

# Public Financing of Popular Adult Learning and Education (ALE)

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Published by: DWV International

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Agentur für Kommunikation GmbH

Picture Alexandra Ioannidou (p. 247):  
DIE/Lichtenscheidt

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek. The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie, detailed bibliographic data is available at <http://dnb.ddb.de>

ISBN: 978-3-942755-46-7

# **Public Financing of Popular Adult Learning and Education (ALE)**

Experience, lessons  
and recommendations  
from 14 country and  
case studies

published by  
DVV International, 2021

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**Chris Duke,**  
**Heribert Hinzen,**  
**Ruth Sarrazin**

Analysis



# Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	6
<b>Part 1: Synthesis</b> .....	9
Towards CONFINTEA VII – The public financing of popular adult learning and education .....	10
The country and case studies: Summaries of the key issues .....	27
<b>Part 2: 14 Country and Case Studies on Public Financing of Popular ALE</b> .....	37
Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Scandinavia .....	38
Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Germany .....	56
Public financing of adult and community education in New Zealand/Aotearoa - commitment, constraint and celebration .....	78
A profile of community education in Ireland .....	86
Public financing of popular adult learning and education – Kominkan as community-based learning centres in Japan .....	96
Public financing of popular adult learning and education – a case study of Australia .....	116
Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Korea .....	132
Public financing of adult learning and education in Vietnam .....	148
Public financing of popular and general adult learning and education in Slovenia – some considerations from a sustainability perspective .....	160
Uganda’s Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation (ICOLEW) architecture: triggering public financing of popular adult learning and education .....	174
Public financing of popular adult learning and education in South Africa – an ‘Introduction to popular education’ course within Community Colleges and Community Learning Centres .....	192
Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Thailand .....	204
Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Ukraine .....	214
Community-based centres for youth and adult education in Palestine: the promise of continuity of learning and development .....	232
<b>Part 3: Further Resources</b> .....	241
<b>Part 4: Authors and Editors</b> .....	245

# Preface

Financing adult learning and education (ALE) has quite often been an object of studies, scientific projects, conferences and publications. The funding of two types of ALE from public sources – literacy & basic skills provision, and continuing training & professional development – is widely accepted and more or less granted in many countries. Financing popular (community, liberal) education, as the third main domain of ALE<sup>1</sup>, is still a controversial issue, positively settled in only in few, mostly developed, countries. Advocacy and lobby work as well as advisory services to ensure public funding for it is a challenge: partly because policy and decision makers from various countries have very limited resources at their disposal for shaping education systems; also because of relatively low knowledge about existing financing models and frameworks and about expected benefits for the broad society which could derive from the public financing of this domain of ALE.

So far no systematisation and analysis of financing mechanisms from public sources for the ‘third key domain of learning and skills’ (according to the UIL’s Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education) existed. This led the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International) to initiate a project aiming to produce such an analysis. This analysis should be based on relevant data and scientific sources, and also derived from collecting a number of articles from different countries, with special attention to identifying good practices from developing countries, describing best practices in public financing of popular ALE.

Thanks to a global project supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) we decided to assign an international team of experts for the study at hand. Based on a competitive open call for proposals, an experienced team consisting of Prof.(H) Dr. Dr. h. c. mult. Heribert Hinzen (Germany), Prof. Dr. Chris Duke (Australia) and Ruth Sarrazin (Germany) was selected, and the study was commissioned.

This publication is the result of their work. The target readership is a wide circle of decision and opinion makers at central, regional and local level, as well as representatives of the ALE professional community, and of partner organisations in and beyond countries where DVV International carries out development projects.

Being *the* professional organisation for adult education and development since 1969, and working currently in more than 30 countries of the world, DVV International strengthens adult education internationally as a key component of lifelong learning. This happens by promoting development through adult education projects, providing expertise, and improving the framework conditions for ALE worldwide.<sup>2</sup> As one way among others of providing expertise and advocacy work at the *macro* level, DVV International develops and provides publications. The present study is one such product, published under the recently developed series “Analysis”.

<sup>1</sup> According to the in 2015 updated Recommendations on Adult Education and Learning (RALE) of UNESCO, “adult learning and education is a core component of lifelong learning. (...) The types of adult learning and education activities vary widely. Adult learning and education includes many learning opportunities for equipping adults with literacy and basic skills; for continuing training and professional development, and for active citizenship, through what is variously known as community, popular or liberal education.”

<sup>2</sup> For more details please refer to the “Strategic fields of action” at <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/about-us/profile>

We hope that this publication with its analytical part and the selection of 14 articles from various parts of the world will allow readers to get familiar with good international examples of financing mechanisms of popular ALE, and to recognise the logic behind them, based on which public funding is granted. We expect longstanding positive impact on policy advice and advocacy work carried out by DVV International and international partners.

From our point of view the theme of the publication is of high importance also in the context of the Goal 4 (target 4.7) of the Sustainable Development Goals / Agenda 2030, and the upcoming 7th World Conference on Adult Learning and Education (CONFINTEA VII), which will take place in 2022. Besides that, the 5th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE), to be published by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in the context of the CONFINTEA VII, will be focused on citizenship education.

Last but not least, we would like to use this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the authors of the study for their professionalism and their above-average and tireless commitment and dedication to this project. We would like also to thank all the authors of the 14 case study articles for their contributions to the project.

Finally, we want to sincerely thank the BMZ for its long-lasting continuous financial support of the international project work of DVV International.

Enjoy the reading!



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March 2021







Part 1  
**Synthesis**

# Synthesis

## Towards CONFINTEA VII – The public financing of popular adult learning and education

### Introduction

#### Looking back: The globally evolving financing of adult learning and education (ALE)

We look back so as to be able to understand and plan better. There was an optimistic and visionary period mostly emanating from the Global North among leading international agencies 50 years ago, in the late 1960s and early 1970s: Edgard Faure's lifelong learning in *Learning To Be*; the OECD recurrent education initiative followed by sustained work on the 'engagement' of universities; the Council of Europe's *education permanente* and the increasing leadership influence of the European Union; the rising profile of the UNESCO Institute for Education, through to 1976, with UNESCO's Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education; and the first ICAE General Assembly. In this way modern-day cradle-to-grave 'lifelong learning' (LLL) was conceived.

UNESCO's 1985 4th International Conference on the Education of Adults in Paris, now known as CONFINTEA IV, was hamstrung by the East-West Cold War. Even so the emerging influence of the growing civil society sector on the global policy stage led that Conference to adopt a 'Right to Learn'. This became an undisputed at least rhetorical platform on which the 5th CONFINTEA was

held at UIL at Hamburg in 1997, and much that has followed was built.

The lead global International Council for Adult Education, ICAE, grew out of CONFINTEA III in Tokyo in 1972. It built on strengthening national and regional ALE non-governmental organisations (NGOs), drawing together a rising chorus of national and INGO voices at subsequent CONFINTEAs: ASPBAE, CEEAL, EAEA, and many others. The decade to 1980 was a golden era for ALE, for all the paucity of public financial support in most countries. More organised and coordinated advocacy lobbied, with some success. Some national governments recognised the need for and importance of a wide range of adult learning needs and policy imperatives, underpinned by changing demography and new, especially electronic, technologies.

Forty years on, these and a wider congregation of civil society NGOs are launching a five-year strategy to advocate for a higher priority for ALE globally, especially in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where an all-permeative LLL perspective is deemed essential to success with the Goals by 2030. The work of the next CONFINTEA in 2022 may prove critical to its success.

Various wealthier nations adopted and some legislated for recognition and support for ALE, using diverse words, means and tools suited to their different cultures and traditions, political systems, economies, and different circumstances. In politically benign contexts, policies, laws, strategies, and fiscal support were generally supportive. Fields of ALE ranged from basic literacy to advanced professional updating; from 2nd chance examined

and assessed school-subject programmes to easier access for adults into further and higher education; and to general adult education favouring a richer quality of life, including health and social welfare for all adults, especially for the rising proportion of older adults living more and more years after regular work. The more this happened, despite modern management tools the harder it became to keep track of diverse forms and channels of public support.

A near-Utopian heyday spirit for universal ALE was sustained in the 1996 UNESCO Delors Report which took up from Faure in 1972. This spirit has been sustained to today by UNESCO and some other intergovernmental organisations (IGOs). But a stronger influence was the increasingly globally domination of neo-economic philosophy and practices launched by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the eighties. This favoured vocational education and training (VET) to fuel economic growth: a new-look narrowed down lifelong learning followed in and from the Nineties.

The rise of neoliberal utilitarianism relegated general adult education to a subsidiary, even middle-class luxury, role. Individual benefit without evident economic return led into a user-pays orientation of early 20th century austerity and audit years; often business and employers became main funders of VET.

Visionary lifelong learning moved towards becoming part of an economic subsystem within competitive market economies. Ministries and departments of economic and labour affairs became as likely as those of education to be the home of lifelong learning policies and funding; in almost all cases the quantum of public funding was small, its scope contracted, and its reliability uncertain. An unfortunate side effect was to sharpen an ever-present 'liberal-vocational' (or VET-general) dichotomy. This tends to blind us, looking forward, to more nuanced evolving policies and practices which straddle this dichotomous perception and divide the voice of ALE passion.

Despite sustained efforts to establish and strengthen ALE within State policy, strategy, laws and funding, most general ALE remains marginal to other regular, formal, familiar educational policy and expenditure. Even if policies for ALE are clear and rule-based, compliance via funding may be little more than tokenistic. This stress on formal audited education masks from our eyes the ever-rich world of learning 'outside the classroom'; and devalue not only 'informal learning' but also 'non-formal' ALE. These two divisions or dichotomies thus reinforce each other, and box in our imagination for richer learning.

This sketch appears bleak. However, countercultures and countervailing trends are also evident in the first decades of this 21st century. The global financial crisis and subsequent small-State austerity programmes have been largely subsumed: swept aside by the still graver crises of rising socio-economic inequalities resultant civil unrest and authoritarianism; a life-threatening ecological extinction crisis; and in this new decade the coronavirus: a pandemic unmatched in over 100 years. Trauma brings in its wake new possibilities: the unthinkable becomes unavoidable; 'austere' governments spend unprecedented fund that they don't have, to fight at least the pandemic crisis. Looking ahead to the next CONFITEA in Morocco in 2022, we are informed but not determined by the trends of the past three decades.

It is conspicuous that most of the 14 commissioned studies which this report present said little about their changing political environment or their own history of evolving ALE. They do well not to be trapped by the past, but also not to be unaware how they came to be where they now are.

**A more detailed analysis: Prospects for financing popular ALE in the 2020s, including the Futures of Education and LLL**

At the time of this study, the UNESCO Futures of Education initiative is in full swing. Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, chairs the International Commission. Its provisional

report title is *Learning to Become: The Futures of Education*. It follows *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good?* (UNESCO 2015a) which the Department for Education Research and Foresight of UNESCO presented at the World Education Forum in Incheon 2015. What kind of discourse and recommendations on educational financing will emerge from the Commission later this year.

Two important documents have been prepared on invitation by the Commission. The UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL) presented *Embracing a culture of lifelong learning. Contribution to the Futures of Education Initiative. Report. A transdisciplinary expert consultation* (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2020). It concluded that a “wide-reaching culture of lifelong learning relies on a *strong social fabric*, which protects against poverty, discrimination and other forms of inequality; conversely, a culture of lifelong learning can strengthen the social fabric actively” (p. 17). Important issues to be tackled are: “An enabling environment for lifelong learning relies on *sufficient funding and resource mobilization*”.

It was becoming obvious that “funding and resources, mobilized by diverse stakeholders, are needed at each decentralized level of the learning ecosystem”. This explicitly includes funding from Government sources. Digitization, the importance of IT and the social media are frequently mentioned: “a culture of lifelong learning can be supported by taking advantage of multiple spaces for learning” where community centres, libraries or study circles play their role. And in conclusion: “Addressing the challenges of the twenty-first century and shaping a sustainable future for democratic societies calls for valuing lifelong learning as a new human right. This has implications for the international community, including UNESCO, and for countries, especially concerning the establishment of a legal framework for lifelong learning” (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2020: 39). There are deep implications for sustainably financing all aspects of the education system: not only in a rear-vision and ‘system’ sense but with a much wider grasp of how and what people learn, and what kinds of support this implies.

The second document for the Commission is *Adult learning and education (ALE) – because the future cannot wait. Contribution of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) to the UNESCO’s Futures of Education initiative* (ICAE 2020). While UIL looked deeper into the future of LLL as an overarching paradigm, there was keen debate within the ICAE writers’ group over how to position ALE within a truly LLL framework. Lifelong learning is now a generally agreed principle; but ALE is seriously undervalued. The new demographic reality for all societies sooner or later is that most people are adults for the longest part of their lives. They are and should be caretakers of a more just and inclusive world.

The chapter on *Financing ALE* starts: “Education in general faces the challenge of insufficient resources, and ALE is the least supported link in the overall lifelong learning chain. Much research confirms that ALE remains globally underfunded in many countries and receives less overall funding compared to other education areas. [...] Although the diversification of funding is part of the solution and different funding models may be used in different sub-sectors of ALE, state funding remains one of the primary funding streams, consistent with the concept of education as a public good [...]”

We need to think outside the box and go beyond just sharing more equally within a small education budget: “The scarce resources for ALE are more a matter of distribution than lack of funds. For example, the world spends incomparably more on the military than on ALE. Unjust tax structures in favour of the rich, harmful tax incentives and illicit capital flight deprive state coffers of much needed resources that can be allocated to education, ALE and other social services. Tax justice measures offer the most viable financing solutions to expand public resources from the billions to the trillions that are needed to close financing gaps in education including the deserved allocations to ALE” (ICAE 2020: 9).

Returning to notions of lifelong learning as a public good and a new human right, a human right is the

right for everyone, unlimited by age, or social position. This resembles the SDG language to ‘leave no one behind’. ALE for all adults requires throwing the net wider in two directions.

One has been studied recently in *A Review of Entitlement Systems for LLL* prepared for UNESCO and International Labour Organization (ILO). Part of the Executive summary reads:

“A lifelong learning entitlement (LLE) means that every citizen has an entitlement to learning opportunities enshrined in law or in their country’s constitution, and those opportunities can be accessed at any time in their life. While few countries have managed to develop and implement such a mature system, many recognise its value and have stated their aim to do so.

The value of introducing an LLE is implicit in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those relating to education, economic growth and inequality. Support is also evident in the work of donor agencies with the governments of developing countries, albeit in the form of strengthening of components of a lifelong learning system, rather than developing a policy framework for planning coherent developments. Such entitlements as currently exist generally emerge from one of three policy environments: education, employment, or social protection. The nature of the entitlement, its geographic scope and its target population will be determined by the policy environment from which it has emerged. The LLE commonly focuses on groups that are disadvantaged and still of working age, or individuals who seek to extend their working life. Coverage may therefore not be universal. It rarely extends to learning for recreation or personal fulfilment, but rather has the underlying aim of supporting economic development” (Dunbar 2020: 6).

In light of this study of the public financing of popular ALE, and our concern to treat ALE both as a full sub-sector of education and of a broader LLL system, we endorse the point that limiting LLL to

vocational ALE for economic reasons is diametrically at odds with learning as a universal human right.

The second direction for throwing the net wider has been looked at recently by ILO in *Lifelong Learning in the Informal Economy: A Literature Review* (Palmer 2020). Here a key issue is the sheer size of ‘leave no one behind’ is serious: “The very size of the informal economy – 2 billion people – and its heterogeneous nature, means that it exists in very diverse contexts across different countries and regions. The extent to which such contexts are enabling skills access, acquisition and utilization vary considerably and need to be considered when looking at supporting specific regions or sectors. [...] If a universal entitlement to lifelong learning is to be operationalized so that it covers the 2 billion people working in the informal economy, governance and financing models will need to be substantially reformed” (p. 50f.). These are big challenges: the usual governance structures and approaches of the formal education system, looking at policies, legislation and financing, do not have them on their radar. ‘Leaving no one behind’ demands exactly such a change in perspective.

### Financing popular ALE: the DVV International project

A significant and ideologically charged component of the rich ALE smorgasbord here called popular ALE, is the focus of this project, and desirably a building block in preparations for CONFINTEA 2022. One political and radical strong element of this has been a cutting edge of the ALE movement in some western history over many decades.

In the 14 studies reported here, ‘popular ALE’ has diverse names and synonyms; its modes and purposes vary greatly. A division can be found between general (sometimes called liberal) individually oriented adults’ learning for all purposes, and more politically purposeful, usually radical, education to inform and empower adults to become active participatory citizens engaged with local and perhaps national policies; to critique policy principles and practices; and to engage in making and changing

policies and directions. There is a focus on action to follow study, and to support changes in the conduct of society and State policy. This explicitly applied and ‘political’ ALE may generate social energy and the capacity for local communities to live more full, productive, and satisfying lives. It may become community development, or national political action. In some societies this is an accepted cultural norm; in many it is a source of concern, and a threat to the established order. It can in consequence at times become even life-threatening.

Reflecting on the course of events in and before 2020, the authors of this report conclude that a strong explicitly political form of campaigning for radical action-oriented popular ALE as a distinct strand like IT literacy or professional updating for example would not today be an effective way to proceed in many places. It proves essential for the healthy future of societies and their national states for political education to be firmly embedded within the spectrum of general ALE.

Rather than explicitly campaign for ALE for political change, its future may be best served, and a flow of resources assured to local communities where the heart of community learning and active citizenship reside, and grow, simply to argue for the full spectrum of ALE as an indivisible right and necessity, rather than separate, as for IT or languages. *This is a central recommendation.*

It is pragmatic advice, informed not by cowardice but by the wish to get support for the full spectrum of ALE in all kinds of country conditions, oppressive as well as more comfortable open working democracies. There is another reason: the difficulties and at times misleading fallacies that arise when different elements of ALE are compartmentalised - most commonly between ‘liberal’, where ‘popular’ active citizenship is nested, and ‘vocational’, as if these are always polar opposites.

Our studies support a more holistic grasp of adult learning: a ‘learning project’ may contribute simultaneously to diverse individual and collective purposes: social, familial, income-generating and

other occupational, health and other things. Not only are individuals infinitely complex and infinitely diverse. So too are the nations where they belong. Hard lines and either-or boxes do not match the reality of life and learning.

### The DVV International project: who undertook the country studies?

In mid-2020, among several studies, DVV International called for proposals to inform and help steer preparation for CONFINTEA VII in 2022, and towards understandings and conclusions that will strengthen the contribution of ALE and LLL towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through the 2020s, and beyond that to at least 2050, the current target date for zero net global emissions to check global warming. The call visualised 7-9 country studies of about 7,000 words each, to examine what is being done to provide ‘popular ALE’ in this decade and beyond. DVV International also required an analysis summarising global trends, based where possible on the quantitative study data.

Those chosen were to create a study template; identify countries and authors; guide, monitor, and edit the studies; and analyse and create a synthesis of the findings, with recommendations and guidance to feed into the work of CONFINTEA in 2021 and 2022.

In the event, experts were contracted to investigate and report on 14 situations, increasing the number and varying the length of the studies. The resulting studies vary from 3,500 to 9,500 words. They appear in full in part II of this publication. Reporting and analysing countries very diverse in size and population, history, culture and tradition, political social and economic conditions. Here they are in a loose sequence based on recent histories and current circumstances: six are from countries with traditions of political support and culturally embedded public acceptance of freely chosen adult learning opportunities; the other eight are places where public support is more recent, perhaps less reliable and formalised; or perhaps more clearly

legislated for, with clearer structures and rules from recent times.

The rough continuum reflects characteristics of societies in more to less open democratic modes of governance and ease of working, maybe with particular salience in terms of politically purposeful studies geared towards community as well as individual learning and action, encompassing the wider spectrum of ‘popular’ in terms of ‘general ALE’. The sequence runs from Scandinavian countries in a subregion identified with Grundtvig, through Germany, New Zealand and Australia (two countries of ‘the North’ within the geographical South); and Ireland, a divided land in Western Europe; and Japan, a remarkable story of democracy and affluence akin to post-War II Germany. The Republic of Korea was also war-ravaged and is still divided, but now highly successful.

The remaining countries mostly have legacies of different forms of post-colonialism, whether or not in the geographical South. They tend to be called middle income: Slovenia and Ukraine in South-East post-socialist Europe; Uganda and South Africa in ‘post-colonial’ or neo-colonial Africa. Thailand in Southeast Asia was never colonised; Vietnam suffered two savage wars for independence and ended up divided, like Ireland. Finally, Palestine had extreme difficulty completing this task because of highly distressed circumstance; in such conditions, politically active citizenship can be hazardous.

In the Call for Proposals DVV International cited the UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education from 2015: “ALE is a core component of lifelong learning. (...) The types of adult learning and education activities vary widely. Adult learning and education includes many learning opportunities for equipping adults with literacy and basic skills; for continuing training and professional development, and for active citizenship, through what is variously known as community, popular or liberal education.”

DVV International adds that: “while the funding of [...] literacy & basic skills and continuing training

& professional development from public sources is widely accepted and more or less granted in many countries [...], financing of popular (community, liberal) education and active citizenship is still a controversial issue, which is positively settled only in a number of countries (mostly in developed countries). Advocacy and lobby work for ensuring of public funding for it is a challenge, partly because policy/decision-makers from partner countries have very limited resources and low knowledge about existing financing models and frameworks.

The theme is of high importance also in the context of the Goal 4 (target 4.7) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) / Agenda 2030 and the upcoming [...] CONFINTEA VII. Besides [...] the 5th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE), which will be published by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) before CONFINTEA VII, will be completely dedicated to active citizenship.”

This open acknowledges the political sensitivity of ‘popular ALE’. The explicit focus of the next GRALE is ‘completely dedicated to active citizenship’. Much of the ALE story about policy, strategy and administration has hitherto been almost silent about the ‘controversial issue’ of political reality, tiptoeing past it. It is the elephant in the room.

Most of these studies were conducted by NGO-based scholars. Advocating public funds explicitly for active citizenship via popular ALE may not have wide appeal. In the words of an old UK TV comedy series, *Yes Minister*, ‘that would be very courageous’ – that is to say foolish.

## Main findings from the country studies

### The heart of the matter

We conclude that the best strategy to protect and advance this vital element of popular ALE is to embed it within a larger all-encompassing concept of ALE. It should also be so managed and audited that the curriculum and subject matter of study are



outside the normal interest and reach of political scrutiny and treated as a natural part of properly fundable demand-led study.

Here we draw out from the studies, features relevant to public financial support for ALE generally, as regions prepare for CONFINTEA 2022 in Morocco. Authors were required to pick out the Key Points and provide them as summaries of what they saw as most important; also perhaps to advise what should be done to improve with a focus for advocacy.

We concentrate here on most recent studies of funding ALE, which in turn draw on recent and earlier work on funding ALE within LLL. This includes the 2018 *FinALE - Financing Adult Learning and Europe*; and the ICAE Contribution to UNESCO's current Futures of Education initiative. In another study, *Financing Adult Learning and Education. The way forward: what works, how and why?* (Popović 2021), DVV International and ICAE drew on 'good practice examples' from 6 studies to make recommendations for financing ALE from different sources, international and national, private and business as well as public. This study thus looks wider than public national finances, policies and funding practices, including ODA-type funds from outside the country, through the national government or independently, so adding an important dimension to the national, especially where the State is suspicious of anything nurturing radical political action.

The ICAE and DVV International report draws on a smaller number of cases than our current fourteen, but includes two from the Americas, each case concentrating on one particular initiative. The present study focuses on public funding, local as well as national; but also looks more broadly across the whole ALE spectrum of how country authors' ALE systems work. Our reflections taken from those of case study authors also ask some wider questions about where and how adults gather information and learn outside anything normally included within ALE; and what other 21st century trends suggest.

### Loss of history?

Most of the 14 country studies show little interest in the history of popular ALE. Their focus may be on the present, and on things that need to be changed. Perhaps too the history is seen as essentially within the story of planning and financing education systems – where ALE varies from modest or miniscule to totally absent. On the other hand, much of the nation's general history is difficult: maybe even savage, bloodstained and better forgotten. In times of war, civil, local or global, ALE is brushed aside. Yet cataclysmic event and trauma have broken a thread and led to startling recovery, rebuilding and national survival include popular ALE. Think of Germany and Japan in and after World Wars; the remarkable recoveries of South Korea and reunified Vietnam; and the ever-chequered history the still fragile divided island of Ireland. Ukraine is still grieving recent loss of eastern lands and Crimea; and the Palestine's condition is even more difficult. Life-threatening crisis has often cleared a way to vigorous recovery and innovation. Overlooking history at this time of pandemic may mean loss of sight for opportunity.

Relevant lessons may not be just of war. South African apartheid memories are still fresh, also Uganda's independence and then the Amin years. Thailand seems locked in a recurrent cycle of military coups and disappointments with democracy, but it has vigorous government-led ALE. Korea and Japan, like huge neighbour China, see fast growth of megacities with awesome infrastructure, and social stresses to match.

### Understanding 'popular ALE'?

The term that framed this study is not itself universally used, nor is there much consensus just what it covers. Most of the studies move on briskly and sensibly to discuss what kind of ALE is seen as relevant, without engaging in much linguistic analysis, or even clear distinction between purposes and whether provision is led supply-driven or demand-led. Along our spectrum, socio-political purpose is perhaps most evident in countries where conditions and political traditions now tend to be



easier, beginning with Scandinavia. But political purpose is also evident where times are tougher, as in Palestine and Ukraine at the other extreme. More obvious is the focus on instruments and arrangements such as the - also variously titled and variously used - Community Learning Centres.

Even leaving aside the fact that many such English language terms do not translate easily to and from other languages, this sparseness over finer points of language assists the constructive ambiguity of generalisation: that is to say, a programme or learning centre may house learning for pleasure and leisure within or alongside which are courses in politics and economics, and practical courses valued by a local community from building to growing food to gaining job-skills. The careworn liberal-vocational dichotomy became heated in the dying years of the 20th century. Current approaches and studies here suggest that intentions, rewards and outcomes are a case of both-and than of either-or.

More hope from the future than strength from the past? - but fewer bonds to restrict hope and imagination?

### **Governance and structures**

There is now a well-known road towards government or public support for ALE in general which most of our studies recognise. Some have traversed it and have the essential elements of policy, laws, and regulations, means of implementation and arrangements to provide resources. Others are currently moving along or towards such a route; or are recognising the widely used map and advocating its use. Advocacy tends to be two-edged: persuading governments, policymakers, and other significant powerbrokers to take strategic policy-making and legislative steps to build a platform for programmes, plans and means to implement the necessary national infrastructure.

Usually this is seen as based in a Ministry of Education (MoE), sometimes it is shared with two or three other ministries or their departments, for example labour or employment. Depending on

the structure and traditions of governance, unitary or federal, tightly controlled from a central capital or decentralised to provincial and more local administrations, channels are developed and usually mandated for sharing of powers, responsibilities, and resources to support ALE. In some states' systems this reaches down three or four levels, to sub-regional local levels and down to the village or neighbourhood.

Even when principles appear to be secured and rules and tools, mechanisms, pathways and means of disseminating means and monitoring and evaluating what happens are all in place, several specialists describe what happens and fails to follow: 'many a slip between cup and lip'. Some authors identify apparently endless bureaucratic delay, such that rights and opportunities do not get implanted; and suggest regulatory or review arrangements such as overview councils giving a range of stakeholder a means to monitor inaction and press for rules to be carried out.

Sometimes tools deemed essential are not in place. The need may not even be recognised: for a known and portable system of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) for example, which is important in times of labour mobility, whether outward with remittances or inward with migration and need for skills recognition; and for the tools and means for access to adults returning to study in later life where accreditation of prior skills as well and qualifications matter, for both individual and wider economic reasons.

Thinking about ALE from the perspective of professional and administrative providers within a familiar paradigm tends to be in terms of new forms, ways and places for extending regular education system schooling to those lacking or with broken formal educational attainment, some tighter and more prescriptive than others. The more thought and provision move into non-formal and informal means of supporting learning, and toward placed-based learning by and within groups, the more oppressive to may find those with a lifetime of running instructional schooling.

In some cases, we see a clearer and keener sense of lifelong learning as a transformative renewal of whole educational and beyond that social systems: cataclysmic change (war, pandemic, climate crisis, sheer poverty etc) may force recognition that good governance of ALE means going far wider than familiar schooling; and transforming the whole school and college system itself. Even in places where the 'golden triangle of governance' is recognised and put in place (a) old views and administrators' own knowledge may prevail (b) lifelong learning is a vastly permeative concept that destabilises known ways of governing. Advocacy built into the much larger concept and recognition of LLL is proving necessary to change popular culture and states' practices.

As they move along this road, several of the country studies recognise what support for and widespread extension of LLL for all means. It means dissolving LLL-based ALE into myriad, ministries, departments, councils, board, committees etc; and thus changing their practices and advancing the SDGs through the many arteries and veins of the modernising state, from head and heart to fingertips.

### Financing and support

When DVV International resolved on financing this popular ALE study the intention was to uncover reasonably firm, reliable and comparable data on the amount of public support that popular ALE in each country received, and how it was dispersed and disbursed, accounted for by what tools and measures.

The results through the 14 studies are, unsurprisingly as one undertakes closer thought and scrutiny, disappointing. At best we are in the land of guesstimates in all but one or two cases: for most it is 'mission impossible'.

In one way this is heartening, although for hard-working and committed adult educators across all forms of ALE it is frustrating. It makes it hard to advance advocacy with such uncertain levels, channels, and kinds of direct and indirect

support. There are some guidelines and categories that emerge. They tend to be fluid and fast-changing, usually without the information systems and competent data collection and analysis needed to underpin and report the work and its analysis. The most tangible include fees and part fees usually to categories of disadvantaged students who have left the school system with minimal if any qualifications.

If finance goes to providers rather than direct to the learners in their programmes, they are attendance-based: and maybe also attainment-based when study performance is assessed and recorded. Several expects report the problems that this form of quantification and payment by results may cause for providers trying to support learning of those most in need; and the bureaucratic load that can be entailed with limited staff time sometimes in primitive conditions.

Regular financial support, even if far too little, is more welcome and useful than short-term (even competitive) funding which prevents agencies from providing reliably, and where the cost of much effort wins only short-term income. This applies to freestanding providers, usually civil society organisations relying on goodwill, voluntary or low-paid and often underqualified labour, if fortunate maybe supported also in part by outside funds, IGO or non-governmental.

Why is this heartening? Taking the approach indicated by the SDGs for all-round sustainable development, and with learning as a major source of nourishment that cannot be contained just with Goal 4, it tells us through how many channels and in how many ways public support for adults' and also communities' learning gets through. Some is in the form of effect ALE (or 'training') provider support; many identify an urgent need for much more such professional development of all kinds of ALE personnel. Much more is in the provision of infrastructure facilities, more after in recent years and more places of local facilities for community-based learning of many kinds of things in many kinds of ways. Premises, their maintenance, and some cost of materials and management, amount

for an unknown quantum of support for local ALE through many public channels, central, regional, and local, run by many kinds of public, private and local community agencies.

This locates and traps financial calculation in the world of guesstimate; but it also shows the diversity of support from many social, health, and wellbeing arenas, through labour market requirements and into primary, secondary, and tertiary industry, commerce, and other arms of the state. Estimates of what all this amounts to as a proportion of annual budget, gross domestic product, and even MoE funds, are slippery. Much comparison between different countries' public ALE spend is unconvincing.

It is however true that even in the most affluent and best-off countries, the budget purposefully allocated for ALE is tiny. Compared with total populations from kindergarten to completion of final regular school or higher education, the public funds formally allocated for rest-of-life learning beyond that age and stage, after completing initial classroom-based provision, is miniscule. Hence the emphasis by several experts that a LLL new paradigm, popular and political culture is necessary for public funds to respond to this new reality.

### **Lessons and recommendations from the country studies**

A lesson common to most studies, albeit not always explicit, is that the system of public funding and policy must relate to the rise and maintenance of democracy, equal rights, and opportunities to take part in the democracy: 'learning for democracy and sustainable development must be based on cooperation, public recognition and support'. The South Africa study bluntly asserted that unless there is political will, good intentions will not translate into practice.

Ukraine still lacked a strategic vision for LLL and ALE. In frail State Palestine building a sense of local ownership and collective benefit is seen as key in the process of developing the ALE centres. Community-based dialogue and other kinds of initiatives

help to ensure wide participation in conceptualising and developing the centres.

One study pointed out that private funding dominated the ALE sector accounting for three quarters of financing of the whole continuing education sector, while a quarter comes from public funding. For providers of *popular ALE*, however, public funding is by far the most important financial source. Forming deep and meaningful relationships across the political parties and with bureaucrats in relevant government departments was therefore important. It also enhanced public perception of ALE.

Another study stated, that in the absence of sustainable public funding, popular ALE providers are forced to allocate disproportionate amounts of time and resources to securing governmental and non-governmental support year after year. For popular ALE to be recognised and further developed, community organisations need to use their voices to ensure that the benefits are constantly promoted to the community and throughout government.

For Japan, to ensure public financing of Kominkan, systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are required, with strong evidence to convince policymakers of value for money. Researchers had an important role to play here. Korea found that to preserve strong citizenship education its core should be 'unfolded autonomously by civic activists and civil instructors'.

The Vietnamese study saw a need first to enhance public awareness and participation in ALE, with a promotion campaign nationwide to increase the motivation and the participation of adult people in ALE. This in turn would attract more attention for more investment. A law instituting ALE into the education system would be the foundation on which policies promoting ALE are built, including financing it. This required a government body in charge of the provision and development of ALE. Thailand, with a long MoE tradition of leading and providing, also put value on cross-ministry action: there had been government memoranda of understanding between every Ministry in order to enhance ALE.

Coming from ecological circularity processes, the Slovenian expert regretted the country's hierarchical approach, and the absence of original thinking outside the box. It needed to build on and upgrade achievements rather than constantly redefine and reorganise. Weak general trust in ALE meant investing in research on the learning and outcomes of popular ALE, with more indicators and measures.

Uganda could benefit by effectively engaging local actors in financing and budgeting decision-making, so reaping the sustainability benefits of a stronger sense of local ownership and commitment.

Few recommendations emanated explicitly from the country studies. Rather, they were implied in the analysis of challenges that the experts encountered and described. A general position was to create legislation and a sound base, and to support the monitoring and practice of popular ALE with stable but medium financial resources directly dependent on outcomes. Some were rather specific to a particular issue in a particular country, such as adopting a national qualifications framework system into which alternative ALE pathways could be integrated, or a National Skill Strategy. Two very common themes were for a strong and compelling campaign on the value that ALE adds to society, and strong alliances across and beyond the education sector, including with industry and related organisations.

## Looking forward, looking wider: new world, new conditions

### Advice and Recommendations for CONFINTEA VII

As pointed out earlier, the present study on public financing of popular ALE was commissioned by DVV International in the context of moving from CONFINTEA VI in 2009 and the Belem Framework for Action (BFA) via the Mid-term Review and its Suwon Statement in 2017 towards CONFINTEA VII which will be in Marrakesh in 2022. Before and during the Mid-term Review a serious discourse evolved as the ALE community on the one hand appreciated the SDG Education 2030 Agenda and

its overarching goal “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, and on the other hand criticised that in the targets ALE as a sub-sector of the education system and as a profession did not receive its needed attention.

Numerous documents and reports since then have claimed that the financing ALE in a perspective of lifelong learning is of highest importance. They all relate somehow to what the BFA says in respect of financing:

“Adult learning and education represent a valuable investment which brings social benefits by creating more democratic, peaceful, inclusive, productive, healthy and sustainable societies. Significant financial investment is essential to ensure the quality provision of adult learning and education. To these ends, we commit ourselves to:

- (a) accelerating progress towards achieving the CONFINTEA V recommendation to seek investment of at least 6% of GNP in education, and working towards increased investment in adult learning and education;
- (b) expanding existing educational resources and budgets across all government departments to meet the objectives of an integrated adult learning and education strategy;
- (c) considering new, and opening up existing, transnational funding programmes for literacy and adult education, along the lines of the actions taken under the EU Lifelong Learning Programme;
- (d) creating incentives to promote new sources of funding, e.g. from the private sector, NGOs, communities and individuals, without prejudicing the principles of equity and inclusion;
- (e) prioritising investment in lifelong learning for women, rural populations and people with disabilities” (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2010: 8).

The BFA tasked the UIL with “recommending the preparation of a triennial progress report to be submitted to UNESCO; and to produce, on this basis,

the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) at regular intervals” (ibid.: 9). Financing has become an important section in all the published GRALE so far, alongside choosing a specific theme like active and global citizenship education in GRALE 5 to be published during CONFINTEA VII. However, reading the parts on financing it becomes quite evident that the statistics on ALE provided by Governments are far from what we may call satisfactory or robust data; still they are alarming as the findings show:

“A big challenge remains in terms of the proportion of public expenditure on education devoted to ALE, as this remains a low investment priority for governments and international organizations. Based on information on a very limited number of countries, GRALE II reported the average percentage of public education expenditure devoted to ALE as around 0.9% in low-income countries, 2.2% in middle-income countries and 2.7% in high-income countries. For GRALE III, countries reported the percentage of public education spending currently allocated to ALE. Out of the 97 countries that reported this information, 41 reported that less than 0.9% of education expenditure is directed to ALE; 34 spent between 1% and 3.9% of education expenditure, and 22 spent 4% or more of education expenditure on ALE” (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2016: 44f.).

The Mid-term Review in 2017 captured the overall framework of the SDG as *Towards CONFINTEA VII: Adult learning and Education and the 2030 Agenda*. However, it stated quite openly: “There have been few significant innovations in ALE financing since 2009. Those few were modest in scale and often took some form of cost sharing with civil society partners [...] Nearly a quarter of the countries (in both the North and the South) did not have information on the scale of public investment in ALE. Of course, the diversity of provision, which often lacks focus or coordination, has complicated efforts to identify the budgets or expenditure dedicated to adult education” (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2017: 59). This is true also for the present study which in several country cases could identify

at least smaller pockets of funding of popular ALE, at the same time confirming: The funding available for ALE is not anywhere close to what would be needed if ‘leave no one behind’, as the SDG argues, is to become a reality.

At the same time there are abundant arguments that ALE is needed to implement several SDGs. Following on this concern DVV International commissioned the study on Youth and adult education in the Agenda 2030, which showed many important areas where more and better ALE is a requirement to achieve most of the other SDG goals, as a “crosscutting enabler”, including goals on decent work, climate action, peace, and justice (Schweighöfer 2019: 10ff). Or as it has been put by UIL into the Key Messages of GRALE 3: “Over the next fifteen years and beyond, countries will face a complex set of challenges relating to issues such as mass migration, employment, inequality, environmental sustainability and accelerating technological changes. ALE is a central component of public policies that can help address these challenges. ALE contributes to the prevention of conflict and poverty, helping people learn to live together, be healthy and thrive, irrespective of their economic, social or cultural background. ALE makes a difference by helping people to continuously update their knowledge and skills throughout their lives so that they maintain their ability to contribute as healthy and productive members of society” (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2016: 15).

The latest GRALE, No 4. featured Leave no One Behind: Participation, Equity and Inclusion and argued that “[...] adequate financing of ALE is likely to boost chances of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in an effective and efficient way. Unfortunately, our findings confirm that ambitions for ALE are not yet matched by investment” (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2019: 51). Looking ahead, the timing of CONFINTEA VII in 2022 is when the 15 years period of the SDG is almost half-way through, and financing of ALE is hardly anywhere better than when the commitments were made, either in the BFA or in the SDGs.

This seems to be true for all three areas of: “learning opportunities for equipping adults with literacy and basic skills; for continuing training and professional development, and for active citizenship, through what is variously known as community, popular or liberal education”, as it is phrased in RALE (UNESCO 2015b: 2). No doubt, there are many billions of dollars missing to serve the close to a billion adults with low or no literacy levels in Community Learning Centres, and neither domestic nor ODA as public funding comes close to what is needed. GRALE 4 seems a bit more optimistic in respect of ALE for what is often called continued vocational training, especially as it is often backed by a mixture of public, corporate, and private funding. “While there is plenty of evidence supporting individual and government investment in ALE for economic reasons, its potential to contribute to democracy and citizenship is less well understood. The economic position that is driving much of the investment in ALE globally is rooted in a long and, among most policymakers, highly respected, tradition of economic theory. The democratic justification for ALE, as expressed in the RALE ambitions, is supported by a recent and still developing knowledge base” (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2019: 171).

Nevertheless, our present study found many relevant examples of ALE financing from public sources which are related to this multi-termed sort of ALE – citizenship, community, general, liberal, or popular. We see in these documented experience from the 14 countries an attempt to create more evidence on the diversity and the varieties of ALE thus enlarging the needed knowledge base. This comes at the right time: when UNESCO and the ALE actors from Government and civil society are engaging in CONFINTEA VII Sub-regional Consultations and Regional Conferences throughout 2021, informing and exchanging on development in ALE since Belem, analysing current challenges, and searching for future directions.

Our study has kept and strengthened the view that ALE is rich in its diversity. Findings and recommendations speak to each specific situation; they are

important for learning from one another. Our few more general recommendations here support those seen in the country findings, which are of highest importance moving towards CONFINTEA VII, – and to ALE in the SDG Agenda.

The first reiterates what the FinALE project called for:

- “Think of adult learning as an investment. Adult learning has a range of benefits not only for the individual, but also for society, the economy, and democracies. The benefits include positive effects on income and employability, health, civic commitment, reduced criminal activity, among others” (EAEA 2018: 2).

The second is of utmost importance, and short:

- Increase the financing of ALE dramatically to reach a level that could really fulfil what the SDG are asking for.

The third relates to looking at ALE in its full dimension covering the three types of ALE envisaged in RALE as literacy, continuing, and citizenship education for adults:

- The best strategy to protect and advance this vital element of popular ALE is to embed it within a larger all-encompassing concept of ALE. It should also be so managed and audited that the curriculum and subject matter of study are outside the normal interest and reach of political scrutiny, and treated as a natural part of properly fundable demand-led study.

The fourth is important for the up-coming ICAE-led ALE campaign of civil society actors:

- Rather than explicitly campaign for ALE for political change, its future may be best



served, and a flow of resources assured to local communities where the heart of community learning and active citizenship reside, and grow, simply to argue for the full spectrum of ALE as an indivisible right and necessity, rather than separate, as for IT or languages.

The fifth is also close to the findings of the country cases:

- ALE should always be seen with these two dimensions. ALE is an equally important sub-sector of the education system like kindergarten, schools, universities, and vocational training. It requires similar support and structures in policy, legislation, and financing. ALE is a movement which encompasses the civil society struggle for a better world and against all sorts of discrimination, injustice, and environmental destruction. This is at the heart of popular ALE.

## Reflections

Much has altered in the world of ALE since Belem CONFINTEA VI, and much more in the wider world beyond. The Belem Framework noted: “Adult learning and education represent a valuable investment which brings social benefits by creating more democratic, peaceful, inclusive, productive, healthy and sustainable societies.” And to achieve this: “Significant financial investment is essential to ensure the quality provision of adult learning and education” (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2010: 8).

It would be a bold person who claimed significant new progress in this aspiration globally. Even if we recognise improvement in some countries; others may have gone backwards; and the wealth-gap poverty gap has widened further within and between most nations. The global financial crisis was followed by an austerity era, while the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals paid minimal attention to introducing an all-permeative LLL vision and strategy, or to implementing ALE along Belem lines.

Now, one third of the way through the 15 SDG years, a cyclone of dangerously interacting global crises has intensified. There is an inverse relationship: between the desperately rising need for vigorous popular ALE, and feebly low levels of support via public funding. Anti-democratic self-seeking authoritarianism, annually more destructive weather events driven by global warming, the suppression of popular movements for reform, and the threat and actuality of war in so many regions: neither ALE within LLL, nor the SDGs themselves, are winning the political attention, practical priority, and resources that the whole ecosystem including all its human dimensions urgently need. We are already part of the extinction crisis.

A global ALE advocacy campaign is now drawing national and sub-regional NGOs and global INGO forces into urgent more effective alliance. This needs to make a powerful impact on governments in CONFINTEA VII for ALE to play its essential role in leading constructive change in governance practices that will turn today’s dominant political and socio-economic trends in productive directions. Lifelong learning needs to influence, infect, inform, and inspire in practical ways all political and social behaviour across the whole complex spectrum of modern governance. Collaboration at all levels, and across all sectors of public, business and civil society, is essential.

There are heartening examples of how for example, most states and peoples are handling the COVID-19 pandemic. Across health and survival issues generally, ordinary people strive to help one another. Human decency often voluntarily mitigates the distress of destitution among migrant and refugee peoples, and other ‘neighbours in need’. Individuals, usually in naturally forming communities give time, resources and sometimes their lives to help others, locally and globally.

Good information leading to good understanding, by word of mouth, by example and through the massive armoury of modern communication methods, effectively supported by targeted ALE, can

guide and alter behaviour, mitigating the ravages of disease, drought, conflict and personal distress.

On the other hand, the present pandemic of fake news, and shamelessly corrupting exercises in confounding public opinion by demagogic populist nativism, are spread like cancers through whole societies and their communities of belief and practice, rather than just misleading individuals.

In terms of these global realities, fundamentally rethinking human learning through the whole of what we call education systems has become urgent. Life-threatening world crises will not wait. More learning takes place outside established education systems than within, from the earliest years to what for the majority of people are their still lengthening lives.

People live longer, with a much higher proportion of time in adult than school-age years; they live, too, in multiple places and ways off the (now too often gated) school premises. The character of planned pre-adult learning (schooling) lays a basis for learning, adapting, understanding, and acting lifelong. A collaborative philosophy of sustainability for survival must therefore permeate all formal education, public policy, and strategy, as well as community and private practice.

A courageous grasp of universal lifelong learning, with strong public support and resourcing, must transform the dominant practices of schooling, and help to reshape popular culture for global sustainability. To meet acute real-world needs that have grown startlingly since Belem, ALE must equally look outside formal school-based education and training for grown-ups; treat all places and spaces of work, and social life and leisure as learning environments; and clearly lift learning out from being just an education industry affair, liberating its wider identity into the kind of society that Faure and others since have visualised. Public funding of popular ALE must flow through all the arteries and veins of governments into all arenas of human life.

What, you may ask, is so different now from in the year of Belem. Listen to the morning news: hear both of the small dramas, successes and tragedies that make up the local and regional news, but also of traumatic daily life-threatening personal, political and ecological crisis: today in Myanmar and Yemen, Belarus and Syria, the Pacific and Alaska; Thailand and Nigeria, and a host of others places on the seas between: fragile States and vulnerable people in exhausted lands. Sane and open international collaboration through CONFINTEA was urgent in Belem in 2009. That need is greatly amplified in Morocco in 2022.

CONFINTEA must frame education and training firmly within the compelling logic of lifelong learning. Powerful new mass and social media and tools have worldwide instantaneous reach where politics so allow. Today's pandemic has taught, albeit brutally, the educative capacity of the worldwide web and the accessibility of knowledge at a distance, with the opportunity for liberation from production-line schooling and separate working from living places; also, the sterility of near-blind econometric mantras of competition, 'free' markets, and austerity. We now know from experience that the impossible is impossibly easy when need is realised.

Several of these studies also show us that forgetting history can be grossly foolish; but that being trapped within it can in turn be suicidal. We see that the dichotomy between liberal and vocational is often false and at times wasteful as well. So is the common ALE trichotomy between formal, non-formal and informal when treated as a downward scale of utility and value.

Categorising funding between public and other may have some use for advocacy as well as policy; but there are multiple mixed modes, new government partnership models, overseas development aid (ODA) funds, powerful global financial processes unhitched from any 'real economy', and global barons whose wealth and power, for good and evil, outmatch those of most national economies. Support for popular ALE flows in through many rivers and disperses through myriad distributar-



ies. Branding and tracking the ALE value of funds through channels not called education and training is elusive. Other means of assessing and assisting the health and learning of society must look wider.

They centrally include new smart forms of data access and learning of the mass and social media as well as the Internet itself; and institutions and facilities like libraries and museums, sports fields, galleries and music venues, streets and shops, places of worship and reflection, most of which have significantly lately changed their appearance, roles and modes. Our work must subsume Education within Learning; and promote the informal over formal, in alliance with non-formal.

The most problematic issue remains the political, the elephant in the room of adult education. Popular ALE is about enabling, and empowering people as active citizens mainly in local communities; placing with them initiative and control over what and how they can learn. This is unacceptable and anathema in many countries and political systems. It points up the need for a people's globally networked ALE community for ethical governance, even while tactically sidestepping this crucial issue.

This presents a challenging puzzle: how can popular ALE address big real-world issues outside the 'world of education' when good school and often too good university education is what parents most want for their children? How can real needs drive ALE policy and practice, not fall captive to the market, consumerism and powerful interests that capture the State?

Instead of begging for crumbs to fall from the table and budget of Education, the solution is to transform schools and colleges into preparatory venues for lifelong learning, and to integrate school-guided learning into the life and learning of the community. Instead of competitively sequencing ALE after education, schools are then woven into all-of-life learning 'out there'. The flow-on as ALE will then become seamless.

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## The country and case studies: Summaries of the key issues

For the convenience of busy readers, as well as reviewing main themes and issues from the country studies we provide here very brief summaries of the 14 studies to allow a quick scan through them all.

### SCANDINAVIA

#### Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Scandinavia

Sturla Bjerkaker

##### History and understanding

- Popular adult learning and education (ALE) in the Scandinavian countries Denmark, Norway, and Sweden started to grow following the enlightenment period in Europe in the first half of the 19th Century.
- Popular ALE is understood as (non-formal) education for the people and by the people. As such, it can cover almost any subject.

##### Governance and structures

- The main tools for popular ALE are folk high schools and study circles.
- Organised popular ALE and its funding are fixed by laws and regulations, guaranteeing some sustainability.

##### Financing and support

- The public funding for folk high schools and the attending students covers around half of the total costs. The other half is covered by the students and/or by the school owner.
- The public funding for study circles and other forms of popular ALE is the rationale for the creation of study associations. These umbrella organisations receive public grants on behalf of

the providers and participants. The subsidies cover around 20 percent of the participant's fees. The rest is paid by the participants.

- The state does not interfere with the concrete content of popular ALE, the courses get funding regardless of subjects if they are run according to the rules (e.g., minimum numbers of participants and study hours).

##### Lessons and recommendations

- The system of public funding and policy must be seen in relation to the rise and maintenance of democracy and the inhabitant's equal rights and opportunities to take part in the democracy.
- We must remind ourselves all the time that learning for democracy and sustainable development must be based on cooperation and public recognition and support.

### GERMANY

#### Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Germany

Susanne Lattke, Alexandra Ioannidou

##### History and understanding

- Adult education and training in Germany is a policy field of shared responsibility between state and non-state actors, with a long history of institutionalisation back to the 18th century.
- The Weimar Constitution of 1919 laid the foundations for understanding adult learning and education (ALE) as a common good, to be promoted and publicly funded by state authorities at federal, regional and local level.

##### Governance and structures

- 14 out of 16 of the federal states (Länder) recognise ALE in their constitution as a policy area;

they have specific laws on adult education in place to regulate public funding.

### Financing and support

- In general, private funding dominates in the ALE sector: this mode of financing accounts for three quarters of the financing of the entire continuing education sector, while a quarter comes from public funding. For providers of popular ALE, however, public funding is by far the most important financial source.
- Public funding of popular ALE is based on supply-side principles, mainly subsidies for ALE supply and performance-based funding. Specific Länder laws on adult/continuing education regulate the modalities. Offerings that are assumed to be in the public interest, civic or value-oriented education offerings, courses relating to life skills or personal development, and offerings promoting family, social and intercultural living together are eligible.

### Lessons and recommendations

- Ending the current one-sided focus on vocational oriented ALE, and integrating popular ALE in an encompassing National Skills Strategy, would be a first step in the right direction. In addition, linking popular ALE offerings to the National Qualifications Framework would enable alternative learning pathways, and increase the formal recognition of popular ALE.

## NEW ZEALAND/AOTEAROA

### Public financing of adult and community education in New Zealand/Aotearoa - commitment, constraint and celebration

Colin McGregor

### History and understanding

- Understanding of the value of adult learning and education (ALE) in New Zealand is limited. ALE

activities are not, on the whole, well recognised or obvious in the community.

- There are both individual and societal benefits from ALE in New Zealand. The individual benefits through improved skills in literacy, numeracy, digital and language. Individuals also gain confidence and self-esteem. These skills can lead to further study and employment.
- Societal benefits include improved social cohesion and civic citizenship through greater community participation.

### Governance and structures

- Many local bodies support ALE related activities such as libraries. Many organisations are self-funded, supported by bequests or philanthropic donors.

### Financing and support

- Public money for ALE in New Zealand was about NZ\$20 million per year but has received a boost for 2021 and beyond of NZ\$16 million over four years. A portion of this will also be used to fund the peak body for the ALE sectors - ACE Aotearoa.
- The funding mechanism has been limited to a narrowly defined range of courses. From 2021 there is opportunity to provide a broader range of innovative courses.

### Lessons and recommendations

- Lessons learnt include forming deep and meaningful relationships across the political parties and with bureaucrats in relevant government departments. Proof of making an impact, in the New Zealand example the ACE outcomes tool, has also enhanced the perception of ALE.
- A clear, compelling message on the value ALE adds to society, and a strong campaign to com-

municate this message to stakeholders and the community is needed.

- There is a need to build strong alliances across the sector, with industry and related organisations.

## IRELAND

### A profile of community education in Ireland

Eve Cobain, Leah Dowdall, Niamh O'Reilly

#### History and understanding

- Community education is holistic and learner-centred, offering a range of both accredited and non-accredited learning options.
- Irish community education has evolved as an effective, grassroots, inclusive model of education that addresses structural and educational inequalities by targeting marginalised learner groups and providing the wrap-around services needed for their educational success.

#### Governance and structures

- Operating largely though independently managed community centres, community education providers remain partially or completely outside of formal government structures.

#### Financing and support

- Community education in Ireland is funded from a diverse range of government departments and non-governmental funding sources.
- Without a sustainable funding model, community education providers are forced to allocate disproportionate amounts of time and resources to securing funding from governmental and non-governmental bodies from year to year.
- SOLAS, the National Agency for Further Education in Ireland, remains the largest government

body funding, and gathering data on, community education, but these data do not capture a full-scale picture of the sector.

#### Lessons and recommendations

- Prior to the launch of the AONTAS community education census in October 2020, there had not been a formal mechanism in place to integrate disparate data sources. That research will provide detail on a range of community education organisations across Ireland in early 2021.
- In August 2020, a new ministerial role and associated government department was established, which places community education in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Early indications of an enhanced focus on community education to meet the social inclusion remit of the Department, in addition to the impact from COVID-19, has resulted in increased funding for community education, for the first time in decades.

## JAPAN

### Public financing of popular adult learning and education – Kominkan as community-based learning centres in Japan

Kiichi Oyasu

#### History and understanding

- ALE in Japan is defined as social education outside of school education, originated in the 1890s and officially included in the Education Ministry's policy in 1919 to improve the education level and quality of life of the general public.
- The Social Education Act was enacted in 1949 to promote democracy and peace through social education, together with school education and family education.

### Governance and structures

- There are 3 types of institutions stipulated under the Social Education Act: Kominkan (community-based learning centres), museums and libraries.
- Public Kominkans are established and financed by local governments. The management of Kominkan depends on the local government policies on education. There are autonomous Kominkans run by local communities; some of them are financially supported by local governments through subsidies.

### Financing and support

- The management and implementation of education activities are decentralised to local government, with four funding sources: the budget of the local government of prefecture and cities; a subsidy from the national government; education bonds of local governments; and donations.
- According to a survey of public financing to the education sector, the social education budget of local governments is about 9.6% of the total education budget (2018).

### Lessons and recommendations

- Due to urbanisation of lifestyle since the 1970s, the role of Kominkan has changed from community development to individual learning according to people's interests such as health, art, and culture.
- The importance of community development through education and learning is revisited by national and local governments under the context of SDGs.
- To ensure public financing of Kominkan, systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are required to convince policy makers for public financing this area, with strong evidence. Here researchers have an important role to play.

## AUSTRALIA

### Public financing of popular adult learning and education – a case study of Australia

Dorothy Lucardie

#### History and understanding

- Australia has a long tradition of community-based organisations and the development of many services that include popular adult learning and education (ALE).
- Popular (community, liberal) ALE encompasses a wide range of learning programmes. They can be variously described as personal enrichment programmes, liberal adult education, non-vocational programmes, and non-accredited vocational programmes; all are primarily organised as non-formal education.

#### Governance and structures

- Australia has a three-tiered government system. A national (federal) government, eight state and two territory-based administrations, and local government (city and regional councils). Each of these levels provides funds that support popular ALE.

#### Financing and support

- Shortcomings of the current system: 1) The limited amount of funding available to community organisations, in particular specific funding for popular ALE; 2) The precarious nature of government funding which can have unintended and disempowering consequences for community initiatives; 3) The lack of value placed by federal and state governments on popular ALE. The perspective that this only benefits individuals not the wider community or society, demonstrates the lack of value given to this learning.
- The maintenance and increase of base funding for community-based, community-led and community-responsive organisations will be vital

to regeneration from COVID-19 and expanded learning opportunities.

### Lessons and recommendations

- As one of the most multicultural countries in the world with an ongoing need for migration from other lands, learning to live together is key to the growth and peaceful development of the Australian society and economy.
- For the value of popular ALE to be developed in governments, community organisations need to use their voice to ensure that its benefits are promoted constantly to the community and throughout government.

## KOREA

### Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Korea

Un Shil Choi, Sung Lee

#### History and understanding

- Popular education is understood as democratic citizenship education that provides citizens with educational opportunities to live a healthy and mature life by cultivating the qualities and literacy required, such as knowledge, values and attitudes for the sustainable development of a democratic society.
- The constitution stipulates that it is the duty of the state to promote lifelong learning. In addition, the Lifelong Education Act and related laws stipulate the systems, organisations, and regulations necessary to implement lifelong learning.

#### Governance and structures

- There are the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE), and the National Lifelong Learning Council. In each of the 17 metropolitan provinces, institutes for lifelong learning have been established, and a Lifelong Learning Council is formed.

- All 226 local governments have Lifelong Learning Centres and Lifelong Learning Steering Committees.

- With the selection of ‘Activation of Democratic Citizenship Education’ as a national task by presidential pledge in 2017, democratic citizenship education is entering a new phase.

#### Financing and support

- Metropolitan and local governments use existing institutions or establish departments in local governments to formally implement.
- Local governments provide financial support for non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, public institutes, and private institutions. Although the budget for democratic citizenship education differs depending on the city, it costs around 50,000 Euro per year. When a democratic citizenship education centre is established, operating expenses are usually around 500,000 to 600,000 Euro per year.

#### Lessons and recommendations

- The primary mission should be to create an atmosphere, to strengthen the motif, and to provide legal, institutional, and financial support at national and local level to catalyse citizenship education. Plus, the core of the development of citizenship education should be unfolded autonomously by civic activists and civil instructors.

## VIETNAM

### Public financing of adult learning and education in Vietnam

Khau Huu Phuoc, Tong Lien Anh

#### History and understanding

- Adult learning and education (ALE) started in 1945 after Vietnam gained independence from the French colonists with the movement called

‘People’s Learning’ to fight illiteracy which affected 95% of the people and later developed into ‘complementary education’.

- Today complementary education has been replaced by continuing education (CE) to serve the idea that learning is an on-going process throughout one’s life, embracing all outside the formal education system being for anyone regardless of age, gender, religion, and ethnicity.

### Governance and structures

- CE is governed by the Department of Continuing Education within the Ministry of Education and Training. ALE as a term is not officially used in government documents.
- In practice, ALE is provided primarily in Community Learning Centres (CLC), which exist in nearly all villages and wards; and in Continuing Education Centres, which are now in the process of merging with Vocational Education Centres.

### Financing and support

- Though it is reported that national education budget has been kept at approximately 20% of the gross domestic product, data on public financing for adult learning and education are unavailable since.
- ALE belongs to the sphere of CE, the funding of which is provided by the Ministry of Finance through its line offices placed within the government called People’s Committee at provincial, district levels and may vary from place to place.

### Lessons and recommendations

- Enhance public awareness and participation in ALE. A promotion campaign should be launched nationwide to increase the motivation and the participation of adult people in ALE, which in turn will attract more attention from stakeholders to invest more.

- Develop and issue a law on ALE that will institute ALE in the education system and would be the foundation on which ALE-promoting policies are built, including those on financing it.
- Establish a government body in charge of ALE provision and development.

## SLOVENIA

### Public financing of popular and general adult learning and education in Slovenia – some considerations from a sustainability perspective

Nevenka Bogataj

### History and understanding

- In Slovenia, popular adult learning and education (ALE) was the forerunner of ALE in the 1990s, while today it is its Cinderella in terms of future plans, staff and finances.
- Popular ALE covers a wide range of topics, including language services, ICT programmes, cultural activities, and basic vocational competences. “Green” topics are present in study circles only; this topic is rising towards 10% of all types of topics.

### Governance and structures

- There is a wide range of ALE providers, covering private, non-governmental and public institutions. A decade ago, these types shared the work relatively equally; recently most attention is given to public programmes.
- An upcoming Masterplan for Adult Education (2021-2030) prioritises literacy, skills and vulnerable target groups, usually based on the results of OECD research and international documents of the branch.



### Financing and support

- An insight into financial base and trends of ALE informs on diverse financing resources, substantial distributive power of the state and that a prevailing distributive model is tender which prioritises competition and not cooperation.
- There is a steady decline in the already poor finances for popular ALE.

### Lessons and recommendations

- Slovenia has a well-developed basis to build on achievements in practice, with a variety of providers of popular ALE and with its standardised long-term monitoring.
- Build on achievements and upgrade them instead of constant redefinitions and reorganisations.
- Invest in research on the learning and outcomes of popular ALE.
- Develop and use more indicators and measures (ELLI index, environmental consciousness, ecological footprint, etc.).
- Support the monitoring and practice of popular ALE with stable but medium financial resources directly dependent on outcomes (a sign of circularity).

