



# 3<sup>rd</sup> GLOBAL REPORT ON ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

The Impact of Adult Learning  
and Education on Health and  
Well-Being; Employment and  
the Labour Market; and Social,  
Civic and Community Life



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



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# FOREWORD

The third *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE III)* comes out as the international community works towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By showing the important contribution that adult learning and education can make across many sectors of society, I am confident that this report will provide a valuable tool to advance the new global agenda.

All three *GRALE* reports are reference and advocacy documents, providing information for analysts and policymakers, and reminding Member States of their commitment at the 2009 Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) to assist in monitoring the implementation of the Belém Framework for Action (BFA).

In *GRALE III*, policymakers will find high-quality evidence to support policies, strategies and budgets. Stakeholders will find compelling arguments for how adult learning and education promotes sustainable development, healthier societies, better jobs and more active citizenship. Researchers will find entry points and ideas for future research.

This report is guided by three goals: first, to analyse the results of a monitoring survey of UNESCO Member States, and to take stock of whether countries are fulfilling the commitments they made at

CONFINTEA VI; second, to strengthen the case for adult learning and education with evidence of its benefits on health and well-being, employment and the labour market, and social, civic and community life; and third, to provide a platform for debate and action at national, regional and global levels.

As *GRALE III* illustrates, countries report progress in implementing all areas of the BFA. Yet there are still about 758 million adults, including 115 million people aged between 15 and 24, who cannot read or write a simple sentence. Most countries have missed the Education for All target of achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015. Achieving proficiency in literacy and basic skills for adults remains a top priority in the great majority of countries, irrespective of income status.

Gender inequality is another major concern. The majority of those excluded from school are girls, with 9.7% of the world's girls out of school, compared to 8.3% of boys. Likewise, the majority (63%) of adults with low literacy skills are women. Education is vital for human rights and dignity, and is a force for empowerment. Educating women also has powerful impacts on families and on children's education, influencing economic development, health and civic engagement across society.

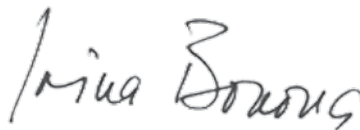
In moving forward, adult learning and education must be built into a holistic, intersectoral approach. This requires working across sectors, guided by the urgent need for deeper partnerships. We must continue to inform all sectors of the essential importance of education for success across the board.

Monitoring and evaluating adult learning and education is vital. Because education and learning often happen in undocumented non-formal or informal spaces, it can be difficult to assess with accuracy. We must continue raising the visibility of learning in all forms and strive for closer monitoring and more accurate data to inform decision-making.

In November 2015, at the 38th UNESCO General Conference, Member States adopted the revision of the Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education (1976). Entitled the 'Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015)', this revision will guide the expansion of equitable learning opportunities for youth and adults on a global scale. I am convinced that both the BFA and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015) provide strong tools to promote adult learning and education as part of the 2030 Education Agenda.

Beginning in 2017, high-level decision makers will assemble for the Mid-Term Review of CONFINTEA VI. *GRALE III* will inform the review of the implementation of the BFA since 2009. It will also help participants prepare to promote adult learning and education as part of the 2030 Agenda and the Framework for Action.

In closing, I wish to thank the Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Mr Arne Carlsen, for his leadership. He has led this project from the beginning, providing guidance and intellectual direction, and coordinating research teams, staff and partners. I am deeply grateful to all of our partners for their vital contributions to this work, which will, I am confident, stimulate debate, build new partnerships, and strengthen action.



Irina Bokova  
Director-General of UNESCO

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication of the third *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE III)* marks both an ending and a beginning: the end of the development phase of *GRALE III* and the beginning of the dissemination cycle. At this point, it is my distinct pleasure to acknowledge the considerable contributions that many countries, organizations and individuals have made to *GRALE III*.

First, I would like to thank the 139 Member States that responded to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey. I am also grateful to the UNESCO National Commissions and Field Offices that provided invaluable advice at various stages of the report development process. Special thanks are due to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning's primary partner in this undertaking, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. In 2009, both Institutes were charged with monitoring the Belém Framework for Action. Since that time, we have worked together successfully on three *GRALE* reports. Colleagues at UNESCO Headquarters have also given invaluable input throughout the drafting of the Report. I would like to thank all of them for their expertise.

The editorial team of Tom Schuller and Kjell Rubenson set the intellectual direction for the report and oversaw the entire process, from data collection and analysis to drafting. They were aided by Satya Brink, who contributed both to the overall editing function and to chapter writing.

The *GRALE* chapters were written by a distinguished group of scholars and researchers. I would like to thank Ricardo Sabates (University of Cambridge), Richard Desjardins (University of California, Los Angeles), Catherine Casey (University of Leicester) and Miya Narushima (Brock University). They were supported in their work by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning staff members Christine Glanz, Angela Owusu-Boampong, Silke Schreiber-Barsch and Madhu Singh, who co-authored chapters.

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The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning team managed the final editing of the Report. Leona English took over the editorial role, and together with Sinéad Crowe, Jan Kairies, Werner Mauch, Christiana Winter and Felix Zimmermann brought the report to its final version. They were supported by their colleagues Ulrike Hanemann, Subbarao Illapavuluri, Suehye Kim, Faith Miyandazi and Rika Yorozu. I also wish to thank Ana Basoglu, Andrea Kloss, Bettina Küster, Konstantinos Pagratis, Cassandra Scarpino, Cendrine Sebastiani and Max Weidlich, as well as the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning interns Clara Bucher, Sofia Chatzigianni, Edgar Felix, Trine Ludvigssen, Bernhard Obergruber, Annalisa Piersanti and Anna-Maria Pircher.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the scholar who worked with me on laying the groundwork for this *GRALE* report, Professor Lynne Chisholm, Research Advisor at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2014–2015). Sadly, Professor Chisholm passed away before the report was completed, but her tremendous contribution is very evident in the final document.

I look forward to sharing this report with colleagues and Member States and inviting them to read, analyse, discuss and learn from it. During this dissemination cycle, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning will continue its fruitful engagement with UNESCO Member States and begin laying the foundation for *GRALE IV*.

Arne Carlsen  
Director  
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning



# KEY MESSAGES

## 1. COUNTRIES REPORT PROGRESS IN ALL AREAS OF THE 2009 BELÉM FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION.

- **Policy:** 75% of countries reported that they have significantly improved their adult learning and education (ALE) policies since 2009. 70% have enacted new policies. An overwhelming number of countries (85%) stated that their top policy priority was literacy and basic skills. 71% of countries reported that they have a policy framework in place to recognize, validate and accredit non-formal and informal learning.
- **Governance:** 68% of countries reported that consultation between stakeholders and civil society takes place to ensure that ALE programmes are tailored to learners' needs.
- **Financing:** ALE still receives only a small proportion of public funding: 42% of countries spend less than 1% of their public education budgets on ALE, and only 23% spend more than 4%. However, 57% of countries and 90% of low-income countries plan to increase public spending on ALE.
- **Participation:** Participation rates have increased in three out of five countries, but too many adults are still excluded from ALE. Almost one in five countries stated that they had no information on how participation rates have developed.
- **Quality:** 66% of countries gather data about completion rates, and 72% gather information about certification. 81% of countries provide pre-service and in-service training for adult educators and facilitators.

The full results of the survey can be found at <http://uil.unesco.org/grale>. This website will help analysts develop a fuller picture of the global state of ALE.

## 2. ALE IS A KEY COMPONENT OF LIFELONG LEARNING AND WILL MAKE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

- *GRALE III* shows that ALE yields significant benefits across a range of fields. Many countries reported increasing evidence that ALE has a positive impact on health and well-being, employment and the labour market, and social, civic and community life.
- Literacy is essential for developing further skills, and so 65% of countries identified illiteracy as the major factor preventing ALE from having a greater impact on health and well-being. Literacy is also essential for enabling workers to function effectively and safely in their workplace. Furthermore, two-thirds of the countries that responded to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey stated that literacy programmes help to develop democratic values, peaceful co-existence and community solidarity.
- 35% of countries responded that poor interdepartmental collaboration prevents ALE from having greater benefits on health and well-being. Only one-third of countries said that they have an interdepartmental or cross-sectoral coordinating body promoting ALE for personal health and well-being.



- 64 countries responding to the *GRALE III* survey stated that inadequate or misdirected funding is an important factor preventing ALE from having a greater impact on health and well-being.
- More than half of the countries agreed that ALE can have a 'moderate' to 'strong' effect on employability.
- Some 53% of countries reported that their knowledge base on the labour market outcomes of ALE had improved.
- More than nine out of ten countries said that they now know more about ALE's impact on society and community than in 2009.
- ALE has a strong impact on active citizenship, political voice, social cohesion, diversity and tolerance, and therefore benefits social and community life.
- 85% of respondents stated that literacy and basic skills were a top priority for their ALE programmes. In most countries, ALE policymakers and providers devote special attention to adults with low literacy and basic skills. Ensuring that adults achieve proficiency in literacy and basic skills remains a top priority in the great majority of countries, irrespective of their income status.

### 3. LEVELS OF LITERACY AMONG ADULTS REMAIN ALARMINGLY LOW.

- Around 757 million adults, 115 million of whom are aged between 15 and 24, still cannot read or write a simple sentence. Most countries have missed the Education for All target of achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015; only 39 countries met the target.

### 4. GENDER INEQUALITY CONTINUES TO BE A CONCERN.

- Inequity in the way women's education and qualifications are supported and valued remains a dominant issue. The majority of those excluded from school are girls, with 9.7% of the world's girls out of school, compared to 8.3% of boys. Likewise, the majority (63%) of adults with low literacy skills are women.
- Nevertheless, there are some hopeful signs: in 44% of participating countries, women participated more in ALE than men. However, some 24% of countries had no data to report on this issue. Improving data on gender equity in ALE is crucial, because as well as improving individual lives, the education of women has powerful secondary effects on their families and their children's education. Women's education also has a strong impact on economic development, health and civic engagement.

5.  
**DESPITE NOTABLE PROGRESS IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION SINCE 2009, BASIC DATA ON ALE CONTINUES TO BE INADEQUATE, AND THUS THE TRUE EFFECTS OF ALE ARE POORLY UNDERSTOOD.**

- Data problems exist in all regions of the world, even where well-developed information systems are in place. GRALE III therefore calls for a discussion on how best to design systems that: a) recognize the problems impeding data-gathering; and b) match countries' current and future financial and human resource capacities.

6.  
**LOOKING AHEAD TO 2030: HOW ALE CAN EQUIP PEOPLE TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE FUTURE.**

- 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.

- As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, world leaders have promised to provide 'lifelong learning opportunities for all', improve adult literacy and foster other essential skills and knowledge. ALE will contribute to all the Sustainable Development Goals, from fighting poverty to tackling environmental degradation.
- The Belém Framework for Action and the UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015) will be important tools for promoting ALE in the coming years. In the future, *GRALE* will monitor the implementation of both the Belém Framework for Action and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education. These complementary frameworks will help the international ALE community steer the development of ALE policy and practice in UNESCO Member States. The Mid-Term Review of CONFINTEA VI, which is scheduled for 2017, will provide countries with a valuable opportunity to promote ALE as part of the Education 2030 Framework for Action.



# INTRODUCTION

## THE WORLD OF ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

Welcome to the world of adult learning and education (ALE) in 2016. This is a world that is responding to major processes of transformation. Rapid technological advances are demanding that citizens develop new skills while also providing an unprecedented range of opportunities to learn. Longer life expectancy in many countries is presenting healthcare and social systems with a new set of challenges, but is also enabling younger people to benefit from the knowledge and experience of older generations. Mass migration is fuelling political debate and making it more important than ever that people from all economic, social and cultural backgrounds learn how to live together peacefully.

Such developments mean that governments and communities need to continue to care about and invest in ALE. Countries all over the world have long recognized that ALE has an important role to play in promoting social inclusion, citizen engagement, health and sustainable economic growth. Global citizens, meanwhile, have always seen education as a human right and a value in itself. This third *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* reasserts the importance of ALE both as a value in itself and as a valuable tool in addressing today's challenges. It seeks to remind readers that education helps both individuals and societies achieve their goals.

It is important to be reminded of this given that today, approximately 758 million adults, including 114 million young people aged between 15 and 24, still cannot read or write a simple sentence. Roughly two out of three adults with insufficient literacy skills are women (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). These numbers show that too many people are being

left behind, and that gender equality is far from a reality. In a world undergoing transition, these numbers also represent a lost opportunity: to face new challenges, full participation in education is needed.

Of course, global leaders are aware of such challenges and opportunities. Indeed, many of the issues mentioned above are at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which governments adopted at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. The Agenda's 17 Sustainable Development Goals set out a powerful vision for the future. And, as the Agenda makes clear, global leaders also know that ALE has a role to play in making the 2030 vision a reality:

All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society (United Nations, 2015, Paragraph 25).

This commitment echoes other recent promises on ALE, such as those made in the Belém Framework for Action (2009; see UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010b) and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015) (UNESCO, 2015).

It is clear, then, that the political, economic and social stakes are high in the world of ALE in 2016. Governments are not just aware that ALE has a role to play in achieving sustainable development; they have also promised to promote ALE so that it can fulfil this role.

## OVERVIEW: THE AIMS AND STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

The *Global Reports on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)* play a key role in meeting UNESCO's commitment to monitor and report on countries' implementation of the Belém Framework for Action. This Framework was adopted by 144 UNESCO Member States at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Learning and Education (CONFINTEA VI), which was held in Belém, Brazil, in 2009. In the Belém Framework for Action, countries agreed to improve ALE across five areas of action: policy; governance; financing; participation, inclusion and equity; and quality (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010b).

*GRALE III* appears as the ALE community prepares for an important global conference: the 2017 Mid-Term Review of CONFINTEA VI. *GRALE III* will help high-level decision makers take stock of progress in delivering their Belém promises since 2009. It will also help them look ahead to 2030. Policymakers are now considering how to put into practice the ALE promises made in the 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015) and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015) (UNESCO, 2015). *GRALE III* will support their deliberations by showing how ALE can help achieve broader health, economic and social outcomes. It will identify major challenges for ALE and examine the implications for ALE of major global trends like migration and demographic shifts.

*GRALE III* brings together the latest data, policy analysis and case studies on ALE. Government leaders will find high-quality evidence to inform their policies, strategies and budgets. Proponents of change will find compelling arguments showing how ALE promotes sustainable development, healthier societies, better jobs and more active citizenship. Policy analysts will find entry points and ideas for future research and policy.

This introductory chapter provides general insights into how ALE contributes to broader economic and social outcomes. It reflects on how the impact of ALE can be measured and better understood. It also provides a brief history of the *GRALE* series and shows how this report builds on its predecessors, which were published in 2009 and 2013 respectively.

*GRALE III* is then divided into three main parts. Part 1 monitors how well countries are doing in fulfilling their commitments under each of the five areas of the Belém Framework for Action. Its findings are based on the responses of 139 UNESCO Member States to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey, which was conducted by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in consultation with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report team as well as academic experts in the field

### Box 0.1

#### The three aims of *GRALE III*

1. To monitor progress on ALE
2. To make the case for ALE and promote action
3. To identify trends and explore solutions

**Table 0.1**  
***GRALE III* in a nutshell**

Introduction	Purpose, overview and history of <i>GRALE</i>
<b>Part 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring the Belém Framework for Action</li> <li>• Responses to the <i>GRALE III</i> monitoring survey</li> </ul>
<b>Part 2</b>	<p>The benefits of ALE for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and well-being</li> <li>• Employment and the labour market</li> <li>• Social, civic and community life</li> </ul>
<b>Part 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major challenges for ALE</li> <li>• Global trends and implications for ALE</li> <li>• ALE and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</li> </ul>

of ALE and partners such as the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Part 1 also identifies ways in which ALE could be better monitored in future years.

Part 2 comprises three thematic chapters exploring the benefits ALE can bring in three important domains: health and well-being (Chapter 2); employment and the labour market (Chapter 3); and social, civic and community life (Chapter 4).

Each chapter reviews the latest evidence, relevant literature and interesting case studies from around the world. Using the *GRALE III* monitoring survey as a starting point, the chapters also explore the extent to which countries recognize the value of ALE and act upon this recognition in

each of the three domains. The chapters confirm the benefits of ALE and provide compelling arguments for investing in ALE in the future.

Part 3 offers guidance for the road ahead. It consists of two chapters. Chapter 5 shares lessons and discusses the implications for ALE of major global trends like migration, ageing populations, changes in the nature of employment, growing inequality and environmental degradation. Chapter 6 examines how ALE has been recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, identifying the goals, targets and indicators that are of greatest relevance to ALE. It considers how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development might pave the way for greater intersectoral collaboration on ALE and for a better balance of educational opportunities across all ages. It also casts



a critical eye on the availability of data to measure progress on ALE, and reflects on how the knowledge gaps might be closed.

The report concludes with an invitation to readers to join the global ALE community, and to use *GRALE* as a platform for debate and action. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has developed and designed the *GRALE* series as a contribution to more evidence-informed policymaking. All partners, especially policymakers, are encouraged to review the findings and implement necessary changes in their policies and practices in regional, national and local contexts.

### MAKING THE CASE FOR ALE: SOME PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Like its predecessors in the *GRALE* series, *GRALE III* builds an evidence-based case for greater public and private support for ALE, and for making ALE more effective and equitable in its outcomes.

This report concentrates on evidence of the positive impact of ALE. However, as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has made clear, creating different policies and practices in silos will not work. Countries need to learn how different policies interact with one another, and to understand how to best combine them to achieve lasting effects. ALE must be seen as part of a larger set of social, cultural and economic practices.

Within the education sector, there is a need to develop a more refined approach. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the concept of lifelong learning. This contrasts with recent tendencies to focus educational

attention on the very early years of life. But in fact there is no contradiction between investing early and investing for all: a lifelong approach combines investments for all ages and recognizes that investment in adult learning also brings immense benefits for children.

To understand the true value of ALE, we need to develop better ways of measuring impact. Conventional measures of how much is invested (input) and how many people gain qualifications and skills (output) are no longer enough. This report focuses on outcomes, examining how investment in ALE adds value to individual's lives, to their families, to their communities and to the broader social, political and economic environment in which they live and work.

*GRALE III* underlines three overarching policy implications. Firstly, countries need to remember that ALE is an indispensable component of education, and that education is a fundamental and enabling human right. Secondly, they need to see ALE as an integral dimension of a balanced life course. Thirdly, they need to view ALE as part of a holistic, intersectoral sustainable development agenda with the potential to offer multiple benefits and lasting impact.

The health, social and economic benefits of ALE are not necessarily linear and easy to identify. For example, studying science may give an adult the confidence to contribute more actively to society. Learning computer skills may enable an adult to connect with others to fight against environmental degradation. These examples show that the positive outcomes of ALE may not have been planned; indeed, they may be random and unintentional.

**Figure 0.1**  
The overlapping benefits of ALE



**Box 0.2**  
Benefits of ALE: Examples from around the world

No matter where in the world they live, ALE helps people to become healthier, to improve their economic prospects, and to be more informed and active citizens. This report is full of powerful examples:

- In the Philippines, ALE programmes to promote breastfeeding and improve infant nutrition have helped reduce infant mortality (Chapter 2).
- In the United States of America, ALE has led to better environmental behaviour and to increases in literacy capacity (Chapter 4).
- In China, learning to engage in physical exercise, dance and musical activities has helped older adults improve their mental health and resilience (Chapter 2).
- Dozens of studies in Europe have shown that ALE brings economic benefits for employers (Chapter 3).
- In several African countries, civic education programmes have informed and empowered individuals, leading to higher levels of political participation (Chapter 4).

### *GRALE 2009–2015:* **THE STORY SO FAR**

Since it was founded in 1945, UNESCO has been supporting global dialogue and action in the field of ALE. In 1949, it organized the first CONFINTEA. Since then, five further CONFINTEA Conferences have taken place at intervals of roughly twelve years, providing UNESCO Member States with valuable opportunities to consider, compare and develop their approaches to ALE.

As mentioned above, the *GRALE* series lies at the heart of global monitoring of ALE. Each report gathers the latest data and evidence on ALE, highlights good policies and practices, and reminds governments of their ALE-related commitments. As part of the process of gathering data for *GRALE*, UNESCO invites countries to submit detailed national reports on ALE. Thus *GRALE* encourages countries to undertake a self-assessment exercise and to consider their progress in each of the five action areas identified in the Belém Framework for Action. Following the publication of each *GRALE*, its findings are presented at a wide range of events and discussed with a broad range of partners. *GRALE* therefore engages countries in dialogue and encourages them to learn from each other on how to improve ALE policies and practices.

*GRALE I* (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010a) was designed to inform discussions at CONFINTEA VI in 2009. In order to prepare *GRALE I*, countries were invited to submit national reports, which were largely in narrative form. Based on these reports, *GRALE I* provided a general overview of trends and identified key

challenges in ALE. The report found that while many countries had implemented adult education policies, governments were not allocating sufficient funds for the sector to deliver its full potential.

*GRALE II* (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013) presented the first opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the Belém Framework for Action. Member States were invited to complete a monitoring survey that was more structured than the narrative reports that had been submitted for *GRALE I*. *GRALE II* also focused on a specific theme: youth and adult literacy, which the Belém Framework for Action identifies as the foundation of lifelong learning. *GRALE II* helped clarify concepts of literacy, providing guidance and inspiration for the later drafting of the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015).

The revised monitoring survey completed by countries to provide data for *GRALE III* took a more succinct form. The results of this survey can be found in Chapter 1. *GRALE III* also reflects the move towards a more holistic view of education and lifelong learning embedded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This holistic view is the rationale behind the chapters on health and well-being, employment and the labour market, and social, civic and community life.

UNESCO has already begun preparing for *GRALE IV*. A core challenge will be to continue building on existing data and developing indicators that allow for the analysis of trends over time. At the same time, future monitoring will need to take into consideration the commitments that countries made in 2015, notably the Recommendation on Adult Learning and

Education (2015) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Some of the implications of these commitments are explored in Part 3 of this report.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has a long and fruitful history of working with partners on advocating, researching and building countries' capacities in the area of ALE. It looks forward to continuing to collaborate with them on the road ahead in order to refine and improve the way ALE is monitored, understand its many dimensions, make the case for greater investment and promote policy dialogue and peer learning.

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# PART ONE

## INTRODUCTION

At the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2009, 144 UNESCO Member States made a commitment to monitor progress in the area of ALE. The Belém Framework for Action reaffirmed that adult education is an essential element of the right to education and is fundamental 'for the achievement of equity and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies' (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010). Governments agreed to design and implement regular tracking mechanisms, some of which are based on monitoring surveys designed by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in cooperation with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Based on its experiences of *GRALE I* and *GRALE II*, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning developed a simple monitoring survey for *GRALE III* in

consultation with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report team, external partners such as the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, as well as academic experts in the field of ALE. Bringing these partners together ensured that existing data sources, such as UNESCO Institute for Statistics data on literacy, were drawn on to devise 75 questions covering the five areas of action outlined in the Belem Framework for Action: policy; governance; financing; participation, inclusion and equity; and quality. The survey was available online and was translated into the six UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

The following chapter analyses countries' responses to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey in order to evaluate their progress in fulfilling their Belém commitments.





## CHAPTER 1

# MONITORING THE BELÉM FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Table 1.1 shows countries' participation in the monitoring survey globally, by region and by income group. The regional groups are based on the regional classifications used by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016a), while the income groups are those used by the World Bank (World Bank, 2016). Globally, 139 of UNESCO's 195 Member States participated in *GRALE III*, which is equivalent to a response rate of 71%. Regionally, 33 countries returned the monitoring survey in sub-Saharan Africa (72% participation rate); 13 countries in the Arab States (65% participation rate); 6 countries in Central Asia (67% participation rate); 14 countries in East Asia and the Pacific (45% participation rate); 8 countries in South and West Asia (89% participation rate); 18 countries in Central and Eastern Europe (86% participation rate); 23 countries in North America and Western Europe (85% participation rate); and 24 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (71% participation rate).<sup>1</sup> Due to the small number of countries in Central Asia and South and West Asia, these two regions have been combined with the East Asia and the Pacific region, which had a low participation rate of 45%. These three regions have been aggregated into one group named 'Asia and the Pacific', which has been used for further analyses in the rest of this report. Finally, some countries in conflict or fragile political situations were not able to provide information and are thus not represented in the overall monitoring of *GRALE III*.

The participation rate was higher for high-income countries, with 20 out of 31 low-income countries, 31 out of 49 lower middle-income countries, 35 out of 50 upper middle-income countries, and 45 out of 61 high-income countries completing the *GRALE III* monitoring survey.

The overall participation rate in the *GRALE III* monitoring survey and the quality of the responses provide sufficient numbers and coverage to monitor trends over time. Nevertheless, it should be noted that 29% of countries did not participate. Furthermore, not all of those countries that took part in the survey responded to all 75 questions. With further disaggregation by region or income group, the question of representativeness of the data for global or regional purposes is important. *GRALE III* does not attempt to achieve representativeness by providing weighted responses, but instead presents the number of responses and percentages that are representative of participating countries. The decision not to weight the responses was made based on the differences between participating and non-participating countries and the fact that the inclusion of weights, whether population weights or unit country weight, is unlikely to explain these differences. Examples given in various chapters do not necessarily represent all UNESCO regions, as the report relies on the data provided by respondents.

<sup>1</sup> For a full list of responding countries, please see Annex 1.

**Table 1.1**  
Countries' participation in *GRALE III* globally, by region and by income group

	Total number of countries	Countries that submitted <i>GRALE III</i> monitoring survey	Participation rate
<b>WORLD</b>	197	139	71%
<b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	46	33	72%
Arab States	20	13	65%
Central Asia	9	6	67%
East Asia and the Pacific	31	14	45%
South and West Asia	9	8	89%
North America and Western Europe	27	23	85%
Central and Eastern Europe	21	18	86%
Latin America and the Caribbean	34	24	71%
<b>INCOME GROUPS</b>			
Low Income	31	20	65%
Lower Middle Income	49	34	69%
Upper Middle Income	50	37	74%
High Income	61	47	77%
Unclassified	6	1	17%

## 1.1 DEFINITIONS OF ALE AND ACTION PLANS

UNESCO's understanding of ALE encompasses formal, non-formal and informal learning and education for a broad spectrum of the adult population. It covers learning and education across the life course and has a special focus on adults and young people who are marginalized or disadvantaged. UNESCO has refined its definition over time, each iteration a calibrated response to shifting learning and education needs in countries. The first definition was produced in 1976 (UNESCO, 1976), updated at CONFINTEA V (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1997), and further refined and enhanced in 2015 (UNESCO, 2015a). The Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015) was ratified after the *GRALE III* monitoring survey was conducted.

Box 1.1 provides the definition provided in the monitoring survey. This definition was specifically designed for monitoring purposes.

Table 1.2 shows that a total of 101 countries have an official definition of ALE, which represents 75% of the countries that responded to this question in the monitoring survey.

It is essential for monitoring purposes to identify the key changes in how ALE has been defined since the Belém Framework for Action was adopted. Countries were therefore asked whether the definition of ALE has changed since 2009 and, if so, whether this was a substantial change. A total of 118 countries responded to this question. Of these, 62% responded that the definition of ALE has not changed since 2009, 25% responded that the definition has changed a little, and 13% – equivalent to 15 countries – stated that the definition has changed substantially. The countries that have substantially changed their definition of ALE since 2009 are: Argentina, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Gabon, Greece, Honduras, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Poland, Serbia, the United Arab Emirates and the United Republic of Tanzania.



**Box 1.1**  
The definition of ALE provided in the *GRALE III* monitoring survey

ALE (adult learning and education) encompasses all formal, non-formal and informal or incidental learning and continuing education (both general and vocational, and both theoretical and practical) undertaken by adults (as this term is defined in any one country). ALE participants will typically have concluded their initial education and training and then returned to some form of learning. But in all countries there will be young people and adults who did not have the opportunity to enrol in or complete school education by the age foreseen, and who participate in ALE programmes, including those to equip them with literacy and basic skills or as a 'second chance' to gain recognized certificates.

Countries reported definitions of ALE covering the overall aims of ALE, the populations covered, the type of provision, tools and sources of funding. Sometimes the definitions included normative statements. Some examples of definitions of ALE provided by countries are provided in Box 1.2.

These examples illustrate that countries' definitions of ALE vary widely, depending on the immediate needs, priorities and contexts of their populations. Some countries position literacy as a core focus of their ALE activities, while others see ALE more broadly, as an unfolding process that occurs over the lifespan. Yet other countries stress the actual process of delivering the ALE programmes and working with institutions and partners throughout this process.

Another important question posed by the monitoring survey examines countries' commitment to formulating CONFINTEA VI action plans. A total of 109 countries responded to the question of whether they had formulated a CONFINTEA VI action plan, as recommended by the Belém

**Table 1.2**  
Countries with an official definition of ALE globally, by region and by income group

	Total no. of responses to question	No. of countries with an official definition	%
<b>WORLD</b>	135	101	75%
<b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	31	26	84%
Arab States	12	9	75%
Asia and the Pacific	28	20	71%
North America and Western Europe	23	12	52%
Central and Eastern Europe	18	13	72%
Latin America and the Caribbean	23	21	91%
<b>INCOME GROUPS</b>			
Low Income	20	17	85%
Lower Middle Income	31	25	81%
Upper Middle Income	36	26	72%
High Income	47	33	70%

Source: *GRALE III* monitoring survey, Question 1.1: Does your country have an official definition of ALE?

**Box 1.2****Countries' definitions of ALE: Some examples provided in responses to the *GRALE* monitoring survey****Azerbaijan**

Adult education is a type of supplementary education, the purpose of which is to provide citizens with continuing education in line with the constant changes occurring in society and the economy.

**Burkina Faso**

The July 2007 Education Act does not draw a distinction between ALE and literacy. Literacy is defined as all education and training activities for young people and adults aimed at acquisition of basic skills in a given language and empowerment of learners. It is one element of non-formal education.

**Colombia**

Adult education refers to educational actions and processes organized to specifically address the needs and potential of persons who, due to a variety of circumstances, did not complete certain levels of public education at the usual ages, or persons who wish to improve their capabilities, enrich their knowledge and improve their technical and professional skills.

