



8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC8)

Outlook 2030: Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe

ARC8 Expert Group on Inclusive and Flexible Lifelong Learning Pathways

Session 3 | Monday, 22 February 2021

Memo

Dr Ilya KORSHUNOV, PIAAC National Expert, Lifelong Learning Group; Deputy Director of the Institute of Education, Higher School of Economics, National Research University, Moscow

Dr Korshunov was asked to focus on the following questions in a 10-minute presentation, to provide food for thought for the expert group:

1. What is your take, how inclusive are the national, institutional LLL policies and practices currently, what is the status quo? Do you have any numbers to show?
2. What potential risks do you foresee that could jeopardize greater inclusion in LLL in the next 10 years?
3. What opportunities, leverage points do you see to promote inclusion in LLL the next 10 years?

Dr Korshunov began by explaining his standpoint coming from his experience as Deputy Director of the Institute of Education at the Higher School of Economics. Reviewing the past three years, he and his team developed and collected statistics on the status quo of lifelong learning in Russia.

Status Quo

▪ Rate of Participation

According to Dr Korshunov, the current situation could be better. The rate of participation in the lifelong learning programmes offered by higher education institutions was not high:

- 20 percent of the total number of participants in lifelong learning programs engaged with higher education institutions.
- 80 percent of the total number of participants in lifelong learning programs engaged with other institutions offering lifelong learning programs.

▪ Growing Support and Investment

In the past two years, professors and university staff expressed interest in developing new educational programmes for different regions. 50 universities have invested in various projects in the technology and scientific track. At the same time, new skills have been realized and programs have begun to be develop in line with these skills.

▪ Developing an Electronic Platform

There has been recent success. Two special online courses were very popular. These courses were related to teaching children online, to understand and analyze problems, and intellectual systems. Other popular courses were related to personal motivation and personal development which helped people find solutions. The profile of those who participated suggested that skills were sought to help people grow and contributed to improving well-being or psychological or psychological situation of the individual.

A correlation was found, of those who took part in lifelong learning programs, it was observed that their productivity and overall well-being improved. **Lifelong learning programs contributed positive outcomes to participants.**

Summary

In this instance, lifelong learning programmes are developed by universities because the university system is the biggest educational system in Russia. This university system investigated lifelong learning opportunities for individuals to pursue lifelong learning and gain skills, which is part of freedom. It opens the possibility to start a new business, to finance their own enterprises, and so on. The focus by the large system of universities granted more independence from difficulties and various troubles, and would promote a better environment and situation in the programs and in the workplace. Based on the past two years, Dr Korshunov explained, that programs were not that successful. Only 20% percent of the total number of participants in lifelong learning programs engaged with higher education institutions.

The presentation of Dr Korshunov was followed by **comments and questions** from members of the expert group:

Dr Alexandra IOANNIDOU, Secretary and Board Member, European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA); Internationalisation Unit – Executive Department, DIE – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning, Germany

According to Alexandra, higher education sector takes a big space in the education landscape in Germany too. However, it is the adult education sector that is really the biggest sector in terms of number of participants, teachers, trainers, and coaches involved.

- Based on OECD data, the percentage of people who had attained a tertiary degree in Russia stood at 57 percent. Whereas, the percent of people who attained a tertiary degree in Germany stood at 29 percent. Thus, it is more common to have this path to higher education in Russia than it is in Germany.

In other countries, the government would choose to pursue developing vocational education and training, when what is important is for universities to offer lifelong learning opportunities. The question then is posed, is the high rate due to the Russian government's focus on providing lifelong learning opportunities at universities or is there another rationale behind it?

Ms Brikena XHOMAQI, Director, Lifelong Learning Platform; Co-chair of the European Economic and Social Committee Liaison Group of Civil Society

Brikena expressed curiosity in learning about the focus on higher education. The fact that universities are really the biggest sector in Russia is quite interesting, Brikena expressed. The question of Brikena comes from the familiarity with other countries wherein their focus is more on adult education as a non-formal education sector. This approach would fit best to some of the learners that have adverse or a not so positive experience with formal education. This would be more fitting to all learners and all types of learners needs. Thus, Brikena asked if the adult education approach as part of a non-formal education sector a strategy considered by the university? Why did the strategy focus only on formal education by universities?

These questions stemmed from Brikena's interest in discussing personalizing and tailoring education programs to different learners. Universities could offer this in their lifelong learning programs, but universities are just one medium.

Dr Korshunov's response to Alexandra and Brikena, in summary:

Dr Korshunov began by explaining the post-soviet transformation and **dependence on a structured economy**. For example, in a region with a big governmental sector and an educational system mainly specializing in medicine and elemental enterprises, this would mean that people who go to the universities have many contacts with employers, employees, enterprises, especially in these

big enterprises. Dr Korshunov commented that this example is particular to big governmental corporations as a result of post-soviet transformation. In such a case, people were interested in big institutions and wanted to learn in big educational systems.

It was explained that Russian federation has vast socioeconomic circumstances. The lifelong learning situation varies in different regions. In Russia, there is no lifelong learning law or legislation. The approach in Russia:

- There are some regions with policies that course lifelong learning through universities, and this approach would be successful.
- There are other regions that have a different strategy and would course lifelong learning through enterprises. Concentrating on specific skills such as high-performance based work practices, how to work with difficult people, and LEAN management. In certain cases, enterprises cooperate with universities because universities also offer hard skills and soft skills.

Professor Séamus O'TUAMA, Chair, ASEM Education and Research Hub on Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub); Director of ACE (Adult Continuing Education) University College Cork, Ireland

Séamus began his comments by sharing that most universities define themselves by those they exclude, and that there is a certain level of humility in the sphere of non-traditional lifelong learning. This comment speaks to the degree in which Séamus agreed with the points of Dr Ilya, such as:

- **Knowledge and Skills as part of Freedom**
Soft skills and other skills are important for people to operate within wider society. Skills are a part of your freedom, which is a very enlightening way of seeing the world, according to Séamus. With knowledge and skills, people can achieve freedom and economic freedom in this world, as discussed in the first part of this session.

According to Séamus, although the conversation was complex, the explanation of Dr Ilya was exactly what was needed. One way of achieving *autonomy* is exactly how Dr. Ilya spoke about the terms *skills* and *knowledge*. When the knowledge and skills are acquired, it gives individuals opportunities to do more in the world.

- **Lifelong Learning and a Cohesive Society**
Emergence of these populist movements are often driven by people who are excluded from knowledge and skills, excluded from the opportunity to really participate in the economy, and excluded from the opportunity to participate in society. They often do not have the knowledge, skills, and the freedom to be able to think in more creative and different ways. In other words, lifelong learning contributes to democratic society's and to a cohesive society.

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