## UGANDA

### Uganda's Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation (ICOLEW) architecture: triggering public financing of popular adult learning and education

Robert Jjuuko

### History and understanding

- There is no official definition of ALE and popular ALE. Desk review and empirical evidence

indicate that Ugandan stakeholders perceive popular ALE as adult education in the context of community development aimed at poverty eradication outcomes.

- In 2020, Uganda adopted the Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation (ICOLEW) programme. It is organised around: literacy and numeracy skills enhancement; village savings and loans associations; livelihoods skills training; business skills training; and community development.

### Governance and structures

- Apparently, ICOLEW design and implementation is situated in a broader perspective to build an adult education system for Uganda. However, the way forward to real systemic change for better financing outcomes for ALE including its emancipatory and social change-seeking dimensions should be anchored in broad policy, legislative and structural reforms fully endorsed by Cabinet and ratified by the Parliament of Uganda.

### Financing and support

- Apart from human resources and implementation structures, systematic public financial investment in ICOLEW has been scanty.
- The fiscal year 2020/21 marks a beginning of explicit public budget allocation of EUR288,410.00 to ICOLEW activities across the entire country.
- NGO-Government partnership generates off-budget financial resources through Memoranda of Understanding. NGO-contributed funds are expended through government structures at macro-, meso- and micro-levels.
- The focus on financing ICOLEW materials development, capacity-building of personnel, formulating guidelines, monitoring and supervision, is widening to incorporate capital developments such as establishing community learning centres (CLCs).

### Lessons and recommendations

- There is a weak institutionalisation of the emerging ICOLEW financing model. The promising practices of optimising allocations from central government transfers and the goodwill to tap into other revenue sources are yet to be firmly supported by policy and legislation.
- Include ICOLEW particularly the CLC component in the public investment plan to secure meaningful capital development funds.
- Effectively engage local actors in financing and budgeting decision-making, to reap the sustainability benefits from a stronger sense of local ownership and commitment.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### Public financing of popular adult learning and education in South Africa – an 'Introduction to popular education' course within Community Colleges and Community Learning Centres

Astrid von Kotze

#### History and understanding

- Adult learning and education (ALE) is still not well understood nor well supported by the state; Community Learning Centres (CLCs) are the 'poor cousins' in the education system.
- CLCs are potentially in a unique position to offer education to socially, economically, geographically excluded and marginalized people, like youth, women and unemployed adults.

#### Governance and structures

- Since the establishment of the Community Education and Training College system, the Department of Higher Education and Training has not transferred individual college funds to them.

### Financing and support

- Currently, very little funding (2.2% of post-school education budget) go to CLCs and provision of ALE.
- CLCs use existing (school) physical structures and facilities, where available, and rely on partnerships with non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations and others to offer ALE.

### Lessons and recommendations

- Rigorous ongoing education of 'lecturers' at CLCs is essential if the centres are to offer ALE. Such education must be appropriate for adults and should be based on a popular education approach.
- Data-free internet access is necessary both for lectures / CLC staff and community members, especially in rural areas. Free WIFI would be a good way to make centres more attractive. It would also allow 'virtual' ALE.
- A programme of non-formal ALE co-facilitated by Popular Education Programme and local CLC lecturers could demonstrate the usefulness and enjoyment of lifelong learning and collective projects.
- Unless there is political will, good intentions will not translate into practice.

## THAILAND

### Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Thailand

Archanya Ratana-Ubol, Dech-siri Nopas, Chanikan Inprom

#### History and understanding

- Adult learning and education (ALE) is perceived as being part of lifelong education and learning. It is recognised as both non-formal education and informal education for adult learners.

- ALE aims at serving the underprivileged adults. The objectives promote literacy, numeracy, occupations, civic duties as Thai citizens, and improving quality of life, while making productive use of leisure time.
- Non-governmental organisations, social sectors, and local communities have been providing ALE focusing on the needs and problems of adults in their respective establishments.

### Governance and structures

- The Office of Non-formal and Informal Education (ONIE), Ministry of Education, acts as the central organisation promoting non-formal and informal education.
- The Community Development Department (CDD) is another major organisation that currently promotes Thai adults to be self-reliant.

### Financing and support

- There are 1,034 ONIE institutions, including 77 Bangkok & provinces offices, 928 district, six regional, and other 23 special offices that receive financial support. The overall ONIE budget is 3,673,263,900 baht (1 USD = 33 Baht).
- According to its budget allocation plan 2020, the CDD subsidises 3,031,128,300 baht over four quarters, with several projects related to ALE currently funded.
- The basic education policy applies individual budget allocation processes for the whole nation. This causes difficult classroom situations because they must have more than 35 seats for students to be funded, so it affects a community that has only five to seven students.

### Lessons and recommendations

- There have been the government memoranda of understanding between every Ministry in order to enhance ALE, for example: ONIE; the Ministry of

Public Health; and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.

- The funding distribution cannot reach groups that get fewer opportunities, like under-privileged groups of people who live near the borders of Thailand.

## UKRAINE

### Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Ukraine

Oleg Smirnov, Mykyta Andrieiev

### History and understanding

- The terms community, popular and liberal education are not used in public or professional discourse. Used are 'civic education' or 'citizenship education' (education for active citizenship). Broader understanding in local practice includes arts and culture, mainly connected with traditional or folk culture, leading to Ukraine citizens' identity.
- At official level it is fixed in several documents. The fullest description is in the Concept for the development of civic education in Ukraine, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in 2018. This provides a list of civic competencies, identifies main strategic directions, and defines its socio-political values.

### Governance and structures

- There is no legal framework for adult learning and education in Ukraine in general and civic education in particular. Attempts to involve more people are initiated mainly by civil society organisations (CSOs), with the support of international donors.
- Local municipalities and so-called amalgamated territorial communities have the right to initiate and approve local development strategies and special programmes including educational components arising from cooperation between local activists and authorities, enabled by legislation

on self-government and a National Strategy for Civil Society Development in Ukraine.

### Financing and support

- The cases presented in the study demonstrate local authorities' readiness for in-kind support, mainly the premises of communal institutions (libraries, schools, houses of culture, stadiums, etc.). This includes small grant support for local CSOs ranging between 5,000 and 15,000 Euro, and special ALE programmes with around 40,000-50,000 Euro.

### Lessons and recommendations

- It is challenging to analyse the proportions of money delivered for education in general, and ALE, as no statistical data are collected regularly. Such decisions of local authorities are largely non-systemic. There is still a need to develop a strategic vision of the ALE development at national level.

## PALESTINE

### Community-based centres for youth and adult education in Palestine: the promise of continuity of learning and development

Ola Issa

#### History and understanding

- There is no common understanding of the concept of popular adult learning and education (ALE).
- A variety of terminology is being used including: adult education; non-formal basic learning; civic, citizenship and human rights education; community development and community participation; cultural learning and empowerment and education for resilience.
- Non-formal citizenship education involves all kinds of activities that aim at enhanced popular

awareness and culture of understanding, respecting, protecting and defending citizenship, rule of law and all human rights principles.

### Governance and structures

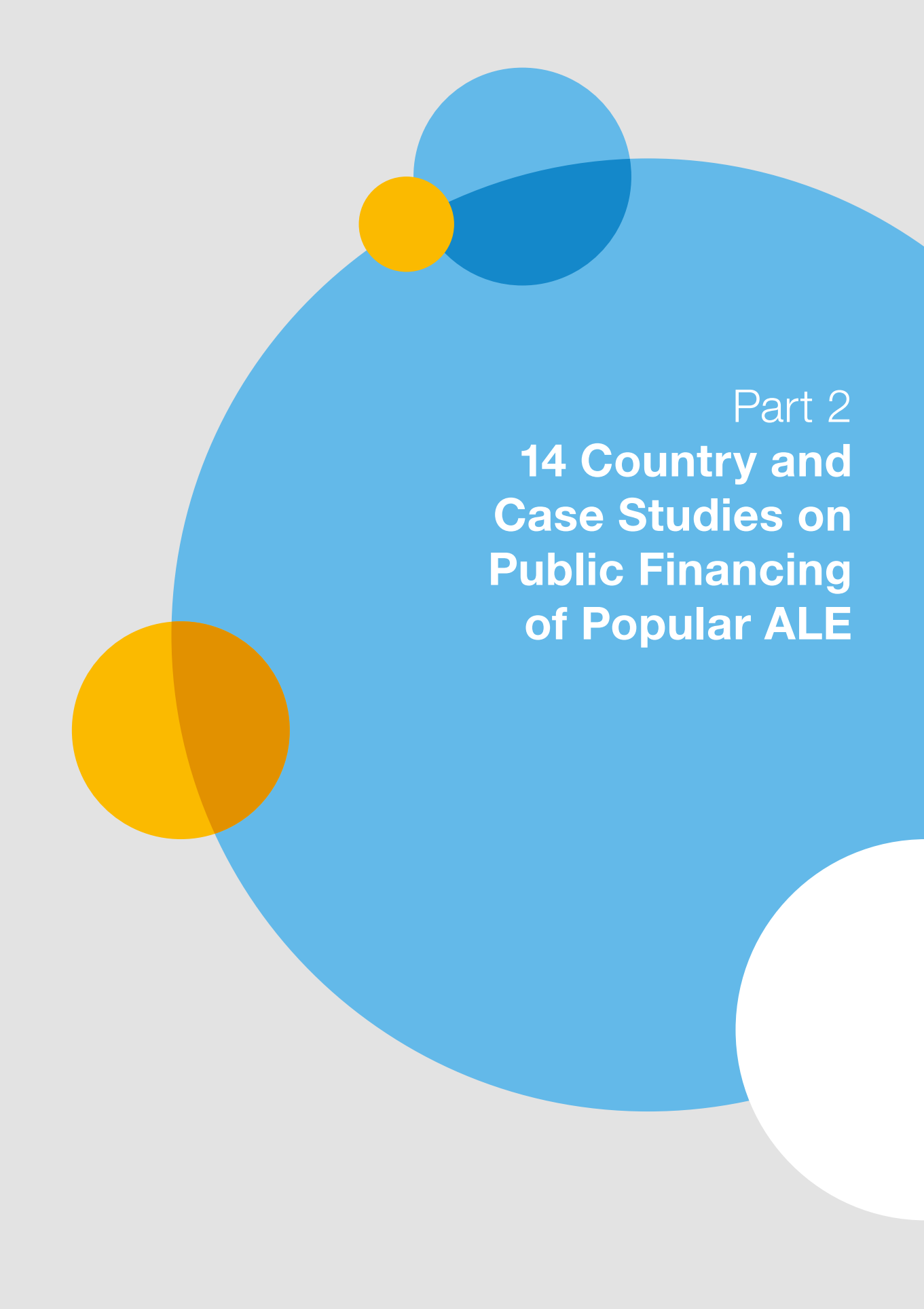
- Despite the absence of articulated legislative support to public financing of popular ALE, public institutions including the national government institutions, municipalities and local councils provide for some areas of popular ALE.

### Financing and support

- Community learning and empowerment initiatives both on a national level and on the local communities' level are very common. They are mainly financed by external funds for civil society projects.
- The newly established community-based centres for youth and adult education are partly financed by the Ministry of Education (main contribution to the salaries of centres' directors, literacy facilitators and cleaning personnel, and establishing and equipping three computer and multimedia labs in the centres); and municipalities (the actual building and facilities of the centres, running costs of utilities, maintenance of facilities and contributions to providing basic equipment for some learning courses).

### Lessons and recommendations

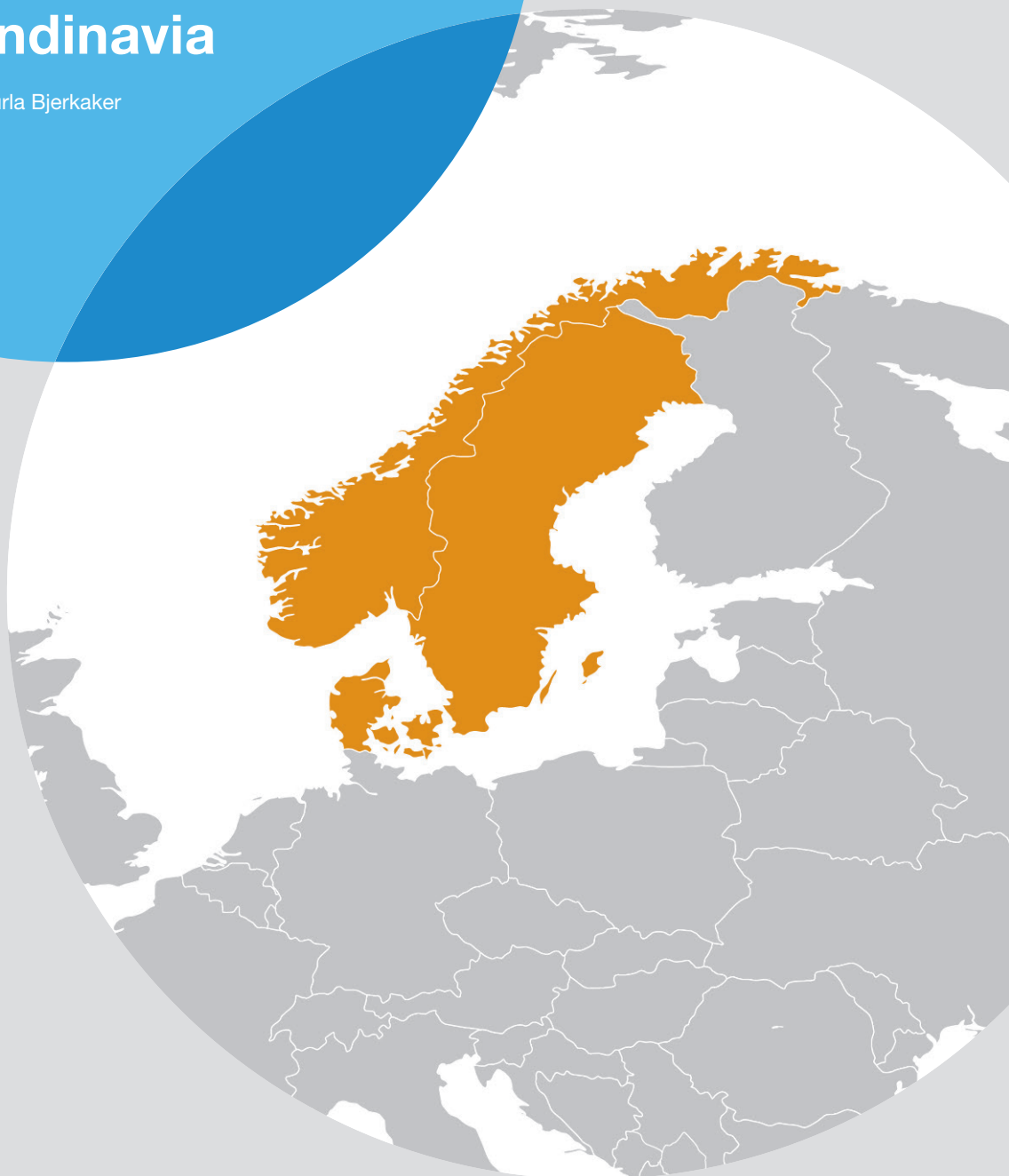
- Building a sense of local ownership and collective benefit was key in the process of developing the centres. Community-based dialogue and other kinds of initiatives took place to ensure wide participation in conceptualising and developing the centres.
- Further steps are needed to ensure effectiveness, sustainability and expansion of this model of partnerships. The centres still have no kind of regulations or bylaws that describe their legal status and system of operations.



Part 2  
**14 Country and  
Case Studies on  
Public Financing  
of Popular ALE**

# Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Scandinavia

Author: Sturla Bjerkaker



## Abstract

**Popular adult learning and education (ALE) has been public co-financed or subsidised for almost 100 years in the Scandinavian countries Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. With special focus on Norway, this article describes why, how and under which conditions the main actors in the field – the folk high schools and the study associations – receive public grants for their learning provisions. With a strong common tradition for popular enlightenment and popular movements, these countries have had a policy which connects popular ALE to the rise and maintenance of democracy. The funding must be seen in this context.**

## Introduction

This article will look at the financing of popular adult learning and education (ALE) in the Scandinavian countries, which are Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. In minor parts it will also cover all the Nordic countries, which in addition to the above mentioned are Finland and Iceland. The article will show how and why popular ALE has developed and become a strong movement in these countries and how they have been and still are co-financed by the public sector. Norway will be the main case in this article. The Scandinavian countries are known as well-developed and strong democracies where the inhabitants have quite strong confidence in the governing of the countries. One reason for this situation is said to be the solid tradition of popular ALE (Andersen 2020). Following settled conditions, popular ALE gets public funding which subsidise participation at folk high schools and study association's study circles and courses, regardless of the topic. For example, a course with political

content opposing the government's policy receives the same level of subsidy as any other course. The funding policy could be summarised as: A characteristic of a mature democracy is that it also offers funding for its critics.

### The Nordic understanding of popular ALE

The Nordic understanding of popular ALE covers the definition given by UNESCO in the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015) which emphasises learning for active citizenship, also known as community, popular or liberal education. Furthermore, the notion is understood broader: A common understanding in Scandinavia is that popular ALE is "the adult learning and education which is organised and provided by folk high schools and study association" (Edquist 2015). It

is a provider-centred definition and not necessarily about the purpose or content of the learning activities as such. ‘Popular’ can be understood as for the people and by the people. Then, almost *any subject* can be understood as popular ALE. It is also a common Scandinavian understanding that popular ALE is non-formal education and learning as opposed to formal and informal learning. This means: It covers organised and intended learning activities and might qualify for public support, while informal learning takes place anywhere, for example around the kitchen table, but is not intended as learning as such. Formal education and learning, on the other hand, leads to (publicly recognised) exams.

## Historical background – the Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a socially critical period in Europe from around 1690 to around 1800 that saw knowledge as an unconditional good, expressed faith in human skills and promoted the humanist ideals of the Renaissance from a societal perspective. From now on, not only nobility and elite should be educated, but the public should also be enlightened. This could not happen by itself. The first school was the primary school, which gave (some) children schooling from the late 18th century. But when and how did lifelong learning and popular education enter the scene?

During the Enlightenment period, pedagogy freed itself more and more from the religion, writes the philosopher Immanuel Kant around the 1770s, and mankind was understood as a human being who by his own power could shape himself and his world. Parenting and teaching were now moving into the focal point of society. And the upbringing gave birth to the formation, and the pedagogy (Kant 2000).

Enlightenment and knowledge were seen in the context of nation-building, growth, and democracy in Scandinavia. The priests became central actors for people’s enlightenment, as they had gained knowledge not only of faith and doubt, but of prac-

tical matters, like growing crops. Together with the first educators in the first half of the 19th century, priests participated in the popular-enlightening work that, among other things, resulted in folk high schools and popular movements. Voluntary organisations with knowledge dissemination in a perspective of lifelong learning began also to spread in the early 19th century.

## The common Nordic tradition

As previously stated, there is a common tradition and understanding of popular ALE in the Nordic countries, based on a strong civil sector, popular movements, and public financing. How is it so? One answer is the common and quite similar historical development in for example farming and industrialization in these countries (Andersen/Björkman 2017). Another answer are the languages, which are closely linked. Apart from Finland – except the Swedish speaking minority – and partly Iceland, the Nordic people can understand each other and can communicate by using their own languages. The Nordic people also have a common challenge with long winters and bright summers, and they are considered as likeminded people with a high level of trust and equality.

In 1948, the Nordic Council was established as a transnational ‘parliament’, followed by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1972. With a common administration in Copenhagen, Denmark, they still meet regularly. In 1968, the Nordic Council created the Nordic Folk Academy (NFA), which for almost 40 years was a Nordic centre seated in Gothenburg, Sweden with a clear popular ALE profile, offering courses for both folk high school teachers, study circle leaders and others. NFA was for many years an active partner in favour of promoting popular ALE as a common Nordic concept. The idea of the NFA had its origin in Grundtvig’s plan for a university in Gothenburg built on a popular enlightenment philosophy (Korsgaard 1997). The NFA was closed in 2005, due to financial and structural reasons.



## The rise of the folk high schools

National identity and romanticism - which also occurred in literature and art - were in addition to the idea of enlightenment important factors when the Danish priest and poet Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) and his fellow Kristen Kold (1816-1870) developed the idea of a folk high school as a popular based alternative and supplement to the 'Latin school', which Grundtvig called the 'black school' because it was too occupied - he said - by reading books and gaining exams. Grundtvig predicted 'the living word'. He argued for the sensitive and inspiring lectures and popular dialogues (Mikkelsen 2002). In the books you could find just 'dead words', he said. The first boarding folk high school in the world was established in Rødding in 1844 on Jutland in Denmark by the priest and politician Christian Flor (1792-1875), who was a big admirer of Grundtvig's ideas.

Today, there are hundreds of folk high schools all over the Nordic landscape, almost all of them based on a popular and liberal tradition, normally with no formal exams and with personal growth as the main objective. A year at a folk high school is most of all a year of maturing. Leaving upper secondary school as 18 - 20 years old, many youngsters do not know which step to take next. Work? More education? Travelling? For many, the answer is a year at a folk high school.

The folk high schools came to be a main part of popular ALE in all the Nordic countries. In Sweden and Finland these schools today also offer education that leads to formal exams - close to vocational training and education (VET). But both in Denmark and Norway they keep the original idea of popular enlightenment - read popular ALE - by just offering a year of maturity schooling without any exams. Personal growth is the most important.

## Learning by sharing - the study circles

The other remarkable feature in the Nordic tradition of popular ALE is the study circle, the small group of equals - ideally 5 to 15 persons - coming together for self-directed learning, based on dialogue and the participants' own experiences. Learning by sharing. Experiential learning. The genuine study circle can be defined as "organised learning through dialogue in small, self-managed groups, which might take place in many different settings and contexts and for many different purposes" (Bjerkaker/Summers 2006).

The Swede Oscar Olsson (1877-1950), a teacher and politician, is regarded as the founding father and inventor of the study circle method, when he in 1902 started the first study circle in the Temperance Movement in Malmö in the south of Sweden (Oliver 1987; Blid 2000). Soon, the method started to spread as an important learning tool in the labour movement and trade unions, likewise in the co-operative movement and among Christian groups - that is among people with no or low education or income. The study circles were a cheap way of learning. They did not require a paid teacher. And as books were rare, each circle could afford only one book which was shared among the participants. Then, the members of the study circle could read and prepare presentations at the circle meetings about the chapters of the book they were responsible for.

Even without a teacher, the management of the circles is important. Training of study circle leaders became therefore an important task for e.g. the trade unions. In study circles, the participants must take responsibility for their own learning. Communication and change of experiences are key factors. It is important that the circle creates an atmosphere for equal dialogue, and in this the study circle leader has a main role.

When the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL) was established in 1932, training for study circle leaders were one of the main tasks. The

second was arguing for public funding for the study circles and courses. This came on board from 1936 as subsidies for books (Nettum et al. 1958; Bjerkaker 2001).

In Sweden, the term study circle is even today linked to the state funding system that requires certain conditions to be fulfilled for recognition, such as the numbers of participants and the length of the learning activity. Today, in some various forms, study associations ('studieforbund' in Norway and Sweden, 'opplysningsforbund' in Denmark) provide study circles and evening courses for hundreds of thousands of adults every year – in Norway around half a million participants out of 5.5 million inhabitants, in Sweden more than one million, out of 10 million inhabitants.

### Actors, stakeholders and providers of popular ALE

There are two main actors which organise and offer popular ALE in Scandinavia: The study associations (also named adult education associations) and the folk high schools. The study associations are umbrellas for a multitude of voluntary member-based organisations – non-governmental organisations (NGOs)/civil society organisations (CSOs) – which offer courses and study circles for members and others and report these activities to their study association to gain public support. The role of the study association is to receive public funding and to offer this money as subsidies for the course participants. Another task is to develop the field by secure and recognise course curricula.

The folk high schools are all autonomous and different from each other. Therefore, also the content of their studies and learning activities differs a lot. Short and long courses can be organised about almost any subject. The methods differ also, but the education and learning mainly take place in small groups and other forms of learning democratically (Bjerkaker/Summers 2006).

Other actors which would be named as popular ALE-providers are libraries, museums, and universities. All these institutions are public, and fully publicly financed. Traditionally, the link between the libraries and the main stakeholders of popular ALE today, the folk high schools and the study association, were stronger years ago. The first public funding for study circles in Norway came in 1936 in shape of money support for buying books. This policy was intricately connected to the libraries.

### The role of the public authorities in financing popular ALE

According to laws and/or regulations, popular ALE gets a certain funding from the public authorities at the state, county and/or municipality level. This differs between the Scandinavian countries. In Norway there is a special law for the public funding and the money is allocated by the state (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2009). Denmark has a law regulation for funding by the municipalities – called local funding – while in Sweden there is a public system authority-based on regulation ('Forordning'), not a law (Folkbildningsrådet 2019b).

The role of the public authorities is mainly funding. Politicians wish from time to time to give popular ALE oral support. There are systems for control and evaluation of the funding. Each year, numbers are reported to the National Agency for Statistics in the respective country which launch annual reports on the learning activities in the folk high schools and the study association. These statistics are the fundament for the level of public funding the following year/s. Also, the Competence Norway – which is a directorate under the Ministry of Education – is organizing controls by claiming reports from and doing visits to the study associations and folk high schools. In Sweden, the National Council for popular ALE has this role. In Denmark, the control and evaluation are mostly done by the municipality. The municipalities in Denmark have their 'Folkeoplysningsutvalg' – local councils for popular ALE.

## Trends and changes during the last decades

During the last 30 to 40 years, popular ALE and non-formal adult education have seen a decline in public funding, especially for the study associations in Denmark and Norway but also partly in Sweden. The same negative trend has not been the case for the folk high schools. So, what are the arguments behind the reduction in public funding? The views on adult education by the political authorities and the labour market have become more and more instrumental and adult education and training connected to and combined with work and working life, like VET, has taken over for traditional and more existentially profiled popular ALE. 'Learning for its own sake' is not valued as much as it was 30 to 40 years ago. The profile of popular ALE has also changed. Over the years, we can see a trend moving slowly from traditional study circles (for example solving local community challenges in small groups) to courses connected to people's leisure time: song, music, dance, hiking, use of the nature. These courses also serve as meeting places, where people connect and act social and learn new skills at the same time. The social dimension of learning is important.

## The Scandinavian popular ALE today – popular ALE 3.0?

Nevertheless, the tradition of liberal and popular adult learning and education remains strong and is still understood as an important tool for keeping strong democracies. Anyhow, as it belongs to the 'soft' ideal and civil sector, you always must fight for positions and funding.

An interesting activity to renew or recover the Scandinavian popular ALE we will find in the new network Nordic Bildung. The renewal could be a way back to the roots, a way to search for the original Enlightenment which formed people as human democrats with confidence and a mind for collective solutions. The network has the last years organised conferences and workshops

and published – so far – two books: *The Nordic Secret – A European story of beauty and freedom* (Andersen/Bjørkman 2017) and *Dannelse – at blive et større menneske* ('Bildung – to be a richer human being') (Andersen 2020). The book *Nordic Secret* asks: How do societies go through major technological, economic, and structural changes peacefully? The ways in which Denmark, Norway and Sweden went from feudal agricultural societies to industrialised democracies were exceptionally peaceful. According to the authors, the answer or the 'Nordic Secret' is the development of popular education and enlightenment and the way in which this tradition and learning methods have had a rise and fall. So, in her second book *Dannelse – at blive et større menneske*, the author Lene Andersen launches popular Enlightenment 3.0 – or we could say popular ALE 3.0 – where she tries to renew the tradition by not forgetting its roots. We have not yet discovered, argues Lene Andersen, the opinion-creative formation for the 21st century, which will make it possible for us to change ourselves and our societies to cope with the local, national, and global challenges we will meet. In short, we need Popular Enlightenment 3.0 – we need popular ALE 3.0. We must remind ourselves all the time that learning for democracy and sustainable development must be based on cooperation and public recognition and support. And that it is not learned and solved once and forever (Andersen 2020).

## International cooperation

The Scandinavian (and Nordic, which also includes Finland and Iceland) countries have a long tradition for international cooperation in the field of popular ALE. All these countries are long standing members of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). EAEA is the European umbrella for organisations and activities based primarily on popular ALE. EAEA promote the importance and values of popular ALE towards the European Union and is lobbying for e.g. public funding both on a European level and in each country in Europe. ICAE is the global voice for popular ALE, especially

in a perspective of solidarity with the oppressed and the developing countries. As such, ICAE wishes to strengthen basic needs and promote literacy campaigns for adults. Where EAEA gets public funding partly from the EU bureaucracy, ICAE have had a tradition for receiving funding from the Nordic countries and countries like Canada, UK, and Switzerland. It is interesting to find that this funding did not come from the educational sector, but from the development cooperation departments, e.g. SIDA in Sweden, NORAD in Norway and DANIDA in Denmark. Due to changes in these countries policy for development cooperation, ICAE has for the time being no funding from these sources. The struggle for public support for popular ALE seems to be the same both on local, national, and global level.

## Public funding of popular ALE in Denmark

Denmark is a kingdom and a constitutional democracy with a prime minister and a parliament (Folketinget). It has around 5.8 million inhabitants. The country is small, just 42,000 square kilometres and rather flat, the highest point over sea level is 171 metres. Denmark is traditionally a land of farmers. The danish people is – according to the World Happiness Report – one of the happiest people in the world. It can be argued that this is due to popular learning and education (Andersen/Björkman 2017).

### Public funding of folk high schools

The concept of boarding folk high schools has its origin in Denmark and the first school of this kind was established in 1844. Thereafter, new folk high schools came during the second half of the 19th century almost all over the country. The main idea was to combine national identity with practical farming education for farmers' sons.

Today, a folk high school is a non-formal residential school/boarding school. Most students are between 18 and 24 years old and the length of a typical stay is four months. As it is a boarding

school, you sleep, eat, study, and spend your spare time at the school campus. There are no academic requirements for admittance, and there are no exams - but you will get a diploma as a proof of your attendance. The number of folk high schools in Denmark is 73 (The Danish Association for Folk High Schools 2020).

In addition to the state funding, which is 2,624 DKK (100 DKK = 14 EUR) per week per student (2020), the average weekly price the students must pay for attending a folk high school is 1,500 DKK per week. Additionally, the students pay for materials, study trips and other special costs. The danish folk high schools normally offer courses lasting from one week to four to five months. The most common are the 20 week's courses. Almost 30,000 students attended a folk high school course in 2019.

The public funding for the folk high schools is regulated by the Act on Folk High Schools (Lov om folkehøjskoler 2013). Most schools receive funding both from the state and the municipality, depending on the ownership. Most schools are owned by an independent foundation or an NGO (højskoleforening), or a combination. In 2019 the funding from the state was totally 584 million DKK for running the schools. In addition to this, each school receives 700,000 DKK as a basic support. Furthermore, the folk high schools might also get up to 50 million DKK for special education for disabled student. The Association for Folk High Schools receives 8 million DKK from the state to co-ordinate the folk high schools' interests in Denmark.

### Public funding of study associations, the popular university, and other providers

The public funding for study association activities (in Denmark mostly called evening schools) comes not from the state, but from the municipalities. Traditionally, Denmark is a more decentralised country than its Scandinavian neighbours. On the other hand, Denmark has quite few and relatively big municipalities and they have fixed responsibility for the evening schools.

All in all, 1.8 million people participated in a popular education activity in Denmark in 2019. The evening schools (organised mostly by the study associations) had 1.1 million participants, and totally received 311 million DKK from the municipalities.

The Association for Popular Education in Denmark informs that the funding from the municipalities to the evening schools have been reduced by 50 percent from 2002 to 2020 (Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd 2020b). Also, in the homeland of popular education they must struggle to survive. Why? The answer is complex. Firstly, public authorities on all levels struggle in these years to balance their budgets. Secondly, the views on learning and education has moved from non-formal and 'learning for its own sake' to vocational training and workplace learning. Education must have a purpose clearly linked to employment and employability. The soft values – read popular ALE – must suffer.

A separate state funding of 14.5 million DKK is given to the popular university ('Folkeuniversitetet'), which in 2019 organised courses and lectures for 150,000 participants. This is a popular ALE provider but works in close connection with the universities which serve the popular university with open lecturers.

From time to time the Danish government offers a special funding for targeted tasks. In 2020 the Ministry of Culture decided to spend 2.2 million DKK to popular ALE activities with purpose to strengthen democracy. "Study associations and other NGOs which receives support from the Act of popular education can apply" (Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd 2020a).

In Denmark, also some other branches of schools and organisations are defined under the umbrella of popular education ('folkeopplysning'). One of these are the so called Daghøjskoler (day folk high schools) – which received 39 million DKK from their municipalities for organizing courses for 4,000 participants at 20 schools (2020). Many of these courses prepare adults for new skills for the work-

ing life and further education but courses in art are also offered.

### Public funding of popular ALE in Sweden

The population of Sweden has passed 10 million in 2020. Sweden is as Denmark and Norway a monarchy and a constitutional democracy with a parliament and a prime minister. Sweden is known for keeping a strong social democracy for many years, with strong trade unions and a high level of immigration from other countries, refugees and asylum seekers and others. Open borders as a solidarity policy has been a political consensus for years, but during the last 5 to 10 years political movements on the far right has grown claiming that Sweden must reduce the immigration drastically.

Folkbildning grew forth at the beginning of the last century when the level of education was low and large groups of people were excluded from higher education. Folkbildning became the answer to people's longing for knowledge and desire to influence societal development (Folkbildningsrådet 2018). Folkbildning is a part of the liberal non-formal educational system. Every year, more than one million Swedes participate in folkbildning activities. The Swedish term folkbildning refers to the activities run by the folk high schools and the study associations, i.e. the organisations that constitute the liberal non-formal and voluntary educational system in Sweden. 'Folk' means 'people', 'bildning' means 'enlightenment'. In this text, folkbildning is understood as popular adult learning and education popular (ALE).

### Public funding of folkbildning, folk high schools and study associations

Already in 1872, folk high schools in Sweden started to receive regular public funding. The same happened with public lectures in 1884, public libraries in 1905 and study circles in 1947. The latter received indirectly public funding from 1912 if they supported a library. In 1947, study circles started

to be directly funded by state subsidies and soon became the by far greatest institution of Swedish popular ALE, organised by and within study associations. Consequently, the funding the state dedicated to the study circles increased quickly, which led to a governmental decision to impose limitation.

The subsidies were conditioned, as several demands had to be met to get the funds. Thus, they functioned as regulatory mechanisms, and the subsidies came to influence the entire concept of popular (adult) education in Sweden. The most important feature imposed by the state subsidy system is the creation of the study associations, which were formed due to the conditions for state funding. The state subsidy system has also formed the educational practices, e.g. the public lectures were to be held regularly, which was later followed by rules that mandated a fixed minimum numbers of lectures per year (Edquist 2015).

Today, there are around 150 folk high schools in Sweden (2020), spread around the country. They offer courses for adults starting from 18 years. Many of the schools are owned and run by popular movements, for example the free church. The schools are partly boarding schools, partly so-called day-folk high schools. The latter are more common in the cities. In Swedish folk high schools, the students can stay from 1 to 3 years and – opposite to the Danish and Norwegian schools – conclude the study with a formal exam, qualifying for being for example a social worker or continue studies at universities, an education practice close to vocational education and training. There are two national folk high school associations in Sweden, one for the schools owned by NGOs/popular movements and one for those owned by the counties. Swedish folkbildning is largely financed through funding grants from the state, county councils and municipalities. There is a broad political consensus that the state should provide support to folkbildning.

The public funding from the state to folk high schools and study associations is totally 4,4 billion SEK (100 SEK = 9.90 EUR) (2018). The National

Council for Adult Education receives the funds and distributes the national grants to the two providers based on the conditions the receivers must report and fulfil every year. The total funds are divided approximately equally between folk high schools and study associations.

While the folk high schools receive grants to run the schools and for student subsidies, the state funding to the study associations is divided in three parts: 1) grants for managing activities (10%), 2) grants for access for special groups, disabled etc. (8%) and 3) grants for activity, the ordinary study circle/course activities (62%). The last 20% are distributed to cultural programs like lectures, concerts etc. Every third year, this distribution system is evaluated (Folkbildningsrådet 2019b).

The public funding system for popular ALE in Sweden was demand-driven up to 1991, when the system of state subsidies changed radically. Then, a few overall targets which replaced most of the detailed regulations for subsidies and the distribution of subsidies shifted from governmental agencies (Skolöverstyrelsen) to a semi-public council (Folkbildningsrådet), which was composed by the popular education institutions themselves, namely the study association and the folk high school associations. This could be seen as a part of a general shift in education policies, from bureaucratic regulations to management by objectives (Edquist 2015).

There are ten nation-wide study associations in Sweden which receive public grants for their activities. They have different profiles and have close connections with the popular movements. They are located with offices and offer study circles and courses all over Sweden.

The conditions for the state support are regulated in a so-called Regulation (in Swedish: Förordning). The overall objective for support to the study associations is that 'folkbildning' should give everyone an opportunity to come together with others to increase his/her knowledge for personal development and participation in society.



The aim is to support activities which develop and strengthen democracy, which make it possible for all to empower their life situation and shape engagement for participating in the development of society, which reduce gaps in educational levels and increase the education levels in society in general and increase the engagement for participation in cultural activities (Förordning (2015:218), 5 §, 15 § and 16 §, Utbildningsdepartementet 2015).

### Other funding sources

Both folk high schools and study associations receive grants from other sources than the main state funding for folkbildning (Folkbildningsrådet 2019a). These sources can be other state sources for example for projects and special efforts like Swedish language for refugees, it can be grants from counties and municipalities and it can be private donations. The average income from these sources was 15 million SEK per folk high school in 2016 (these numbers are based on enquiries). Four out of ten schools got between 0-10 million SEK. One out of then between 21-30 million SEK. The income from other sources than the main state funding covered 55 per cent of the total income.

For the study association this external funding (other sources) covered on average 49 per cent of their income. Three out of ten activities were financed by municipalities and counties. This means that around 15 per cent of the total income for study associations comes from these regional public bodies (Folkbildningsrådet 2019a).

In Sweden, libraries are occasionally described as popular education institutions, mainly because they offer counselling and support for e.g. people wishing to improve their digital skills. From the 1960th, they have been almost exclusively organised by the municipalities (Edquist 2015).

### Public funding of popular ALE in Norway

In the following chapter, we will look at the public funding in Norway in more depth. The Scandinavian countries are equal in many parts, they are all constitutional monarchies, they are well developed welfare states, and the living standards are among the highest in the world. They are also quite equal when it comes to education and adult education. But Norway differs from Denmark and Sweden by being a younger nation, just slightly more than 100 years old. The development – where popular education became one of the tools – had to happen more rapid than by its neighbours.

Norway is a small country with around 5.5 million inhabitants. The country has been an independent and sovereign state from 1905, being in union with Denmark for almost 400 years up to 1814, and with Sweden between 1814 and 1905. Norway got its own constitution in 1814. Norway is a strong democracy, holding a combination of market economy and a welfare model with universal health care and a comprehensive social security system.

The 19th century was a period of emancipation for Norway, where equal access to knowledge became an important tool to build a real democracy. In this development, popular enlightenment and education came to play a crucial role. In 1864, a group of philanthropic students in Oslo formed what later is known as the popular university. The same year, the country's first folk high school was established. From around 1880, folk academies were established to offer lectures to the people. The first ever public grant for popular ALE was offered to subsidise these lectures. Then, political parties such as the Liberal Party and the Labour Party were founded, and with the labour movement, the study circles and socialist evening schools appeared. As the first proper study association in Norway, the Workers' Educational Association was formed in 1931.

After the first funding for lectures for adults around 1880, the funding of popular ALE in Norway has had many shapes, strands, and levels. The grants given

<b>Folk high schools</b>	957,520,000 NOK
<b>Study Associations</b>	232,877,000 NOK
<b>The skills development program (workplace learning/VET)</b>	172,134,000 NOK
<b>Lifelong learning (research, development etc)</b>	233,376,000 NOK
<b>Totally for “Policy for skills and lifelong learning” around</b>	1,892,323,000 NOK

Source: Prop. 1 S (2020–2021) For budsjettåret 2021 (State budget)

**Figure 1:**  
Budget for popular ALE within the “Policy for skills and lifelong learning” programme of the Ministry of Education (2020)

by the state have never covered the total costs of neither folk high schools nor study associations activities. The grants were meant for subsidies.

### Adult education – and its public funding

To get a clear overview of the field of adult education is not easy as there are several opinions of what the field really covers. The definition of the term ‘adult education’ varies by culture, country, and context. A common understanding is that adult education is the education a person attends and takes part in after and beyond his or her first traditional educational career (Lov om voksenoppl ring, Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet 1976). It can take place in any of the following three contexts:

1. Formal – which is structured and organised education which typically takes place in formal education and training institutions, usually with a set curriculum and carries credentials. This part is publicly funded.
2. Non-formal – which is structured and organised by educational institutions but non-creden-

tial. Non-formal learning and education may be provided in the workplace, as vocational education and training (VET) by folk high schools or study associations or civil society organisations and groups. Most of popular adult learning and education belongs to this context and can receive public funding. The workplace learning is normally financed by the workplaces themselves, but for special programs they can apply for public funding.

3. Informal – learning which goes on all the time, not intended, resulting from daily life activities, related to work, family, community or leisure. (Bjerkaker 2016)

In the state budget for the Ministry of Education we find a programme called “Policy for skills and lifelong learning”. This is as close to a common state budget for public funding of adult education we can come. The main numbers for 2020 are shown in Figure 1.

These numbers do not cover the costs for formal adult education which takes place in the adult education centres and schools in municipalities, e.g.



courses and exams at primary, secondary or upper secondary level, Norwegian for foreigners etc. Each municipality receives funding from the state for formal education and 'hides' it into their own budgets. According to the Educational Act (2006, § 4A-1 og § 4A-2), adults have the right to attend this formal education free of charge if they lack it.

### Public funding of folk high schools

There are 84 folk high schools in Norway (Folkehøgskolerådet 2020). In the State budget for 2021, these schools will together get close to 1 billion NOK (100 NOK = 9.50 EUR), or 10 to 15 million for each school, depending on the size and number of students. The funding is separated in three groups:

1. Basic support, which is the same for all 84 schools
2. Support for covering rent and other costs for buildings
3. Student support, based on numbers of students at the school

Annually, more than 8,000 students attend the long courses at the folk high schools. In addition to this, the schools organise short courses, especially in summertime. A shift in the state policy for folk high schools finalises the public funding for short courses from 2021. According to the new policy, the long courses – where the students live at the schools for around 8 to 9 month – should be the main profile for these schools. A year for contemplation and maturity.

Folk high schools are owned partly by foundations, NGOs, Christian organisations, or a county. They offer a multitude of subjects, focusing on culture, sport, nature, philosophy, religion, and travels. These schools are divided in two separate groups, a group of liberal schools (49) and a group of Christian schools (35). Most of the Christian schools are owned by free-church organisations. Both groups have the same public funding conditions. The Christian schools may receive additional funding

from their owner organisations. The liberal schools are owned partly by the counties, NGOs and/or foundations. The county schools have additional public funding from their counties. We have no exact numbers for this additional support.

The purpose for the public funding of the folk high schools is that they should promote popular education and enlightenment, but on their own conditions. The state does not interfere the pedagogical choices and the content and studies the folk high schools offer, but the state has systems for annual control of how the funding is spent.

The public funding depends on political decisions on the state budget at the parliament at the end of each year. In the chapter in the budget which covers "Program for skills and lifelong learning" we will find the folk high schools and the study associations. The funding covers a lump sum to each folk high school, based on the numbers of students. In the state budget for 2021, money is also allocated for establishing two new schools in 2021 and two more in 2022. The folk high schools have political support from most political parties in the Parliament. The students pay as an average around 120,000 to 125,000 NOK for a folk high school year. This includes both education, travels, accommodation, and meals and covers around 50 percent of the total costs.

### Public funding of study associations

The system of study associations had its slow start back in 1864 and 1931, when first the Popular University and later the Workers Educational Association (WEA) were founded. These two adult education providers have similar 'relatives' in many countries. The WEA is member of a global network of WEAs: The International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA) which is seated in Cape Town, South Africa.

Relatives of the popular university are for example the German and the Austrian folk high schools ('Volkshochschulen'), the 'université populaire' in France and Spain and the university extension

courses in United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries.

According to the Act of Adult Education (1976-77) and the revised Act (2009), you must be organised as study association to receive public funding. To be recognised as a study association (SA) you must fulfil the following conditions:

- a) The SA should have education as its main objective and be based on idealism.
- b) The term ‘studieforbund’ (study association) should be a part of its name (e.g., Studieforbundet AOF – the Workers Educational Association).
- c) The SA should have a democratic structure (the members elect the board, etc.).
- d) The SA should have nation-wide activities and have a regional position.
- e) The annual number of public registered course hours should pass a minimum level per study association (on a national level).
- f) The SA should have more than two NGOs/voluntary organisations as members.

These NGOs might have a range of different purposes and interests, but what they have in common is that they offer non-formal courses for their members and for the public. They offer popular ALE. The 14 public recognised study associations (2019) in Norway have nearly 500 NGOs as members. The learning activities mainly take place in and are organised by the NGOs, partly by the associations. The study association – as we see them today – is a construction established to receive public funding.

The funding for the study associations is based on the last three years activity and covers financing of administration and subsidies for the participants. The funding is divided into three parts:

1. Normal funding with purpose to reduce the fees/costs for the participants.

2. An additional funding with the purpose to reduce the costs for participants with special needs, such as disabilities.
3. An additional funding to cover a percentage of the costs for administration and curriculum development for the SAs.

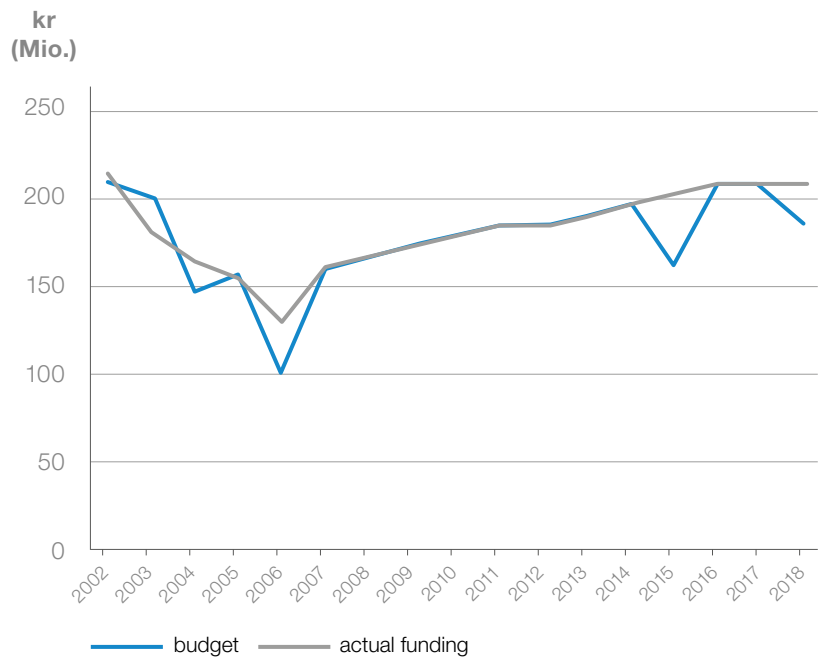
In addition to funds and subsidies, the law and regulations for the field offers the popular ALE providers educational facilities free of charge as an indirect subsidy. “Educational facilities where the costs are covered by the public sector should on request be offered free of charge for the study associations and their member organisations when they run courses which are publicly recognised and funded by this law” (Lov om voksenoppl ring, Kunnskapsdepartementet 2009). This indirect subsidy has a great value for many course providers of popular ALE. To rent a private facility fitted for adult education might cost up to 5,000 NOK per day.

Due to changes in the Act of Adult Education, the funding system for the study associations is from 2021 divided between the Ministry of Education – which has been the normal situation since the 1970th – and the Ministry of Culture. The rationale for this change is a political decision since most study associations are connected to the field of culture, in a broad sense of the term ‘culture’, like song, music, dance, folk costumes, handicraft, religion and sport.

The funding covers just a minor part of the costs for running courses. In the budget for 2021, the state funding for the study association is proposed to be on the same level as the previous years, totally around 220 million NOK. Figure 2 shows the development of state funding to the study associations from 2002 – 2018.

In 2019, close to half a million participants attended the study association’s courses and study circles. The numbers have been quite stable the last five years, with a peak in 2016, when 505,000 participated. The numbers of courses are also stable, around 45,000 per year for the study associations

**Figure 2:**  
Development of state  
funding to the study  
associations from  
2002 – 2018



Source: Norwegian Association for Adult Learning 2019

in total. Totally, all these courses last around 1,400,000 hours. The state subsidy covers only a small part of the costs for a course. The subsidy is around 450 NOK per participant as an average. The costs for the courses differ very much, depending on the length, the material needed, the teacher's payment, etc. The total cost for an average course could be around 2,500 to 3,000 NOK, which means that the state subsidy covers less than 20 percent. The rest is paid by the participants as fee. If the courses are relevant for professional development, the fees might be paid by the employers.

At the end of the 1970th, the public funding for the study associations covered up to 80 percent of the costs. At that time, most of the counties and many municipalities offered public funding for the courses. Today, the funding from the counties has declined or completely disappeared and just very

few of the country's more than 350 municipalities give any funding for the study association learning activities.

The positive trends back in the 1970th were connected to the Act of Adult Education, which passed the parliament in 1976 after 10 years of preparation. (The first ever White Paper on adult education was launched at the Parliament in 1965, and in the period that followed Norway showed much more attention to adult education (St.prp. nr. 92 1964-65)). The Act was said to be the 'first act in the world' which especially regulated education outside the formal educational system – namely popular ALE. The law was designed especially for the study associations and gave rules for funding from all the three public levels: state, county, and municipality. This was changed in the revised Act of Adult Education (2009), which no longer imposes counties

or municipalities to support popular ALE. One reason for this change was that the politicians on national level – who decide about laws – no longer wished to decide how the politicians on county and municipality level should spend their budgets. As popular ALE is a soft field, the expected outcome of this change was that the municipalities would give priority to fields where they have obligations.

The result is that just a handful of municipalities and around half of the 11 counties offer any subsidies for popular ALE today. The level of these subsidies differs, but in general are low. In one of the counties the study association reported 49,000 participants joining their courses in 2018, and the funding from the county was close to 1 million NOK, which equals less than 20 NOK per participant.

### Indicators and measures used by the public authorities to monitor popular ALE providers

Providers like study associations must present annual reports to the public authorities through the National Agency for Statistics (Statistisk Sentralbyrå in Norway) to receive funds. The reports must include:

- Recognised curricula (study plans)
- Signed participant lists, with number and names, age, and gender
- Subjects (e.g., how many language courses, how many green agriculture courses...)
- In what way did the courses fulfil the goals in the Act of Adult Education

The goals which the last condition refers to and which are defined in the Act of Adult Education are:

- a) To help maintain and strengthen democracy and lay the foundation for sustainable development by engaging and developing active citizenship.
- b) To enable people to influence their own life situation.

- c) To combat ejection and contribute to inclusion.
- d) To contribute to motivation and access to knowledge and expertise for all and thus meet needs in a constantly changing society and working life.
- e) To strengthen cultural diversity and increase participation in cultural life.
- f) Being an independent arena for learning and a supplement to public education provision for adults.

As the reporting mainly includes numbers, it is not easy to judge effects on for example sustainability, but over the last 30 to 40 years we can register changes in choices of subjects for studies. English language courses were immensely popular during the 1970th, due to increased travelling and the fact that many adults had limited foreign language education at school. Likewise, in the 1980th and 90th courses to handle computers and ICT dominated the study associations' courses. Nowadays, everyone learns English from primary school and the information and communications technology (ICT) is self-instructional. Themes which are popular today are e.g. music (band and instrument training), song (choirs), environmental issues and courses for coping with crops, tourism, and hiking. Courses on how to live with different diagnoses, handicaps and chronic disease are also a big issue. One of the Norwegian study associations has as members around 75 different voluntary organisations which work for this sector and organises courses on how to cope with e.g. diabetes, hard of hearing challenges and other disabilities. These courses might get extra funding (see above).

Political education is not as big a part of popular ALE as it was 40 to 50 years ago. Around 1980, almost all political parties had their own study association (8 in total). They run study circles to prepare their political programs, about international political issues, solidarity actions etc. Today, just two or three of the 14 study associations have a relation to a political party.

But this is still the case: A course with political content opposing the government's policy receives the same level of subsidy as any other course. As stated above: A characteristic of a mature democracy is that it also offers funding for its system critics.

### Libraries and museums as providers of popular ALE

The libraries and the museums could be called the third branch of popular education in Norway. The libraries have 100 percent public funding, as they are run by the public sector, namely the municipalities. During the last 10 to 15 years we have seen a shift in the profile of most libraries. They have turned into literary houses and they are offering service which go far beyond the tradition where anyone can come to a library to borrow a book. Even though libraries still have this task as their main activity, they also offer spaces for students, playground for children, 24/7 open space, literary happenings, and courses in basic ICT skills. Libraries may struggle for their financial basis, but as they in principle are public funded, they cannot so far collect fees from the participants. Then, they can offer popular ALE cheaper than e.g. the study associations. So far, this has not led to any conflict.

Finally, we can partly place museums as popular ALE providers. Their main activity are exhibitions and research, but they often supply exhibitions with lectures and seminars about art, handicraft, traditions etc. Public museums are as the libraries publicly financed, but some smaller local or regional museums are owned by voluntary organisations or foundations which collect money from both public sector (municipalities) and the public in general. In this respect we could say that museums receive public grants for popular ALE, but in small scale and not according to any complex system.

### At the end

The Scandinavian countries like to look at themselves as unique when it comes to adult education in general and popular ALE in particular. In this article, I have detected that this is the case – to a certain extent. The level of trust and confidence between the people and the governing bodies are strong, which have led to a system for public funding of folk high schools, study associations and other providers of popular ALE that is quite open and not a victim of too strong bureaucratic control. It is open and democratic also in the sense that the public funders are not asking what kind of popular ALE you offer. You get your funding when you as a provider offer what you find important for and together with your target groups.

On the other hand, the picture is not just sunny and bright. The instrumental approach is about to battle the existential approach also in this field, even in these countries. Though Albert Einstein once said that "It is not everything that counts that can be counted" it seems that politicians and bureaucrats increasingly ask for numbers and countable results before they open their sack of money. This is the case also for Norway and the other Scandinavian countries: Supporting words and nice talks about the values of popular ALE, but the money does not always follow the talks. But as Lene Andersen and Thomas Bjorkman (2017) describe, we do have a 'Nordic secret': as society and economy changed, the least educated were inspired to self-govern and become responsible citizens with a sense of purpose. ... So, let us see what happens now, when societies almost all over the world are changing dramatically. Is it possible that popular ALE in all its brightness could deliver a new enlightenment period? And will there be money left in the public budgets to support this change?

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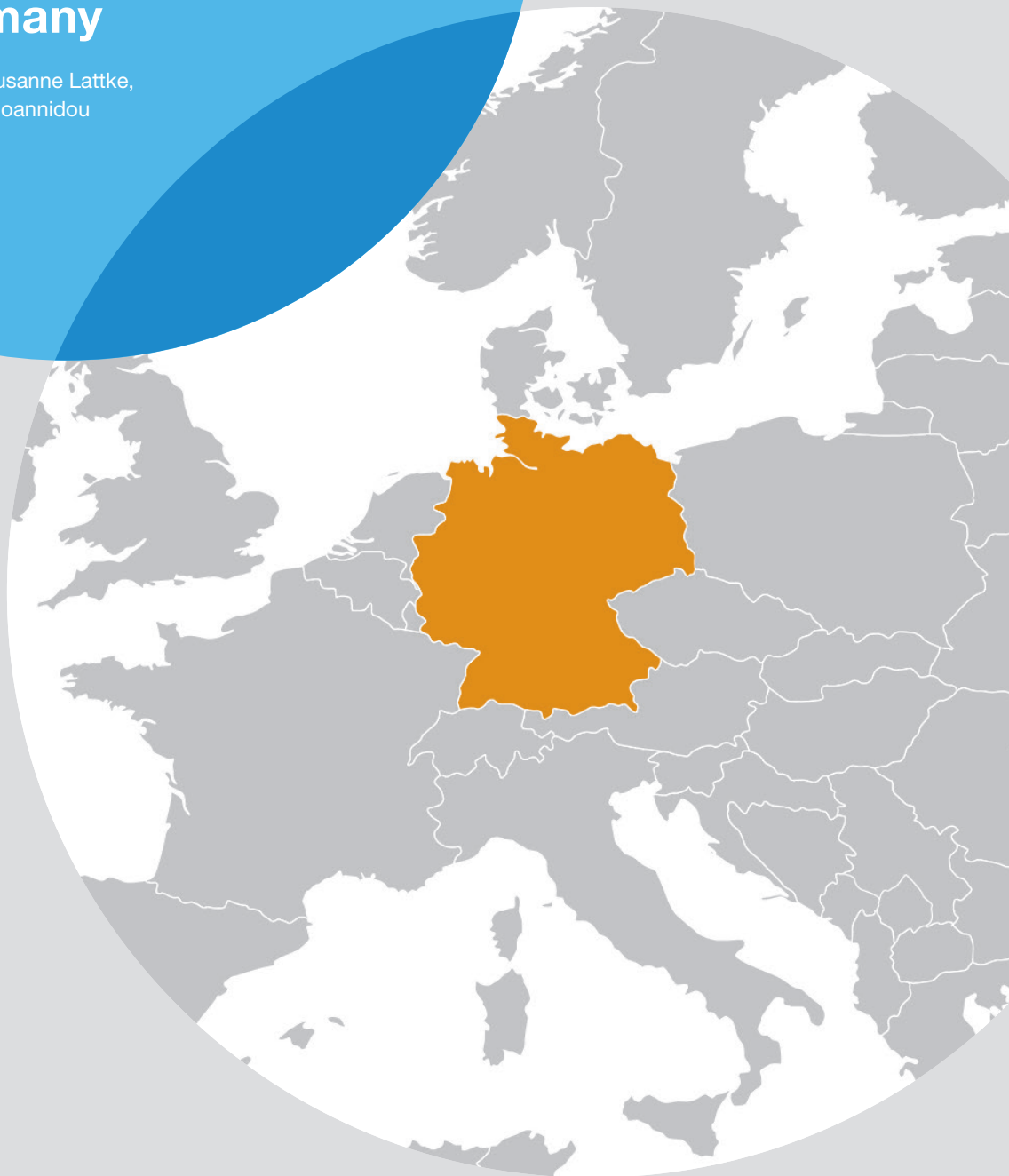
Norway: [www.vofo.no](http://www.vofo.no) ; [www.folkehogskole.no](http://www.folkehogskole.no)

Denmark: [www.dfs.dk](http://www.dfs.dk) ; [www.hojkolerne.dk](http://www.hojkolerne.dk)

Sweden: [www.folkbildning.se](http://www.folkbildning.se) ;  
[www.studieforbunden.se](http://www.studieforbunden.se) ; [www.folkhogskola.nu](http://www.folkhogskola.nu)

# Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Germany

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## Abstract

**Popular adult learning and education (ALE) in Germany has a long history dating back to the 18th century. A notion of ALE as a common good to be publicly promoted was first included in the Weimar constitution in 1919. Today, the federal states support popular ALE through legal provisions and funding arrangements. This study outlines the main funding mechanisms and highlights the significance of public funding for providers of popular ALE. Despite existing challenges, mainly related to trends of economisation and marketisation, public funding still ensures a permanent supply of ALE opportunities accessible to all. Research evidence of the benefits of popular ALE enhance awareness and appraisal of it.**

## Introduction: Understanding popular adult learning and education (ALE) in Germany

### National definitions, terminologies and understanding

Adult education and training in Germany is a policy field of shared responsibility between state and non-state actors, with a long history of institutionalisation. To refer to the broad field of ALE, two terms are mainly used in the German context: *Erwachsenenbildung* (Adult Education) and *Weiterbildung* (Continuing Education and Training - CET). Both terms are used - often synonymously and interchangeably - in policy papers and legal texts as well as by practitioners and researchers. For the term *Weiterbildung*, the definition coined by the German Education Council in a policy planning

document in 1970 during the education reform era, is still influential. According to this, *Weiterbildung* is

“The continuation or reuptake of organised learning after completion of an initial phase of full-time education.” (KMK 2001: 4, own translation)

This definition is holistic in terms of content and aims of the learning activities. The only limitation refers to the degree of organisation: learning has to be planned and organised, informal learning is thus excluded in this context. ‘*Weiterbildung*’ covers both popular ALE as well as other parts of adult learning such as vocational and professional continuing education and training, which are addressed in the UNESCO (2016) *Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education* (RALE). Although this definition has no formal legal status, it is frequently referred to in documents and publications to today.

Since the 1990s, though, driven by international discourse, a new terminology has been established around the term lifelong learning in addition to the traditional terms of Weiterbildung/Erwachsenenbildung. The term Weiterbildung as defined above is not entirely compatible with the concept of lifelong learning, which emphasises learning (instead of education) over the lifespan, and distinguishes learning activities into formal, non-formal and informal, depending on the context of provision and the recognition of the thus acquired skills and competences.

During the past 50 years after the introduction of the Education Council's definition, a rough distinction between vocational/occupational CET (CVET) and non-vocational/non-occupational CET has increasingly gained ground in practice. This differentiation is of practical relevance especially in the funding context, as many funding schemes are explicitly limited to CVET. However, there is neither a theoretically grounded classification of types of CET nor a conceptually clear definition of what is to be understood by 'vocational'/'non-vocational' CET; so, in individual cases, it is disputed whether certain offers (e.g. courses addressing 'soft skills') are to be assigned to one area or another.

Other terms often used in contrast to vocational/occupational CET are 'general continuing education' (Allgemeine Weiterbildung) or 'general adult education' (Allgemeine Erwachsenenbildung). General continuing/adult education includes for example adult literacy courses and courses for catching up on school-leaving qualifications (second chance education); but also courses on languages, ICT (information and communications technology), soft skills, family education, religious education, leisure-oriented courses for adults, and others. Obviously, in some cases such as ICT, languages or courses on soft skills, there are areas of overlap with continuing vocational training as indicated above.