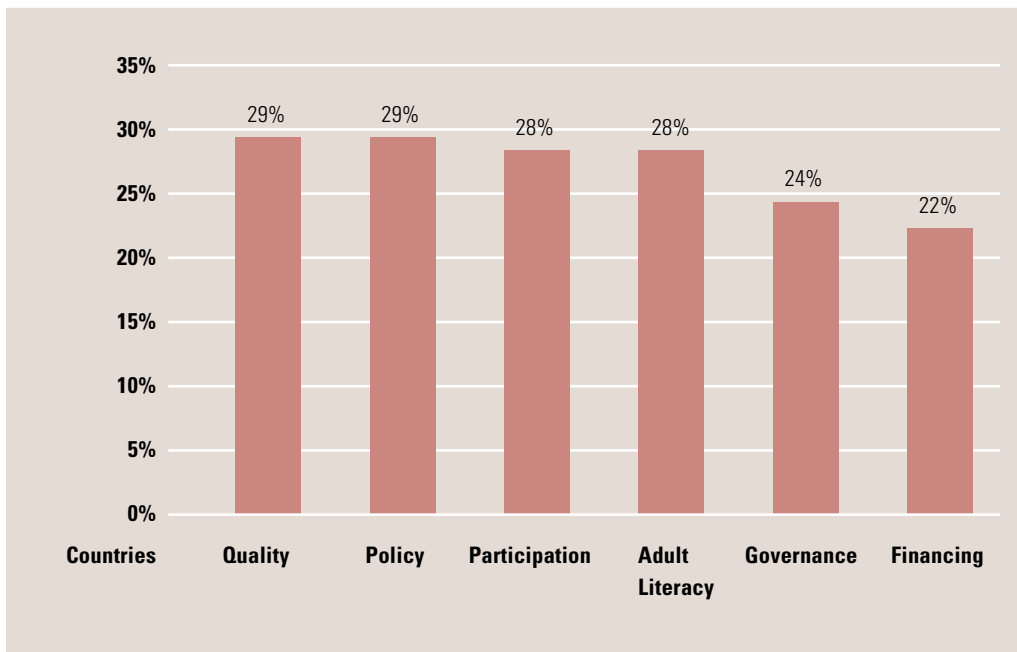
**Cuba**

Adult education should be understood as a social process of ongoing education that takes into account the needs, motives and interests of a heterogeneous participant population. The process of ALE in Cuba is inclusive and encompasses all the ways and routes through which education is delivered. Hence it includes formal, non-formal and informal education, through a system of relationships between the Ministry of Education and the different institutions and bodies that participate in Cuban society. The teaching and learning process in adult education takes place through a sub-system, in a complex process, with two essential conditions for its success: the bilateral relationship which is established between the learners and teachers (fundamental teaching support) and the use of appropriate teaching methods (methodological support).

**Spain**

The continuous and unfinished process of learning, not confined to one particular educational model, context or time of life, which supposes the acquisition and improvement of relevant learning for personal, social and career development and enables individuals to adapt to dynamic and changing contexts.

**Figure 1.1**  
Percentage of countries covering the different areas of the Belém Framework for Action in their CONFINTEA VI action plans



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 1.5: Has your country formulated a CONFINTEA VI action plan following the Belém Framework for Action? If so, what areas does it cover?

Framework for Action. Of these, 41% reported that a CONFINTEA VI action plan had been formulated. Figure 1.1 shows what percentage of countries cover the different areas from the Belém Framework for Action in their national action plans. 29% of the countries cover the issues of quality and policy, 28% of countries cover the area of participation, 28% cover adult literacy, 24% cover governance and 22% cover financing.

## 1.2 POLICY

According to the Belém Framework for Action, 'policies and legislative measures for adult education need to be comprehensive, inclusive, integrated within a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective, based on sector-wide and intersectoral approaches, covering and linking all components of learning and education' (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010). Establishing a policy on adult learning recognizes the value of learning throughout the life course and

its potential influence on other areas of individuals' lives, such as family, health, and social participation (see Walters *et al.*, 2014). In addition, adult education policy is a statement of intent that guides action, lays down principles and creates the conditions needed to foster learning opportunities and to enable adult learners to benefit regardless of their circumstances. However, not all countries interpret policy as a specific statement; some use it in a broader sense to refer to legislative actions and budgeting decisions that are later translated into programme planning activities. Some also use the term 'policy' to refer to established ALE practices. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has developed a collection of national lifelong learning policies and strategies from around the world (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2016). This collection aims to help countries to operationalize lifelong learning. The data provided by the *GRALE III* monitoring survey supplements this work on developing an operational definition of lifelong learning and proposing indicators for measuring it.



The following three key messages on political commitment were highlighted in *GRALE II* which are worth reiterating here:

1. ALE is integral to lifelong and life-wide learning as a framework for fostering and sustaining the development of active democratic citizenship.
2. The impact of national policies on ALE outcomes requires a long-term approach, but it is important to assess progress regularly in terms of progression and inclusion of ALE policies and policy frameworks.
3. More research is needed to inform policies in the field of ALE so that they target not only income and productivity in the labour market, but also consider wider personal and social benefits.

Monitoring progress on policies and political commitment was at the core of the *GRALE III* monitoring survey. In particular, countries were asked to report on whether there were significant improvements in ALE policies, including policy approaches to literacy and basic skills; on the inclusion of ALE policies for groups of potential learners, some of whom have previously been excluded or marginalized; on the existence of policy frameworks for recognizing, validating and accrediting informal and non-formal learning; and on whether countries have enacted new ALE policies since 2009. Three-quarters of the 128 countries that responded to this question about progress in ALE policy indicated that there has been significant progress since 2009. Different aspects of ALE policy were mentioned. For instance, Kenya mentioned the inclusion of different approaches to training in its Adult and Continuing Education policy (2010). Restructuring of the National Committee for Literacy and Adult Education (2010) is an important component of ALE policy in Lebanon. An updated version of Lithuania's Law on Non-Formal Adult Education and Continuing Learning has recently been approved, making a further contribution to ALE policy. Other countries such as Bolivia (Plurinational State of), El Salvador, Georgia (see Box 1.3),

### Box 1.3

#### Progress in ALE policy: Examples from Mali, Georgia and Greece

With the introduction and implementation of the Programme Vigoureux d'Alpha-bétisation et de Promotion des Langues Nationales (Dynamic Literacy and Promotion of National Languages Programme) in Mali, the ALE budget has increased significantly and there has been a push towards the adoption of education policies and strategies designed to connect formal and non-formal paths more effectively. The creation of national directorates to bolster further education aims to improve the employability of rural youth.

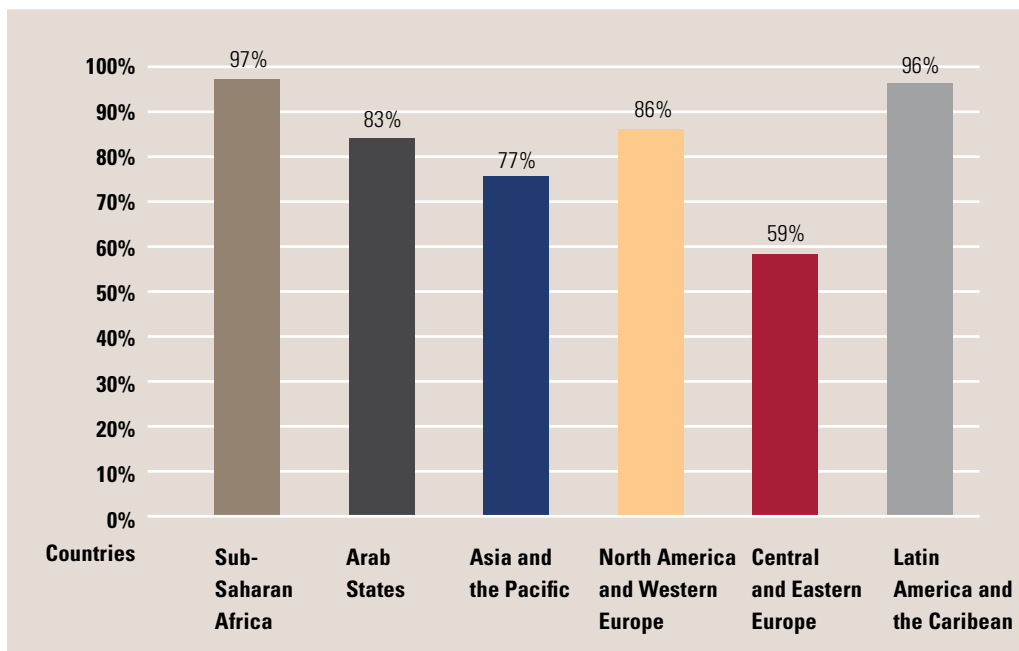
The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia developed a set of nine key competences of non-formal education. These competences are divided by thematic modules and focus on the challenges faced by youth.

Law 4186/2013 in Greece, about the organization of regional non-formal education services, establishes decentralized services for lifelong learning. These services are supervised by the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning and Youth.

*Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 2.4: Since 2009, has your country enacted any important new policies with respect to ALE? If yes, please provide the name of the policy, the year of adoption, and if possible a link to the document.*

Greece (see Box 1.3), Mali (see Box 1.3), Mauritius, Nicaragua, Oman, Paraguay and the Philippines placed explicit emphasis on reaching young adults and providing them with employability skills as well as addressing the needs of the general adult population. This political commitment is important for dealing with structural inequalities in provision.

**Figure 1.2**  
Percentage of countries per region in which literacy and basic skills are a top priority for ALE programmes



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 1.3: Are literacy and basic skills a top priority in ALE programmes for your country? Total number of responses: Arab States 12, Asia and the Pacific 26, Central and Eastern Europe 17, Latin America and the Caribbean 23, North America and Western Europe 22, sub-Saharan Africa 31.

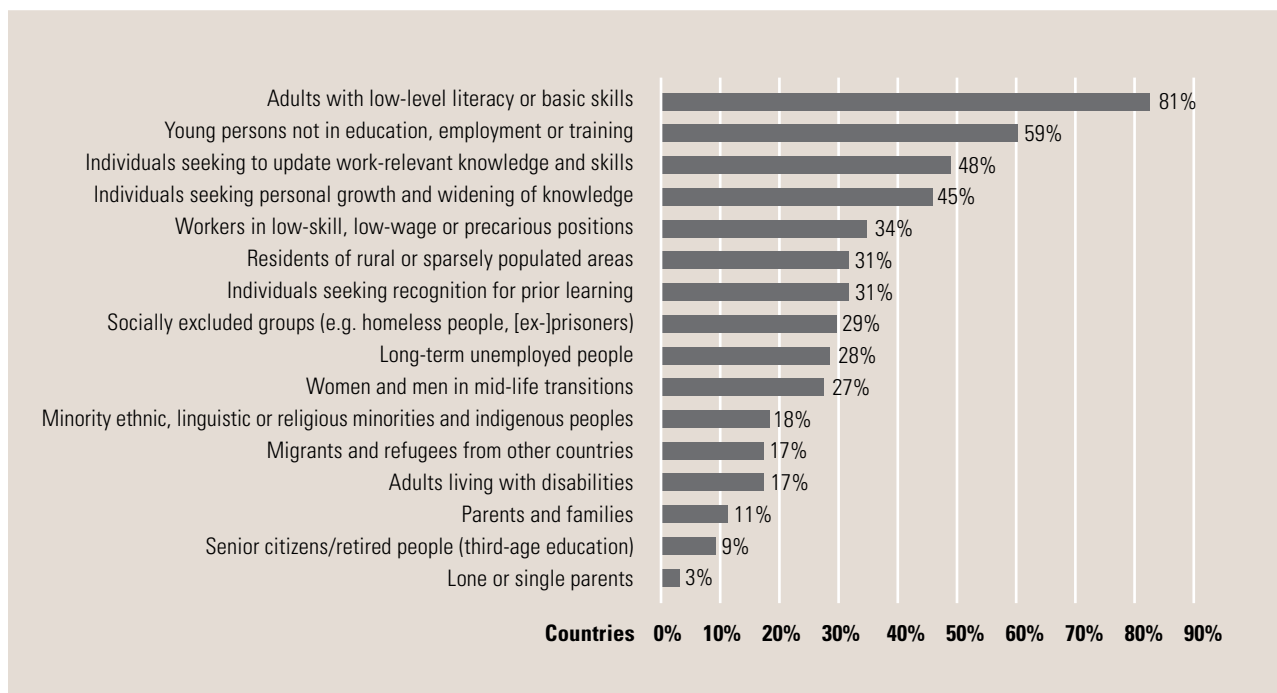
In recognition of the important role played by non-formal learning in achieving wider social outcomes, the national policies of some European countries include references to the provision of non-formal ALE. In Luxembourg, for example, non-formal education, in particular language programmes, is a key instrument of integration policy.

Out of 131 countries, 111 (85%) responded that literacy and basic skills were a top priority for ALE programmes. Regionally, most reporting countries from sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean indicated that literacy and basic skills were a top priority for ALE programmes (over 95% of countries from these regions named it as a top priority) whereas 59% of countries from Central and Eastern Europe gave it such a high priority (see Figure 1.2).

Countries report the following major conclusions with regard to policy approaches to literacy and basic skills:

- Policies with a strong focus on literacy and basic skills should be framed in terms of the human right to education.
- Policies should focus on skills with an impact on health, social cohesion, and economic development and poverty reduction, and on the central role of literacy in achieving these wider outcomes.
- Policies should highlight the importance of formally recognizing learning achievements and opportunities for advancement after literacy and basic skills are developed.
- Policies should target marginalized and disadvantaged people in order to achieve equity in literacy and basic skills.
- Policies should make long-term commitments to achieving measurable outcomes in literacy and basic skills.

**Figure 1.3**  
Target groups of (potential) learners that are especially important in countries' ALE policies



Source: *GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 2.3: Which target groups of (potential) learners are especially important in ALE policies in your country?*

It is important to identify specific target groups in ALE policy in order to reduce inequalities in access to ALE programmes and provide support for those most in need. Figure 1.3 shows that 81% of the countries that responded to the *GRALE III* survey identified adults with low levels of literacy or basic skills as the most important target group for ALE. Fewer countries see more specific target groups, such as ethnic minorities, refugees, adults with disabilities and other socially excluded groups, as especially important for ALE policies. This suggests that recognition of these target groups remains a global challenge.

The second-most important target group of potential learners was young people not in education, employment or training (reported by 59% of respondents). Significant regional variations in target groups of potential learners were found in sub-Saharan Africa, where residents of rural or sparsely populated areas were identified as a key target group, and

in North America and Western Europe, where those in long-term unemployment were particularly identified.

In the Belém Framework for Action, countries pledged to establish structures and mechanisms to recognize, validate and accredit non-formal and informal learning. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics defines non-formal education as

education that is institutionalized, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. [...] Non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programmes on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012, p. 11)

Informal learning, meanwhile, refers to

forms of learning that are intentional or deliberate but are not institutionalized. It is consequently less organized and structured than either formal or non-formal education. Informal learning may include learning activities that occur in the family, workplace, local community and daily life, on a self-directed, family-directed or socially-directed basis. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012, p.12)

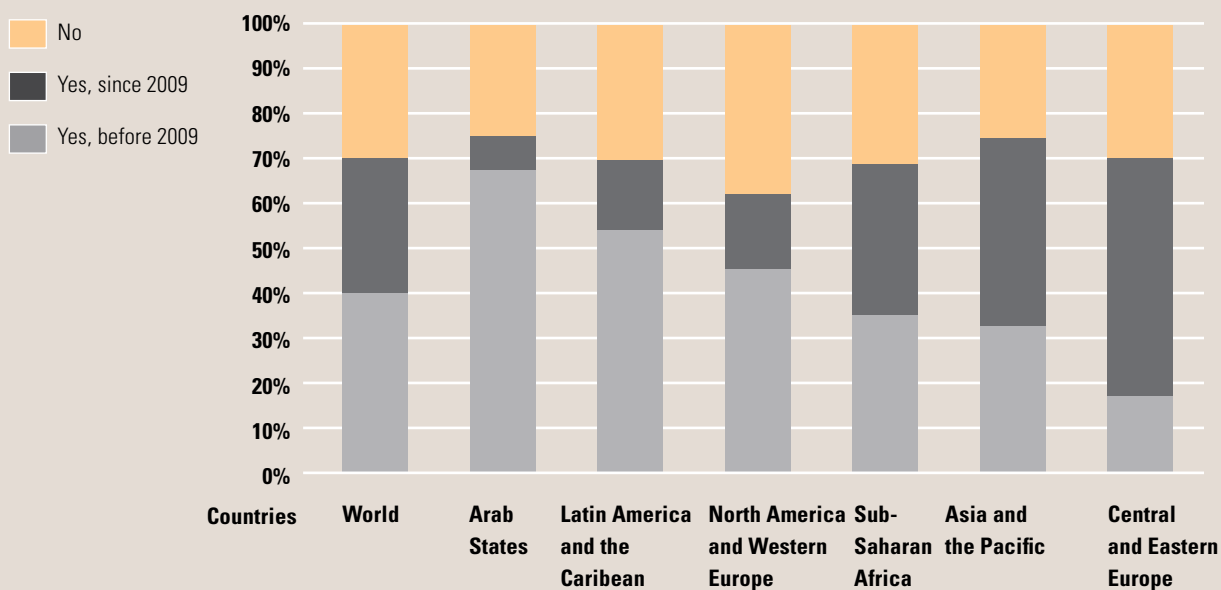
To support non-formal and informal learning, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning launched the online *Global Observatory on the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning* (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2012b). This Observatory is currently moving from a descriptive collection of case studies to a more analytical tool so as to ensure that governments are well informed on policies and practices related to

recognition, validation and accreditation, and on how these can be better integrated into qualifications frameworks in diverse national and regional contexts. To date, 27 country profiles and 44 case studies have been uploaded to the Observatory.

Figure 1.4 shows that out of 133 countries, 41% reported that they had a policy framework to recognize, validate and accredit non-formal and informal learning before 2009. A further 30% responded that the policy framework had been established since 2009, whereas the remaining 29% still do not have such a policy framework. Regionally, out of 33 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 11 had established such a policy framework since 2009 (Benin, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, and Zimbabwe). Out of 25 countries in Asia and the Pacific, 10 had established such a policy framework since 2009 (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Georgia, India, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Nepal

**Figure 1.4**

**Responses to the question of whether countries have a policy framework to recognize, validate and accredit non-formal and informal learning (globally and by region)**



Source: GRALE III Survey, Question 2.2: Does your country have a policy framework to recognize, validate and accredit non-formal and informal learning? Number of responses by region: Arab States 12, Latin America and the Caribbean 24, North America and Western Europe 22, sub-Saharan Africa 33, Asia and the Pacific 25, and Central and Eastern Europe 17.

**Table 1.3**  
Countries globally, by region and by income group that have enacted new ALE policies since 2009

	Total no. of responses to question	No. of countries that have enacted policies	%
<b>WORLD</b>	131	92	70%
<b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	31	18	58%
Arab States	13	7	54%
Asia and the Pacific	26	17	65%
North America and Western Europe	23	21	91%
Central and Eastern Europe	16	15	94%
Latin America and the Caribbean	22	14	64%
<b>INCOME GROUPS</b>			
Low Income	19	12	63%
Low Middle Income	33	23	70%
Upper Middle Income	33	18	55%
High Income	45	39	87%

Source: GRALE III Survey, Question 2.4: Since 2009, has your country enacted any important new policies with respect to ALE?

and Uzbekistan). Out of 22 countries in North America and Western Europe, 4 had established such a policy framework since 2009 (Cyprus, Greece, Malta and Sweden). Out of 17 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, 9 had established a policy framework (Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine) and finally, out of 24 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 4 had established this kind of policy framework since 2009 (Barbados, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Ecuador). Above-average growth in the establishment of policy frameworks for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning since 2009 was observed in sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and Asia and the Pacific. A new policy framework is an indicator of progress in political commitment on the part of a country.

The enactment of new ALE policies can equally be seen as a sign of growing political commitment. As shown in Table 1.3, out of 131 respondents globally, 70% reported that new and important policies in ALE had been enacted since 2009. Regionally, 94% of 15 countries in

Central and Eastern Europe and 91% of 23 countries in North America and Western Europe have enacted new policies since 2009, whereas in the other regions it was between 54% and 65% of countries. The high values for Europe and North America are also reflected in the data by income group, where 87% of the 45 countries belonging to the high-income group reported enacting new ALE policies.

Examples of legislative measures and long-term strategies that have been introduced since 2009 include the following:

- Law 8/2013, which focuses on establishing a national Youth Guarantee Plan that increases the educational levels of young people who are neither studying nor working, was passed in Spain.
- The Law on Open Civic Universities for Lifelong Learning, which is directed at providers specializing in adult education, was adopted in 2011 in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

- The Legislative Decree 54/2014, which focuses on the recognition, validation and accreditation of skills for adults, was passed in Cabo Verde.
- A measure to identify and test the levels of adults who wish to pursue education and the levels of graduates of adult education and literacy centres was adopted in 2009 in Jordan. Its regulatory principles have since passed into law.
- The Federal Act on Continuing Education was adopted in Switzerland in 2014.
- A policy document entitled 'Main Directions of Lifelong Education' was approved by the Mongolian Ministry of Education and Science in 2013.
- The National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007–2013 and the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014–2020 were adopted in Cyprus. These strategies seek to increase the number of providers and modes of delivery as well as improve the training of ALE educators.
- The Strategic Platform Development of Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning was adopted in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2014–2020.
- The Education Reform Framework PNDSE II 2011-2020 of Mauritania follows the National Strategy on Adult Education and Literacy (2006) and features elements of literacy and non-formal education, peace and human rights educations, and health education.
- The Ten-Year Programme for the Development of Vocational Training for Employment was launched in Mali 2010.
- The National Strategy to Promote Reading and Improve Literacy Skills (2014–2020) was adopted in Bulgaria.
- In Poland, a strategic document entitled 'Lifelong Learning Perspective' was published in 2013.

#### **Box 1.4** **The Belém Framework for Action's commitments with regard to governance**

[W]e commit ourselves to:

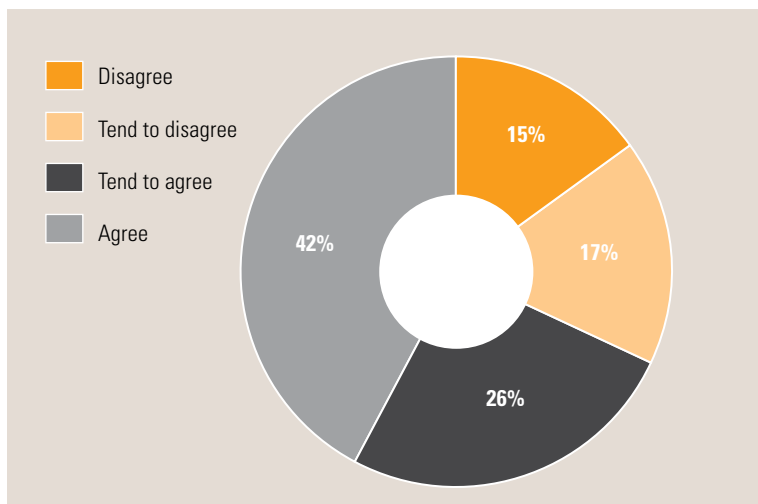
1. creating and maintaining mechanisms for the involvement of public authorities at all administrative levels, civil society organizations, social partners, the private sector, community and adult learners' and educators' organizations in the development, implementation and evaluation of ALE policies and programmes;
2. undertaking capacity-building measures to support the constructive and informed involvement of civil society organizations, community and adult learners' organizations, as appropriate, in policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation; and
3. promoting and supporting intersectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation.

(UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010)

In addition, the Human Capital Development Strategy (2013) is a cross-sectoral strategy with components of ALE.

Overall, there have been many noteworthy examples of political commitment to ALE around the world, with a number of countries reporting significant progress in ALE since 2009. Some countries are making adults with insufficient literacy and basic skills a priority for ALE programmes, while others have interpreted the concern with equity in Sustainable Development Goal 4 as a call to keep vulnerable and marginalized groups at the top of the ALE agenda. Countries should continue to build on policy frameworks for recognizing, validating and accrediting non-formal learning.

**Figure 1.5**  
Percentage of countries that agree or disagree that the governance of ALE has become more decentralized since 2009



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 3.1: Which of these statements apply to your country? Subquestion 4: Since 2009, the governance of ALE has become more decentralized (Scale from 1 = disagree to 4 = agree) Total number of responses: 125.

### 1.3 GOVERNANCE

In the Belém Framework for Action, UNESCO Member States adopted two key principles for good governance in ALE. The first is that governance should facilitate the implementation of ALE policy and programmes in ways that are effective, transparent, accountable and equitable. The second principle is that there should be wide-ranging participation by all stakeholders to guarantee responsiveness to the needs of learners, in particular those in a situation of disadvantage (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010).

Box 1.4 sets out the three commitments made in the Belém Framework for Action with regard to governance.

In Ethiopia, consultation with stakeholders is part of the dynamic relationship between the federal and regional state governments and the *kebeles*, i.e. the lowest units of government working at the grassroots level. At the federal level, the role of the government in terms of the governance of adult learning is to determine goals, formulate policy guidelines, coordinate with stakeholders

#### Box 1.5

#### How governments consult stakeholders on ALE policy: The case of the Republic of Korea

‘According to the Lifelong Education Law, the Korean government established the consultative body as one of the main bodies responsible for developing and implementing national policies for lifelong education. These consultative bodies include the Lifelong Education Promotion Committee (central government level), the Municipal/Provincial Lifelong Education Promotion Committees (provincial or municipal level), and the Local Lifelong Education Promotion Committee (district or community level). The Lifelong Education Promotion Committee is chaired by the Minister of Education and composed of vice-ministerial level government officials, the president of the National Institute for Lifelong Education, and experts appointed by the committee chair. It is given the responsibility to deliberate on, coordinate, analyse, and evaluate national lifelong education policies. At the municipal/provincial and district/community level, the Regional Lifelong Education Committee must involve the participation of not only the heads of regional governments but also regional policymakers, so that each region can discuss and decide its own lifelong education policies. Under the decentralized policy system of the Republic of Korea, even though the central government develops the basic policy framework and policy agendas in lifelong learning, it is the local departments that carry out the detailed policy tasks developed by the central government in accordance with local needs. Therefore, various opinions from each level of government and external experts converge through conferences and in-depth discussions with policy advisory committees in the development process of the national lifelong education policy plans.’

Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 3.2: Since 2009, has the government consulted stakeholders and civil society about the formulation, implementation and evaluation of ALE policies?



and funders about priorities, and provide the overall regulatory framework for adult learning, including accreditation, research, dissemination and documentation. At the grassroots level, the role of the *kebeles* is to coordinate services to support the implementation of programmes, identify local learning needs and demands, and assist with the recruitment and enrolment of learners.

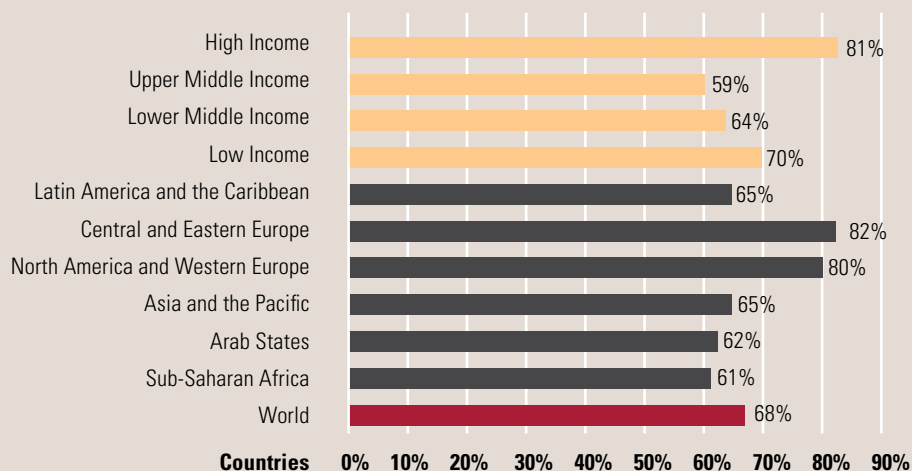
*GRALE II* showed that the decentralization of ALE to regional and local levels is important. The expected benefits of decentralization are greater accountability, more transparency and increased participation of stakeholders. *GRALE II* reported that effective decentralization in ALE demands good coordination, funding and capacity-building. Countries reported for *GRALE III* on whether the governance of ALE has become more decentralized since 2009. As shown in Figure 1.5, some 42% of respondents agreed completely that ALE has become more decentralized, with a further 26% tending to agree, and a total of 32% disagreeing or tending to disagree.

Box 1.5 presents the example of decentralization provided in the Republic of Korea's response to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey. In the Republic of Korea, the central government develops the basic policy framework and policy agendas for lifelong learning, but local departments carry out the detailed policy tasks in accordance with local needs.

68% of countries participating in the *GRALE III* monitoring survey reported that the government has consulted stakeholders and civil society about the formulation, implementation and evaluation of ALE policies since 2009 (see Figure 1.6). There is not much regional variation except for Europe (Western, Central and Eastern) and North America, where a higher proportion of responding countries has consulted stakeholders since 2009.

This is also reflected in the analysis of countries' responses by income group, which reveals that a higher proportion of high-income countries has consulted stakeholders since 2009. In Romania, for example, widespread public consultations were undertaken for the elaboration of the National Strategy on Lifelong

**Figure 1.6**  
Percentage of countries globally, by income group and by region that have consulted stakeholders and civil society about ALE policies



Source: *GRALE III* monitoring survey, Question 3.2: Since 2009, has the government consulted stakeholders and civil society about the formulation, implementation and evaluation of ALE policies?



Learning. These consultations included the participation of governmental representatives, education and training providers, employers and social partners. Online consultation was conducted in addition to face-to-face group discussions, which were organized in six of the eight development regions in Romania. In total, more than 530 stakeholders in Romania were consulted at all levels, including face-to-face meetings with 49 persons at the central level and 103 at the regional and local levels. In addition, 386 stakeholders responded to an online survey.

Capacity-building measures are also important to increase participation by stakeholders, including stakeholders from civil society. In Paraguay between 2009 and 2011, a broad process of collective participation was carried out with 12 public consultation sessions held in six different towns. These were attended by a total of 343 individuals representing 35 civil society organizations and 11 state bodies. Women, young people, indigenous communities, Afro-Paraguayans, people with disabilities, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, people in prison,

older adults and civil servants took part in the consultations to put together the Public Policy on Continuing Education.

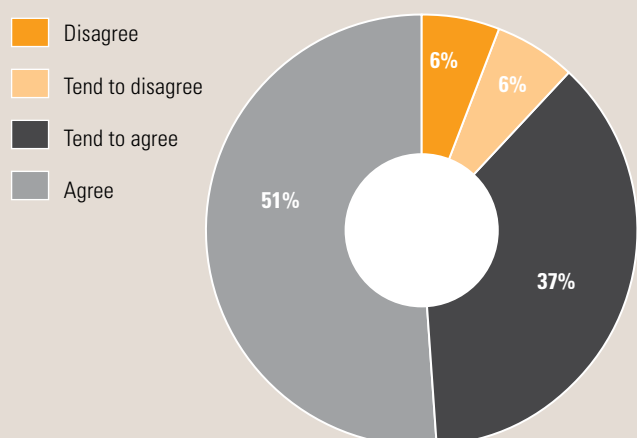
In Mexico, emphasis has been placed on the participation of indigenous communities. As part of the 2013–2018 National Development Plan, a National Consultative Forum entitled ‘Mexico with Quality Education for All’, which included a panel on ‘The Educational Lag and Illiteracy’ was held in Palenque, Chiapas, in April 2013. Members of indigenous communities participating in the consultative forum highlighted the structural problems they faced with respect to ALE: insufficient infrastructure, lack of relevance and specificity in the ALE curricula, and low quality of ALE educators.

Inter-ministerial cooperation is important for reaching potential groups of adult learners previously excluded or marginalized. As illustrated in Figure 1.7, 51% of countries responding to *GRALE III* agreed that the governance of ALE has strengthened inter-ministerial cooperation since 2009, with a further 37% of countries tending to agree. In Oman, for instance, increasing collaboration between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, and the Ministry of Social Development has resulted in joint projects for targeted groups of learners in prisons and collaboration with Omani women’s associations to improve literacy, in particular in remote villages.

In Georgia, increased inter-ministerial collaboration has taken place between the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to professionalize adult educators. Collaboration has also increased between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice to provide professional training to educators working with prisoners.

In October 2013, the Slovenian Parliament adopted the new Adult Education Master Plan for the period 2013–2020. This plan defines priorities, programmes, supportive activities, target groups, monitoring instruments and the scope of public finances aimed at adult education. The

**Figure 1.7**  
Percentage of countries that agree and disagree that the governance of ALE has strengthened inter-ministerial cooperation since 2009



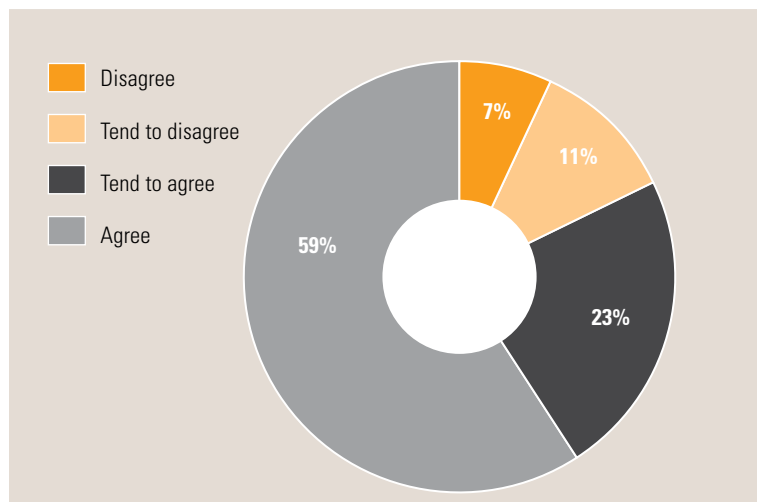
Source: *GRALE III* monitoring survey, Question 3.1 Which of these statements apply to your country? Since 2009, the governance of ALE has strengthened inter-ministerial cooperation. Total responses: 128.

most important innovation introduced in the new document was the inclusion of several additional ministries in ALE. Thus in addition to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, other ministries included were the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, and the Ministry of the Interior.

Other countries have focused on the governance of non-formal adult education. In Nepal, for example, the Non-Formal Education Centre is a centre for policy formulation, implementation and monitoring of non-formal learning activities. It consults civil society and other stakeholders regarding the formulation of policies specifically related to non-formal adult education. In Burkina Faso, the government consults on non-formal ALE policy through specific forums for promoting non-formal education.

Countries acknowledge the importance of undertaking capacity-building measures to support the constructive and informed involvement of civil society organizations,

**Figure 1.8**  
Percentage of countries that agree and disagree that the governance of ALE has strengthened capacity-building initiatives since 2009



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 3.1: Which of these statements apply to your country? Since 2009, the governance of ALE has strengthened capacity-building initiatives. Total responses: 124.

adult learners and instructors. Figure 1.8 shows that 59% of responding countries agreed that the governance of ALE has strengthened capacity-building initiatives.

**Table 1.4**  
Countries globally, by region and by income group with significant innovations in ALE governance since 2009

	Total no. of responses to question	Countries with innovation in governance	%
<b>WORLD</b>	123	77	63%
<b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	28	19	68%
Arab States	12	6	50%
Asia and the Pacific	25	16	64%
North America and Western Europe	19	12	63%
Central and Eastern Europe	15	11	73%
Latin America and the Caribbean	24	14	58%
<b>INCOME GROUPS</b>			
Low Income	18	14	78%
Lower Middle Income	30	19	63%
Upper Middle Income	34	17	50%
High Income	40	28	70%

Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 3.3: Has there been any significant innovation/development in ALE governance in your country since 2009 that could be of interest to other countries?

Germany has strong collaborative initiatives involving experts, researchers and social partners involved in ALE. In 2012, for example, the German Adult Education Association collaborated with the Bertelsmann Stiftung, a private non-profit foundation, to organize discussion forums for citizens in more than 50 cities throughout Germany.

Finally, countries were asked to report on significant innovations or developments in the governance of ALE since 2009 that could be of interest to other countries.

Table 1.4 shows that 63% of responding countries reported significant innovations in the governance of ALE since 2009. Proportionally more innovations took place in low-income countries, with 78% of the 18 countries belonging to the low-income group reporting new innovations or developments in the governance of ALE. Some examples of innovations in the governance of ALE reported by countries include the following:

- Chad developed the National Non-formal Education and Literacy Development Programme in 2010 together with survey mechanisms for identifying the capacity-building needs of ALE stakeholders with regard to teaching, organizational and institutional frameworks.
- In Eritrea, a curriculum providing foundations for lifelong learning has been developed for adults and out-of-school youth. This curriculum is accompanied by accreditation mechanisms for education and training obtained outside formal schooling. It also provides for opportunities for learning such as community reading rooms in remote areas of selected communities to promote reading and literacy skills.
- Estonia introduced the Occupational Qualifications System under the Estonian Qualifications System in order to link the lifelong learning system with the labour market.
- The Philippines introduced Accreditation and Equivalency, a non-formal education programme

that provides certification of learning and is aimed at providing an alternative pathway of learning for out-of-school youth and adults who have basic literacy skills but have not completed the 10 years of basic education mandated by the Philippine constitution. Through this programme, school dropouts are able to complete elementary and secondary education outside the formal school system.

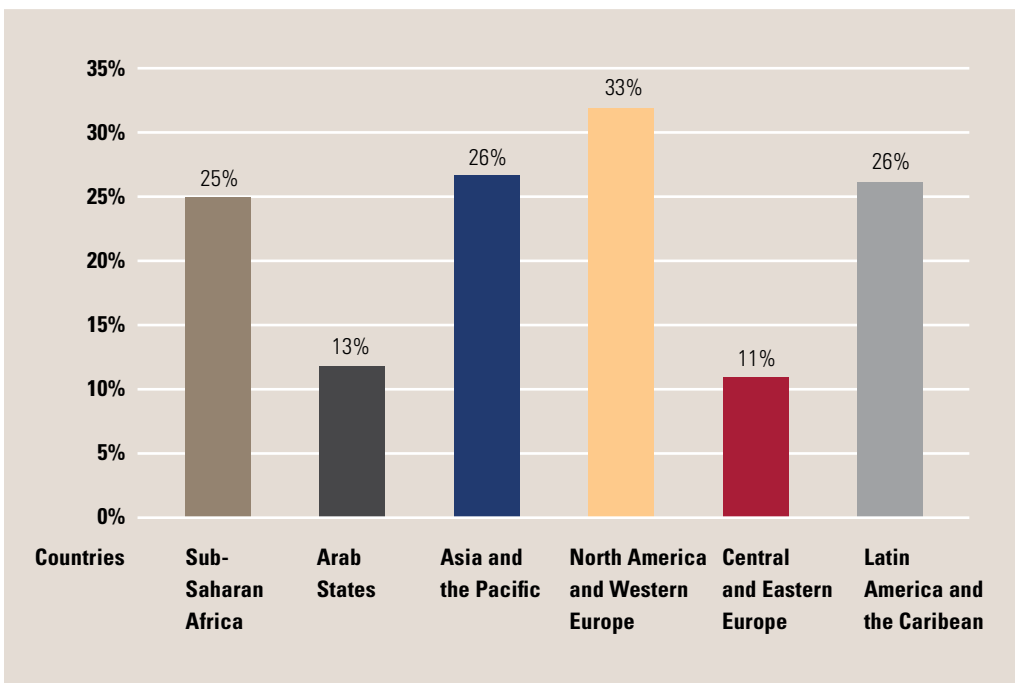
- In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs entered into an agreement to implement a learning neighbourhood policy, draft adult education curricula, design tools for continuous assessment, and develop other policies and regulations for adult education in Saudi Arabia.

Overall, the *GRALE III* monitoring survey reveals that governance of ALE has become more decentralized since 2009, which implies that decisions about specific demand for programmes and the correct supply are being made at more local levels. This poses certain challenges, as capacity building is necessary at different levels of government to enable proper assessment of learning needs and adequate provision to satisfy such needs. Joined-up initiatives dealing with multiple needs are necessary to reduce learning gaps. Inter-ministerial cooperation is the only way to combine efforts and resources to tackle multiple forms of disadvantage in adulthood.

## 1.4 FINANCING

Adequate financial resources are imperative for creating quality learning opportunities for adults, in particular those with the greatest needs. In the Belém Framework for Action, countries committed to five specific areas of intervention with respect to the financing of ALE. These are: (i) seeking investment of at least 6% of GNP in education with an increasing share of resources allocated to ALE; (ii) integrating ALE into financial strategies across government departments and creating an integrated ALE strategy; (iii) establishing transnational funding for adult literacy and adult education

**Figure 1.9**  
Percentage of countries per region with education expenditure of at least 6% of GNP



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016b. Number of countries per region: Sub-Saharan Africa 44; Arab States 16; Asia and the Pacific 43; North America and Western Europe 27; Central and Eastern Europe 19; Latin America and the Caribbean 34

**Box 1.6**  
List of countries with education expenditure of at least 6% of GDP

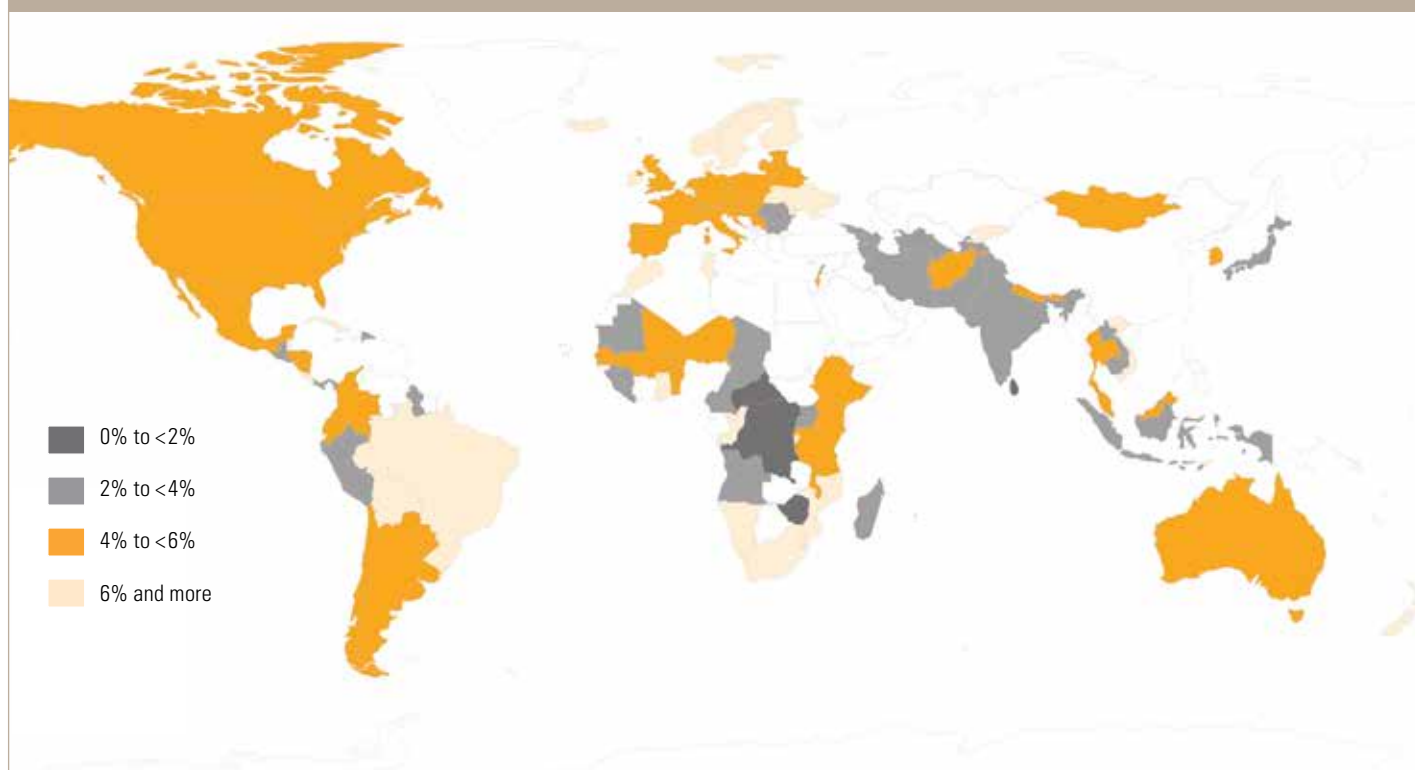
Aruba; Belgium; Belize; Bolivia (Plurinational State of); Botswana; Brazil; Comoros; Costa Rica; Cuba; Cyprus; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Denmark; Finland; Ghana; Honduras; Iceland; Ireland; Jamaica; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Lesotho; Malawi; Malaysia; Maldives; Malta; Marshall Islands; Micronesia (Federated States of); Moldova (Republic of); Mongolia; Morocco; Mozambique; Namibia; New Zealand; Norway; Palau; Sao Tome and Principe; Solomon Islands; South Africa; Swaziland; Sweden; Tunisia; Ukraine; Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of); and Viet Nam

programmes; (iv) creating incentives for attracting alternative sources of funding for ALE, for example from non-governmental organizations, the private sector, communities and individuals; and (v) prioritizing investment in ALE for vulnerable and marginalized populations, in particular individuals with disabilities.

Evidence from *GRALE II* showed that countries had made some progress towards achieving their target of devoting 6% of GNP to education. According to recent information from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, total government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP is 4.7% in sub-Saharan Africa, 4.3% in the Arab States, 4.3% in Asia and the Pacific, 5.3% in North America and Western Europe, 4.7% in Central and Eastern Europe, and 5% in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016b). Figure 1.9 shows that 33% of countries in North America and Western Europe already devote at least 6% of their GDP to education, whereas

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016b

**Figure 1.10**  
Expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP

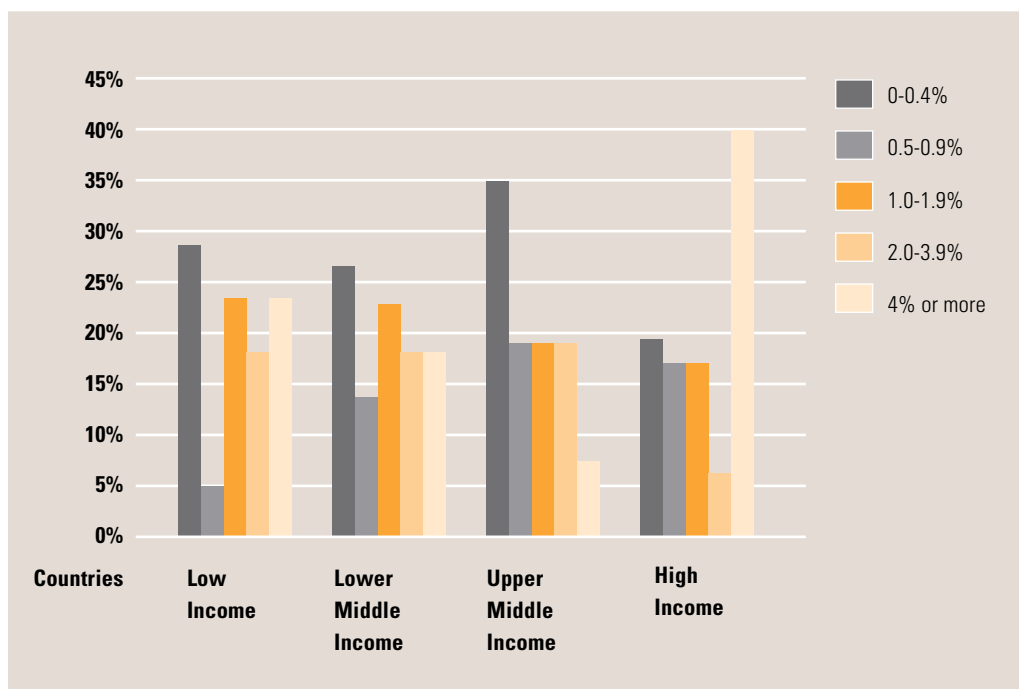


Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016

only 11% of countries in Central and Eastern Europe do so. An important item of progress to highlight is the availability of information on countries' education expenditure: data is now available on the education expenditure of 183 countries, whereas in *GRALE II* it was only available for 64 countries.

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

**Figure 1.11**  
Percentage of public education expenditure directed to ALE by income group



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 4.1: What percentage of public education spending currently goes to ALE? Total number of responses: 97. By income group: low income 17; lower middle income 22; upper middle income 26; high income 30.

between 1% and 3.9% of education expenditure, and 22 spent 4% or more of education expenditure on ALE.

Figure 1.11 shows that over a quarter of low- and middle-income countries that reported information on education expenditure directed less than 0.4% of their education expenditure to ALE. Of the high-income countries that reported education expenditure, nearly 40% directed 4% or more to ALE, which is a similar percentage to that reported by *GRALE II*. It is important to highlight that as a proportion of GDP, the education expenditure devoted to ALE in all countries is very small, indicating the lack of funding available to ALE as a sector.

Lack of financial information continues to be a challenge for many countries, as it makes it difficult for countries to make realistic and achievable strategic plans for the future of ALE. Globally, 24 countries reported not having figures available on education expenditure, while 19 countries did not respond to this question (together

these represent 31% of the 139 countries participating in *GRALE III*). By income group, 15% of low-income countries, 35% of lower middle-income countries, 30% of upper middle-income countries and 36% of high-income countries participating in *GRALE III* did not provide financial information. Increasing investment in ALE has been an ongoing challenge since 2009. Countries all over the world faced reductions in economic resources due to the global financial crises of 2008 and 2009 and economic downturns in key economic powers such as the United States of America, the European Union and China. In addition, allocation of resources to ALE faces competition due to investment priorities in key sectors such as health, infrastructure and social welfare. Furthermore, the complexity of the ALE sector and lack of coordination between government departments dealing with different aspects of ALE have consequences for the efficient mobilization of resources.

**Table 1.5**  
Development of public spending on ALE as a proportion of public spending on education between 2009 and 2014 (globally, by region and by income group)

	Total no. of responses to question	Increased %	Stayed the same %	Decreased %	Do not know %
<b>WORLD</b>	129	46%	33%	13%	8%
<b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>					
Sub-Saharan Africa	32	44%	28%	22%	6%
Arab States	12	50%	25%	25%	0%
Asia and the Pacific	26	42%	46%	8%	4%
North America and Western Europe	20	40%	40%	5%	15%
Central and Eastern Europe	16	38%	25%	13%	25%
Latin America and the Caribbean	23	61%	30%	9%	0%
<b>INCOME GROUPS</b>					
Low Income	20	45%	30%	20%	5%
Lower Middle Income	32	41%	44%	16%	0%
Upper Middle Income	33	45%	30%	15%	9%
High Income	43	51%	28%	7%	14%

Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 4.2: Between 2009 and 2014, public spending on ALE as a proportion of public education spending in my country has ... increased / stayed about the same / decreased / Do not know

**Box 1.7**  
List of countries by income group in which public spending on ALE as a percentage of public spending on education decreased between 2009 and 2014

**Low income:**

Benin, Guinea, Nepal, Uganda

**Lower middle income:**

Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan

**Upper middle income:**

Gabon, Grenada, Lebanon, Peru, Tunisia

**High income:**

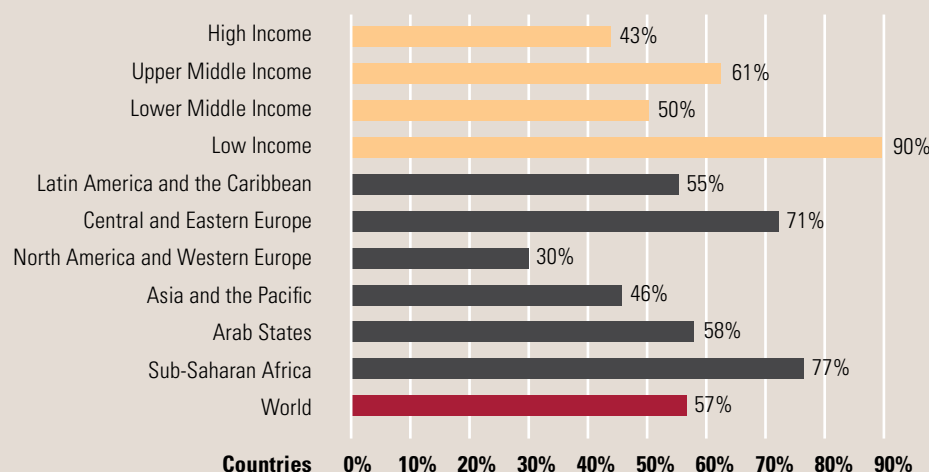
Hungary, Netherlands, Slovenia

Notwithstanding these problems, countries reported progress with respect to investment in ALE. Globally, out of 129 responding countries, 46% reported that spending on ALE as a proportion of total spending on education increased between 2009 and 2014 (see Table 1.5). A further 33% reported that education expenditure on ALE did not change during this period, while only 13% reported that education spending on ALE decreased over the same period. 8% of countries were not able to report this information.

Box 1.7 lists by income group the countries which reported that spending on ALE as a percentage of public spending on education decreased between 2009 and 2014.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016b

**Figure 1.12**  
Percentage of countries by income group, by region and globally in which the government plans to increase spending on ALE in the future



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 4.3: Does the government plan to increase or decrease spending on ALE? Total number of responses globally: 130. By region: Sub-Saharan Africa 31; Arab States 12; Asia and the Pacific 28; North America and Western Europe 20; Central and Eastern Europe 17; Latin America and the Caribbean 22. By income group: low income 20; lower middle income 32; upper middle income 33; high income 44.

**Table 1.6**  
Countries globally, by region and by income group that have introduced significant innovations in the financing of ALE since 2009

	Total no. of responses to question	Countries that have introduced innovation	%
<b>WORLD</b>	115	55	48%
<b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	28	13	46%
Arab States	12	4	33%
Asia and the Pacific	25	12	48%
North America and Western Europe	18	12	67%
Central and Eastern Europe	14	5	36%
Latin America and the Caribbean	18	9	50%
<b>INCOME GROUPS</b>			
Low Income	18	8	44%
Lower Middle Income	29	12	41%
Upper Middle Income	31	16	52%
High Income	36	19	53%

Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 4.4: Has your government introduced any significant innovation in ALE financing since 2009 that could be of interest to other countries?



Globally, there appears to be political willingness to increase investment in ALE, with 57% of 130 responding countries planning to increase spending on ALE. This is partly in response to the new Sustainable Development Goals, which include a specific target for youth and adult literacy, but also incorporate ALE as a part of other targets. The willingness to increase investment in ALE is also partly due to political recognition of the importance of adult learning in strengthening the intergenerational transmission of educational success. The commitment of low-income countries to increasing spending on ALE is particularly notable, with 90% of low-income countries reporting that they plan to increase spending on ALE in the future.

Countries were asked whether they have introduced any significant innovations in the financing of ALE since 2009 that could be of interest to other countries. Table 1.6 shows that globally 48% of countries (i.e. 55 out of 115 countries) reported significant innovations in the financing of ALE since 2009. There is not much regional variation, with about half of the countries who reported this information indicating some significant innovation in the financing of ALE.

The following are some examples of innovations in the financing of ALE as reported by countries:

- Chad established the Non-Formal Education and Literacy Development Support Fund (FADAENF) in 2014.
- The Chinese Government encourages the development of privately run adult education centres and increased cooperation between schools and private enterprises. This is boosting investment from different sectors in ALE.
- The Government of Israel significantly increased budget allocations to promote education for populations with varying educational levels, with a special emphasis on education in certain sectors. The primary goal of this investment is to facilitate better integration of all populations into the job market.
- Indonesia has implemented a competitive funding system, according to which all non-formal education institutions are eligible to apply for a grant from the government.
- The Philippines introduced 'Bottom-Up Budgeting', a grassroots participatory budgeting process whereby local government units and civil society organizations are allowed to propose programmes and activities based on their needs.
- In Poland, the National Training Fund was launched in 2014 as part of the reform of labour market services. Employers can receive funding to cover up to 80% of the costs of training and educating employees, while micro-entrepreneurs are entitled to 100% of the costs. Employers can use National Training Fund resources to finance the diagnosis of training needs, courses, postgraduate studies and examinations, to give just a few examples.
- Serbia introduced changes to the Law on Adult Education so that funds for the financing of adult education are included in the budget of Serbia, the budgets of the provinces and the budgets of the local self-government units.
- A detailed example of an innovative approach to funding was provided by Estonia. This is presented in Box 1.8 below.

Overall, there is evidence of some improvement in the monitoring of the financing of ALE since 2009. The fact that more countries provided information on financing in the *GRALE III* monitoring survey than in the *GRALE II* survey is an encouraging sign. Furthermore, there is clearly a political willingness to increase investment in ALE globally. However, challenges still remain with respect to financing ALE. Firstly, the funding available for ALE remains a very small proportion of total investment in education in most countries. Secondly, several countries still lack up-to-date information on investment in ALE. Thirdly, investment in ALE is not

**Box 1.8****Reporting on innovations in the financing of ALE: The case of Estonia**

Estonia introduced changes to the labour market training system, [which involved] a transition [...] to a needs-based approach [for people who are unemployed]. For this reason, personalized training vouchers were introduced in 2009. The personalized training vouchers are a flexible tool to match the training as precisely as possible to the individual needs of the job-seeker. The vouchers can be used to choose a course offered by training providers approved by the Unemployment Insurance Fund. [...] In 2009 and 2010, only further training was available on the basis of training vouchers, but from 2011 they could be used for retraining as well. During one job-seeking period a customer can use up to €2,500 worth of personalized training vouchers. In addition, [...] in the period 2008–2013, the European Social Fund financed three Estonian adult education programmes:

1. **Work-Related Training in Vocational Education and Training Institutions and the Development of Adult Education:** This programme was launched in the summer of 2009 under the guardianship of the Vocational and Adult Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Research. [...] Free work-related training courses were held at institutions of vocational education and institutions of professional higher education that provide vocational training. Over the course of the programme, 41,200 participants took part in work-related training-courses. The target population of the programme was the working-age adult population across Estonia.
2. **Training in Popular Adult Education Institutions:** This programme was initiated in 2008 [...] by the Estonian Non-Formal Adult Education Association. The training courses took place in 45 popular adult education centres in all counties, and provided information on the knowledge and skills necessary for increasing professional competitiveness and the key competences for lifelong learning required for coping successfully. Over the course of the programme, over 33,000 people took part in over 2,000 training courses.
3. **Popularization of Adult Education:** This programme was launched in 2008 and was carried out by the Association of Estonian Adult Educators (ANDRAS). The programme involved activities such as [the] organization of Adult Learners Week and broadcasting of radio shows and TV series in [...] Estonian and Russian.

*Source: Estonia's answer to the GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 4.4: Has your government introduced any significant innovation in ALE financing since 2009 that could be of interest to other countries?*

protected against economic downturns, and it risks being the sector where public funding cuts occur.

## 1.5 PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Ensuring equal access to and participation in ALE plays a crucial role in enabling people to realize the potential benefits of adult learning. As an outcome of the

**Table 1.7**  
Development of the overall participation rate in ALE since 2009 globally, by region and by income group

	Total no. of responses to question	Increased %	Stayed the same %	Decreased %	Do not know %
<b>WORLD</b>	126	60%	13%	7%	19%
<b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>					
Sub-Saharan Africa	31	55%	16%	3%	26%
Arab States	11	45%	0%	27%	27%
Asia and the Pacific	25	56%	4%	0%	40%
North America and Western Europe	20	65%	30%	0%	5%
Central and Eastern Europe	17	71%	12%	12%	6%
Latin America and the Caribbean	22	68%	14%	14%	5%
<b>INCOME GROUPS</b>					
Low Income	19	63%	5%	5%	26%
Lower Middle Income	30	60%	10%	3%	27%
Upper Middle Income	33	61%	12%	9%	18%
High Income	43	60%	21%	9%	9%

Source: *GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 5.1: Since 2009 and for the adult population overall, the participation rate (%) in ALE has... Increased / Stayed about the same / Decreased / Do not know*

Belém Framework for Action, countries agreed to introduce measures to facilitate more equitable access to ALE programmes, in particular programmes addressing the needs groups previously excluded from learning opportunities. Systematic collection of data is important to monitor access, progress and overall participation in ALE.

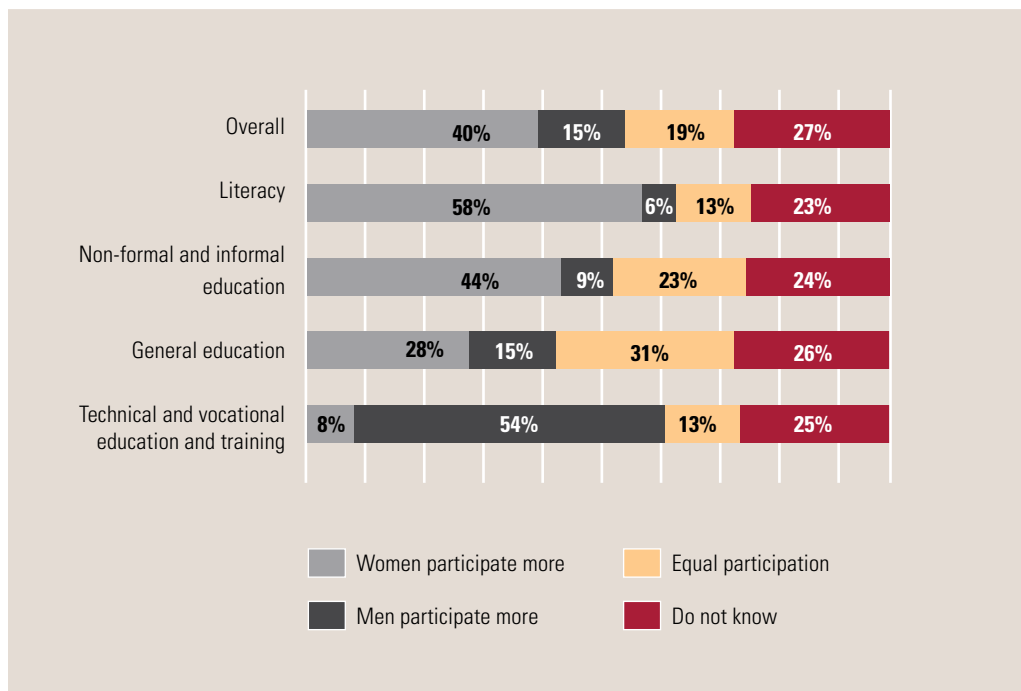
*GRALE I* highlighted not only the low overall participation in adult education in most countries, but also inequities in access and participation both within and between countries. *GRALE II* stated that close to 100 countries collected information on participation in adult literacy or adult education programmes in general. However, this data is of limited use in monitoring participation in ALE, as countries generally do not use consistent and comparable indicators. Nonetheless, *GRALE II* reported that many adults, in particular those living in poverty and remote rural areas, members of ethnic minorities, women, refugees and migrants, were still excluded from educational opportunities. *GRALE II* found that these

people generally lacked access to ALE programmes, and that even when access was available, the quality of educational provision was often questionable.

For *GRALE III*, countries reported on whether the participation rate for the overall adult population has increased, decreased or remained unchanged since 2009, or whether they do not have this information. Table 1.7 shows that 60% of 126 countries reported that the overall participation rate has increased since 2009, whereas 13% reported it as unchanged. Only 7% of countries reported a decrease since 2009. 19% of countries globally reported that they do not know the changes in the overall participation rate in ALE.