Both political and cultural education for adults are often considered as separate areas alongside general and vocational continuing education; sometimes, though, they are treated as sub-areas of general continuing education.

Popular ALE as a term is no longer commonly used in German discourse, even though the historical beginnings of adult education in the 18th/19th century developed under the name Volksbildung (popular education) (see also the next section). However, echoes of this early terminology are still omnipresent in the term Volkshochschulen (Folk High Schools), which is used in Germany to describe the community adult education centres.

With reference to German terminology, this article will focus mainly on general (or non-vocational) education for adults, including political and cultural education, which are defined elsewhere as liberal adult education. This type of ALE is typically non-formal (except for second chance education) and more aligned with stakeholders from civil society such as unions, churches, leisure-time organisations, environmental and cultural associations.

In order to maintain uniformity of terminology within the framework of this anthology, we use the term popular ALE in the rest of the article to refer to this area of general or non-vocational or liberal education for adults as described above.

### Historical evolution of popular ALE

The history of popular ALE began towards the end of the 18th century, when the first forms of organised learning for adults appeared in Germany. These were reading and museum societies for the urban bourgeoisie aiming at the cultivation of the self and at popularising science. At the same time, artisans (craftsmen) and workers set up education associations aiming at the solution of problems related to their living and working environment, and with a strong interest in political participation and empowerment.

However, it is the Weimar Constitution of 1919 that marks a milestone in the institutionalisation of ALE in Germany. Article 148, paragraph 4 of the Constitution states that "the popular education system, including the adult education centres, shall be promoted by the Reich, the federal states and the municipalities". This is the first time in German

**Box 1:**  
**Articles on ALE in the  
constitutions  
of German Länder –  
examples**

**Articles on ALE in constitutions of selected German federal states  
(Länder)**

**Baden-Wuerttemberg:** “Art. 22: Adult education shall be supported by the state, the municipalities and the districts.”

**Brandenburg:** “Art. 33 (Continuing Education and Training): (1) Continuing education of adults shall be promoted by the Land, the municipalities and associations of municipalities. [...]”

**North Rhine-Westphalia:** “Art. 17: Adult education shall be promoted. In addition to the state, municipalities and associations of municipalities, other bodies, such as the churches and independent associations, are recognised as responsible bodies for adult education.”

**Rhineland-Palatinate:** “Art. 37: Popular education, including public libraries and Volkshochschulen, is to be promoted by the state and municipalities. The establishment of private or ecclesiastical adult education institutions is permitted.”

history that adult education was declared to be a basic right to be promoted by state authorities at federal, regional and local level. Even if there were no legally binding commitments, the constitution of Weimar laid the foundations for understanding ALE as a common good, which deserves to be publicly funded and supported.

The regulations for the popular education system (Volkshochschulen) at the time of the Weimar Constitution were based on the principle of subsidiarity, allowing complementary state funding for adult education centres as well as for institutions of denominational religious communities, and for civic associations (Schrader, Rossmann 2019: 10).

With industrialisation, (popular) adult education played a role in the rise of political movements as trade unions and political organisations close to the workers perceived adult education not only as enlightenment and cultivation, but also as an

instrument of domination over the working class. During the Weimar Republic, the labour movement, in conjunction with the Socialist Party, pursued the development of adult education as a means in the class struggle, and in the service of emancipation and empowerment of the working class.

In the period of the Nazi regime to the end of World War II (1933-1945) ALE was instrumentalised as ‘war important task’ and as an ‘ideological weapon’; educational work during this time served the Nazi ideology (Olbrich 2001: 251).

After World War II, the allies promoted ALE in the Western occupied zones primarily as a means of democratic re-education. Community adult education centres (Volkshochschulen - vhs), political foundations (Stiftungen) and residential adult education centres (Heimvolkshochschulen), in particular, were charged with the task of re-educating the people to democracy (Olbrich 2001: 311-325).

## Recognition of popular ALE in today's policy and society

Due to the historical evolution and early institutionalisation of adult education in Germany, popular ALE has a strong tradition still today. Constitutive elements of popular ALE system in Germany are the diversity of offerings and the voluntary participation. A range of institutions provide a variety of popular ALE programmes as non-mandatory offerings open to all. The recognition of ALE in general, and popular ALE in particular, is firmly established in the legislation of the Länder, i.e. the federal states. Due to the federal distribution of responsibilities, general adult education falls under the jurisdiction of the Länder. Many Länder recognise adult education in their constitution as a policy area to be promoted by the state and the municipalities (see examples in Box 1). Moreover, some Länder constitutions (Bavaria, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland) explicitly include the community adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) as a type of adult learning provider to be publicly funded.

The relevant laws on adult and continuing education of the Länder then specify in more detail what kind of ALE is to be supported by the state. In most cases, ALE in the sense of this legislation includes general, vocational and citizenship education, in some federal states also cultural education. The laws are therefore not limited to promoting popular ALE, but explicitly include continuing education for professional purposes.

According to the legislation of the Länder, the purpose of ALE is defined as the ability to act responsibly in the private, professional and public spheres. Adult education is intended to serve both the individual and society by promoting personal development, by providing necessary skills and by supporting a free and democratic public sphere (see examples in Box 2). In addition, the Länder laws emphasise that adult education provision must be accessible to all people regardless of gender, age, and other characteristics.

Thanks to the legal ground of popular ALE and the well-developed institutional structure based on it (see next section), popular ALE enjoys a high reputation and is very evidently present in society. However, there are some limitations, which are mentioned below:

- *Formal recognition:* As popular ALE in Germany is typically not linked to formal qualifications, it often lacks formal recognition in terms of certification or validation; some exceptions refer to basic adult education courses leading to school leaving qualifications and language courses. Moreover, it is not connected to a modularised and flexible education system as it is the case in other countries enabling alternative education routes, and it is not part of the National Qualifications Framework.
- *Participation:* Overall participation in ALE in Germany has been high and relatively stable over past years. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES), since 2012, the participation rate of 18-64-year-olds in ALE has fluctuated between 49 and 54% (BMBF 2019: 13). However, these figures also include participation in employer-sponsored in-company training. If we look specifically at popular ALE (i.e. non-vocational CET in the AES' terminology), participation rates are considerably lower, with approximately 12-13% of the 18 to 64-year-old population participating in such activities (BMBF 2019: 22).
- *Policy:* While popular ALE is put on a solid permanent footing by legislation, its status is not reflected in the same way in recent educational policy initiatives. In current strategy papers, funding programmes and priorities, popular ALE has been rather side-lined. Rather, education policy attention is mainly focused on vocational and employment-related ALE. One very recent example is the National Skills Strategy (BMAS, BMBF 2019) that was adopted in summer 2019 by an interdepartmental alliance of federal and state governments with the participation of the social partners. The strategy aims to combine federal and Länder continuing training pro-

**Box 2:**  
**ALE definitions in the  
laws of the German  
Länder – examples**

**Baden-Wuerttemberg: Law for the Promotion of Continuing Education and Libraries (WBilFöG)**

§1(2)

Continuing education has the task of helping individuals to deepen, broaden or renew their skills and knowledge in the extracurricular field. On the basis of the Federal constitution and the Land constitution, it covers general education, continuing vocational training and political education. Further training is intended to enable individuals to act responsibly in the personal, professional and public spheres and thus, to serve free society in a democratic and social constitutional state.

**Lower Saxony Adult Education Act (NEBG)**

(1) 1. Adult education is an independent, equal part of the educational system. 2. It comprises general, political, cultural and vocational education and training. 3. Its task is to provide educational guidance and to plan and implement measures to strengthen the personality, to shape the transition from general to vocational education and to continue or resume organised learning.

(2) 1. The content of adult education is determined by the educational needs of adults. 2. Adult education shall provide all persons, irrespective of their sex and age, education, social or occupational status, political or philosophical orientation and nationality, with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for the free development of their personality and for participation in society.

grammes, to align these with skills needs, and to establish a new continuing education culture (Weiterbildungskultur).

This initiative is an excellent example of how a wide range of state and non-state actors in a complex and multifaceted area such as ALE can be coordinated and jointly arrive at forward-looking policy decisions. Such a comprehensive involvement of stakeholders in a joint strategic alliance has not existed in the ALE sector in Germany in this form for decades. The strategy therefore offers great potential for the development of a consistent and widely supported ALE policy. The downside is that the strategy focuses exclusively on vocational and in-company

training. Other areas of adult education are not even mentioned, and important representatives of popular ALE are not represented in the stakeholder consortium. The strategy might thus be seen as a missed opportunity (Käpplinger 2019, Kilian 2019). Under optimistic assumptions, the strategy might be a first step towards a more comprehensive approach at a later stage.

**Institutions, content and methods of popular ALE**

The institutional structure of ALE provision in Germany is heterogeneous and plentiful. The field is characterised by a historically grown coexistence of public and private, non-profit and for-profit

adult learning providers, as well as the educational institutions of the churches, companies, social partners and other social groups. Almost 15 percent of the providers are 'valued-based associations' like churches and trade unions; the community adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) make up 11.5 percent of the providers (Schrader 2019: 712). Most ALE providers offer a mixture of popular ALE and vocational-related offers. According to the latest *wbmonitor* issue (longitudinal annual survey on adult education and training providers in Germany), for 40 percent of all ALE providers, popular ALE represents the main task, and 8 percent offer exclusively popular ALE, compared to 33 percent which focus exclusively on vocational training (Christ, Koscheck, Martin 2020: 50-52).

Among the most important providers of popular ALE are, in particular:

- the community adult education centres (Volkshochschulen or vhs) (approx. 900 throughout the country) (Reichart, Huntemann, Lux 2019: 17)
- educational institutions of the churches (evangelical, catholic) (almost 1,000 in total) (Horn, Lux, Christ, Ambos 2019: 19)
- the federal association Arbeit und Leben - AuL (Work and Life), a cooperation between community adult education centres and trade unions, which concentrates on political and social educational work. In 2017, AuL had 141 ALE providers as members (Horn et al. 2019: 19)
- trade union training institutions (no exact data available).

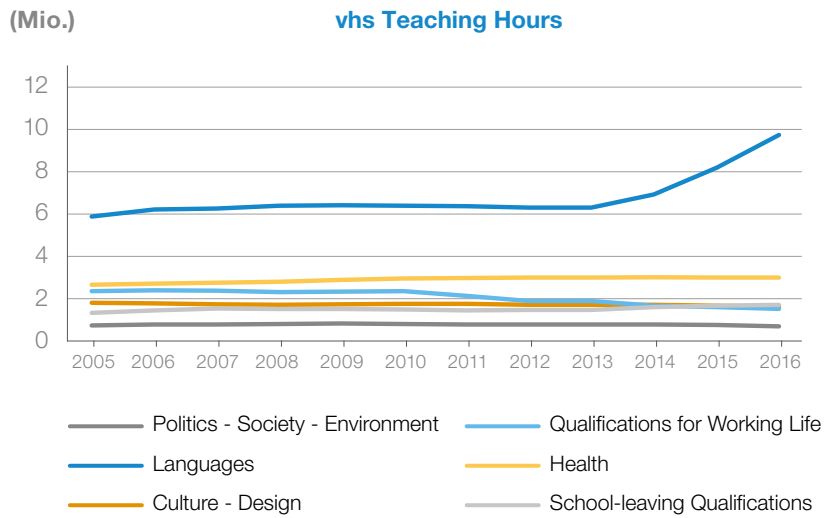
In addition, grassroots initiatives and alternative groups, which have developed since the late 1970s, alongside with a variety of smaller educational institutions and academies outside the major societal organisations (churches, unions), provide popular ALE offerings. Commercial training institutions offer market-oriented general adult education courses such as language and soft-skills courses.

State agencies at federal and state level with a public mandate for providing political education occupy a special position in the provision of popular ALE. The Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (at federal level: the Landeszentralen für politische Bildung) are committed to promoting political education and the sense of civic responsibility of citizens in a non-partisan way. Their establishment was decided jointly by the prime ministers of the federal states after the Second World War, after the experience of the Weimar Republic and the Nazi regime. Besides getting themselves actively involved in the provision of educational opportunities, they financially support civic education courses that are offered by other organisations. The AuL association, for example, benefits from this support.

The above-mentioned institutions offer a broad and diversified portfolio of popular ALE. The Volkshochschulen in particular, each cover a very comprehensive range of subject areas. These are reflected in the vhs statistics as well as in the Network statistics (Verbundstatistik), which monitor provision and participation in the community adult education centres and in the work of other important providers of (mainly popular) ALE. The annual statistical reports depict the range of content and distinguish the following categories: Politics – Society – Environment; Culture and Design; Health; Languages; Qualifications for Working Life – IT – Organisation/Management; School leaving qualifications – University admission – Study support; Basic Skills. For a detailed description of the course topics, see Annex 1.

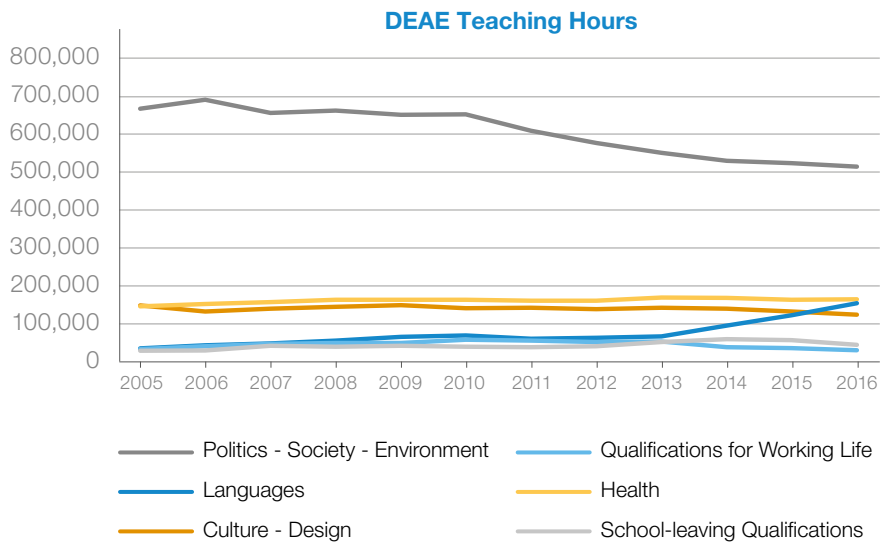
The graphs below illustrate the development of the provision offered by two examples of major adult education providers between 2005 and 2016: at the vhs (Figure 1: vhs Teaching Hours) and at the adult education institutions of the Protestant Church (Figure 2: DEAE Teaching Hours), respectively. Languages account for the largest share of the vhs programme, whereas the Protestant institutions, which also cover a wide range of topics, have a stronger focus on political, social, and civic education. The same applies to the Catholic institutions, not shown here. The volume of offerings in terms

**Figure 1:**  
Volume of vhs offerings by subject area over time (in teaching hours)



Source: German Institute for Adult Education (DIE); data basis Statistics on Adult Education Centres ("Volkshochschul-Statistik"), reporting years 2005-2016.

**Figure 2:**  
Volume of DEAE offerings by subject area over time (in teaching hours)



Source: German Institute for Adult Education (DIE); data basis statistics DEAE, reporting years 2005-2016.

of teaching hours remains rather stable over time, with the exception of a sharp increase in language courses in the vhs since 2015, obviously related to the offers targeted at newly arrived migrants and refugees after that year.

## Public financing of (popular) ALE

### Supply-side vs. demand-side funding schemes

Generally speaking, the financial mechanisms and measures to support and steer (popular) ALE can be differentiated into supply-side and demand-side measures and further broken down into measures and incentives targeted to the individuals, those targeted to adult education institutions, and those targeted to employers/companies. Institutions belong to the supply-side, individuals and employers/companies to the demand-side.

Supply-side measures and incentives are considered to be: subsidies, performance-based funding or contracts, capital funding or tuition fees policy (OECD 2017: 36, figure 2.1). Demand-side measures and incentives are considered to be: subsidies, individual learning accounts, or study and training leave (for individuals); and subsidies, tax incentives, training levies, or public procurement (for employers/companies) (ibid.) Although this taxonomy is useful for analytical purposes, it is not always easy 'to classify measures neatly given that supply- and demand-side effects are closely intertwined' (OECD 2017: 35).

While demand-led public financing plays an important role in vocational education and training, the reverse is true in the case of popular ALE. Here, public funding is essentially based on supply-oriented principles as is illustrated in more detail below. However, a few elements of public demand-led financing can also be identified in the area of popular ALE. For example, publicly funded institutions offer reduced participation fees for certain disadvantaged groups, such as the unemployed or severely disabled. Paid educational leave

is another demand-led mechanism. In most of the Länder, employees have a statutory right to paid leave - usually 5 days per year - for the purpose of participating in educational events. Such leave is granted for both vocational training and (parts of) popular ALE, especially for civic education. During this time, participants' salary is continued to be paid by the employer. As a rule, participants have to pay participation fees themselves. Public money plays only a minor role here, but in two cases it does contribute to the financing: (a) for civil servants or public employees whose salary (from public funds) continues to be paid during the educational leave; and (b) where the state reimburses employers for the costs incurred by the continued payment of salary. However, civil servants in some Länder are explicitly excluded from the right to paid educational leave; and the possibility of reimbursing employers' costs is only provided for in two Länder (Rhineland-Palatinate and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) where it is also subject to budgetary reservation (Dohmen 2017: 35).

Training vouchers, which are an important demand-led financing mechanism, are provided in some form in almost all Länder (see for example overview in Dohmen 2017: 24). However, these vouchers are explicitly related to vocational training and cannot be used for popular ALE.

### Public vs. private funding

While public funding dominates in the school and higher education sector, and is merely supplemented by private expenditure, the opposite is true in the ALE sector: here private funding dominates, and the public sector contributes supplementary funds. For the year 2015, a study by the Bertelsmann Foundation calculated the share of public funding in expenditure in the entire continuing education sector at 23.4%, while private expenditure accounted for 76.6% (Dobischat, Münk, Rosendahl 2019: 20). However, these figures refer to the entire field of ALE, that is they include the extensive segment of vocational and in-company training. This is the largest sector in terms of provision and participation (Schrader 2019: 709-714); it is largely funded



by private financiers (employers and individuals). If one considers specifically the area of popular ALE, the ratios shift more in favour of public funding, as is illustrated in the following.

*Statistical data on financing of ALE is available in Germany for a number of provider groups with a particular focus on popular ALE:*

- the Volkshochschulen (vhs), that is the community adult education centres, which have joined together in the association DVV (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband/German Adult Education Association)
- the educational institutions of the Protestant church, grouped together in the DEAE association
- the educational institutions of the Catholic church, grouped together in the association KEB
- the member organisations of the Work and Life (AuL) association.

For these groups, the German Institute for Adult Education – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning (DIE) – has been regularly collecting data on offerings and participation, as well as on financing: since 1962 for the Volkshochschulen, and since 2002 for the other three associations, respectively.

Based on these statistics, the graphs below show the development of different financial sources over time, for two of the above-mentioned providers.

The graphs clearly show that public funding is by far the most important source of financing for these providers. In 2014, to take one year as an example – the last year before the arrival of large numbers of migrants caused a sharp increase in public funding which does not however represent the general situation – public funds for the Volkshochschulen amounted to 549.855.240 Euro. This corresponds to 52% of the total revenue. In the case of the AuL association (Figure 4), which has a pronounced focus on political and civic education offerings, and

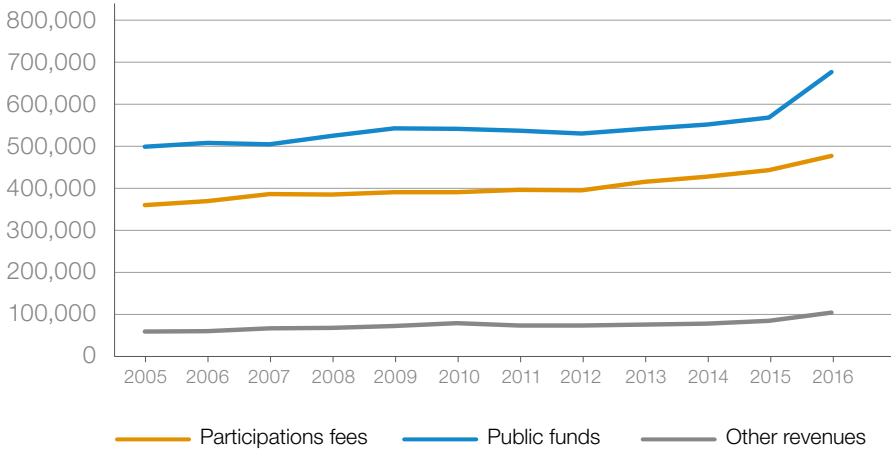
which finances its educational offers to a considerable extent via public (time-limited) funding programmes and tenders (Menke 2020), the role of public funding is even more pronounced. Public money for AuL in 2014 amounted to 25.819.473 Euro, 61% of total revenue. Besides public funds, participation fees are another important source of income, especially for the Volkshochschulen (Figure 3). In 2014, participation fees there amounted to 425.662.664 Euro, a share of 41% of the total revenue.

*Public funding of popular ALE* derives from various sources. These are exemplified below by Volkshochschulen revenues. Public funding for the Volkshochschulen is provided mainly by the municipalities and districts, by the federal states (Länder), and the federal government. In addition, EU funds, e.g. from the European Social Fund, contribute a part, albeit smaller, of the total income of the Volkshochschulen (Figure 5).

*Federal funds* consist mainly of project- or programme-bound funds, which are paid out for specific services or innovations. For example, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research has funded the development and implementation of the online learning portal of the vhs since 2014 with approximately 14 million Euro (BMBF 2020). A special case is ‘SGB funds’, which are shown separately in the graph. These are funds paid by the Federal Employment Agency for the implementation of CET measures for the unemployed. The sharp increase in federal funding after 2015 is an atypical feature and is related to the high number of refugees since this year. The increase reflects the high number of language and integration courses that have been offered by the vhs for refugees since then; these have been financed by the federal government.

In contrast to federal funds, *public funds from the Länder and the municipalities/districts* mainly comprise subsidies for the regular operation of the providers. As explained above, the general mandate to promote adult education by the Länder and municipalities is laid down in (many) Länder constitutions. Financial support is regulated in more

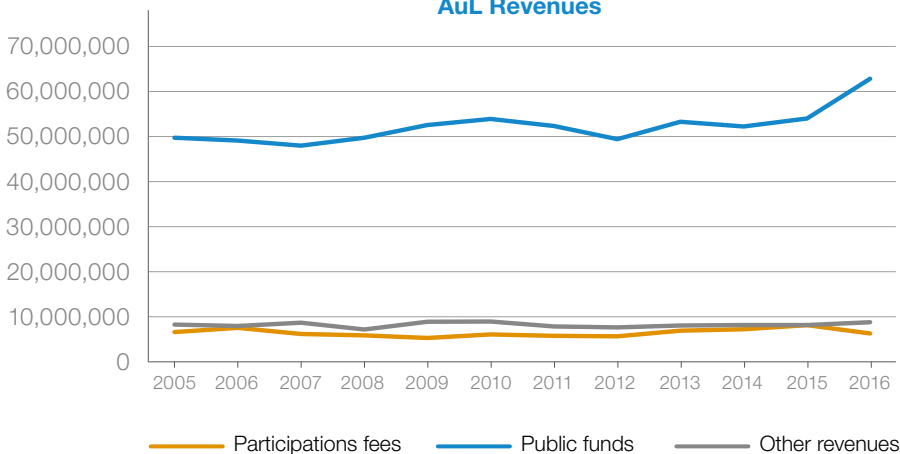
### vhs Revenues



Source: German Institute for Adult Education (DIE): data basis Statistics on Adult Education Centres ("Volkshochschul-Statistik"), reporting years 2005-2016.

**Figure 3:**  
Development of  
vhs revenues in Euro  
from different  
sources between  
2005 and 2016\*

### AuL Revenues

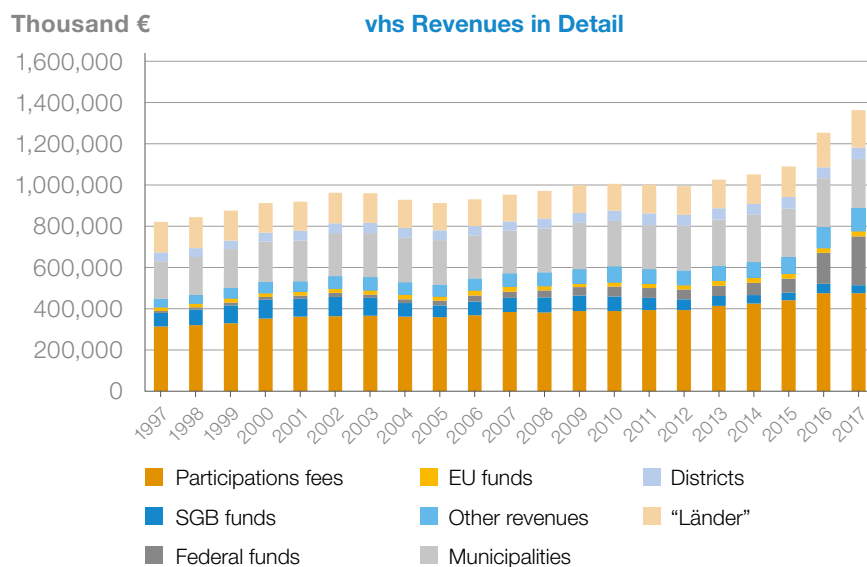


Source: German Institute for Adult Education (DIE): data basis statistics Arbeit und Leben (AuL), reporting years 2005-2016.

**Figure 4:**  
Development of AuL  
revenues (in Euro)  
from different  
sources between  
2005 and 2016\*

\*Note: Public funding in both graphs includes subsidies and project funds from the EU, the federation, the Länder, and the local communities (municipalities, districts). The AuL income also includes a (smaller) share of the sponsors' own funds, which is shown separately in the chart. There is no equivalent for this funding category in the case of vhs.

**Figure 5:**  
Development of  
vhs revenues from  
different sources,  
detailed breakdown,  
between 1997 and  
2017



Source: German Institute for Adult Education (DIE): data basis Statistics on Adult Education Centres ("Volkshochschul-Statistik"), reporting years 1997-2017.

detail in the legislation. 14 of the 16 Länder have specific laws on adult/continuing education, which establish a public responsibility to ensure a basic supply of educational opportunities for adults. In the remaining Länder, ALE provision is regulated in a different law. Thus, the Berlin School Act obliges the districts to offer lifelong learning opportunities in adult education centres. Some laws explicitly set quantitative targets for the basic supply. The North Rhine-Westphalian law on continuing education (WbG), for example, stipulates that municipalities with 25,000 inhabitants or more must provide 3,200 hours of instruction per year, and that this compulsory provision increases by 1,600 hours per year for every 40,000 inhabitants or part thereof (WbG § 11). The Länder distribute institutional grants to those adult education providers that contribute to this basic supply. Public funding of ALE at the federal state level is thus a shared responsibility between the municipalities and districts on the one hand and the Länder on the other hand. Municipalities and

districts contribute a higher share, as can be seen from Figure 5.

### Public funding mechanisms according to adult education laws of the Länder

Modes of public funding of ALE are regulated in the above-mentioned specific Länder laws on adult/continuing education; and specified in greater detail in accompanying regulations.

To be eligible, adult education institutions must meet a number of conditions. In most cases, the laws of the Länder stipulate that the institution must have its seat in the Land concerned; it must provide adult/continuing education as its main task. The course programme must be publicly accessible, and the courses open to everyone. Furthermore, it must provide participants with a suitable infrastructure (premises and equipment) and employ qualified staff. Public funding by the state is in principle open

to all institutions that meet the legal requirements. To benefit from the funding, an institution must first apply for recognition as an eligible provider. Volkshochschulen, as institutions funded by the municipalities, are automatically recognised as eligible for funding in a number of Länder; in other Länder they must follow the same procedure as other providers.

Funding arrangements laid down in the laws, generally provide for a flat-rate subsidy of the institution's staff and material costs. The subsidy is calculated based on the scope of the offerings in teaching hours. Only offerings explicitly recognised by law as eligible are taken into account. These are offers that are assumed to be in the public interest, such as literacy courses, second chance education, vocational training, but also civic or value-oriented education courses, courses relating to life skills, courses for personal development or for the promotion of family, social and intercultural living together. Course offers that are primarily or exclusively intended for leisure or entertainment are considered to be of private interest, and are not generally eligible for funding.

Within the courses that are in principle eligible for funding, the laws can define a further hierarchy by granting higher levels of funding to courses that are considered particularly valuable from a societal and public perspective. For example, the Lower Saxony Adult Education Act (NEBG, §8) provides that courses, which "meet special social needs", are weighted with an increasing factor of 1.5 to 3.5. (for a detailed list of these courses, see Annex 2).

In addition to subsidising the courses offered, public support may also relate to other specific purposes, such as staff training, targeted investments or innovation projects. The extract from the adult education law of Saxony-Anhalt quoted in Box 3 illustrates this principle in an exemplary manner.

## Public funding of popular ALE in Germany – appraisal and outlook

An appraisal of a state's regulatory efforts and budget allocation to ALE by the state can be linked to conceptualisations of adult education as a common good. Although the understandings of this concept vary in the theoretical debate, notions of common good normally refer to "what is shared and beneficial for all, or most, members of a given community or to what could be produced by collective actions and active participation in the public and political sphere" (Boyardjieva, Ilieva-Trichkova 2018: 346). Adult education as a common good "presupposes, and requires, that it develops as an inclusive process shared by, and beneficial to, all or most members of a given community/society [...] a kind of collective endeavour in which are involved different and diverse social institutions" (ibid.: 348). Another characteristic is that this "understanding of adult education emphasises its complex nature and the plurality of its roles and values, which go beyond its instrumental function, and acknowledges its empowering and transformative mission as well" (ibid.).

Boyardjieva and Ilieva-Trichkova suggest that a country's specific institutional arrangements have a decisive effect on whether and how adult education is realised as a common good (ibid.). In this perspective, adult education can be considered as a common good "when it is accessible to a growing number of people and when policies have been implemented to reduce inequalities in, and barriers to, its access" (ibid.).

Against this background, the public funding arrangements that are in place in Germany can be seen as a solid contribution to establishing ALE as a common good. The legal provisions and the funding arrangements connected to them guarantee a substantial supply of adult learning opportunities throughout the country, that are accessible to all people, cover a broad range of topics and serve a plurality of purposes. Popular ALE has a firm place in this picture. Although much of current and past ALE policy measures and strategies focus

**Box 3:**  
**Law on the promotion of adult education in Saxony-Anhalt of 25 May 1992, original in German, authors' own translation**

**Law on the promotion of adult education in the Land of Saxony-Anhalt (extract)**

**§ 5 Basic funding**

(1) Institutions recognised as eligible for funding, or their sponsors, as well as their associations, shall receive on application grants for personnel and material costs as basic funding for the implementation of adult education measures. The grants shall be awarded as lump sums, the amount of which shall be determined on the basis of a scale of unit and material costs calculated according to the volume of work performed.

(2) The Ministry of Culture is authorised to determine the amount of the lump sum by decree.

**§ 6 Funding for ongoing educational work**

Irrespective of the grants pursuant to § 5, the Land will, on application and within the limits of the available budget, provide the institutions, associations or institutions recognised as eligible for funding with grants for

1. the educational work carried out in their educational responsibility and
2. the training of its staff.

**§7 Grants for investments, teaching materials and model projects**

The Land may, on request, provide grants to bodies recognised as eligible for funding their associations and institutions, within the limits of the available budget, for

1. the construction, extension, repair and furnishing of buildings and premises
2. the provision of teaching and working materials and
3. pilot projects or innovations in the field of adult education grant.

strongly on those segments of ALE which promise a direct vocational benefit in terms of employability and immediate applicability at the workplace, the Länder laws presented in this paper also guarantee permanent support and promotion of the other areas of ALE that enhance values, active citizenship and wellbeing.

This does not mean, however, that popular ALE is not faced with challenges stemming from economic rationality. Increasing tendencies towards economisation and marketisation, even in this sector have been observed since the 1990s. The introduction of the New Public Management paradigm with

standards-based accountability even by publicly funded adult education institutes (Meisel 2008), and persistent stagnation or even decline in public core funding for adult education (Dobischat et al. 2019) have forced adult learning providers to act in a more market-oriented manner. The growing share of participant fees in the total financing of major providers of popular ALE (cf. Figure 3) is a clear indication of this. Stagnation or even decline of public core funding for popular ALE is possible because the laws do not set any absolute requirements for the amount of funding. Previous proposals for reform to secure institutional core funding by setting a certain percentage of the budget of Länder and

municipalities (Hummelsheim 2010: 122) have eventually never been implemented.

The above-mentioned trends of economisation and partly declining financing by the Länder have not fundamentally questioned the public funding of popular ALE, or seriously threatened the existence of the provider landscape as a whole. Nevertheless, they do pose special challenges for adult education providers. To be able to maintain the same scope and diversity of their offerings, they are increasingly dependent on acquiring additional third-party funding or securing expensive but socially desirable course offers through internal cross-financing. This means that institutions deliberately offer courses that are in high demand by financially strong population groups, in order to generate income that can then be used to finance other offerings (DIE 2011: 110, Tippelt, Lindemann 2018).

In the financing of popular ALE, a mixture of market principles and state responsibility thus comes into play. This fuels conflicting arguments as to whether adult education is a private or a public good (Bojadjeva, Ilieva-Trichkova 2018). Given the challenges currently facing German society, the social importance of adult education certainly speaks in favour of continued strong public commitment. One of the most challenging trends for ALE in general and particularly for popular ALE, is demography and changes in the population structure. The proportion of over-65 years olds in the population has long been increasing, rising from around five percent in 1919 to over 22 percent in 2019 (DESTATIS 2020). The number of people born abroad and living in Germany reached over 13 million in 2018 (BMI & BAMF, 2018: 165), the new migration includes refugees and displaced people. Demography and new migration move issues of popular ALE and the political, social, and cultural integration of a growing and increasingly heterogeneous population to the centre of (adult educational) policy interest. A particular social challenge is the rise of extreme and radical political tendencies and groups, which often lead to verbal and physical violence. Even below these extreme manifestations, an increase in intolerant attitudes and a decreasing willingness to

compromise is observed in society. Here, important tasks arise especially for the citizenship education of adults. Holding strong connections to civil society adult education and learning can contribute to a democratic public sphere. The public sphere as the domain of the social life where people meet, discuss, and form public opinions (Habermas 2013) can influence political action. Not least, the creation of a sustainable future is highly dependent on individuals aware of the challenges of climate change, and able to identify fake news and unscientific opinions. Popular ALE and education in general are related to every single Sustainable Development Goal, and can thus contribute to achieving Agenda 2030 of the United Nations.

The individual and societal benefits of ALE have been researched and confirmed in many studies. Specifically, the effects and benefits from participation in popular ALE are related to certain functions, such as the promotion of civic engagement, political participation, a healthier lifestyle, and wellbeing. The positive effects of education on political participation have been documented since the 1960s (Lischewski, Busse, Seeber, Baethge 2020: 217-222). Research findings show that further education programmes have a positive effect on the participation of citizens in politics when enrolment is voluntary and not mandated. People with a medium level of qualifications especially seem to benefit from participation in these courses, affecting their voting behaviour (*ibid.*: 213-235). Other research findings reveal that civic educational activities at adult education centres increase voter turnout in general, with party-specific effects in particular (Martin, Reichart 2020).

Furthermore, there is empirical evidence of a strong and positive association between volunteering and participation in ALE, showing that public investment in ALE for volunteers fosters volunteering sustainability (Rüber, Güleriyüz, Schrader 2020: 146-173). The latter is, in turn, important for ensuring social cohesion and inclusiveness in a society.

Participation in popular ALE is also connected with wider benefits in a range of fields. An EU-Study

on the Wider Benefits of Learning (BeLL) provided evidence on self-reported perceptions of the benefits of learning by adult learners. Adult learners feel healthier and seem to lead healthier lifestyles; they build new social networks and experience improved wellbeing. They appear to feel more motivated to engage in lifelong learning; and view it as an opportunity to improve their lives. These benefits were reported by learners across all course areas, ranging from languages and arts to sport and civic education (Manninen, Thöne-Geyer, Kil, Fleige 2014).

In view of this evidence, and in a perspective that regards (popular) ALE as a common good, it would be consistent to expect the state not only to continue to ensure popular ALE provision through public funding and temporary grants of the Federal and the Länder governments, but to renew its commitment to the functions of popular ALE, and to enhance public awareness and appraisal through policy papers and strategic actions. Departing from the current one-sided focus on vocational oriented ALE, and integrating popular ALE in an encompassing National Skills Strategy, would be first steps in the right direction.

## Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Andrea Bachem, Heike Horn, Hella Huntemann and Thomas Lux from the statistics unit at the DIE for preparing and providing the statistical data presented in this paper.

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## Annex 1: Range of topics covered in the German vhs

<b>Programme Area</b>	<b>Related Course Topics</b>
<b>Politics – Society – Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History/Contemporary history</li> <li>Politics/Civic engagement</li> <li>Economy/Law/Finance</li> <li>Global learning/Education for sustainable development/ Environmental education and consumer issues</li> <li>Pedagogy/Education/Family</li> <li>Personality development/Psychology</li> <li>Diversity/Gender/Interculturalism</li> <li>Philosophy/Religion/Ethics</li> <li>Country and local history/City culture</li> <li>Natural Sciences</li> <li>Communication/Media</li> </ul>
<b>Culture – Design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature (Theory)</li> <li>Literary practice</li> <li>Theatre/Dance (Theory)</li> <li>Theatre practice/Small arts</li> <li>Dance practice</li> <li>Art/Cultural history</li> <li>Painting/Drawing/Printing techniques</li> <li>Sculptural design</li> <li>Textile design</li> <li>Handicraft/Crafts</li> <li>Photo/Film/Audio and other media practice</li> <li>Music (theory)</li> <li>Musical practice</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relaxation/Stress management</li> <li>Physical exercise/Fitness</li> <li>Prevention/Disease/Health</li> <li>Healthcare</li> <li>Food and drink/Nutrition</li> <li>Health and psyche</li> </ul>
<b>Languages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>German as a second language</li> <li>German as a Mother tongue</li> <li>German Dialects</li> <li>Sign language</li> <li>Foreign Language courses in a broad range of languages</li> </ul>

**Qualifications for working life – IT – Organisation/ Management**

IT/media basics/General applications  
Commercial IT/Media applications  
Technical IT/Media applications  
Basic and specialised commercial courses/Accounting  
Basic and specialised technical courses  
Soft Skills/Application Training  
Organisation/Management  
Sector-specific specialist courses

**School-leaving qualifications – University admission and Study support**

Second chance courses to obtain school leaving certificates at all levels  
Individual school-leaving qualification-related courses/ school-leaving qualification and examination preparation  
Study preparation and support

**Basic skills**

Literacy  
Numeracy  
Acquisition of everyday skills (incl. offers specifically for migrants)  
Professional orientation and preparation

Source: Reichart et al. 2019: 76-78, own compilation

## Annex 2: Extract from Lower Saxony Adult Education Act (NEBG)

### § 8 Eligible Courses (3) courses which meet special social needs include:

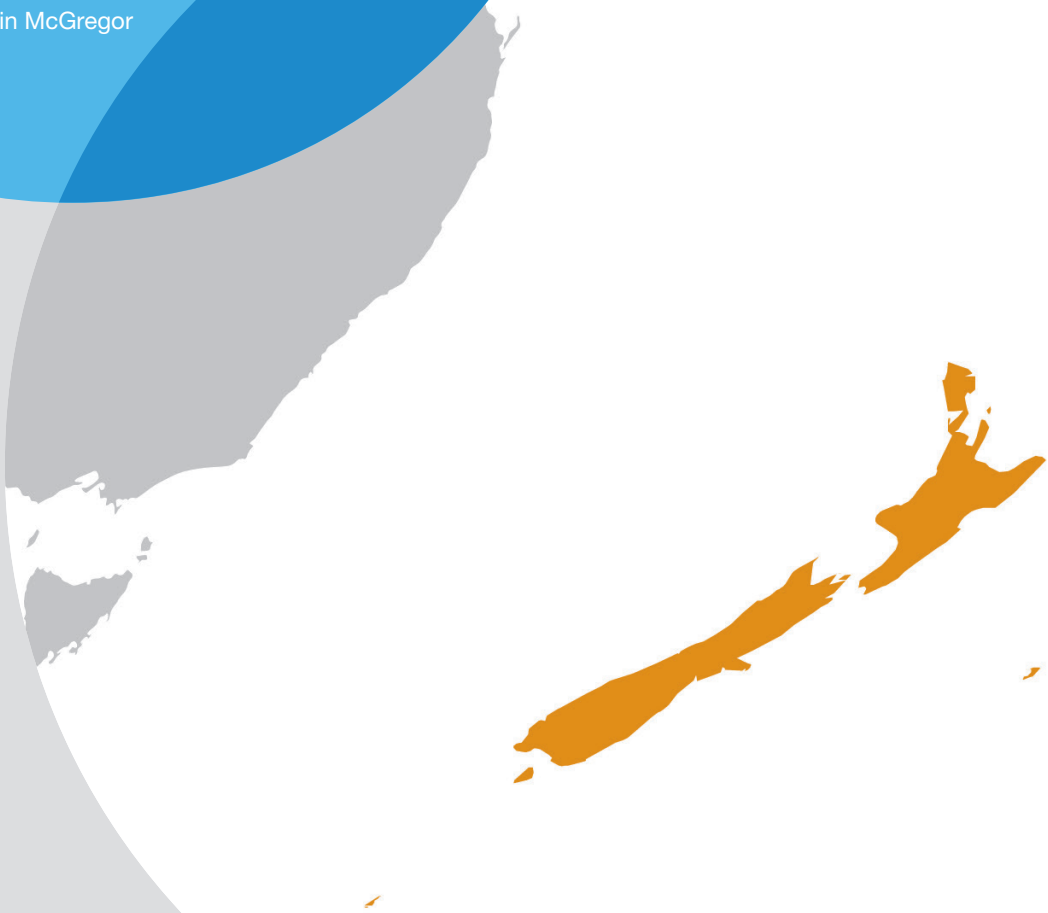
1. political, value and norm-oriented education,
2. courses on basic economic and ecological issues,
3. second chance education, literacy and measures aimed at integrating immigrants,
4. courses to reduce gender-specific disadvantages,
5. qualification courses for the exercise of honorary posts and voluntary services,
6. courses designed to promote the social integration of people with disabilities or to alleviate or compensate for their specific disadvantages,
7. parental and family education,
8. courses for young adults to support personal and professional orientation in the transition phase from school to work
9. orientation and qualification courses with the aim of integration into working life,
10. course provision to improve the economic and social structure of rural areas,
11. courses which serve the qualitative development of kindergarten and school,
12. courses offered in cooperation with universities and their institutions,
  - (a) if scientific knowledge is taught in these courses,
  - (b) if these courses improve transitions from work or school to higher education,
  - (c) if adult education institutions take over parts of the teaching responsibilities of the higher education institution on the basis of agreements; or
  - (d) if new forms of mediation are tested.

Educational measures which meet special social needs are weighted with an increasing factor of 1.5 to 3.5. [...]



# Public financing of adult and community education in New Zealand/Aotearoa - commitment, constraint and celebration

Author: Colin McGregor



## Abstract

**New Zealand or Aotearoa (the Maori name now commonly used in New Zealand) has a history of adult and community education (ACE) that can be traced back to pre-European settlement. Today there is a mix of funded and unfunded organisations providing ACE. They provide courses that cover areas such as personal enrichment and vocational learning. In general ACE has been underfunded and under-resourced. However there has been significant progress with the election of a new government in 2017. This government has had a focus on the development of ACE policy and has increased funding for the sector.**

New Zealand is a nation of 5 million people in the South Pacific. It was first settled by Maori about 1320 in several waves of waka (canoes) from eastern Polynesia. The first Europeans from the Netherlands arrived in 1642 and the British followed in 1840, with more British arriving in the 18th and 19th century. It is unique in terms of having a Treaty with Maori, the Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1841 which has become the mechanism to address past injustices. The current population breakdown is 70% European, 16.5% Maori, 15.3% Asian and 9% Pacific Island (it has to be noted that each person has the opportunity to assign to more than one ethnic group during a census. Therefore the sum is more than 100%). Over 30 distinct Pacific groups live in New Zealand. It is both bicultural (Maori and English) and multi-cultural, with many Pacific Island nations, and their culture and language, represented. Auckland City, with a population of over 1.5 million, has about 400,000 people. It is the largest Pacific Island city in the world.

New Zealand has a history of stable government on the Westminster model, a unicameral government and no federal states. Government is

elected through Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) representation implemented from 1996. This model resulted in far greater representation from Maori and Pacific peoples in government. In 2020, for the first time since MMP was introduced, a government secured enough votes to govern without requiring a support party.

New Zealand recognises Maori (along with English) as an official language. Whilst New Zealand considers itself bi-cultural, statistics indicate that there is some way to go for equality of outcomes. Although generally considered a very tolerant society New Zealand was traumatised by a terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch in 2019. 51 people were killed.

New Zealand has been lauded for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst by no means out of the woods, New Zealanders are enjoying freedoms not experienced elsewhere, as a result of inspirational leadership, a well-considered strategy ('go hard-go early'), one of the most severe lockdowns in the world, and a strongly compliant community.

## Adult and community education in New Zealand history

ACE in New Zealand can be traced back to pre-European Marae- (Maori meeting house) based learning, where Maori attended where wananga (house of learning). Technical schools offered adult evening classes in the 1880s, and from 1915 to 1940s The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) was set up. It became the main provider for adult education. (Pollock 2012) The government established the Council of Adult Education in 1938.

Interest in Adult Education in New Zealand grew strongly in the 1960s and 1970s, with large numbers attending the Workers' Educational Association courses, and government interest in the adult education sector. Greater recognition occurred in the 1970s with a Director of Continuing Education appointed to the Ministry of Education. The 1980s saw funding cuts to the sector, and a number of reviews. Decades of further cuts and reviews followed. Cuts and reviews tended to follow the thinking of government, especially with a market model and individual responsibility as the focus of many governments. The philosophy of conservative governments has tended to be targeted funding and user-pays, adopting a neo-liberalism model. There has been a general lack of understanding of the wider role that ACE plays in the wider community.

## Scope and meanings of ACE

In general ACE has been under-funded, and under-resourced - the "poor Cousin" (Tobias 2016). The role of adult education has been investigated a number of times; the most recent comprehensive recommendations was made in 2001 (Adult Education and Community Learning Working Party 2001). This review was set up to provide the government with advice on a new policy and funding framework for Adult and Community Education. The review made several recommendations, including setting up an ACE Board, having an ACE unit in the Ministry of Education, legislative change for sector recognition, ring-fenced ACE funding, and a coordi-

nated approach to sector delivery. The review was completed under a Labour (left wing) government. Some of the recommendations from the review informed government policy.

## Financing of ACE

ACE funding has been considered as being part of 'tertiary funding' in New Zealand. Tertiary funding applies to post-school learning. In New Zealand school is compulsory to 16. The body that allocates the funding is the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). This was set up in 2003 and took over tertiary funding responsibilities from the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education remains the body that is responsible for ACE policy. TEC, a government agency, provides funding to the ACE sector for a specific range of courses. (A small cost of living increase was also provided in the 2019 budget).

This has been in the region of NZ\$20 million a year [1 NZ\$ = 0.70 US\$ approx.]. Previously this was focused mainly on vocationally oriented courses, digital courses, and Te Reo (Maori Language). Recently it has expanded to include taster courses and a focus on financial literacy and improved health and well-being (parenting, mental health and resilience/conflict management). Funds are not ongoing, but subject to annual applications made by institutions. In 2020 the Government increased funding to the sector by a total of NZ\$16 million over the next four years. This is the first significant increase in funding for over a decade.

The breakdown by institutions has been (NZ\$20 million):

• ITP (Polytechnics)	23%
• Wanaga (Maori Organisations)	10.5%
• Private Training Establishments	31.5%
• Community Providers	8.5%
• REAP (Rural Education Activities Programme)	11.5%
• Schools	15%



Museums, libraries and art galleries receive operational funding from central government and local government.

## Key policy developments since 2000

Key policy developments include the introduction of the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) and Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities (STEP). The first five-year TES was introduced in 2002. The Strategy sets out the government's goals for tertiary education to guide the activities of the government's tertiary education agencies and the decision making of providers.

Another important step was the establishment of the Tertiary Education Commission as the intermediary and funding agency for tertiary education, including adult and community education.

There have been a number of regulatory changes including the introduction of charters and profiles, which set the strategic direction for each Tertiary Education Organisation and its funding agreement with the Crown. These have more recently been replaced by Investment Plans. These now ensure alignment between organisational planning, funding decisions, and level of performance to be achieved by the provider. Investment plans have been implemented in the ACE sector from 2009.

Finally, there have been significant changes in the way tertiary education organisations are funded. The changes have seen a move away from a demand-driven funding model that focused on participation and competition between providers, to an investment-led approach that promotes collaboration between providers, and quality and relevance of provision, as well as access. This new approach to funding links to the government's goals as set in the 2002 Tertiary Education Strategy (TES). It is implemented through Investment Plans negotiated with each provider. Investment Plans outline how a TEO will respond to the TES, and to the needs of its own stakeholders - students, employers and communities - on a regional and national basis.

Investment Plans are developed in discussion with the TEC.

In 2008 New Zealand elected a National (Right-wing conservative) Government. 2008-9 funding to the ACE sector was NZ\$43.87 million. The global financial crisis from mid 2007 to 2009 had an impact: "2008 global financial crisis took its toll on participation in the tertiary sector and in 2009, NZ\$500 million of governmental funding was withdrawn from tertiary education. Enrolments were capped, having significant and disastrous effects" (Amundsen, Diana, November 2020, personal communication). In 2009-10 this was cut to NZ\$28 million by the new government; in 2010-11 to NZ\$9.3 million; and further cut to NZ\$4.9 million in 2010-11. Many organisations survived using a user-pays format, but they were dramatically reduced in terms of what could be provided. For example, school providers fell from 212 schools in 2009 to 17 schools in 2020. Government funding also narrowed down to a small range of specific programmes - literacy, numeracy, digital and Te Reo (Maori Language). Personal enrichment courses were considered an individual benefit rather than a public good, and the cost borne by the learner.

The tertiary sector in New Zealand consists of three areas: the academic, traditionally universities; vocational training, traditionally Polytechnics and Apprenticeship training, along with more recently Private Training Establishments (as a result of neo-liberal reforms in the 1990s to introduce more competition); and ACE. Vocational education and training (VET) has traditionally been viewed as alternative to academic training in New Zealand (Maurice-Takerei 2016).

Like the ACE sector, the VET sector has also been subject to numerous reviews and in 2020 is subject to yet another review (Review of Vocational Education).

In 2017 a new Labour-led coalition government won the election. Policy work has also been undertaken with the ACE sector. After an initial cost of living increase for ACE that was applied from 2020, in May

2020, they announced an increase to the budget from 2021 for ACE by NZ\$16 million over 4 years, and increased the range of courses that are funded. This included funding for ACE Aotearoa, the peak body for the ACE sector. In 2020 the Labour Government was re-elected with a large increase in its majority.

Where government funding is not available it is user-pays, and organisations survive through donations or bequests.

Currently, at least 600 organisations deliver some form of ACE (Chauvel 2019). In 2017 TEC funded 74 organisations through its ACE fund. These include Private Training Establishments (19), schools (17), Community Education Providers (19) and Rural Education Activities Programme (1 body but 13 locations). The main programmes are personal enrichment, foundation learning, cultural enrichment and professional/vocational enrichment.

The groups not funded include organisations such as the WEA, which was funded by philanthropic trusts or bequests, and can also charge for courses. These organisations can quickly meet a need by developing appropriate courses. Other groups, such as Men's Sheds, provide a service tailored to a specific sector of the community (in this case older, retired men who work on specific community projects) without government funding.

New Zealand also has bodies such as a University of the Third Age (U3A), Senior Net (which provides computer training to the senior age group) and the Fabian Society, which are self-funded.

## How well is ACE understood by whom?

The understanding of ACE has varied according to different priorities from different governments. Traditionally the conservative government in New Zealand has been less supportive than liberal governments. For example, in 2003 the Labour (liberal) government endorsed five national priorities

- Strengthening social cohesion
- Strengthening communities by meeting identified community learning needs
- Encouraging lifelong learning
- Targeting learners whose initial learning was not successful: and
- Raising foundation skills. (Tobias 2016: 68)

In 2010, under the National (Conservative) government, the priorities became:

- Engage learners who have not been well served by education in the past
- Increase literacy, language and numeracy skills for individuals and whanau
- Contribute to the overall cohesiveness of the community

Table 1 outlines Tertiary Education Commission funding in 2017. Note that the Private Training Establishments (PTEs), schools and others, and community education are usually combined. These have been split out here to indicate the community education portion.

## Institutions, content and methods of popular ACE

In New Zealand there are 5 main categories of ACE provision. These are outlined below with the providers and method of instruction.

1. **Personal enrichment:** Budgeting, home management, hobby courses, sustainability, English as a second language providers, literacy provision
- Providers/institutions: Some universities, some schools, community organisations, REAPS (Rural Education Activities Programmes), WEA (Workers Educational Associations), Men's Sheds

**Table 1:  
Tertiary Education  
Commission funding  
in 2017**

		%
<b>Universities (8)</b>	1,572,000,000	54.7
<b>Institute of Technologies and Polytechnics (16)</b>	600,000,000	20.9
<b>Wananga*</b>	167,000,000	5.8
<b>Industry Training Organisations (11)</b>	171,000,000	6.0
<b>PTEs, schools and others</b>	345,500,000	12.3
<b>Community education</b>	17,5000	.61

Source: Tertiary Education Commission (2017)

\*Wananga are Maori Training institutions akin to universities

- Methods: face to face small group and community activities, some now online
- 2. **Foundation learning:** literacy, numeracy, driver's license, employment skills, digital skills
  - Providers/institutions: Private Training Establishments (PTEs), schools, not-for-profit and charitable organisations, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs)
  - Method: individual and group face to face, and some online information delivery
- 3. **Cultural enrichment:** Maori Culture and language revitalisation, Treaty of Waitangi, languages and culture
  - Providers/institutions: schools, Maori/Iwi organisations, Pasifika Organisations, REAPS, WEAs, universities
  - Methods: curated informal learning, face to face tours and sessions for individuals and groups, access to self-directed learning, online delivery
- 4. **Professional/vocational:** Career development, employment upskilling, volunteering
  - Providers/institutions: schools, universities, WEA, not-for-profit organisations
  - Methods: individual and group instruction
- 5. **Search and Rescue Training/ Emergency Training:** Specialist training for volunteers
  - Providers/institutions: Specific ITPs
  - Methods: group instruction

### Role and contribution of ACE in the rise of popular movements

The ACE sector is independent, and self-managing, with a strategy and mission focused on the learner. The sector has seen ongoing development e.g. a move from 'night classes' for the masses for self-improvement to a broader more inclusive population: community education but also literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for employment. In some cases, ACE practitioners and programmes have been pioneers and ahead of their time. This was especially the case in the 1970s,

but also more recently when ACE practitioners and programmes have been in the forefront of new ideas and social change (Tobias 2016). This has included gender education and Te Reo (Maori Language). Trends included: trade union education in the 1980s; rise of work-based training from the late 1960s; adult literacy movement in the 1970s; rise of ESOL and programmes for Pasifika. More recently ACE has been at the forefront of adjusting to new technologies due to the impact of COVID-19.

The ACE sector has also been at the forefront of supporting excellence in teaching and adapting to changing need with new strategies. This has not been without tension, as government choice of direction hasn't always aligned with the adult and community education ethos.

### How are ACE providers audited?

Where government funding is received, detailed reporting is required of numbers, attendance, and outcomes. Under-delivery results in a claw-back of funds. Providers are audited on a regular basis, and receive rankings based on this audit. This audit, an External Evaluation and Review, is undertaken by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). It is an extensive and in-depth analysis of the providers, and final reports are publicly available on the NZQA website. The rating can impact on the provider. For example, if the rating goes down significantly, there is a possibility of no additional funding, or potentially reduced funding. ACE Aotearoa has developed an outcomes tool that can be used by providers. This measures a learner's gain in confidence, achievement and next steps (moving onto further education). Community funded organisations do their own evaluations. There is no appraisal that focuses on sustainability and social impact.

### Benefits of ACE to society and the individual

Outcomes include employment preparation skills, literacy and numeracy, Te Reo (Maori language), digital literacy, driver licensing, English language, culture and languages, fitness health and well-being, art, craft and photography. Learners gain in societal engagement, confidence and self-belief, health and well-being, community contribution, cultural knowledge, and identity.

It is hard to measure the benefits to society. In 2008 PricewaterhouseCoopers did research on the outcomes of ACE participation in New Zealand (ACE Aotearoa 2008). They found a range of individual benefits such as community participation and improved confidence, that they linked to improved social cohesion and improved civic citizenship. Individual benefits are measured and reported on. ACE Aotearoa, the peak body for the ACE sector in New Zealand, has developed a tool which measures individual learner outcomes with a focus on gains in confidence, skills and knowledge.

### Strengths and shortcomings of the current system

The current system enables grassroots community groups to identify a community education need and meet it. Groups such as the WEA are funded by philanthropic trusts or bequests. They can also charge for courses. These organisations can quickly meet the need by developing appropriate courses. As previously mentioned, there are other groups such as Men's Sheds, University of the Third Age (U3A), Senior Net (which provides computer training to the senior age group) and the Fabian Society, which are self-funded.

The recent increase in funding with a government focusing on the well-being of citizens is a new key strength.

Shortcomings mainly relate to very focused government funding, with associated reporting require-

ments. This means that some courses are limited to what is funded. As we have seen, organisations can also be severely impacted when government changes or priorities change.

## Key successes

Despite commonalities in delivery, the ACE-provider landscape is highly diverse. It shows a sector catering to learners from diverse demographics, backgrounds and circumstances, with diverse learning needs. The ACE landscape is all-encompassing. It meets the needs of different cohorts of learners because of this diversity. ACE learning contexts are closely shaped to individual and community needs in unique and appropriate ways.

## Hopes for the future

Providers are wanting certainty and additional funding.

ACE will need to continue to build alliances with other progressive groups and organisations.

There is a need to analyse how the State has wielded control over adult and community education by its control of recognition and funding. The pitfalls of engaging with government policy without a clear and critical understanding of potential implications need to be considered.

In particular the ACE sector needs:

- A clear, compelling message on the value it adds to society
- A strong campaign to communicate this message to stakeholders and the community
- Strong alliances.

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# A profile of community education in Ireland

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## Abstract

**Community education is central to Irish adult learning for marginalised learners. It provides key support services, designing learner-centred, community education to diverse learner cohorts. Its range of accredited and non-accredited options include retraining, upskilling, and progression to higher education, with personal and social outcomes. Life-wide and lifelong benefits are widely reported, but the grassroots orientation makes it hard to slot into government remits. It is funded through diverse government departments and non-governmental sources, overly complicating the funding system with burdensome reporting. The study explores national understanding, including its grassroots orientation and development, considered also in the context of COVID-19, which is an opportunity to address longstanding political and policy issues.**

## Introduction

Located in the North Atlantic, the Republic of Ireland occupies most of the most westerly island in the British Isles. Populated by 4.9 million people, 11.6% of whom were born outside the State, it has a small open economy with a high gross domestic product and a legacy of educational inequality. Community education has grown and evolved to address embedded systemic educational inequalities. Ireland drew associated investment from the European Union since joining in 1973. This paper describes community education, a model of non-formal education, within the context of Irish policy and practice. Community education is the term normally used for popular adult learning and education (ALE).

Community education is a vital component of the adult learning sector in Ireland. Developed through a succession of grassroots movements, it was initiated mainly by women's community groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) promoting educational equality, inclusion, and lifelong learning (AONTAS 2009). Operating largely through independently managed community centres, community education providers remain partially or completely outside formal government structures. As such, community education providers are afforded a greater level of flexibility and agility that allows them to respond quickly to changing community needs. Their services can more easily remain holistic and learner-centred, allowing the needs of participants

to take precedence over top-down policy constructions that can oftentimes fail to meet the needs of learners and local communities. While this autonomous, grassroots position affords the sector with unique benefits, community education faces major challenges in terms of sustainable, streamlined funding. Often it does not receive the formal recognition it desires for the valuable role it plays in the broader adult learning sector. For this reason, it is worth exploring what is community education, what role it plays in the Adult Learning Sector in Ireland, and most importantly, why it is so valuable.

## The national understanding of community education

Winnie Coakley, an adult learner, describes her experience of Dublin Adult Learning Centre, a community education centre in inner-city North Dublin, as ‘a place of healing’. Lee Carroll states that Access 2000, a community development organisation in Wexford, “has given me confidence and belief in myself and opened doors”. Learners offer powerful accounts of the transformative impact of community education on their lives, their family and community. With this background, this section focuses on articulating community education in the context of Irish literature and policy.

Definitions of Irish community education tend to be grounded in Freirean critical pedagogy, whereby education is aimed at social transformation. The diversity of provision, as well as its ability to meet diverse needs, is a key ingredient to its success (Fitzsimons 2017; CEFA 2011; Freire 1970).

Community education operates by a set of principles or values which place the needs of the learner at the heart of any educational approach; as such, individual learner pathways are custom-designed to meet learners’ needs (Slevin 2009 and Grummell 2007). A Limerick study on Community Education (Power et al. 2011) defined community education at its most basic level as representing “a movement for education to go out into the community, rather than the community coming to it” (Lynch 1997 cited

in Power et al. 2011). Indeed, the focus on individual learner needs is the root of community education’s ability to effectively support marginalised learners (Power et al. 2011; Bailey et al. 2010; and CEFA 2011a). In particular, wrap-around support services are cited as tools that have helped to mitigate some of the structural and social challenges learners face in accessing education and training. These supports, for instance, have addressed limited access to transport, unmet childcare needs, low levels of confidence, and limited community supports (Mooney and O’Rourke 2017).

The community education movement played an integral role in the expansion of broader adult education provision in Ireland. With increasing levels of unemployment, poverty, and exclusion in the 1980s, local community groups who were “established to tackle disadvantage from within” were seen as vital components for social change (AONTAS 2004: 9). The government began to recognise this value and began to explore ways to further support and integrate independent community education providers into the formal adult education system.

As community education entered a new decade, *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (Department of Education and Science 2000), provided formal government recognition to the value of the sector, devoting a chapter to community education and promising an injection of funding, supports, and key personnel as part of an overall framework for Adult Education (AONTAS 2004: 7). That chapter considers the richly complex and dynamic nature of community education, noting its interconnectedness with other modes of community engagement and social movements. It acknowledged the closeness of community education to community development, while also highlighting its feminist orientation. For the authors of *The White Paper*, a feminist praxis was at the heart of any definition of Irish community education. It notes that:



“perhaps the most fundamental point regarding the conjuncture of feminist education with community-based women’s education is the common starting point being the lived experience of the women participants. In starting from that point, as opposed to a syllabus or institution-driven agenda, Community Education assumes a different character to all other forms of formal education, not merely in terms of its content but in terms of the relationships between the participants themselves; between the participants and tutors; the learning process and outcomes and the modes of assessment” (111).

The ways in which this is enacted, at a community level, are powerfully demonstrated in adjacent research, *Women at the Forefront the Role of Women’s Community Education in Combating Poverty and Disadvantage in the Republic of Ireland* (AONTAS 2001). While the values and ethos of community education were very much grounded in feminist principles, its application, however, had a much wider reach, focusing on providing educational opportunities to underrepresented learner cohorts such as Travellers, migrants, low-qualified adults, substance misusers, and lone parents.

Twenty years on, the 2000 *White Paper* remains the key policy text for the sector, while other more recent literature such as *More Than Just A Course* (Bailey et al. 2010) and *Sowing the Seeds of Social Change* (AONTAS 2011) have provided an overview of the sector and its impact. Brid Connolly has written extensively on the historical development of community education (Connolly 2005 and 2010), while Camilla Fitzsimons’s *Community Education and Neoliberalism* (2016) has surveyed the sector, highlighting a new set of challenges for community education in this current 21st century landscape. These publications reflect the ways in which the sector has evolved.

In spite of the optimism generated by *The White Paper* in bringing community education further into the formal education sector and investing in its strengths in addressing social and economic inequality, the years following the publication of *The*

*White Paper* saw a number of economic challenges, and further disparity within the sector (Fitzsimons 2017 and Harvey 2012). This did not mean the valuable work undertaken by community education groups ended; rather, groups largely returned to their grassroots independent work, finding means to survive on the margins or completely outside the formal education system. Recently, however, challenges to social inclusion and educational equality posed by COVID-19 helped to illuminate the value of this work once again, resulting in a renewed government focus on the value of community education to the broader adult education sector in Ireland.

In Ireland today, community education courses are both non-accredited and accredited. They fulfil a range of learning objectives such as personal skills development, social integration, life skills, parenting, citizenship and democracy education, literacy and numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), digital skills, study skills, preparation for work, career planning, cultural awareness, and engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals. Community education places a premium on face-to-face learning, with group work being a key process. However, provision has increasingly moved online or into a hybrid, remote learning context due to COVID-19 restrictions. The one national unifying body of community education groups is the AONTAS’ Community Education Network (CEN), which hosts over 120 community education providers. The CEN was established in 2007 by AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation, as a network of independently managed community education providers who work collaboratively, sharing information and resources, engaging in professional development, and working to ensure that community education is valued and resourced.

## The value of community education in Ireland

The value of community education provision comes both from its ability to reach underrepresented learner cohorts, its learner-centred provision, and the variety of type of experiences offered.

**Table 1:  
Benefits of  
non-accredited  
or non-formal  
learning**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Societal</b>
Social inclusion/ personal belonging	Strengthened democracy
Increased language skills	Migrant integration
Personal empowerment	Greater civic participation
Relational capital	Intergenerational understanding and connection
Improved mental health and wellbeing	Community development
Greater health awareness	Higher gross national levels of happiness
Increased civic engagement	Greater climate change action and awareness

The ‘life-wide’ and ‘lifelong’ benefits of community education are widely reported within an Irish context (AONTAS 2011; AONTAS 2010; AONTAS 2001). While community education offers a range of accredited learning options that include objectives such as employment, upskilling, progression to higher education and technical training, community education providers also offer valuable non-formal learning opportunities that lead to a range of positive personal and social outcomes and in many cases act as a bridge to formal learning. The benefits cited by community education providers are vast. They encompass both individual and collective gains. A list of some of the benefits identified in current research can be found in Table 1.

In Ireland, the desire to see the wider benefits of community education and development captured has resulted in the development of the Pobal Distance Travelled Tool to measure soft skills relevant to employment, education and personal development for service users engaging with the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.

The name Pobal means ‘community’ in the Irish language. Pobal works on behalf of Government to support communities and local agencies toward achieving social inclusion and development. The Distance Travelled Tool is designed to “support service users and staff to work together to identify personal goals for the client and show progress over time. The tool is non-judgemental and supports the development of strengths and skills”. It seeks to recognise that “Each journey is individual” (Department of Rural Affairs and Community Development 2020). It measures five ‘soft skill’ areas including ‘Literacy and numeracy confidence’; ‘Confidence, goal setting and self-efficacy’; ‘Communication skills’; ‘Connection with others’ and ‘General work readiness’. The tool was introduced to all Local Community Development Companies and Local Development Centres on 30th January 2020 (Department of Rural Affairs and Community Development 2020). However, a tool to measure the wide-ranging impacts specifically of community education has yet to be developed.

## Funding community education

Broadly speaking, the community and voluntary sector has faced harsh and disproportionate government cuts since the publication of *The White Paper* (2000). Without a sustainable funding model, community education providers are forced to allocate disproportionate amounts of time and resources to securing funding from governmental and non-governmental bodies from year to year. Procuring proper resources keeps community education providers away from what they do best: building relationships with their community and supporting learner engagement. This untenable, never-ending struggle by community education providers to find adequate funding has become a necessity to ensure that doors stay open, learners have tutors, and learners can benefit from participation and progression in education in the communities where they live. Being forced into top-down government funding structures that must be adhered to, in order to remain open, hinders instead of helping the mission of community education providers.

Moreover, this approach to funding community education is the mirror-opposite of the very model of provision that was praised in *The White Paper*. This feature of sustaining community education in Ireland can be viewed through the lens of *The White Paper* as not only unsustainable and unjust but also as unjustifiable. No other key player within the education system, especially one that delivers such a positive impact for people most in need of educational and social equality, is challenged and curtailed by such a precarious model of funding.

In their 2019 Annual Report, the National Further Education and Training Authority SOLAS (whose acronym in Irish – An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna – translates as ‘Further Education and Skills Service’) reported 51,550 ‘community education beneficiaries’. It remains the largest government body funding, and gathering data on, community education. Yet many community education providers are outside of SOLAS’ remit, and many organisations rely on various other funding

streams, including those from other government departments, to support the provision of courses.

From available data through SOLAS reporting of community education spending, it is clear that community education provision receives significantly less investment per learner than does the broader further education and training system. In terms of spend, in 2018 SOLAS reported that the €10.9 million allocated to community education provision benefited approximately 50,000 learners, which equates to €218 per learner. Regarding total further education and training provision costs excluding community education, SOLAS spent €472.5 million benefiting approximately 288,000 learners, which equates to €1,641 per learner.

Funding for community education simply does not cover the true cost of provision. Additionally, SOLAS funding is distributed regionally through Ireland’s 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). As realised from a *White Paper* recommendation, community education facilitators employed within ETBs offer support to funded groups; challenges however remain. The manner in which this funding is distributed to community education groups in Ireland varies, often due to legacy agreements. Some groups have historical agreements that allow them to access core funding from year to year, while others access support through tutor hours alone. This inconsistency of approach to funding community education organisations across ETBs further complicates the issue, ultimately impacting on community education learners.

Furthermore, community education’s grassroots orientation has meant that it has not easily slotted into the remits of government departments. This is reflected in the ways in which community education in Ireland is funded. Indeed, the complex and diverse nature of the sector, in terms of profile and funding, has been a challenge for policy-makers, with the recent Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy describing community education as ‘not [...] easy to categorise’. Yet the ‘ground-up initiatives’ which characterise community education were felt to be a ‘critical part’ of provision;

and they were praised for their ability to ‘serve the needs of particular localities, often in partnership with local organisations’ (SOLAS 2020: 24). It also opened with a statement from the Minister for the Department of Further and Higher Education, Skills, Science and Research which asserted that community education had an important role in “facilitating integration of our diverse population” (SOLAS 2020: 4). Yet the strategy failed to paint a comprehensive image of the sector within FET or Ireland more broadly, calling instead for the development of a Community Education Framework to help provide a clearer definition and picture of provision.

AONTAS has monitored the issue of funding since the establishment of the AONTAS Community Education Network. In 2011, a position paper was published about creating an effective funding mechanism for community education. From 40 organisations, a key finding of this 2011 research was that 10 government departments were providing funding for these AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) members. The three main departments were:

- the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- the Department of Education and Science
- the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Later in 2017, as part of an ERASMUS+ KA2 project, FinALE, AONTAS commissioned a study which identified 12 unique funding streams, representing 8 government departments (FinALE 2017). Within this grassroots level research project, the diverse range of government departments and non-governmental funding sources emerged. Although community education is set within further education and training policy, for a range of reasons some organisations receive no funding from SOLAS via local ETBs. As with the outcome of the AONTAS research in 2011, the FinALE research found that organisations receive their primary and secondary funding from a multitude of department and agency sources, as

well as from philanthropy, learner fees, religious organisations, and community grants. This assortment of funding providers, each offering funds for specific purposes, has led to an overly complicated funding system that has yet to be fully deciphered by all funders and funding recipients alike.

For example, Longford Women’s Link, a community education organisation located in a rural setting and addressing the needs of marginalised women, does not receive any SOLAS funding via the ETB. Although engaging 344 learners per year, the provision of services to enable access requires funding through multiple departments – including Department of Social Protection, Department of Housing Planning and Local Government, Department of Social Protection – with smaller grants such as banking corporate social responsibility programmes, and student fees. As such, its complete data would not be held by any one government agency. It can therefore only be obtained in consultation with the group directly. This is also the case for groups which are part-funded through ETB tutor hours; they receive funding through a variety of sources.

The inefficiencies of such a system of funding are expressed by community education organisations; and in 2019 the OECD report *Getting Skills Right: Future Ready Adult Learning Systems* cited the FinALE research stating that:

“Project-based funding is temporary by nature which can undermine the financial sustainability of adult learning system; and procedures for accessing external funds can be complex and time-consuming, which can result in gaps in adult learning provision and can absorb a significant amount of human and financial resources which could otherwise be available for training” (94).

## Measuring the sector

The complexity in the funding system leads to patchiness in the data collection system. The lack of any centralised data collection poses challenges for provider capacity, as well as for researchers and

advocates who seek to gain a full picture of community education provision across Ireland. While some pockets of data do exist for groups that are funded by government agencies (such as SOLAS and Pobal) or provide formally accredited courses (through Quality and Qualifications Ireland, QQI, or other accrediting bodies), these data are not always comparable, making providing a national picture difficult. Individual groups also draw revenue from a number of different funding sources, meaning that what they report to one funder may not be representative of the true total number of learners or courses provided; rather it would only reflect what was being delivered under that funding stream.

Records are kept for all community education providers that provide accredited educational provision, despite their funding source, through Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). In order to receive accreditation, groups must supply proof of enrolment and successful measures of meeting current quality standards. SOLAS records have shown that there are over 100 independent providers delivering accredited community education provision (SOLAS 2020). Yet many community education courses are non-accredited, suggesting that the number of community education providers noted by QQI under-represents the true number of community education providers across Ireland.

The one national unifying body of all community education groups is the AONTAS' Community Education Network (AONTAS CEN). Prior to the launch of the AONTAS community education census in October 2020, there had not been a formal mechanism in place to capture the disparate data sources from CEN members or community education organisations. In its pilot year, this organisational survey focusses on identifying community education groups, courses, funding streams, learners, and supports provided within community education. This research will enable the creation of an interactive map providing detail on CEN and other community education provision across Ireland in early 2021.

## Recent developments in community education

The most recent Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024 has a specific action dedicated to developing a Community Education Framework. This seeks to address many of the longstanding issues, including funding challenges (SOLAS 2020). In August 2020, a new ministerial role and associated government department was established, which places community education in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Early indications of an enhanced focus on community education to meet the social inclusion remit of the department, in addition to the impact from COVID-19, has resulted in increased funding for community education – for the first time in decades.

At the onset of the pandemic, in March 2020, the Department of Education and Skills quickly established a set of groups to support the continuity of further education and training, higher education, and community education provision through the COVID-19 crisis via the Tertiary Education System Steering Group (Quality and Qualifications Ireland 2020). As part of this structure, AONTAS CEO Niamh O'Reilly was tasked with establishing and chairing the Mitigating Educational Disadvantage (including community education issues) Working Group (MED). The group brought together providers, academics, NGOs and policymakers working across the adult learning sector in higher, further, and, importantly, community education. It published a range of papers identifying issues impacting marginalised learners, with associated recommendations. This structure offered a space at national level for the issues of community education to be heard.

Due to the vast expertise community education providers had on the issues facing learners on the ground, the MED group developed a paper specifically exploring the issues faced by community education providers in times of COVID-19, entitled, *Challenges facing Learners and Community Education Providers within Tertiary Education* (Mitigating

Educational Disadvantage Working Group 2020). The paper offered a series of immediate and long-term recommendations to address barriers faced within the sector. Three of the six long-term recommendations featured addressed issues connected to funding restrictions and reporting requirements for independent community education providers. In response to this work and a range of lobbying activities by AONTAS, on Budget Day 2021 a specific budget of €8 million aimed at mitigating educational disadvantage, a vital and important support for community education organisation in meeting the increased need of their learners, was announced by Minister Harris TD. [A TD (Teachta Dála) is a member of the lower house of the Irish Parliament].

## Conclusion

In the Irish context, community education has evolved as an effective, grassroots, inclusive model of education which developed to address structural and educational inequalities. Although, community education has been included in a range of policy developments within the broader lifelong learning system, the current ineffective funding mechanism hampers its potential. As the COVID-19 pandemic has not affected all members of society equally, and as community education is well-positioned to meet the needs of the most marginal learners during and in the wake of the pandemic, there is now the potential to move at a political and policy level to address the longstanding issues the sector has faced.

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# Public financing of popular adult learning and education – Kominkan as community-based learning centres in Japan

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## Abstract

**This paper discusses public financing for adult education in Japan with a focus on Kominkan, as community-based learning centres under the current Basic Act on Education. Government allocations to popular adult education decreased over the decades due to the availability of diverse learning opportunities including offers by private institutions. Kominkans have good potential to function as local centres for sustainable community development, as shown in the cases in this paper. Systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are required to convince policymakers for public financing to this area. Researchers have an important role to play here.**

## Introduction

This article looks at public financing for adult education in Japan. It focuses on Kominkan (literally ‘public citizen hall’), as community-based learning centres and their potential for sustainable community development. Many public community-based learning centres in Asia have emerged under the international commitment and framework of Education for All context since 1990, such as community learning centres (CLCs). UNESCO Bangkok has initiated and coordinated a regional network of CLCs through exchange forums, capacity and resource development, which are consolidated and available as on-line training programmes (UNESCO Bangkok 2019). The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning also provides a synthesis on CLC experiences of Asian countries (UIL 2016). Kominkan was initiated for socio-economic recovery from World War II (WWII) through promoting individual and group learning for democracy and scientific knowledge and skills.

Education in Japan is accessible mainly through three domains: school education, social education, and family education. Social education is defined as intentional educational activities outside of school education, which can be categorised as both non-formal and informal education under the International Standard Classification of Education (UIS 2012), covering children and adults.

Basically, the policies and implementation of the education sector including financing in Japan are decentralised to local government to support learning activities effectively, responding to the local needs and demands of the people and communities, except national institutions such as national universities and museums.

According to the National Social Education Survey conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2018, there are 90,311 social education institutions in the

**Table 1:  
Social education  
institutions and  
facilities**

	2002	2005	2008	2011	2015	2018
Kominkan	18,819	18,182	16,566	15,399	14,841	14,281
Library	2,742	2,979	3,165	3,274	3,331	3,360
Museum	1,120	1,196	1,248	1,262	1,256	1,286
Museum type*	4,243	4,418	4,527	4,485	4,434	4,452
Youths	1,305	1,320	1,129	1,048	941	891
Women's education	196	183	380	375	367	358
Physical education (PE)**	47,321	48,055	47,925	47,571	47,536	46,981
Private PE	16,814	16,780	17,323	15,532	14,987	16,397
Theatre	1,832	18,885	1,893	1,866	1,851	1,827
Lifelong learning	...	...	384	409	449	478
<b>Total</b>	<b>94,392</b>	<b>94,998</b>	<b>94,540</b>	<b>91,221</b>	<b>89,993</b>	<b>90,311</b>

Source: Social Education Survey of 2018 (MEXT 2020a)

\*Museum type institutions are run by non-government institutions, and the local education board recognises that their activities are similar to public museums.

\*\*Physical education is basically sports centres or facilities. Besides these centres/facilities under social education category, school facilities are also open to the public for sports activities.

country run by local governments, designated management bodies or private organisations for public use. Table 1 above provides an overview of social education institutions reported by this survey.

As shown in Table 1, physical education institutions have the largest numbers, followed by Kominkan. The numbers of these two institutions have decreased, while libraries, museums and lifelong learning institutions have increased, their numbers being the highest in 2018 since this survey started in 1955.

While 90,311 institutions are recognised as social education institutions, 51,972 are run by the local government budget and others are run by non-pub-

lic financing. There is a mechanism of outsourcing public services by local governments to different types of designated management bodies to run public institutions including social education institutions. This management system emerged in 2003 to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services. Out of the 51,972 public social education institutions, 15,836 are run by designated management bodies such as non-profit organisations (NPOs) (5,620), private companies (4,983) and other organisations (2,584). In the case of Kominkan, most public Kominkans are directly managed by local government, while 9.9% are designated as these organisations, the details being shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:**  
Types of organisation  
designated to manage  
public Kominkan

Government organisation*	Community organisation	Public interest cooperation	Private company	Non-profit organisation	Others
3	395	313	121	43	532

Source: Social Education Survey of 2018 (MEXT 2020a)

\* Government organisations not under the education board

Outsourcing of public services to non-government bodies certainly improved efficiency and effectiveness. At the same time, it caused discontinuity of activities and lack of long-term vision, as well as less sense of people’s participation as community members (Nagasawa 2016).

As well as the public Kominkan financed by the local governments, it is estimated that there are more than 70,000 community based autonomous Kominkans in the country, although exact numbers are unknown. These autonomous Kominkans are basically financed and run by non-government bodies including community organisations, the private sector, or non-profit organisations. They do not have legal status or official recognition by the government as education institutions; yet some of them get subsidies from the government to support their activities.

### Background to social education and its public financing

Japan had a long history of adult education before introducing the national school education system in the late 19th century. It is considered that the literacy rate was high at that time because of the existence of learning mechanisms such as Han-ko (schools for Samurai) and Terakoya (temple-based learning centre) for the general public (Saito 2012). After introducing the public school education system under the Meiji Restoration in 1872, the

idea of social education was also discussed, and a section in charge of education outside of school established in the Ministry of Education in 1919 to improve knowledge and skills of the general public, under the national slogan of “strengthening the country through industry and army forces”. During WWII, social education was an effective means for promoting the awareness and spirit of the people in general to support the government policies for the war against the Allies, in particular the US.

Restructuring of the public administration of Japan after WWII was a big turning point for the country, including the role and functions of the whole education system of schools and social education institutions. The Basic Act on Education was enacted in 1947 to support the development of the democratic and cultural state of Japan, and to contribute to peace and human welfare. The Act ensures the right to education for all, recognising three main educational delivery modes: schools, home, and society. One main part of the restructuring of education administration was separating education administration from the general administration of local governments, to ensure independence and neutrality of education by preventing interventions from the political agenda. Initially, the local education board was formulated with members by public elections, but this was changed in 1956 to appointment by governors or mayors under new legislation. As a result, education administration has not been fully independent from the local government general administration.

(100 million yen)

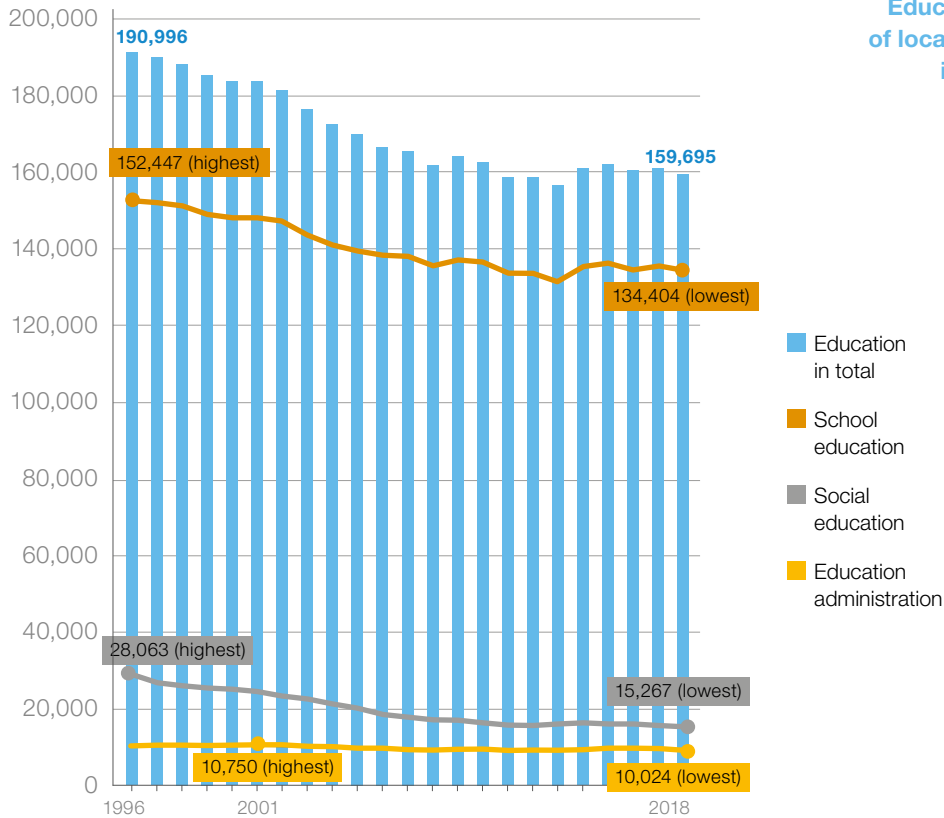


Figure 1: Education budget of local governments in Japan

Source: Survey on education budget of local government (MEXT 2020b)

Budget category	Main contents
School education	Public nursery, primary, secondary, specialised and vocational schools
Social education	Institutions established and run under the education board, and social education activities of the education board including cultural and sports and cultural heritage preservation
Education administration	Management of education board

Source: Survey on education budget of local government (MEXT 2020b)

Table 3: Education budget categories

Under the Basic Act on Education, the School Education Act was enacted in 1948 to guarantee free and compulsory education for 9 years through primary and junior secondary schools. The Social Education Act, formulated in 1949, covers the general principles of social education as self-learning and collaborative learning, with emphasis on the voluntary motivation of learners rather than order or control by government and education administrations. The act focuses on Kominkan as the main delivery mechanisms of social education in the community. Separate acts were formulated respectively for libraries in 1950 and museums in 1951.

According to the national literacy survey conducted in 1948, the literacy rate of youths and adults was high, which implied less necessity for adult literacy teaching. This reinforced the demarcation between basic education for school age children through formal schools, and social education for youth and adults through institutions outside of formal schools, leaving adult literacy education behind. Since this survey, it was considered that literacy was not a social problem of the country but of individuals. However, it is estimated that there are more than a million adult illiterates without access to public basic education. The Act on Guaranteeing Compulsory Education was promulgated in 2016 to develop and implement policies to ensure basic education for adults and children in need. Technical and vocational education and training for adults is also not part of social education, but under the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, while pre-service vocational education and training is provided through school education at the senior secondary and tertiary levels.

Providing adult education under public social education was affordable for many local governments when the economy was booming in the country until 1980s. However, after the collapse of the 'bubble economy' in the early 1990s, public budget constraints became more significant for national and local government, and the public management system had to be restructured, particularly funding for public services. Nation-wide policies on mergers of several cities and towns took place in 1999 to cut

the local government budget, including personnel and infrastructure costs.

The Ministry of Education has carried out a biannual survey of public financing to the education sector since 1949, based on the budget of local governments in the country. The results of 2018 showed that the social education budget of local governments is about 9.6% of the total education budget, while school education is 84.2% and education administration 6.3%, according to the education budget categories in Table 3. This survey also shows a continuous budget decrease of the entire education sector, particularly to social education. As shown in Figure 1, the education budget of local governments in 2018 was 1.59 trillion yen (15.2 billion USD) which is 16% less than the highest amount of 1996 reported under this survey. While the school education budget has decreased 12% and the education administration budget has maintained almost the same amount, the social education budget of 2018 was 15 billion yen, which is a 45% decrease from the budget of 1996.

As mentioned earlier, the management and implementation of education activities are decentralised to local government, with four funding sources: the budget of the local government of prefecture and cities; a subsidy from the national government; education bonds of local governments; and donations. Allocating budget to each sub-sector is different according to management levels from national to city government. The budget of social education at the city government level is high, as most activities are close to people's daily life (see Table 4).

Under the social education budget, the portion of physical education facilities such as sports centres and gymnasias is the highest, followed by libraries and Kominkan (Table 5). The ratio according to the institutions has not changed much since 2014 (MEXT 2020a).

With the decentralisation policies, each local government formulates budget planning and allocates funds for the establishment and maintenance of the building and facilities, staff cost and programme

**Table 4:**  
Education budget  
according to the  
funding sources (in  
100 million of yen)

	School Education	Social Education	Education Administration	Total
National subsidy	17,380	643	163	18,186
Prefecture government	70,427	1,619	2,965	75,011
City government	40,108	11,363	6,795	58,266
Local bond	6,438	1,593	95	8,126
Donation	51	50	5	106
<b>Total</b>	<b>134,404</b>	<b>15,267</b>	<b>10,024</b>	<b>159,695</b>

Source: Survey on education budget of local government (MEXT 2020b)

**Table 5:**  
Budget of social education  
institutions by local governments  
in 2017 and 2018\*

	2017			2018		
	Budget	Ratio %	Change %	Budget	Ratio %	Change %
Kominkan	218,349	13.8	0.4	218,471	14.3	0.1
Library	291,738	18.5	4.3	279,921	18.3	▲ 4.1
Museum	153,949	9.7	6.9	138,879	9.1	▲ 9.8
Physical education	376,016	23.8	▲ 4.8	356,242	23.3	▲ 5.3
Youths	49,060	3.1	11.8	46,701	3.1	▲ 4.8
Women's education	1,321	0.1	▲ 11.3	1,659	0.1	25.6
Cultural	109,999	7.0	▲ 7.3	101,839	6.7	▲ 7.4
Other institutions	102,245	6.5	▲ 4.1	103,223	6.8	1.0
Social education activities of education board	151,044	9.6	▲ 12.7	153,413	10.0	1.6
Preservation of cultural heritage	126,148	8.0	1.0	126,386	8.3	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,579,873</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>▲ 1.5</b>	<b>1,526,739</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>▲ 3.4</b>

\*Budget in millions of yen; Ratio: percentage of a portion in the total budget; Change: percentage of increase or decrease (▲) from the previous year.

Source: Social Education Survey of 2018 (MEXT 2020a)

activities. Public financing for staff varies according to the employment system and budget of each local government, with a combination of full-time permanent staff, contracted full-time staff and contracted full-time/part-time staff. Kominkan staff members are not always required to have a licence, unlike schoolteachers. There is a certificate to become a social education specialist who completes a course in a university or education institution. According to the Social Education Act, each education board of the prefecture and city government should have at least one social education specialist, but not necessarily in each Kominkan. Local governments organise pre-service and in-service training for social education staff, while the national government provides general guidelines and technical support such as training materials.

Through the movement promoting lifelong learning as one of the government's main social policies in the late 1980s, the right of individuals to learn for improving knowledge and skills throughout life was emphasised. Local governments, mainly at the prefecture level, have separate public financing under the general administration budget to lifelong learning institutions, such as sports (41.4%), culture (24.5%), related to women (2.3%) and youths (2.2%), of a total 1.9 billion yen in 2018. This amount is equivalent to one-eighth of the social education budget of the year (MEXT 2020b).

## Emergence and changing roles of Kominkan

Under the Social Education Act, Kominkan emerged to provide learning opportunities for all, including children and adults outside formal schooling. Prior to the Act, Kominkan was initiated by a concept note from Mr. Teranaka of the Ministry of Education in 1946, requesting local governments in the country to establish education centres to provide youths and adults with learning opportunities for community development with a focus on promoting scientific knowledge and democracy.

When Kominkan was legalised under the Social Education Act in 1949, the functions of Kominkan were confined to those of education institutions: to contribute to community development through learning, with conditions of non-commercial, non-religious and non-political activities. The National Kominkan Association was also established in 1951 as a non-government organisation to provide extensive information-sharing and capacity-building programmes, and to develop a nation-wide network linking with prefecture level associations established in almost all the prefectures in the country.

During the 1950s and 1960s, when the country was an agricultural society, neighbourhood ties in a community were strong and collaborative work at local communities was required. Kominkan provided various work- and life-related as well as community development programmes. However, urbanisation, which began in the 1970s, changed the role of Kominkan from community development to individual learning for knowledge and skill development in many urban areas. Since most of the population in both urban and rural areas started working in government and company offices, their sense of belonging became with those offices or schools, so local community ties became loose, compared with those of the earlier agricultural society.

The role of Kominkan has become a place for people to gather for socialising, learning through lectures, classes, and joint learning, and connecting with one another to create learning circles (Matsuda 2015). Official activities of public Kominkan are free for local citizens, while learning circle activities may be charged with a small fee for covering the honoraria of instructors and cost of, for example, ingredients for cooking and materials for artwork. Kominkan also charges rental fees on rooms to those who wish to use them for private activities such as meetings and practising musical instruments. Many learning circles were organised in Kominkans, but the 'communities' formed by these circles were often based on individual interests rather than geographical community needs and

interests. In this context, people in general have less sense of belonging to a local community and try to avoid tasks that used to be shared by community members, such as cleaning rivers and streets. People tend to rely on the government or private services for maintaining the environment, rather than participating in such efforts and sharing the burdens of their own communities. This kind of mindset as ‘consumers’ of public services has become a big barrier to promoting community-based mutual learning and collaboration (Makino 2019).

Under the government’s main education policies of lifelong learning, the Bureau of Social Education was replaced by the Bureau of Lifelong Learning in the Ministry of Education in 1988, and many local governments followed this kind of replacement in their education board secretariat. Commercial education and training institutions expanded various learning opportunities for meeting individual needs and interests; universities also provide lifelong learning programmes through open lectures for general public by faculty members as part of their social extension services.

Along with the changing notions of communities and diversified learning opportunities described above, the role and necessity of Kominkan was questioned mainly from the public administration side, arguing that lifelong learning can be left with individuals while government should provide necessary information and space for such purposes (Matsushita 1986). There have been discussions whether Kominkan should maintain their status as an education institution or change the function to a community development centre. In the latter case, the main concern of educators is that such centres will become a general public administrative service provider, with education and learning functions suffering a low profile (Nagasawa 2016).

While individual lifelong learning opportunities have been expanded by diverse providers, social problems in the country have become more visible since the mid-90’s, in particular ageing and a declining birth rate. Implications of the ageing society are a lack of workforce and the financial burden of wel-

fare to a government already burdened with huge public financial deficit. To revitalise the functions of a community for developing mutual support for community welfare, several local governments have introduced mechanisms for comprehensive community development, but not necessarily with Kominkan.

Local governments merged several institutions in a community, and established community development committees and/or community centres, without limiting their functions to education but encouraging comprehensive community development including commercial activities such as community businesses. Some Kominkans have also been shifted to community centres too, to develop them as multi-functional centres. This shift means governance of some Kominkans was transferred from the local education board to the general administration of city government. Because of the mergers of local governments of cities and towns, and this shift to community centres over the last decades, the number of public Kominkan under the education board has declined over recent decades from 18,819 in 2002 to 14,281 in 2018.

This overview of the trend and situation of Kominkan in Japan has not been very positive. This paper now highlights some good practices in order to revisit the potential of Kominkan as driving forces for a sustainable society, to revitalise communities with reference to the global and national commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

There are various kinds of initiatives to reinforce or reorient the functions of Kominkan, for example, in these cities:

1. Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture, promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) through whole city approaches, Kominkan being a hub for community-based learning.
2. Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture, developing bottom-up learning mechanisms of public and autonomous Kominkan, linking learning activities with other sectors, in particular welfare.



3. Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture, introducing public-private-partnership in the management of Kominkan, with flexible 'community design' approaches.

The following sections elaborate the above cases of different features, the main common focus being sustainable community development through learning under public financing for its management.

### Case 1. Okayama City: Kominkan as learning centres for sustainable development

Okayama City is located in the western part of the country with a population of 700,000. It has diverse landscapes of urban, rural mountainous and coastal areas. In Okayama City, Kominkan have been established in each of the 37 districts (junior high school catchment areas), coordinated by the Kominkan Promotion Office under the City Education Board budget. The total education budget of the city in 2020 is 49.4 billion yen, with 7.9% for social education (Okayama City 2020). Other education budget components include: school education 75.6%; pre-school education 4.2%; health and sports 5.9%; and general administration 6.4%. Under the social education budget, allocation for Kominkan is 41%, most of which goes to personnel and infrastructure costs.

Each Kominkan has a director and 3 to 4 staff members, including one full time regular staff specialising in social education, which is not very common in other cities of the country. Staff members plan and provide learning opportunities through lectures, discussions, and project planning using learning experiences.

Initiatives of Kominkans in Okayama City are drawn to attention as practical cases of community-based ESD through lifelong and life-wide learning, which is a unique approach in the country. The main reason why Kominkan in Okayama initiated ESD was the city government decision in 2005 to adopt ESD as the main policy through a whole-city approach,

including different government offices, Kominkan, schools, NPOs and the private sector. Okayama City was designated as one of the initial seven Regional Centres of Expertise for ESD, coordinated by the UN University since 2005.

There are eight overall priority areas of Kominkan for ESD, namely, environment, senior citizens, health, gender, child-care, youth development, inter-generational learning and networking. Looking to these priority areas, each Kominkan has developed their programmes in response to local needs. Key principles of Kominkan include: regard local issues as our own; establish a mutual learning relationship; review the present from the perspective of the past and consider the future; ensure participation of stakeholders from the planning; take actions to solve problems and change behaviour; and, learn the pleasure of cooperation for our common future. Specific activities were summarised and published in 2014 as 'Ren-Men-Men' (Okayama City 2014), which means in Japanese inter-generational linkages to hand down wisdom, heritage and values from the past to the present, and to the future. Kyoyama Kominkan (showcased in Box 1) is a pioneer of ESD activities of Okayama, with environmental education being its entry point.

Developing an effective network of community stakeholders is a strong feature of Kominkan in Okayama under the overarching city policies for ESD and the SDGs. Many public schools in the city have joined UNESCO Associated School Network to promote ESD in cooperation with local organisations, in particular Kominkan. There are joint programmes of schools and Kominkan such as disaster prevention practices, free space for children after school with volunteers, organised play and hands-on learning activities, e.g. science and languages. Summer programmes for children supported by local resource persons and annual Kominkan festivals are also good opportunities for inter-generational learning to find and discuss community issues. Kominkan plays a facilitating role to link community people with NPOs and experts of different sectors such as childcare, health, welfare, environment and gender issues. Volunteer groups

**Box 1:  
Environmental  
Project in Kyoyama  
Kominkan**

Kyoyama District is in the urban residential area where several schools, universities and cultural institutions are located with natural parks and hills. Since 2004, Kyoyama Kominkan has promoted ESD efforts, encouraging participation of children and trying to involve their parents and all generations in the area. The project 'environment check-up' aims to ensure that programme participants jointly identify, share and work on problems occurring in Kyoyama. At the same time, it tries to develop individuals who can play a major role as leaders in improving the community environment. Under this project, waterfront environmental research studies are carried out in early summer and autumn in order to check the situation of species, water quality, and the volume of water. This serves as a good opportunity for local residents to consider the connection between nature and their daily lives. The research has diversified into a wide variety of efforts, such as proposing and realising the construction of 'A Path of Greenery and Clear Water', filming a movie titled 'Irrigation Water Developing the Community', and restoring the tradition of a water deity festival with a traditional dance, for the first time in half a century. These are good opportunities for young generations to experience and enjoy many forms of the community's traditional culture and customs to pass on to the next generation.

Source: based on Ren-Men-Men (Okayama City 2014)

are important partners of Kominkan operations, as presented in Box 2.

Another important feature of Okayama Kominkan is developing linkages from local to global partnerships under ESD. Such inter-country relationships can promote awareness in the general public of the city, and can encourage stakeholders to understand that their activities and efforts can contribute to global challenges, including environment protection, bio-diversity, climate change and socio-cultural diversities as common sustainable issues.

In 2014, the last year of UN Decade of ESD, the International Conference on Kominkan – CLC for ESD was held in Okayama. Nearly 700 participants from 29 countries attended, including educators, practitioners, researchers and government officials. Okayama Commitment, the outcome document, presented the potential of Kominkan and CLCs to promote community-based learning for a sustain-

able society in the future. The conference sessions and the Commitment covered key ESD areas of social, economic, environmental, and cultural issues as development domains, and advocacy, capacity development, research, networking, policy support and international cooperation as main modalities.

Okayama City advanced its policies on ESD in conjunction with the Global Action Programme (GAP 2015-2019) of ESD, as a key network partner on local community. The UNESCO–Japan ESD Prize was awarded to Okayama City in 2016, based on which the Okayama ESD Award was established by the city government to further international networking for sustainable development. In the meantime, under the city policies on ESD–SDGs since 2016, Kominkans continue to function as a key community development centre under the overall City Kominkan strategy 'Kominkans open to the society for our future'.

**Box 2:**  
**Formulating ties**  
**among local**  
**residents in Kozai**  
**Kominkan**

The Kozai Kominkan is located in a central residential area of Okayama City. The ageing ratio of this area is by far the highest of all the urban areas in the city. To ensure that local residents can continue to live without worries, it is essential for them to develop networks among themselves. At the Kozai Kominkan, there have been programmes to train volunteers who can provide daily life support to senior citizens that is neither offered by the administration nor covered by public nursing care insurance. It is often pointed out that there is a gap between those who provide support and those who receive it. To provide effective support for local residents, the first step the Kominkan takes is to identify the needs and what and how volunteers can do in the local community. Secondly, based on this needs and potentials identification, people discuss what types of activities are feasible and how to continue such activities. There are some principles for the activities, developed through a series of dialogues, such as: tasks should not be too much burden for volunteers and can be done in 30 minutes each time; and the role of the leader should be shared by members in rotation every month. The volunteers are mainly aged early 60s, just retired from work, who can help their senior people for the daily life of shopping, cleaning the windows or having a tea together for chatting. A network of small mutual help has been expanded to the local primary and junior secondary schools, and also to private companies under the coordination of Kominkan. This activity through learning community issues and potential is a good opportunity for both children and adults to regard the ageing society as their own issues and prepare for better senior lives.

Source: based on Ren-Men-Men (Okayama City 2014)

## **Case 2. Matsumoto City: Kominkan based on the community learning networks**

Matsumoto City, with a population of 240,000, located in the central mountainous area of Japan, called the Japan Alps, has a rich natural environment, cultural heritage and famous music and art events and institutions. Nagano Prefecture, including Matsumoto City, is reputed to be an education prefecture. It has been promoting community-based learning with the largest numbers of Kominkans in the country, including both public district Kominkan and community based autonomous Kominkans. The total education budget of the city in 2020 is 9.9 billion yen, with 35.0% for social education. Other education budget compo-

nents include school education 23.4%; pre-school education 4.1%; health and sports 24.5%; and general administration 13.0% (Matsumoto City 2020). The portion of social education in Matsumoto is higher than both the national average and that of other cities introduced in this paper. The Kominkan budget is 27.1% of the total education budget. That includes subsidies to community based autonomous Kominkan totalling 489 in the city.

The main principles of the Kominkan in Matsumoto are that they should be community-based; local people should take ownership with government support; they should cover various local issues; learning should be the key objective; and collaborative actions should be taken by the community and the city government. With these principles, Matsu-

**Box 3:**  
**Local community network with the city government**

Located in the western part of the city centre, Tagawa District is one of the 35 districts in Matsumoto City, consisting of 12 communities and with a population of 3,847 as of January 2020. The CDC and Kominkan share the same building while the welfare office is in a different building nearby. There is an autonomous Kominkan in each community functioning as the community focal point, which organises a gathering once a month, with themes such as healthcare, disaster risk reduction, cleaning the community, new year's party, and community café. These gatherings are supported by resource persons arranged by the District Kominkan, the local hospitals and people with local wisdom. The city government provides a small fund of US\$300 per year for organising these activities. It also provides a subsidy to build or renovate these autonomous Kominkan buildings and facilities. District Kominkan staff join the events to share information from the government side and to learn about key local issues and needs of the communities.

According to the people of the Tagawa District, the availability of the autonomous Kominkan in the community makes a big difference since it is located within walking distance for most people including senior citizens, enabling people to get together and socialise easily. As they develop closer relationships, people undertake community tasks voluntarily without making them obligations or assignments. Such relationships in the community make it easier to have their voices reach the Tagawa CDC, which relays the comments as feedback to government policies and programmes. This community-based infrastructure and bottom-up community participation is one of the key drivers of the community-based learning process in the city.

Source: information based on the field work by the author in February 2020

Matsumoto City has established 35 District Kominkans in each primary school catchment area to promote sustainable community development through local collaboration and mutual learning.

Since the late 90s, the need to provide services for senior citizens became more visible in Matsumoto, so the city government formulated a policy to develop community-based welfare through establishing a 'community welfare corner' in each district. Since learning, community development and welfare have a lot in common when tackling local issues, the Kominkan and the welfare corner have had close linkages. To further these linkages, a Community Development Centre (CDC) was established in each district in 2014 to coordinate

government interventions in the community across different sectors. The CDC has developed local networks among Kominkan, welfare corner, community-based organisations and the city government departments as well as the private sector, universities and NPOs.

One of the strong features of Matsumoto Kominkan is the existence of autonomous Kominkans in each community, as the key infrastructure for people to get together, learn and socialise, based on community needs. Each district Kominkan maintains close linkages with the autonomous Kominkan in order to provide information about updated policies of the city government, and financial and technical support for community activities.

**Box 4:  
Internship  
programme for  
community  
development**

The Matsumoto City government introduced an internship programme in collaboration with Matsumoto University and district stakeholders and established a Memorandum of Understanding between the city government and the university in 2015. Interns are students who just completed their undergraduate studies. There are three to five interns every year, working as contract staff members of the city government for a period of two years for community development, linking with District Kominkan. Some initiatives carried out by the interns include:

- Organising a ‘treasure hunt’ activity in which participants walk through and explore the community to identify local attractions in order to create a map and guide of the community.
- Advertising local resources and attractions on the website.
- Organising a local market selling vegetables which cannot be sold in supermarkets because of the irregular shapes and sizes, but which are good in terms of quality for consumption.
- Organising community cafés to discuss issues about daily life, particularly those of elderly people, such as shopping – interns resolved this issue by visiting households using a cart to sell vegetables.
- Branding local special products of vegetables and processed goods, e.g. local vegetable oil, to add value and promote sales.

Source: information based on the field work by the author in February 2020

Each community has a committee to coordinate consultation with local stakeholders about community issues such as local transportation, healthcare, fitness, and childcare. The committee calls on different members for consultation according to the specific issue, rather than on the same fixed members. Such flexible and issue-based collaboration has enabled stakeholders to work together easily, since they have a choice to participate rather than be obliged or have mandatory duties. A case of such community-based collaboration mechanisms is presented in Box 3.

Matsumoto City has been trying to develop a sense of responsibility among community members of all generations to take ownership in community affairs.

The city policy upholds the vision of ‘living together’ and promotes this vision with an emphasis on balancing work, individual time, and time for the community. Specifically, each district made a comprehensive District Development Plan through a participatory consultation process of involving multi-stakeholders covering community management, economy, environment, health, welfare, childcare, disaster risk reduction and education.

Some positive initiatives have been observed through youth-led activities to revitalise the community in collaboration with a local university, as shown in Box 4.

The visions of Kominkan in Matsumoto cover the domains of SDGs including the environmental, socio-economic and wellbeing of people in present and future communities. I asked the Matsumoto Kominkan staff and community people about SDGs during my field work in February 2020, and they responded: “We found that our current activities are well in line with the concept of SDGs and process of ESD, and realised our local activities are linked with global initiatives. At the same time, since our visions and plans already include the global agenda, we would like to use our own wording, developed by ourselves, instead of replacing them with foreign terminologies.”

Most of the Kominkan regular staff of Matsumoto are assigned from other sectors of the city government rather than education. In general, they work in Kominkan for 2 to 4 years, and then usually move to other sectors of city government, which looks like a loss of their expertise and a lack of continuity of Kominkan operations. However, from another viewpoint, working in Kominkan with community people provide good opportunities for city government staff to be exposed to field reality through learning together with community people at Kominkan. They can bring their experiences in Kominkan for their future work in planning and management of public services. This mechanism has worked well in Matsumoto, because of the local networks of autonomous Kominkan in each community that have created local assets and good learning environments for both Kominkan staff and community people.

### Case 3. Naha City: New initiatives through Public Private Partnership

Naha City, with a population of 316,000, is the capital of Okinawa Prefecture. This consists of Okinawa and other islands, located to the Southwest of the main islands of Japan. Okinawa was occupied by the US administration after the end of WWII in 1945, until 1972. Japanese legislation and administration were introduced from 1972, including public education systems. Therefore, the

development process of Kominkan in Okinawa has been different from other parts of the country. Public Kominkans were established in 1975 in Okinawa while community based autonomous Kominkans were established and functioned during the Ryukyu (Okinawa) civil administration of the US. These autonomous Kominkans were based on traditional community management mechanisms, culture, and networks as learning centres for community development, covering education and culture as well as socio-economic and quality of life improvement of the people.

According to the city government report on education administration and finance of 2020 (Naha City 2020), the budget for social education is 11% of the total education budget of 14 billion yen. Other education budget components include school education 64.6%, pre-school education 0.1%, health and sports 12.8%, and general administration 11.6%. Naha City established the Central Kominkan in 1975 under the Japanese education legislation. Area-based Kominkans were established together with public libraries in a total of 6 regions of Naha City. Each regional Kominkan covers a broader geographical area than a school catchment area, as compared with other cities, for example, a catchment area of secondary school in Okayama and that of a primary school in Matsumoto. Out of 7 Kominkans, 5 are directly managed by the city government, while the other two are run by NPOs as designated management bodies for public administration programmes. The following cases of Naha City provide experiences of public-private partnership.

Wakasa Kominkan is situated in the western coastal area of Naha City. This area used to be the main port of the city for trade mainly with China. It remains as a historical site, together with a newly developed commercial and residential area. The local government established Wakasa Kominkan in 1992, in response to the demands of local residents for Kominkan and a library, using the previous marketplace. This is the first Kominkan that employed an NPO staff in 2003 while the director was appointed from the city government. A public forum, ‘free di-

### Box 5: Parlour Kominkan

Wakasa Kominkan started Parlour Kominkan in 2017, as a mobile Kominkan, in response to demands from residents of Akebono District. The District is a newly developed residential area without decent public space except a primary school established in 1990. It was not easy to establish a new Kominkan building through official procedures, and to obtain necessary financial allocations from the government. A new idea emerged to develop Kominkan space for people to get together with outreach support services from Wakasa Kominkan. The main principles of this Kominkan are to create space for people to gather; involve artists to look at space, place and people differently; support people by listening, not imposing; organise art workshops with specific messages; and develop linkages with local stakeholders. The idea of mobile and open space based Kominkan has encouraged people to be free and open to participate, which is very different from the typical government centres with entrance, reception and fixed space with walls and partitions. Furthermore, open space invited local people to bring their own resources and wisdom for creating their own Kominkan, involving different generations. The Parlour Kominkan is to finish as a project in 2020, but the community-based initiatives will continue for designing new ways of realising Kominkan through bricolage of local resources with the help of external support and linkages with education, art and community development experts.

Source: Wakasa Kominkan website: <https://cs-wakasa.com/kouminkan/parlor/>

alogues in the community’, was initiated in 2005 to review the past and present of the community, and then discuss overall visions of its community and the role of Kominkan. Then, ‘Wakasa Community Support’ was formulated as an NPO and started running the Kominkan. To mobilise the participation of youths, public relations through blogs, newsletters, website, Social Network Services were introduced first to let people know about Kominkan. Wakasa Kominkan organised breakfast events and big gatherings, using games for open and informal communication and networking of youths and other generations, which led to learning about social issues and the history of the community. The outreach programme presented in Box 5 is a unique initiative of this Kominkan.

Handagawa Kominkan is another initiative, run by an NPO as the designated management body. This Kominkan was established in 2007, as the newest

in the city, covering the Mawashi region of 100,000 people. The main concept of this Kominkan is to preserve the local culture and promote people’s pride for sustainable community development, serving a population of approximately 10,000 which is equivalent to a primary school catchment area. The NPO’s 10,000 people’s informal dialogues (Ichiman-nin no Idobata Kaigi)’ running this Kominkan, consider that this size of population coverage is suitable for discussing local issues and taking actions together for solutions. Programmes of Kominkan have been developed through consultations with various stakeholders of government, community organisations and schools. Most of the activities of Handagawa Kominkan are organised with participation of different generations as shown in Box 6.

Handagawa Kominkan has encouraged community people to develop global perspectives to



## Box 6: Inter-generational activities

The main purpose of inter-generational activities coordinated by Handagawa Kominkan is to find potential future leaders and key personnel in local communities, the prefecture, and the country. There is a group of local resource persons who can share with school children their knowledge and skills of cooking, traditional toy making and local history and culture. Mutual support programmes were initiated between high school students from remote islands who need reasonable housing and elderly homeowners who need support for daily shopping and disaster preparation from Typhoons. Supporting children in need was launched jointly by an NGO, school counsellor and the Kominkan to provide children of a single parent with dinners for improving their nutrition and preventing their isolation and loneliness from the society. The Kominkan facilitated these activities through a series of small consultations with different stakeholders and groups for matchmaking the needs and resources for developing mutual support mechanisms, in cooperation with the city government and community-based organisations. Mutual support through dialogues and actions is a learning process for all, of different generations.

Source: based on Handagawa Kominkan report (Ichiman-nin no Idobata Kaigi 2016)

understand diverse culture, respecting people's dignity and rights including ethnicity, traditions, and gender. To further the initiatives of inter-cultural understanding, Handagawa Kominkan applied for the 'EDU-Port' programme supported by the Japanese Ministry of Education, to organise an exchange project with community educators of Egypt. The focal person of the counterpart in Egypt used to study and work in Okinawa., and would like to adapt the experiences of Kominkan to local communities there. A series of training workshops has been organised since 2019 that helped Egyptian counterparts to expand the notion of non-formal education from literacy to sustainable community development. The workshops also provided the Handagawa Kominkan staff and community people with opportunities to learn about a different culture and social situation as well as people. Such mutual learning between geographical areas and generations is a key principle of the Kominkans of Naha, highlighted in this section.

## Potential of Kominkan for public financing as community learning and development centre

The three cases in previous sections present needs and potential of Kominkan for sustaining society through public financing for social education in different contexts and approaches. The case of Okayama is policy driven, recognising Kominkan as a key institution in each community to lead ESD/SDGs discussions and activities through networking local stakeholders. Kominkan in Matsumoto shares similar visions of sustainable communities, with different approaches of collaboration with autonomous Kominkans run by local communities. The public-private-partnership in the Naha case provides new initiatives to cope with changing social contexts and roles of Kominkan, utilising the expertise of NPOs to carry out community development activities in more flexible ways.



To ensure the right to lifelong learning within the tight budget situation of the government, it has become important to justify the use of public financing by showing evidence of the outcomes and impact of the activities, for accountability to taxpayers. Unlike the case of public schools that have the national curriculum standard, learning objectives and assessment through tests, portfolios and other means, activities of Kominkan are not designed to test or score learning outcomes, since the learning process of individuals by themselves and in groups is the objective of Kominkan programmes. In the past, assessment of learning outcomes and evaluation of activities were not discussed much for social education; but many local governments are now trying to introduce systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in social education programmes including Kominkan.

Accordingly, assessment and evaluation of activities and projects of Kominkan are being introduced in local government, often building on existing activity-based reports and monthly/annual reports of each Kominkan. There have been some concerns about quantifying the outcomes of Kominkan activities with numbers of events or participants, since Kominkan may try to choose popular events such as lectures by latest media persons to mobilise a lot of participants, which could be organised by private event companies. Although such events are also useful to promote awareness among the general public, Kominkans need to balance these with activities of voluntary learning of community stakeholders taking local initiatives for public interests in such areas as health, disaster risk reduction, and support mechanisms for people in need, as observed in the case stories.

In the case of Okayama City, an assessment report is prepared by each Kominkan staff member, covering inputs, processes, and outputs of each activity. Kominkan staff developed assessment criteria through regular coordination meetings, in view of ESD priority areas such as active participation, mutual learning and collaboration, perspectives from past to the future, and actions for transformation. According to the recent city government

policies for public administration and management, Kominkan is now required to show the impact of its activities. A working group of Kominkan staff has been formulated to develop assessment strategies and tools for measuring the impact of Kominkan in terms of influence and transformation of people's behaviour towards sustainable society through learning in Kominkan.

Matsumoto City reviews and revises the city's master development plan every five years, based on research evidence and in view of public opinion, to make necessary modifications including community mechanisms under the master plan. The importance of community-based learning is reviewed through an area research programme on senior citizens' health and life conditions, to find out community life and views concerning health, social participation and social capital, using surveys developed by the Japan Gerontological Evaluation Study.

Naha City undertook an evaluation of Wakasa Kominkan through documentation of daily journals and monthly reports, project reports, field visits, surveys for users and interviews with the Kominkan staff. The report team was impressed by the number and quality of activities carried out by the Kominkan, with the half amount of the budget of Kominkans directly managed by the city government. The report concluded that the effective and innovative approaches of Wakasa Kominkan have been highly appreciated by local stakeholders, and recognised as good models, winning several national level awards.

## Conclusions

This paper provides an overview of public financing for social education and reviews historical background and emerging process of Kominkan, then highlighted different types of Kominkan in Okayama, Matsumoto and Naha in contributing to community development through collaborative learning. Public Kominkan in Japan has a long history as a community-based learning centre, funded by local

government without much question. To justify public financing to mass learning activities, it will not be enough to develop and measure outputs of learning and activities. One must also collect evidence on different aspects from different perspectives.

Unlike an assessment of literacy or qualification based learning programmes, learning outcomes and the impact of community-based learning in Kominkan may be measured through proxy indicators such as the Human Development Index, including education, health, and economy, and/or indicators of the 17 SDGs. The area study of Matsumoto City shows such an example, focusing on the quality of life of senior citizens. Qualitative evidence from various sources and stakeholders, as seen in the evaluation of Naha City, can well justify the public funding of social education. Evaluations should include both external and internal stakeholders, including learners and staff, for their assessment of daily activities, and review their local assets from learning and networking, as initiated in Okayama City.

Public financing of popular adult learning and education should be examined and determined, considering outcomes and impacts of long-term changes and transformation of individuals and communities. Researchers and institutions can play an important role by bringing evidence to policy makers including the voices of stakeholders, especially staff and learners, through documentations of anecdotes, case studies and action research, to mobilise dialogues about the social impact of community-based learning.

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# Public financing of popular adult learning and education – a case study of Australia

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## Abstract

**In Australia popular (community, liberal) adult learning and education (ALE) encompasses a wide range of learning programmes variously described as personal enrichment, liberal adult education, non-vocational, and non-accredited vocational programmes. All are primarily organised non-formal education. A long tradition of community-based organisations, and developing many services that include popular ALE, is the strength of current delivery. The community is involved in voluntary organisational management, service and programme delivery, and direct advice on community needs. Public funding is diverse, complex, and hard to measure; an untidy mix of kinds of support from all three government levels, that would benefit from greater shared commitment and more stability.**

## Introduction

In Australia popular (community, liberal) adult learning and education (ALE) encompasses a wide range of learning programmes that can be variously described as personal enrichment programmes, liberal adult education, non-vocational programmes, and non-accredited vocational programmes, all of which are primarily organised non-formal education (Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training 1991, 1997). Popular ALE also has a focus on learning for participation in community or social action, such as community services and issues-based movements.

Australia has a three-tiered government system. A national (federal) government, 8 state and territory based, and local government (city and regional councils). Each of these governments provides funds that support popular ALE. As education is a prime responsibility of the states and territories, they provide the bulk of funds, with local govern-

ments providing some organisational infrastructure and venues, plus specific grants. Within the federal government, various government departments provide funding for community-based programmes and services, and public institutions.

### Brief history of popular ALE in Australia

Popular (community, liberal) ALE, for convenience, hereafter popular ALE, has been a feature of the Australian community and society for many years. In particular, the sixty-five thousand (65,000) year history of Aboriginal culture has always emphasised the role of learning through the handing down of skills, knowledge and stories from Elders within the community. This learning for both children and adults has been a vital part of survival and enrichment of the lives of the Aboriginal people.

White settlement brought the traditions of Europe, in particular the English-speaking world. After the arrival of the first fleet the ships were converted to hulks and were the first adult education schools in the settlement (Whitelock 1970). Convicts were primarily from urban areas and did not have the skills necessary to clear the land, cultivate crops, care for farm animals and the like. Key skills for the early settlement such as blacksmithing, farrier, tanning were also in short supply, as was basic literacy and numeracy skills (Whitelock 1970).

State governments established Workers Education Associations (WEA), the first in 1827 in Hobart (Bentley 2015), primarily in capital cities and similar to those in England and Scotland, to enable workers to gain skills and also to broaden their knowledge as active citizens. Adding to these WEA, Mechanics Institutes were established in 1880 – 1900 (Whitelock 1970), mostly in rural townships following the first world war, with funding for buildings to house the reading rooms and lectures. This provision was extended through universities by the federal government after the second world war primarily to assist returning soldiers to retrain for the peace-time economy. These University Extension programs commenced in 1891 (Whitelock 1970) also provided learning programmes across Australia's rural regions for farmers and their families. The programmes included more than farm skills, covering a wide range of topics such as world geography, philosophy, ancient civilisations, and skills such as cooking and gardening.

Technical and Further Education Colleges emerged in 1974 (Bentley 2015) as the prime deliverer of vocational and technical education in Australia, sharing the purposes of the WEA but with a major focus on industry skills. They were managed by state governments and spread across rural and regional areas. In addition to vocational education and training (VET), TAFE (technical and further education) Colleges provided popular interest classes to the whole community as learning for leisure or hobby activities. For many years, these courses were heavily subsidised in the TAFE systems, but over later decades are no longer supported with the

government funding and TAFE accountability for industry skills training.

Community-based (community-run) provision of popular ALE is now the most prolific in Australia. Community based organisations are primarily subsidised by state or local government and managed by local volunteers. The delivery of the programmes is supported by the learners through fees. These community-based providers emerged from WEA activities and community neighbourhood action in the 1960s and the 1970s (Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training 1991). Community-based provision has expanded over the years to include Aboriginal Community Controlled Education Institutes, Universities of the 3rd Age, Men's Shed's, Multicultural groups, and Environmental groups drawing on funding from federal, state and local government.

## Understanding, supporting and valuing popular ALE

Within Australia's educational policy and administration popular ALE is not well understood despite two Senate enquiries (Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training 1991 and 1997). There is no policy for ALE at a federal level although a national Australian Language and Literacy Policy was established in 1991 (ACAL 2004). Despite decades of lobbying by the peak body Adult Learning Australia (ALA 2020b) there is no national policy for lifelong learning. Successive Australian governments have interpreted lifelong learning as referring to kindergarten to year 12 schooling, and the formal accredited programs delivered by TAFE and universities.

The range of programmes identified in the introduction as popular ALE is understood broadly by governments and the Australian society, and is considered valuable. But the benefit is viewed to be a private good, that of the individual learner, not the wider community or society, compared to learning for work or professions. The perception of producing only a benefit to an individual has precluded

systematic policy or greater financial support by federal and state governments.

In Australia it is the state governments which have the responsibility for education (early childhood, schools, VET), and each state provides varying support in both infrastructure and programmatic funding. With increasing focus on the economy over past decades VET has a much higher profile than popular ALE, and a higher value to government as the training that supports industry and businesses. VET receives funding for facilities, infrastructure resources and programs in a similar manner to that of the formal schooling system.

In the broader culture there is also a sense that while popular ALE is “good” it is an individual pursuit, a private good and is not essential for society. This lack of support has resulted in less government funding, the development of user pays systems (fees), and the application of market forces on the types, topics and delivery of popular ALE (Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training 1991, 1997). In addition, some of the traditional popular ALE has been subsumed by commercial interests that now offer learning opportunities linked with products, such as home repairs run by the hardware chain Bunnings. Free online courses (that are supported by advertising) also have started to fill the demand for popular ALE in Australia.

### **The role and contribution of popular ALE to the development of society and the individual**

Popular ALE has played a significant role in Australian society for individuals, families and communities. Participation in these learning programmes helps adults to broaden their perspectives of the world, their society and other cultures. As one of the most multicultural countries in the world with an ongoing need for migration from other lands, learning to live together is key to the growth and peaceful development of the Australian society and economy. Learning about other countries, lan-

guages, religions and philosophies builds increased tolerance and compassion for others.