Table 1.7 demonstrates that there are no very dramatic differences between income groups in terms of changes in the reported participation rates since 2009. There are greater differences in the proportion of countries within income groups which have the ability to report this information. For high-income countries, only 9% said

**Figure 1.13**  
Participation in ALE programmes by sex and type of programme



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 5.2: What differences are there between women and men in terms of their participation rates (%) in ALE programmes? Total number of responses: 139.

that they did not have information to report such changes, compared to around one quarter of lower middle-income countries and low-income countries. Regionally, 40% of countries in Asia and the Pacific reported not knowing whether the overall participation rates in ALE had changed since 2009.

Gender is an important aspect of equity in participation in ALE (Hanemann and Scarpino, 2015). Although the overall gender gap has been narrowing (UNESCO, 2015b), recent evidence suggests that gender differences in ALE may be course-specific and may thus influence learners' future choices. In order to monitor gendered participation in different ALE programmes, countries reported on whether more men or women complete these programmes. Some of the differences are significant. Figure 1.11 shows that in 44% of participating countries, women participated more in non-formal education than men. In 9% of countries, men participated more in non-formal education, and in 23% of countries, participation was equal by gender. In 24%

of countries, this information could not be provided.

Gender equity is a major concern of the Ganokendra Programme in Bangladesh, a non-formal intergenerational educational programme that creates contextually appropriate, needs-based and sustainable lifelong learning opportunities for out-of-school children, youth and adults living in marginalized rural and urban slum communities. Although the programme serves all community members, particular efforts are made to target women, not only because they are often marginalized from existing educational programmes, but also because they are central to family and community development. As such, women currently constitute about 70% of the more than 85,300 programme beneficiaries.

Literacy is another area where higher participation rates reflect greater need among women. 58% of countries indicated that more women than men participate in literacy programmes. For example, Saakshar Bharat is a centrally

sponsored national scheme focusing on increasing women's literacy in India. Launched by the Indian Department of School Education and Literacy in 2009, Saakshar Bharat aims to reduce the number of non-literate adults in India and foster an environment within communities that encourages lifelong learning. While the 2011 census showed that India's adult literacy rate had reached 69%, an increase of 7% from the 2001 census, the adult literacy rate of women continues to be significantly lower at 59%, compared to the men's rate of 79%. The programme's focus is on reducing this gender disparity and thereby achieving the government's target of 80% national literacy by 2030. This is planned to be achieved through the provision of basic literacy to 70 million more people, of whom 60 million are women (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013).

The *GRALE III* monitoring survey revealed that in 54% of countries, more men than women participate in technical and vocational education and training. Chapter 3, on employment and the labour market, gives further details on the gender dimension in relation to employment-related ALE.

There is comparatively little information available on the participation and access of specific groups, which makes it difficult for countries to establish needs and monitor progress over time. Figure 1.14 shows that 43% of countries participating in *GRALE III* did not provide information on the ALE participation rates of workers in low-skill, low-wage and precarious employment. Meanwhile 62% of participating countries did not provide information on the participation rates of minority ethnic, religious or linguistic groups. This may be due to the fact that in many countries, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities are excluded groups because of background differences or because they often live in remote rural or isolated locations, which makes it difficult to track and collect information about participation.

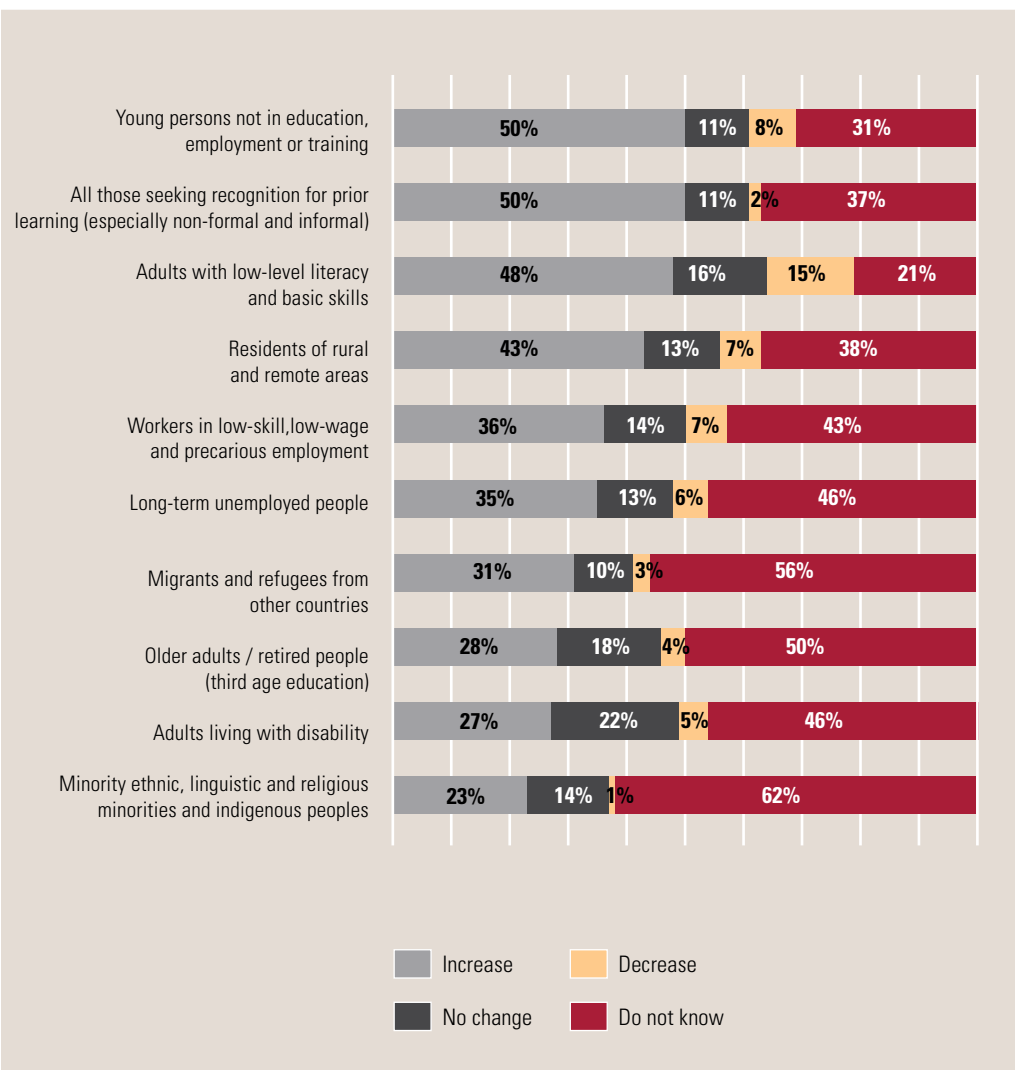
There is also a lack of information available about the participation of migrants and refugees in ALE programmes. 56% of reporting countries indicated that they did not have information on the participation of these groups in ALE programmes. This may be because many host countries perceive these groups as temporary residents in their countries and so do not focus efforts on the collection of information about their participation in ALE programmes.

Adults with disabilities remain a group with very low visibility in terms of their participation in ALE. 46% of responding countries stated that they did not have information on the participation of adults with disabilities in ALE programmes. Adults with disabilities tend to be a vulnerable minority in many countries, but also a heterogeneous group with different learning needs depending on the type of disability. Information tends to be obtained holistically, as part of the welfare provision for adults with disabilities. Finally, there is a lack of information in many countries about the participation rates of older adults; 50% of participating countries stated that they did not have information about the participation rates of older adults in ALE programmes.

Figure 1.14 shows that 50% of participating countries reported an increase since 2009 in the participation of young people who are not in education, employment or training. Likewise, 50% of participating countries reported an increase in the participation of adults seeking recognition of prior learning, in particular non-formal or informal learning. The participation rates of adults with low levels of literacy and basic skills were also reported as having increased. Overall, these trends reflect an increased focus on young adults, in particular those not in employment, and on adults with low basic skills.

Without adequate information on participation in ALE programmes, it is difficult to accurately plan for the future provision and needs of ALE. For this reason, countries pledged in the Belém Framework for Action to gather detailed information on participation in ALE. In

**Figure 1.14**  
Changes in participation rates of different groups in ALE globally



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 5.3: For each of the following groups, how has ALE participation since 2009 changed? Total responses: 139

Luxembourg, for example, an Adult Education Survey and a Continuous Vocational Training Survey are conducted. Luxembourg also collects information on training practices through a national survey covering company training activities and employees' access to training.

Finally with respect to participation, countries were asked to report on significant innovations that have been introduced since 2009 to increase access and participation which could be of interest to other countries. Table 1.8 shows that

69% of countries that responded to this question reported significant innovations. Regionally, 87% of 15 countries in Central and Eastern Europe reported innovations; in sub-Saharan Africa, 78% of countries reported innovations to increase access and participation. By income group, proportionally more innovations took place in low-income countries. Some 81% of the 16 countries in the low-income group reported innovations to increase access and participation in ALE programmes since 2009, a higher proportion than in the other income groups.

**Table 1.8**  
**Number of countries globally, by region and by income group that report significant innovations to increase access and participation in ALE programmes since 2009**

	<b>Total no. of responses to question</b>	<b>Countries that have introduced significant innovations</b>	<b>(%)</b>
<b>WORLD</b>	115	79	69%
<b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	27	21	78%
Arab States	10	6	60%
Asia and the Pacific	24	14	58%
North America and Western Europe	19	11	58%
Central and Eastern Europe	15	13	87%
Latin America and the Caribbean	20	14	70%
<b>INCOME GROUPS</b>			
Low Income	16	13	81%
Lower Middle Income	29	21	72%
Upper Middle Income	30	17	57%
High Income	39	28	72%

Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 5.4: Has your government introduced any significant innovation in ALE to improve access and participation since 2009 that could be of interest to other countries?

Examples of innovation to increase participation in ALE programmes as reported by countries include the following:

- The State Strategy for the Development of Education provides for the establishment of regional resource centres for participants in ALE throughout Azerbaijan.
- In Bahrain, increasing participation, in particular that of women, has been achieved by providing transportation to adult education centres from meeting points close to their homes as well as by awarding grants for learners who have completed women's preparatory stage and are moving into continuing education courses in various fields.
- Belize introduced an alternative high-school equivalency certificate programme in each of six districts in order to increase participation in adult learning. In addition, the government partnered with the private sector to implement a programme for young adults and adults known as the Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship Programme.
- Cyprus introduced the Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning, part of the Europe 2020 strategy, which aims to increase the participation of adults in education and training through awareness campaigns, information days, booklets, and other information material.
- The Young Adults' Skills Programme is part of the Government of Finland's Youth Guarantee scheme. The programme is aimed at young people aged between 20 and 29 who lack a post-basic education qualification. Through the skills programme, young adults are provided with an opportunity to complete a vocational qualification or part thereof. Training leading to a vocational qualification can

- be provided at an educational institute or in the form of an apprenticeship. Reaching out to the target group and providing guidance and counselling during studies are an important part of the programme.
- Men-only literacy classes have been established in some remote parts of Kenya in order to boost the participation of men by following cultural traditions. In addition, mobile ALE programmes and mobile libraries have been established for nomadic people, while evening programmes are offered in urban centres such as Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombasa and Mandera to enable working populations to access learning after regular working hours. Furthermore, learners are involved in generating their own reading materials. This helps them to identify with their learning materials and encourages participation.
  - The Government of the Republic of Korea runs projects such as the Lifelong Learning Cities Project and Lifelong Learning Centres for Happiness. These projects aim to increase participation by building facilities near residential areas and offering customized learning programmes that reflect specific community needs. Lifelong Learning Centres for Happiness prioritize residents in rural communities who lack lifelong learning opportunities. The centres are created by restructuring existing facilities such as libraries, community centres, senior citizen centres and facilities at apartment complexes. All Lifelong Learning Centres for Happiness have managers on site.
- Literacy programmes have also achieved success in boosting participation. One such programme is described in Box 1.9.

#### **Box 1.9**

#### **Boosting participation in adult literacy programmes: the Aksara Agar Berdaya (AKRAB) programme in Indonesia**

The Aksara Agar Berdaya (AKRAB) programme in Indonesia offers both basic and advanced literacy training in local languages and Bahasa Indonesia for adults. One of the main strengths of the AKRAB programme is that multiple stakeholders are involved in its coordination and implementation. Whereas the design of the AKRAB programme is the responsibility of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, other ministries are also involved, such as the Ministry of Public Welfare, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Women's Empowerment. Provincial and municipal authorities are involved in implementing the programme, as are a wide range of organizations, including non-governmental organizations, women's groups, community learning centres, religious institutions, environmental groups and universities. The AKRAB programme has been very successful with regard to participation. Between 2008 and 2012, more than 4 million people participated, more than 3 million were awarded a literacy certificate, more than 3,500 adult literacy tutors received training and more than 6,179 community reading gardens were made available in public areas. The number of community learning centres increased by 30% between 2007 and 2012, and gender disparity decreased from 4.32 in 2007 to 2.7 in 2011.

*Source: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2012a.*



## 1.6 QUALITY

As stated in the Belém Framework for Action, 'quality in learning and education is a holistic, multidimensional concept and practice and demands constant attention and continuous development' (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010). Different dimensions of quality in the provision of ALE programmes have been put forward for monitoring purposes since *GRALE I*, including relevance, equity, efficiency and effectiveness. *GRALE II* highlighted the fact that many countries have developed and applied quality criteria, yet conceptualizations and definitions of these criteria vary widely.

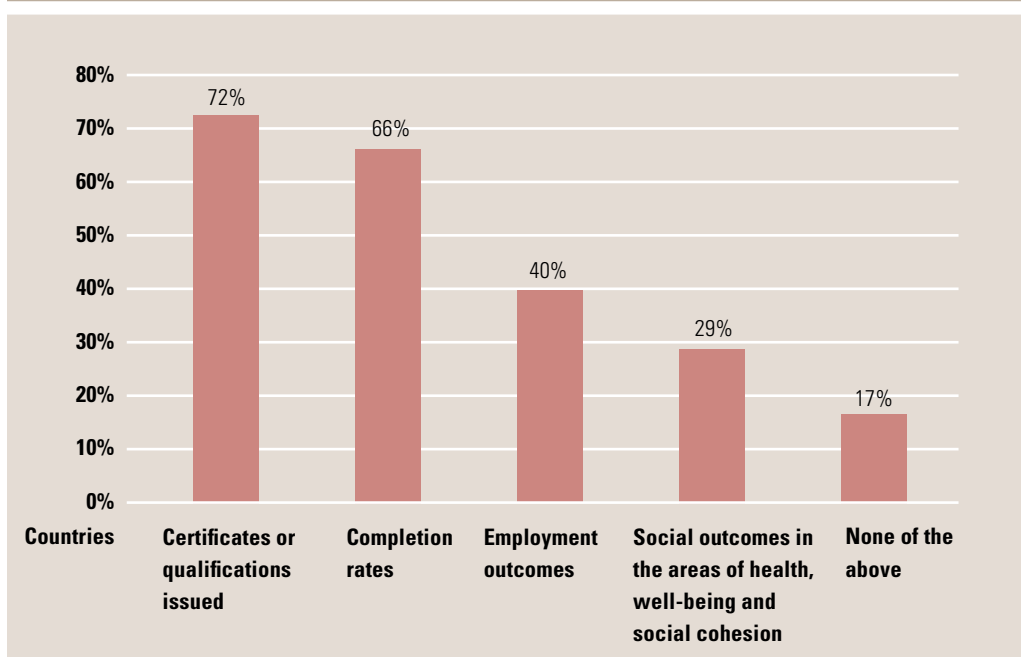
*GRALE III* defined the following key five areas for monitoring quality in the provision of ALE:

1. Systematic collection of information.
2. Existence of pre-service education and training programmes for ALE teachers and facilitators.

3. Requirement of initial qualifications for teaching in ALE programmes.
4. Existence of continuing, in-service education and training programmes for adult learning teachers and facilitators.
5. Substantial research produced on specialized topics for ALE.

As shown in Figure 1.15, 66% of all countries participating in *GRALE III* reported that they collect information on completion rates, and 72% reported that they collect systematic information on certificates issued. These are identifiable outcomes that can be easily tracked. However, only 40% of countries reported systematic collection of information on employment outcomes, and only 29% reported collection of information on wider social outcomes. Information on certificates and qualifications issued, as well as on completion rates, is something that ALE providers can easily gather themselves, whereas information on economic and social benefits is much

**Figure 1.15**  
Percentage of countries globally that systematically collect information on different outcomes of ALE



Source: *GRALE III* monitoring survey, Question 6: Does your country systematically collect information about the following ALE outcomes? Total number of responses: 139.

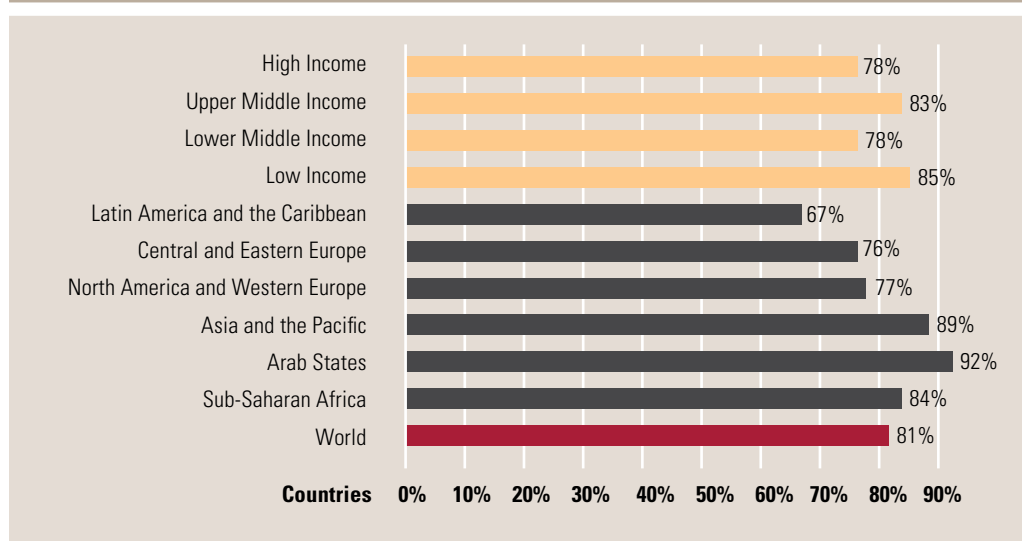
harder to obtain and requires different methodological approaches for data collection, inter-agency participation and a longer-term timescale for analysis. Figure 1.15 also shows that 17% of countries, corresponding to 23 countries, do not collect any systematic information on the outcomes mentioned in the monitoring survey.

In terms of initial, pre-service education and training programmes for adult educators and facilitators, 81% of 134 responding countries reported that these programmes exist already (Figure 1.16). By income level, there is little variation in the proportion of countries where initial, pre-service training is provided for adult educators. Information on the existence of initial, pre-service education and training programmes for adult educators does not include the proportion of ALE teachers who actually engage in training, but simply indicates that the training exists. This is a broad indicator, but one for which it is easier to gather comparable data. Furthermore, it is important to note that while the

training of education personnel is important, quality is not solely dependent on training. Teachers' motivation and pecuniary and non-pecuniary incentives as well as infrastructure, materials and curricula also play an important role. Finally, the provision of initial training should not be associated only with formal provision of ALE. Adult educators and facilitators should be provided with initial and continuing training, even when the delivery of ALE is non-formal.

The Government of the Republic of Korea established the Lifelong Learning Educator system, a national certification system for professional educators working in the lifelong education sector that aims to guarantee a high quality of teaching and learning. In Article 24 of the Lifelong Education Act, a lifelong learning educator is defined as 'a field specialist responsible for the management of the entire lifelong learning process, from programme planning to implementation, analysis, evaluation, and teaching.' To be certified as a lifelong learning educator, individuals must obtain a number of

**Figure 1.16**  
Percentage of countries by income group, by region and globally in which there are initial, pre-service education and training programmes for ALE teachers



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 6.2: Are there initial, pre-service education and training programmes for ALE teachers/facilitators in your country? Total number of responses globally: 134. By region: sub-Saharan Africa 32; Arab States 12; Asia and the Pacific 27; North America and Western Europe 22; Central and Eastern Europe 17; Latin America and the Caribbean 24. By income group: low income 20; lower middle income 32; upper middle income 35; high income 46.

academic credits in a related field from a university or graduate school, or they must complete training courses provided by designated institutions. In addition the Lifelong Education Act prescribes 'the placement and employment of lifelong learning educators,' making it mandatory for municipal and provincial institutes for lifelong education as well as lifelong learning centres in cities, counties and villages to employ lifelong learning educators. Schools and preschools that run lifelong learning programmes are also advised to hire lifelong learning educators (Republic of Korea Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2009).

Adult educators are not always required to have qualifications to teach, in part because so few training opportunities are offered. In fact, Figure 1.17 shows that less than half (46%) of the 134 responding countries reported that pre-service qualifications are a requirement to teach in ALE programmes. A further 39% reported that in some cases pre-service qualifications are required to teach in ALE programmes, whereas 15% reported that qualifications are not required to teach in ALE programmes.

South Africa reported that the government has provided unemployed graduates and youths who have senior secondary-school certificates with short-term contracts to teach adults literacy and basic skills. This highlights a lack of qualified teachers in the field of ALE. The point to stress is that qualifications alone do not guarantee the professionalism of adult educators; however, ensuring professionalism does entail providing initial and continuing training, employment security, fair pay, opportunities to grow, and recognition for good work in reducing the educational gap in the adult population.

An important development with respect to qualifications and quality assurance in ALE was described by Bahrain, which has set up the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training. This authority formulates quality standards for curricula, teaching methods and assessment. The authority has the following duties:

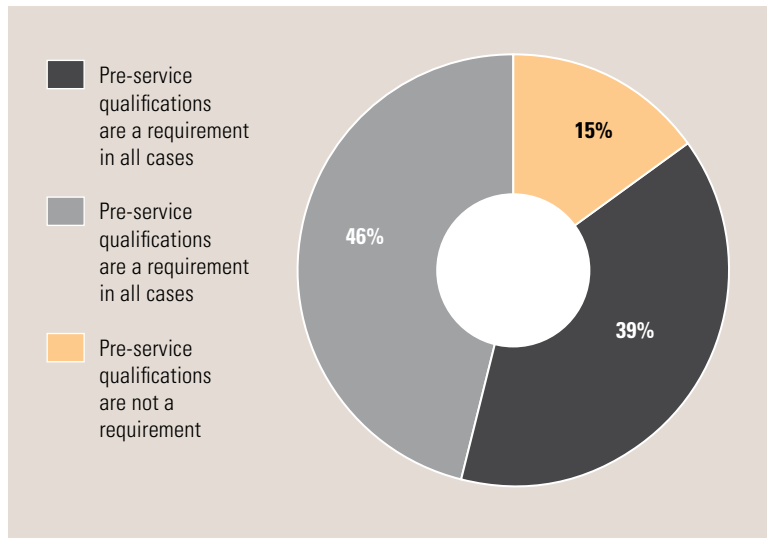
- (1) to set standards and guidelines for measuring the performance of educational and training institutions, and to map national qualifications;
- (2) to conduct quality reviews of education and training institutions in order to ensure accountability and improve the quality of output;
- (3) to develop and implement a national examination system that provides a reliable assessment of learners' achievement in the pre-university stages;
- (4) to manage the national qualifications framework, which covers all forms of learning and accommodates outcome-based national qualifications that meet the needs of the country's labour market;
- (5) to publish accurate and transparent reviews, qualifications and national examination reports for quality enhancement and decision-making;
- (6) to build national capacities to support quality enhancement and sustainability in education and training institutions in Bahrain; and
- (7) to enhance partnership and communication with the relevant bodies.

In addition to initial training, continuing professional development is important to maintain the quality of educational provision in ALE. Figure 1.18 shows by income group the percentage of responding countries that have in-service professional development for ALE personnel. Globally, only 31% of countries reported having continuing in-service professional development with sufficient capacity, whereas 54% of countries reported having continuing professional development but with inadequate capacity, and 14% reported not having continuing professional development at all. By income group, 70% of low-income countries, 61% of lower middle-income countries, 52% of upper middle-income countries and 43% of high-income countries reported inadequate capacity for continuing professional development.

The creation of knowledge and information provides a strong basis for improving quality. For this reason, research produced in specialized ALE topics is the final element of quality for which monitoring information is provided. Countries reported on whether they have conducted substantial research since 2009 on learning outcomes, quality, diversity, the impact of new technologies or equity in ALE (see Figure 1.19). Globally, 52% of countries reported having conducted substantial research on learning outcomes, 50% reported substantial research on quality criteria for teaching and learning, including curricula and pedagogy, 39% on diversity of providers, 33% on equity issues in ALE, and 29% on the impact of new technologies on ALE.

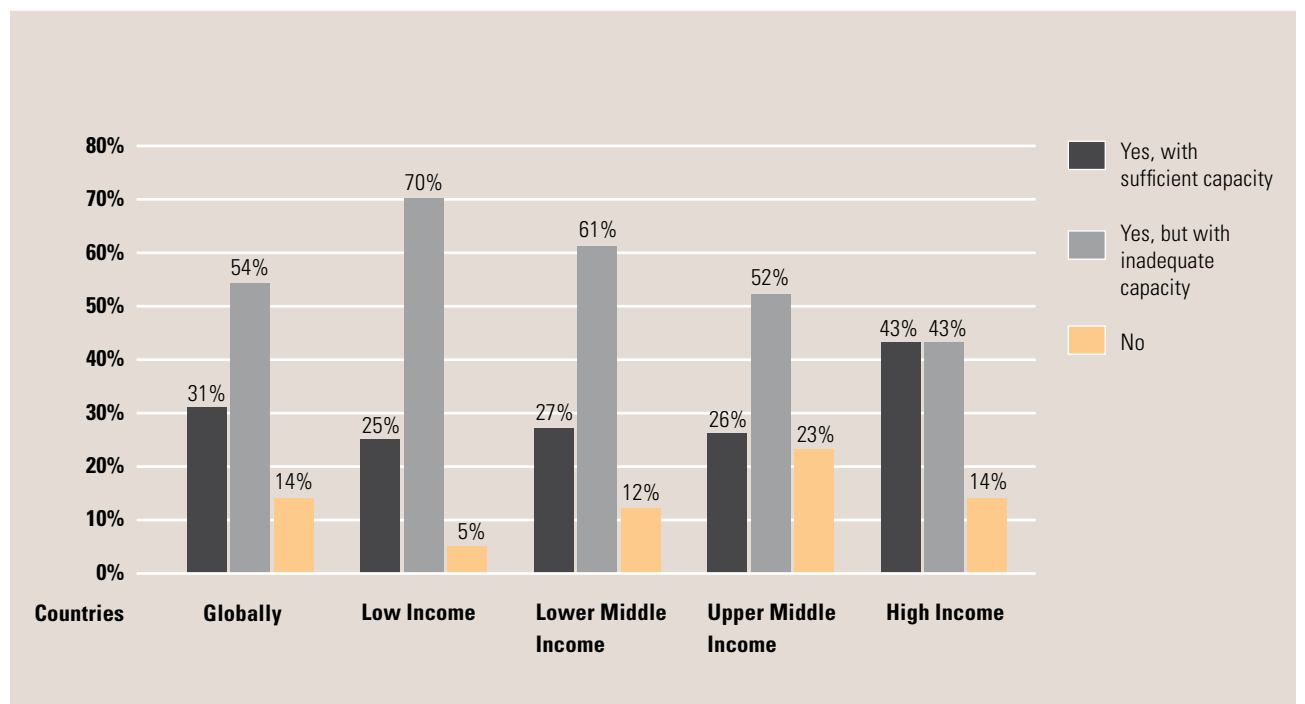
Germany reported extensively on research activities, data and other information related to the quality of ALE. Some examples include:

**Figure 1.17**  
Percentage of countries globally in which pre-service qualifications are a requirement to teach ALE programmes



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 6.3: Are initial, pre-service qualifications a requirement to teach in ALE programmes?  
Total number of responses: 134.

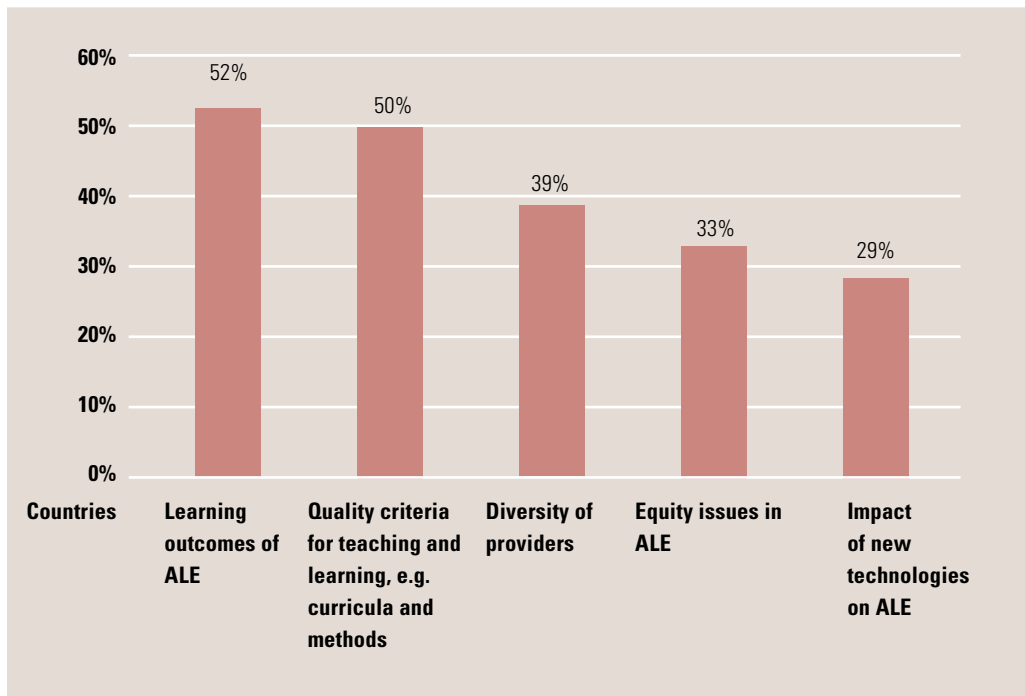
**Figure 1.18**  
Percentage of countries globally and by income group that provide in-service education and training programmes for ALE teachers and facilitators



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 6.4: Are there continuing, in-service education and training programmes for adult education teachers/facilitators in your country? Total number of responses: 127. By income group: low income 20, lower middle income 33, upper middle income 31, high income 42.

**Figure 1.19**

**Percentage of countries globally that have conducted substantial research on ALE learning outcomes, quality criteria, diversity of providers, equity issues and impact of new technologies**



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 6.5: Since 2009, have there been any substantial analyses of the following issues in your country? Total number of responses: 139.