The opportunity to widen adults’ knowledge in areas that are not seen as vocational also encourages individuals to pursue active citizenship through greater awareness of societal issues and strategies that could be used to address them. For instance, taking steps to recycle and reuse materials, conserving water, using alternative energy supplies and land management improvements (Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training 1991, 1997). Popular ALE helps adults to gain an understanding of the need to address inequalities by providing support to those who are vulnerable or in need. It also helps individuals, families and communities to gain knowledge and skills that builds resilience.

Individuals and their families benefit in many ways from participating in popular ALE. Many undertake courses where they gain skills and knowledge for interest. The application of these helps to improve personal life satisfaction. Individuals gain the opportunity to mix with others, and this can improve relationship-building in classes as well as with their family and in the community. Stronger relationship-building skills can improve a range of skills such as teambuilding, parenting and leadership.

Popular ALE also provides an accessible and non-threatening avenue for adults to re-enter education and engage with learning. This is particularly so for those who have had previous negative experiences with schooling or who need to improve their basic reading, writing and numeracy skills. Adults can also find that participation in popular ALE enables the exploration of alternative work and life options.

### **The role and contribution of popular ALE in the rise of popular movements and democracy**

Australia has a long tradition of community-based organisations and the development of many servic-

es that include popular ALE. Popular movements have emerged from popular ALE and popular movements have in turn developed popular ALE. Community-based ALE in Australia itself is seen as a movement that champions the right to education and lifelong learning.

In Australia, citizens have the individual and community freedom to organise and participate in popular movements. The political system also supports popular movements and democracy, but governments may not necessarily fund their activities and learning programs.

During the 1870s and '80s the union movement saw mass unionism spread, particularly the miners and sheep shearers (ACTU 2020). Trade unions have provided a wide range of learning programs to their members over the past 150 years, with some government support but primarily funded by membership fees. Other movements such as the Suffragettes focused primarily on political activism rather than popular ALE, but their activities did raise community awareness and informal learning.

100 years later in the 1970s, new social movements emerged around demands for peace, women's rights, gay liberation and Indigenous rights, which transformed Australia's social landscape. Modern Australia in 2020 owes much to the impact that these movements had upon the social foundations of post-war conservatism (Hamilton 2020).

Many environmental groups started in the 1960s and '70s as grassroots orientated, movement-style organisations (Walker 2020). From the 1980s these movements became more mainstream and provided a wide range of community learning programs to their members and the wider community. World Wildlife Fund, The Wilderness Society, Greenpeace, and the Australian Conservation Foundation are the most influential and active organisations in Australia (DAWE 2020c).

Arguably the strongest community movements in Australia have been centred around sporting activities such as all codes of football, basketball, fish-

ing, sailing, horse riding, cycling, skiing; the list is endless. Australians enjoy joining their local clubs, building their skills in the sport of their choice and competing with others mostly in teams but also individually. Local sporting clubs become community hubs with local volunteers learning how to manage the local committees, undertake fundraising, develop facilities, provide leadership, and help community members to face issues and crisis in their lives. While some government funding is provided for sports training, venues are often local government owned and supported, it is the volunteers and the communities who continue to support the sport through member fees and raffle tickets.

## Commonalities and differences within the funding mechanisms

In Australia's three-tiered government system each level has slightly different priorities and programmes. The funding mechanisms are similar in terms of application for funds, open and transparent processes for allocation of funds, and accountability for the use of the funds on behalf of the recipient.

At the federal level, programmes mostly have nationwide application processes and can be delivered in all regions and cities across Australia. These grants vary and are subject to annual budget allocations to departments.

The programmes are managed by federal government departments and allocated by the departments. For example: *Citizen Science Grants* managed by the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER 2020) is part of the Australian Government's AU\$200 million [AU\$1 = US\$0,77] investment in bushfire recovery for native plants, animals, ecological communities and natural assets. The intended outcome of the grant opportunity is increased community participation in scientific research projects where participants learn new skills, form new networks, receive acknowledgement for their participation, and receive updates on



their participation in specific research projects. The grant value is AU\$500,000.00.

Similarly, with the *Investing in cleaner and greener communities* of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE 2020) under its closed, non-competitive programme: each of the 151 federal electorates could receive up to AU\$150,000 in grant funding to support up to 20 community-led projects that address local environmental priorities. Grants provided through the programme could range from AU\$2,500 to AU\$20,000 per project. The Australian Government has approved and is supporting over 1,330 projects across Australia with a combined value of over AU\$18 million.

There are also learning programmes specifically funding popular ALE such as *Indigenous Fire and Land Management Workshops* funded by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE 2020b). This funding aims to support the recovery and long-term resilience of wildlife and their habitat. The objective of this grant opportunity is to support Indigenous organisations, Indigenous businesses and Traditional Owners to lead workshops aimed at sharing and strengthening knowledge of Indigenous fire and land management practices. There is AU\$2 million allocated for this programme (DAWE 2020b).

It is between the states that differences start to appear for the funding of community-based adult learning and education (Adult and Community Education, ACE/ALE) organisations. In some states these organisations will also be granted funds to deliver accredited VET. They may not receive any specific funding for popular ALE but their infrastructure is subsidised by government grants.

Australia has six states and 2 territory governments. In the Australian Capital Territory Adult and Community Education organisations can apply for grants for specific projects over a period of two years. Allocations are capped at AU\$50,000 for individual projects and AU\$100,000 for joint projects; the total pool of funds is AU\$500,000 (ALA 2020).

The Northern Territory does not have any specific allocation to community-based adult learning and education, but does provide grants for the Home Interaction Program for Parents & Youngsters (HIP-PY) that focusses on parents as the first teachers. AU\$160 million has been allocated from 2014-15 to 2021-22.

New South Wales is a large state in population numbers and provides adult and community education funding for Community Colleges (ALE and VET). The funding targets disadvantaged adults and those located in rural and regional areas. It can be used to 'provide intensive support' to eligible participants to help them find pathways into further training and employment (Training NSW 2020).

In South Australia adult and community education programmes are localised and focus on developing life skills, job search skills and a pathway to further learning and more formal learning settings. In 2019 AU\$1 million was removed from the ACE/ALE programmes budget, with AU\$2 million remaining (Community Centres SA 2019).

Tasmania does not have a specific grant programme for community-based organisations, but it provides funds through Libraries Tasmania "to offer and support a wide range of programmes and activities through its 45 service points across the state. Informal and formal lifelong learning opportunities promote learning for enrichment, foundation and vocational reasons" (ALA 2020).

Victoria has developed a community-based Adult and Community Education sector since the 1960s (60 years). It has the largest number of organisations funded as Learn Local providers. These providers offer pre-accredited and other programmes to enable participants to move on to further education, training and employment. Total grants by the Victorian Adult Community and Further Education for 2019-2020 was just over AU\$31 million (ACFEB 2020).

In Queensland there are no dedicated ACE/ALE funds, but a specific program has been developed

to be offered by a variety of different organisations under a grant application process. ‘Skilling Queenslanders for Work’ (SQW) is a Dept of Employment, Small Business and Training initiative introduced in 2015–16, which has a total six-year funding commitment of AU\$420 million until 2020–21, with AU\$80 million available under ‘Skilling Queenslanders for Work’ in the 2019–20 period.

The SQW initiative includes tailored community-based and supported pathway programs for young and mature aged job-seekers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, women re-entering the workforce, Australian Defence Force veterans and ex-service members, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

Similarly, Western Australian government also does not provide dedicated ACE/ALE funds, but it does support Community Resource Centres and local government authorities to provide training and skills development through an AU\$2 million program. Grants of up to AU\$30,000 are available in each locality.

## Institutions, content and methods of popular ALE

The delivery of popular ALE in Australia that attracts government funding can be broken down into 5 main types of provision.

- Institutions with a primary focus on education
- Institutions with a primary focus on social and community development
- Public institutions providing community learning
- Community-based services
- Issues based movements.

## Institutions with a primary focus on education

At state level various types of community-based not-for-profit organisations have developed a strong history of providing locally based learning opportunities for adults since the 1960’s. Some programs and organisations receiving government subsidies, with the remainder funded by the learner themselves. These organisations and programmes rely heavily on volunteers from the community and support from local councils and businesses. They are Adult Community Education Centres, Community Colleges, Neighbourhood Houses, University of the 3rd Age, and Learning Cities.

The content of the programs offered by these organisations includes: personal skills development, leisure activities, life skills, parenting, citizenship, study skills, preparation for work, career planning, and cultural awareness. Primarily, the learning programmes occur in face-to-face small group and community activities delivered in accessible and local facilities. Most of these organisations also offer vocational training under the VET system and some are now offering online courses.

## Institutions with a primary focus on social/community development

Many of the organisations mentioned in the previous section grew from a focus on the development of the individual and the community. This has often been in response to a particular group or need. Many receive federal or state subsidies that fund coordination of the delivery at a local level, supported by community volunteers. Often, local government provides venues for delivery of the service and small grants for initiatives. For instance, Neighbourhood Houses were developed across Australia in the 1970s to provide local and accessible support for those who were isolated in the home, many of whom had child-care responsibilities. Other organisations developed to support people who have migrated to Australia from across the world and face barriers to participating in the community. Still others have developed to support

**In focus:  
the ACE/ALE sector  
in Victoria**

“The ACE/ALE sector in Victoria is the largest and oldest in Australia. In Victoria, the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board – a statutory authority under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 – funds ACE organisations (known as registered Learn Local providers) to deliver education and training programmes that target people with limited prior access to education, including pre-accredited programmes.

Pre-accredited programs are short modular courses that are primarily focussed on creating pathways for participants to further education and training or employment. Pre-accredited programmes target:

- women seeking to re-enter the workforce or who have experienced or are experiencing family violence
- early school leavers, both mature and youth
- low skilled and vulnerable workers
- Indigenous people
- unemployed and underemployed people
- people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- disengaged young people
- people with a disability.”

(ALA 2020)

older age groups within the community and within care facilities. Over the past decade, Men’s Sheds have spread across Australia, now replicated in many other countries, providing space and support for men in the community.

The content offered in these organisations includes opportunities for social interaction, practical skills learning activities, information sessions, group support activities and access to community services. As the focus is on social interaction, the methods adopted are individual and group face-to-face in specific locations, developed to suit the users’ needs. Childcare is available in many spaces to support attendance. Telephone and online information delivery are also available to provide support to those unable to attend in person.

### Public institutions providing community learning

As in many other countries, Australia has public institutions such as museums, libraries and art galleries that are supported with full funding by various governments (federal, state and local) over the past two hundred years. These institutions provide opportunities for citizens to learn through viewing exhibitions, collections, and having access to written works. These provide informal opportunities to participate in popular ALE.

The content covered by these Institutions is broad and deep: history, art, literature, religion, governance, geography and science, to name a few areas. These organisations make it possible for Australians,

**In focus:  
Men's Sheds**

Men's Sheds originated in Australia in the 1990s to provide a space for constructive and social activity, informal and non-formal adult education, as well as offering a place for ACE/ALE to make friends and regain a sense of purpose. The Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) has approximately 950 member Sheds, but there are around 1,000 Men's Sheds across Australia (Siggins Miller 2016). Men's Sheds have boosted the number of males participating in ACE/ALE. Some Sheds are associated with Neighbourhood Houses and Centres while others are independent. A total of 55% of Shed members live in regional Australia (AMSA 2011). (ALA 2020)

"Since 2010, a total of twenty rounds have been finalised and AU\$6,181,285.00 (goods and services tax /GST excl.) has been provided to assist new and existing Sheds. Under the NSDP, the Australian Government will allocate AU\$1,000,000 (GST excl.) in the 2020/2021 financial year. There will be two funding rounds each allocating AU\$500,000 (GST excl.).

The NSDP provides direct financial assistance to:

- Assist to address the health and wellbeing of the Shed members
- Support health improvements through a focus on the social determinants of health through national activities in relation to key population groups such as men
- Deliver appropriate activities and programmes
- Improve facilities and the sustainability of Men's Sheds across Australia"

(AMSA 2020)

children and adults, to develop an understanding of communities and societies across the world, and an appreciation for the creative output of all cultures, in particular that of Indigenous Australians. Learning about Aboriginal culture, history, geography, languages and lives is the key to addressing racism and disadvantage for Aboriginal people. Migration has also made Australia one of the most multi-cultural societies in the world. Having access to community learning about different cultures is extremely important for all citizens.

These institutions provide curated informal learning, face to face tours and sessions for individuals and

groups and access to self-directed learning. They have been particularly at the forefront in using technology to provide interactive and immersive learning opportunities for the Australian community.

### Community-led services

Australia is a vast land mass with a small, isolated population. It often faces extreme conditions brought on by climate, drought and distance. It has a strong tradition of community-led services that provide emergency assistance across the country. These community-led services have some grant funding from federal and state governments but rely

**In focus:**  
**Libraries Tasmania**

Libraries Tasmania offer and support a wide range of programmes and activities through its 45 service points across the state. Informal and formal lifelong learning opportunities promote learning for enrichment, foundation and vocational reasons. This includes adult education classes, adult literacy and numeracy support, family literacy and digital literacy programmes. Libraries Tasmania hosts 26TEN, a 10-year strategy to engage the broader community and private sector in improving adult literacy and numeracy in Tasmania. Through its grant programme, 26TEN funds employers and communities to contribute to lifting the literacy and numeracy skills of Tasmanians (ALA 2020). Total Grant Pool AU\$500,000 per annum (26Ten 2020).

heavily on volunteers to deliver the services. Members take great pride in the assistance that they are able to render as volunteers and as organisations. These community-led services provide significant adult learning opportunities for their members to gain knowledge and skills that can be applied in other parts of their life and in the community. Some examples are the Country Fire Authorities and State Emergency Services. Members of these services train on a weekly basis for their roles, protecting life and property during crisis (Country Fire Authority 2019). The Surf Life Saving also provides services to the coastal areas and also inland in local swimming pools and lakes. From an early age young people are trained to eventually take their roles guarding swimmers.

Many community-led services have commenced as initiatives driven from the community as needs arose. For the Surf Life Saving it was a community response to drowning; government was not able to provide the protection and training for individuals and families enjoying the beaches and waterways. Now there is significant financial support and government has also initiated other programs such as a New South Wales local council which has initiated free swimming lessons for newly arrived migrants from the Sub-Saharan, in response to an increase in drowning deaths in 2020.

The content covered in training includes practical skills such as using chainsaws and fire retardants, physical development (climbing, swimming), First Aid and CPR, working in teams, and leadership skills. Methods used are primarily face to face with individual and group instruction, learning manuals and on the job training.

### Issues-based movements

Federal and state governments also provide grant funding to issues-based groups and movements that have developed from the community. This is most significantly in the area of land management and environmental protection: Landcare, Wildlife Rescue, and groups such as the Royal Society of the Protection and Care of Animals. These groups provide learning opportunities to their volunteers as well as to the community.

The content depends on the group focus but can include general environmental awareness, learning about specific land management, and environment issues such as water, drought, climate, fire, plants, animals and oceans. Methods typically employed by these groups include individual self-study, group meetings, community activities and actions, practical application in the environment.

**In focus:  
Surf Live Saving  
Australia**

Surf Life Saving Australia is Australia's peak coastal water safety, drowning prevention and rescue authority. With 173,865 members and 314 affiliated Surf Life Saving clubs, Surf Life Saving Australia represents the largest volunteer movement of its kind in the world. Surf Life Saving is a unique not-for-profit community cause that exists through community donations, fundraising, corporate sponsorship and government grants (total government funding in 2019, AU\$61 million for Surf Life Saving and Royal Life Saving Australia). Since Surf Life Saving was established in 1907, over 660,000 people have been rescued by our surf lifesavers. Surf Life Saving has opportunities for people to be an active patrol member saving lives on the beach, an age manager for Nippers [children] on the weekend or as a volunteer club official working behind the scenes to ensure things run smoothly.

More information on Surf Life Saving: [www.sls.com.au](http://www.sls.com.au)

**In focus:  
Landcare Australia**

Landcare Australia works with governments, corporate and philanthropic organisations and donors to facilitate funding for good quality, hands on projects and programs that will improve environmental outcomes for the Landcare community.

The funding raised from partnerships and sponsors supports Landcare Australia to develop programmes that are practical, deliverable and community focused. The funding (AU\$22 million in 2020), and in-kind support, helps the Landcare community achieve a diverse range of positive outcomes. These include a sustainable approach to integrated land management, natural habitat restoration, enhancing biodiversity, building resilience in Australia's food and farming systems, and creating social cohesion and wellbeing in communities.

More information on Landcare Australia: <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/>

## The role of the public authorities in financing popular ALE

Funding for popular ALE is provided across all three tiers of government in Australia, federal, state and local. State and federal Education Departments do provide some targeted funding for education providers; but following the focus on learning for work this funding is mostly to build study or work-ready skills and attitudes. Most funds are not ongoing, but are subject to annual applications made by community-based organisations, primarily for organisational support and some specific non-vocational programmes. The major public institutions Museums, libraries and art galleries, receive operational funding from Federal, State and Local governments. They have ongoing funding status, but allocations can vary on an annual basis with programmes delivered directly to the community (rather than informal curated learning) only offered when funds allow.

In some states, notably Victoria, Community Service departments and local government provide base funding for neighbourhood houses, over AU\$25 million per annum in Victoria (DHHS 2020); and the federal government has provided funding for the establishment of Men's Sheds, AU\$1 million per annum (AMSA 2020). Limited funding is available for delivery of popular ALE.

In order to supplement limited funds for delivery, many community organisations that offer popular ALE utilise local facilities for small fees or free of charge such as town halls, libraries, museums, as well as local council facilities, aged care facilities, sporting venues, parks and recreation, schools, TAFE colleges and universities.

Programmatic funding is made available to specific groups from federal departments such as Environment, Health, Ageing, and Aboriginal Health. These funds primarily reflect government priorities and are gained by tender-triggered applications. These are targeted government services or pilot programmes that have significant parameters in terms of organ-

isational and learner eligibility, or the focus and measurement of programmes.

## Initial funding of popular ALE and development of funding efforts and systems

Initial funding of popular adult learning and education is a mixed process of bottom-up and top-down. Groups of individuals in the community or existing community organisations have advocated for governments to provide support for programs that address identified community needs. This has included identification of outcomes to be expected of the programs, including the benefits that will be accrued, or the mitigation of potential disbenefits of not funding.

Governments at each of the three levels in Australia also initiate funded programs from the top down to address issues in the community, to redress disadvantage or to provide stimulus for innovation. Learning Towns in Victoria is an example of the latter where state government provided funding to support the growing number of local councils and education providers who were developing Learning Cities and Towns (Martin 2004). As discussed later, this had unintended consequences for the community organisations

## Financing mechanisms

To reiterate, Australian federal, state and local governments primarily allocate funds on an annual basis via grant applications made by community organisations; or in the case of public institutions operational allocations by the government. Some funds at federal and state level are set around a 3-year cycle of support mainly for infrastructure and coordination, but require the achievement of goals set at the commencement of the grant. This involves not only the submission of extensive tender applications but also the community organisation entering formal funding contracts with the governments. These contracts and the funding that flows

rely on the achievement of measurements set by the government, often expressed statistically - for instance numbers of participants and attendance.

Where government funding is received acquittal of funds and activity evaluation reports are submitted but impact evaluation is rare. This limits the ability for community organisations to demonstrate the outcomes and benefits of popular ALE identified earlier for individuals and communities. Individuals and the community do measure impact informally; the continued support and growth of organisations and participation in popular ALE activities would seem to indicate these are considered valuable and worthwhile.

Beneficiaries of this financial support are the organisations, community and public, that subsidise their operations and enable programmes and courses to be offered to the whole community and to specific groups with identified needs. Ultimately the main beneficiaries of the financial support are the users of the services, individuals, the community, and the wider Australian society.

## Trends and changes in recent times

From the 1990s Australian governments at federal and state level have focused on funding vocational and accredited training with the establishment of the competency-based training system. Support for popular ALE has dwindled at the federal and state level. Grants for popular adult learning and education have become very limited and focus on government priorities rather than those of the community or individual.

For community-based organisations this has meant continual and extensive submission-writing to fit needs expressed by the community into a narrow focus outlined in the grants. This takes up staff and volunteer time. It can be a very disheartening process. The marketisation of the public education provision in all sectors of education in Australia has built a system focused on enrolments, student contact hours, qualifications, and quality audits.

Personal enrichment courses are considered an individual benefit rather than a public good, with the cost borne by the learner. Where government funding is not available, individuals and community members organise to gather resources and provide the learning opportunities.

## Popular ALE in Australia in review - communities as key

In Australia popular ALE has developed over the past 60 years to include dedicated adult community education networks, community-led service organisations (examples Country Fire Authority, State Emergency Service, Surf Lifesaving), active public institutions (libraries, museums and art galleries) and delivery of specific-issue learning through community groups and movements (for example environment movements). All of these receive funding from the three tiers of government on an annual basis (some 3 years), but this funding is often to subsidise the organisational infrastructure or service delivery rather than specific popular ALE programmes. It is often the community-based and community led organisations which marshal their resources to organise and deliver these programmes for the benefit of individuals and communities.

It is this community base which is the strength of the current situation in Australia. Members of the community are involved as volunteers, managing the organisations, delivering services and programmes and providing direct advice on the needs of the community. This strength is recognised by Australian governments which understand that those close to the local community, and close to the learner, are better able to develop learning programmes that will meet the objectives of their programs and address critical issues in the community.

Community-based organisations are able to leverage on the additional resources of volunteer time and community venues to provide added value to limited or no government funding for specific popular ALE. These factors are key to their success in



delivery. They are able to provide local learning opportunities accessible for all community members, a non-threatening environment for those tentative in re-entering learning, and enthusiasm for learners to make a contribution to their community and society. Public institutions that offer popular ALE also understand the importance of interacting with their community of learners; and they have developed community programmes that invite ongoing participation.

Popular ALE in Australia has also developed a strong perspective on enabling choice by the learner, to ensure that interest is a key motivator to participate. Choice and interest enable engagement in learning that brings joy and life satisfaction but also helps the learner to gain transferable skills and knowledge that can be used in many of the adult's roles in life, including vocationally in work.

## Limitations and shortcomings

These strengths are balanced by three specific shortcomings that could be addressed to enable the potential of popular ALE to be realised for many more individuals and community in Australia.

The first is the limited amount of funding available to community organisations, in particular specific funding for popular ALE. Community-based organisations are drawing on the good will of volunteers and community facilities to augment limited funds. This burden is exacerbated with the uncertainty of annual grants mechanisms that rely on constant submission writing by staff and volunteers.

Secondly, the precarious nature of government funding can have unintended and disempowering consequences for community initiatives. The Learning Towns programme previously mentioned was the result of state government recognising the work that local governments, community education organisations and tertiary education institutions had done over 1-2 years to develop Learning Cities. Funds were made available by annual submission to enable the groups to employ part-time staff to

support the volunteer efforts. Unfortunately, many groups became reliant on the funds and staff. When the funding was withdrawn by government, many had lost or never developed the community impetus required for sustainability. Sadly, their initiatives folded (Martin 2004).

The third is the lack of value placed by federal and state governments on popular ALE. The current focus on VET has meant that the bulk of government funding and resources has been directed to learning for work in accredited programs to the detriment of those programs that develop generic skills, engage learners through interest and have successfully demonstrated over many years benefit to individuals, community and society. The perspective that popular ALE only benefits individuals not the wider community or society demonstrates the lack of value given to this learning. By placing value on popular ALE Australian governments would have a powerful strategy to build skills and knowledge in the community, to encourage active citizenship, a just and peaceful society and to enable greater life satisfaction for Australians.

## Predictions, expectations, hopes and fears for the future

Australia is a country that has a relatively small population spread across a large geographic space. This means limited government service provision, particularly in rural and remote areas. Australia is also ravaged by natural disasters on a regular basis, including fire, flood, hurricane, and drought. It is currently dealing with ongoing drought, fire devastation and the COVID-19 pandemic. The economy is now emerging from recession, and unemployment will be uncertain with the closure of many businesses. This period of time is reminiscent of the post-World War 2 period when adult education, particularly liberal and popular education, was seen as a key strategy to rebuild the nation.

Community-based organisations and community-led services have long been key successes for Australia as a nation, from the earliest times 65,000

years ago to the present time. With changes in our society, many volunteers (women and retirees) are no longer available to provide the workforce that community organisations have relied on. The maintenance and increase of base funding for these organisations will be vital to community regeneration and expanded learning opportunities. If these funds are withdrawn, it is feared that most of the delivery of popular ALE will be extinguished.

If Australian governments and society place value on popular ALE, working with communities to develop innovative and exciting programmes that attract full funding the benefits to individuals, community and society will be significant. For this value to be developed, community organisations need to use their voice to ensure that the benefits of popular ALE are promoted constantly to the community and government. *Do not continue to rely on the results speaking for themselves.*

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# Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Korea

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## Abstract

**In Korea, popular education is democratic citizenship education to provide educational opportunities to live a healthy and mature life, cultivating the qualities and literacy of a democratic citizen, such as knowledge, values, and attitudes for sustainable democratic society. Local governments use their lifelong learning institutions to provide democratic citizenship education and establish departments to formally implement this education. More and more cities are establishing democratic citizenship education centres to promote education for citizens. Free democratic citizenship education is formulated and executed on a legal basis and treated as mainstream in general administration, with support at all levels. There is no regulation to account for an exact proportion of total budget. It is a legal responsibility of metropolitan government to mobilise the necessary budget, resources and infrastructure.**

## The national understanding of popular adult learning and education (ALE)

In Korea, popular education in the 1970s and 1980s focused on political awareness education for groups alienated from the means of government. In the 1990s, citizenship was emphasised in terms of democratised society, the development of civic groups, and the expansion of the educational programs of non-governmental organisation (NGO) groups.

Currently ‘democratic citizenship education’ aims to cultivate a sense of rights and responsibilities as a democratic citizen, and to contribute to the realization of a real democratic society. Although we use ‘democratic citizenship education’ it is used as meaning citizenship education.

In other words, popular education of the past ideological and labour movement is understood within the framework of citizens who live together, not the subject of class struggle, according to the trend of the times. It is categorised into the underprivileged, such as the disabled, human rights, women, environment, education, and foreigners. Education for them is carried out in various ways within the framework of lifelong learning. It would be reasonable to understand popular education in Korea as citizenship education that emphasises the leading role, rights, responsibilities, and social participation of citizens, regardless of whether they are underprivileged or not. There may be differences in inter-

pretation, but in the Korean case popular education will be called democratic citizenship education.

## Historical evolution of popular ALE

The roots of popular education in Korea can be seen from the 1920s, when the modern working class began to emerge as the feudal social structure was dismantled. Educational activities in labour night schools and peasant night schools served as an important basis for the independence movement and socialist movement. After a period of severance due to the Korean War in 1950, it unfolded in the period of the 1960s and 70s.

Popular education from the mid-late 1960s to the late 1970s centred on Christian and Catholic organisations' emancipatory theology-oriented missionary education. It took place at the level of human rights movements based on humanism, rather than political movements for social transformation. Since the mid-1980s, it has been strongly influenced by the scientific socialist movement centred on Marxist-Leninism. Based on scientific socialism, the youth movement and the student movement have a strong character of propaganda and agitation for political transformation, resulting in a strong consciousness education. From the early 1990s to the late 2000s, criticism of the content and form of the existing popular movement was raised from the perspective of new social movements and post-modernism; and the possibility of popular education based on new principles in a new field was revealed as potential.

Since the enactment of the Seoul Ordinance for Democratic Citizenship Education in 2014 and Gyeonggi Province (2015) in the mid-2010s, as of November 2020 11 out of a total of 17 metropolitan local governments enacted the Democratic Citizen Education Ordinance (National Law Information Centre, ROK 2020a, 2020b). Based on these ordinances, organisations to operate democratic citizenship education are being established at the local level. In addition, 'medium-and long-term Action Plans for Democratic Citizenship Education' in met-

ropolitan level are being established specifically to implement this. At the same time, more than 40 out of 226 municipal governments nationwide created ordinances for supporting democratic citizenship education to promote the active participation of adults in society.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Citizenship Education Act to promote democratic citizenship education at the national level has been proposed by a member of the Democratic Party of Congress (Strait News 2020). However, democratic citizenship education is mainly advocated by politicians belonging to the Democratic Party; politicians belonging to the opposing party see it as an intention to use it for political purposes and oppose it (Gyeonggi Institute for Democratic Citizenship Education 2020).

## Understanding, valuing and supporting popular ALE

Within educational policy and administration, popular education in Korea has historically changed its purpose little by little. But it usually refers to issues of education for those who have lost their educational opportunities due to socioeconomic conditions, and the recovery of these people's right to education. With the enactment of the Ordinance on Democratic Citizenship Education by metropolitan local governments in the mid-2010s and the selection of 'Activation of Democratic Citizenship Education' as a national task with the presidential pledge in 2017, democratic citizenship education is entering a new phase.

Each local government is also actively promoting democratic citizenship education with the aim of improving democratic citizenship capabilities so that they can respect the values of democracy and create a culture that can coexist with each other by fostering independent citizens with critical thinking skills.

Korea was a country where natural resources were poor and economically lagging. It was believed that cultivation of human resources through education

promised the better future of the country, and the state, society, and parents have invested a lot for formal education to build a country with today's economic wealth. In this system, formal education within the economic-related system, such as vocational and technical education, has been regarded as more important than any other education. However, in the present and future, where economic development has been achieved to some extent, and social changes and composition are diversifying, competency and capability for social integration, participation and responsibility, rational decision-making, conflict resolution, and problem solving are becoming more important. Therefore, the meaning of shared values such as freedom, autonomy, fairness, compliance, consideration and sharing, and respect for diversity, is being regarded as important in adult education.

Since the 1970s, vocational technical education in Korea has been actively supported by the government, centring on high schools and colleges. In addition, the government enacted the Workers Vocational Training Promotion Act in 1997. In this Act, the state and employers' responsibilities for the development of workers' vocational skills, the establishment of public vocational skills development training facilities, and employers' vocational skills development activities, were stipulated. In particular, by creating a semi-compulsory fund to invest part of the wages for the development of workers' vocational skills, the legal basis was laid for the role of the state and employers to develop workers' vocational skills. Until then popular education was led by the labour movement outside the institutional sphere, and there was no legal basis for promoting democratic citizenship education.

As the Social Education Act was enacted in 1982 (National Law Information Centre, ROK 2020d) and revised to the Lifelong Education Act (National Law Information Centre, ROK 2020b) in 1999, interest in lifelong learning emerged. Adult citizenship education is defined in the Lifelong Education Act in the domain of citizen participation in 2014, and the legal basis for democratic citizenship education can be said to be the beginning. With the President's

pledge in 2017, citizenship education is being embodied as democratic citizenship education. It can be said that 'building a society where everyone can harmonise and co-prosper' has emerged as a social issue, and as a way to overcome the problems caused by the collapse of the traditional culture of living together, due to the improved economic level, and social differentiation in Korea's economic development. The importance of democratic citizenship education to reinforce citizens' capacity to live together is emerging, and various educational attempts and approaches are being made to put it into practice. However, citizens' interest in democratic citizenship education is significantly lower than in vocational training, humanities, and digital literacy education.

This may be due to the recognition that it is an education for political purposes, because 'democratic' is included in the name of democratic citizenship education, and also due to the lack of experience in taking the education programs.

### **The role and contribution of popular ALE to the development of society and the individual**

President Park Chung-hee, who was a general in the army in a military coup in 1961 and held dictatorial rule until 1979, suppressed democratic movements for economic development in Korea. Since then, until 1993, two military generals have been elected president one after another. They governed as a dictatorship in the name of pursuing economic development, continuing to control popular education. Popular education in Korea received official support from the government under the Kim Young-sam administration after 1987, when the wind of political democratisation blew.

The Kim Young-sam administration chose a method led by private organisations and supported by the government, breaking away from the method of directly controlling and supervising civic education by the state. Since then, democratic citizenship education, which had been passively conducted in

terms of lifelong learning, has been implemented in earnest in the mid-2010s.

Since democratic citizenship education has been conducted for a relatively short period of time it would be premature to discuss specific tasks, impacts and benefits. Although this is a case of some cities, small changes are taking place centred on participants who have completed the training course for democratic citizen leaders, which has been conducted free of charge by the municipal government since the end of 2010. In the case of Hanam city, Gyeonggi Province, the changes seen by the participants in the 2019 democratic citizen facilitator training course can be said to be an example of the achievement of the purpose of democratic citizenship education. The group that has completed the curriculum has won a project for the village by the central government. It is promoting village change and innovation based on village resident participation.

In other words, it is a new initiative that promotes new changes in the village, based on the participation of the residents led by the residents. In the case of Chuncheon city, a province in Gangwon-do, many changes have been made by directly implementing the village change project of the Ministry of Public Administration and Security, centred on the village leader, and based on citizen participation. Although there are no accurate statistical data, village change projects by leaders who have received such training for village leaders are constantly appearing. In particular it can be said that democratic citizenship education is being activated in line with the government's policy projects for citizens, such as civic cooperation projects, village community development projects, village education community projects, and social economy promotion projects.

### The role and contribution of popular ALE in the rise of popular movements and democracy

After experiencing popular education centred on night school during the Japanese occupation and

the Korean War, in the 1970s and 1980s, under strong central government control, the labour movement focused on the improvement of workers' human rights and political participation. At that time, it can be said that it contributed a lot to the improvement of workers' human rights and working environment, but with democratisation in the 1990s, popular education did not have adequate opportunities to contribute to popular movement or democratization. Most of the popular education at that time remained at the level of vocational and technical education and literacy education for poor people, so it is not easy to find a connection between popular education and popular movement and democratisation.

In particular, the democratization movement of 1987, which became a landmark of Korean citizen-participatory democracy, was formed with white collar and active student participation. As a result of this democratisation movement, it can be said that popular education has risen to the surface and has become the subject of the government's attention.

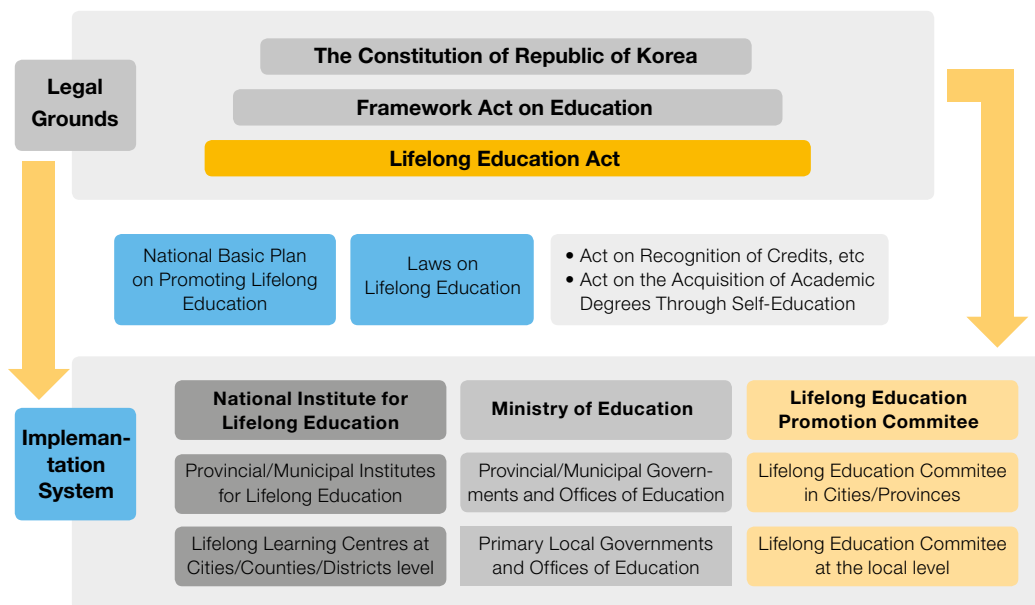
Anyway, in the late 2010s and early 2020s, various forms of citizenship education for the popular movement and democracy of genuine citizen participation are being conducted, and many positive changes are expected for citizens.

### Institutions, content and methods of popular ALE

The Korean constitution stipulates that it is the duty of the state to promote lifelong learning. In addition, the Lifelong Education Act and related laws stipulate the systems, organisations, and regulations necessary to implement lifelong learning. Figure 1 gives an overview of the legal grounds and the implementation system. At national level, there is the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) and the National Lifelong Learning Council. In each of the 17 metropolitan provinces, institutes for lifelong learning have been established to promote lifelong learning for residents, and the Lifelong Learning



**Figure 1:**  
Systematic approach to lifelong learning of the Republic of Korea



Source: NILE 2017

Council is formed. All 226 local governments across the country have Lifelong Learning Centres and Lifelong Learning Steering Committees to promote lifelong learning for local residents. Lifelong learning-related departments have been established within the administrative bodies of the Ministry of Education and regional and basic local governments to promote lifelong learning for residents based on laws and ordinances.

Local governments that actively promote democratic citizenship education have established democratic citizenship education centres to provide education for citizens. Local governments designate public institutions under local governments as democratic citizenship education centres to entrust projects or establish separate institutions.

The metropolitan government does not have a democratic citizenship education centre. Instead it supports the democratic citizenship education of the municipal government through its Institute for Lifelong Learning, which was established to promote lifelong learning, or directly operates a democratic citizenship education programme. There are also departments dedicated to democratic citizenship education within local governments, but in the case of municipal governments, departments related to lifelong learning and lifelong learning centres of local governments are the subjects of democratic citizenship education. In other words, in accordance with the government's policy to promote democratic citizenship education, existing lifelong learning departments are required to provide democratic citizenship education, and the existing lifelong learning infrastructure is used to operate the mainstream.

In addition, NGOs such as YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) and libraries, youth training centres, welfare centres for the disabled, welfare centres for the elderly, and education centres for farmers and fishermen are also providing democratic citizenship education for the customers of the institutions. According to the Democratic Citizenship Education Ordinance, it is required to provide democratic citizenship education for employees of local government-affiliated organisations, public organisations, and institutes which are financially supported by the local governments to provide citizens with education programmes, and to raise awareness and interest in democratic citizenship education. This approach is also helping to spread democratic citizenship education.

Most local government ordinances for democratic citizenship education define the contents and methods of democratic citizenship education. The main contents are as follows.

- Education on the basic values, ideologies and basic rights of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea and international covenants, understanding of institutions including democracy and ways of participation
- Education on the understanding of the democratic political system and political participation of the state and local governments
- Citizen's rights and obligations, participation and responsibilities, communication, rational decision-making, conflict resolution, problem-solving, etc. to cultivate competencies and qualities
- Education on shared values such as freedom, autonomy, fairness, compliance, consideration and sharing, and respect for diversity
- Education on the values of life required by the times, such as human rights, environment, gender equality, media, labour, peace, and unification
- Other education deemed necessary for democratic citizenship education

The ordinances also stipulate the method of democratic citizenship education, the contents of which are as follows:

- Democratic citizenship education should endeavour to be conducted in a way that enables rational communication, such as active participation of participants.
- Democratic citizenship education should allow citizens experience in various areas of life according to various learning programmes for knowledge-sharing, awakening values, and reinforcing citizen status.

The basic principles of democratic citizenship education described in local governments' ordinances are as follows:

- It should be an education that contributes to the development of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in order to inherit and develop the values of universal human rights and democracy guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Korea.
- Democratic citizenship education shall not be used as a means to persuade participants to have only specific opinions or to pursue private interests or opinions of specific political parties.
- Democratic citizenship education shall ensure that various theories, perspectives, and diverse opinions existing in the academic field and political reality are dealt with fairly.
- Democratic citizenship education shall be conducted for the public interest purpose of citizens to lead a healthy political life and to learn democratic consciousness and capabilities.
- Universal accessibility for all citizens to participate in democratic civic education shall be guaranteed, and citizens voluntarily participate in democratic civic education.

Based on the above ideals and basic principles of democratic citizenship education, many local governments establish a Comprehensive Democratic Citizenship Education Plan. It usually includes policy objectives and directions of democratic citizenship education, plans and methods of implementation, necessary resources and funding, training democratic citizenship educators, building and revitalizing human, material and institutional foundations for strengthening professional democratic citizenship education, research, development and evaluation of schools and community activities.

Although there are slightly different parts depending on the comprehensive plans, the following contents are stipulated:

- A revitalization policy shall be established and implemented to ensure that all citizens are fully provided with opportunities for democratic citizenship education under the responsibility of the head of a local government.
- A government officer in charge shall provide at least 60 hours of democratic civic education per year within one year after he/she is appointed as a person in charge.
- The transfer order shall be minimised for the expertise of government officers in charge of democratic civic education.
- Employees of affiliated organisations and members of the Residents' Self-Governing Centre shall also receive democratic citizenship education.

## Financing mechanism and the role of the public authorities in financing popular ALE

Lifelong learning in Korea refers to all types of systematic educational activities including complementary education, adult literacy education, vocational skills improvement education, humanities liberal arts education, culture and arts education, citizen participation education, excluding the regular school curriculum. In other words, democratic citizenship education in Korea is implemented as a form of citizen participation education, one of the six areas of lifelong learning. Therefore, the procedure for establishing and executing a budget for democratic citizenship education is not different, but is the same as that of other general administrative projects. Budgets at the national level are mainly executed through the National Institute for Lifelong Education. There is no regulation to organise the national budget separately for democratic citizenship education. Therefore, the National Institute for Lifelong Education's budget for democratic citizenship education does not account for a large portion of the total budget.

Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Public Administration and Security, are running projects that directly support citizen-centred community change activities. These projects can be viewed as another budgetary source in the sense that they have received democratic citizenship education or promote changes in local communities by demonstrating democratic citizenship. There are local government budgets for operation such as the Metropolitan City and Provincial Government's Institute for Lifelong Learning and the Municipal Government's Lifelong Learning Centre. Because the local government's budget is based on the Ordinance for Democratic Citizenship Education, a separate budget is formulated. In addition, local government budgets are gradually increasing. However, the central government's budget rarely directly supports local government's lifelong learning or democratic citizenship education, and the local government voluntarily supports lifelong learning and democratic citizenship education budgets for most citizens.

In the case of the metropolitan government, various projects are being implemented through cooperation with local governments to promote democratic citizenship education in each city: for example, a programme for training instructors related to democratic citizenship education, development of online contents for democratic citizenship education, operation of a programme to improve awareness of democratic citizenship education, operation of a curriculum for citizens of democratic residents, a course for solving local problems, and operation of empowerment of democratic citizenship education activists. In addition, the metropolitan government conducts workshops and performance-sharing meetings for persons in charge of democratic citizenship education in the municipal government, consulting the municipal government, education for persons in charge, and democratic citizenship education for public officials. Financial support to the municipal government is indirectly provided in the sense that all of these projects are conducted free of charge.

The municipal government is promoting various forms of democratic citizenship education by directly operating leaders training and resident education to revitalize democratic citizenship education in the city, or by granting subsidies to institutions related to democratic citizenship education. Although it varies, depending on the city, when a local government directly runs a democratic citizenship curriculum, a budget of about 40,000 Euro per year is used to operate the programme, and the trend is gradually increasing.

In addition, some local governments have designated or established democratic citizenship education centres for the purpose of strengthening democratic citizen capacity and networking to promote citizens' democratic citizenship. These democratic citizenship education centres operate a network of institutions related to democratic citizenship education, information-sharing and establishing a data base related to democratic citizenship education, and a project to strengthen democratic citizenship capabilities. Most of the budgets, such as labour costs and facility maintenance costs required for

the operation of these centres, are supported by the municipal government. Since most institutions that operate democratic citizenship education are non-profit institutions, the ultimate beneficiary can be said to be citizens.

The specific mechanism of the budget for democratic citizenship education of local governments can be mainly explained as follows.

- Subsidy project for organisations related to democratic citizenship education such as NGOs and CSOs (civil society organisations)
- Operate a curriculum to foster democratic citizen leaders and facilitators
- Support for project budgets for each village for democratic citizenship education
- Lecture to citizens to spread democratic citizenship education
- Citizen competition project to spread democratic citizenship education
- Democratic citizenship education project through the operation of the democratic citizenship education centre
- Development of textbooks and manuals to spread democratic citizenship education

The local government's ordinance for democratic citizenship education is the legal basis for promoting projects related to democratic citizenship education and the basis for budget support. Democratic citizenship education for adults in Korea is non-formal education, but it is officially supported by the government. Democratic citizenship education is essential for citizens to live as members of a healthy society and is a natural duty of the state. Nevertheless, as formal education centred on economic growth had been emphasised, citizens had not been provided with sufficient opportunities for democratic citizenship education in formal education. In this respect, democratic citizenship edu-

education is currently accepted as a natural responsibility of the state and local governments toward citizens. Therefore, it is top-down free education for democratic citizenship education. However, the education method and implementation method are a bottom-up method that pursues participatory education based on citizen participation.

## Establishment and consolidation of any rules and practices for funding

The metropolitan government and municipal government's ordinances for democratic citizenship education make clear the responsibilities of governors and mayors. According to the Seoul Metropolitan City's Democratic Citizenship Education Ordinance: "The mayor must establish and implement policies for revitalizing democratic citizenship education so that all citizens are fully provided with opportunities for democratic citizenship education, and have a responsibility to promote and support the activities of autonomous districts and the private sector" (National Law Information Centre, ROK 2020c). In the case of Seoul Metropolitan City, the duties of the municipal government head for democratic citizenship education are specified in the ordinance: "The mayor of the district must actively cooperate with the city's policies on democratic citizenship education and endeavour to revitalise democratic citizenship education within the autonomous district" (National Law Information Centre, ROK 2020c).

The ordinances of the provinces of Gyeonggi Province specifically specify the responsibilities of governors as follows.

- The governor must establish and implement policies for revitalizing democratic citizenship education so that all citizens of the city are fully provided with opportunities for democratic citizenship education.
- The governor should actively endeavour to revitalize democratic citizenship education in cities and counties in the province.

- The governor should endeavour to systematically cultivate professional democratic citizenship education personnel.
- The governor must conduct democratic citizenship education for the public officials and employees under the control.

In other words, it is a legal responsibility for the metropolitan government to make efforts to improve citizens' democratic citizenship by mobilizing the necessary budget, resources and infrastructure. The budget for democratic citizenship education is formulated and executed on this legal basis.

## Trends and changes in recent years

Currently, Korea is facing a historical shift in civic education along with the Candlelight Revolution in the plaza by the people, that triggered the impeachment of the president in 2017. In addition, with the introduction of the Residents' Council from 2021, the importance of democratic citizenship education at the level of residents' autonomy has emerged.

The municipal government has shifted its policy: from providing democratic citizenship education to citizens directly, to supporting citizens to autonomously operate from planning, operation, and evaluation of activities, to strengthen democratic citizenship in their local communities. Citizenship education is being activated in the following ways: by specializing in citizenship education infrastructure and content, fostering citizenship education activists, discovering and supporting citizenship education projects, self-monitoring and self-evaluating citizenship education, sharing citizenship education results, building citizenship education information archives, and using artificial intelligence and robots of digital age.

Reflecting these recent trends, Learning City Eunpyeong-gu, Seoul has been receiving positive responses by attempting a new citizenship education experiment in the form of a self-sustaining independent research project with citizens under the name of

the De Vinci School. In the case of Open City college in Seoul, various groups have newly conceived programs, such as citizenship education linked to embassies, and youth citizenship education programs through life design schools for successful gap year for young people. In the case of Osan, Gyeonggi-do province, they are opening a new chapter in Korean-style independent citizenship education by promoting new types of civic education models such as Osan centennial citizens' college, question-mark schools, exclamation-mark schools, study salons, Osan workshops, and Jingumdari (which means stepping-stones) classes. Gwangmyeong, Gyeonggi-do province, presents a new Gwangmyeong type of democratic citizenship education based on place-based learning, and develops a Gwangmyeong Global Citizenship Campus by dividing Gwangmyeong City into five learning districts.

The Gyeonggi-do Provincial Institute for Lifelong Learning, as an example of new methods and practices of citizenship education, has been implementing the 'Living Lab' project as a form of democratic citizenship education. The project, called On-Maueul (Whole Village), stipulates residents to change the scenery of small villages' alleys and to turn abandoned spaces into beautiful village libraries or study rooms for residents. In addition, through this project residents who participated in the curriculum are carrying out activities such as preventing illegal dumping of garbage in villages, creating mural streets in village streets, and building complex community centres.

In Hanam, Gyeonggi-do province, democratic citizen leaders who have completed a 35-hour democratic citizenship education action-learning course for 7 days are solving community problems on their own with residents. They have been selected for public offerings for various projects of the central government to solve problems in the local community, and are solving problems of the residents and their own communities by themselves.

These changes mean that learning cities are emerging as a new model for democratic citizenship education. At the same time, this represents a shift

in ideology and paradigm. Democratic citizenship education as self-sustaining and bottom-up popular education is beyond the level of top-down government-led democratic citizenship education. It suggests that it is no longer provider-centred civic education, but participator-centred democratic citizenship education. It is an important transformation point, where action-learning-style new citizenship education models are being created by citizens' participation and practice.

### Appraisal of popular ALE

In Korea, a common tool for evaluating or monitoring adult popular education has not yet been used. Some of the leading cities are applying action-learning techniques to educate democratic citizen leaders. Participants in this curriculum have to solve real village problems with villagers during the education and share the results. Based on this experience, there are cases of participants carrying out projects of central or local governments related to local communities, but they have not yet been evaluated as performance. Since the purpose of democratic citizenship education is similar to that of global citizenship education, there are cases in which educational outcomes are evaluated by comparing scores before and after participation in learning, by using a measure of global citizenship. Most of them show positive changes at a statistically significant level, but more practices will be needed for these indicators to be used as indicators for democratic citizenship education.

### Strengths and shortcomings of the present situation

One of the strengths of the Korean-style citizenship education model and implementation method is that it has a legal basis. Each local government has established and operated a democratic citizenship education ordinance and a democratic citizenship education centre to focus on developing various programs, research and development, and support-

ing citizenship education through public offering projects.

In addition, under the leadership of the National Institute for Lifelong Education, research and development and public offering projects for democratic citizenship education and support for specialization of learning cities are being carried out. A wide range of information on popular education is provided through the ‘NuelBaeUm’ (Forever Learning) portal and ‘Damo’ (Gathering Altogether) Lifelong Education Information Network, both of which are national portal sites for lifelong learning.

Another strength is the fact that the institutes for lifelong learning of 17 metropolitan and provincial governments are serving as institutions to promote democratic citizenship education for residents of each province. They play a role in helping the cities/ counties promote democratic citizenship education for the citizens. Cities are establishing democratic citizenship education centres. This will strengthen democratic citizenship education.

One of the weaknesses is that there was no political agreement on democratic citizenship education. Therefore, the perspective of democratic citizenship education differs from party to party, due to the concern that democratic citizenship education can be used for political purposes.

Another weakness is that since we do not have much experience in conducting democratic citizenship education in Korea, the effectiveness of methods, tools, and processes for democratic citizenship education has not yet been revealed in detail or obtained consent.

## Predictions, expectations, hopes and fears for future support for popular ALE

Since the 2017 Candlelight Revolution, the current government has been expanding democratic citizenship education as popular education, with the power of citizens, and actively promoting support

and investment for it at the national level. It is not easy to predict what kind of changes will take place in citizenship education because it depends on the future direction of the administration, and the cycle of conservative and liberal governments. However, conservative parties have recently all agreed on popular education as a basis for civic-led social growth, sustainability, and an inclusive society for the underprivileged. They are also fully aware that no government can succeed without this foundation, so that regardless of the administration’s orientation, citizenship education is expected to be the most important agenda item for lifelong education as popular education in the future.

Among the six areas set by the Korean Lifelong Education Act, the area of civic participation education is expected to spread to most central areas, due to citizens’ relatively high awareness of citizenship about building citizenship, and the consensus of the education community and of society as a whole.

## Key successes and failure as examples, lesson or warnings to others

The fact that there are many highly educated people in the community is raising the possibility of success in democratic citizenship education in Korea. Democratic citizenship education is not being well activated in some cities because political consensus on democratic citizenship education has not been reached. Current democratic citizenship education is mainly led by cities where the Democratic Party is the majority party, and relatively poorly achieved in cities where the Conservative Party is the majority party.

In the case of a country with a political situation similar to that of Korea, civil and political consensus on the purpose, values, and methods of democratic citizenship education must first exist.

Some successful examples of democratic citizenship education can be found in Korea. Most of 175 lifelong learning cities are actively promoting democrat-

Figure 2:  
Outline of Gwang-  
myeong Autonomous  
Civic College

## Gwangmyeong Autonomous Civic College



- Realizing autonomous decentralization by fostering citizenship experts through lifelong learning
- The Institute for Lifelong Learning was in charge of Gwangmyeong Autonomous University and in 2020 operated the theories and discussions, benchmarking, and basics and advanced courses in five areas; Autonomous Decentralization, Village Community, Social Economies, Urban Regeneration, and Climate Energy.
- Support for networking of graduates will provide a place for sharing community information and promote cooperation and participatory administration based on collective intelligence to enhance expertise in each field.
- Participation in municipal administration that reflects the needs of citizens and innovative ideas for the enhancement of the people's sense of domiciliation and community culture.

Source: Gyeonggi Institute for Democratic Citizenship Education 2020



ic citizenship education by creating unique models and approaches. Here follow three typical examples.

The first case is the Gwangmyeong City's Global Citizenship Education Model. As South Korea's first lifelong learning city, Gwangmyeong city operates basic democratic citizenship education infrastructure and education programs such as 'Gwangmyeong Autonomous college', 'Global Gwangmyeong Civic School', 'Everyday Life Citizenship School'. It has developed and operated a model for citizenship education such as stretchable schools, stable schools, and close-knit schools, which are unique models of Gwangmyeong Autonomous Civic College. They are implementing autonomous decentralized citizenship education in line with the era of citizenship as part of a convergence learning model. Uniquely they present a long-term vision to improve the autonomy and citizenship of the entire city, by realizing the spirit of decentralization, autonomy, participation and cooperation, learning and practice through citizens' learning and growth.

To realise this vision, Gwangmyeong Autonomous College operates five departments: Autonomous decentralisation, village community, social economics, urban regeneration, and climate energy, providing specialised civil education for citizens to reflect civic demands and innovative ideas in order to improve their settlement and community culture.

The second is the case of Seoul Open City College. Seoul Open City college has diversified into seven departments: humanities, Seoul studies, democratic citizens, cultural arts, social economy, environmental life, and future studies. Although it is not a recognised degree under the Higher Education Act, Open City college operates a degree system called the Honorary Citizen Degree System, which recognises the learning experience and motivates continuous learning. Civic research groups are formed to promote civic education by supporting autonomous research groups so that citizens can freely engage in deep learning, policy research, and social participation activities on various topics.

The third case is of Osan Centennial Citizen's College. It has set and operated two goals under the vision of Osan, a lifelong learning city where citizens learn and grow together. The two goals are: 1) to create a learning ecosystem in which individuals' lifelong learning is returned to the region, and 2) to reinforce citizenship by revitalizing the community of participation and communication. The city supports projects for citizens to participate actively in providing lifelong learning programs to revitalise the communities as facilitators of learning.

As mentioned earlier, Hanam City directly operated the Global Citizenship Facilitator Training Program. Community leaders who have completed this curriculum of action learning techniques are practising the knowledge, skills, tools, and processes learned during the curriculum directly with residents in the local community. Some leaders are spreading democratic citizenship by using the government's community revitalization project. The city provides a space for their activities by providing financial resources to run projects in each village.

Now, at this early stage of democratic civic education from a lifelong educational perspective, nothing has been clearly found to suggest that it is a failure. However, some issues that need to be addressed for Korean-style citizenship education to move forward in the future are as follows.

First, the government should be careful not to allow citizenship education to take place with a dominating government-led education system. It is desirable for citizenship education to move forward in the form of a culture of learning and experience led by citizens rather than education led by the government. Top-down citizenship education programmes depending on outside factors like a public offering with public finance tend not to last long. This must be remembered, and citizenship education should be activated from a philosophical point of view. Second, it should be remembered that chasing trends or copying citizenship education in other regions or cities is blind education that does not involve local characteristics and cultures. Independent and meaningful civic education, anchored

in the characteristics of each local region, should be promoted.

Third, the primary mission should be to create an atmosphere, to strengthen the motif, and to provide legal, institutional, and financial support at national and local level to catalyse citizenship education. Plus, the core of the development of citizenship education should be unfolded autonomously by civic activists and civil instructors.

Fourth, civil education should not be divided. In terms of lifelong education, families, schools, and communities should be organically linked, to be able to achieve a virtuous cycle of integration and inclusion. In addition, from the perspective of the entire life cycle, citizenship education should consist of an integrated promotion system that spans a hundred years, including all generations from children to old age. In particular, there should be balanced citizenship education such as inter-generation citizenship education and citizenship education in step with the life cycle. Citizen education should be linked and spread out together. From the perspective of global citizens, a model development and promotion of global citizenship education should be continuously researched and developed.

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# Public financing of adult learning and education in Vietnam

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## Abstract

**This paper reviews the financing mechanism of continuing education (a sector of education in Vietnam, embracing adult learning and education) with a focus on public financing. It begins by providing the background information on legal framework and institutional providers of this sub-sector; and concludes with five recommendations for improving continuing education quality and participation through better funding.**

## Background

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam was established after the French resistance war in 1945. The war left a Vietnam torn by weapons, with poverty ravaging and famine killing millions of people. Ho Chi Minh, then Head of State, identified illiteracy as the new enemy and decided that if the country was to recover, this enemy had to be eliminated. The illiteracy rate, according to the Vietnam National Review of Education for All 2015, was as high as 95% (MOET 2015: 6).

Ho Chi Minh initiated the People's learning movement among the people, encouraging all to participate, the intellectuals (those who were affluent enough to have received French schooling before) teaching the literate, the literate teaching the illiterate. Classes were held in any possible public sites in local areas. Market places had their entrances barricaded, and people were asked to read words on signs held up by 'voluntary teachers' before they were allowed to enter the markets. If they failed to spell or read, quick lessons would be provided.

The movement called for all kinds of support from the people: voluntary teaching, provision of writing

paper, slogan development, poster making. Innovative teaching methods were implemented to make learning a fun experience. Word spelling lesson (Vietnamese words are read by spelling out component letters) were made into poems, facilitating memorisation.

Thanks to effective propaganda strategies, people came to be aware of the benefits of education and within one year, a remarkable outcome was seen: 2.5 million of the people successfully learned to read and write (in this context Basic literacy). Five years after the 1945 Declaration of Independence, nearly 12.2 million people were literate (Pham 2020).

In 1954, when the literacy rate was higher, the 'People's Learning Movement' was changed to 'complementary education', which provided additional basic knowledge and practical skills of farming and aquaculture to people. In 1957, the then Prime Minister released Directive 114 (Prime Minister 1957) on Increasing Management of Illiteracy Eradication and Complementary Education. According to reports at the Review Conference of Complementary

Education in 1961, among central governmental agencies, over 80% of the personnel were studying high school levels (The Nhan Dan 1961: 1).

In 1993 ‘Complementary Education’ was changed again to ‘Continuing Education’, to serve a wider range of learning needs for new socio-economic life, and to reflect the idea that learning is an on-going continued process throughout one’s life.

## Terminology

### Adult learning and education

The UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015: 6) considers ALE as embracing all modes of learning that take place in all settings for anyone seen as adults by the society where they live.

“Adult learning and education is a core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim at ensuring that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those are regarded as adults who are recognised as adultly by the society in which they live in and in which they develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies. Adult learning and education involves sustained activities and processes of acquiring, recognising, exchanging, and adapting capabilities. Given that the boundaries of youth and adulthood are shifting in most cultures, in this text the term ‘adult’ denotes all those who engage in adult learning and education, even if they have not reached the legal age of maturity.”

Though a definition of ALE is missing in the Law on Education, the Vietnam report for the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE III) prepared by the Department of Continuing Edu-

cation (DOCE), Ministry of Education and Training, presents a definition:

“ALE is continuing education which provides lifelong learning opportunities for all (even people who have already finished their formal education)” (DOCE: 1).

This definition of ALE is narrower than others as it involves only continuing education, which according to Pham Tat Dong, Former President of the Vietnam Learning Promotion Association (VALP), is non-formal education catering to all people who have or have not completed initial education. The Law on Education (National Assembly of Vietnam 2019) presents a similar definition of continuing education. The de facto ALE governing body is thus the Department of Continuing Education.

### Continuing education

The Law on Education (Article 5) defines continuing education (CE) as “education that provides certain educational programmes in flexible ways regarding programme implementation formats, time, methods, locations, that meet learners’ need for lifelong learning” (National Assembly of Vietnam 2019).

Therefore, ALE appears to belong to CE in the context of Vietnam, where the latter is more commonly used in official government documents. At the same time, it does not limit ALE to adult learners only, but accepts all people who study outside the domain of formal education. This is in line with Jarvis’s argument (2004: 45) that “adult education might also be understood as an educational process conducted **in an adult manner** [emphasis added]” because there is no specific biological age beyond which a child suddenly becomes an adult.

As continuing education in the Vietnamese context embraces all forms of education taking place outside the formal education sub-system of the national education system, and is for anyone regardless of age, gender, religion and ethnicity, it caters for a wide variety of practical learning needs, from farming knowledge for people in rural areas to

foreign language skills for working people in cities, from computer skills for young adults to health care knowledge for the elderly, from leisurely learning activities for retired people to vocational skills for people seeking jobs. Classes can be in day time or in the evening after working hours. Community learning centres and social organisations like the Vietnam Women’s Union and the Communist Youth Union also initiate communal activities that serve both learning purposes and the community integrity. One such undertaking is the knowledge dissemination meeting sessions and the distribution of leaflets at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Popular education

“Popular education refers to a non-formal adult education approach that develops the capacity of learners to critically analyse the root causes of their socioeconomic, political, cultural, spiritual and religious struggles, with the ultimate goal of organizing and taking collective action that will enhance social transformation” (International Encyclopaedia of ALE 2005: 480-481).