1. The Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (German Institute for Adult Education) produces a publication entitled *Trendanalyse* (Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung, 2013) which gathers and analyses research on ALE. The publication deals with ALE providers, staff, courses and programmes, participation, funding, competences and qualifications, and governance structures.
2. The open-access online database Research Map for Adult and Continuing Education (<http://www.die-bonn.de/weiterbildung/forschungslandkarte/default.aspx?lang=en>) allows users to search for ongoing and completed research projects in the field of ALE. This database was developed by the Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung in cooperation with the adult education division of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft (German Educational Research Association).
3. The *leo. Level-One Study* on functional illiteracy was conducted by the University of Hamburg between 2009 and 2012 (Grotlüschen, 2012). It aimed to provide differentiated information on literacy levels in Germany, especially for the lower competency level, known as 'level one'. The study not only provided the first reliable figures on the extent of functional illiteracy in Germany, but also provided substantial data on the living conditions of the group concerned.
4. Finally, countries were asked to report on whether they have introduced significant innovations or developments to improve the quality of ALE since 2009. Table 1.9 shows that 65% of countries globally reported significant innovations in the quality of ALE since 2009. There is no clear indication that innovation with respect

**Table 1.9**  
Countries globally, by region and by income group that have introduced significant innovations to improve the quality of ALE since 2009

	Total no. of responses to question	Countries that have introduced significant innovations	(%)
<b>WORLD</b>	116	75	65%
<b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	27	16	59%
Arab States	12	7	58%
Asia and the Pacific	22	16	73%
North America and Western Europe	18	11	61%
Central and Eastern Europe	14	10	71%
Latin America and the Caribbean	23	15	65%
<b>INCOME GROUPS</b>			
Low Income	16	9	56%
Lower Middle Income	30	22	73%
Upper Middle Income	32	18	56%
High Income	37	26	70%

Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 6.6: Since 2009, has your country introduced significant innovations to improve the quality of ALE?

to the quality of ALE is dependent on countries' income. This is not to say that financial resources play no role in the quality of ALE, but simply that innovation is possible regardless of economic resources.

developed the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework, which was released in April 2012. This is a competency-based framework that supports the development of adult learners and literacy programming.

Examples of innovation in the quality of ALE reported by countries include the following:

- Canada reported significant innovations to improve the quality of ALE in several provinces and territories since 2009. For example, Manitoba developed a credential for adult literacy instructors and partnered with the University of Manitoba to deliver a course on adult literacy instruction. New Brunswick developed a quality framework for providers of community adult learning services. The Northwest Territories developed a modularized curriculum and resources for low-level literacy maths courses that were piloted in 2015/16. Ontario
- Egypt established the National Agency for Excellence and approved the elaboration of quality standards in adult education. The agency developed a mechanism for accrediting assistant literacy and adult education trainers at regional level as well as professional literacy and adult education trainers at regional level.
- The Adult Education Act (2015) in Estonia determines outcome-based curricula for continuing education. The aim of the new act is to increase the transparency and quality of continuing education and enlarge continuing education providers' responsibilities.

- In Hungary, the Adult Education Law states that if the aim of the education or training is vocational, if it involves language learning or if it is funded by the State, the training provider must have the appropriate licence from the Government. The objective of the issue of licences is to have a reliable quality system in each adult education or training institution as well as a higher level of transparency.
- In Kenya an integrated education management system has been introduced and materials reviewed to make them more relevant to the needs of adult learners.
- A National Diploma in Teaching Adults has been introduced by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning in Malta. At the graduate level, a master's degree in adult education has been introduced by the University of Malta with two specializations, one in community education and the other in adult training.
- The Government of Nicaragua has declared the eradication of illiteracy a priority. As a result, there has been an increased focus on implementing literacy modules, with flexibility in modalities and an increased supply of teachers in remote rural areas.
- To support systematic quality assurance, the National Agency for Education in Sweden has developed a comprehensive tool for quality self-evaluation.
- Zambia has developed guidelines for open and distance learning institutions. In addition, basic and functional literacy materials have been developed in local languages and adult literacy training manuals for methodologies have been developed.

## CONCLUSIONS

The following main conclusions can be drawn about monitoring the quality of ALE. Firstly, the systematic collection of relevant information has increased since 2009. However, there is still a shortage of information on the economic and non-economic outcomes of participation in ALE. Monitoring is also being hindered by a lack of internationally comparable data. Secondly, the existence of pre-service training, initial qualifications for ALE instructors and in-service education and training programmes for adult educators are all important aspects of ensuring high-quality provision. However, they are not the only aspects. Monitoring the quality of educational provision requires that systems continue to examine the institutionalization of ALE as well as its funding base, curricula, availability and modes of delivery. Adult educators require support in providing instruction that meets learners' needs. Finally, research in the field of ALE should continue to inform policies and practices, as knowledge and information have a crucial role to play in improving the quality of ALE.



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# PART TWO

## INTRODUCTION

ALE needs to be seen as part of a larger set of social, cultural and economic practices. Placing ALE into the broader picture of sustainable development is the objective of this part of the report, which examines how ALE interacts with and impacts on the following three important domains: health and well-being; employment and the labour market; and social, civic and community life. Each chapter reviews the latest evidence and literature on the links between ALE and these policy domains. The chapters also present case studies from around the world that provide lessons for policymakers and ALE practitioners. The chapters confirm the benefits of ALE and provide arguments for governments, the private sector and individuals to invest in ALE. However, the chapters also exercise due caution: many of the links between ALE and broader social and economic outcomes are indirect. Establishing direct causal relationships is not always easy, nor indeed advisable.

With many countries experiencing unprecedented population ageing, spending on health and health-related issues is becoming a contentious policy issue. ALE could be a smart long-term

investment that may ultimately help reduce health-related expenditure. Understanding how ALE promotes better health and well-being is therefore becoming increasingly important. This is the topic of Chapter 2.

In sub-Saharan Africa, much has been written about a youth bulge and demographic dividends. For the countries concerned, ensuring that young women and men have opportunities for decent work will undoubtedly become an increasingly urgent task. These countries will need to develop a solid understanding of how ALE can help citizens enter and remain in labour markets, a topic discussed in Chapter 3.

Finally, understanding how ALE affects social, civic and community life will become crucial for all countries. As discussed in Chapter 4, ALE can help countries promote social cohesion and greater understanding between citizens of different cultural backgrounds. It can also address growing concerns over voter apathy, declining trust in political institutions and increasing community fragmentation.



## CHAPTER 2

## HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The basic link between health and education is well-established: more educated individuals are more likely to know how to take care of their health, and so more educated societies are likely to have healthier populations. This chapter seeks to go further, however. It examines and presents the latest evidence on the complex links between education and health. It identifies the benefits for health and well-being of education in general, and of ALE in particular.

The chapter begins with an explanation of why it has become more important than ever that policymakers understand and strengthen the links between education and health. This is followed by a brief discussion of the complex nature of the relationship between education and health. The chapter then outlines the many direct and indirect ways in which ALE can affect the health and well-being of individuals and societies before presenting case studies showing how the links between ALE and health can play out in practice.

After that, the chapter asks whether countries are recognizing and responding to the positive links between ALE and health. Here, the responses to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey are very revealing. One might assume that countries have taken measures to ensure that the benefits of ALE for health are maximized. However, the survey reveals that there is still much work to be done. Many countries say that they recognize the benefits of ALE for health and well-being, but only a few countries have put into place relevant coordination mechanisms.

The chapter concludes by calling on countries to overcome barriers to effective intersectoral coordination. By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development, global leaders have recognized the urgent need for whole-of-government approaches. Strengthened by the evidence in this chapter and the political momentum behind the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, countries should be ready to take action.

### 2.1 WHY THE LINKS BETWEEN ALE AND HEALTH ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

Governments have long agreed that positive health outcomes depend on action across sectors. The 1978 Declaration of Alma-Ata (World Health Organization, 1978), for example, called for coordination with other sectors (including education) in the pursuit of better primary healthcare. As discussed later in this chapter, however, progress in linking the two sectors has been slow.

Today, the need for a coordinated approach is stronger than ever. There are three main reasons for this. Firstly, the cost of health services is rising considerably in many countries. This rise is being driven by a large number of factors, including unhealthy lifestyles, ageing populations, and a lack of health-related knowledge. In member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, public spending on health rose from 5% of GDP in 2000 to 6.5% in 2013. Outside the European Union, total public and private spending on health grew by around 2.6% in 2013 alone, with growth especially strong in Asia and Latin America. In Chile and the Republic of Korea, spending grew by more than 5% in 2013, while per capita spending has risen by almost 25% since 2009 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015;



all figures are in real terms). With budgets under pressure, governments need to consider how health costs can be managed and contained. Education and learning have a major role to play in showing people how to prevent ill health and promote healthier behaviours. In the long run, small investments in prevention can reduce the need for much larger investments in acute care and hospitals.

The second reason why a coordinated approach is important is that in recent decades, the understanding of health has broadened considerably to encompass the concept of well-being. According to the World Health Organization (1948), health can be defined as ‘a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’. Education and learning are a means of achieving such well-being, as they enable people to develop a greater degree of control over the quality and meaning of their lives. Mental health is particularly relevant here. The World Health Organization defines mental health as a ‘state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (World Health Organization, 2014a). To achieve this state of mental health, people need to develop capacities and competences, which implies a major role for education and learning.

Finally, there is growing recognition that single sectors can no longer solve problems on their own. At the global level, the Sustainable Development Goals call for an integrated, whole-of-government approach to policymaking. At the national level, studies are showing that health outcomes depend on much more than just the healthcare system. A study in Canada, for example, found that 50% of health outcomes could be attributed to socio-economic factors such as education and income. Biology and genetics accounted for 15% of outcomes, and the physical environment accounted for 10%. This left just 25% of health outcomes in the hands of the healthcare system (Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2009).

## 2.2 GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE LINKS BETWEEN ALE AND HEALTH

When examining the evidence on how ALE relates to health, it is important to bear in mind some principles. Firstly, while it has been established that education is a social determinant of health (Solar and Irwin, 2010, cited in World Health Organization, 2012), it cannot be assumed that there is a simple linear path from better education to better health. This complexity becomes particularly evident when the entire lifespan is considered. Proponents of ALE have long viewed education and learning as a lifelong endeavour that includes formal, non-formal and informal learning. Similarly, attending to health and well-being should be seen as a lifelong endeavour. As people transition into adulthood and get older, they need to be able to manage their own – and their dependents’ – health, diseases and disabilities. This requires knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes developed not just through initial education and learning, but throughout the lifespan.

A further complexity lies in the fact that learning and health needs vary enormously in different socio-economic and cultural contexts, and also according to gender. What is seen as healthy behaviour in one community may be regarded as unhealthy in another. Different languages, values and worldviews can have hugely significant implications for health and education, as can be seen, for example, in the context of the debates about HIV/AIDS prevention in Africa. Policymakers therefore need to understand how health and education work together in local contexts. They also need to promote mutual learning between families, educators and health professionals (Ntseane and Chilisa, 2012).

At all stages of the lifespan and in all contexts, education and health can interact in ways that are mutually beneficial and complementary. The challenge is to better understand these interactions, make better use of their potential and synergies, and recognize them in policies and practice.

## 2.3 EVIDENCE: HOW ALE CAN LEAD TO BETTER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Education brings health benefits for both individuals and society as a whole. It can lead to better health outcomes (such as reduced disease and better mental health), longer lives, healthier behaviour (such as better diets) and lower health costs (due to less hospitalization, for example). Before discussing each of these specific health benefits in turn, this section offers a general overview of the evidence and trends.

### 2.3.1 OVERVIEW, GENERAL EVIDENCE AND TRENDS

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the many health and well-being benefits that derive from investing in ALE.

Much of the research on the impact of education on health focuses on formal education rather than non-formal or informal learning. It also prioritizes school and higher education for young people rather than ALE. The rationale for investing in education, however, applies to all ages and forms of education. Developing knowledge, skills and competences is likely to improve people's health and well-being, no matter what their age.

**Table 2.1**  
Benefits for health and well-being deriving from investment in ALE

Benefit	Individual level	Population level
Good general health	Better learning outcomes due to less absenteeism from education; less absenteeism from work; greater ability to fulfil family responsibilities and be involved with the community	Increased human capital; full participation of citizens in the economy and society
Healthy behaviours and attitudes	Greater personal responsibility for health	Population with positive attitudes to prevention and health culture
Longer life expectancy	Extended life expectancy; extended period of life without limiting disabilities and therefore with greater independence	Longer disability-free life expectancy; lower care costs
Reduction in disease, doctor's visits and hospitalization	Fewer days of illness; better self-managed health	Lower costs for the public health system due to increased use of outpatient care and decreased use of inpatient care
Better mental health and lower rates of depression	Better coping skills and strategies; better quality of life; greater life satisfaction	More productive, self-reliant population
Intergenerational benefits		Increasing levels of population health



Research has found that education has a strong, measurable impact on health and well-being. In fact, it has been suggested that among the wider benefits that ALE brings, the greatest are to health, mental health and well-being (Dolan *et al.*, 2012). The benefits of learning on health are 'potentially extremely large' (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006), even controlling for genetic traits and family background (Cutler and Lleras-Muney, 2006). For individuals, formal education early in life has long-term effects: there is a strong relationship between educational attainment and health outcomes later in life (Baker *et al.*, 2012). Thus, according to Hannum and Buchmann (2003), 'countries with better-educated citizens tend to have healthier and longer-lived populations, with individuals making more informed health choices and having healthier children'. Furthermore, a survey of adult skills conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development suggested that a person's level of literacy has a direct bearing on his or her health. Literacy remained a significant factor even after controlling for demographic variables, levels of education and labour market status (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013).

Direct attempts to increase knowledge of health issues can be fruitful. For example, communities in eight countries in Central America learned how to avoid using the insecticide DDT in preventing malaria. Instead of DDT, which has adverse effects on the environment and is suspected of being harmful to human health, they were encouraged to avoid storing collected water, improve drainage systems and keep their communities clean. As a result, malaria incidence fell by 63% (World Health Organization/PAHO, 2009).

The effects of education can be both direct and indirect. Whereas the former includes the use of appropriate medication, the latter includes more effective use of health services, healthier lifestyles, better work environments and lower levels of stress (Ronson and Rootman, 2012).

There is evidence of both vicious and virtuous circles in ALE's impact on health. People who are in poor health have shorter

life expectancies, which shortens the period of time during which the benefits of education can accrue (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2003). This, in turn, reduces incentives for investing in ALE. Conversely, a clear understanding of the benefits is linked with longer time horizons and longer life expectancy.

There is some evidence of different effects of education at different stages of the life course. For instance, education has a greater impact on mental health in younger age groups and on physical function among older people (Regido *et al.*, 1999). However, further research is needed to develop a clearer understanding of the links between specific health outcomes and certain types of education. We also need to learn more about the ages at which particular types of learning are most effective.

### 2.3.2 SPECIFIC BENEFITS OF ALE FOR HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

#### Improved Health Behaviours and Attitudes

Education is closely linked with healthy lifestyles and knowledge about health matters. People with more education are more likely to have a greater understanding of health conditions, better knowledge of the available treatments and more skills to manage their health (Higgins *et al.*, 2008). More educated people report spending fewer days in bed and missing fewer days of work due to illness (Cutler and Lleras-Muney, 2006). International studies have linked education to determinants of health such as healthy behaviour and the use of preventive services. Better educated people are less likely to smoke, drink a lot or use illegal drugs. They are also more likely to exercise more, to use seat belts in the car, to get vaccinated and to participate in screening programmes (Feinstein *et al.*, 2006).

There is also evidence specifically linking ALE to better health. For example, a British study found that no matter what path adults have taken in their early years, participating in education between the ages of 33 and 42 has positive effects

on smoking cessation, exercise and life satisfaction (Feinstein and Hammond, 2004). Usman (2009) studied rural adult literacy and health education programmes in five villages in northern Nigeria over a five-year period, carrying out participant observation and focus-group interviews with 30 Fulani nomadic women. The outcomes included health empowerment (i.e. more control over decisions affecting their own and their children's health), the development of knowledge and practices to reduce reproductive morbidities common among pastoral women due to early childbirth and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, better family planning, healthier diets, improved hygienic and sanitation practices, and more collaborative decision-making with spouses due to better communication (Usman, 2009). A study of Swedish seniors who engaged in study circles on nutrition found that they had a better nutritional status than those who did not (Westergren and Hedin, 2010). Research suggests that adult community learning improves both mental health and educational knowledge and skills (Lewis, 2014). Non-formal education through radio, television or mobile phones is also a powerful source of learning about health. In Ethiopia, for example, where hygiene promotion messages were broadcast up to 14 times a day for three years, there was a dramatic reduction in observed dirty hands from 74% to 26%. This led to a 20% reduction in trachoma prevalence without the use of antibiotics (Head *et al.*, 2015).

### **Life Expectancy and Disability-Free Life Expectancy**

Education is a major predictor of life expectancy in most countries, regardless of their level of development. In 1980, 25-year-olds in the United States of America with some college education could expect to live another 54.4 years on average, almost three years more than 25-year-olds who only had high-school diplomas, who could expect to live another 51.6 years. A study conducted in 2000 found that this gap had increased to seven years (Cutler and Lleras-Muney, 2006). Thus while education can benefit some of the population, it can also widen inequalities, which implies that ALE has an important role to play in closing learning gaps later in life.

Education affects both the length of life and the quality of the life. Disability and illness-free life expectancy are widely used as indicators to measure the real benefits of health to added years. Minicuci and Noale (2005), using the Italian Longitudinal Study of Aging, found that recovering from a mild disability added years to peoples' life expectancy, and that higher levels of education increased the probability of recovery and lowered the probability of a mild disability becoming worse. A study across 22 European countries found that people with low education were more likely to report overall poor general health and functional limitations (Kneesebeck *et al.*, 2006). In Denmark, men and women with 18 years of education are up to eight times more likely to report excellent health than those with only seven years (Arendt, 2005).

### **Reduction in Lifestyle Diseases**

Lifestyle diseases are responsible for 63% of global deaths, while 80% of deaths in low- and middle-income countries are due to non-communicable diseases (World Health Organization, 2014b). Medical interventions can provide only a partial solution. Countries also need to improve people's understanding of their situation and knowledge of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. More educated people are less likely to die from the most common acute and chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, cholesterol, emphysema, diabetes, asthma and ulcers.

Preventive education works best if the contexts that people live in are health-supportive. The nature of the food and drinks industry, the level of environmental pollution and the prevalence of poverty are crucial contextual factors for health. Indeed, the World Health Organization (2016a) reports that approximately one in four deaths globally (12.6 million people) are connected to living in an unhealthy environment. ALE provides people with the capacity to shape their own environments and make them healthier.

The results of studies on the impact of education on obesity are mixed. For example, the prevalence of overweight and obesity has been found to be lower among educated people in developed countries (Grossman and Kaestner, 1997;

Cutler and Lleras-Muney, 2006). But Jones-Smith *et al.* (2012) studied the relationship between education and obesity among women in 39 low- and middle-income countries and found that obesity was more prevalent among more educated women, as obesity is a sign of relative affluence. However, the same study found that increases in overweight prevalence were higher among women with lower levels of education. What is clear is that overweight and obesity is becoming increasingly prevalent all over the world. The healthcare costs of this are high, and even small reductions pay off. In the United States of America, the estimated annual healthcare costs of obesity-related illness are \$190.2 billion, which amounts to nearly 21% of annual medical spending (Cawley and Meyerhoefer, 2012). If obesity rates could be kept to 2010 levels, the projected savings would be \$549.5 billion over the next two decades (Finkelstein *et al.*, 2012).

Many countries are implementing or considering implementing education programmes to prevent lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, which is highly dependent on diet, exercise and weight management. The medical costs of treating patients with diabetes and related renal vascular disease are expected to rise. In South Asia, for instance, it is estimated that incidence of type 2 diabetes will have risen by more than 150% between 2000 and 2035 (Nanditha *et al.*, 2016). The International Diabetes Federation observes that 60% of people with diabetes live in Asia, and about one-half of these in India and China (Chan *et al.*, 2009). Diabetes education is among the main ways the federation seeks to combat this problem.

### **Benefits for Well-Being**

In general, ALE positively affects health and well-being. As reported by Sabates and Hammond (2008), 'having higher qualifications is associated with greater happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and reduced risk of depression'. Sabates and Hammond also report that the positive effects of education 'on happiness and well-being result from a variety of intermediary processes, which probably include higher income, non-alienating work, household composition, health behaviours, use of health services,

emotional resilience, social capabilities and, amongst older adults, better physical health'.

Mental health includes states of mind, self-esteem, self-respect, happiness, identity and decision-making. Jack *et al.* (2014) report that low and middle-income countries spend US\$870 billion every year on mental health costs, and that this will likely more than double to US\$2.1 trillion by 2030. 80% of people with mental health issues live in low and middle-income countries (World Health Organization, 2010). Mental health is better among those who are better educated (Cutler and Lleras-Muney, 2006). Colom and Lam (2005) report mental health therapeutic gains when individuals are enabled to understand the complex relationships between symptoms, personality and interpersonal environments.

Different forms of ALE – formal, non-formal and informal – may work better among different groups and at different stages in people's lives. Among older adults, non-vocational courses have been shown to boost well-being by providing mental stimulation and opportunities for social interaction. Qualitative studies commonly report psychosocial benefits for older people engaged in community education (e.g. Narushima, 2008). Sun *et al.* (2013) examined community-based ALE for the prevention of depression and mental illness among older adults in China. The adults who participated in ALE programmes demonstrated improved psychological functioning, mental health and resilience when compared with the control group. T'ai chi and dancing had the most favourable impact on depression, mental health and resilience, while playing a musical instrument and singing had a more moderate effect. Participation in learning – especially learning involving musical and arts activities – was also associated with greater psychological well-being in a large-scale study of older adults in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Jenkins, 2011).

Another longitudinal British study found that adults aged 16 and over with higher levels of qualifications were more likely to report having medium or high satisfaction with their lives. They were also more likely to view their life activities as worthwhile.

Those who had undertaken formal or non-formal part-time education over the previous year had a higher level of well-being than those who had not. Leisure- or interest-related learning also increases life satisfaction (Duckworth and Cara, 2012). In the Benefits of Lifelong Learning in Europe study, which was funded by the European Commission, 84% of adult learners experienced positive changes in mental well-being, and 83% experienced positive changes in their sense of purpose in life (Manninen *et al.*, 2014).

The impact of both formal and informal learning on self-confidence has been found to be very large, more than twice the impact of employment (Dolan *et al.*, 2012). The impact on self-worth was generally larger for men and those aged 40 and over. Many qualitative studies tracking the effects of adult education and training have also identified this benefit (e.g. Schuller

*et al.*, 2004). Adult learning increased self-esteem and self-efficacy and served as a trigger for the uptake of preventive medicine (Hammond, 2003).

### Impact on the Healthcare System

As well as the intrinsic health benefits of improved education, ALE can yield systemic benefits by reducing costs and making the delivery of health services more effective. The estimated additional healthcare expenditure in the United States of America due to low health skills was estimated to be about \$73 billion in 1998. This comprises an estimated \$30 billion for the population that is functionally illiterate and \$43 billion for the population that is marginally literate (National Academy on an Aging Society 1999). Since the literacy rate has not improved and healthcare costs have gone up, this number has surely risen over the past two decades.

#### Box 2.1 ALE and men's health: Men's Sheds

Research examining ALE's effects on men's health is scarce compared with the large body of literature on women's health and well-being. A few studies, however, have focused on a unique grass-roots adult learning movement, 'Men's Sheds', which was initiated in Australia and Ireland (Carragher and Golding, 2015; Golding, 2011; Cordier and Wilson, 2014). The Australian and Irish Governments include Men's Sheds in their National Male Health policies as a part of their gender-specific promotion of health and well-being for at-risk male groups such as unemployed men, war veterans, older retirees, Aboriginals, men living with disabilities, men living in remote areas and gay men. Men's Sheds aim to reduce the marginalization and social exclusion experienced by such men. The movement has since spread to New Zealand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Canada. Men's Sheds programmes are run through local community health and service organizations that offer peer-to-peer and intergenerational mentoring, using shared-interest activities in a male-friendly environment.

An international survey of 383 Men's Sheds coordinators examined the programme's overall trends and efficacy (Cordier and Wilson, 2014). The results show that the vast majority of the participants (e.g. 89% in Australia) rated their mentoring programmes as effective. Key factors behind the effectiveness of the Men's Sheds include their local, informal, regular and social character, and the fact that they involve practical learning in small groups. For example, one activity involves the participants making something together and thereby sharing hands-on skills from their work lives. The survey also found that, in contrast to the stereotypical view of masculine indifference to health and fitness (Golding, 2011), most men expressed a strong desire to learn how to stay fit and healthy.

ALE has the potential to reduce healthcare costs by influencing the way in which individuals engage with and navigate through the healthcare system. Limited knowledge of health information and systems is associated with an increase in preventable hospital visits and admissions (Berkman *et al.*, 2004). A study of adults who stayed overnight in a hospital in the United State of America in 1994 found that those with low health skills averaged 6% more hospital visits and stayed in hospital nearly two days longer than adults with higher health skills. Patients with low literacy skills were nearly twice as likely to have been hospitalized during the previous year, a relationship that held even controlling for health status and socio-economic factors (American Medical Association, 1999).

Participation in formal ALE courses is also associated with a reduction in the number of visits to general practitioners (Dolan *et al.*, 2012). With greater understanding, patients take better decisions and find it easier to comply with instructions from doctors, for example about the use of medication (Muenning, 2000). Furthermore, education can encourage people to use longer planning horizons. For example, they may adopt healthy behaviours with long-term cumulative benefits, and they may invest more in education today, leading to better health outcomes tomorrow (Sander, 1995).

It should be noted here that more educated people may be more likely to recognize the need for healthcare and request health services. They also live longer and, accordingly, could consume more healthcare over their lifetime (Muenning, 2000). More positively stated, better education can help boost public support for better investment in health. The key point is that education can reduce acute stresses on the health system, enabling professional skills to be used more effectively, and freeing up resources for users who need help the most.

### **Intergenerational Benefits and Returns**

Education can lead to positive multigenerational health outcomes, with parents passing on benefits to their children (Hanemann, 2015). For

example, the results of the *Identification and Prevention of Dietary and Lifestyle Induced Health Effects in Children and Infants* study revealed that parents in Europe with a higher level of education were able to provide more nutritious food to their children (Fernández-Alvira, 2013). Similarly, a study from Cameroon found that parents' literacy can affect children's health through breastfeeding and better nutrition (Nouemsi *et al.*, 2007), while in the United States of America, low health literacy among parents is associated with obesity among children aged between 7 and 11 (Chari *et al.*, 2014). In Beijing, China, overweight prevalence among children who took part in a nutrition education and physical activity intervention involving them and their parents was just 9.8% compared with 14.4% in control schools, while obesity was just 7.9% compared with 13.3% in the control group. The intervention included the provision of educational materials to parents, classroom lessons on obesity and a physical activity component (World Health Organization, 2016b). It should be remembered that ALE can also have a more long-term positive effect on the health of younger generations through the influence of parents' education on children's educational attainment (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006).

### **2.3.3 UNDERSTANDING THE LINKS BETWEEN EDUCATION, HEALTH AND INEQUALITY**

According to the World Health Organization, 'health inequalities can be defined as differences in health status or in the distribution of health determinants between different population groups' (World Health Organization, 2016c). Inequality in health cannot be addressed through the health sector alone, but needs to be understood in relation to other drivers of inequality. For example, we know that improving the circumstances of the most disadvantaged people is the most effective way to reduce health inequality (Marmot, 2010). However, these people are the least likely to participate in lifelong learning activities that have positive effects on health.

One place where health and educational inequalities become most apparent is the labour market. Education and health are closely linked with employment and income. People with both low education and poor health find it most difficult to escape conditions of precarious employment and low income, making disadvantage cumulative across the lifespan. Such cumulative disadvantage is also evident if we compare different communities and neighbourhoods. Communities where people have lower levels of education, higher levels of unemployment, lower income and poor environmental conditions are also those where people have lower levels of health, yet such neighbourhoods are poorly served with healthcare provision.

Health inequality tends to be most visible in cities, where high population density is often related to higher disease rates, not only because of easy routes of infection, but also because of pollution, poor housing, limited access to water and sanitation services and other health risks (World Health Organization, 2016*b*). From this perspective, the World Health Organization's estimation that by 2050, 66% of the world's population will live in urban areas, is set to pose new challenges. Furthermore, the absolute number of people living in slums has been continuously rising. Currently, UN-Habitat estimates that the number of people living in slum conditions is 863 million, in contrast to 760 million in 2000 and 650 million in 1990 (World Health Organization, 2016*d*). Developing inclusive, sustainable learning cities, as supported by the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, is a promising way of tackling such challenges.

Gender inequality is a further powerful factor that must be considered when examining the links between education and health. Many countries are not reaping the benefits of equal opportunities. An educated woman is more likely to marry at a later age, to have fewer children and to benefit from better individual and family health outcomes. The 'demographic dividend' – when a country shifts from large families and low life expectancy to small families and long life expectancy – is strongly linked to the learning of women.

The gender gap is not limited to low-income countries, however. Morocco has a per capita income of \$3,450, but 63% of women aged 15 and above remain illiterate.

## 2.4 LEARNING FROM GOOD PRACTICE

The following case studies highlight policy ideas, lessons and experiences from a diverse group of countries. The programmes discussed were not only successful in terms of educational and health outcomes, but also yielded benefits in policy domains such as telecommunications and migration.

### **CASE STUDY 1: mHealth Education and Health Promotion**

The term 'mHealth education' refers to the use of mobile and wireless devices to improve health outcomes at low cost by providing timely, personalized and interactive information. mHealth has been shown to work in both developing and developed countries. Many least developed countries lacking telephone infrastructure have leapfrogged into using mobile phones rather than landlines. mHealth education has been successful because of the reach of mobile technology in these countries: 2 billion people in developing countries use mobile phones (International Telecommunication Union, 2015). Some examples of mHealth education programmes aiming at different health outcomes are provided below.

*Colombia:* Using the mHealth education approach, the Colombian Department of Health sent text messages to pregnant women to inform them of prenatal care, HIV/AIDs testing and vaccination (World Health Organization, 2011*b*).

*India:* mHealth education provides mobile phone users private and personal information that adults may be reluctant to learn in group settings. For example, the Commcare programme in the state of Bihar provided counselling for adolescent girls and women on menstrual hygiene, sexually transmitted disease and family planning methods (National Academy of Sciences, 2010).



*Philippines:* The mHealth education programme to promote breastfeeding and infant nutrition was successful, with evaluations showing that breastfeeding rose and infant mortality fell (National Academy of Sciences, 2010).

*Uganda:* 'Text to Change' is a non-profit organization that cooperates with telecommunication operators to send SMS quizzes educating mobile phone users about HIV/AIDS and other health issues (World Health Organization, 2011*b*).

*United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:* A mobile health tobacco cessation programme was launched by the World Health Organization and the International Telecommunications Union in 2011. As part of this programme, people wishing to give up smoking received motivational text messages and information on medication options, support tools and programmes near their location (National Academy of Sciences, 2010).

*Bangladesh:* The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of Bangladesh tried an experiment in 2007 when it learned of the increasing number of mobile telephone users. On National Vaccination Day, the Ministry sent a text message to all mobile telephone numbers in the country, asking parents to get their children vaccinated. The response was very positive (Rahman, 2007). Since then, the Government has developed the Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021 Plan, which includes health education. In 2010 a service was launched whereby mobile telephone users can subscribe, at a nominal rate, to an SMS service that sends regular text messages on diverse health topics. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was responsible for the content of the text messages and coordinates with Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission for their transmission.