The English term “Popular Education” has never been popular in Vietnam except some references in discussion by scholars, and is translated using different Vietnamese terms. Miethe et al. (2019) uses “Bình dân học vụ” (literal translation: Education for the common people), Dang et al. (2018) does not provide a translation but he uses the term to describe the movement of “Bình dân học vụ,” while Pham Thi Ly (2007) uses “Giáo dục đại chúng” (literally translation: Education for All). The people’s learning movement called “Bình dân học vụ” was actually to serve a narrower purpose than that defined in the International Encyclopaedia. It aimed to eradicate illiteracy which was a big obstacle to the nation’s recovery and development in Vietnam after 1945.

## Public financing of adult learning and education

The current education system of Vietnam consists of two parallel sub-systems: the formal, and continuing education. Figure 1 presents the whole system at a glance.

As the term continuing education is officially used in Vietnam, with its distinctive meaning which includes ALE, and in the absence of a defined sector of ALE in the national education system, it is not possible to describe how ALE is financed. The rest of the report will thus be about Continuing Education.

### Legal framework of continuing education

Currently community education is regulated by the following government documents.

#### *National level*

- Resolution No 29, issued by the Vietnam Communist Party in 2013 on Fundamental and Comprehensive Renovation of Education, stipulates that CE shall provide learning opportunities for all, especially for those in rural and disadvantaged areas (Vietnam Communist Party 2013). It also asks that the network of CE institutions be developed and perfected, providing all modes of learning in flexible ways. This is considered a strong political will to transform Vietnam education.
- Law on Education, issued in 2019 by the National Assembly of Vietnam (National Assembly of Vietnam 2019). The law includes a section on CE, stipulating its aims and responsibilities, programmes, CE institutions, assessment and accreditation, and direction for development policies.
- Decision No 89/QĐ-TTg, issued in 2013 by the Prime Minister approving the Framework for Building a Learning Society for 2012-2020 (Prime Minister 2013). The goal is to create environments that facilitate learning for all through all

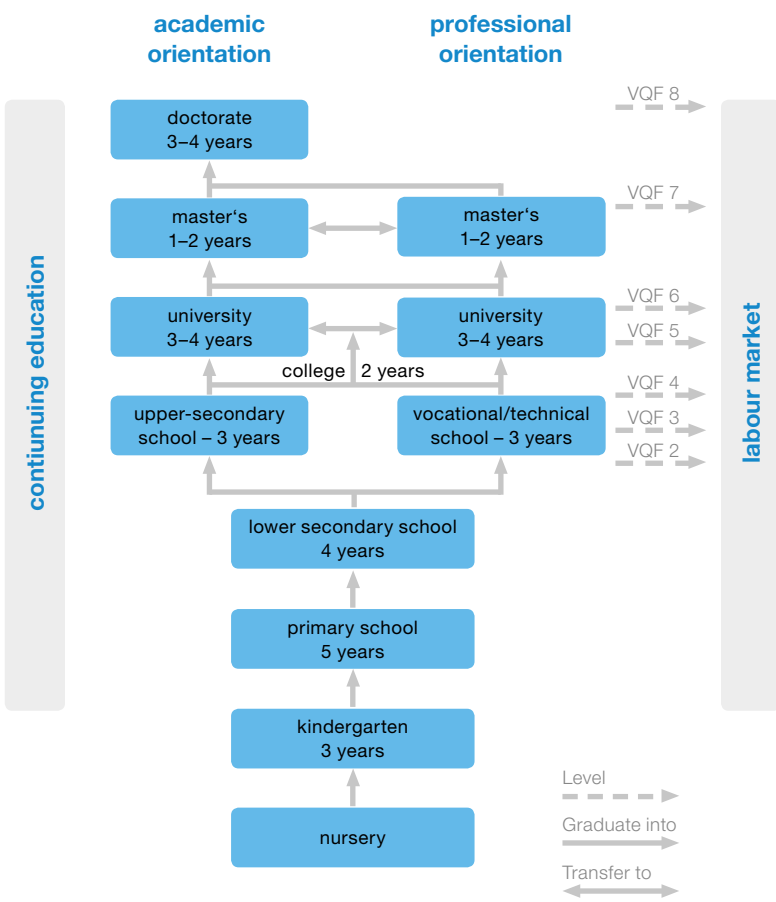


Figure 1: Vietnam education system

Source: Prime Minister Decision 1981/QĐ-TTg (Prime Minister 2016)

modes of learning in different contexts. The decision states that all governmental institutions, economic and social organisations, communities and families have the responsibility to provide these learning opportunities.

- Decision No 1981/QĐ-TTg, issued by the Prime Minister in 2016 (Prime Minister 2016). It approves the revised Vietnam Education System, and stipulates that the purpose of CE is to provide learning opportunities for all people of all ages and education levels. Everyone shall be entitled to opportunities of learning to improve

their knowledge, and develop professional skills, thus contributing to improved quality of human resources which meet the developing socio-economic situation, leading to a learning society. Of special importance is the new feature of *transferability* between formal and continuing education.

Ministerial level

- Decision No 01/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT, issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in 2007 (MOET 2007). The decision regulates the establishment and operation of Continuing



Education Centres (CECs). According to the decision, CECs can offer certificated learning programmes equivalent to those of the formal education system, and those that meet learning needs of people including both academic and vocational ones.

- Decision No 09/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT, issued by (MOET) in 2008, revised in 2010 (MOET 2008). The Decision regulates the establishment and operation of Community Learning Centres (CLCs). It stipulates that the functions of CLCs are to provide lifelong learning opportunities for people of all ages, to teach life-improvement knowledge, and to disseminate information on law and policies. Though CLCs cater for the learning needs of all, most CLC programme participants are adults.
- Circular No 96/2008/TT-BTC, issued by the Ministry of Finance (2008). The document guides the funding support from the state budget for CLCs.
- Circular No 21/2018/TT-BGDĐT issued by MOET (2018). The document (replacing Circular No 03/2011/TT-BGDĐT) provides for the establishment and operation of Foreign Languages and Informatics Centres (FLICs). According to this circular, FLICs can be financially supported by the state, course fees, donation. Those established by foreign companies will be self-sufficient.
- Circular No 04/2014/TT-BGDĐT issued by MOET (2014) on Management of life-skill education and extra-curricular/off-course education activities.
- Circular No 57/2015/TT-BLĐTBXH, issued by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA) in 2015 on the Establishment and Operation of Vocational Education Centres (VECs) (MOLISA 2015). It provides that these are self-sufficient centres that offer vocational programmes.
- Joint Circular No 39/2015/TTL-BLĐTBXH-BGDĐT-BNV issued by MOLISA and the Ministry of

Home Affairs in 2015 (MOLISA, MOET, MOHA 2015). It guides the merging of VECs, CECs and general technical career orientation centres at district level into V-CECs

- Circular No 07/2018 /TT-BTC issued by the Ministry of Finance (2018). The document guides the management and use of state budget for the implementation of the Scheme on Building a learning society for the period 2012-2020 under Decision No 89/QĐ-TTg dated January 9, 2013 by the Prime Minister.

### Institutional providers of community education

Community education is provided by MOET with the support of other stakeholders, of which the key ones are MOLISA and Vietnam Learning Promotion Association. MOET is the highest governing body of CECs, CLCs, V-CECs (Vocational-Continuing Education Centres), FLICs, and the Centre for Life Skills Training Centres, which recently came under the governance of MOET after the enactment of the Law on Education in 2019.

CECs and V-CECs provide paid certificate programmes equivalent to those of formal education for young people and adults who cannot take these from the formal programmes, and those non-certificate programmes that meet learners' various needs. CLCs are community-based learning sites established by local people, operating under the direction of the local government named the People's Committee, providing free or low-fee programmes and learning activities that meet the local needs. Non-formal languages programmes and computer skills programmes are provided by FLICs, some of which belong to the public sector; others are private entities established and run by either Vietnamese or foreign education companies, all under the governance of MOET. FLICs provide paid learning programmes. Therefore, many of them are self-sufficient. The same is true of Life Skills Education Centres (LSECs), which are a recent establishment following the new Law on Education.

The Vietnam Learning Promotion Association (VALP) is a social organisation (Pham 2016) that aims to “promote learning, develop talents, and build the country as a learning society”. It is a powerful fund-raiser for both formal and non-formal education. In 2015 alone, it was able to raise over 2,100 billion Vietnam Dong (VND) (≈87,000 US\$) (ibid.), an equivalent of nearly 100 million USD then. Considering that year’s national educational budget which stood at 224,826 billion VND (Ministry of Finance 2017), this was a considerable amount of money raised by an association to support learning. In addition to maintaining a close connection with MOET and MOLISA, the association also collaborates with the Vietnam Women’s Union, the Communist Youth Union, the Farmers’ Union, the Vietnam Farmers’ Association and other government-established social organisations. It organises learning activities to raise people’s awareness and practice of good health, gender equality, environmental preservation, and good farming techniques. VALP was one of the “founders and nurturers of CLCs” in Vietnam (Ngo 2009: 5), using the model suggested by UNESCO and modifying it to suit the cultural and social context of Vietnam.

### Funding mechanism for community education

The Law on Education 2019 provides in Article 96, Item 1 that “The State shall prioritise national education budget allocation, maintaining this at 20% and above of the total national budget” (National Assembly of Vietnam 2019).

*It does not specify* what percentage of the national education budget will be for CE.

Since 2007, the education budget has always been kept at approximately 20% of the national budget (Vietnam Communist Party 2013; MOET 2020).

In Vietnam monitoring report for GRALE III, DOCE suggested that the percentage of public education spending for ALE sits at 1 to 1.9%, and that the government plans to keep the same level of spending for ALE in the years to come. It should be noted

that these numbers are from MOET only, as figures from other stakeholders are either unavailable or inaccessible.

Funding for CE comes from the national budget and stakeholders in CE. In general, CE institutions will receive state funding from the national government through the local government which directly governs them, in which case the responsible unit for this decision-making is not the Department of Education and Training (DOET) of the province or district, but the finance unit within the People’s Committee.

Table 1 shows the budgets for CE as percentage numbers of the national education budgets from 2009 to 2014.

In 2019, the national educational budget accounted for approximately 20% of the total national budget, and 5% of the country GDP according to ActionAid (cited in Ministry of Finance 2017). However, the budget for CE is not reported. The funding mechanism is made complicated by the involvement of different stakeholders in most types of institutions, the low coordination among them, and the many overlapping policies applied to each type.

Figure 2 shows a simplified flow of funding for CE.

### Funding for CLCs

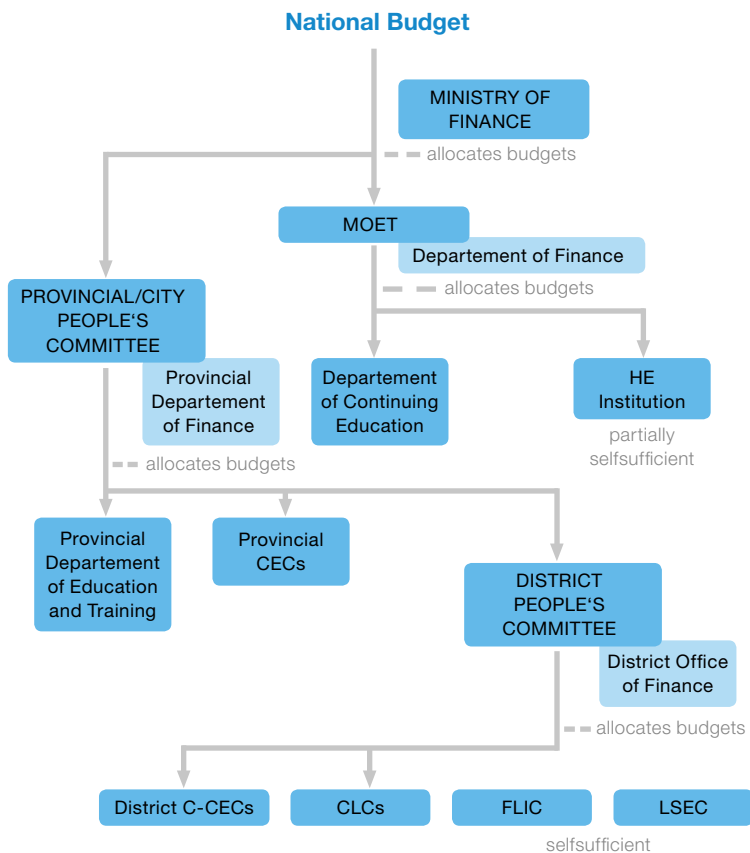
By regulation of Decision 09/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT on Establishment and Operation of CLC, a new CLC will be provided by the national government with 30 million VND to set it up. It will receive an annual operational budget from the local government which varies according to geographical place (rural/urban, mountainous/land) and the economic level of the local area. This will be from 10 to 20 million VND a year, which is usually not sufficient for operation. The funding gaps will be covered by additional sources like social organisations, businesses which are located in the local area and also from individual donors. Sometimes some low fees will be required of learners to hire teachers. A CLC, by regulations of the said decision, does not have its

**Table 1:**  
Budgets for CE and formal education as percentage number of national education budget

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Formal education (nursery to senior high)	69.7	69.7	69.0	69.2	69.0	69.2
Continuing education	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.6

Source: Ministry of Finance 2017

**Figure 2:**  
Flow of funding for community education



Source: authors' illustration

own teachers. Teachers are either seconded from a school in the local area who are paid by the school, or volunteers or hired staff using funding from donors (businesses and individuals), for thematic workshops. Some courses in life skills or skills for income generation may charge learners a small fee to pay hired teachers.

### Funding for CECs

A CEC is an education institute at provincial or district levels providing educational programmes equivalent to those in the formal education stream, and other programmes that meets the learning needs of the people. It is managed in academic respects by the provincial DOET, and funded by the local government. Sources of funding are also tuition fees, and thematic programmes commissioned by the government. However, this mechanism of governance and funding is undergoing a major change.

Since 2015 a merging process has been taking place between district-level CECs and VECs. Governance of the new V-CECs is still under debate, leaving the issue to be decided by the individual local government, DOET and DOLISA (Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs) local department. Currently, DOET and DOLISA are in charge of academic aspect and local governments are in charge of finance and staffs. There are three types of CECs: the self-sufficient ones (just under 10 in numbers across the country); the semi self-sufficient ones (the majority of CECs now); and the very few CECs that rely entirely on state funding – in operation alongside the new V-CECs.

Before this merger, VECs were run by MOLISA. They operated in a similar fashion to CECs, offering paid vocational programmes to young people and adults who wish to get a job or a rise in salary.

### Funding for FLICs

Unlike CLCs and CECs, which belong to the public sector, FLICs belong to both public and private sectors. Some DOETs and state-run universities

have their own FLICs which operate under their own regulations. Though partially funded by the state at the start for facilities set-up, they have become self-sufficient. Other FLICs are established by educational businesses, and organisations, and are managed according to their governing businesses and organisations, under the control of DOET. These are self-sufficient.

### Funding for LSECs

These are a new type of CE centres providing programmes in life skills such as self-protection, group work, creativity, and problem-solving. All LSECs are self-sufficient, sustaining on the income from tuition fees.

### Funding for HE programmes

Continuing tertiary level programmes are provided in the form of distance learning and online learning, in addition to the now less common conventional in-person mode by higher education (HE) institutions, the two biggest of which are Ho Chi Minh City Open University and Ha Noi Open University. It is however not limited to open universities, but can be conducted by other traditional ones. Programmes vary from certificate courses in practical skills to full degree programmes where students are awarded bachelor degrees upon successful completion. Programmes are not subsidised by the government, and tuition may serve as a source of income for the universities that organise the learning programmes.

## Recommendations

Non-formal ALE is a key tool that responds to changes in the work place due to technological advance. It inherits the flexibility of programme contents and modes of implementation of CE. Therefore, ALE deserves more adequate attention to serve the various learning needs. This calls for the following:

1. Enhance public awareness and participation in ALE. A promotion campaign should be launched nationwide, to ensure that the public as well as all ALE providers and activities conducted in Vietnam is aware of its importance. The aim is to increase the motivation and the participation of adult people in ALE, which in turn will attract more attention from stakeholders to invest more in ALE.
2. Develop and issue a law on ALE, that will institute ALE in the Vietnam education system. The law would be the foundation on which ALE-promoting policies are built, including those on financing it.
3. Establish a government body in charge of ALE provision and development. This agency may be placed inside the Department of Continuing Education.
4. Increase the effectiveness of PPPs (public-private partnerships); mobilise resources from the private sector, especially companies, in providing lifelong learning programmes for their employees.
5. Improve teaching capability by providing adequate funding for teachers' capacity- building at ALE institutions, especially CLCs and V-CECs.

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# Public financing of popular and general adult learning and education in Slovenia – some considerations from a sustainability perspective

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## Abstract

**This overview of Slovenian adult learning and education (ALE) is based on secondary data. A study of the financial basis of popular ALE and the current integration of ALE into the total education system, based on the new Adult Education Act (2018), accentuates a steady decline in the already poor finances for popular ALE. Subsequent and substantial changes in society and the environment call for the opposite: more support to popular ALE because of its flexibility, potential for empowering participation, and, in its collective forms, local contextual embeddedness and a commons-based approach. Slovenia has a well-developed basis to build on achievements in practice, with a variety of providers of popular ALE and with its standardised long-term monitoring.**

## Introduction

The *principle of circularity* is one of the basic principles in nature reflected in the concept of sustainability. It calls for the lowest possible material and energy footprint. It is currently unknown in adult learning and education (ALE). It may be known but low in popular ALE. It can help us to set a basis for improvements of ALE and popular ALE in terms of fulfilling sustainability criteria and providing an insight into the material basis and trends of ALE.

In recent years the emphasis in ALE has been roles for the labour market, resulting in marginalising its other functions in policymaking (Koulaouzides and Popović 2017). However, there are also educational needs forces pulling to what have always been the basis of ALE, nationally and internationally. This is particularly true for popular ALE, also called critical, community, or liberal ALE. Its diversity of values, learning strategies, contexts and roles delineates popular ALE from VET and literacy programmes. In

the 1990s Slovenia imported examples of popular ALE from elsewhere in Europe – study circles from Scandinavia, learning exchanges from Great Britain, etc., as forerunners of current ALE. This can mobilise an active response not only of selected target groups but of all able and willing to contribute and gain through ALE with a shift in character.

In recent decades initial goals of popular ALE (democratisation, access and diversity of learning forms and providers) were at least partly achieved. Its diversity of forms and providers enabled adaptation to all kinds of changes and challenges (low skills, lack of infrastructure in the rural areas, migrant waves, lack of environmental education). The recent strategic act that defines public interest in adult education is titled *Resolution on the Masterplan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia*. It is not articulated on the basis of these achievements, but above all on the basis of PIAAC

survey results (OECD 2017), views of stakeholders, and international influences on adult education. The highest priority is given to public network provision of ALE and vulnerable groups, through publicly validated programmes. Transdisciplinary and collective based approaches as appropriate to respond to the complex changes that we face are poorly recognised as appropriate, so there is no investment in this field of research or practice. This absence of documented outcomes of popular ALE may hinder providers from responding with more complex processes of learning in changing socio-ecological systems. Another issue is the inclination to ‘one size fits all’ solutions, and poorly addressing sustainability principles and issues. Also, administrative hierarchies may be slow in learning of new issues and therefore depend on lobbying to use their power and influence over the future especially of popular ALE.

We therefore argue for complementarity of top-down and bottom-up approaches that locate end users of ALE as a reference point, instead of object of learning provision. It does not only mean an initiative to take into account the latest global recommendations for the future of ALE (UIL 2020, ICAE 2020), but also additional accounting indicators and investments into national transdisciplinary research. Examples are competences of circular economy (Cycle 2017) that address economy, society and environment simultaneously, or study circles (Duke/Hinzen 2020, Bogataj 2015) addressing transversal issues through problem-based learning, hardly addressed through formal education.

ALE in Slovenia is called general non-formal education. Our aim is to provide an insight into its financial base: 1) to promote the role of popular ALE for adapting to changes and for sustainable development (accounting for environment, society and economy at the same time); and 2) provide a stable future for popular ALE and its critical, deliberative tradition in Europe and worldwide. Slovenia might be a good example of a small adaptive state, because of the frequent political and economic changes that it faced in the last century, at the crossroad of natural and linguistic European units.

We present below the general structure of Slovenian ALE, its financial base and governmental mechanisms for distribution, and the trends, indicators and monitoring used by public authorities.

## Definition and indicators

ALE here refers to general (delineated from vocational) non-formal (to differ from formal) education. It is defined as an organised (planned and monitored) activity, aimed at “rising literacy levels and access of vulnerable groups, providing general education, stimulating intergenerational cooperation and active citizenship, developing communities and stimulating community learning, contributing to sustainable development, green economy, healthy lifestyles, national identity, cultural consciousness and other topics, defined in the basic strategic act that defines public interest in adult education” (Adult Education Act, ZIO-1 2018, article 21). The strategic act is called the *Resolution on the Masterplan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia* (hereafter the Masterplan).

The overall used indicator of Slovenian ALE for over a decade is the number of participants. The valid Masterplan (2013–2020) accounts for an inquiry into workforce educational participation (four weeks before the measurement) and the Adult Education Survey (participation in the year prior to measurement). Another indicator (knowledge quality according to OECD) is used to delineate and address different target groups. Participants are classified according to their age, educational level and gender, and taken from the official national statistics or through selective use of the literature where criteria for selection are not discussed. Qualitative characteristics of learning (motivation, relational issues in society and towards environment, roles and outcomes of learning) are collected; but also used in frames of their development (EU projects or Slovenian popular ALE databases developed from 1990s onward). The European Lifelong Learning Indicators (ELLI) index (Saisana 2010) are not used. A database for study circles used in the development of current national ALE information systems

enables identification of trends in participation structure and learning outcomes. It was externally validated by the Social science data archives which enables access.

Finances are described on the basis of *ad hoc* collected data and secondary sources (e.g. internal draft of a Masterplan 2021-30, fifth Eurydice national report 2020, and others). Primary data sources are used for the presentation of distributive mechanisms based on personal observation over two decades. Primary data are used when we refer to examples of Slovenian popular ALE.

## Setting the scene - a brief overview of ALE in Slovenia

Adult education provision of folk universities since the sixties reached its peak in the wave of European democratisation in the 1990s. The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) was established in the independent state of Slovenia, with the strong initiative and engagement of informed and experienced professionals who supported it with research and development. Examples of popular ALE were introduced to activate different types of providers. SIAE served as a coordination body, but later partly passed this role to other institutions. Technological advances and extensive European Social Fund funding stimulated new aspects, including development of counselling and literacy programmes. Gradually the power of state criteria and procedures intervened to prevent direct response to local needs. OECD research was of importance in this respect; its data are still a subject of evaluations. However, environmental issues are missing in its codebook (OECD 2016), so sustainability and circularity have no ALE research ground.

A few new programmes of popular ALE were developed. One example is *The basics in education for sustainable development* (2007, 2016). This work is covered outside ALE, mostly by civil society. On the other hand, the Third Age University became a player in the field of ALE. Societal challenges were reflected in ALE priorities in financing job-related

issues, migrations, multiculturalism, and intergenerational cooperation during the past two decades. A top-down approach prioritised the establishment of public provision on the basis of a new Act. Other sectors (e.g. agriculture, health) also provide ALE but in the frame of other Ministries. Intersectoral, intergenerational and interdisciplinary cooperation have yet to evolve; they are needed for both, rural and urban populations. New challenges, and last but not least, the new needs of the circular economy, sustainable development and pandemic, emerge, affecting in particular those who live alone or far from infrastructure. As one size does not fit all, building on the achievements of popular ALE practices that gained trust among people through two decades might have contributed to fulfilling these and other future educational needs.

## The national understanding of ALE in Slovenia

ALE covers a variety of educational aims, forms, approaches and arguments. It is not therefore easy to talk about an overall national understanding. Public recognition may be limited when the key word is adult education; but also with lifelong learning and so the focus is on the formal programmes (e.g. completing primary school), validation and guidance to support participation, non-formal programmes for basic skills, non-formal programmes of popular ALE, and others. These investments in promotion are understandably substantial, but outcomes are hindered with constant redefinitions of key points: from initial formal knowledge to new competence and literacy-based structuring, and finally to life skills. For example, literacy programmes are sometimes an essential part of popular ALE in Slovenia, and sometimes delineated into separate categories of ALE.

At the national website of SIAE, popular ALE is presented with six practices (see <https://www.acs.si/podrocja-dela/neformalno-ucenje/>). Projects of non-formal learning are: i) learning exchange; ii) self-directed learning; iii) study circles; iv) project learning for young people; v) education for sustain-

able development, (expired) E+ project CIA2SFM; vi) literacy programmes, presented separately: <https://www.acs.si/podrocja-dela/pismenost/>. The draft for the upcoming Masterplan for 2021-2030 lists past achievements of literacy, basic skills, programmes of lower educated adults, publicly valued programmes of general non-formal learning, and only then popular ALE programmes and educational provision for elderly adults. Similar priorities in listing are used in the upcoming Masterplan for the period 2021-2030, which discourages actors of achievements by framing a new public face of ALE.

Consistent interpretations of ALE types and roles will hopefully be achieved through recognising sustainability and circular processes in society and environment. This also means substantial investments in general trust, recognised as problematic in post-communist countries by several authors; in the field of lifelong learning by Hoskins et al. (2010) in their European overview of impact of lifelong learning to economic and social outcomes; and in the latest analysis of the target group with the lowest literacy level by Bogataj (2020). Attention is given to the self-defined needs of active participants mobilised in ALE during the last two decades, as documented for example in the substantial bibliography for study circles in Slovenia (see <https://sk.acs.si/objave>), which can contribute to the national understanding of ALE.

### Organisational model and finances of the central Institution

The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE - <https://www.SIAE.si/en/about-us/>) is the central national institute of development and research in adult education founded by the government in September 1991. It drafts professional papers and evaluations, and monitors and develops the ALE system and its infrastructure. It also supports network of providers with professional training, informs professionals and the general public of achievements and developments, and promotes ALE. Its intermediary role is in the coordination of stakeholders with policymakers. Its currently limited

research and promotion well illustrate recent trends and outcomes in forming the *Resolution on the Masterplan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia for 2021–2030*. Around thirty people are employed at SIAE. The model of financing is documented showing relations among the actors. It has been relatively stable since the nineties, as illustrated by the example of one of the ALE programmes <https://sk.acs.si/izkaznica/organigram>.

### Providers of ALE, programmes and supporting activities

ALE providers are the following private, non-governmental and public institutions:

- adult education centres (public institutions) (major role),
- school centres for upper secondary and short cycle higher vocational education (minor role),
- private educational institutions (minor role) and
- other legal persons – non-governmental organisation (NGO) (minor role).

The names of public providers are diverse: people's universities, institute for education and culture, institute for training and permanent education, andragogical centre, centre for education, etc.

A decade ago, these types shared the work relatively equally; recently most attention is given to public programmes. However, an example of popular ALE, self-directed learning (Došler/ Zagmajster 2018), is recently being framed under the umbrella of public programmes. As an example of popular ALE, the latest evaluation of ALE response to the Spring 2020 wave of COVID-19 only took programmes run by folk universities (adult education centres), the Third Age University provision, and study circles (Možina et al. 2020). The best response was identified as programmes with financial obligations, meaning formal programmes (31%), followed by publicly valid programmes (8%), lan-

guage (19%) and unspecified programmes (12%). However, popular ALE projects were still represented with about 10%, even if there was only a minor financial obligation to fulfil, and an opportunity to postpone activities.

Programmed and supporting activities may be state-funded if providers are legal persons specified for ALE in their constitutions, registered to pursue ALE, or otherwise specified by law. Public providers are well connected with the ministry also through two national associations to represent their interests in the dialogue with the decision-makers. Civil society and private providers are discouraged, and usually unable to compete in administrative funding procedures. Their strength lies in their integrity and contextualised needs; interdisciplinary and reflexive problem-based learning, which is close to the principle of circularity in terms of information; knowledge; and fulfilling sustainability principles. They also enjoy local embeddedness, significance, and reputation.

Stretching ALE providers between the State and market results favours the vocational elements (e.g. validation) and supporting activities (e.g. guidance). Formal programmes enable completing basic school; or an opportunity to get National Vocational Qualifications. Intergenerational centres and basic and vocational competencies are funded by the EU Social Fund, while self-learning centres and study circles are funded from the national budget. The Third Age University is distinctive with its combination of NGO and enterprise. It is co-financed by participants and the national budget. Language and computer courses are usually financed on a market basis. Counselling and promotion are financed through the national and EU budget, enabling for example Lifelong Learning Week and Learning Parades to move from short events towards weekly or monthly activities. Most international projects are important levers of motivation and learning (for example Erasmus+, Interreg and others), and also of occasional research.

Public institutions and their educational offer, empowered by international or national arguments,

may differ from local customs and traditions, and 'end users', in terms of their basic values and visions of learning and development. This issue is poorly addressed and little known; it may be positive (upgrading tradition) or negative (lost tradition, decline of trust). In this sense, popular ALE practices are important, to counterbalance trendy or financially attractive issues, which lack regard for local needs. Issues of climate, sustainability and circularity are perfect examples of the misuse of ALE to get attention or resources.

In Slovenia an educational offer is by no means connected with traditional small-scale organic farming, nor does it follow the modern global agenda of green and circular. However, traditional practices and supra-local agendas may share a lot through complementing bottom-up and top-down initiatives. Moreover, the strengths of Slovenia's dispersed settlement pattern, personal contact with the land, and relatively well-preserved ecosystems, were used as a basis for the first programmes of education for sustainable development more than a decade ago (Anko et al. 2007, Anko et al. 2009, znamenjatrajnosti.si).

## Content and methods of popular ALE

Variety of topics is typical of popular ALE, as has already been described. A structured overview is difficult because of dispersion and diverse umbrellas, covering for example enterprises for driving licences. To illustrate the situation, we list their range: language services (reading, writing, Slovenian for immigrants, foreign languages); information and communications technology (ICT) programmes (self-directed learning, web-based courses, a programmed of digital literacy etc.); cultural activities (art, local problem-solving, handicrafts, wood carving); programmes for the basic vocational competences; counselling; promotion in the frame of Lifelong Learning Week and the EU-funded Learning Parade. Green topics - gardening, forest management, adaptation to climate change, green jobs etc. - are present, and evaluated in study

circles only; this topic is rising towards 10% of all types of topics; culture prevails. Sustainability was recognised in the current and future Masterplan (Masterplan 2014, 2020, internal draft).

New methods are poorly developed, except for individual EU project-based exceptions (Ličen 2011, 2015). A 2018 example of exception is ScienceLit Methodology (<http://www.sciencelit.eu/outputs/>), which is exactly in line with circularity based on reflexive loops of learning, that motivate people to attend and enable uptake of environmental issues in line with the eventual needs of participants. However, for pandemic reasons most system attention is now given to digitalisation and ICT-based offers, leaving rural people lagging behind, and underrepresented (Charmpis 2020).

## Financing of ALE and popular ALE

According to the latest regulation (ZIO-1 2018), state funds may cover the following costs of public institutions for ALE set up by the state that are pursued in line with the norms specified by the Minister: investments, maintenance and renovation of real-estate and equipment; material and operational costs to implement basic school for adults, and for activities like for example public service as specified by this law (namely funds for labour cost and expenses for goods and services), implementation of officially recognised adult education programmes and non-formal adult education programmes (=ALE) that include labour cost and expenses for goods and services; staff costs and expenses for goods and services for educational programmes that result in educational qualifications, upskilling or reskilling. The total of funds earmarked for public service, adult education programmes and activities may cover only expenses, and cannot allow for surpluses.

This means that ICT tools and their maintenance are provided, along with some staff education. Popular ALE staff based in civil society and private institutions are unprivileged also in terms of further education, as the Ministry for Education, Sci-

ence and Sport limits its support to teachers and professionals employed within its frame. A minimal yearly professional input (1-2 days of education) is provided by SIAE while infrastructural support is only available through partnerships with public institutions (libraries, museums) or municipalities. Contributions of non-educational ministries do not refer exclusively to ALE, but have been relatively stable in the past few years (Table 1).

The overall amount of investment into the first priority of the Master plan (non-formal learning that includes popular ALE) is around 20 million Euro yearly. One fifth (20%) of this amount is provided by the Ministry for Education, Science and Sports. The rest is provided by the other Ministries, among which the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs prevails (37%). According to the yearly financial report, less than half of these resources are invested into popular ALE. Shares are estimated only; and suffer eventual bias due to poor official definition of popular ALE. Based on an *ad hoc* list of popular ALE projects in overall ALE information is provided in Table 2, based on the totals of 7,344m in 2018 and 4,841m in 2019. These amounts show the substantial decline in the budget for popular ALE education.

The financial structure of popular ALE at SIAE is presented in Table 3, deriving from rough estimates of the total budget of 1.7 million Euro in 2018 and 1.9m in 2019 respectively.

Financing of popular ALE declines substantially. ALE is covered by the national budget, European Social Fund, EU programmes (like for example Erasmus, Interreg), local (minor) investments into ALE (popular and other). A detailed insight into an example of popular ALE practice of study circles (see <https://sk.acs.si> and <https://eaea.org/our-work/projects/9975-2/>) shows that on the average financial structure calculated for the last five years, 55% of expenses are covered by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, 20% by adult education providers, 10% by municipalities, 3% by donors, and 4% by members (Bogataj 2018).

**Table 1:**  
An example of the  
financial structure of  
ALE (internal draft of  
Masterplan, 2020)

<b>Sector</b>	<b>2018 (EUR, % of all)</b>
Education	31,3
Labour, Families and Social affairs	29,6
Agriculture	15,6
Foreign affairs	15,9
Culture	3,7
Interior affairs	0,9
Environment	0,3
Public Administration	2,4
Justice	0,4

Source: Masterplan 2020

**Table 2:**  
An *ad hoc* list of  
popular ALE  
programs and their  
shares in the National  
budget (Yearly ALE  
reports)

<b>Popular ALE Programmes</b>	<b>2018 (EUR, % of all)</b>	<b>2019 (EUR, % of all)</b>
Third age university	1	2
Study circles	4	7
Lifelong Learning and Learning Parade	2	3
Basic vocational competences	80	88
Education of unemployed and ALE	14	0

Source: Unpublished material (2020)



**Table 3:**  
Estimates of popular  
ALE budget at SIAE  
for 2018 and 2019

	2018 (EUR, % of all)	2019 (EUR, % of all)
ALE	10	12
EU Social Fund	17	26
EU projects	6	6

## Financing mechanisms and criteria

Distribution of finances through tenders is most usual as it seems formally transparent. Other mechanisms like for example direct delivery practised for years and based on professional responsibility are not in current use. Tenders are used for both national and EU Social Funds resource distribution. Institutions compete for information and positioning, which is particularly tough in large projects, resulting in fluctuations of staff. Precarious employment in ALE limits its long-term development. There is no circularity in terms of counting professional references or past achievements in this process, and no sustainability. New people come and go, again and again. Calls for partnerships do not substantially change this situation, the opposite to cooperation and coordination called for as a matter of urgency. Projects of popular ALE, like for example centres for self-directed learning, are currently financed on the basis of yearly tender, but is expected to turn into public financing with minimal coverage. The rest of popular ALE is expected to continue its dependence on yearly public tenders and see declining financing.

Criteria are generally prepared by administration at the Ministry for Education, Science and Sport. Smaller popular ALE projects are financed on the basis of criteria, usually prepared in accordance of the Ministry and SIAE on the basis of internal database evaluations. For study circles in 2020, priority

was given to small NGOs and private providers. This way some balance was provided with public providers, even if they document excellent material achievements, outreach, and long-term activity.

Financing mechanisms turn attention from learning and self-responsibility for its outcomes to external reference e.g. state provision of ALE, and its quality. In some ways this is good; but again, one size does not fit all. Therefore, the distribution system merits substantial improvements, already practices with trials of participatory budgets and commons-based approaches, up to now not practiced in Slovenian ALE.

## Trends and changes in recent times

Most of these trends have been mentioned earlier. However, it is worthwhile to underline underrepresented rural areas, and the declining activity of civic and private educational institutions that enhance the empowering of rural population. Promising fields of development are seen in encouraged collective dimensions of ALE; they are well presented and argued in the latest publications of the UNESCO Institute for Adult Education (UIL 2020), and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE 2020). Rural population and the accent on sustainability may become strengths of ALE, in integrating the socio-economic system with the environment. Arguments for this is that it is practice of material



circularity in small-scale land-based production, with integration of economic, ecological, and social values. Additionally, social capital remains in rural areas all over Europe; globally it may serve as a model of trust-building – important as a precondition of learning. Programmes developed, top-down, and their move to digital platforms, may fill some gaps, but open up other gaps. For this reason, selective participation based on top-down established financing rules (eligible for EU funds, target group definition, publicly valid programmes) disempower informal and non-formal validations, as is obvious from the response to already existing programmes. This systemic gap is worth being addressed in the future, together with the response to environmental challenges and climate change, issues identified decades ago.

## Appraisal of popular ALE

Grounded data are a matter of grounded contextualised interpretation as well as numbers and structure of participants, and internationally comparative research. They are also the matter of serious problems, that cannot be addressed just with simple indicators and methodologies. There are examples of interdisciplinary team approaches (Saisana 2010, Manninen et al. 2014). Popular ALE has lacked investments in research for decades. However, there are substantial nationally validated databases (like for example the database for study circles) developed with the first wave of EU Social Fund. They remain underused, and poorly upgraded for response to recent socio-ecological challenges.

National ALE priorities are influenced by EU ALE initiatives, but not all the work is included. Trials of describing learning features in popular ALE with new, qualitative indicators exist (Urh et al. 2019: 118, Bogataj 2019: 47), paving the way ahead. However, the challenge remains of how to measure relations, trust, synergies, and cultural aspects. The pandemic situation well illustrates that learning is much more than simple knowledge transfer, or top-down planned education performed on modern web-platforms. An example of study circles has

been chosen as it is bottom-up activity, precisely monitored and coordinated. Slovenian study circles somehow differ from the plethora of examples, presented just recently (Duke/Hinzen 2020) for their intergenerational participant structure and problem-solving orientation, based in reflexive dialogue and resulting in (officially demanded) action that has two goals: to self-reflect the success of learning, and to publicly promote learning, its topic, form, etc. There are also other reasons to cite Slovenian study circles:

- They reflect 27 years of adaptation of initial aims to the actual challenges of society;
- They represent high motivation to attend or enrol in local development, and in obtaining mentorship license;
- They are regularly monitored, in functioning as well as structure;
- They fulfil Sustainable Development Goal criteria by providing equal access to learning, to practical information flow, and to action;
- They were recognised as a best practice example at local and European level;
- They are documented in extensive bibliography available at <https://sk.acs.si/objave>.

## Discussion and conclusion

ALE is defined in the existing Slovenian Master-plan (2014: 58) as planned, half-structured, and eventually validated, but without valid educational level recognition. Popular ALE has as its reference point the needs and will of people, regardless of the location of their learning (workplace, private life), target group or possible roles. It is sometimes compared with an iceberg (Došler/Zagmajster 2018), and certainly contributes to educational system needs by activating participants in any programme or activity. Adaptation to diverse changes calls for transferability of competences, knowledge and

skills; the best answer at all levels is learning. A Slovenian definition of popular ALE incorporates individual relational elements to 'the other' and to the physical environment of nature, technology, community etc, regardless of its base (territory, workplace, interest). This is the way to the future, adding the value of learning, better than the only positivist and top-down, approaches and selective use, of some foreign models. Relatively vague definition and several gaps popular that ALE fills make it less appropriate for administrative or media use, but still a tool to address the needs of participants. This seems to be its crucial identity in providing the future of popular ALE as already articulated in the latest strategic global documents (UIL 2020, ICAE 2020) based on a variety of field practices and long-term strategic research. Future decisions will need better integration of structure with contexts and functioning, because learning motivation and socio-ecological issues are complex and dynamic. Evolution of reference points, from educational level to competences, literacy and recently to skills, may provide a solid basis for the future, but also makes for confusion. Uptake of measures already developed is therefore a way forward (ELLI index, Manninen et al. 2014, ecological footprint, etc.).

Some issues are specific for Slovenia. The basic precondition of learning – trust – is low, for some groups even zero (Bogataj 2020). Another specific issue refers to the strength of one of the main arguments for ALE: equity. Its relevance is weakened with information that Slovenia has the highest equity level of all EU states (Eurostat 2020). Arguments for Slovenian ALE and popular ALE are not only about equity and raised knowledge and skills literacy. A basic question – is participation the final goal *per se*, or an outcome of high-quality educational provision – seems relevant. Regardless of answers, ALE should be a part of solution and not part of a problem (Manion et al. 2011, Biesta 2004). So, the basic question of ALE is not only its definition, operationalisation and finances, but above all fulfilling the needs of participants. These need change; they are, at least for the connection between people and their natural environment, totally unknown from an ALE perspective.

Welcome support for ICT might also become a trap. Diverse educational needs call for diversity of providers, diversity of tools, diversity of topics and elements of ALE. Hierarchical structure takes a lot of energy in coping with the uneven distribution of power, diverting attention from the core motive of learning and addressing diversity and sustainability optimally. Popular ALE in Slovenia can and will contribute its strengths to agility and adaptability of ALE, with its diversity, participant orientation and circular communicative loops. It has already tried to complement the positive roles of hierarchies by filling gaps at their negative externalities. This was proposed years ago by well-known Slovenian adult educator Prof. Zoltan Jelenc, the first head of SIAE. Sustainability principles, and a process of circularity, call for major changes that by definition we all avoid. However, undervalued and unknown intermediaries like civil society combine high access and low carbon footprint. We already have models and practices for the future that have been carefully developed for over two decades. I would even say that the example of study circles is a reference point of departure to achieve ambitious target levels of participation (both in Europe and in the upcoming Slovenian national Masterplan), because they have the public reputation needed by any state to implement, enforce and align legal requirements with existing informal norms. Actual European educational policy supports humanism and sustainability (Pangerc Pahernik 2020) so there is hope in this respect.

Feedback loops in recycling information, reflexive debates, local problem solving, teamwork: all are important elements of sustainability in education. Satisfied participants return and ask for more programmes, as has been observed in Slovenia. However, it is also possible to mask a programme with terms from the new international favourites and continue educating in the old unsustainable way. As in the nature, there are reversible but also irreversible changes, so it is urgently needed to talk about issues openly, critically and transparently. A light in the tunnel is seen in flattened organisation, quality assessment, self-organisation combined with coordination of programmes, new indicators

and the maintenance of relations and links in the following areas of popular ALE provision:

- relation of providers with end users (participants)
- relation of ALE (representing a social pillar of sustainable development) with economy and ecology at the same time\*
- positioning of popular ALE for an intermediary between the State and individuals, instead of being just a State tool
- flattening organisational scaling, which is seen as easier than in formal education
- giving weight to local communities (lower than municipalities) and their use of nature (see also UIL 2020)
- stimulating participative governance, participative budget, and providing a chance for participants to define their problem on their own
- stimulating synergies and complementarities (see Iniguez-Berrozpe/Boeren 2019)
- stimulating self-regulation, self-organisation, and quality monitoring for rationality, motivation, and incorporated feedback loops (=circularity) instead of highly regulated programming
- building up common knowledge, reciprocity, meritocracy and liberation
- keeping the basic popular ALE identity critical, community-based and liberal in character.

\**Economy* is indirectly addressed: not through financial literacy but above all through target group selection aimed to integrate those who lag behind, need empowerment and 'fill the gaps': (knowledge

gap, digital gap, generational gap, skills or competencies gap etc.). *Environment* is currently missing - a gap in understanding environmental issues and their relation to sustainability. *Society* is an inherent part of both, but all too often only studied as a whole, instead of as a mosaic of communities. ALE staff usually have their roots in humanities or social sciences, so the environment has not been their primary interest. To understand the concept of sustainability, and to integrate the three perspectives, needs an added value and changed approach, coupled with recognition of local specific constellations; that is communities that adapt dynamically to 'internal changes' - motivation of participants and their needs - and external changes in climate, migration, the ageing of the European population, etc.

*To sum up*, we are happy for increased incorporation of ALE in the Slovenian educational frame, but unhappy with its already poor and declining finances. Extensive data on its outcomes, good public response and a viable intermediary role are to be respected and supported as achievements, because of the contribution to the overall legitimacy of Slovenian ALE. Its capacity for fast and motivated response to local changes, embedded into both a social and a natural dynamic and the principle of circularity, is best expressed in group forms, as exemplified in Slovenian study circles. International vision for ALE already opens the door to the future (ICAE 2020, UIL 2020 and others). The agility of future ALE systems may gain from complementarities achieved at all levels. We therefore argue for more support to be given recently marginalised popular ALE.

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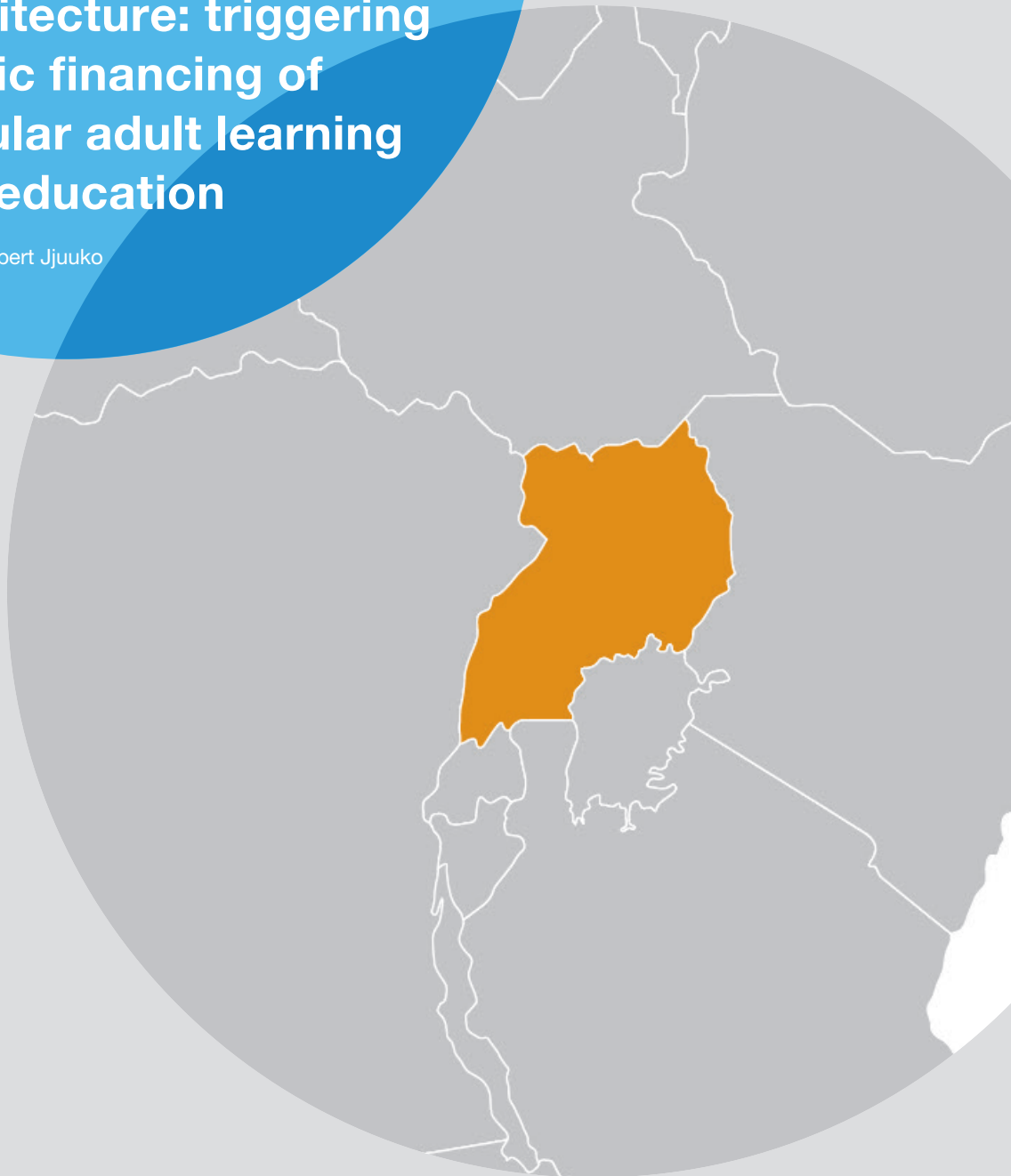
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# Uganda's Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation (ICOLEW) architecture: triggering public financing of popular adult learning and education

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## Abstract

**Notwithstanding Uganda's narrow conceptualisation of adult learning and education (ALE), an emergent expanded vision of adult literacy education within an Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation (ICOLEW) architecture offers new hope for public financing of liberal dimensions of the ALE sector. Adopted in 2020 as the official successor of the National Action Plan for Adult Literacy (NAPAL), it can potentially alleviate ALE's perennial financing challenge. ICOLEW promotes inter-sectoral partnerships to optimise public financing, as an inspirational experience that can contribute to improved public financing of popular ALE, if stakeholders consider systemic policy reforms. Hitherto the story is one of small steps, promising ideas, but disappointment and difficulty in terms of finding a viable funding model to match the more ambitious reach of popular ALE.**

## Introduction and background

Making public money and related resources for adult learning and education (ALE) available has been one of Uganda's development challenges since the evolution of organised education provision more than a century ago. Education for adults' conscientisation and personal transformation for social change has always been at the periphery of decision-making for the already meagre public financing for ALE. Investing in the education of adults in the context of poverty eradication gained political support based on presumed economic returns, moving up as a funding priority under the poverty action fund in 2002. Despite the narrower focus on adult literacy education at the time, this started a new trend of state-funded ALE service delivery.

An expanded vision of literacy and basic education within Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation (ICOLEW) architecture offers new hope for public financing of popular ALE. Adopted in July 2020 as the official successor of the national action plan for adult literacy (NAPAL), ICOLEW has the potential to bridge the longstanding challenges of public funding of ALE. ICOLEW is a fusion of ideals and principles drawn from the Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) and sustainable livelihood approaches; it promotes partnerships and inter-sectoral linkages, optimising the mobilisation and use of financial resource.

This article is based on a desk review of thirty official documents, and empirical insights from unstructured interview sessions with 11 informed actors. It reviews the evolution, design, and approach of ICOLEW as a stimulus for financing community education. A sketch of the understanding of ALE in general and Popular ALE is followed by a brief overview of the development of organised adult education service delivery in Uganda. I turn to the past of ALE financing, before dealing with the current position, challenges, and future prospects, of ICOLEW financing. I argue that the ideological stance of ICOLEW and its integrated approach holds good promise for the discourse and practice of public financing of popular ALE in Uganda, and that stakeholders should consider a system thinking approach to enable an environment conducive to better popular ALE outcomes.

### Conceptualisation of popular ALE

Uganda has no official definition of adult learning and education (MGLSD 2012). Popular ALE is not in the official discourse of education and social development policy and governance. Stakeholders often interchangeably use the term ‘adult education’ rather than ‘ALE’ to refer to adult literacy or non-formal education for young people and adults. In the 2012 national progress report in the context of the Belem Framework for Action, the government acknowledged the absence of an official definition of adult education, and quotes a civil society advocacy group, which defined adult education as:

“The process by which adults seek to improve themselves and society by increasing their knowledge and skills ... through which groups and institutions support the educational development of adults” (MGLSD 2012: 3).

According to the 2015 UNESCO Institute for Life-long Learning monitoring survey results in the context of preparing the third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE), Uganda indicated that there is an official definition of ALE but did not state what it was (MGLSD 2015a).

Definitional challenges persist in Uganda despite progress made through one of the recommendations in the 1992 Government White Paper on Education (GWP), which called for the democratisation of education, focusing on critical areas including non-formal and adult education (MoES 1992). Related policy discourses to clarify the understandings of ALE have oscillated between titles that broaden and narrow the scope of the sector (Jjuuko et al. 2007). This is made worse by the absence of a comprehensive policy for ALE (Bananuka and Katahoire 2019). The MGLSD that, by practice, seem to encompass most of the ALE components that would ordinarily encompass some liberal education dimensions enacted a policy carrying a title that is restricted to adult literacy (MGLSD 2015b).

However, while the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) and other state and non-state actors may seem narrower and /or unclear in relation to their understandings of ALE, service provision stretches to cover other ALE components such as vocational skills development, practice-oriented entrepreneurship education, health education, civic education, and environment education (UGAADEN 2010). The provision of some ALE components does embrace liberal dimensions, as is the case with ICOLEW but without a pronounced definitional clarity. Further, despite the MGLSD’s narrower policy focus on adult literacy education, expanding and strengthening of ICOLEW is among the priorities in the budget framework paper for community mobilisation and mindset change programme for the fiscal year 2020/21 (MGLSD 2020a).

### Evolution of organised public adult education

Beside the informal and indigenous learning as embedded in peoples’ everyday cultural practices, organised public adult education service delivery in Uganda, dates from the 1940s, with the creation of the Department of Public Relations and Social Welfare (MGLSD 2008). Previously, adult education as a system and practice had received recognition owing to its role in developing the workforce to



grow cash crops such as coffee and cotton. The colonial government established the Department to rehabilitate and re-orient ex-combatants of the Second World War to become productive citizens; and to train the general adult population in social welfare, health, sanitation, and related rural development themes (Openjuru 2016).

The mass character of adult literacy education during colonial Uganda, intended to make citizens good servants of the establishment, received a boost during the post-independence era in the mid-1960s. Two community development-oriented institutions expanded their non-formal adult education programmes and activities. Quantity and quality of provision were far below reaching the huge number of non-literate Ugandans who were never a priority of the elitist formal education system. Adult literacy education became a major focus of public adult education policy in 1967, when the government declared that the Education Ministry had spread public resources too thinly, and its impact on the eradication of illiteracy had been minimal (MGLSD 2008).

Following a two-decade-long adult education policy and financing void, the White Paper based on the report by the Education Policy Review Commission argued for the need to direct substantial resources within a framework of making the entire education system viable in terms of quality and quantity. The GWP recommended creating a directorate of non-formal education in the Ministry of Education and a national council for non-formal and adult education, with district committees. These recommendations been the bedrock of official policy reforms for mainstream education, but not for ALE sector.

### ALE and community development: institutions and approaches

Of the several public institutions that deliver distinct components of ALE, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) is the most known and lead government agency. Adult literacy for community development explicitly targets youth and adults outside the formal education system.

The MGLSD established the division for adult literacy within its community development department in 2008: the most outstanding public pronouncement closer to ideal public institutional support for non-formal ALE. A functional institutional infrastructure for ALE and later popular ALE as envisaged by GWP is yet to be realised.

MGLSD's community department services operate country-wide through local government structures at district and sub-county levels. Community development officers take direct professional responsibility for the delivery of literacy and community development services by local governments. Nationally the department does the following directly related to ALE:

- developing and disseminating guidelines and regulations, and setting standards on community development work and functional literacy;
- monitoring and evaluating policy implementation on community development and functional literacy;
- providing technical advice, support supervision and training to local governments on community development and literacy (MGLSD 2019b).

The Department works hand in hand with the National Library of Uganda established by the National Library Act of 2003. The National Library of Uganda is obliged to support and promote adult literacy and education by identifying and stocking post-literacy reading materials; and support setting up rural community libraries.

The MGLSD is in overall charge of adult literacy policy intended to ensure that service provision meets the diverse learning needs of young people and adults outside the formal schooling system. The ambition to link adult literacy education to community development outcomes has always prompted the argument to broaden the scope of service delivery. Attempts to transcend a narrow focus on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills were apparent a few years into implement-

ing the first post-colonial national mass literacy campaign in 1964. The government introduced a functional adult literacy (FAL) approach in 1966 to counter perceived inadequacies of the traditional approach. The Integrated Non-Formal Basic Education Pilot Project (INFOBEP) designed in 1992 after a two-decade vacuum adopted a FAL approach in 1996. In 2002, the government designed a 5-year national adult literacy strategic plan (NALSIP) with similar methodological ideals to anchor the sector into the poverty eradication agenda.

However, real change of practice resulting from applying a FAL approach to encompass all social and economic life facets of participating learners remained elusive. Against this background the process review report on the performance of NALSIP recommended deepening, diversifying and moving beyond FAL (MGLSD 2007b). The successor national action plan for adult literacy (NAPAL) 2011- 2016 adopted a core theme of 'deepening adult literacy for socio-economic transformation' (MGLSD 2011). In the struggles to widen and broaden FAL there is ambivalence over programme purpose. In 2008, process reviewers of the Embassy of Iceland-sponsored FAL implementation in Kalangala and Buvuma islands identified lack of clarity of purpose:

“FALP seeks to combine the teaching of adult literacy with functionality. We found considerable uncertainty whether the priority is literacy or functionality; and what is meant by functionality, whether it is (a) social/community development through developmental messages; (b) group formation; (c) livelihood skills training and activities; and/or (d) civic participation” (Rogers et al. 2008: 4).

What seemed to be clear to the reviewers was the absence of critical development through structural transformation from the agenda.

Conceived in 2016 as a pilot and adopted in July 2020 as the official successor to NAPAL, ICOLEW seeks to improve delivery and practice by building on lessons from using the FAL approach under

predecessor programmes. According to informed actors in the MGLSD and DVV International, ICOLEW is configured to build a new integrated adult education system in Uganda; it is both a programme and an approach: a fusion of ideals and principles drawn from REFLECT and sustainable livelihood approaches. Already, in the late 1980s, REFLECT had begun to take root in Uganda mainly through the work of Action Aid International; but it was not formally adopted, and efforts to promote it yielded little at the time (Okech et al. 2001).

Effective and appropriate use of REFLECT principles is now envisaged to create participatory learning spaces for enhanced community mobilisation and empowerment; and to address the needs of youth and adult learners holistically. The ICOLEW programme is organised around: literacy and numeracy skills enhancement; village savings and loans associations; livelihoods skills training; business skills training; and community development. These components form the basic ingredients for addressing poverty in materially poor communities. Planned outcomes include community planning, and actions that address community-related issues such as food and hunger, health and sanitation, early childhood development, housing and other contextual community needs and aspirations.

### ICOLEW's potential as popular ALE

Despite ambivalence over the purpose of public literacy and community development programmes, which often focus on poverty reduction, clarity to integrate liberal education dimensions may emerge through the ICOLEW approach. the ICOLEW programming paradigm seems to acknowledge the “nature and the potential of adult education in democratisation of the processes of both politics and economy within nations” (Bhola 2005: 405).

Participation and empowerment ideals are embedded in the ICOLEW design. Participation is viewed as empowering people and involving in decision-making processes so that stakeholders influence the control of development initiatives,

decisions, and resources. Many argue that it encourages community development and social action. The collectives of participants in locations or villages where ICOLEW activities take place are formally called Community Empowerment Groups (CEGs). One ICOLEW informed actor explains that “the choice of the notion of empowerment in naming learning groups was deliberate to connote the ambition to turn adult learners into change agents” (National Level NGO Staff).

Aware that Uganda does not have an official definition of ALE or later of popular ALE, I sought to discern stakeholders’ common understandings of popular ALE by asking them ‘what empowerment in the context of ICOLEW means to them’. Most stakeholders equate empowerment with improved livelihoods, self-confidence, and financial autonomy of ICOLEW participants.

“For us, empowerment is not about skills, only. It is about attitude; has the learner learnt something, is he replicating it, is he able to sustain it? Does he now start looking at the impossibilities being possible? ... Are they going to start adopting technologies like use of fertilizer, improved seed, such that they see the land that was regarded poor, become rich” (District Local Government Staff).

Some demonstrate social change dimensions of empowerment, yet to be mainstreamed into ICOLEW practice. ICOLEWs method requires engaging participants in action planning, leading to group action plans and village action plans. This is said partially to socially empower. Document and empirical evidence is that CEG participants and facilitators acting individually or collectively are seeking to address social problems through some form of social activism. Thus, CEG participants in one of the locations in Iganga district were reported to have caused the transfer of a head teacher in 2018 when they confronted the local authorities over the habitual poor performance of the primary school (DVV International 2020).

Evidence indicates increasing political participation of CEG participants in matters of governance at community, sub-county, and district levels. Some CEG participants have been elected to serve on community structures, such as local government councils and committees.

“I have a lady I know...that lady used to come to the class, she got money and began to venture into business, she managed to renovate her home, she managed to engage in politics and got elected for the post of Local Council 2” (ICOLEW Facilitator).

One CEG participant engaging in local governance and politics stated that “I was shy, I could not answer any question when asked but right now, I speak freely, because I am vice chairperson of Local Council 2”. On her engagement with men on matters of domestic governance and family relationships, she argued that “I am assertive I cannot fear him. I do not rush with them; I handle slowly in my own way”.

There are indications that political participation and holding positions on local government structures by some ICOLEW participants is partially a solidarity action empowered by their CEGs. Local government and ICOLEW frontline actors both argument that CEG solidarity helps to strengthen the political aspirations and dreams of individuals seeking to influence the way power and resources are used in the communities.

The strategic relevance of CEGs in taking forward the social change agenda seems to be part of the ICOLEW design. Its national and local actors argue to have the CEGs registered as community-based organisations (CBOs), to allow continuity of social economic empowerment processes beyond the life of the programme. Perhaps CEGs, acting in their right as civil society institutions, can facilitate moving beyond reducing poverty to addressing structural and institutional impediments to social change.

## Financing of ALE in Uganda

Finances for public ALE services in the context of community development come from traditional taxes and aid by bilateral and multilateral agencies, civil society organisations (CSOs) and philanthropy (Jjuuko 2017). Public ALE in this context refers to the adult literacy education-related activities implemented under the mandate of the MGLSD. The Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MFPED) exercises its mandate of collecting all public revenue; oversees national budgeting and accountability; and transfer of social development non-wage grants to MGLSD headquarters and local governments. ALE being a decentralised service, central government transfers to local governments are meant to fund it.

Funds are made available for delivery of public ALE services in five main ways. First, government uses its own generated tax revenue and foreign aid to finance ALE. This was particularly evident during the 2002/2002 fiscal year when NALSIP was formally integrated into poverty action fund financing arrangements under the budget line for directly improving the quality of life of the poor (MFPED 2000). This positive trend among others had been cemented by including adult literacy education within the public investment plan (PIP) by the Ministry of Finance until fiscal 2014/2015.