The Bangladeshi Government has transformed a limitation (the lack of fixed telephone line infrastructure) into an opportunity by incorporating mobile technology into health education. This has required close and sustained cooperation between the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the telecommunication regulator and the mobile operators that contribute to

this initiative as part of their corporate and social responsibility. A great advantage is the regulatory framework, which permits the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission to instruct mobile telephone operators to broadcast text messages provided by the ministry and other government agencies. The current mobile telephony network covers 98% of the ministry's target population, so it is an ideal tool for the transmission of health promotion and health education messages. Thus mHealth is inexpensive and has a broad reach.

The ministry is currently evaluating the impact of its mHealth projects. On the positive side, the projects have met with a huge response. For example, messages about an immunization campaign were sent to an estimated 55 million mobile users. The service has also streamlined the workload at the ministry, reducing the paperwork and fixed-line calls. Some shortcomings have been identified, too, however. One limitation is that the messages are in English only. Thus far it has not been possible to send and receive messages in Bangla, the official language spoken by 98% of the population. Another problem has been a shortage of skilled technical personnel in the ministry.

(National Academy of Sciences, 2010; Rahman, 2007; Kaplan, 2006)

## **CASE STUDY 2: Health Education and Literacy Programmes for Hard-to-Reach Vulnerable Migrants**

In 2015, 244 million people lived outside their country of origin. While some migrants are well educated, which eases their integration into the societies of their host countries, many are not. While legal migration (e.g. within economic unions) tends to be well managed, many migrants are hard to reach because they live in paralegal settlements and have no fixed address. Therefore, their needs for health services are difficult to meet, and their health outcomes may be at risk. Half of such migrants are women, most of whom are of reproductive age (United Nations, 2016).



Health programmes for migrants focus on providing them with audio material on healthcare, visual information on how to navigate the healthcare systems and simple health information and vocabulary to enable them to communicate with professionals. Some country examples are provided below.

### **Alberta Network for Safe and Healthy Children**

The Alberta Network for Safe and Healthy Children in Alberta, Canada, has created a set of audio resources on early parenting for immigrant and refugee children who not only cannot speak English or French (the official languages of Canada) but also have low literacy skills in their own language. These ‘Developing Parents, Developing Children’ audio resources are brief recordings available in Mandarin Chinese, French, Somali, Spanish and Sudanese Arabic providing basic information about giving birth, becoming a parent and caring for a young child. They are 5–12 minutes long and include topics such as how a baby will grow and develop over the first 18 months.

### **The Take Care Project**

The objective of the European Union’s Take Care project is to help migrants improve their language skills and knowledge about healthcare in the country to which they have moved. Due to the lack of language skills and basic knowledge on the health system, such migrants are especially vulnerable when they need medical help.

The project has developed two sets of resources. The first set supports the integration and social inclusion of migrants by providing information on the host country, while the second set focuses on health. The latter includes a Healthcare Language Guide for Migrants, which aims to facilitate communication between migrants and healthcare providers in eight European countries.

The Take Care project was commended by experts and was a nominee for the European Association for the Education of Adults Grundtvig Award in 2015. The project products have been piloted by

72 migrant organizations, 85 healthcare providers and 117 language professionals, reaching over 3,300 target-group clients (Take Care Project, 2015).

## **2.5 ARE COUNTRIES RECOGNIZING AND BUILDING ON THE POSITIVE LINKS BETWEEN ALE, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?**

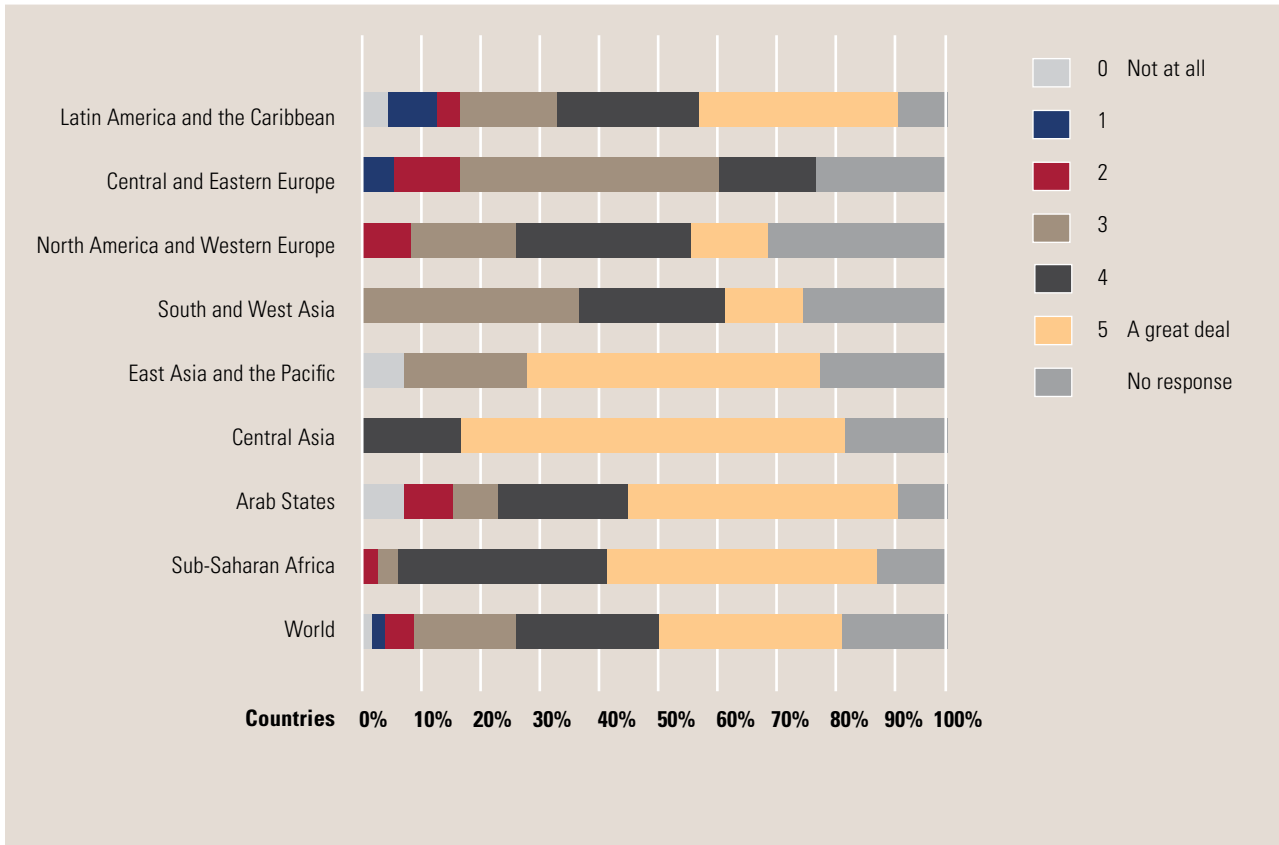
There is strong quantitative and qualitative evidence for the health benefits of ALE, both in the literature and in a number of specific country cases. This section will examine whether and how countries as a whole are recognizing the positive links between adult education and health. It draws in particular on the responses that countries sent to questions in the *GRALE III* survey, the main findings of which are discussed in detail in Chapter 1 of this report.

### **2.5.1 WHAT DO COUNTRIES THINK ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF ALE FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?**

Countries were firstly asked to rate the health benefits of ALE. Figure 2.1 shows that a large number of countries believe that ALE contributes to personal health and well-being. Of the 115 countries that responded to the question about the contribution of ALE to health and well-being, 102 (89%) recognized that it contributes a great deal. In sub-Saharan Africa, where 29 countries responded, 97% recognize the large contribution that ALE makes to personal health and well-being.

Countries were invited to say whether they had actual evidence for the positive impact on ALE, and what particular health benefits this evidence highlighted. Fourteen countries said that ALE has a positive influence on healthy lifestyles. Nine countries reported that they had evidence for the positive impact of ALE on health competencies, and 11 countries said that ALE helped people prevent and live with chronic disease.

**Figure 2.1**  
**Countries that agree that ALE makes a large contribution to personal health and well-being**  
**(by region and globally)**



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 7.1: Indicate the extent to which your country's ALE policy and practice recognizes the contribution ALE can make to personal health and well-being (0 = not at all, 5 = a great deal). Total number of responses: 115.

The *GRALE III* survey illustrates how the recognition of ALE can play out in countries facing similar challenges. Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, and Barbados have similar life expectancies, but vastly differing disability-adjusted life years, with Barbados faring the best by far. Among the three countries, Barbados is the only one that believes that ALE can contribute a 'great deal' to personal health and well-being. It spends more than 4% of its public education budget on ALE.

### 2.5.2 WHAT DO COUNTRIES REGARD AS MAJOR BARRIERS TO ALE'S POSITIVE IMPACT?

Countries were asked which factors prevented ALE from having a greater impact on health and well-being. Illiteracy was by far the most frequently cited factor, identified by 90 countries. Sixty-four countries stated that inadequate or misdirected funding was a factor, while 56 countries named household income inequalities (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2**  
Factors preventing ALE from having a greater impact on health and well-being

Factor	Illiteracy	Household income inequalities	Poor quality of pedagogy, training materials, staff training and capacity	Lack of access to information on ALE programs	Poor inter-departmental or intersectoral collaboration	Community resistance	Inadequate or misdirected funding
<b>No. of countries</b>	90	56	45	41	49	39	64

Source: GRALE III monitoring survey, Question 7.3: For your country, indicate (on a scale of 1 = not important to 4 = very important) how important the following are as factors influencing the effectiveness of ALE for health and well-being: illiteracy, household income inequalities, poor quality of pedagogy, training materials, staff training and capacity, lack of access to information on ALE programmes, poor interdepartmental or intersectoral collaboration, community resistance, country's lack of financial resources, inadequate or misdirected funding.

### 2.5.3 ARE COUNTRIES IMPROVING POLICY COORDINATION AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION?

Reinforcing the positive links between education and health requires greater policy coherence and intersectoral coordination. The challenge is that, in most countries, health and education have their own legislation and budgets, which encourages compartmentalized thinking. Health ministries have health promotion and education programmes, while education ministries have adult literacy programmes that include modules on health skills. There are also some examples of sharing infrastructure, for example when vaccinations are performed in schools or antenatal classes are provided in hospitals. Nevertheless, 49 countries responded that poor interdepartmental collaboration prevents ALE from having greater benefits for health and well-being. Only one-third of countries (40) said that they have an interdepartmental or cross-sectoral coordinating body promoting ALE for personal health and well-being.

Finally, countries were asked: 'How far do different stakeholders (public education agencies, public health agencies, non-governmental organizations, private providers, etc.) collaborate in the design and delivery of ALE programmes in

your country?'. Overall, only 20% of the respondents said that collaboration was effective and successful. The highest rates of success were in the Arab States, with 31% reporting that stakeholders work effectively and successfully, and in North America and Western Europe, where 30% said they work effectively and successfully. Central and Eastern Europe had the lowest rate, with 12% reporting effectiveness and success. Looking ahead, collaboration appears to be increasing in sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, South and West Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

### 2.5.4 THE CHALLENGE OF FUNDING ALE AND OVERCOMING BUDGET SILOS

As discussed throughout this report, ensuring that ALE is adequately funded remains a major challenge in all countries. Alongside the general funding shortage, there is also the specific challenge of funding ALE activities that have particular benefits for health and well-being. The lion's share of public health spending is directed to acute care and hospitals, while spending on prevention and promotion remains small. Considering that health and education represent major budget expenditures for all countries, it is surprising how little priority is given

in budgets to education with spill-over effects on health. Cutler and Lleras-Muney (2006) estimate that the total returns to education can increase by as much as 15 to 55% if one factors in the health returns to education.

As in the case of inter-ministerial coordination discussed above, intersectoral funding remains a major challenge. With each ministry responsible for its own budget, there is limited accountability for positive or negative results in other sectors, and there are few incentives to analyse and evaluate the value of cross-departmental effectiveness. Countries do not have the mechanisms to assess how much increasing adult education spending will affect health outcomes, and vice versa.

## 2.6 **A POLICY AGENDA: TOWARDS MORE COHERENCE IN ADULT EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELL- BEING**

This chapter has stressed the need for greater policy coherence, which would help maximize the benefits of ALE for health and well-being. The chapter set out a rationale for greater coordination, identifying major reasons to consider the links between ALE and health, such as rising healthcare costs, tightening budgets and ageing populations. The chapter then provided the evidence for ALE's health benefits, showing that most countries agree on the benefits and challenges. Finally, the chapter calls for cross-sectoral partnerships between government departments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, with each playing a defined role on a long-term rather than case-by-case basis.

The need for whole-of-government approaches reflects global agendas. The World Health Organization is, for example, examining the links between health and employment (World Health Organization,

2012). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is putting forward a framework for greater policy coherence for sustainable development (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016). However, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us with the strongest global commitment towards policy coherence, as global leaders have emphasized that the new Sustainable Development Goals are 'integrated and indivisible' (United Nations, 2015). They have agreed that, in the pursuit of sustainable development, the environmental, economic and societal goals are inseparable.

The holistic nature of sustainable development has crucial significance for the health and education links that we have explored in this chapter. A damaged environment has negative effects on health and, without an educated citizenry, hard policy decisions to improve the environment will not be taken. As we have seen above, inequalities in one area, such as employment, can quickly exacerbate inequalities in others, such as education and health.

But even small educational investments can provide large returns for health. The challenge for policymakers is to translate this recognition into a long-term and multi-sector vision for the population. The vision needs to follow people throughout their lifetime, and ensure that the most marginalized populations are not left behind. There is enormous potential for countries to explore which ALE activities provide the greatest benefits to health and well-being, both at population and individual levels. Policymakers can also establish new legal and financial incentive schemes to promote intersectoral programmes, evaluations, budgets and institutions, for example. They can also seize the exciting opportunities provided by new technologies to connect and promote health, education, literacy and learning.

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## CHAPTER 3

# EMPLOYMENT AND THE LABOUR MARKET

For governments, employers and individuals, investing in ALE represents value for money. Education boosts skills, and people with more skills are more employable. This statement holds true both in theory and in practice. Solid evidence from around the world shows that, as well as enabling people to develop new skills, education and learning lead to higher wages, promote job satisfaction and encourage employees to be more committed at work. As a result, they raise productivity and boost economic growth.

This chapter explores the many links between ALE and employment. It examines the evidence to show how different types of ALE can have different types of outcome for different groups of people. First, the chapter begins with a discussion of why today's policymakers and companies need to understand the value of ALE. The nature of work is evolving, changing the types of skills people need in the workplace. Meanwhile, populations are living longer, and countries need to understand the roles that older citizens can play in the labour market.

Second, this chapter provides an overview of the various positive benefits that ALE can offer individuals, employers and economies. The chapter examines the latest research on how various forms of ALE, ranging from formal vocational programmes to informal learning, can bring different labour-market outcomes (both positive and negative). There is also a discussion of some of the contextual factors, such as social inequality, that can affect the value of ALE.

Third, the chapter presents lessons from a case study on a tailoring course for women in India.

Fourth, the chapter examines whether and how countries actually recognize in principle the value of ALE for the labour market. Drawing on responses to the *GRALE III* survey, the chapter reports that recognition of the value of ALE is widespread. However, investment in ALE remains far too low, both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of public spending on education. Further efforts are needed to raise awareness and convince governments, employers and individuals to invest in ALE, particularly for the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

The chapter concludes with several policy considerations. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, countries have made a commitment to improve ALE and provide decent work for their citizens. It also stresses the links between all sectors of economic and social activity. Alongside the solid 'business case' for investing in ALE, the Agenda provides crucial political impetus for countries to increase their efforts.

## 3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE LINKS BETWEEN ALE AND THE LABOUR MARKET

The world of work is evolving rapidly. Cloud technology, advanced robotics and intelligent software systems are spreading into almost every occupation, including areas that were previously considered only accessible to highly educated people. The 2015 Human Development Report states that

these technological revolutions are changing wages and productivity in labour markets and workplaces

through new ways of contracting and subcontracting, new conditions of work and new business and organizational models. [...] This pace of change will not slacken – the next 20 years will see a continuing revolution in work and workplaces, marked by complexity, uncertainty and volatility. (United Nations, 2015a)

Alongside these technological changes, the world is witnessing major demographic changes. As discussed in previous chapters, people are leading longer lives in almost all countries. This is translating into longer working lives. Older people are in better health, and so are able and willing to work into their sixties and beyond. Governments also need older people to work for longer to keep public finances in check and ensure that pensions and other welfare benefits remain affordable. There are also issues concerning the need to help migrants and refugees enter into host labour markets.

ALE has a major role to play in helping populations adapt to these changes. Adults need support in acquiring new skills and managing the mental, physical and emotional demands of a new labour market. Older generations need particular support if they are to remain in the labour market for longer periods. As the following section will discuss, there is abundant evidence to show that investment in ALE is crucial, but there is work to be done in countering misconceptions. For example, employers are often unwilling to train older workers because they assume that the 'payback period' for such investments will be short (International Labour Organization, 2013). Such an assumption fails to factor in the high turnover rates that tend to characterize younger employees.

### 3.2 **EVIDENCE: THE BENEFITS OF ALE FOR INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS AND ECONOMIES**

Identifying the full range of benefits that ALE can offer labour markets is a challenging endeavour (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007). Since the 1960s, thousands of analyses have provided positive evidence. However, most of these studies have focused on factors that are easy to measure. They examine, for example, how an individual's formal qualifications or years of schooling translate into labour-market outcomes (Feinstein *et al.*, 2004). Far less attention has been paid to informal learning in the workplace.

In order to understand the impact of ALE on the labour market, one must look beyond ALE programmes that cater directly to the labour market. For individuals, ALE activities that meet personal, social, political or cultural needs can be a key pathway to developing their employability and productivity in the labour market. It is worth bearing in mind here an important conclusion from the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, which was held in Hamburg in 1997: 'Work-related adult learning has vocational, cultural, social and political dimensions and to ignore any one of these would mean an impoverishment of adult learning as well as of the workplace' (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1999, p. 17). Thus we take a broad approach in this section, discussing studies on all forms of ALE and examining both positive and negative outcomes of specific ALE programmes. Table 3.1 provides a starting point. It shows that ALE can have an impact for individuals, their employers and the societies and economies in which they live.



**Table 3.1**  
The labour market outcomes of ALE

	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Society and economy</b>
	Earnings	Productivity	Productivity
Labour-market and employment benefits	<p>More individuals are employable.</p> <p>More individuals have access to the labour market.</p> <p>More individuals can progress along the career ladder.</p> <p>More individuals are able to switch employment or even occupation.</p>	<p>Employees are more satisfied.</p> <p>Employees are more committed to their work.</p> <p>The workforce is stable.</p> <p>Employees are able to adapt to technological innovation.</p>	<p>Economic activity rates are higher.</p> <p>More people are in the labour market who are willing and able to work later in life.</p> <p>Tax revenues are higher.</p> <p>The labour market functions better, as more workers are able to change occupations.</p> <p>Entrepreneurship levels are higher.</p>
Wider benefits	<p>Employees are satisfied with their jobs.</p> <p>Individuals are healthier and have a greater sense of well-being.</p>		<p>Better employment has a positive impact on health.</p> <p>Well-functioning labour markets have a positive impact on social cohesion.</p>

Studies from around the globe confirm the many benefits of ALE identified in the table above. However, they also show that the benefits should not be expected too quickly, nor should they be taken for granted. The success of ALE programmes often depends on how well they were designed (internal factors), but can also be highly dependent on external factors, such as societal norms and cultural practices. Thus different types of ALE will have different types of outcome in different contexts. For example, formal qualification-bearing programmes will be particularly important for certain careers in some countries, whereas in others, workplace-based training will be the main source of benefit to both employees and employers.

The diverse impacts of ALE are evident when the results of studies in sub-Saharan Africa are examined. Many countries there depend on very large informal labour markets (Adams *et al.*, 2013). The formal training system remains fragile, and training places are insufficient,

costly and difficult to access. As a result, apprenticeships in the informal sector have become the main source of skills. In Malawi, such apprenticeships have helped individuals find jobs more easily (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2010). In the United Republic of Tanzania, graduates have more than doubled their earnings. Moreover, graduates can earn additional premiums by going on to take further formal or non-formal training (Nübler *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, graduates from informal apprenticeships have greater access to formal training later on. Rosholm *et al.* (2007) found that informal training had positive impacts on earnings and productivity in Zambia. Rosholm *et al.* (2007) also found that training provided by enterprises in Kenya's formal sector had positive outcomes, particularly where training was provided over a long duration. The study also found that outcomes were better in the case of larger firms, which may have greater capacity to absorb training costs and greater potential to benefit from longer-term productivity gains.

Similar findings appear in studies on entirely different economic contexts and regions. One study in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for example, examined the benefits of vocational courses in non-university colleges (UK Government Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013). Among participants of these courses, 35% of men and 29% of women reported that they found a better job after participating in the courses, while 18% of men and 12% of women reported that they received a promotion. About half of men and 40% to 45% of women said that participating had led to greater job security, better pay, prospects of promotion and greater responsibility. Nearly 60% of the study's participants reported greater job satisfaction. This confirms the findings of several other studies examining the links between training and job satisfaction both in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Jones *et al.*, 2009) and in Germany (Georgellis and Lange, 2007; Schmidt, 2007).

Job satisfaction is as important for individuals as it is for employers, since individuals who are satisfied with their jobs are more committed and attached to their organizations (Bartlett, 2001). In a study in Malaysia, Ahmad and Bakar (2003) found a strong correlation between the availability of and support for training and overall organizational commitment. Bulut and Culha (2010) found similar results in Turkey.

More committed workers are also more likely to harness their emotional and creative energies in order to innovate and produce higher-quality goods and services. Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of Vocation Training, found that countries with the highest overall ALE activity were also the most innovative (Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle, 2012). Indeed, ALE appeared to be more closely linked with innovation than tertiary education. This suggests that tertiary education may need to be complemented with training, including workplace learning, for it to make a significant contribution to innovation.

Many studies show the impact of ALE on productivity and company performance. This includes micro-level studies, which have observed that training helps boost productivity and enhance product value at the company level (Barron *et al.*, 1997). It also includes macro-level analysis, which has linked training and education to productivity and economic growth (Hanushek *et al.*, 2011).

These various studies remind us that, when assessing the impact of ALE, it is important to consider both individual- and group-level effects. The Adult Education Initiative in Sweden, for example, brought very positive labour-market outcomes for those people who completed the programme. However, at an aggregate level, it may have had negative effects, since it actually worsened the earnings of people who did not participate (Stenberg and Westerlund, 2008; Albrecht *et al.*, 2006; Ekström, 2003).

A study in Tajikistan (Wallenborn, 2014) found that the outputs and benefits of ALE programmes for poorer people need to be analysed at the micro, meso and macro levels. At the micro level, many participants improved their income and productivity. At the meso level, the links which were initiated between the programme and local administration and businesses were central to the success of the ALE programme. At the macro level, however, institutional problems such as the lack of basic resources like classrooms and equipment and insufficient cooperation with donors resulted in neglect of a systemic approach to ALE.

### 3.2.1 THE DESIGN OF ALE PROGRAMMES CAN AFFECT LABOUR-MARKET BENEFITS

In order to have positive labour-market outcomes, ALE programmes need to be designed wisely. They should be anchored in a clear strategy that engages the right partners and reaches out to the right target groups, especially when these include the most disadvantaged workers (Desjardins, forthcoming 2017).



Stimulating demand and generating good results among disadvantaged workers largely depends on targeting, outreach, strategic purpose and partnerships.

For example, a large-scale voucher programme in Chile in 2011 failed to produce the desired results. Grants were offered to low-wage working adults aged between 18 and 60 to take up training courses at training organizations of their choice. Only 30% of eligible adults participated (Kaplan *et al.*, 2015). While women and people from disadvantaged groups benefited from the programme, the overall impact was negative in terms of employment probabilities and earnings. The lack of a partnership approach bringing together training providers, employers and unions as social partners has been identified as a factor in the disappointing results.

India has had a more positive experience. Its National Skills Development Corporation, which was established as a public-private partnership in 2009, has had very positive response from the private sector (National Skills Development Corporation, 2016). The biggest challenge lies in reaching the masses with quality training while at the same time keeping costs affordable.

### 3.2.2 GENDER IS A CRUCIAL FACTOR WHEN ASSESSING THE BENEFITS OF ALE

The International Monetary Fund argues that raising the participation rate of women in the labour force would bring enormous value to economies around the world (Elborgh-Woytek *et al.*, 2013). In the United States of America, raising the participation rate of women to that of men would raise GDP by 5%. In Japan, GDP would rise by 9%. The figures for the United Arab Emirates and Egypt are very high at 12% and 34% respectively.

Yet several studies have revealed great disparities in how ALE benefits women and men. There can, for example, be a gender bias in the provision of educational opportunities. For instance, vocational education and training programmes – the

form of ALE that is most directly linked to financial gain – tend to be populated by men. Tan *et al.* (2007) found that in industrial training institutes in India, men tended to predominate. One reason could be that the courses were inclined to be focused on electronics and mechanics. Responding to the *GRALE III* survey, 54% of countries stated that men participated more than women in vocational education and training.

Since the study mentioned above, however, India has invested considerably in vocational education and training programmes, and has targeted greater labour-market participation by women. One non-governmental vocational education and training programme in the tailoring industry helped women aged between 18 and 39 raise their employment prospects and earnings. It also boosted entrepreneurship (Maitra and Mani, 2013).

Indeed, the labour-market outcomes of ALE can sometimes be stronger for women than men. This was the case in Sri Lanka from 1992 until 2004. While both men and women benefited from vocational and education training, Tan (2012) found that the results were stronger for women in terms of job prospects, earnings and attachment to the labour market.

A reemployment programme for housewives in the Republic of Korea was found to be less successful, however. Jang *et al.* (2012) found that only 13% of women who participated in the reemployment programme between 2008 and 2011 found jobs within six months of programme completion. Of those who found a job, only a little more than half found regular employment, whereas the others found only temporary jobs. Moreover, it was the younger and more educated women who found contract jobs.

The findings in the Republic of Korea suggest that, more than laws and programmes, societal norms with regard to gender are a major factor in determining the labour-market outcomes of ALE. In many countries, straightforward discrimination in both the workplace and the home remains a major barrier for women entering the labour market. Often,

the skills and qualifications that women gain are considered to have less value (Schuller, 2016, forthcoming).

The Republic of Korea revised its Equal Employment Act in 2007 to prohibit gender discrimination in hiring, wages and promotions. Women in both Japan and the Republic of Korea have increased their levels of qualifications very rapidly. However, the participation rate of women in the labour market remains well below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015), and the gender gap in earnings remains very high. Indeed, all countries are failing to make effective use of their national talents as a result of inequitable and inefficient labour market practices. The International Labour Organization emphasizes the importance of adopting a life-cycle approach to tackling this inequity:

Overcoming the challenges that confront women in gaining access to education and training and in using this training to secure better employment requires the adoption of a life-cycle approach. This includes improving girls' access to basic education; overcoming logistic, economic and cultural barriers to apprenticeships and to secondary and vocational training for young women – especially in non-traditional occupations; taking into account women's home and care responsibilities when scheduling workplace-based learning and entrepreneurship training; and meeting the training needs of women re-entering the labour market and older women (International Labour Organization, 2010).

### 3.2.3 HOW INEQUALITY AFFECTS THE LABOUR-MARKET BENEFITS OF ALE

The prevalence of inequality in a country can have major implications for the role of ALE in improving labour-market outcomes. Consider a country where the income that individuals earn is strongly associated with their qualifications. If, in that country,

access to education is very unequal, then the distribution of labour-market outcomes will also be very unequal. Therefore education does not always reduce inequality, but may actually increase it.

In high-income countries, where most people have quite high levels of qualifications, the average private rate of return to an additional year of education is found to be about 10%. In middle- and low-income countries, there are fewer people with qualifications, meaning that the reward for qualifications is higher. This is the case in Brazil, for example, where the average rate of return to an additional year of education is twice as high as in high-income countries (Carnoy *et al.*, 2013).

At the same time, the plight of the most disadvantaged people may be hidden from view in overall statistics. Overall evidence might suggest major progress in terms of product or process innovation or entrance into new markets. However, where inequality is high, these benefits will mainly accrue to employers and not their workers, who may be subject to exploitative and unregulated working conditions. This is yet a further reminder of the importance of looking beyond micro-level statistics and considering qualitative accounts of the value of ALE, and paying close attention to the overall economic context in which ALE programmes are implemented. How people feel about their job, how far they are committed to their work and how far they trust their employer and the wider social system are key socially related aspects that relate to skills development (Tan, 2012; Schmidt, 2007). High inequality and polarization, generally and in each specific workplace, may thus be an impediment to a high-skill, high-trust model of production based on knowledge and innovation (Brown *et al.*, 2001).

### 3.2.4 ECONOMIC AND MARKET STRATEGIES AFFECT THE BENEFITS OF ALE

When examining the impact of ALE on productivity, it is important to look beyond general measures and to examine the way in which productivity is actually being improved. Broadly speaking, there

are two ways in which productivity can be enhanced. Companies can either enhance the value of their goods ('quality-based' competition), or they can reduce their costs of production ('price-based' competition).

Research shows that the strategies that countries or companies choose are closely related to skills demand and supply (Mason and Constable, 2011; Buchanan *et al.*, 2010; Evesson *et al.*, 2009). In the case of quality-based competition, there is a clear incentive to invest in ALE, as this nurtures innovation and development. In the case of price-based competition, there is very little incentive to invest in ALE. Employers are neither seeking to increase skills levels, nor are they willing to reward individuals with higher skills. Workers, for their part, remain vulnerable but do not see the value in pursuing education. Indeed, the least skilled workers are the least likely to invest in themselves and also the least likely to receive employer support for developing or sustaining their skills (Desjardins, 2014).

In many transition economies and developing countries, the prevalence of low skills makes it more difficult to boost productivity and income via innovation. However, Krishna (2005) argues that the advantages of cheap labour and price-based competition will not last. Accordingly, policymakers are seeking ways of moving their economies up the value chain (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010a). This will require them to foster new skills among their populations and to help people adapt to new technologies such as information and communications technology, bio-technologies and micro-electronics (Krishna, 2005; Hanemann and Scarpino, 2016). Furthermore, technologies will need to be demystified for those without technical knowledge and skills. An example from India is the Barefoot College, a non-governmental organization which trains solar engineers, hand-pump mechanics, communicators and engineers in a range of trades. To move their economies up the value chain, policymakers will not just need to focus on skills supply, but also to boost the demand for skills in local markets (Froy *et al.*, 2009). In this context, Panth (2013)

suggests that South Asian countries could link skills and training programmes to new investments in energy, transport, municipal services and green technologies. This will require interrelated efforts at all levels: basic education, higher education and ALE.

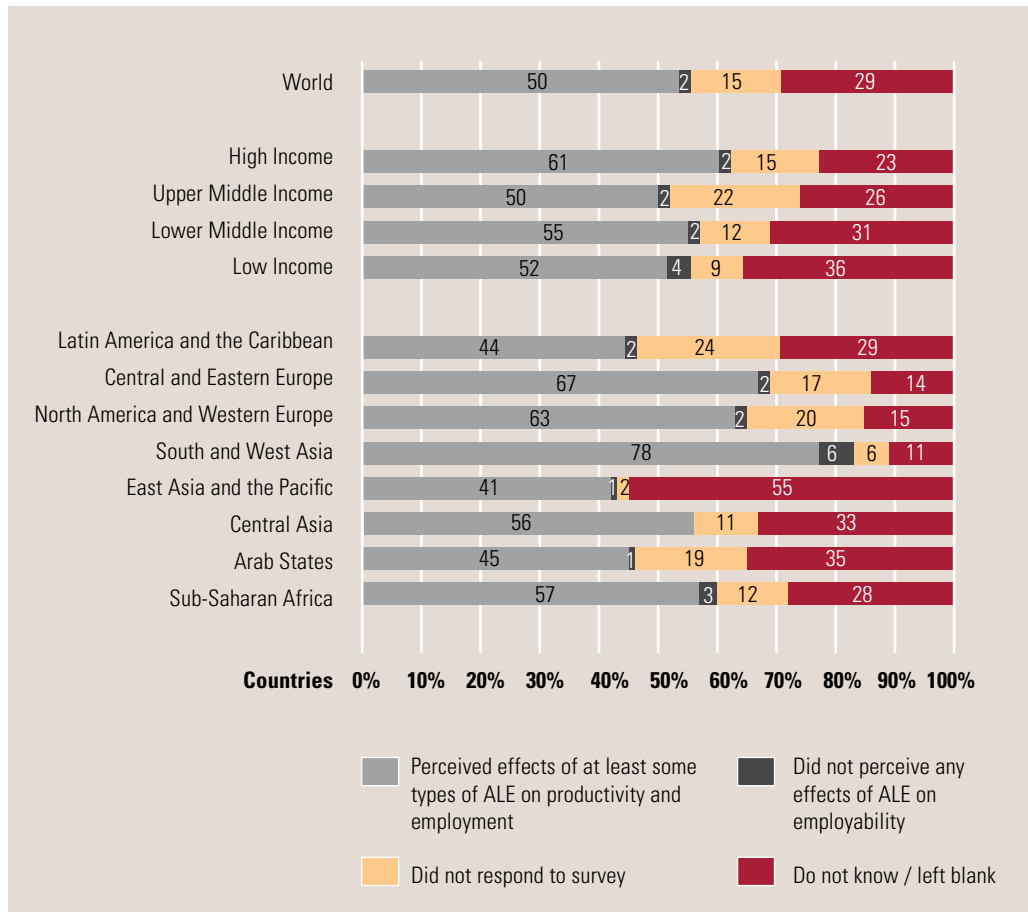
### 3.3 ARE COUNTRIES RECOGNIZING AND BUILDING ON THE POSITIVE LINKS BETWEEN ALE, EMPLOYMENT AND THE LABOUR MARKET?

This chapter has shown that there is an undeniable 'business case' for engaging and investing in ALE, as it can bring measurable benefits for individuals, companies and the public purse. This section considers the extent to which countries, companies and individuals recognize and respond to the value of ALE. It is often assumed that if people think ALE will yield positive outcomes, then they will invest; this is the well-known 'expectancy valence theory' in ALE (Rubenson, 1977). However, this section shows that while attitudes towards ALE are largely positive, the level of investment remains low.

#### 3.3.1 WHAT LABOUR-MARKET OUTCOMES DO COUNTRIES EXPECT FROM ALE?

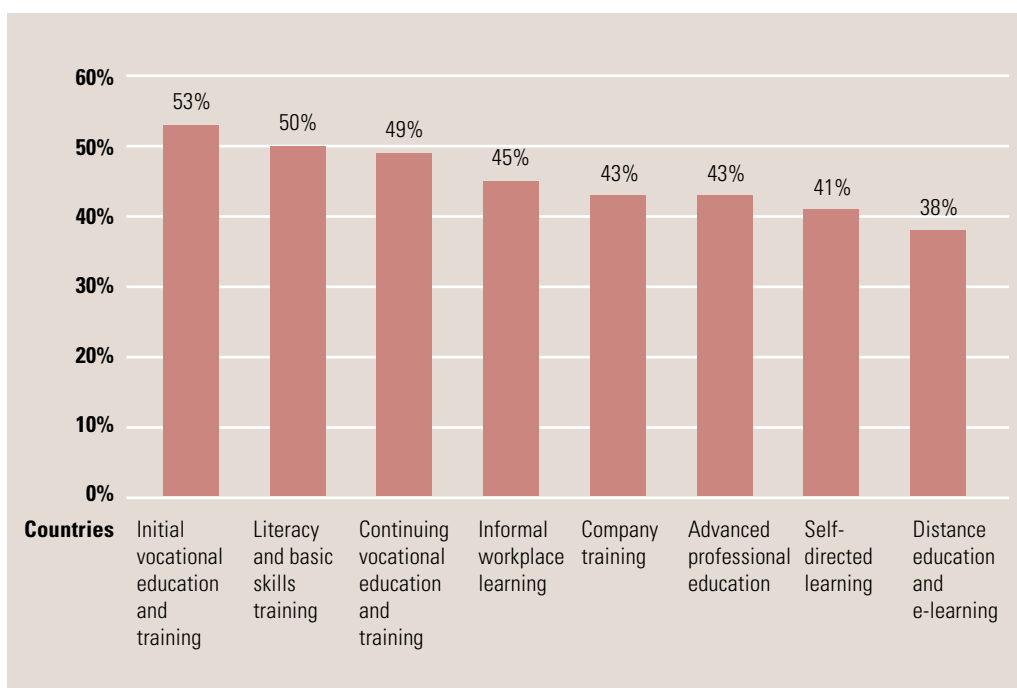
The results of the *GRALE III* monitoring survey suggest that countries have high expectations of ALE in terms of labour-market outcomes. More than half of the countries that responded to the survey agreed that ALE can have 'strong' or 'moderate' effects on productivity and employment (see Figure 3.1). Only about 2% of countries report no perception of impact on productivity and employment, while 15% did not know. The positive perception of ALE is fairly similar across income groups, although high-income countries have slightly more positive perceptions. North America and Europe along with South and West Asia feature the highest expectations for ALE in terms of productivity and employment, while Latin America and the Caribbean along with East Asia and the Pacific have the lowest expectations.

**Figure 3.1**  
Countries' perceptions globally, by income group and by region of the effects of ALE on productivity and employment



Source: GRALE III monitoring survey. Question 9.3. How strongly do ALE policymakers perceive the effects of the following kinds of ALE provision for productivity and employment in your country?

**Figure 3.2**  
Types of ALE that countries view as having the most positive impact on productivity and employment



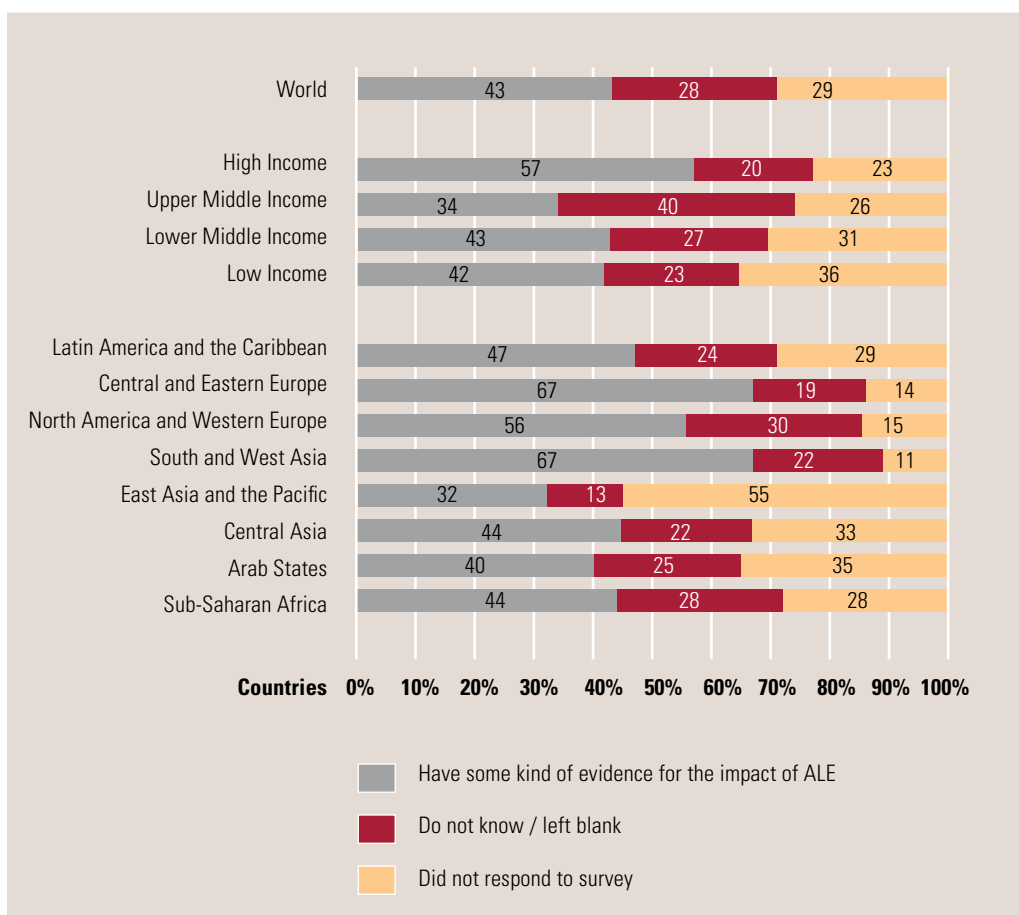
Source: GRALE monitoring survey, 2015, Question 9.3. How strongly do ALE policymakers perceive the effects of the following kinds of ALE provision for productivity and employment in your country?

The survey also asked countries to consider which types of ALE might have the most positive effects on employability. As shown in Figure 3.2, just over half (53%) of the countries that responded saw initial vocational education and training as having the most positive impact.

The *GRALE III* survey also asked countries whether they had evidence to support a positive perception of ALE, as one might assume that countries with higher degrees of positive evidence would be more likely to invest in ALE. More than four out of ten countries reported that they have such evidence (see Figure 3.3).

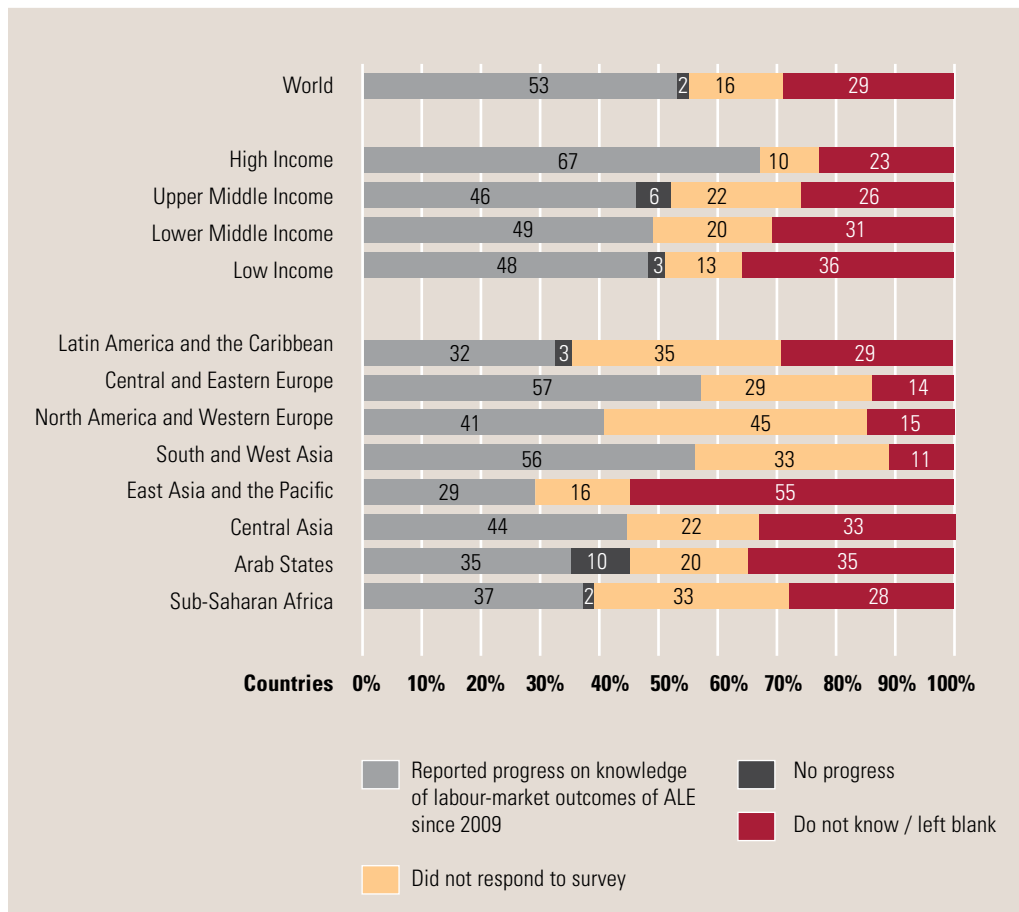
Finally, the *GRALE III* survey asked countries whether they had conducted major studies of the impact of ALE on employment and the labour market since 2009, when the Belém Framework for Action was adopted. More than half of countries (53%) report such an improvement (see Figure 3.4).

**Figure 3.3**  
Percentage of countries globally, by income group and by region that have evidence for the impact of ALE on labour-market outcomes



Source: GRALE monitoring survey, 2015. Question 9.1: Do you have evidence to show that in your country, ALE has a positive impact on the following? Company/organization success (profitability, efficiency, quality of service), innovative capacity, adaptability to change, inclusiveness in respect of disadvantaged groups (e.g. people with disabilities, older workers)

**Figure 3.4**  
**Percentage of countries globally, by income group and by region that have conducted major surveys and studies assessing the impact of ALE on employment and the labour market**



Source: GRALE monitoring survey, 2015. Question 9.4: Since 2009, have there been any major surveys or studies in your country that assess the outcomes or results of ALE programmes for employment and labour market? Total Responses: 112



### 3.3.2 ARE COUNTRIES INVESTING IN ALE?

Countries have evidence for the positive role that ALE can play. However, most countries are not translating this evidence into public spending. Many governments allocate less than 1% of their public education budgets to ALE activities, as discussed in Part 1 of this report. Finland is an exception. It allocates about 10% of its public education budget to ALE. The adult Finnish population also has among the highest levels of foundational skills such as literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013) and among the highest levels of investment in ALE for job-related reasons (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011).

Investing in ALE should not be the responsibility of the public sector alone. Individuals and companies have good reasons to invest themselves. The role of governments here may be to promote cost-sharing through co-financing mechanisms (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005). The idea is to provide incentives for firms and individuals to invest, and to mitigate the risks of investing in ALE (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2003).

At the same time, governments should beware of shifting all responsibility to the private sector. Where investments are driven mostly by market mechanisms (as is the case in the United States of America), there is also a risk of market failure, with the most disadvantaged groups being left behind. Several Northern and Central European countries (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway) pursue social partnership models where responsibility is shared and various stakeholders agree on the strategic allocation of ALE funds.

It is very difficult to establish accurate and internationally comparable estimates of overall private-sector spending on ALE, as the sources and channels of ALE funding vary from country to country. Furthermore, systems to report and collect data are often inadequate. Estimates of spending

by employers on training are often unavailable or unreliable. Similarly, very few countries have information on how much individual households spend on ALE generally and on labour-market-related ALE specifically.

### 3.3.3 WHERE ARE INDIVIDUALS AND COMPANIES ENGAGING IN ALE?

Among the countries that participated in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), countries with higher incomes were more likely to have higher levels of participation in ALE. In Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Germany, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada and Australia, between 30% and 65% of the adult population reported that they had participated in some kind of ALE activity in the preceding 12 months. These are generally the countries that also have the highest rates of employment and productivity. In countries like Italy, Spain, Slovakia and Poland, where rates of employment and productivity are lower, only 15% to 30% of adults said that they had participated in ALE. Less comparative data is available for countries that are not members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, but a 2014 study estimated that between 1% to 10% of adults in Brazil and Viet Nam had participated in some kind of ALE activity in the preceding 12 months (Desjardins, 2014).

Employment prospects are a major factor in motivating both companies and individuals to invest in ALE. In all of the countries for which PIAAC data is available (mostly high-income countries), 80% to 90% of adults who participate in ALE report doing so for job-related reasons, i.e. to obtain a job, keep a job, get promoted or change to a better job (Desjardins, 2014). In these countries, employers also finance between 60% and 85% of all ALE activity (Desjardins, forthcoming 2017). Countries with the highest levels of employer support are also those that show the highest overall ALE activity. Companies that invest the most in ALE

are generally large firms that operate in global markets and foster higher rates of organizational and product innovation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005).

### 3.3.4 PROMOTING ALE FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

The challenge for policymakers is to stimulate ALE investments that benefit all groups, including the most disadvantaged ones. Employer-supported ALE has grown at a faster pace than overall ALE activity, and most employer-supported ALE is aimed at knowledge workers who already have recognized qualifications. Since adults from the most advantaged groups have more opportunities to participate, there is a risk of ALE exacerbating inequalities.

However, there are some good examples of public investment in ALE to help improve the labour-market prospects of disadvantaged adults. Several programmes target literacy and numeracy, a priority underlined in the Belém Framework for Action. Literacy is an essential skill for workers to function effectively, efficiently and safely in the workplace. It is also necessary for adults to be able to navigate the labour market and cope with displacement caused by economic restructuring and other labour adjustments. For the most disadvantaged adults, literacy interventions can help to boost their knowledge of the labour market and support their job search. Box 3.1 discusses a number of examples.

### 3.3.5 ENSURING THAT ALE IS RECOGNIZED AND VALIDATED

Most adults will not participate in ALE simply to acquire new skills. They will need those new skills to translate into labour-market outcomes. This, in turn, depends on how well labour markets recognize and validate the participation and completion of ALE programmes. The recognition and validation of ALE (including recognition of prior learning) is crucial for motivating individuals to invest in ALE and

#### **Box 3.1** **Literacy and the labour market**

Over the last 10 years, a number of countries have launched initiatives to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of the most disadvantaged adults in ways that are directly connected to the labour market. Examples include the Basic Competence in Working Life Programme in Norway and various literacy and essential skills programmes in Canada. Myers *et al.* (2009) conducted a review of the most promising Canadian workforce programmes focusing on literacy and other essential skills. This study generated a number of key insights. Firstly, effective labour-market-oriented literacy and essential skills programmes should be delivered separately from other community literacy programmes. Secondly, there is consensus on the importance of a partnership approach that involves the state and employers, and on the need for programmes tailored to the needs of workers. Partnerships are particularly helpful in enabling stakeholders to work together to identify, assess and prioritize their skill and knowledge needs. Thirdly, it is imperative to create learner pathways that connect skills upgrading with employment and further education and training. Fourthly, employers must be involved in all aspects of employment development programmes, including designing programmes, providing work experience and changing recruitment practices. Finally, results highlighted the need for government intervention, particularly with regard to financial support, and the need for outreach activities to stimulate demand.

Non-formal literacy and essential skills programmes are successful when they adopt an integrated approach combining life skills with technical and vocational skills. The recognition, validation and accreditation of the skills participants already possess is a major factor in empowering adults and motivating them to take up self-directed learning.

take on associated risks (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010b).

Many countries have already understood the importance of connecting non-formal education to recognized qualifications. Countries like the Netherlands and Finland are strengthening their adult skill profiles and continually developing their qualification structures (Singh, 2015a; Singh and Duvekot, 2013; Gaylor,

2015). In countries like Ghana, Mauritius, China and India, ALE is being linked to formal qualifications. The new national qualifications system in Ghana is expected to recognize non-formal education that is linked to skilled trades (Baffour-Awuah, 2013).

An ongoing challenge for all countries is to ensure that there is a degree of coherence between the recognition of non-formal ALE and the qualifications that can be obtained within the regular education system (Singh, 2015*b*; Singh and Duvekot, 2013; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning / European Training Foundation / Centre européen pour le développement de la formation professionnelle, 2015). A further challenge is to address the lower status and stigma that may be attached to ALE, non-formal learning or 'lower-tier' educational tracks. A study in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland found that when adults had acquired formal qualifications beyond the 'normative' age, there was no measurable impact on individuals' wages (Feinstein *et al.*, 2004). Employers may mistakenly consider older graduates less motivated or less able to perform certain tasks.

To support the recognition issue, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has worked with UNESCO Headquarters, Cedefop and the European Training Foundation to develop a *Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks*. This inventory showcases and analyse how countries use frameworks as reference points and as sources of quality assurance for recognition processes (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning / European Training Foundation / Centre européen pour le développement de la formation professionnelle, 2015).

### 3.4 LESSONS FROM A CASE STUDY

The following study illustrates some of the issues addressed in this chapter and highlights the need to contextualize the evidence. In this study, Maitra and Mani (2013) report the effects of participating in a subsidized vocational training programme aimed at improving the labour-market outcomes of women from low-income households in India.

#### **CASE STUDY: Free Stitching and Tailoring Course for Women, New Delhi, India**

This study focuses on a joint ALE initiative by two non-governmental organizations, Pratham Delhi Education Initiative (Pratham) and Social Awakening Through Youth Action (SATYA). The initiative provides free stitching and tailoring training to young women in New Delhi.

A total of 658 women participated in the training programme. Extensive advertising was used to inform the women about the programme. Participants had to be aged between 18 and 39, to have a minimum of five years of schooling, and to live in poor slum areas of New Delhi. They also had to pay a fee of 300 rupees for the whole training period, but they received a full refund on completing the programme. The purpose of charging the fee was to encourage attendance and completion.

As this was a randomized control study, two-thirds of the applicants were assigned to a treatment group, i.e. they received training in stitching and tailoring. The remaining one-third received no training. The evaluators used a baseline study before the programme to assess skills levels, followed by another assessment six months after the study and again at eighteen months.

**Key Lessons:**

In all, 56% of programme participants completed the course. The study evaluators noted that there were a number of barriers to participation and programme completion, namely financial constraints, the long distance to the training centre from home, and a lack of proper childcare support. However, when they studied the programme after its conclusion, they found that there were economic gains for women: training increased the likelihood of employment by 6% and self-employment by 4%, while the number of hours worked in the previous week increased by 2.5. Furthermore, monthly income increased by 150%, while the likelihood of owning one's own machine increased by 8%. The fact that income increased to such an extent is an indicator of success in this programme. The results after 18 months confirmed that the provision of ALE had a direct and positive effect on the labour market. Maitra and Mani therefore report that the findings of this study 'speak to not only policymakers, non-governmental organizations and researchers in India, but have implications for influencing policy choices in a number of low-and-middle income countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, which experience similar challenges in attaining economic growth, development and gender equality' (Maitra and Mani, 2013).

## 3.5

**A POLICY AGENDA: TOWARDS STRONGER LABOUR-MARKET OUTCOMES FROM ALE**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a strong political imperative for investment in ALE to improve labour-market outcomes. Target 4.3 aims to ensure that all women and men have equal access to affordable and quality technical and vocational education. Target 4.4 calls on governments to equip adults with skills for employment,

decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Target 4.5 reminds them to eliminate gender disparities and provide equal access to ALE for disadvantaged groups, and Target 4.6 contains a more general commitment towards literacy and numeracy. Meanwhile Sustainable Development Goal 8 calls on countries to boost productivity and innovation (Target 8.2) and calls for full employment and decent work for all (Target 8.5) and for the protection of labour rights (target 8.8) (United Nations, 2015*b*).

This chapter has shown how ALE can contribute to all of these Sustainable Development Goal targets. It has highlighted major trends in technology and demographics that make investing in ALE more important than ever. It has also identified the many pathways through which ALE can benefit the labour market and examined factors such as gender and social inequality that have important implications for ALE.

Drawing on the political momentum and evidence behind ALE, countries around the world appear to recognize its value. However, they are not yet translating this recognition into sufficient investment, especially for the most disadvantaged populations, who risk being left further and further behind. As this chapter has argued, public-sector investment needs to increase, and governments need to strengthen the incentives they provide for companies and individuals to invest and participate in ALE. Moreover, they need to establish systems to recognize and validate ALE of all kinds. This can only be achieved through strong partnerships with all relevant stakeholders. Where governments, employers and workers collaborate, they will be able to identify both current and future needs in the labour market. This will help individuals to cope with change, and economies and companies to become more competitive on the global markets.

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## CHAPTER 4

# SOCIAL, CIVIC AND COMMUNITY LIFE

This chapter examines how ALE is embedded in social, civic and community life. In all of its forms, ALE yields benefits to individual citizens, their families and the communities they live in. ALE helps citizens become more active in civil society and political life, more tolerant of diversity and more aware of environmental issues. It also promotes cultural development, from the arts to spirituality, helping citizens become well-rounded and resourceful in shaping their societies.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the complex relationship between ALE and societal outcomes. It shows that even more than in the cases of health and employment, the benefits of ALE for social, civic and community life are not linear. Indeed, the success of ALE in this area often depends on the community structures that are already in place.

Secondly, the chapter discusses specific positive outcomes that ALE can have for individuals and communities. Leading studies show that ALE helps individuals improve their levels of literacy, their practical skills, their life competencies and their cultural understanding. In communities, ALE helps promote social cohesion and integration, increases participation in social and political activities, and stimulates the creation of learning communities that can respond to major challenges like environmental sustainability.

Thirdly, the chapter draws lessons from two case studies: one on community education about biogas latrines in India, and one on community cohesion in a city in the United Kingdom.

Fourthly, the chapter identifies some of the challenges that countries need to address in order to maximize ALE's benefits for communities. These include providing greater opportunities for the most disadvantaged groups and ensuring that women are empowered in societies. Community-based learning is more likely than most forms to engage socially disadvantaged and politically excluded people.

The chapter concludes with a reflection on the importance of recognizing the links between ALE and thriving communities.

The links between ALE and societal outcomes are multifaceted. The Hamburg Declaration, which was adopted at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education in 1997, states that 'adult education is both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society' (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1997). Thus while ALE can lead to social change, civic and social structures also affect the availability and quality of ALE. Healthy social and political institutions and flourishing communities encourage and enable adults to keep on learning. This, in turn, strengthens social cohesion and trust. Countries that provide sustained, high-quality ALE generally have higher levels of socio-economic development, active political and civic institutions, and social trust and inclusion (UNESCO, 2015a; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014). Conversely, ALE tends to suffer where there are large inequalities of power and wealth.



## 4.1 EVIDENCE: THE LEARNING GAINS AND SOCIETAL OUTCOMES OF ALE

Compared to the benefits of ALE for health and the labour market, researchers have devoted relatively little attention to the benefits of ALE for community and society. The overall knowledge base may thus be smaller here than in the previous chapters of this report. In particular, further work is needed to examine the causal effects of ALE on factors like political engagement, social cohesion and civic society.

Nonetheless, there is compelling evidence to show that ALE in formal, non-formal and informal settings helps individuals acquire greater skills, knowledge and understanding. This, in turn, can have considerable ‘spill-over’ benefits for their families, their work and their community environments. ALE can have a strong impact on active citizenship, political voice, social cohesion, diversity and tolerance. These factors bring important benefits for social and community life.

### Box 4.1 Learning gains and their benefits for communities and societies

#### Individual learning gains:

- Literacy and numeracy
- Practical skills (e.g. ICT)
- Life skills (e.g. resilience, confidence, problem-solving)
- Cultural learning (e.g. arts, ethics, spirituality)

#### Benefits to communities and societies:

- Social cohesion and integration
- Social capital: interpersonal and institutional trust, social connections
- Participation in social, civic and political activities
- Diversity tolerance and more peaceable and cohesive social relations
- Learning communities: ethical economies, ecological awareness and environmental sustainability

Box 4.1 provides an overview of the direct learning gains ALE can offer individuals, and of the direct and indirect benefits this can have for communities and societies.

### 4.1.1 INDIVIDUAL LEARNING GAINS

#### a) Literacy and Numeracy

Improving and retaining levels of adult literacy and numeracy brings enduringly positive benefits to learners, their families, their communities and their societies.

*GRALE II* showed that the primary benefits of adult literacy for individuals and families are similar across countries, especially with regard to access to socio-economic competencies and employment (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013a). An extensive 2011 review and evaluation of adult literacy and numeracy in the United Kingdom supports this. It found ‘clear, convincing and statistically significant evidence’ that participating in adult literacy and numeracy programmes and retaining literacy competencies have a positive personal and social impact on individuals and communities (Vorhaus *et al.*, 2011). Such findings illustrate that we need to develop a broader understanding of the close relationship between literacy and numeracy on one hand and social and cultural development on the other. Countries that responded to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey appear to be adopting this broader view. A large majority of the responses suggested that policy approaches to literacy are extending beyond reading, writing and numeracy.

#### b) Practical Skills

Participating in ALE helps adults acquire a large range of important practical skills in areas from traditional crafts to information and communications technology (ICT). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) shows that adults with ICT skills utilize these skills for communication, information, entertainment and labour market participation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). Furthermore, there is evidence of a direct connection between increased social capital and better ICT skills

(Zinnbauer, 2007). ICT skills are especially valuable in distance education, as ICT can create 'nearness' through interaction and dialogue. It facilitates contact between students and faculty, promotes exchange and cooperation among students, and opens up new feedback systems and learning techniques. Such opportunities only become possible when technology is available, affordable and handled by competent users, however (Carlsen *et al.*, 2016). The challenge for countries and providers of ALE, then, is to ensure that all groups are able to acquire and use ICT skills.

### c) Life Skills

ALE also plays an important role in helping adults develop crucial life skills. For example, ALE helps adults become more resilient and improve the quality of their lives (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013; Manninen, 2010). Adults can learn to face life's difficulties, solve problems and, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, improve their mental health and well-being (Jenkins, 2011; Manninen *et al.*, 2014). One way in which ALE builds these skills is by helping learners develop confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Through greater self-confidence and self-esteem, learners also develop a sense of self-efficacy (Schuller *et al.*, 2004). This self-efficacy and confidence in turn encourages adults to engage in further learning, and to join in community and social forums. This is especially valuable for disadvantaged groups, to whom ALE can provide the tools to take on new challenges (Vorhaus *et al.*, 2011). With new life skills, adults can provide practical and emotional support to those around them (Balatti *et al.*, 2007).

### d) Cultural Learning

ALE for cultural learning takes place in very diverse settings. Tett *et al.* (2012), for instance, examined how ALE can generate hope and motivation among adult prisoners. By taking part in creative writing, music and theatre programmes, prisoners also developed their ability to connect emotionally with other people. Cultural learning fostered a change process that developed empathy,

trust, identity reformation and social engagement.

In a very different setting – museums – ALE programmes can help individuals, groups and families learn and play together (Innocent, 2010). By eliminating hierarchies between adults and children, these programmes promote intergenerational learning and understanding. Libraries also contribute to these goals by providing resources, professional assistance and computer-based learning devices for the promotion of intergenerational learning.

Other studies have examined specific forms of cultural learning among specific constituencies. For example, one longitudinal study of adults over 50 years of age showed that music and arts education had stronger effects than formal education on their quality of life and well-being (see also Chapter 2). The cultural ALE programmes that were studied raised the mean level of quality of life by 8% of a standard deviation (Jenkins, 2011).

ALE can encourage adults and communities to think about and reengage with the classical cultural heritage. Learners can, for example, gain fresh understanding of the wisdom of esteemed cultural figures. Studying Confucius, for example, can provide adults with useful insights to address contemporary ethical dilemmas (Zhang, 2008).

Finally, it has been found that adult learning can develop the 'moral emotions', helping adults contend with emotions like greed and narcissistic aggression (Nussbaum, 2010). Moreover, Baba-Moussa *et al.* (2014) demonstrate how culture provides the educational link between the individual and the community and insist on the relevance of citizenship education for the transfer of norms and values in a society.