Second, local CSOs, often funded by international agencies, mainly non-governmental organisations (NGOs), directly finance ALE activities in communities, normally in a few selected villages, sub-counties, or districts. These international NGOs include DVV International, Finnish Refugee Council in Uganda, Norwegian Refugee Council in Uganda, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and ActionAid International (Okech et al. 1999). There is a detailed list of national and local CSOs involved in adult education related service delivery in a directory produced by Uganda Adult Education Network (UGAADEN 2012).

Third, international CSOs finance ALE by directly providing funds to a government department or

ministry to implement activities. One example is the unique partnership between DVV International and MGLSD in the context of ICOLEW since 2015 considered below.

Fourth, foreign government agencies offer funding to Government of Uganda structures through off-budget financing mechanisms for directly implementing ALE activities. Direct support to the MGLSD and local governments by the Embassy of Iceland between 2002 and 2015 towards ALE activities on the islands of Lake Victoria is the single most significant example (Mabuya and Odedo 2009; Rogers et al. 2008).

Fifth, multilateral and bilateral development agencies provide one-off financial support towards providing adult literacy education activities. Examples include the support by UNESCO and UNICEF to relaunch FAL in 1992. Recently, UNICEF financially supported the review of the FAL curriculum to integrated nutrition learning content (MGLSD 2016). Another example is World Bank support for evaluating FAL in 1999.

Over the period, the budgeting and allocation of public funds by the MFPED through the MGLSD focused on adult literacy education under the FAL framework. At macro level, the MGLSD through its community development department would originate the national budget in line with the indicative planning figures released by the MFPED. The MFPED would disburse monies, as approved by the Parliament of Uganda, to the MGLSD for national level expenditure, and to local governments for relevant activities at district, sub-county, and community levels.

However, this funding was far from adequate: instead of the annual UGX30 billion (EUR7,500,000) originally budgeted in the NALSIP, only about UGX3 billion (EUR750,000) was approved every year (MGLSD 2007a). In addition, there was concern that the grants hardly reached implementation. Further, the entire financing arrangement that focused on adult literacy was assumed insufficient in terms of addressing the learning needs of out-of-school

youth and adults. It is being claimed that FAL's narrower programming and implementation prompted MFPED to remove it from PIP in 2015.

"FAL was exited the PIP with effect from 2014/2015 as such there was no financing of adult literacy education within MGLSD community development function at the national level" (MGLSD Staff).

The debate and advocacy campaigns mainly by CSOs for reinstatement of FAL on the PIP, alongside calls to streamline and widen public financing of ALE, are yet to show results; but ICOLEW's inter-sectoral orientation seems to be a promising stepping-stone for a shift from narrower adult literacy education financing perspectives.

### From adult literacy to community learning financing

The shift from adult literacy to community learning financing, based on the promising ICOLEW approach, offers a new window for better public financing of popular ALE. Apparently, ICOLEW is in tune with the NALSIP process reviewers' recommendation to widen FAL by "turning it from being a single programme to being a field of activity in which different delivery systems can be found to help adults to develop their literacy skills and practices in the many different contexts in which they live" (MGLSD 2007a: 93). Seemingly, there is consensus about the power of ICOLEW to respond to this concern. Most stakeholders claim that ICOLEW fits firmly within government policy imperatives. One top ICOLEW admirer in the MGLSD argues that ICOLEW is linked to the political economy of the country, which is why endorsement by Ministry top policy management was possible.

Informed actors at local government levels agree that the ICOLEW design and approach is indeed delivering better resource mobilisation outcomes.

"ICOLEW approach of financing is now the best way to go because it is integrated. ... And that's where the government is going because recently when we had the budget conference, they told us, now these things of just budgeting for the department are phasing out" (Sub County Staff).

One of the outstanding elements in this emerging financing arrangement for ICOLEW is the emphasis on community learning centres (CLCs) as hubs for knowledge acquisition and utilisation. The CLC component is seen by many stakeholders as the real hook to tap into mainstream public financing and budgeting for ALE activities. During a stakeholders' consultative meeting in 2019, a cabinet minister reportedly argued that:

"The CLCs component makes the programme to qualify for project funding under government Public Investment Plan [PIP] because one of the conditions is capital investment ... 70% of its budget has to go into capital investments while 30% goes into recurrent expenditure."

### Enhancing ICOLEW financing mechanisms

Empirical evidence and literature sources indicate a difficult past in terms of government financing of ICOLEW but also a promising future. The financing of ICOLEW since its inception in 2015/16 is dependent on partnership between MGLSD and DVV International, under renewable memoranda of understanding (MoUs). The MGLSD makes available its institutional infrastructural support at national level, and through its countrywide network of community development staff.

Commensurate counter-funding by the MGLSD had not materialised by the time of fiscal year 2019/20, partly because financing of FAL had been removed from the PIP. Social development non-wage recurrent transfers from the MFPED remained the only explicit source of funds for adult literacy education, but still under FAL programming perspectives. A national actor in the MGLSD narrates how local

**Table 1:**  
Social development  
grants to local  
governments for  
selected priorities

SN	Grant	Amount (UGX)	Amount (Euro)	Percent
1	Youth Council	916,800,000.00	229,200.00	12.00
2	Women Council	702,880,000.00	175,720.00	9.20
3	Council for Disability	382,000,000.00	95,500.00	5.00
4	Council for Older Persons	382,000,000.00	95,500.00	5.00
5	Libraries	282,680,000.00	70,670.00	3.70
6	Probation and Welfare	764,000,000.00	191,000.00	10.00
7	Community Based Rehabilitation	382,000,000.00	95,500.00	5.00
8	Community Development	382,000,000.00	95,500.00	5.00
9	Special Grant for PWDs	1,528,000,000.00	382,000.00	20.00
10	<i>Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation</i>	<i>1,153,640,000.00</i>	<i>288,410</i>	<i>15.10</i>
11	Labour	382,000,000.00	95,500.00	5.00
12	Gender and Culture	382,000,000.00	95,500.00	5.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7,640,000,000.00</b>	<b>1,910,000.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: MGLSD Implementation Guidelines 2020/21 (MGLSD 2019b)

governments were guided to find some money for FAL activities during this difficult period:

“In 2016, local governments were told ‘you are in a situation to plan for the central government (social development grants) transfers under community-based services in the district for social development sector transfers ... there is FAL, there is Youth Livelihood, there is disability; so they were given the discretion also to earmark those needs accordingly.”

The little funds that could be realised as a percentage from central government social development grants of approximately UGX9million (EUR2,250) per month to each of the 135 districts in Uganda

were being directed to FAL-related expenditure. Typical expenditure included occasional adult literacy instructors’ training workshops; monitoring and supervision; formative assessments; and proficiency tests. District local governments would budget, allocate and expend the social development non-wage grants, but within stipulated guidelines, which continued to officially prioritise FAL other than ICOLEW until 2019. However, fiscal year (2020/2021) introduced new implementation guidelines for spending social development grants under the community mobilisation and mindset change programme, that subsequently earmarked ICOLEW with a comparatively better percentage share of 15%, as indicated by Table 1.

The guidelines also permit local governments to budget for capital investments such as building CLCs using the discretionary development equalisation grant (DDEG), or reallocations from wage and non-wage conditional grants. Training ICOLEW facilitators and providing equipment are among permissible spending areas. There are reports of additional funding of ICOLEW activities especially in the pilot districts of Iganga, Nwoya, Namayingo and Mpigi from DDEG, that has not hitherto been a common financing source for ALE-related expenditure. One of the local government actors close to the internal budgeting dynamics illustrates this positive trend:

“Last financial year, when we were budgeting, we had skipped the construction of the latrines to the CLC. We got some funds from community development, from administration, and from health, to start the construction of the pit latrine; and we have already completed it.”

Across the ICOLEW pilot districts there are reports of increased financial support towards procuring learning materials and facilities such as chairs in addition to regular monitoring and support supervision by local government staff. In addition, there is mention of increasing interest by autonomous state agencies and CSOs in providing financial and material support to ICOLEW at community level. A national level actor familiar with how ICOLEW is attracting support of such organisations including a public agency, narrates:

“I remember in Kochi Goma Sub County in Nwoya district they [district stakeholders] identified that we have some needs. We empowered them to advocate; like to discuss with other stakeholders. Apparently, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) has said that ‘we are going to do additional funding’. One time they went to UN Women and said that ICOLEW looks a sustainability of all programmes; UN Women provided funding for raising seedlings, and distribution to all ICOLEW participants.”

This is confirmed by others who report that Nwoya district local government received additional funding of UGX500 million (EUR125,000) between 2017 and 2018 from UWA to construct two community-learning centres for the sub-counties of Anaka and Purongo.

Since 2015/16 DVV International has disbursed a total of Euro1 million to the districts and service providers, as indicated in Table 2. The key cost centres have always been monitoring, personnel capacity-building, and provision of learning resources and facilities. One remarkable expenditure prioritised under this financing arrangement is the monthly token allowance of UGX50,000 (EUR12.5) for ICOLEW facilitators. This had never been a routine cost centre in the recent history of adult literacy education financing in Uganda; yet the poor performance of unpaid adult literacy instructors is often cited by public policy documents as a main challenge faced by the social development sector (MFPED 2018b).

DVV International financing follows an off-budget funding model. This involves the transfer of monies to service delivery points or suppliers for jointly planned activities. During the period under consideration (2015–Oct 2020), the DVV International Country office had to switch to directly transferring ICOLEW funds to district accounts rather than channelling the same through MGLSD headquarters. A national actor familiar with DVV International funds flows to service delivery points explains that:

“In 2017 and 2018, we used to transfer money to the ministry account ... this we stopped; we started from 2019 August to send directly to the district. ... They will usually request for a quarter, like two months, and we send accordingly. ... In addition, they communicate with the national ICOLEW coordinator. We do annual planning together at the national level putting together district annual plans.”

The funds that DVV International transfers to the districts are managed according to local government financial and accounting regulations within a



**Table 2:**  
**DVV International**  
**Support to ICOLEW**  
**(2015-2020)**

<b>Cost centres</b>	<b>Total (UGX)</b>	<b>Total (Euro)</b>
Training of staff in the Ministry, districts, and sub-counties	1,449,525,232	362,381.3
Programme planning, monitoring and evaluation	1,346,056,946	336,514.2
Material development and production	365,928,020	91,482
Personal costs (such as facilities' allowances)	188,330,200	47,082.5
Equipment, furniture and stationery (such as furnishing and equipping CLCs in 2018/2019)	821,513,806	205,378.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,171,354,294</b>	<b>1,042,838.5</b>

Exchange rate 1€ = UGX 4,000

partnership enhanced budgeting and monitoring framework. The trend of spending far more at the micro level with 54% compared to 33% at meso and 13% at macro is probably attributable to the nature of this funding partnership.

**Towards institutionalising ICOLEW financing**

There are indications of attempts to institutionalise the new way of mobilising resources for ICOLEW implementation. The intentions and steps to harmonise and increase finance flow to ICOLEW activities in the next five years of its rolling out can be discussed within two strands. The first comprises efforts aimed at optimising existing fiscal infrastructure to consolidate the gains so far. In this strand lies the transitory MoU between MGLSD and DVV International for the cooperation period 2021 to 2025. The MoU requires the government and DVV International to create an enabling environment to ensure successful national rollout of the ICOLEW. The partnership encompasses support to key strategic interventions at macro level to create a conducive environment for ICOLEW at district

and sub county levels. This partnership should also help to ensure a well-managed and resourced ALE system.

This strand includes reallocating funds hitherto ring-fenced for FAL to ICOLEW. These new directives are contained in a circular dated 30th September 2020 by the MGLSD, which communicated the government decision to roll out ICOLEW in all the 136 districts. The circular guides:

“Local governments to adopt the ICOLEW Programme ... and to direct 15.10% of the social development sector grant towards the programme activities. Initial activities of the programme shall include orientation of governance structures at all levels towards the programme, community entry, mobilisation and sensitisation and training of trainers.”

The second strand of good intentions and attempts comprises policy change proposals to widen the resource base for ICOLEW. These include a broader policy strategy for integrated community development, prioritising establishing fully functioning CLCs



(MGLSD 2020b), and the November 2019 cabinet memorandum to strengthen community development function and its funding. Here, MGLSD argues for harmonised mobilisation and allocation of funds which are scattered across ministries, departments, and agencies. It specifically asks the cabinet to approve establishing CLCs as one-stop centres for integrated community service delivery (MGLSD 2019c).

The cabinet memo on streamlining the financing of community development functions including ICOLEW serves as build-up to implementing a new planning and budgeting paradigm ushered in by the national development plan (NDP III). One MGLSD staff clarifies this policy shift:

“We have now designed our programmes in terms of priority areas in the National Development Plan (NDP). And human capital development is one of the programme areas of the NDP III and where adult education comes out prominently. We are going to be programme-based; identify an issue, and all sectors are going to lead to the issue.”

At local government level, discussions to embed ICOLEW and more specifically CLCs in district and local government plans and budgets are in progress. A top policy-maker in Iganga district alludes to the debate to entrench CLC within the regular planning frameworks of local governments:

“During the planning, it is envisaged that a sustainability plan is embedded within the CLC. We need deliberately to bring on board CLCs to develop indicators in the development plan of the district and sub counties.”

Similar discussions and actual steps are evident in some sub-counties. For instance, in its 5-year development plan (2020-2025), one of the sub-counties in Namayingo district prioritises financing CLCs in its work plan for capital development projects. The plan also seeks to finance ICOLEW instruction materials and payment of instructors’ stipend.

## Challenges, tensions, and opportunities

Looking ahead, particularly in the light of past of ICOLEW’s financing that relied heavily on DVV International and MGLSD funding partnership that is expected to end by 2024, reveals a set of challenges, tensions and opportunities.

### Challenges

Document review and interactions with informed actors reveal four forms of challenges that point to the broad subject of sustaining the gains so far. First is about democratising financing and budgeting practices for ICOLEW, within existing structures and government procedures. There are ‘silent voices’ that allude to the limited participation of local actors in decisions relating to spending priorities. Participatory spaces for actors to enhance accountability, and monitoring and efficient utilisation of allocated funds, are not evident. MGLSD technocrats, local government staff and ICOLEW frontline social actors seem not to have effective power, mandate, and capacity to take the most efficient financial decisions and actions.

The second challenge is to address the financing gap that will inevitably result from phasing out DVV International funding; in addition to the huge task of increasing disbursements to service delivery points across the 136 districts. One higher local government staff shares his worries:

“Government may feel the gap, but it does not have much [potential] because it is already overwhelmed. We have like over 13 sections within community development at the district and we get something like 60 million for a year. There are programmes that get 3 million in a year.”

It is evident that unless some policy and financing shifts are made, bridging the eventual financing gap will be a daunting task.

Dealing with delayed release and flow of government grants to service delivery points at the local

government and community levels is the third challenge. One relevant explicit view is by a lower local staff member who observed that:

“the challenge is on delay in government funds ... because even right now, the funds for the second quarter came in August. But as I talk now, this is November; we haven’t seen any money in the sub-county. But for the central government, when it comes to releasing funds, they do so immediately. But now the people at the government, who are concerned with this money, are the challenge we are having.”

The fourth challenge is to deal with top government decision-makers’ overzealous stance of investing more and more in capital developments, such as building structures for CLCs in a manner that seem not to address the need to put in place robust mechanisms to ensure financing of recurrent budget expenditure. Making available money to establish CLCs and CEG groups to meet overhead costs and related recurrent expenditure such as electricity bills, facilitators’ stipend, maintenance, safety and security, remains a challenge. The idea of making CLCs operate income-generating schemes, as suggested by some informed actors, shows limited appreciation of what it means to run community learning centres within a lifelong learning and popular ALE perspective.

## Tensions

The question whether governments can really spend money on popular ALE is at the core of the tensions. Is it possible to achieve authentic popular ALE services that are delivered within the framework of public financing obtainable from regular tax revenue? A few voices ring loud on the complex matter of whether publicly financed ALE in Uganda can be designed and delivered in a way that allows frontline actors and learners to ask critical questions that challenge the status quo. In this regard, one of the top local government political leaders is explicit in his opinion of whether public funded ALE can deliberately aim to promote social and political empowerment:

“Government has not [adequately funded ALE] ... either out of omission or out of strategy [it] has not thought that political empowerment is such a critical aspect of social economic and political transformation of our society. Even the electoral commission, which is mandated by the constitution to carry out civic education among the citizens, has been reduced to voter’s education” (District Local Government Leader).

## Opportunities and considerations for the future

Challenges and tensions notwithstanding, there is some hope for better times for popular ALE within the context of ICOLEW. First, ICOLEW is embedded in some of the operational guidelines of the MGLSD, though budget allocations are still marginal. Advocacy considerations to reconfigure and consolidate ICOLEW funding into the MFED national budget framework paper should be prioritised. Advocating for the inclusion of ICOLEW, particularly the CLC component on the PIP to secure meaningful capital development funds, is a pertinent consideration. Negotiating the use of social development grants to finance CLCs’ recurrent expenditure must be considered in the context of turning them into real lifelong facilities.

Second, ICOLEW’s attraction of financing from Uganda Wildlife Authority signals possibilities for financing partnerships with some of the relatively well-resourced, autonomous, and self-accounting authorities and agencies in the country. Similar possibilities and avenues for partnership with corporate companies, particularly those involved in communication, education, and ICT business, can be explored.

Third, the unique example of NGO-state partnership as evidenced by the cooperation between DVV International and MGLSD in the context of ICOLEW offers inspiration for reaching out to other CSOs, to promote effective and efficient utilisation of financial resources for ALE. This of course demands well-structured and properly resourced public-private partnership (PPP) mechanisms. As observed

by a report on a related study by LitNet, strengthening formal PPP is a viable option to address implementation challenges faced by public adult education service delivery (LITNET 2006).

Fourth is the positive move by local government actors to search for additional ways of financing ICOLEW. This signals that a solid change of attitudes and practices should be recognised through optimising the engagement of local actors in making financing and budgeting decisions. The benefits of further democratisation of ALE financing by more active engagement of local actors including CEGs, facilitators and supervisors, can deliver better outcomes in terms of resource mobilisation, utilisation, and accountability.

Fifth, the emerging cultural practice of an 'integrated approach to ALE provision and financing' is a great achievement pointing to sustainability possibilities. However, macro-level decision-makers should consider prioritising financing and investment to build the theoretical and methodological competencies of frontline social actors that live up to the ideals and principles of *an empowering and transformative ICOLEW*. A cadre of ICOLEW managers, supervisors and facilitators who possess deeper conceptual consciousness and practical competencies to design and deliver social change-seeking ICOLEW is the real hope for popular ALE.

Overall, it is apparent that ICOLEW is situated in a broader framework to build an adult education system for Uganda; this should be good news and a source of optimism for tackling the sectors' long-standing financing bottlenecks. However, the way forward to real systemic change for better financing outcomes for popular ALE will depend on comprehensive policy, legislative and structural reforms which are fully endorsed by Cabinet and ratified by the Parliament of Uganda.

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## Annex: Interview guide - Conversations with informed actors

### Discussion starters/talking points/ check-list

#### A. Spirit and purpose of public financing of ALE – Ideological basis

1. What are key official considerations for spending public money on ALE – according to the Ministry of Finance; and your own MGLSD?
  - Any policies or operational instruments in place to guide public financing of ALE or discretionally /incidental?
  - Any specific policy documents which give a sense of government intentions on public financing of ALE
2. What are the specific aspects or components of ALE that the government prioritise in its financing decisions; and why?
  - Checking conceptualisation/understanding of ALE (official and personal)
  - Checking familiarity with the term ‘popular ALE’ and awareness/knowledge levels
  - Checking the logic behind whether economic or social ends (poverty reduction versus social transformation and empowerment) lie at the heart of decision-making; what are key decision drivers – financing policy motives!

#### B. Finding financial resources

1. How does the government raise revenue for financing of ALE?
2. What institutional arrangements are in place to stimulate and sustain public financing of ALE?

#### C. Investment priorities and decision-making

1. If there was enough money, would be ALE priority funding areas; and why?
2. Currently, what are the main areas of spending investment for ALE work at macro (MGLSD), meso (districts/SCs) and micro (community/village) levels?
3. What is the basis behind the choice of these priority funding areas; and who decides on the priorities?

#### D. Budgeting and spending

1. How much money does government spend on ALE annually in the last 5 years?
  - Check on the distribution of annual budget to different components of ALE
  - Check on trends – drop and increase!
  - Check how much does the government spend on each learner to complete the first cycle of their participation in the programme (ICOLEW)
2. How do public funds for ALE reach the service providers at the community level; and how does the government ensure that there is value for money?
  - Seeking to understand the arrangements for transferring public funds from the Ministry of finance to the providing agencies right from the MGLSD to the districts and sub county local governments.

#### E. About ICOLEW (Specific thoughts/reflections)

1. What do you think about the nature of public financing of ALE since the inception of ICOLEW?
  - Considering the rise of adult literacy financing in the times of PAP, decline particularly in the period of NALSIP/NAPAL

2. What do you think about the future of public financing of ALE?

- Any optimism – and the basis for positive thinking (strengths, gains)
- Fears / scepticism – sustainability)

7. MGLSD has official mandate for Adult Literacy; so it is official government agency in charge of ALE!

### Double-checking common observations, perceptions, terminologies, concepts and arguments

1. The 1960s/1970s were good times for public financing of community development centres, so community education/adult literacy/popular education registered growth and development!
2. Non-wage recurrent transfers
3. Public investment plan – FAL/ALE removed because it was deemed a non-capital investment by the Ministry of Finance
4. Glorifying poverty eradication, the economic ends (e.g. increased access to micro-credit by ICOLEW learners); where does this leave the empowerment, conscientisation and transformative agenda of community learning spirit of ICOLEW
5. Similarly, increased participation in community leadership (elective political positions) by ICOLEW/FAL learners, graduates, tutors and other actors (some of who are only pushing personal agendas) seems to be one of the greatest signs of empowerment outcomes according to majority stakeholders? Does such contribute to addressing the structural inequality and injustice in our society?
6. Claims of improved self-esteem and confidence among FAL/ICOLEW graduates (Is there any statistical evidence; is there any convincing qualitative account?)

**Public financing of popular  
adult learning and education  
in South Africa – an ‘Intro-  
duction to popular education’  
course within Community  
Colleges and Community  
Learning Centres**

Author: Astrid von Kotze





## Abstract

**Despite excellent recommendations, intentions and policy, the provision of adult learning and education (ALE) is in a parlous state. The old Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) which are now called Community Learning Centres (CLCs) have next to no facilities, and are very poorly equipped, with inadequate and inappropriate materials for adults. The funding system and lack of financial allocation to the CLCs reflect this neglect, despite progress made on policy with the White Paper from Government (2019). An introductory programme to popular education (PE) for Community College (CC) and CLC staff has begun to address this deficit. It contextualises education, raises critical questions about systems and power, and models democratic relations and processes. The paper suggests that ongoing advocacy efforts to Government and support from DVV International helps prepare ALE providers to translate good intentions into action.**

193

## Introduction and context

A plethora of policy surrounds the provision of 'popular adult learning and education (ALE)', with all good intentions to redress past inequalities and injustices in the education sector. The means for delivering ALE to cater for the needs of millions of youth and adults who are not in employment, education or training (so called NEETs) are to be Community Education and Training Colleges (CETs), also called Community Colleges (CCs). Lyster and Land (2019: 141) point out that "there is confusion about the terms CLCs and CET College and a lack of understanding that they are all interrelated parts of the same system, with networks of CLCs and their networks of Satellite Centres making up the community college system". In this text the terms are used interchangeably.

In 2013, Government approved the *White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (WP- PSET)*, which envisioned the transition of adult education and training that was offered through Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) to CET colleges. To give effect to this policy pronouncement, 9 Community Education and Training Colleges (one per province) were established under each of which the former Public Adult Learning Centres were incorporated as Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in 2015 (DHET 2019a).

The *National Development Plan: Vision 2030* argues that these institutions, combined with enrolment in workplace-based programmes, should meet the target of one million learners by 2030. Through

satellite CLCs “the colleges are to contribute to reducing unemployment, poverty and inequality, improve social cohesion and achieve social justice” (DHET 2019a). The vehicle for this is ‘non-formal programmes’ that have “an inherent social value such as citizenship education, values, voter education, worker education, personal development, etc.” (DHET 2015: 18).

However, so far very little of this has translated into actual public provision of ALE as is reflected in the almost total absence of reliable funding, financing systems and records. As the recent Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Plan states:

“... colleges are still funded according to the *Interim Norms and Standards for Funding CET college* that were approved in 2015. This means that the CET colleges are funded in the same manner as PALCs were funded by Provincial Departments of Education. This means that the current funding and financing regime does not have any due regard to the totality of the cost drivers above. To remedy this anomaly, the Department has committed to produce new Norms and Standards for Funding CET colleges by March 2019. During the 2019/2020 financial year new *Norms and Standards for Funding the CET colleges* must be finalised subject to approval by the Minister after consultation with the Minister of Finance” (DHET 2019a: 36).

As of November 2020, these norms and standards have not been finalised. This document is therefore unable to report reliably on public financing of non-formal education (NFE)/popular ALE. In fact, by 2020, CCs have not been established, though acting principals and some council members have been appointed. CLCs on the other hand, exist, mainly in the form of the renamed old Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs).

This is the context for this study of a programme in popular education for CLCs, run by a non-profit organisation (NPO), the Popular Education Programme (PEP), from 2018 to today. This CLC programme was and is not funded by the DHET,

under whose direction CC are, but by the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International), as part of supporting a start-up of ‘good practice’ CLCs. It is presented in some detail in Box 1.

## Brief sketch of the evolution and role of popular ALE

There is no agreed understanding of ‘popular ALE’. While ALE is an umbrella term encompassing all learning of and education for adults, popular ALE suggests a focus on one aspect of ALE, namely popular education, as in education generated in social action groups, organisations and movements (von Kotze 2005).

There is a long history of popular education in South Africa, both in response to the absence of education for Black and working-class people, and in support of popular movements and struggles (von Kotze, Walters & Luckett 2016; Luckett, Walters & von Kotze 2017). It took many forms as night schools, worker/union education, faith-based programmes for domestic workers and others, with non-governmental organisations running classes on anything from literacy to life-skills, socio-economic conscientisation à la Freire and personal development. The education was supported by teaching and learning materials ranging from ‘how to start and maintain a food garden’ to how to organise, from how to know and enact one’s rights to how to run meetings and do report-writing. Alongside the long history of non-formal education for working class people are liberal arts programmes for the middle classes, through summer and winter schools and extra-mural studies programmes.

Most of the community adult education programmes were paid for by donor funding, often from outside the country. Others were financed through union dues, and the sweat and dedication of volunteers, while extra-mural studies were financed through fee income. Progressive and appropriate adult education, therefore, has been

undertaken largely outside the state, and often in opposition to governments and systems.

## Bottom-up evolution of curricula

An equally long history of educational initiatives being designed in response to explicit community and worker needs tells stories of ongoing commitment to adult education. The bottom-up, participatory, approach of progressive popular education and community development, translated into processes in which educators and learners were subjects together, each learning from and with the other, and collectively creating curricula. Rather than searching for deficits and identifying perceived gaps in knowledge, this approach builds on existing knowledge and seeks to extend it in a way that is useful for daily life and livelihood practices. The critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire demanded the identification of ‘codes’ arising from and developed with communities. These often served as the basis of learning and teaching (CIPSET 2018a, 2018b).

There are many examples of how popular education underpins successful collective action for change. Campaigns for social justice include people who have extensive experience in struggling, and are effective organisers, even if their formal schooling may have been interrupted early on. Popular education often brings the theory to the action. It extends experience through critical information on global developments, political tensions and contradictions, through rehearsal of negotiation skills and practice of conceptual argumentation. Progressive popular education challenges problem-posing, rather than problem-solving: it supports critical questioning and democratic being.

For example: early on in their housing campaign to ‘Reclaim the City’ from apartheid geography, activist organisation Ndifuna Ukwazi in Cape Town instituted weekly learning and education sessions for all members. The success of subsequent court victories must be ascribed to the rigorous participatory education process conducted with members: all together, they learned about legislation and legal

rights, how to marshal public meetings and initiate public discussions after performing plays that gave crucial information about different agendas and centres of power. Ndifuna Ukwazi is funded through a foundation. PEP supported their introduction to a popular education approach.

## Community Colleges (CCs) and Community Learning Centres (CLCs)

The vision in the White Paper for Postschool Education was of a system of provincial CCs with satellite CLCs that would play an important part in facilitating a post-apartheid non-racist, non-sexist, equitable South Africa. The system was to enable access even in remote rural areas, and to offer people opportunities for learning in matters that relate to their particular life contexts.

A field visit in late 2015 by members of a Ministerial Committee on the review of the funding frameworks of Technical and Vocational Education, and Training Colleges and Community Education and Training Colleges, looked at a selection of the supposedly better ex-PALCs in each province and found that centres had very basic facilities, were poorly equipped, that staff worked under dismal and insecure conditions. There were often no teaching and learning materials such as readers, and the demands of Umalusi Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training were unrealistic and not met.

The reality of the state PALC system was that it piggybacked on school facilities after hours and relied almost exclusively on part-time staff made up of some schoolteachers working after hours, and other unqualified people scraping an income from this work. Most were not adult educators and there was little if any training offered them; only some received the two-day so-called orientation offered to schoolteachers taking on the task of teaching in PALCs.

## Popular Education Programme (PEP) working with Community Colleges and Community Learning Centres

### Education provider

The Popular Education Programme (PEP) is a small non-governmental education organization in Cape Town, founded in 2011. As the name suggests, this organization has concentrated on strengthening a PE approach within progressive social justice organisations, trade unions and social movements.

### CC and CLC participants

PEP staff considered it important that all staff in all positions should share a common understanding of popular education and potential non-formal courses so that they could facilitate future programmes with a sense of collective purpose. Therefore, all staff were invited, with particular workshops for college staff – both managerial and support staff.

### Participants

2018 saw the beginning of a process of workshops for/with Community College (CC) and Community Learning Centre (CLC) staff (administrators, and educators) from 9 provinces. In addition, PEP ran a short course for CLC learners, as a way to better understand who the target audience is and how they perceived their enrolment.

### Programme

PEP worked in 4 ways:

(1) *Introductory 2-day workshop* for managers and leadership of the DHET and CCs.

The workshop was entitled ‘Re-imagining youth and adult education’, and invited participants to experience the PE approach and imagine alternative forms of education, in particular, non-formal community education aimed at transformation.

(2) *National Popular Education Development workshop*

The focus was on ‘Decolonising pedagogy: beyond changing syllabi’. Participants were principals and academic heads from the 9 provinces’ community colleges. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce models of learning and teaching nurtured in democratic relationships and focused on subject matter relevant to the daily reality of CLC communities / learners. The 19 participants (6 women, 13 men) from the 9 provinces practiced cooperating rather than competing, and reflected critically on what changed relations may mean for community colleges that are poorly resourced. The workshop outline informed the design for subsequent provincial workshops in working towards a common language.

(3) *Provincial CLC workshops*

Over 2018/19, PEP ran 2-day workshops with CLC staff in each of the 9 provinces. The purpose was to introduce CLC lecturers to (1) non-formal education as community education relevant to particular conditions ‘on the ground’ that

**Box 1:**  
**‘Introduction to popular education’ course – a Popular education approach at CLCs**

often include participants with incomplete formal education, and (2) create experiences of the popular education approach as a way of planning and running education that is relevant, useful and enjoyable. The workshops demonstrated how working together through dialogue and creative processes can lead to participants identifying common problems and organizing to confront and tackle them collectively.

#### *(4) Sample Community Learning Centre*

Participants from one of the CLCs were invited to experience an-other education outside the second-chance learning they were used to. Five weekly workshops were conducted with learners whose ages ranged from 19 to 50; their previous schooling had been interrupted for a variety of reasons and they wanted to complete their matriculation certificates. One aimed to further accredited studies in nursing, another needed to obtain a license as a skilled motor mechanic.

#### **Process**

Imagine this: Five groups of 5 women and men of all ages are clustered around tables, busily discussing and sticking colourful shapes on the image of a tree. Scissors and glue, pens and rulers are being passed around while they talk agitatedly: 'This leaf represents something we have learned from nature', says one, 'and I think we should label it water, referring to the drought.' While he labels, another prepares to stick it on a drawn branch. In another group there is an ongoing discussion about lessons learned at school. There is disagreement about the subjects offered: 'we never had science lessons', says a woman, 'science was only for boys'. 'It is true, at our school the girls had to do typing!', adds another. The dialogue explores other examples of differences between boys' and girls' education, and the gendered nature of knowledge. Eventually, five colourful trees are displayed, each telling stories about where knowledge comes from and is reproduced. The ensuing plenary discussion investigates the value ascribed to different kinds of knowledge: who values this, how is this value expressed, who benefits from it? Why is there a higher value placed on knowledge learned at school, than knowledge gathered from experience? And why do we find it so hard to give examples of knowledge learned from nature? After two hours there is a review of what has come together in these dialogues: knowledge and power, gender and patriarchy, ecology and livelihoods, and the nature of various formal, non-formal and informal curricula as they underpin education and training.

This is a scenario from an adult learning and education (ALE) workshop conducted in 2018. It encapsulates all the elements of popular education: facilitators and learners are subjects who construct knowledge together – unearthing and building on what they already know, and pushing beyond to include new information and knowledge. They learn with 'hand, heart and head', actively participating using all their faculties, and they explore the various dynamics inscribed with power and interest as they produce insights that relate experience and conditions to each other.

The process outlines the essence of a PE approach: the session aimed deliberately at re-examining the concept of 'knowledge' and how epistemology is culturally, politically, and socially inscribed. There was a conscious reflective focus on process and methodology: first, participants experienced a particular process; secondly, this was critically

- > discussed and examined; and thirdly, an exercise asked participants to apply the ‘tool’. Subsequently, PEP produced a booklet that outlines, in small steps, the PE approach used in different activities. (PEP 2019, A popular education approach at CLCs)

### **Evaluation**

Responses to the workshops were very positive: irrespective of leadership, lecturers or students, all participants enjoyed the processes of producing knowledge together and experiencing new ways of meaning-making and learning. Attendance rates were high, as motivation to participate kept educators coming. Evaluation comments include:

- I am more wide open about what to do when I get back to my centre
- I have new insights on effective communication and feel more motivated and developing
- It was valuable in the sense that we all had something to take back – we will begin projects around WiFi, and community engagement, even without funds.

### **Funding of the CLC programme**

In some instances, provinces supplied the site and venue for the workshops – contributing ‘in kind’ to the costs. In some instances, they also supplied materials, such as photocopies of hand-outs. Some local CLCs organised and paid for the refreshments of participants.

On the whole, DVV International funded the workshops by means of:

- Travel costs
- Accommodation for participants from out of town
- Costs of PEP facilitators
- Supplementary materials

### **Outlook**

DVV International has also supported the development of PEP, since 2011 – in this way contributing to the overall re-introduction of popular education in the country. Sustained support for popular education will continue to reap benefits for participants and their communities and organisations.

Part of the ongoing support has been the publication by PEP of the ‘toolkit’ A Popular Education Approach at Community learning centres (CLCs), 2019.

To-date, CCs have not been formally launched, and CLCs offer mainly school subjects for youth and unemployed people who wish to complete or re-do their matriculation certificate through the newly introduced General Education and Training certificate (GETC). There are generally many more women enrolled for GETC: ABET level 4 (similar to Grade 9 at school, i.e. the ninth year of formal schooling). The biggest age group is 20-24 year olds, followed by 25-29 year olds, and 30-34 year olds; in South Africa these all constitute 'youth', as 'youth' is defined as 18 – 35 year olds. A total of 28,154 students completed GETC: ABET Level 4 qualification in 2018, resulting in a completion rate of 43.5%, at CLCs (DHET 2018).

A few CLCs also offer very basic skills training, mainly in subjects such as beading/handicraft, child-care work, motor mechanics, health care, career guidance.

Asked what they thought might be offered in non-formal education courses, CLC lecturers recently suggested: entrepreneurship, selling and communication skills, IT, classroom strategies, research-based strategic learning. Generally, responses to this question are limited to what people already know and have.

Lecturing staff have no security of tenure, no fringe benefits, and often get paid on the basis of the number of students enrolled. The participants of the PEP programmes frequently reported not having been paid for months. They lamented the fact that they themselves had to do the recruitment. Their incomes and job security are a matter of great concern. Lecturers look out for (school) teaching jobs, as these offer greater security. The more skilled ones often leave the CLCs.

In 2018 CET colleges/CLCs had a total of 14,086 staff members comprising of 12,975 lecturers, 1,082 support staff and 29 management staff (DHET 2018). Indications are that management staff are comparatively very well paid.

An excellent overview of the current state of CLCs is given by Lyster and Land (2019) in the Community College Pilot Rollout Project funded by the ETDP SETA (Education, Training and Development Practices, Sector Education and Training Authority).

### Appraisal by public authorities

There is as yet no 'official' appraisal of any CC/CLC programmes, including the one outlined in Box 1. Indications from participants and centre managers in response to the case study introductory course were positive, and enrolment in a subsequent programme was vigorous and enthusiastic. However, the lack of funding has not enabled participants to embark on applying their newly learned insights. Not surprisingly, there was little action resulting from good intentions: while participants readily drafted ideas for ALE that may not require funding or inaccessible resources beyond personal dedication and energy during the workshops, these did not translate into practice.

### Financing of CLC programmes

It is extremely difficult to find reliable data on financing – while there is a wealth of good intentions, there is an equal shortage of actual accounts and financial plans.

The low level of state funding for ALE in all its forms has been deplored for years, as evidenced in the many high-level policy documents and reviews. In reporting to UIL in preparation for GRALE 5, the overall spending of the DHET on ALE for 2018 was 2.2% of the overall Departmental budget. The endemic problem of the PALCs not having a proper budget to pay for any materials, equipment and utilities, water, light, or cleaning and maintenance seems to have continued.

Already in 2008, the South African National Report on the Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education, noted this disjuncture between policy intentions and implementation: "policy



is at times ‘symbolic’ in that it lays out ambitious aspirations but then the funding does not follow” (DoE 2008: 30). The competition for resources, they noted, leads to schooling absorbing the bulk of education funding. “This is compounded by the fact that the budget and policies are set at national level and much implementation is provincial” (DoE 2018: 31).

Deplorably, the average amount spent per learner has decreased in recent years, and upgrading and improving the quality of CC will require much more than the present budget. A report by DNA Economics (2016, p.i) suggested that to meet the ambitious targets set for 2030 in the White Paper, an additional R21.2 billion (≈US\$918,000) would be required. In 2013, R1.7 billion was spent on the Adult Education and Training sector, representing only 6% of state spending on the Post-School sector (DHET 2015). In 2016, the allocation of the national education budget to adult education was estimated at R1.7 billion and it was almost entirely spent on salaries. “Probably the only approach that makes sense is that a benchmark be set for the proportion of the national education budget that is awarded to adult education and training” (Ministerial Committee 2017).

The Ministerial Committee on the review of the funding frameworks of TVET Colleges and CET colleges (2017) itemised the challenge of funding the CLCs as staffing costs, materials development, curriculum development, examination costs, setting up of an evaluation and monitoring system, funding for educator training. However, there was and is no budget for any of these. The Ministerial Committee (2017) concluded that “the current adult education and training system is of very poor quality, and that the current mode of operation and available funding does not allow for significant quality improvements. A steady process of reform and incremental growth is needed, starting with a proper holding operation and a new CET implementation plan” (p. 34).

A national task team drafted a document on the ‘ideal community college institutional model (Land and Aitchison 2017) – it was noted that

“The *National Policy on Community Education and Training Colleges* (DHET, 2015a, p. 24) states that Community Colleges will be funded in accordance with Norms and Standards for the funding of public colleges in terms of section 23 of the *Continuing Education and Training Act of 2006* as amended in 2013. Sections 22 to 26 regulate funding in all public colleges, including both TVET and Community colleges. Public colleges must be funded “on a fair, equitable and transparent basis” (S 22 (1)), though there can be differentiation on a rational basis and there must be redress of past inequalities (S 22 (2) and (3)). Public colleges must be given advance notice of the state grants in time to prepare their budgets.”

ALE has suffered from decades of neglect or, at best, token support, argue Aitchison and Land (2019: 138), “and we look at how the system could be revitalised, both in terms of minimal requirements for immediate basic improvement as well as for a more radical and forward-looking transformation of the system”.

Unless CCs are placed on an adequate regular funding model, they cannot function; and it appears that there is a lack of political will to make the colleges a reality that will yield real gains for South African society, in particular in relation to equality and justice.

What are present conditions of funding? Lyster and Land (2019) have warned that the new institutional model of the CETs can only be piloted successfully if funding becomes available for additional staff, staff development, co-ordination, space, equipment (including computers and internet) at the relevant CLCs and something as basic as ensuring that there are functioning private toilets and toilet paper (Lyster & Land 2019: 139).

But in 2019, “the CET colleges are still funded according to the Interim Norms and Standards for Funding CET college that were approved in 2015. This means that the CET colleges are funded in the same manner as PALCs were funded by Provincial



Departments of Education” (DHET 2019: 36). “Since the establishment of the CET college system, the Department has not transferred individual college funds to them. The operational allocations (goods and services) for CET colleges are retained by the Department and the colleges use the supply chain management system of the Department” (DHET 2019: 36).

On the other hand, there are examples of ‘indirect’ state funding supporting various studies of the CC / CLC system. Universities have managed to gather small amounts of research funds channelled through other state institutions to examine, for example: (1) UWC’s Traditions of popular education (funded from the DHET through the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences), as a catalytic project); (2) funded by the ETDP SETA, the Community College Pilot Rollout Project (Lyster & Land 2019) undertook research into ‘models’ of practice; (3) The Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training (CIPSET) has received funding from DHET to conduct research into bottom-up drafting of community-lead curricula.

## Strategic partnerships

The pattern of forging strategic partnerships and other relationships with organisations and agencies for provision of community education is one of the recommendations reiterated in the most recent policy documents. There is consensus in South Africa that there is a great deal of expertise in the non-profit / non-government and community-based organisation sector to deliver appropriate and developmental community education and training. “For the CET college system in particular, partnership with this sector is a pre-requisite for success. It should not be by choice that the CET college system seeks to cooperate with the non-formal, popular and formal education sectors. It is an exigency of their maturation process to enable them to deliver responsive community education and training programmes without interfering with the autonomy of organisations and groups that currently run popular education programmes” (DHET 2019: 44).

The DHET has pursued and in some cases secured funding from inter alia, the European Union, The Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority, and Durban University of Technology.

A longer-term partnership between CCs/CLCs and DVV International would ensure ongoing support in training and materials production, leading to improved performance ability.

## Popular Education Programme working with CCs & CLCs as good practice

In 2017, the Ministerial committee noted that “It is common cause that in the Public Adult Learning Centre system its majority of contract temporary staff were underqualified and poorly trained”. 2019 figures received from DHET’s EMIS system showed that 31% (8,329 of 26,756) of educators employed nationally in 2017 had only a school leaving certificate (DHET 2019: 149). Lyster and Land (2019: 142) found that “staff at CET Colleges and CLCs generally have limited knowledge of skills training and non-formal programmes particularly as they have not to date been funded by DHET or previously by the DBE and were therefore considered as optional add-ons to the core business of the PALCs/now CLCs.”

Staff at CLCs have had no preparation for organizing and running non-formal community education. Most have only a scant understanding of what such education might be. As one step towards enabling and supporting future efforts of non-formal education at CLCs, the PEP designed a special introductory programme for staff. A detailed description of this programme can be found in Box 1.

As an initial orientation to popular education, this CC/CLC programme for staff across provinces garnered positive responses. Given the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding of CCs with DVV International, there will be continued support for this work, and hence a good opportunity for

sustained learning by educators for the immediate future.

The programme modelled another approach that is deeply bottom-up and participatory, that responds to local conditions, and that addresses local concerns and problems, building on local strengths. The workshops were designed for maximum exposure to various methodological processes. This opened up the tunnel-vision that ‘education’ = ‘banking’: that is, little more than depositing information in assumedly ignorant learners. Workshops also offered a clear link between process (how), purpose (why) and subject-matter (what).

Importantly, the programme provided opportunities for staff to experience shifts in power relations; and it demonstrated how provincial groups could each design and run their own non-formal ALE. The change from hierarchical patriarchal relations often encountered in ‘traditional’ school environments (and homes and institutions) was warmly embraced particularly by women staff, as was the explicit link to democratic practices. The hierarchical nature and structure of many CLCs does not promote cooperation and risk-taking in education provision - such as would be required when introducing NFE / ALE. PEP worked hard to suggest partnerships between centres, as a way of pooling resources.

PE takes inclusion seriously: it does not assume literacy or fluency in another language and uses active processes that advantages different participant literacies at different times. Participants appreciate being able to put their ideas forward, and getting a sense making active and productive contributions to the learning and teaching process.

Popular education is applied: it must move to action and implementation. Not surprisingly, there was little action resulting from good intentions expressed. While participants readily drafted ideas for ALE that may not require funding or inaccessible resources beyond personal dedication and energy during the workshops, these did not translate into practice.

## Conclusion

South Africa has the capacity to run CCs and CLCs but, as Land (2017) suggests, “The main obstacle in the way of getting there is an entrenched mind set”. Somehow, the importance of investing in and running a comprehensive adult education system that includes accessible CCs and CLCs that are well equipped, offer up to date technology, and are responsive to changing times. including the dynamics of climate crisis and pandemics has not been fully grasped; or else there is a lack of political will.

Most of the problems encountered in CLC work relate to systemic problems which are a product of the neglect of the sector as whole. Financial and other support offered through agencies such as DVV International are crucial to getting the system up and running. While physical infrastructures should be provided locally, the educational programmes need support. Popular education speaks to people on the ground; experiences evidence the power of collective action that is inspired and guided by critical education.

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# Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Thailand

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## Abstract

**This study examines the overall information available as public financial support for adult learning and education (ALE) in Thailand, with a focus on community enterprises. It investigates government budgets and allocations in respect of ALE at national, regional, and local levels, and the respective financing mechanisms. Two important actors are central: the Office of Non-formal and Informal Education (ONIE) and the Community Development Department (CDD). A case study of Thai Bueng community is selected as a good representative of Thai community enterprises. These local level projects are top-encouraged but local-anchored and driven. They give purpose, identity, pride as well as some at least ancillary income to village communities often in very poor parts of the country.**

## Introduction

In Thailand, adult learning and education (ALE) is perceived as being part of lifelong education and learning. ALE has been recognised as both non-formal education and informal education, or learning, for adult learners, providing adult learners in Thailand's approximately 53 million people with equal access to the potential educational opportunities available in all forms of learning suitable to adults' living conditions and problems. The government, non-government organisations, each social sector and local communities, are working collaboratively as networks to design programmes and activities to improve adults' quality of life. ALE in Thailand emphasises learning, beginning at birth and continuing to the end of life. This can occur all over, from temples and community learning centres to homes and schools. These educational institutions provide necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that people require according to their ages and needs.

According to Thai demographic data, there are six regions, North, South, East, West, North-East and Central, 77 provinces, 878 Amper (districts), 7,255 Tambon (subdistricts) and 75,032 villages. The central government has decentralised financial support for ALE to local authorities in each local community. Each community may also work with other socially oriented agencies, such as its local universities, the Office of Non-formal and Informal Education (ONIE), Ministry of Education, the Department of Community Development (DCC), Ministry of Interior; or it may work independently. The government with these agencies launched as an ALE and enterprise project of ALE, the project One Tambon One Product (OTOP), as local entrepreneurship to local authorities for funding. According to government policies, ALE aims at serving underprivileged adults. The objectives are to promote literacy skills, numeracy, occupations, the understanding of the civic duties as Thai citizens, and improved life quality, while

making productive use of leisure time. Non-governmental organisations, social sectors, and communities had also been providing ALE focusing on the needs and problems of adults in their respective establishments. Due to globalisation, Thailand has confronted many changes that provided opportunities and caused limitations to the country's development. To cope with various regional and global changes, the 10th National Social and Economic Development Plan had set an important strategy for the development of Thai people and society. This strategy for becoming a learning and knowledge-based society should enhance life-long learning in knowledge management, local wisdom and modern knowledge, at community and national levels. These should facilitate the economic and social development of the country (Sutthisakorn 2013).

The 1999 National Education Act initiated an overall reform of the Thai education system, prompting considerable changes of management and administration to support key teaching and learning improvements (Office of National Education Commission 1999). The Act emphasises the decentralisation of administrative responsibilities to the local level, with the consolidation of educational planning at central level. The reform process of the Thai educational system led to the establishment of 175 Educational Service Areas in 2003; the number was increased to 185 in 2008. A new structure for the Thai Ministry of Education at the central level has been implemented since 2002.

ONIE, Ministry of Education, acts as the central organisation in promoting the support and coordination of Non-formal and Informal education. ONIE promotes, supports, and collaborates among individuals, families, communities, communal societies, local administration organisations, and private sectors to implement ALE, or non-formal and informal education. The Community Development Department (CDD) is another major organisation that currently promotes the strength of community development and administration with a meaningful mission to build communities to be self-reliant, promote the expansion of the foundation economy,

strengthen the efficiency and good governance of the community, and build organisational capacities to enhance community development projects.

In fact, the combination of local wisdom and local identity has been used to guide and propel Thailand to strive for the happiness of its society, rather than to measure the success of development based on the total size of the gross domestic product. The new social paradigm in the postmodern era has turned its focus to the foundation of society, so that the community becomes strong and sustainable. In keeping with the primary balance in respect of sufficiency, the community must turn to self-reliance, with the support of government agencies (Srisopha 2010). In 2005 therefore, the government announced the Community Enterprise Promotion Act 2005, promoting the concept of community enterprise all over the country, especially in productive districts where there were numbers of outstanding local products and services, in order to align with government policy that prioritised a self-sufficiency economy.

Community enterprises under the government policy and regulation must be founded and managed by local people in each area. The objective of promoting community enterprises is to encourage potential communities to form their own groups and run their own businesses, as a private business sector, to strengthen themselves and their communities. Most of the products or services are local agricultural products based on the uniqueness of each particular area (Maitreesophon 2019). According to the Secretariat Office of Community Enterprise Promotion Board (2005, as cited in Lertsiri et al. 2017), Thai community enterprises were categorised into 3 groups: product, services, and farmer groups. The *product group* includes 18 sub-groups which are plants, livestock, food processing, textiles/clothing, basketry, fishery, herbs, artificial flowers, beverages, souvenirs, wood/furniture, metals, jewellery, pottery, leathers, machineries, and others. The *service community enterprise group* is divided into 6 sub-groups, including community saving, community shops, health, travelling, machinery maintenance and others. The *farmer group* is divided into

4 sub-groups: farmers, community cooperatives, housewives, and young farmers. However, many of them concentrate on health-related products and services such as hospitality, herbal products, and organic farming, operating in partnership with the community. This may be reflected in job creation, income generation, and improved community well-being (Marohabutr 2016).

This paper explores national public financial support of community enterprises, as well as an important case of community enterprises and other ALE supports with major leading organizations, ONIE and CDD. These two major organisations are the main supporters of ALE in Thailand. Collectivism is valued in Thai society, and individual adults will be in focus; the budgets usually transfer top down, and most activities are carried out as a community. To be more precise, governments budgets and allocations from different sorts of public institutions in respect of ALE at national, regional or local level as well as the respective financing mechanisms that are available and being used will be considered. We conclude with the model of overall financial support to popular ALE in Thailand, and then provide some recommendations.

### Office of the Non-formal and Informal Education (ONIE)

In Thailand, before any kind of formal education was introduced, education or learning existed mainly in the form of informal learning. ONIE was founded in 1940 and continues serving Thai people to the present day. The philosophy and curricula of adult and non-formal education were formulated, particularly in terms of an overall concept called 'khit-pen' (Nopakun 1985). In 1940, the Division of Adult Education was established within the Ministry of Education to look after non-formal education, which was called at that time adult education. The main purpose in that period was to provide adults with literacy skills coupled with knowledge and understanding about citizen roles in a democratic society. After the Division was upgraded to become the Department of Non-formal Education, the scope

of responsibilities was extended to serve all after compulsory school-age people, including adults. When the National Education Act, 1999, which focused on lifelong education, was promulgated, all types of education were recognised as main components of lifelong education: formal education, non-formal education, and informal education (Sungsri 2018).

According to ONIE's basic plans for the enhancement of human resource development, there are 1,034 ONIE institutions including 77 Bangkok & provinces offices, 928 district offices, 6 regional offices, and 23 other special offices receiving financial support. ONIE allocates the budget for activities and operations. These are the budget for personal car, the budget for after-hour activities (75,000 baht per year) (1 USD = 33 Baht), other special expenses budget for car and accommodation rental (215,000 baht per year), the budget for office materials (115,000 baht per year), and another special budget for living. It is also stated in ONIE budget allocation guidelines that 8,451 informal education institutions including provincial public libraries, district public libraries, provincial non-formal offices, science centres for education, and sub-district non-formal offices are supported by various budgets depending on different elements. For instance, administrative and book purchase fees for public libraries are assisted with a 67,833,000 baht budget per year. Sub-district learning resources that provide the people well with high quality lifelong learning education are funded yearly with a 220,292,000 baht budget. In addition, a 43,580,200 baht budget is used to subsidise information network fees for non-formal and informal education each year.

Overall, ONIE subsidises 3,673,263,900 baht in total. A budget of 3,060,788,400 baht is used for the Project to Support Educational Expenses from Kindergarten to the Completion of Basic Education and Other Non-formal Education Activities at Basic Education Level. Additionally, Activities Promoting Community Learning Centres, Communicative English for Career Development, the Development of Elderly Quality of Life, and Community Digital Centres are funded by a budget of 400,862,000 baht,



44,840,000 baht, 94,058,700 baht, and 72,714,800 baht respectively. To exemplify this, three provinces that are particularly supported by ONIE are selected as examples.

The first is *Bangkok*, selected because it is Thailand's capital city. ONIE allocates the budget for its Bangkok offices: 117,044,072 baht, for the project from Kindergarten to the Completion of Basic Education and Other Non-formal Education Activities of the Basic Education Level, 8,400,700 baht for community vocational training centre, 1,440,000 baht for enhancing career English for communication, 25,700 baht for elderly's life quality development, and 675,788 baht for digital community.

The second province is *Mae Hong Son* province. It was selected because it is one of the Burmese border provinces. ONIE allocates the budget for Mae Hong Son offices: 10,989,559 baht for the project from Kindergarten to the Completion of Basic Education and Other Non-formal Education Activities of the Basic Education Level, 1,863,600 baht for community vocational training centre, 288,000 baht for enhancing career English for communication, 51,400 baht for elderly's life quality development, and 184,050 baht for digital community.

Lastly, *Narathiwat* was selected as one of the three southern border provinces with separatist inclinations. ONIE allocates the budget for Narathiwat offices: 34,691,183 baht for the project from Kindergarten to the Completion of Basic Education and Other Non-formal Education Activities of the Basic Education Level, 3,188,800 baht for a community vocational training centre, 397,800 baht for enhancing career English for communication, 128,500 baht for elderly's life quality development, and 314,930 baht for digital community.

Criteria used for the budget allocation are divided into various aspects, including 1) teaching and learning budget (950 baht per year for each person to primary school, 1,150 baht per year for each person to secondary school, 2,750 baht per year for each person to occupational school), 2) book budget (290 baht per year for each person to pri-

mary school, 380 baht per year for each person to secondary school, 500 baht per year for each person to occupational school), 3) learners' enhancement activities' budget (140 baht per year for each person to primary school, baht per year for each person to secondary school, 530 baht per year for each person to occupational school).

We interviewed Dr. Pan Kimpee who works for Thailand's ONIE to gain more understanding. He summarised four types of evaluation for ALE projects that are supported by ONIE: 1) evaluating in accordance with the objectives of the projects, 2) goal-free evaluation, and 3) evaluating in accordance to objectives of the projects and goal-free evaluation, and 4) national level evaluation using standardised criteria. Both quantitative and qualitative manners are applied. There are internal and external evaluation methods for the above evaluation procedures. For internal methods, the projects are evaluated by the owners of the projects themselves, and by the evaluators from other different Thailand's ALE organisations. The external evaluation is usually done at the national level. The projects are evaluated using standardised government criteria.

## Community Development Department (CDD), Ministry of Interior

The Community Development Department is the major organisation promoting community development and administration, with a meaningful mission to build communities to be self-reliant, promote the expansion of foundation economy, and strengthen efficiency and good governance of the community, building organisational capacities to enhance community development projects. Moreover, CDD aims at creating community power and knowledge management systems, as well as community administrative and managerial system, based upon the ultimate goal of actualising the robustness of community, for happy homes with a high quality of life, as well as self-efficiency (Community Development Department 2020). In line with CDD's promo-



tion policy in 2020, the head of CDD claimed that several projects will be promoted to ensure a good quality of life of Thai citizens.

For instance, the Local Village and Community Development program using the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy attributed to the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's approach to nationwide economic development aims at enhancing households in 74,655 villages to be developed integrally in accordance with different social landscapes, fundamental factors, potential, ways of life, and different cultures and identities. This programme should build the strengths and self-reliance of the community, including establishing a stable foundation economy. The ultimate goals of the program would be helping the citizens to secure food, create a sustainable development, and promote social 'self-immunisation'. One approach to this is to build a community learning centre in every community to educate its citizens. Another fascinating project is a New Generation Marketers for Society programme, which can help passing on local wisdom to youth, solving unemployment problems, and expanding marketing channels for entrepreneurs.

According to the CDD's 2020 budget allocation plan, CDD subsidises approximately 3,031,128,300 baht (1 USD = 33 Baht) over the 4 quarters of 2020. According to the plan, several projects related to ALE are currently funded. For example, The CDD Employee Training and Development Programme has been funded with a budget of 3,300,000 baht. The Training to the Excellence Course for the Employee Competency of Human Resource Department Programme has been assisted with 447,000 baht. The Training Course for the Community's Project Administrator Competency Programme has been funded with 1,248,300 baht. The Training Centre Development Programme has been supported with 2,243,600 baht. The Empowered Community Developer Enhancement Programme has been funded with 774,700 baht. The Knowledge Market Programme has been supported with 1,276,000 baht. The Integration of Community Plan at the District Level has been assisted with 52,660,000 baht. The Development of Seminar Speaker Network

at the Community level has been supported with 59,579,000 baht. The Development of Community Occupation at the Village Level has been assisted with 594,402,800 baht. The Development of the Occupational Group has been funded with 19,840,000 baht. The Workshop of the Regional Women Committee has been assisted with 1,342,800 baht.

There is also Development of the Sufficient Economic Village, for example, the Development of Propelling Mechanisms at the Potential Area Level has been supported with 39,708,104 baht. The Enhancement of the Community Management process has been funded with 452,690,900 baht. The Enhancement and Development of Transformative Leader Program has been sponsored by 45,039,700 baht. The Career and Life Quality Development for Low Income Earner Program has been funded with 46,822,100 baht. The North-eastern Woven Fabric Export Project has been assisted with 31,470,000 baht. The Thai Organic Farming Project has been promoted by 15,839,400 baht. The Good Agricultural Practices Project has been funded with a budget of 17,421,600 baht. The Economic Community Development Project, such as OTOP Academy (186,356 projects in total), has been assisted with 24,804,000 baht. The Community Propeller Fund Project has been assisted with 11,919,900 baht. Entrepreneurial Development and Social Enterprises of Agricultural and OTOP Product has been supported with 23,365,000 baht. The Community Product Development Project has been funded with 412,623,000 baht. Finally, The OTOP Community-based Tourism Potential Development Project has been supported with a budget of 361,683,000 baht (Community Development Department 2020).

## Community level

Aside from the government organisations, ALE has also been operated by the community itself. The Lopburi Cultural Office, Ministry of Culture, presented Thai Beung community in Kok Sa Lung sub-district, Pattananikon district, Lopburi province as one of the cultural tourist attractions.

Thai Beung, also known as Thai Deung or Thai Korat, is an indigenous group settled in the Bpaa Sak river basin. This community has similar traditions and cultures to the Central Thai groups, but the group still has languages, beliefs, plays, folk songs, and weaving which are unique to the people. Most people are farmers. When it comes to the dry season, men usually enter the forest to hunt for wild objects and animals, while women weave clothes and grow cottons in the house area. The community relocated to live here. It has built up its culture and ways of life since the 13th century. Until now, the evidence indicates archaeological traces, such as the construction at Kok Sam Raan temple, the smelting of the ancestors, the archaeological parts and antiques at Kok Ra Kang temple, etc. The community is 14 kilometres from Pasak Jolasid Dam, though the community existed 100 years before the construction of the dam. The first trace that indicates that people from this area moved from Korat (Nakhon Ratchasima province) is the lingering Korat accent. Since the community is close to the dam, it is abundant in both consumers and consumption, and good for agricultural activities such as fishing, growing jasmine rice, local style weaving, and making rice crackers with watermelon syrup. The community's well-being helps gather local people to sing, dance, and perform local arts which have been preserved for centuries.

The researchers conducted an interview with Thai Beung community leader, Mr. Prateep Onsalung. He introduced two main objectives of the community: using cultures as a tool for local wisdom learning; and creating six human resource development curricula namely 1) basic knowledge development using dialogue and system thinking, 2) powerful network-building to enhance relationships, 3) community strategy planning to identify needs and goals, 4) community learning, 5) tour package design that reinforce the sense of community value, and 6) community facilitator skill enhancement through community dialogues and training. These curricula are contributed predominantly by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation with approximately 800,000 baht per year. Other sources of income generally come from selling their own products,

community-based tourism, and social enterprise activities such as training courses and websites, with an estimated amount of 200,000 baht a year.

The community receives a small portion from the government budget which, for the most part, aims at advancing the products, more than magnifying learning. Nevertheless, the results of their extraordinary community curricula are fascinating, especially the potential and level of confidence of the people during the dialogues. Once the strengths of the community increase continuously, more youths will be attracted to come back to the community instead of finding jobs in the big cities. As a matter of fact, bringing the new generation back to their areas is one of their sustainability goals. Mr. Prateep claimed that the success of the work can be assessed by observing the people's life in the community, and the number of young people who returned home and are willing to propel the community forward.

It is obvious that local level leadership plays a vital role in representing and propelling the communities. Generally, each community has both formal and informal community leaders. Formal leaders come from the local elections held by the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. Informal leaders, on the other hand, come from the community itself, and are accepted by the people. Most are retired public servants, wisdom teachers, and passionate young generation members that used to be trained by the government. For instance, Thai Bueng community leaders used to be trained by a programme supported by the government. The unity of the communities at local level can strengthen the ability to cope with uncertainties. For example, during the first half of 2020, Thailand had a couple of thousand COVID-19 cases. Fortunately, most people were aware of its harm, and were willing to comply and be responsible, in terms of reducing the spread of the virus. Communities played an important role in sharing useful information and instructing people to stay safe and stay tuned. Most public health volunteers were the people in the communities who acted as a great agent between the government and all individuals.

## Conclusion

The advantages for the current financial situation are these:

- The Thai government institution enhances the operation of ALE by emphasising funding policy.
- Some private institutions support all of the networks, including the Thai Health Promotion Foundation which supports ALE at community level.
- There have been the government memoranda of understanding between every Ministry in order to enhance ALE, for example: The Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE); the Ministry of Public Health; and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.
- Some international institutions support ALE, such as UNESCO.

However, there are also some disadvantages in the current financial situation:

- The funding distribution cannot reach groups that get fewer opportunities, like under-privileged groups of people who live near the borders of Thailand,
- The funding enhancement of ALE highlights every level of basic or fundamental education, but does not highlight other ALE activities,
- The fundamental education policy which is supported by the government applies individual budget allocation processes for the whole nation. This causes difficult classroom situations because they must have more than 35 seats for students to be funded, so it affects the classroom in a community that has only five to seven students. There are then troubles when allocating the budget.

Hence, adult educational philosophy that emphasises education for life should be re-examined and

refocused to enable various and equal learning opportunities for adults. Aside from having decent non-formal education management enhancing basic education, it is vital to have clarity in terms of adult education philosophy to prioritise ALE steps and make the financial allocation for the fullest benefit of Thai adults. Furthermore, government policy needs to take underprivileged people into more serious consideration. The budget should not be designated according to the number of students. Instead, it should be set according to the quality, level of importance, and learning values of the projects.

Predictions, expectations, hopes and fear for future support for popular ALE in Thailand include:

- ALE educators and organisers should take rural areas and underprivileged groups into consideration for the purpose of balancing city and underprivileged groups;
- financial allocations must be manifestly managed and focused on informal education and career development. This can be done by allocating the budget for each student adequately in addition to assuring good basic education;
- coordination between various government sectors needs to be more frequent and effective, as a mean of promoting the local goods, products, and learning processes of the communities. These contributions will assuredly raise popular ALE to a higher level.

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# Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Ukraine

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## Abstract

**This article describes Ukrainian experience in the public financing of educational initiatives intended to provide knowledge and skills for active citizenship. We consider the variety of approaches to understanding community, popular or liberal education, and dominating usage of the term ‘civic education’ in both the broader public and official documents, before focusing on recent developments in the area. Several cases of public budgeting, mainly in the framework of local municipalities programmes, are selected to provide evidence on how civil society organisations lobby for funding, what are the sources of financing, and which educational activities are supported.**

## Introduction

This article describes Ukrainian experience in the public financing of educational initiatives intended to provide knowledge and skills for active citizenship. This area, “variously known as community, popular or liberal education” as defined in the UNESCO (2015) *Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE)*, has been developing rather rapidly in the country since Ukraine obtained its independence in 1991, mainly with financial support from international organisations and donors.

However, these terms are not widely used in Ukraine, either by researchers or by educational services providers. Various approaches to ‘the formation of an active and responsible citizen’ have been reflected in several legislative initiatives in recent years. The term active citizenship has not gained popularity, and is used purely among civic activists and experts.

The primary phrase used in Ukraine to describe education and learning which empowers people to ac-

tively engage with social issues, is civic education. This term is widespread in public discourse and is included in the legislation regulating the educational area. For many years however, we could observe different perceptions of the term among the population and officials, primarily over how it was defined in official documents. Most civil society institutions use the term civic education for a broader range of educational activities, like the learning of cultural traditions, the study of arts, music education, crafts training, etc. The official understanding narrowed civic education mainly to learning and executing one’s rights and responsibilities. This situation influences our research, by narrowing possibilities to trace all the areas of popular adult learning and education (ALE) in the country.

Another strong limitation on research on the public funding of popular ALE is the absence of any national statistics for ALE, including ALE providers, educators and trainers, the programmes, participants and budgets. The state national programmes

can contain certain ALE components, like youth programmes, and several directions of activities of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, or the Ministry of Digital Transformation, but it is impossible to find real data on their budgets, as implementation and funding is the responsibility of both national and local authorities, with the major part of planned funding through local budgets.

## Overview of national level framework conditions

European approaches to civil society development were used to develop the legal framework for civic education in Ukraine. They are part of the following documents:

- The Constitution of Ukraine
- The Law 'On Education'
- The National Strategy in the field of human rights, approved by Decree of the President of Ukraine № 501 dated August 25, 2015
- The National Strategy for Civil Society Development in Ukraine for 2016-2020, approved by the Decree of the President of Ukraine № 68, February 26, 2016
- The Decree of the President of Ukraine "On priority measures to promote the strengthening of national unity and consolidation of Ukrainian society, support for civic initiatives in this area" № 534, December 1, 2016
- The Concept for the development of civic education in Ukraine, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine order № 710, October 3, 2018
- The Strategy of national-patriotic education, approved by the Decree of the President of Ukraine № 286, May 18, 2019

The legal basis for the development of civic competencies at general secondary education level is Arti-

cle 12 of the Law of Ukraine 'On Education' (2017). It defines twelve key competencies, including civic and social competencies related to democracy, justice, equality, human rights, welfare, and healthy lifestyle with an awareness of equal rights and opportunities. That corresponds to the purpose and principles of education, including cross-cutting competencies, including critical thinking. The State "creates conditions for obtaining civic education aimed at forming competencies which lead to the execution of one's rights and responsibilities as a member of society, awareness of the values of civil (free democratic) society, the rule of law, human and civil rights and freedoms" (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2017).

The National Strategy for Promoting Civil Society Development in Ukraine for 2016-2020 anticipates the intensification of activities aimed at educating the broader population to provide additional opportunities for the realisation and protection of human and civil rights and freedoms, to satisfy public interests, using various forms of democracy, participation, civic initiative and self-organisation (President of Ukraine 2016).

The Concept for the development of civic education in Ukraine approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on October 3, 2018 defines civic education briefly as "civic training and upbringing based on national and universal values". This document outlines a list of civic competencies, and establishes the value benchmarks (indicators) and the civic education system which, in addition to civil society institutions, also includes state authorities, local self-government bodies, and educational institutions in various forms of ownership.

The Concept for the development of civic education is the most comprehensive document in the relevant field. It identifies the main strategic directions of civic education: the public legal education of citizens, in particular in terms of knowledge and understanding of rights, and skills to exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities, and to strengthen their ability to participate in public life and use opportunities to influence decision-making



processes at national and local levels (realisation of the right to participate). The document also defines the socio-political values of civic education: freedom, democracy, respect for the native language and culture, patriotism, respect for the law, responsibility, and solidarity.

According to the concept, “civic education should be aimed at the development of the following competencies:

- understanding of one’s own identity as a citizen, national and cultural identity, respect for other cultures and ethnic groups;
- ability to preserve Ukrainian traditions and spiritual values, to have the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities to realise their potential in modern society;
- understanding the importance of national memory and its impact on socio-political processes;
- knowledge of European values, including the principles of democracy, and the ability to apply them in everyday life;
- understanding and perception of the value of human rights and freedoms, the ability to defend one’s rights and the rights of others;
- understanding and perception of the principles of equality and non-discrimination, respect for human dignity, tolerance, social justice, integrity, the ability to embody them in their patterns of behavior, the ability to prevent and resolve conflicts;
- knowledge and understanding of the state system, public administration in all spheres of public life at the national and local levels;
- knowledge of the mechanisms of participation in public, socio-political life and the ability to apply them together with decision-making at the national and local levels; responsible attitude to

their civil rights and responsibilities related to participation in socio-political life;

- ability to form and argue one’s position, respecting different opinions/positions, if they do not violate the rights and dignity of other persons;
- ability to critically analyze information, consider issues from different positions, make informed decisions;
- ability to socially communicate and the ability to work together to solve problems of communities of different levels, in particular through volunteering.” (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 2018)

The concept determines the results to be achieved in the process of civic education, for each type - formal, nonformal, informal - and component and level of education - preschool; complete general secondary, specialised and extracurricular, professional (vocational), professional higher education, higher education, adult education (including post-graduate).

For many years international donors were the only source for the financing of civic education programmes in Ukraine, especially for adults. To make full use of the potential of a partnership with civil society, the State has approved the following approaches to financial support for civil society organisations (CSOs). First, such support can be provided to implement projects, programmes, and activities to realise tasks of national and local policy. Second, the funds of the CSOs’ financial support are distributed through transparent tender procedures, during which the most effective projects are identified. Such requirements for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) financial support are part of the current procedure for conducting a competition to identify programmes (projects, activities) developed by CSOs and creative unions, for the implementation of which financial support is provided, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution № 1049 of 12.10.2011.

One of the main priorities of the Strategy of State Policy for Civil Society Development in Ukraine, approved by the Decree of the President of Ukraine on 24.03.2012 № 212/2012, is the need to delegate to civil society institutions certain functions of the government to implement state policy in humanitarian and social spheres.

The positive developments for financing citizenship education from state and local budgets are visible within youth policy. One bright example is the State Target Social Programme ‘Youth of Ukraine’ for 2016 – 2020. Among its priorities are: building citizenship position and national-patriotic upbringing; implementing activities aimed to revive national-patriotic upbringing; asserting citizenship awareness and an active life position of young people; engaging young people in activity beneficial for society; developing a sense of personal and national dignity; environmental protection; creation of conditions for young people’s creative and spiritual development and intellectual growth; young people’s healthy lifestyle, implementing measures aimed at promoting and affirming healthy and safe lifestyle and health culture among youth; development of nonformal education; and implementing activities aimed at young people acquiring knowledge, skills and competencies beyond the system of formal education, in particular by volunteering (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 2016). At the same time, it is problematic tracing concrete funding for popular ALE in the framework of the total programme budget.

There are several other examples of inclusion of educational components in the national state programmes and budgets, where it is problematic to separate popular (civic) ALE within the the total funding:

- the **Ukrainian Cultural Foundation** is a state-owned institution created in 2017. It supports projects through competitive selection at national level. Activities of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation are guided and coordinated by the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy. One new components of its activities in 2021 will be the ‘Education. Exchanges. Residencies.

Debuts’ Programme with a budget of UAH 50 million (EUR 1,47 million) for 2021. It is possible for diverse stakeholders to submit educational projects and receive public funding for their initiatives, including in the sphere of popular ALE.

- the **Ministry of Digital Transformation** has initiated an educational component, mainly aimed at digital literacy of the broader population of the country (see <https://osvita.diiia.gov.ua/>). Courses are open and free of charge for everyone. There are courses which include components of popular (civic) ALE e-democracy instruments (‘Stars of E-Democracy’), several courses on local elections, etc., though the majority were designed and produced with the support of CSOs and international donors.

## Opportunities and challenges of civic education in the formal system and in non-formal ALE

Civic education is part of the formal education system of Ukraine. Formal education develops and consolidates knowledge of the main components of civic education, civic consciousness, models of social behavior, and activity of children and youth. At the level of formal education, the acquisition of knowledge in civic education in one or another format is provided under standards developed on a competency basis, including the formation of personal qualities (values, views, ways of thinking), and mastery of specific knowledge and skills. Education standards are periodically updated. Based on the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture developed by the Council of Europe (2016), the Civic Education course has been designed and introduced in secondary and high schools of Ukraine since 2018. So far, around 2,000 teachers have been prepared by short-term training to teach the civic education course in schools. Their training was provided partly by the State and also through the projects of international donors. Regular school classes on civic education are paid for through public funds.

Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science declare that civic education is very well developed in the formal system. According to Igor Baluba, Head of the Expert Group on Skills Development, the adult education and pedagogical education of the Directorate of Higher and Adult Education is aimed at preparing young people for a conscious and responsible public life. It has a clear structure, covers all areas of civic education, and the content considers the age characteristics of students and their ability to acquire relevant knowledge, learn the appropriate norms of behaviour, and apply them in everyday life. The legislation provides conditions for the systematic updating of educational standards and the content of academic programmes. This ensures that the educational process considers social requirements, the needs of the economy, and global trends. At the same time, Baluba underlines that the system requires regular monitoring to determine its status and effectiveness (Baluba 2019: 36).

1. Systematic research is necessary, taking into account the following current tendencies in society as a whole, and education in particular:
2. insufficient interest and motivation to learn and get practical skills of responsible civic behavior/ activities among pupils and youth;
3. the formal attitude of teachers to civic education programmes;
4. the inability to minimise the impact of manipulative informational and political technologies;
5. the gap between theoretical knowledge and positive action patterns provided to students, and real negative social practices in Ukrainian society, including corruption, etc.

This is why the government pays special attention to the training of educators. In particular, there are relevant requirements for higher education standards, the need for theoretical and practical training, and the development of new models of education and training. The process of current reforming all

levels of the formal education system affects the structure and content of the educational process, and methods and technologies of teaching. The changes being implemented should increase system efficiency.

Igor Baluba also emphasises that adult education deserves special attention. It has significant and unrealised potential for civic and political education, for the formation of civic competencies among the adult population, and for the involvement of citizens in responsible social activity. For the most part, educational services on socio-political issues are provided by public organisations, political parties, and foundations, including foreign (Baluba 2019: 36). But the lack of systemic direct public (State, community) funding for such activities is a major obstacle for adult learning to unfold its potential.

Yaryna Borenko (2019), an expert on Youth Policy group of a Reanimation Package of Reforms, mentions numerous types of “providers at a local level, working on specific issues of citizenship educations: local and regional NGOs, including youth and students, NGOs providing open-air activities, festivals, fora and workshops. There are also new co-working spaces; libraries, which succeed in transforming to modern public spaces and establish partnerships with non-governmental actors and/or donors; municipal and non-governmental youth centres in the process of legitimisation and unification of their activities in the frame of youth policy reform; political parties working mostly with international donors and providing citizenship education programmes for strengthening of capacity”. The municipal institutions involved are the only institutions with regular state funding that provide non-formal civic education activities.

However, according to the findings of the All-Ukrainian Public Opinion Survey on Civic Literacy in Ukraine, held in July-September 2016 by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in the framework of the UNDP project entitled Democratisation, Human Rights and Civil Society Development, only 27% of respondents consider themselves active citizens. It is also noted that

“Ukrainians display a high level of declarative civic activity: They would prefer to join the activities rather than initiate them on their own”. The research indicates a low level of civic education and civic culture among the population of Ukraine in general. At the same time, according to this report, about half of Ukrainians would like to gain knowledge of civil rights and skills. (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2016)

Civic education needs state support, which can be implemented through the Civic Education Development Strategy till 2030, and the Action Plan for its implementation. Both documents have been discussed during the past year. They were developed to implement the concept. At the same time, the position of the Ministry of Education and Science responsible for developing and approving the documents was clearly declared: there will be no public funding at national level for the Strategy and its Action plan as there is a big risk that the documents will not be approved at all. Most likely, the responsible decision-makers expect the issue of funding to be lobbied by local CSOs and delivered by local authorities in the framework of existing national or local programmes.

Several current tendencies in civic education development were debated by the members of the working group involved in the design of both documents. *Fragmentation of civic education* in formal and nonformal spheres is among them. The deficiency of a unified cross-cutting approach to the structure of civic competencies means lack of a holistic system of civic education. It generates chaotic measures for civic education, and uncoordinated actions of stakeholders. According to the Recommendations of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, civic education encompasses knowledge, skills and attitudes. At present, in Ukrainian society, civic education is often associated with knowledge, sometimes with skills, but rarely with a value component. Among other things, in the formal system civic education sometimes remains at the level of teaching a school subject.

The lack of a shared vision of the content of civic competencies contributes to their *reduced coverage in educational standards* and educational and training programmes. Note also that there is a lack of understanding of the structure of civic competencies in the approved education standards, and absence of modern standards for certain levels of general secondary education, as well as for vocational and professional higher education.

An important factor complicating implementing civic education in educational institutions is *the low level of understanding among educators and trainers* of the essence, purpose, features and methodology of civic education. Readiness of CSOs properly to promote acquiring civic competencies in the system of nonformal education is seen as an essential factor by representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Widespread introduction of civic education requires *educational and methodological support*, and unique national manuals and learning materials which are currently insufficient for all areas of civic education. At the same time, there is a wide selection of English-language literature and teaching materials developed by international organisations. Given the high level of universality of basic civic education courses, such training materials can easily be adapted and implemented in the educational environment.

The involvement of citizens of different age groups who carry out voluntary activities has become widespread, a positive phenomenon in forming a civil society in Ukraine. Therefore, civic education should take into account the need to develop a demand for volunteering and educating young people in the qualities of mutual support and mutual assistance. There are successful targeted initiatives to meet such requirements, like educational platforms providing educational resources for civic education (see for example <https://vumonline.ua/>). More practical examples of nonformal educational initiatives for adults in Ukraine are described in the publication *Best educational practices in the field of active citizenship in Ukraine* (Dragovenko, Smirnov 2019).

At the same time, there is a need to create a holistic system of civic education based on effective global practices of civic competencies. Effective civic education can be ensured by introducing civic education, through creating a democratic educational environment and the formation of civic competencies: by means of the civic activities of students, their participation in self-government, clubs, courses, and introducing certain disciplines, modules, special courses in civic education.

### Promoting local democracy through support for civic education in the framework of decentralisation reform

Opportunities for public funding of civic education in Ukraine have been opened since the start of *decentralisation reform* in 2015. Thanks to this reform, local communities are more frequently becoming centres of innovations in Ukraine today (Kobynets 2020).

According to experts, in spite of numerous conflicts, inconsistencies and imperfections during the initial years of implementation, Ukraine's decentralisation reforms have greatly improved governance at municipal level. Local resources have been pooled in more sustainable territorial communities, and the parallel implementation of sectoral reforms is under way. Decentralisation has contributed to promoting local democracy. Insofar as decentralisation helps Ukrainian state-building and nation-building, it indirectly promotes a non-authoritarian path of post-communist development that implies an open society, political pluralism, public participation, and Western integration (Romanova, Umland 2019).

As declared by the state authorities, the process of decentralisation in Ukraine in general, and decentralisation and modernisation of education, influenced local communities' (*hromadas* in Ukrainian) attitudes to local educational policy. Local communities themselves started to form this policy, taking into account local cultural features and labour market peculiarities. Proper organisa-

tion of the functioning and effective management of local educational institutions is a key factor in the success of reform and provision of high-quality educational services to citizens. The bodies of local self-government in the amalgamated communities are independent. They have all powers, including education administration (Information portal decentralization 2020). In areas related to education, sectoral changes are taking place. They create new conditions for obtaining civic competencies: participation in the distribution of participation budgets by territorial communities, transformation of cultural institutions into public spaces, the emergence of urban activism and arrangement of street public spaces, increasing measures of direct action, and involving citizens in the activities of direct democracy.

Voluntary amalgamation has enhanced the development of local democracy by supporting grassroots political and civic engagement. The creation of genuinely autonomous municipal governments in the new amalgamated territorial communities (ATCs) has equally emancipatory consequences (Romanova, Umland 2019).

Local communities have the right to formulate and approve the strategic paths of their development. Local authorities representing communities create favourable conditions for achieving strategic goals and operational plans, including civic education components. One option for such competitions is to propose and make changes to existing targeted local programmes to develop culture, sports, youth, education, public relations, etc., by making provisions for an annual competition of projects for NGOs with the allocation of appropriate funding. The priorities of these competitions include educational activities for adults, especially civic education. The majority of civic education programmes proposed on the local level are short-term, usually limited to one-, two- or three-day courses of seminars or trainings. Local providers within regional development priorities offer the content of the courses; rarely is it based on needs analyses.

## Local cases of municipal (or regional) funding

The cases collected and described below, on the one hand, reflect the diversity of approaches to local public financing of civic education across the country, which have been possible mainly due to decentralisation processes. On the other hand, we guess that the list is not exhaustive and there might be other approaches.

The examples are based on analysis of information collected from different regions of Ukraine. The proposed structure includes answers to several key questions, received via e-mail or phone calls from local CSOs:

- How was the lobbying of local funding for civic adult education (active citizenship) initiated? (Communication, meetings, events, etc.)
- When was this done? How much time did it take?
- What was the basis of the justification? (Research, surveys, previous experience, references to national documents, e.g. National Strategy for Civil Society Development? State Policy Strategy for Healthy and Active Longevity until 2022? Others?)
- Who (the person, the organisation) did this lobbying?
- Who (which authority) made the decision? How is it organised? (Local special programme, a component of another (which?) programme, action plan, Mayor's order, other?)
- What is supported? How long did the trainings last? Short-term, long-term? What were their target group(s)? How many people took part in the trainings?
- What amount was allocated? What exactly was funded? (Work of managers of the organisation? The fee of the trainer? Educational handouts? Meals for participants? Travel? Other?)
- What funding mechanism was used? Who received the funds? Public organisation? Special account?

### Case 1. Vinnytsia: The case of the local CSO Centre Podillya-Socium; the special programme of local authorities "Providing financial support for socially-oriented activities of civic organisations of veterans and persons with disabilities".

**How?** In terms determined by the local authorities of Vinnytsia, annually, local CSOs have the opportunity to submit for consideration by local governments a request for funding for the statutory activities of an organisation. A proposal is submitted to the Mayor. An estimate of the planned costs accompanies a list of documents. Then, the Mayor assigns the relevant department of the city council to consider the feasibility of supporting the initiative.

**When?** Requests are usually accepted until the end of August. Accordingly, the preparation of documents is carried out in the summer. The decision is taken in September-November with the support of initiatives during the next year. Financial support is provided annually. With positive results support is possible regularly.

**Why?** The results of educational needs assessment of residents obtained, and presented by CSOs, are essential for local governments. Facts, figures, and references contribute to a favourable decision. Local authorities make decisions taking into account the positive experience of previous cooperation of the civic organisation with the Mayor's office's structural units, their participation in previous competitions of social projects held by the Mayor's office, available donor support, etc. The CSO representatives also emphasise the importance of government support for education for the elderly, in their TV and radio interviews and social networks.

**Who initiates the issue?** Applying was discussed at the general members' meeting of the organisation Centre Podillya-Socium. The financial manager processed the financial component and was also



entrusted to communicate with the Mayor's office's relevant administrative/financial department, and control the correctness of the application procedure.

**Who decides on funding?** Deputies at the session of the Vinnytsia City Council made a decision in the framework of a local special programme 'Providing financial support for socially-oriented activities of civic organisations of veterans and persons with disabilities' (Vinnytsia City Council 2019). The programme of statutory activities of CSOs are thus funded, if their statutes state that they are organisations created by or oriented for the support of these categories of vulnerable groups.

**What is supported?** The training programme (26 hours, two hours per week) 'Community Participation Tools' includes the following components: Vinnytsia City Council website as a tool for interaction, how to create accounts on the website of Vinnytsia City Council; how to submit electronic petitions; how a 'transparent office' operates; budget of public initiatives. One hundred older adults participated in the training.

**Amount of funding:** In 2020 the project budget was UAH 109,000 (approximately EUR 3,700). The CSO can thus cover printing materials, stationery, rent of equipment, management, and trainers' fees.

**Funding mechanism:** Money is provided by the Department of Social Policy of the City administration, the administrator of funds under this programme, through the Treasury account of Centre Podillya-Socium. This mechanism supposes the opening of a bank account in the State Treasury of Ukraine, and applying accounting and reporting procedures similar to the policies used to government agencies and organisations.

**Case 2. Sumy: The cases of the CSOs Centre for Lifelong Learning and Integration and Development Centre for Information and Research; the Regional Social Order Mechanism.**

**How?** Funding for adult education under the Local Government Social Order Programme is possible

through cooperation with the regional education department. The programme includes a number of priority, socially essential issues in public health, social protection; and state policy implementation in the informational, media and financial literacy of the population, health and recreation, and youth policy.

**When?** The regional targeted social programme for solving priority problems using the social order mechanism was introduced in the Sumy region in 2016. From 2018 it included civic education among areas of financing (Sumy Oblast Council 2016).

**Why?** An evidence-based approach is used to form this regional programme. Results of current needs research, and feasibility of funding civic education activities for adults, were discussed during working meetings of local CSOs representatives with regional authorities. Social order is an effective tool for regulating social services. It is based on the gradual delegation of powers and resources from public authorities to civil society institutions and the business sector, mainly social functions that overload state institutions.

**Who initiates the issue?** Documentation for obtaining funding was compiled by the leaders and members of the NGOs Integration and Development and the Centre for Lifelong Learning.

**Who decides on funding?** The general coordination and control over the implementation of the Social Order programme measures are carried out by the Department of Information Activities and Public Communications of the Sumy Regional State Administration. Funding of the programme is carried out from the regional budget in amounts provided by Sumy Regional Council decisions on the local budget. Fund managers are specialised structural units of the Sumy Regional State Administration.

**What is supported?** In 2018, thanks to the Social Order programme, 3-day training on the Culture of Neighborhood course was organised for sixty schoolteachers in the region. In 2019, there was 2-day financial literacy training for 30 schoolteach-

ers in local amalgamated territorial communities selected by the organisation on a competitive basis.

**Amount of funding:** In 2018, UAH 200,000 (approximately EUR 6,700) was allocated for training, in 2019 - UAH 60,000 (approximately EUR 2,000). The programme covered the work of trainers, travel and accommodation of participants, and handouts.

**Funding mechanism:** The purpose of the programme is achieved by means of ordering social services by local authorities. A special procedure is used to select contractors, particularly public organisations. The organisation is chosen to fulfil such a social order through the Prozorro system (see <https://prozorro.gov.ua/en>) developed to determine suppliers and providers of services, works, and goods by government agencies and authorities at the auction. The supplier/provider who offers the lowest price and will be able effectively to fulfil the order, wins.

### **Case 3. Sumy: The case of the local CSO Centre for Lifelong Learning; local competitions for CSOs mechanism.**

**How?** A successful case of lobbying for local public funding for popular civic adult education is the programme *Project competitions for CSOs* organised by local departments of education, culture, sports, youth, public relations.

**When?** Once a year local CSOs can apply for public funding through the project competitions of various departments of city and regional administrations. It is possible to submit a project proposal each year if the previous project was fully implemented. The NGO Centre for Lifelong Learning has been receiving annual funding for civic education projects since 2015.

**Why?** The support to CSOs' activities is provided to make full use of the potential of a partnership with civil society in achieving current tasks of national and local policy, especially in humanitarian and social spheres. The competition rationale is that there is no communal structure (like *Volkshochschulen* in

Germany) that would be responsible for providing quality and affordable educational services of the adult population.

**Who initiates the issue?** Leaders of the Centre for Lifelong Learning lobbied for introduction of the programme *Project competitions for CSOs* on the regional (oblast) and city levels. to finance such competitions through corresponding budgets.

**Who decides on funding?** Such a competition is held at the oblast level, where the Sumy Oblast Council was responsible. At the city level, the Sumy City Council was the responsible authority (Sumy City Council 2019).

**What?** In 2020, the Centre for Lifelong Learning implemented the School of Leaders of Change project, which included a 48-hour educational programme. As part of it, students had to plan and execute their public action projects in the city. Twenty people, selected on a competitive basis, took part in the project.

**Amount of funding:** Each year, different amounts are set in the budget, depending on the capacity of the budget, local government priorities, and lobbying. For example, the budget of the regional competition of projects for non-governmental organisations from the Department of Youth and Sports of the Sumy Regional State Administration in 2019 was UAH 3 million (approximately EUR 100,000), while the budget of the competition of projects from the Public Relations Department of Sumy City Council was UAH 300,000 (around EUR 10,000). There are usually restrictions on the maximum budget of one project. As a rule, these funds are used to finance the work of trainers, coffee breaks, handouts.

**Funding mechanism:** The decision on funding is made by the tender commission, which includes representatives of local authorities and members of the public. The money is transferred to an account opened by the winning civic organisation in the local treasury.



#### **Case 4. Nikopol: The municipal programme Adult Education in Nikopol for 2019-2021.**

**How?** In Nikopol in 2018, a member of the Global Learning Cities network, the municipal programme Adult Education in Nikopol for 2019-2021, was approved and is currently in force (Nikopol City Council 2018). Its primary purpose is to improve the quality of life, to form a culture of learning, and to provide the adult population with free access to lifelong learning. Co-executors of the programme are the Department of Education and Science, Nikopol City Centre for Social Services for Families, Children and Youth, local CSOs.

**When?** Funds are planned in the local budget each November-December for the next calendar year's activities, and funded through the Department of Humanitarian Policy of Nikopol City Council, based on project applications and draft estimates of local CSOs.

**Why?** Recently, the demand for adult education programmes in the city has grown. The Nikopol City Council and the Mayor were persuaded to develop and approve this programme by the interest and number of citizens united around the ALE Centre. In addition, the events organised by the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International) in Ukraine inspired and encouraged the Mayor and deputies to purchase and renovate premises for the ALE Centre (Decision of the Nikopol City Council № 53-51/VII dated June 26, 2019).

**Who initiates the issue?** Local CSOs, among them an NGO 'Kozatsky Nabat', the leading organisation, prepare justification (they have a certain number of applications from citizens with the detailed description of their needs, groups enrolled). The fees are calculated according to the amounts approved officially. Mainly, the team of the public organisation Kozatsky Nabat provided proposals and held negotiations.

**Who decides on funding?** The justification is reviewed/discussed by the Department of Human-

itarian Policy, a decision is taken, and money can be delivered to an NGO (they have to announce a tender for equipment or consumables) or the municipal institution's Centre for Culture and Leisure, if trainers represent this institution. In reality, the final decision was always made by the Nikopol mayor, although the programme was formally approved by the deputies of the Nikopol city council.

**What?** The municipal programme Adult education in Nikopol for 2019-2021 contains such areas of activity as democracy education, non-formal education for personal changes, involvement of disabled people in education (civic activism, employment opportunities, etc.), education for volunteering, which receive financing. In 2020, for example, these measures were implemented in the following areas: personal change; a healthy lifestyle; dance school; courses 'creative planet' (creative thinking, traditional folk art, contemporary art, theatre workshop, aesthetic and intellectual development), allowing financing the purchase of equipment or consumables for educational courses, or salaries for trainers.

**Amount of funding:** The total three-year programme financing is UAH 2,235,000, including from the city budget UAH 1,280,000, and from other sources UAH 955,000. In 2019, the funding of the programme amounted to UAH 200,000 (approximately EUR 6,700), in 2020 the amount increased to UAH 400,000 (approximately EUR 13,300). The funds are used to organise educational activities, and for trainers' fees and the purchase of facilities. In addition to the programme itself, in 2019 UAH 4 million (approximately EUR 133,000) were spent on the purchase of premises for the ALE Centre. The Department of Education and Science, Nikopol City Centre for Social Services for Families, Children and Youth, and local CSOs can finance the purchase of equipment or consumables for educational courses; or for salaries for trainers.

**Funding mechanism:** Funding is provided through the local branch of the State Treasury by the main fund manager, the Humanitarian Policy Department of the Nikopol City Council, which signs contracts with services providers.

**Case 5. Poltava: The case of the local CSO Adult Education Centre of the Poltava Region; participatory budgeting programme mechanism.**

**How?** In Poltava, civic education is supported by funding through a ‘participatory budget’ mechanism. Participation is a process of interaction between local governments and the population. It aims to stimulate residents of the city of Poltava to make decisions on the distribution of part of the city budget. In 2016, the first city target programme Participatory budgeting in Poltava for 2016–2020 and participatory budgeting regulations were approved (Poltava City Council 2016, 2019). Since then, citizens themselves have decided which projects will be funded; civic education is one of the priorities.

**When?** The allocation of funds to support educational initiatives for the elderly began in 2018 and continued in 2019 and 2020.

**Why?** The programme is aimed to promote a democratic society and civic education, improve the dialogue between government and community, stimulate and maintain civic initiatives, activate the people of Poltava to participate in the budget process, and to ensure implementation of citizens’ projects.

**Who initiates the issue?** The civic education project for seniors was initiated by the local CSO Adult Education Centre of Poltava Region and promoted by the head of the organisation, a deputy of the Poltava City Council.

**Who decides on funding?** Each year the selection of winning projects is coordinated by the Poltava City Council and several municipal organisations by counting the votes of citizens for the submitted projects, and approving their final list. The executors of the projects, supported through participatory budgeting, are the structural subdivisions of local self-government bodies and communal institutions. The municipal organisation, the Institute of Urban Development of Poltava City Council, was responsible for implementing the civic education project.

**What?** The project aims to increase elderly people’s civic and social activity by improving their civic and social competencies. The educational course is called ‘Information and communication technologies in developing civic competencies and promoting social activity of the elderly’. The programme includes 20 topics, grouped into the following modules: opportunities for information technology to develop civic skills; social activity of the elderly; civic competencies as a condition for successful social self-realisation. The project is in the premises of the Poltava University of Economics and Trade.

**Amount of funding:** In 2019, UAH 470,000 (approximately EUR 15,700) was allocated for the project.

**Funding mechanism:** The project financing mechanism is carried out by the financial department of Poltava City Council by making calculations according to a pre-agreed estimate. Every month the website of the Poltava City Council publishes information on the implementation of the winning projects.

**Case 6. Lviv: The case of public infrastructure and resources provided by the City Council for civic education initiatives.**

**How?** The restoration of Lviv library spaces to realise their educational potential is fixed in the Culture Development Strategy 2025 (Lviv City Council 2019) and the Lviv Breakthrough Strategy 2027 (Lviv City Council 2018). According to these documents, the strategic priority of the city is ‘to support and develop nonformal cultural education in the format of lifelong learning’. In these documents, cultural institutions are given the role of institutionalised budgetary and extra-budgetary institutions of the city’s cultural network, which, in particular, perform an educational function.

**When?** The practice of using libraries as places for nonformal learning has been intensified in Lviv since 2016. Each year the number of educational activities increased, except in 2020 when it decreased slightly due to quarantine restrictions.

**Why?** Culture and education are complementary areas. Through culture, new skills and competencies are developed, the worldview expands; it allows us to look at familiar things from a new angle. The practice of using libraries as educational hubs was introduced to develop targeted comprehensive educational programmes in cultural institutions with the involvement of local NGOs. Thus, a cooperation strategy between local cultural and educational institutions has been introduced at all levels.

**Who initiates the issue?** Local CSOs usually initiate educational activities in libraries. Libraries in Lviv are public places, so all interested organisations have the right to host their events there. Each library has a local manager who deals with everyday operations, event planning, and collaboration with education providers.

**Who decides on funding?** The organisations that strategically coordinate this area are the municipal institution, the City Institute, and the Department of Culture of the Lviv City Council. Events are usually free for students. If the event is paid for, the organiser is encouraged to make a charitable contribution to the library.

**What?** As a rule, only long-term courses (at least 20 hours) are implemented. Diverse educational events, lectures, meetings with experts, workshops, masterclasses are held in 23 libraries of the city. In 2019, 32,400 people attended educational events. During the events, the organisers provide free rental of necessary technical equipment (projectors, screens, laptops, Internet, flipcharts). In some cases they buy stationery.

**Amount of funding:** According to various estimates, support for civic education activities per year can amount to almost UAH 1 million (approximately 34,000), including rent of premises, equipment, and other material and technical means. However, it isn't easy to measure the exact amount of funds, as it is provided in kind.

**Funding mechanism:** Each NGO can directly contact the local library and agree on a date and

format for the event. They need to submit a short description of the event, an action plan, estimated duration, and information about the target audience to a local manager. Some libraries have highly specialised areas for art classes, civic education, and language courses.

## Conclusions

1. Since the early 1990s, when Ukraine gained its independence, the country's civic movement has become stronger despite its sporadic character. Mainly this was in response to challenges in political development, and the influence of political confrontation. There were several attempts at applying a systemic approach to civic learning through formal, mainly school, education. The main focus was on knowledge and understanding of rights, skills to exercise citizens' constitutional rights and responsibilities, and formation of one's own identity as a citizen, national and cultural identity, and respect for other cultures and ethnic groups. Since 2019 the course on civic education has been introduced in secondary and high schools, with the support of international donors and the state.
2. The process of creating the political and legislative framework for the support of civic education in the country has been intensified during recent years, especially with the increasing role of the Ukrainian civil society since the start of the Revolution of Dignity, armed Russian aggression in Eastern regions, and the occupation and annexation of the Crimea. This has resulted in public discussion and further political approval of several strategic policy papers aimed at civil society development, support for civic initiatives in the strengthening of national unity, and the consolidation of Ukrainian society. On one hand there is no systemic approach, no institutional structures responsible for popular, civic, citizenship education, especially for adults, and no direct public funding. But, on the other hand, there are components of popular ALE in several national programmes, like Youth, Culture, and

Social areas, with funding which is problematic to trace and calculate. due to the absence of statistics. The Concept for the development of civic education approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in 2018 is now revised and supplemented with the Plan of Activities. These changes should be ratified in the near future.

3. Currently, the absence of national regulatory mechanisms for adult education causes difficulties for those communities, which see the value of education for all population layers. It is also perceived as a brake on broader development. However, there are still other opportunities for support, mainly in the framework of local municipalities and amalgamated territorial communities programmes. These cases include the provision of in-kind support through premises or equipment free of rent, as well as available instruments for financing the educational activities of local CSOs or other providers.
4. The analysis of local cases demonstrates the diversity of such instruments: a) particular direct budgeting through municipal programmes for the support of adult education or as part of broader educational strategies, programmes, and activity plans; b) through national and municipal programmes for socially vulnerable groups, thematic programmes, and directly financing the statutory activities of CSOs; c) through participatory budgets, and municipal contest of the best local social projects. The range of target groups and thematic support is rather broad. There are some programmes intended for the support of vulnerable groups, like veterans of the anti-terror operation in Eastern Ukraine, seniors, people with disabilities. Topics include knowledge of democratic values and practical skills for active citizenship, like mechanisms of local democracy, advocating for the rights, and participation in decision-making. There are educational initiatives aimed at the personal development of local citizens, leading to their better involvement in local communication processes and adaptation to pro-active roles in their communities. A reader can see this diversity in the titles of directions
  5. The cases described reflect changes on a local community level, in many cases as a result of the practical involvement of active groups of population in processes of reform, from analysis of the economic and social situation, including needs analysis, to broader joint design and building of local strategies, and detailed plans for implementation. This is possible by including representatives of groups of activists in local advisory civic boards, and the use of mechanisms of public hearings, and other tools of local democracy. The value of international or foreign educational initiatives - joint study trips, local training, etc. - has also been immense. The positive cases need thorough analyses and broader promotion.
  6. Budgets distributed for ALE, including popular ALE, are not mainly from budgets provided for the education area. Their source can be other areas – culture and social spheres, information policy. This situation reflects a weak perception of adult education as part of a lifelong learning strategy. Traditionally, the sphere of education has been limited to formal preschool, school, professional and higher education. It becomes even more noticeable at local level, where local authorities' sphere of responsibility has been legally limited to preschool and school levels. The promotion of a lifelong learning approach still requires significant efforts from the State at national level and by local authorities.

within one municipal programme of Nikopol city (annex). It is difficult to compare the effectiveness of diverse mechanisms, as there are few cases in practice.

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## **Annex: Example municipal programme “Adult education in Nikopol for 2019-2021” (see case 4. presented in the article), list of tasks and activities:**

### **Tasks 1. Awareness-raising and information sharing about Adult Education in Nikopol**

Activities:

- 1.1. Production and placement of street advertising on the role of the development of a LLL culture in the city
- 1.2. Conduct of round tables, lectures, webinars to popularise Adult education in Nikopol
- 1.3. Participation in the Ukrainian and international seminars, conferences with the aim of the popularisation of the city of Nikopol, as a member of the UNESCO Learning Cities network

### **Task 2. Preservation and increase of moral, cultural and scientific values of the adult population of the city of Nikopol**

Activities:

- 2.1. Conduct of questionnaires and surveys to study the demand for educational services
- 2.2. Educational courses and trainings, based on needs analyses: “Nonformal education for personal changes.”
- 2.3. School “Step by Step” (courses, trainings, round tables, workshops on legal literacy), “Democratic Education for the Citizens of Nikopol”)
- 2.4. Training for improving professional skills, and compensatory education (the Ukrainian and foreign languages, computer literacy, healthy lifestyle, etc.)
- 2.5. Education for culture, courses “Creative planet” (art workshops, pottery workshops, ‘Creative

hands' studio, studio of non-traditional contemporary art (ebru, sand animation, etc.) nuno felting, playing musical instruments, vocal ethnic studio, dance school, theater workshop, aesthetic and intellectual workshops, etc.)

2.6. Social and cultural formal and nonformal learning in Nikopol (festivals, fairs, master-classes, creative meetings, literary and musical evenings, quests, intellectual games)

2.7. The activity of the studio "You can" for parents bringing up children with disabilities (those who do not attend any school), and their kids

2.8. The revival of pottery and traditional ceramic painting as a historical brand of the city: master classes, theatrical performances, festivals for adults

2.9. Scientific environment development: round tables, scientific conferences, webinars, publications

### **Task 3. Creation of universities of the third age for the elderly people**

Activities:

3.1. Development of needs-oriented education programmes for senior students

3.2. Summer camp for seniors

3.3. Art-picnics

3.4. Development and spreading of informational materials on activities of universities of the third age

### **Task 4. Nonformal education for adults with disabilities**

Activities:

4.1. Conduct of trainings for adults with disabilities

4.2. Conduct of competitions for poets, writers, photographers, artists, festivals, fairs with the involvement of adults with functional disabilities

### **5. Support of volunteers and CSOs in the popularization of nonformal learning in Nikopol**

Activities:

5.1. Development of volunteer movement in the city and involvement of volunteers in education

5.2. Conduct of seminars, round tables, scientific conferences on the role of nonformal and informal education in society in general and in public governance

5.3. Development of cooperation with the SCO "Kozatsky Nabat" and others in the popularisation of nonformal education in Nikopol

5.4. Involvement of business companies in the implementation of educational programmes

# Community-based centres for youth and adult education in Palestine: the promise of continuity of learning and development

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## Abstract

**The understanding and practice of popular adult learning and education (ALE) in Palestine is complex, with various modes of financing popular ALE used in this particular context. The example of the Community-based centres for youth and adult education is highlighted as a promising emerging social structure that promotes joint public financing of non-formal adult education. In addition to emphasising the benefits and impact of popular ALE in Palestine, there is an analytical review of the experience of Centres, lessons learnt, and recommendations for stakeholders, to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of similar initiatives.**

## **The national understanding and practice of popular adult learning and education (ALE): multiple terms, multiple actors and a shared purpose**

While, within the complicated and conflict-ridden context of Palestine, there are various active actors who provide different aspects of popular ALE (as defined by UNESCO), there is not a nationally common understanding of the concept. A variety of terminology is being used, including: adult education; non-formal basic learning; civic, citizenship and human rights education; community development and community participation; cultural learning and empowerment and education for resilience. This section highlights the different and similar understandings of some of these terms, and the ways in which they are being interpreted on the ground in the work of various actors.

The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2017 – 2022) defines non-formal education as

“every objective and organised educational activity and every piece of knowledge, skill, value or behaviour outside the framework of official educational systems—such as schools, universities or any other formal educational institution—be they in social, economic or political institutions or in factories or Non-Governmental Organizations“ (Ministry of Education and Higher Education 2017: 26).

The ESSP states that the key stakeholders who contribute to provision of non-formal education in Palestine are the Ministry of Education (formerly: Ministry of Education and Higher Education), Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Social Development, national and international non-governmental organisations, and the private sector (Ministry of Educa-

tion and Higher Education 2017: 28). Multiple types of learning are covered within this definition, especially for adults. These include literacy programmes; unaccredited learning courses; community learning programmes; sports, fitness and wellness courses; entertainment courses; participation in human resource development conferences and workshops; and continuous professional development. Non-formal learning activities seek the development of people who are free, creative and critical thinkers who can develop their potential for the work and the future (Ministry of Education 2019: 04).

A specific definition for the term ‘adult education’ was provided, in addition, in the National Strategy on Adult Education in the context of Lifelong Learning (NSAE 2014 - 2019). The NSAE has been developed in partnership with a national team that included more than 25 national civil society organisations and governmental and public institutions. According to the NSAE, adult education is

“all educational processes through which Palestinian adults develop their capacities, expand their knowledge and improve their technical or professional qualifications or daily life skills, using these skills to embark on new paths that serve their needs and those of society. This process creates changes in behaviour or attitudes that directly or indirectly contribute to integrated development that is socially, economically and culturally balanced” (Ministry of Education and Higher Education 2014: 11).

While the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the other members of the National Committee on Adult Education use the two terms *non-formal education* and *adult education* interchangeably, a study commissioned by the MoE on *Adult Education in Palestine: The Situation, the Requirements and Prospects of Improvement*, notes the evident lack of national consensus or even awareness of how the two terms are used, and what their meanings and connotations are for the various and diverse stakeholders (Al Kilani 2019).

The question of a unified, or at least commonly understood, term for the concept of popular ALE starts with a controversial Arabic translation of the words: *adult* and *education*. On one hand, for decades both terms referred to programmes of literacy education for the elderly. On the other, there is a more general debate whether the term *education* and its one-word translation into Arabic (*Taalyem* which can be understood as the mere act of teaching) does justice to the value of the Arabic concept of *Tarbiyeh and Tarabbi* (which transcends into a higher level that includes several aspects such as the upbringing, self-driven-learning, self-responsibility; not only the individual values of learning, but also those collective ones and the social context of learning).

This debate especially impacts the ALE sector, as one major feature of ALE is its “freer” and non-formal nature, where the concept of ‘teaching’ is far less in the focus. This debate, however, has led to vast support among the members of the National Committee in Adult Education to adopt the name “ALE: Adult Learning and Education” during recent years.

This lacking common understanding of popular ALE also stems from lack of explicit and systemic support for it in Palestinian legislation and public financing priorities. While adult continuing and non-formal education are stated as two of the six sectors of the Palestinian education system, they are not mentioned in the Palestinian Education Law (Presidential Decree) 8/2017. While the MoE includes literacy education programmes within its budgetary allocations, no other public funds are allocated explicitly to ALE. Finally, while ALE is provided on a large scale and by a vast range of providers and forms, there is not a specific type of provider or a set of nationally approved criteria that can help in explicitly identifying those diverse providers as institutions for ALE (Al Kilani 2019: 26).

Non-formal education programmes that belong to the MoE provide mainly basic literacy education and second chance learning paths for persons who are older than 15 years old. In the period

2015 – 2018, MoE operated 190 centres serving 2,884 men and 4,197 women in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (Ministry of Education 2019: 25). In addition to basic Arabic language skills, mathematics, basic computer skills, these programmes which are completely funded by the MoE, including the salaries of managing and teaching staffs, infrastructure (in schools) and supervision costs, provide participants with two courses in ‘life and general culture’, as part of the main learning programme. The aim of these courses is to achieve not only literacy and numerical literacy, but also to achieve broader functional literacy that assists participants to be more informed, active and aware citizens who can contribute not only to their own wellbeing but also to the development of their communities.

Within more comprehensive definitions of popular ALE as defined by UNESCO, *non-formal education* (as stated in the ESSP) and *adult education* (as stated in the NSAE), the MoE and other multiple governmental, non-governmental and private stakeholders provide a great variety of popular ALE activities that are mainly supported by, and reliant on the existence of, external funding. In 2019, at least 1016 non-governmental and private providers were identified; noting the major challenge of inability to collect data on more than other 1,000 entities, which suggests that there are even more providers, the majority of which are civil society actors (Al Kilani 2019). National civil society, community-based organisations and grassroots organisations constitute the largest sector of providers. Despite the fact that they belong to very diverse areas of speciality, human rights awareness and advocacy, community development and seeking enhanced quality of life for the citizens are main common areas for most of them. Other providers include international non-governmental organisations, UN agencies and national and international faith-based organisations.

Seemingly, the concept of non-formal citizenship education has a more agreed understanding among the various actors, despite being used in multiple forms, such as education for citizenship, civic education, civic participation learning, human rights

education, community participation learning, learning for resilience, community empowerment, etc. Non-formal citizenship education involves all kinds of activities that aim at enhanced popular awareness and a culture of understanding, respecting, protecting and defending citizenship, the rule of law and all human rights principles. As importantly, it:

“is oriented towards generating a sense of human dignity and empowerment of each individual to become capable of contributing to a free society, in which coherence, tolerance and friendship among people from all ethnic/ cultural/ religious backgrounds are strengthened and upheld; and in which individuals’ unique personalities and characters are empowered and their respect to human rights, including the right to be different, are strengthened” (The Independent Commission for Human Rights 2017).

The common understanding of citizenship education is evident in the different forms of provision of ALE. In addition to vocational training programmes there are many examples of non-formal learning programmes that are aimed at a better quality of life and prospects for the future for Palestinian youth, adults and communities. They include joint extra-curricular projects implemented by several civil society organisations in cooperation with the Ministry of Education aiming at enhanced understanding of the concepts of citizenship and citizens’ rights and roles in community development. Such extracurricular learning projects usually target 7–12 graders, schoolteachers, members of parental councils, parents and caregivers, young women and men in the local communities, and other community leaders. This includes students’ citizenship initiatives; and students’ projects that target social auditing on local authorities and local communities’ learning initiatives in defending human rights and reporting violations.

The established understanding of citizenship education was translated on the ground because different civil society initiatives to promote civic participation and citizenship education were combined under one coordination mechanism. It

is evident that the main financing of such projects comes from international funding of Palestinian civil society, and that most of these learning activities are project-based and implemented only so long as external funding is available. Many of those initiatives were successful in the sense that they were mainstreamed and are now considered as part of school-led community learning projects; for example, Project Citizen which has been implemented in Palestinian public, and UNRWA schools and local communities in West Bank and Gaza Strip since 2005 (The Palestinian Press Agency 2010). Community learning and empowerment initiatives, both at a national level and at local communities' level, are very common, and are mainly financed by external funds for civil society projects, as well. Main forms of learning initiatives in this regard include professional development, socio-cultural learning, political participation and awareness, and legal awareness (Ministry of Education and Higher Education 2011).

### **A way for a better quality of life individually and collectively: the contributions of popular adult learning and education**

In the complex and very challenging context of Palestine, popular ALE has been used by civil society and public institutions as a tool and an approach to realise development aspirations. A slow pace has been caused mainly by the complex and unstable political, economic and social reality.

It is a common understanding that non-formal education not only seeks ultimately to contribute to a wider vision of the whole education system in Palestine: that is seeks to develop the People's *knowledge, experience and skills for economic and social development*, but is also evidently achieving this contribution through responding to people's needs (Fannoun 2013: 69).

Available national data on the efforts of public and civil society institutions to contribute to realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) show

extensive reliance on various forms of popular ALE. Various levels of progress have been made in the promotion of better mental health, wellbeing, employability, gender equality, and better access of marginalised and vulnerable groups to education, also in the participation of community members in monitoring and accountability for good governance and transparency. All these are traced back to non-formal learning, awareness and sensitisation programmes that actively engage participants and put them at the centre of the process of change (Al Kilani 2019).

One major contribution of popular ALE for Palestinians is its impact on their ability to continue their existence in their lands and to thrive as a unified People. Within their highly unstable and unpredictable political context, Palestinians find in collective popular learning initiatives a pathway for development of alternative resilience approaches and mechanisms (Masarat 2015). Such initiatives vary from learning processes that seek to sustain the simple day-to-day needs for livelihood; to more complicated collective learning processes that involve profound social changes in how people view themselves and their realities, their relations with one another, and what they can do about their problems; and to the even more complicated learning processes of how to understand their national struggle, preserving and interacting with their individual and collective identity in a context of military occupation, statelessness, and national political division.

### **The first steps have been taken: examples of new pathways in public financing of popular ALE**

Despite the absence of articulated legislative support for public financing of popular ALE, public institutions including national government institutions, municipalities and local councils also provide for some areas of popular ALE, as mentioned above. This includes not only cultural and life-skills, functional literacy programme, but also other forms of learning programmes that aim at enhanced

resilience of the most vulnerable communities that are affected by Israeli settlements, the Separation Wall, and checkpoints: East Jerusalem communities, communities that fall in the Seam Zone, gated communities, communities that are labelled as Area C, and unrecognised Palestinian Bedouin communities (the so-called Masafer Yatta) in the military zones south of the West Bank. Non-formal learning programmes like these include for example initiatives to sustain livelihoods, to enhance reproductive, maternity and childhood health, increase opportunities for domestic and family-based small businesses, and to enhance awareness of human rights and access to available services.

During the first few months of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, the Ministry of Women's Affairs cooperated with local authorities, that is municipal and village councils, in establishing and financing Women-led Support, Guidance and Orientation Committees in all towns and villages. Not only did these committees participate in various forms of learning programmes to be prepared to respond to the emergency. They were also prepared to support mental health, social solidarity, and active communication among members of the local communities to ensure no one is left behind, in dealing with the pandemic and its consequences. The Women-led Support, Guidance and Orientation Committees are planned to become either permanent or at least long-term non-formal structures that will continue to provide additional opportunities for better community development outcomes (Nissa Women's News Agency 2020).

Some municipalities and village councils have taken on the responsibility for many years to support their communities' access to continuous and additional learning, despite lack of public budget allocations. They have been providing for popular ALE activities, either directly or through supporting local community-based youth clubs, women societies, and young women's collective initiatives.

Reports of the World Bank on the performance of public spending in Palestine (World Bank 2016), show that municipalities and village councils - the

latter being the ones that tend to spend a higher percentage of their operational and developmental budgets on non-formal education compared with municipalities although they have fewer resources - take on the task of providing for education as part of their mandatory functions, until the Ministry of Local Governance declares otherwise. Village councils and municipalities seem to take an active role in providing *meaningful public services likely to enhance local residents' wellbeing* that include so-called knowledge, cultural and educational services. It is important that the local authorities still engage in these services, although they are only expected by the Ministry of Local Governance to use public funds to maintain facilities, mainly schools, with regard to education services.

### Community-based centres for youth and adult education in Palestine: catalysing shared public responsibility for learning and development

There is no established budget allocation by the government for popular ALE, but there are examples of partnerships that include public actors and civil society, that started as project-based collaborations and transformed into more sustainable programmes. The experience of the community-based centres for youth and adult education is one promising example.

The first ever three Palestinian centres of their type were established in 2018. With the support of DVV International and Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, the Ministry of Education signed new partnership agreements with the municipalities of Karmel, Yamoun and Arraba. Like most of the other Palestinian communities, the three Palestinian towns with populations ranging from 13,000 to 25,000 persons in the north and south of the West Bank are strongly affected by the difficult political, economic and social realities.

The concept of this emerging partnership was based on transforming the literacy education centres of the MoE, expanding their services to serve more diverse groups in the local communities. Instead of providing programmes of literacy only, they have evolved to offer four different programmes: literacy education, personal and professional development, community participation and learning, and cultural education.

The ultimate goal of the centres is to provide learning and educational opportunities and services to youth and adults within the principle of *lifelong learning for all*, in order to contribute to enhancing local community development, and fight poverty and unemployment. The centre thus seeks to provide individual and community non-formal learning for all, in the form of training courses, public activities, learning programmes and community initiatives aiming at promoting personal and community development, vocational training, cultural and artistic learning, and environmental education. The following roles are therefore sought for these community-based centres for youth and adult education: provide more learning opportunities for all; ensure inclusivity; ensure continuous learning for youth and adults; promote personal and community development; promote the culture of lifelong learning and of a learning community; transform the perspectives of local community members towards social, economic and cultural life; strengthen the social cohesion and solidarity which are intrinsic values in the communities; and contribute to poverty reduction.

In the period January 2019 – January 2020 more than 62 courses additional to literacy education courses were offered. More than 750 women and over 600 men joined these courses in two years. As important, more than 2,000 local community members, both women and men, joined in one form or another in community initiatives supported by the centres and implemented by the participants in their community learning programmes.

The centres are financed mainly by the MoE. The main contribution is to the salaries of centre direc-

tors, literacy facilitators, and cleaning personnel; and to establishing and equipping three computer and multimedia labs in the centres. The municipalities also provided support, in the form of the actual buildings and facilities of the centres, the running costs of utilities, the maintenance of facilities, and contributions to providing basic equipment for some learning courses. DVV International contributed the cost of capacity development programmes, making partial contributions to the salaries of administration staff and infrastructure development, and small grants to implement some learning courses. They helped local and district-based civil society organisations that signed partnerships with the centres to jointly implement specific learning programmes. Other local business owners donated in-kind and/or financial support to the centres. In addition, membership and basic fees came from some course participants.

The existence and success of the community centres encouraged the founding partners and other local stakeholders to invest more in enhancing their work. The three municipalities themselves provided very significant support which was not a condition for the partnership. The municipalities showed greater interest in the centres after they started providing courses and community activities. Some municipalities started actively promoting centre activities on their social media pages. Others started organising joint events. The Ministry of Education provided a fully equipped modern computer lap for each centre. Local businesses in each of the three communities made donations in several forms - supporting participants' fees, paying membership fees, adding additional budgets for the community initiatives etc. Other community-based and civil society organisations continue to coordinate and cooperate with the centres to implement their community awareness and empowerment programmes.

Most importantly, the MoE included a specific indicator on expanding community and public partnerships for creating additional community-based centres for youth and adult education within the mid-term revision of ESSP 2017 – 2022. This model of partnerships was presented to the National Com-

mittee on Adult Education, which expressed keen interest, and included it in the revision of the NSAE. MoE and DVV International are currently in the process of creating new partnerships with municipal and village councils to establish two more centres.

## Conclusions and recommendations for enhanced effectiveness and sustainability

Building a sense of local ownership and collective benefit was central in the process of developing the centres. Community-based dialogue and other consultation occurred to ensure wide participation in conceptualising and developing the centres. Various groups were deliberately targeted: not only in the terms of needs assessment but also in more advanced phases of deciding the goals, roles, services, and mechanisms of work of the centres. Ensuring public dialogue led to better collective understanding of the drivers and nature of learning programmes and provisions. People could thus see and be willing to invest in the common good of the centres, and how they could change the lives of community members, leading to the sense of a learning community (Németh, Issa, Diba, Tuckett 2020). This was true not only for the same community but for others also. With a relatively short period of time for piloting actual work in the three local communities, more municipalities and community representatives and educators showed interest in the concept of the community centres, requesting information on how to partner with MoE and DVV International to establish new centres.

The experience of the three community-based centres for youth and adult education in Arraba, Karmel and Al Yamoun so far proves that meaningful lifelong learning and ALE have great potential to transform and humanise communities in a context of conflict. It is usual in zones of prolonged conflict for people to start normalising abnormal circumstances. Very basic human rights become just additional unexpected luxuries. Examples mentioned above are a significant indicator of how, with minimal financial investment, the existence of

a community centre for learning can help mobilise and catalyse much more in resources, partnerships and collective learning and action.

This example emphasises the success factors. Further steps are needed to ensure the effectiveness, sustainability and expansion of this model of partnerships. One of the very first steps needed is more clarity in the legal and administrative status of the emerging centres. The centres still have no kind of regulations or bylaws that describe their legal status and system of operations. The founding partners are in processes of dialogue to develop these aspects in a manner that respects the participatory process within which the centres were established. However, this needs decisive and brave steps to be taken by the different partners to reach a formulation that ensures the community-based nature of the centres, and their function as an independent social structure.

Brave decisions are also needed, following such clarity, in terms of taking decisive steps to increase and guarantee the sustainability of budget allocations to the current and future centres by the MoE, and by the municipalities.

Furthermore, there is a need to establish public and community dialogue to develop more opportunities for popular learning and education. Documenting and sharing this nationally and internationally would benefit national dialogue and advocacy towards more institutionalised approaches and public policies related to public financing.



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Part 3  
**Further Resources**

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**DVV International** is the Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV), the German Adult Education Association. DVV represents the interests of the approximately 900 adult education centres (Volkshochschulen, vhs) and their state associations, the largest further education providers in Germany.

As the leading professional organisation in the field of adult education and development cooperation, DVV International has committed itself to supporting lifelong learning for 50 years. DVV International provides worldwide support for the establishment and development of sustainable structures for Youth and Adult Education.

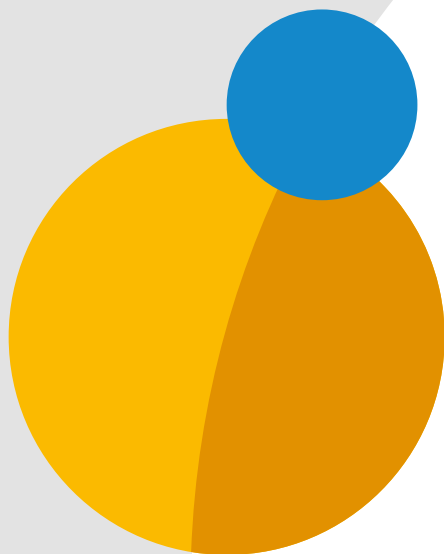
We are a professional partner in dialogue with the local people. To achieve this, we cooperate with more than 200 civil society, government and academic partners in more than 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. Our country and regional offices build local and regional cooperation and ensure the quality and effectiveness of our action in our partner countries. Our work focuses on literacy and basic education, vocational training, global and intercultural learning, environmental education and sustainable development, migration and integration, refugee work, health education, conflict prevention and democracy education.

DVV International finances its work through funds from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Federal Foreign Office, the European Union, as well as other donors. In concert with national, regional and global adult education associations, DVV International promotes lobby work and advocacy for the human right to education and for lifelong learning. To achieve this, we orient ourselves on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the global education agenda Education 2030 and the UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA). DVV International supports the European and global exchange of information and expertise through conferences, seminars and publications.

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