### 4.1.2 BENEFITS TO COMMUNITIES AND SOCIETIES

All of the learning gains described above are benefits in their own right. However, they also generate wider-reaching societal effects and benefits. They do so both directly and indirectly: by shaping what people know; by developing competencies that help people develop and apply their knowledge; and by cultivating attitudes, values and beliefs.

#### **a) Social Cohesion, Integration and Inclusion**

As discussed in previous chapters, many cities and regions around the world are experiencing social change shaped by migration and ethnic heterogeneity. Achieving social cohesion is a growing challenge, and populations' capacity to tolerate diversity is a vital cohesive resource. Higher levels of literacy in the population are linked with greater tolerance of diversity (Post, 2016, forthcoming). ALE plays a key role in encouraging diversity tolerance, understood as the capacity for a fair, objective and permissive attitude toward beliefs and practices that differ from one's own (Feksi, Mtey and Sulle, 2013; Fragoso *et al.*, 2008). Several studies have shown that ALE contributes to social cohesion and integration (e.g. Kil *et al.*, 2012; Nafukho *et al.*, 2005; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007). A longitudinal ethnographic study of Salvadoran campesinos, for example, showed that increased literacy enabled better communication within families and communities, so that disputes were resolved with less acrimony and less shame (Prins, 2010).

Among countries responding to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey, about two-thirds stated that literacy programmes help develop democratic values, peaceful co-existence and community solidarity. Literacy programmes that respect linguistic diversity and the mother tongue of the participants help to solidify communal identities and collective histories (Alidou and Glanz, 2015).

Frye (2014) shows how young adults who participated in faith-based education learned how to discover meaning and reflect better. This provided them with a resource for adult life leading to 'tolerance for others and activity in service and commitment to others' (p. 52).

Nilsson (2010) demonstrates that, as well as developing job-oriented skills, formal vocational education for young adults promotes social inclusion. For example, while learning technical skills, workers also develop social and communication skills and grasp group dynamics. This, in turn, helps workers understand their broader interests and capabilities. Billett (2014) finds that learning empowers workers to articulate their rights and collaborate with others. When workers learn to participate in workplace decisions, they learn about organizational complexities and competing interests. In the process they learn about democratic participation and political regulation (Casey, 2009); thus both the economy and society benefit (De Leonardis *et al.*, 2012; Hake, 2009).

#### **b) Social Capital**

For an individual, having 'social capital' means having the skills to participate in community and civic life, to extend one's general knowledge, and to sustain social connections (Manninen *et al.*, 2014). Social capital is a widely reported benefit of ALE (Bosche and Brady, 2013; Feinstein, 2008; Field, 2005). Indeed, Vorhaus *et al.* (2011) point to social capital as an 'almost ubiquitous outcome' of ALE interventions over the past twenty years. By generating social capital, ALE has been shown to reduce crime rates (Dawe, 2007). It also encourages individuals to engage in community volunteering (Boeck *et al.*, 2009) and to take leadership roles in their communities (Roberts, 2013).

Communities with social capital feature high levels of trust and strong social engagement and connectivity. The World Values Survey finds that literate individuals in literate environments typically trust a wider circle of people than individuals who report themselves to be illiterate. In several countries with high levels of illiteracy, there is a higher degree of trust

between those who were declared to be literate as opposed to illiterate (Post, 2016).

These findings highlight the fact that the relationship between ALE and social capital is reciprocal. People who are well connected find it easier to engage in ALE, and their learning is more likely to be valued in their communities. Conversely, those with poor social networks will find it more difficult to avail themselves of learning opportunities, and will find fewer applications for what they have learned.

### **c) Participation in Social, Civic and Community Activities**

Large-scale analyses have shown that formal education in general, and tertiary education in particular, is associated with increased political activity (see for example Hoskins *et al.*, 2008). In addition, recent studies on diverse countries, such as Kenya, the Dominican Republic, Poland, South Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, find that ALE equips individuals with the dispositions, knowledge and skills to become active citizens (Finkel, 2014).

While specific data on ALE is scarce, countries responding to the *GRALE III* survey appear to agree that ALE contributes to active citizenship and political and community participation. Almost three-quarters of the countries that responded said that literacy programmes make a large contribution. Citizenship education programmes help individuals gain political information, develop feelings of empowerment, and increase their levels of political participation. The effects are particularly strong in terms of factual political knowledge and participation at the local level.

In the VOICE programme (a civic education programme) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2011–2012), 60% of villagers who had been instructed about a planned decentralization process could correctly identify the new decentralization funding institution, but only 10% in the control villages could do so (Finkel, 2014). Those who had participated in civic ALE programmes were more active in local politics, which seemed to be related to

a belief in one's ability to influence the political system. While civic ALE seems to have less success in changing democratic values than in fostering civic competence, engagement and political participation, the end result is that the programmes 'can be relatively effective agents of political empowerment and mobilization of individuals into the democratic political system' (Finkel, 2014, pp. 175-176). Two three-year USAID studies of 1,000 Nepali women and 2,200 Bolivian women showed that literacy had multiple significant long-term effects on civic participation, as well as on income and children's education (Burchfield *et al.*, 2002). Further evidence from PIAAC shows similar effects: 'In most OECD countries, the survey shows that greater literacy skills (as well as more education) have independent positive effects on such outcomes as adults' willingness to engage in the political process, political efficacy, trust, and good health' (Post, 2016).

Civic education programmes can do more than just promote participation. They can also build political competencies that help adults hold institutions and political actors to account (Vicente, 2014). This in turn helps institutions and formal political processes become more trustworthy, leading to increased social capital.

### **d) Learning Communities: Ethical Economies, Ecological Awareness and Environmental Sustainability**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on countries to address the challenges of protecting the environment and achieving a fairer distribution of socio-economic benefits. This commitment to sustainable development has an important ethical dimension, and so adults educated in ethical principles as well as economic and technological skills are needed to help put the Agenda into practice.

The impact of ALE on ethics is somewhat difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, some recent studies in the area have yielded interesting results. For example, data from the World Values Survey indicates that respondents who are literate are more likely to prioritize the environment over economic growth (Post, 2016). In



### Box 4.2 Study circles, dialogue and democracy

As far back as 1977, Lundkvist argued that popular adult education played a central role in the democratization of society in Sweden. The 'study circle' allowed people to learn about democratic values, use dialogue instead of confrontation and recognize that people from different social classes can live and work together. This historical example from a Western European country may have limited application when addressing contemporary issues in countries across the world. Nevertheless, it does provide an encouraging model of how ALE could foster active citizenship in situations where citizens often face major social and political barriers to using their political voice.

The lack of political voice is not only an issue for emergent democracies; it is also a serious problem in mature democracies, where people with low levels of income and education are less likely to be able to express their experiences, needs and preferences or hold public officials accountable (Schlozman *et al.*, 2012). In Sweden, a national evaluation of public funds for popular education concluded that study circles are a viable instrument for developing the ability to be active participants in a system of democracy as dialogue (Andersson *et al.*, 1996). The circle methodology advanced participants' ability to put forward credible ideas and start public discussions about their concerns.

In some countries, popular adult education has long been associated with struggles for social transformation. Building on the work of Paulo Freire, popular education has been advocated as a political, social and educational process (Hall *et al.*, 2012; Kirkwood and Kirkwood, 2011). This is based on the idea that at a grassroots level, people can collectively achieve critical consciousness and challenge unjust uses of power. The Nordic European tradition tends to share Freire's fundamental view of teaching and learning as involving encounter and dialogue.

the business world, corporations have been calling on employees to develop their 'moral compass' in order to fulfil their corporate and social responsibility (Hartman, 2013; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 2011). Meanwhile, Noguchi *et al.* (2015) have examined how community-based learning can be a foundation for sustainable development. Community-based learning is often facilitated through community learning centres that are formed as partnerships between residents, non-governmental organizations and government bodies. They provide various learning opportunities in literacy, basic education and socio-economic knowledge and can foster ethical awareness, tolerance for diversity and mutual respect.

Another important approach to pursuing sustainable development involves building 'learning cities' and 'learning

communities'. Learning cities and communities seek to harness the potential of lifelong learning to 'enrich human potential, foster life-wide and lifelong personal growth, promote equality and social justice, maintain social cohesion, and create sustainable prosperity and economic growth' (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013b). Lifelong learning can also lead to concrete improvements in urban policy coordination and development across domains, jobs, housing, transport and sanitation (see Kearns, 2015; Longworth, 2012). The Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities, which was adopted at the first International Conference on Learning Cities, declared learning communities, learning cities and learning regions to be pillars of sustainable development (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013c). Since then, cities as diverse as Beijing (China), Cork (Ireland), Sorocaba

(Brazil) and Amman (Jordan) have made significant progress in implementing the learning city approach (Valdés-Cotera *et al.*, 2015). Many of these cities have joined the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities as a way of strengthening partnerships and increasing support for lifelong learning for all their citizens (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2015).

## 4.2 LESSONS FROM CASE STUDIES

The case studies below provide grassroots evidence for the benefits and returns of ALE for social, civic and community life. The first case illustrates the benefits of ALE in a low-income community facing chronic disadvantage. The second case illustrates citizen education in a multicultural city in a high-income country. *GRALE II* noted that non-formal and informal learning modalities remain at the margins of recognition in national education systems, and that their benefits are therefore rarely reported. These cases specifically showcase some of those benefits.

### **CASE STUDY 1: ALE Helps Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals: The Biogas Latrines Project, Kerala, India**

Over one billion people in the world practise open defecation on a regular basis (United Nations, 2008). Eliminating open defecation requires provision of both resources and ALE. Analysts estimate that half of India's households lack effective sanitation facilities (World Health Organization, 2013). In the state of Kerala, adult educators in a partnership of local government, non-governmental organizations and village leaders carried out a three-year programme to implement a low-cost sanitary project at village level (Government of Kerala, 2008; Keralastat, 2012). This project provided both sanitary facilities and education to enable the villagers (who generally had basic literacy skills) to cease or reduce open defecation. It installed bio-gas latrine technology to convert human waste into gas that can be used in domestic cooking and water heating. It therefore provided

socio-economic resources to village communities for subsequent use.

Teams of educators held adult education seminars – or 'learning circles' – in the villages. The educators encouraged village leaders and adult women and men to participate together in learning sessions about the bio-gas latrines. The inclusive learning circles aimed to overcome sensitivities about talking about human waste management and sanitation, and to foster a sense of shared community responsibility for community needs. The seminars had a practical dimension, giving participants opportunities to experiment with the bio-gas technology units.

The participants learned:

- about bio-gas and the health risks of open defecation;
- to reduce the depletion of vegetation for firewood;
- how to maintain their village bio-gas units;
- to reflect on their resistance to addressing toileting issues and to re-evaluate traditional low-status and gendered roles associated with human waste; and
- about the concepts of long-term benefits and community sustainability.

#### **Box 4.3**

#### **The benefits of the biogas latrines project in Kerala**

##### **Benefits of the ALE and bio-gas sanitary programme:**

- Significant contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 6, Target 6.2: 'By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations'
- Progress toward gender inclusion and equality
- Increased social capital, including advanced abilities to collaborate, to undertake joint projects and to take community responsibility for community needs
- Greater awareness of environmental and sustainability issues

**CASE STUDY 2:****ALE Promotes Inclusive, Peaceful and Diverse Societies: Leicester, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

The British city of Leicester is noted for its ethnic diversity. In Leicester, no single ethnic group comprises a majority (Office for National Statistics, 2011), and nearly half of its residents were born outside the United Kingdom (Leicester City Council, 2012). A notable example of ALE provision in Leicester is the 'Citizens' Curriculum' offered by the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education. The curriculum focuses on building capabilities in the areas of English, mathematics, health, finance, civic education and digital skills, and it is aimed predominantly at assisting new migrants (National Institute for Adult Continuing Education, 2014). It encourages recognition and respect for the wide range of faiths in the city and encourages pride in being a citizen of such a diverse city.

Participants in the Citizens' Curriculum gain practical competencies and life skills, a deeper understanding of their rights and local services, and better knowledge of other ethnic groups and neighbourhoods. The comprehensive curriculum, which includes learning in class and visits to cultural and civic sites in Leicester, builds learners' capabilities to play an active role in the community (Sattar and Huda, 2015; Waddington, 2013). Learners report that they feel 'empowered' and 'less fearful' of their new city (Sattar and Huda, 2015).

This community-based approach focuses on adult learners who are embedded in their communities of origin and encourages them to venture beyond those familiar domains. The interplay between migrant communities, civil society organizations and public education institutions in Leicester is both the product of and the continuing basis for a culture of lifelong learning. The synergies that result are drivers of democratic participation and social cohesion. In this way, ALE directly contributes to making the ideal of the 'learning city' and of inclusive, peaceful and diverse societies a reality (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013*d*; Valdés-Cotera, 2015; Waddington, 2013).

**Box 4.4****How ALE fosters inclusion and social cohesion in Leicester**

- Combines practical skills development with cultural learning
- Fosters tolerance, knowledge and respect for different faiths, cultures and lifestyles
- Fosters civic engagement and shared civic responsibilities
- Helps build a cohesive, peaceable and participatory society

## 4.3

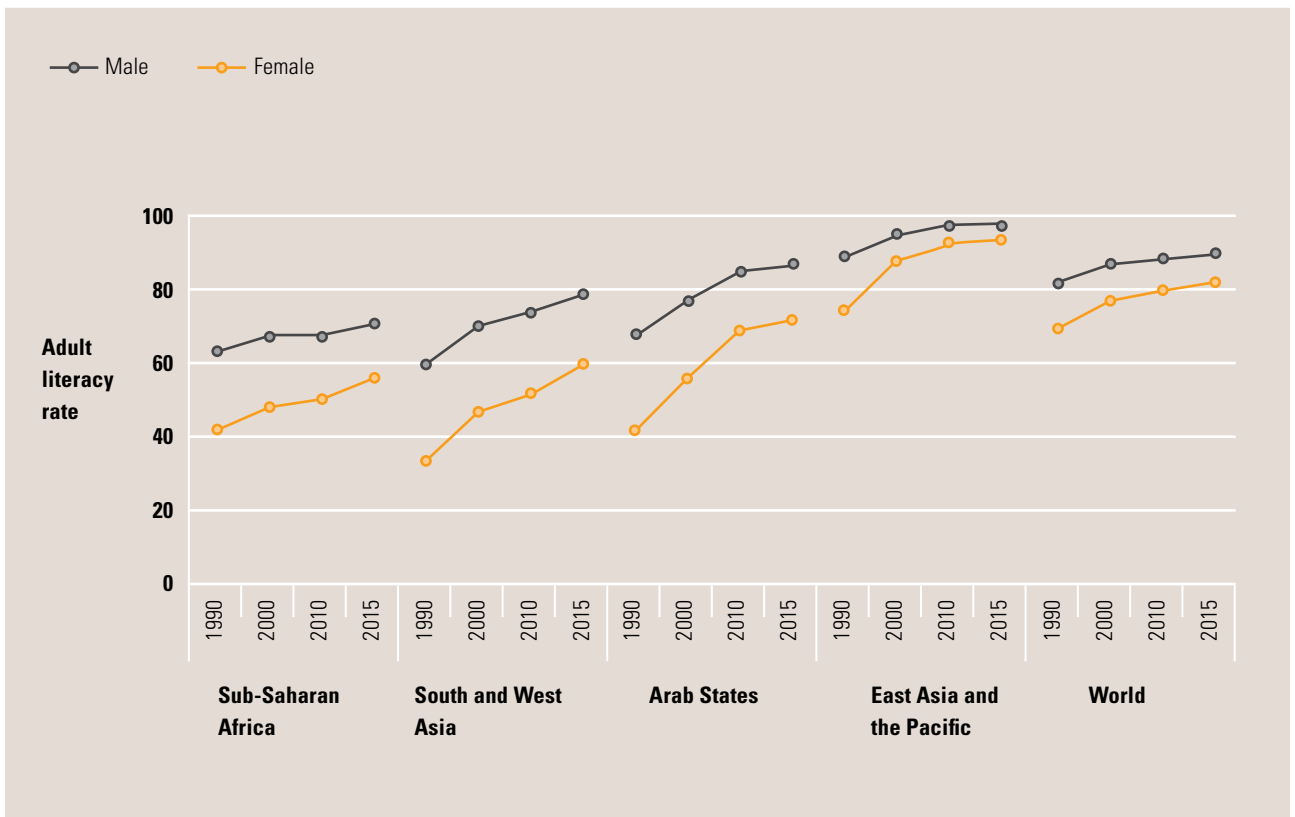
**CHALLENGES IN MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS OF ALE FOR SOCIAL, CIVIC AND COMMUNITY LIFE**

Like the two previous reports, *GRALE III* finds that countries are strengthening ALE. However, a number of challenges are proving to be persistent and need to be addressed if social, civic and community life is to enjoy the full benefits of ALE. These challenges are outlined below.

Social and community development is heavily dependent on women's capacities, but, as discussed elsewhere in this report, women still have insufficient opportunities to participate in ALE programmes and benefit from them. Progress in achieving literacy for all has been slow, as has progress towards gender justice. UNESCO's Education for All Gender Report 2015 reported that an estimated 481 million women aged 15 years and over lack basic literacy skills (UNESCO, 2015*b*). Figure 4.1 reproduces an illustration from the Education For All Gender Report depicting these trends.

All over the world, the most marginalized, most disadvantaged and poorest people remain excluded from ALE activities. People with disabilities, chronic illness or learning difficulties are among those considered hardest to reach with ALE programmes. Their exclusion from ALE is helping to maintain the 'disability-poverty

**Figure 4.1**  
Women's literacy lag



Source: UNESCO, 2015b

Women's literacy continues to lag behind that of men. Adult literacy rate by gender, world and selected regions, 1990, 2000 and 2015

cycle' (Banks and Polack, 2014). Thus it is clear that the benefits of ALE continue to be distributed unequally across the world's communities (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015; Janmaat and Green, 2013; UNESCO, 2015a; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010).

#### 4.4 VALUING ALE AS A FUNDAMENTAL SOCIETAL ASSET

*GRALE I* highlighted the fact that an active citizenry is a 'fundamental societal asset' (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010). *GRALE II* noted that the relevance of ALE in developing active citizenship and societal inclusion is often recognized in policy guidelines (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013a). The responses to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey confirm that countries recognize the importance of ALE in this area.

Measuring the many complex links between ALE and social, community and civic outcomes is more than just a technical challenge. When governments and global institutions are under pressure to demonstrate results, they tend to focus on more visible outcomes and more easily measurable targets. This means that economic goals often enjoy priority over social ones and that within the ALE community, greater emphasis is placed on formal ALE and quantifiable labour-market outcomes than on non-formal ALE and more intangible community outcomes. As this chapter has shown, the outcomes of non-formal ALE include qualities and potentials that cannot be reduced to numeric measures. Yet governments know that these outcomes are vital and have committed to achieving them in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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# PART THREE

## INTRODUCTION

Part 1 of this report examined the results of the *GRALE III* monitoring survey. The results reveal some broad positive trends towards better ALE, but they also highlight how much more work is needed if countries are to establish effective systems of lifelong learning. Levels of adult literacy, for example, need to be improved, while achieving gender equality remains a major challenge in all countries. Part 2 showed that understanding of the value of ALE, and of its effects beyond the education sector, is improving. It also highlighted the many links between Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, 8 and 11. While more research and better data are still needed, there is now robust evidence to support the case for greater investment in ALE.

The final part of this report is designed to guide readers in their efforts to promote and improve the state of ALE around the world. It is divided into two chapters. Chapter 5 brings together lessons, identifies trends and examines their implications for ALE. In reflecting on the current and future state of ALE, the chapter concludes by considering the ‘worst-case scenario’ of a world where ALE is neither valued nor supported. Arguing that such a world would be untenable, the chapter calls on all stakeholders to come together and strengthen their efforts to ensure that ALE plays the role that it should. Chapter 6 sets out a practical agenda for future work on ALE, concluding with an invitation to join the *GRALE* community in promoting stronger ALE, improving our understanding and analysis on ALE, implementing ALE action, and debating crucial policy issues in the years to come.



## CHAPTER 5

# LESSONS, TRENDS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

This chapter opens with an overview of lessons that the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has learned from monitoring ALE since the Belém Framework for Action was adopted in 2009. The chapter then identifies some major global trends, examining what these might mean for ALE policies and practices in the future. Finally, it proposes a framework to help understand and address the challenges that accompany such trends. As this chapter will show, the importance of ALE is likely to grow in the face of these challenges.

## 5.1 LESSONS FROM MONITORING: HAVE COUNTRIES MADE PROGRESS ON ALE?

Many of the 139 countries that responded to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey have positive stories to tell about progress in ALE:

- At the most general level, three out of four countries report ‘significant progress’ on ALE policy since 2009; very few countries report that they have regressed.
- Over half report improvements in governance, such as more decentralization, increased coordination among ministries and stronger stakeholder consultation.
- Over half of the countries report that government spending on ALE will increase, while only two countries say that funding will be reduced.
- Three out of five countries report an increase in overall participation in ALE, while just nine countries say that participation has decreased.

- 81% of 134 responding countries reported that initial, pre-service education and training programmes are in place for adult educators and facilitators.

In their survey responses, many countries shared innovative ALE practices. These include institutional innovations, such as The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’s Open Civic Universities, or innovative strategies, such as Mali’s long-term vocational employment plan. At sub-national level, many countries, especially in Asia, have established local community learning centres and are building learning cities. In countries like Japan, China and the Republic of Korea, these initiatives are helping address the challenges of ageing populations and rural-to-urban migration.

While such overall trends are certainly encouraging, the results of the monitoring survey suggest that progress in ALE remains uneven and uncertain. They also indicate that huge gaps remain in our knowledge of ALE developments at both global and country levels. The three major challenges in the field of ALE – improving levels of adult literacy, achieving gender equality and filling our knowledge gaps – are discussed in more detail below.

### 5.1.1 ADULT LITERACY CHALLENGES REMAIN

As emphasized elsewhere in this report, literacy is part of the right to education. It is at the core of basic education and an indispensable foundation for learning. But improving youth and adult literacy and numeracy remains a global challenge. In 2000, the international community had agreed to achieve ‘a 50% improvement in



levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults' (Education for All Goal 4). But only 17 out of 73 countries with a literacy rate below 95% in 2000 were able to reach this target. None of the countries where fewer than 90 women for every 100 men were literate in 2000 have reached gender parity (UNESCO, 2015a).

The definition of ALE in the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015) recognizes that literacy involves a continuum of learning and proficiency levels: there is no clear border between adult literacy and illiteracy (see Annex 1). An increasing number of countries have therefore started to use test-based approaches to measure the literacy and numeracy proficiency levels of their populations. It has been found that about 20% of adults in Europe lack the basic skills they need to fully participate in society (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010). As a result, the issue of low literacy and numeracy skills has returned to the agendas of middle- and high-income countries.

Finding ways of improving levels of adult literacy will require countries to develop a more refined understanding of the challenges. Countries should not assume that improved levels of literacy will automatically result from greater numbers of educated young people entering the adult population. Rather, they need to consider how to improve the quality of ALE programmes to ensure that they have sustained impacts on literacy. The good news is that countries in all regions and at all levels of development continue to recognize proficiency in language and basic skills as a top priority. In the *GRALE III* monitoring survey, the majority of countries identified adults with low basic skills as the most important target of their ALE programmes.

Efforts are also continuing at the global level. For example, a new literacy target was included within Sustainable Development Goal 4. Furthermore, UNESCO is launching a Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning, which re-affirms the crucial role literacy will play in achieving the

goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This alliance will mobilize actors from around the world behind the Sustainable Development Goal target on youth and adult literacy.

### 5.1.2 GENDER INEQUALITY REMAINS A FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE IN ALE

Providing educational opportunities for women is both a prerequisite for and a driver of successful development. As discussed elsewhere in this report, the majority of those excluded from school are girls, and the majority of adults with low literacy are women. As a result, girls and women all over the world are being deprived of opportunities and, indeed, of their human rights.

As Part 2 of this report showed, the education of women improves their individual lives and strongly influences economic development, health and civic engagement. It has powerful secondary effects on families and on children's education, which in turn improves the effectiveness of other educational investments. In short: women's education is powerfully connected with the quality of life enjoyed by all. Of course, education of boys and men also has a crucial role to play in tackling gender inequality and violence against women.

In different countries and contexts, gender inequality appears in very different forms. This has diverse implications for policy. In many developing countries, for example, girls and women remain far behind boys and men in terms of access to quality schooling and effective ALE programmes, especially literacy. Overcoming the barriers to their access is of the highest priority. In many developed countries, on the other hand, girls now outperform boys in most areas of study (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). However, discrimination still needs to be overcome in some educational areas, such as science and engineering. Moreover, the qualifications and skills that women have obtained need to be recognized and rewarded appropriately in the world of work. In some countries, an increasing number of qualified women

are becoming economically active. This is changing the way wage-based work is organized and how skills are defined and utilized. But occupational barriers and discriminatory practices continue to undermine the potential contribution of women's education.

### 5.1.3 MAJOR KNOWLEDGE GAPS REMAIN AT GLOBAL AND COUNTRY LEVELS

The fact that 139 countries responded to the *GRALE III* monitoring survey is itself a positive sign. It shows that in most countries that adopted the Belém Framework for Action, government officials are actively engaged in shaping the future of ALE. Four out of five countries report that they have developed more effective systems to monitor and evaluate ALE since 2009. This suggests that their knowledge base on ALE is expanding, putting them in a better position to take decisions on policy and practice.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the *GRALE III* survey only provides us with very broad-brush indications of progress. The data from the survey is self-reported, and countries may have had very different interpretations of what 'significant progress' means when they responded to the survey questions. Countries also responded in different degrees of detail. Some were unable or unwilling to respond to specific questions, while others supplied considerable detail and provided links to sources of further information.

After three rounds of *GRALE*, it has become apparent that robust data on ALE is very hard to come by. The reasons for this are clear. For a start, unlike secondary or tertiary education, ALE does not constitute a single recognized sub-sector within education. Usually there is no single ministry with overall responsibility for determining ALE policy and managing knowledge. This is further complicated by the fact that the providers and funders of ALE constitute a very diverse group of public and private stakeholders. Finally, ALE often takes place in non-formal and informal settings, making it hard to

operationalize and measure. As discussed in Chapter 6, however, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning will support the further development of the ALE knowledge base at both global and national levels.

## 5.2 SIX MAJOR GLOBAL TRENDS AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR ALE

Monitoring progress in ALE since 2009 has taught us many lessons about where progress is possible and what the most difficult challenges are for policymakers today. However, the economic, social and environmental landscapes are constantly evolving. Policymakers need to cast their eyes to the future to understand global trends and ensure that ALE keeps up with these trends. This section focuses on what are arguably the six dominant trends: growing migration flows; longer lives and demographic shifts; changing employment patterns and the reorganization of work, growing inequalities; environmental degradation and sustainability; and the digital revolution.

### 5.2.1 GROWING MIGRATION FLOWS

Globally, there are an estimated 244 international and 740 million internal migrants (International Organization for Migration, 2015). Of the 244 million international migrants worldwide, 104 million (43%) were born in Asia (including the Middle East), Europe was the birthplace of the second-largest number (62 million or 25%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (37 million or 15%) and Africa (34 million or 14%). 54% of people across the globe were living in urban areas in 2014, and the current urban population of 3.9 billion is expected to grow to some 6.4 billion by 2050 (UN DESA, 2014). In many countries, the ongoing refugee crisis has highlighted the urgent need to understand the opportunities and challenges brought by migration. In 2014, the total number of refugees in the world was estimated at 19.5 million. Turkey became the largest refugee-hosting country worldwide, with 1.6 million refugees, followed by Pakistan

(1.5 million), Lebanon (1.2 million) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (1 million) (United Nations, 2016).

Migrants and refugees often bring considerable skills with them, but providing them with the opportunity to deploy these skills is a major challenge. Firstly, host countries need to accredit and convert professional and occupational qualifications, recognizing that many migrants have highly developed but underutilized skills. Secondly, ALE must be used to help migrants and their families build new lives, temporarily or permanently, in their host countries. ALE helps adults acquire language skills and support their children's education. It can also foster cultural learning and promote social integration.

ALE also has a significant but neglected role in countries of origin. Thanks to ALE in host countries, adults may return with new skills, turning 'brain drains' into 'brain gains'. Indeed, ALE in countries of origin can provide adults with opportunities that prevent them from migrating in the first place.

### 5.2.2 LONGER LIVES AND DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Between 2015 and 2030, the global number of people aged 65 or over will double to 1 billion. They will form 13% of the overall population, up from the current 8% (KPMG, 2013). These global trends take different manifestations in different countries, of course. Some countries still have traditional population pyramids, with young people as the largest group. Others already have large older populations and mature economies. All countries, however, need to think about education throughout the life course.

There are six significant implications for ALE:

1. Health needs are evolving as it becomes important to ensure quality of life in later stages of the life course. Older individuals need to learn how to manage their own health and collaborate with health professionals.
2. Mental health issues, often generated or exacerbated by loneliness, exclusion and a lack of stimulation, are often prevalent among older populations. ALE can foster a sense of inclusion and counter isolation.
3. Learning must not stop after school, nor must it stop after individuals retire from work. In countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, life expectancy after work has grown to 19 years for men and 23 years for women. Older people are often willing to take on formal, informal and volunteer work for both personal and altruistic reasons. These people need appropriate opportunities to learn the skills required for such work. As recipients of different incomes from work, pensions and other sources, they may also need to learn how to manage their changing financial situation.
4. Training will have to address the skill needs of older workers in both the professional and the volunteer workforce. Older workers will also need appropriate career guidance. Employers will need to sensitize all staff to issues of age discrimination. They will also need to become better at valorizing the experience of older workers and ensuring that their knowledge is shared with younger colleagues.
5. ALE can help promote positive interaction between generations. Mutual learning within and across generations is a powerful means of conveying knowledge and skills and improving understanding for both families and communities more generally. Promising programmes using intergenerational approaches can be found all over the world (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2015). The success of such programmes relies on quality teacher training, intersectoral collaboration, cooperation between institutions, teachers and parents, sustainable funding and long-term policy support.

6. Policymakers will need to modernize the definitions and categories they use to gather evidence and analyse and implement policies. For example, defining the potential workforce as all people aged between 16 and 65 no longer corresponds to reality. Furthermore, different cultures and societies may have different understandings of what it means to be 'adult'. The Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015) points out that 'the boundaries of youth and adulthood are shifting in most cultures', and so it uses the term 'adult' to refer to 'all those who engage in adult learning and education, even if they have not reached the legal age of maturity' (UNESCO, 2015*b*). What is clear is that all countries need a framework to understand different ages and stages of life and to decide how educational resources might be allocated across the life course (Schuller, 2009)

### 5.2.3 CHANGING EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS AND THE REORGANIZATION OF WORK

Underemployment has become a global phenomenon, with many people either out of work or working below their level of qualification and potential. According to the International Labour Organization, the global unemployment rate stood at about 5.8% (representing 197 million people) in 2015. It is expected to remain unchanged in 2016 and fall slightly to 5.7% in 2017 (International Labour Organization, 2016).

Meanwhile, the nature of employment and labour contracts is changing around the world. There is evidence of a shift away from stable, full-time contracts for workers. The International Labour Organization has found that short-term contracts and irregular working hours are becoming more widespread, and that nearly six out of ten workers are in part-time or temporary forms of employment. This phenomenon affects women more than men (International Labour Organization, 2016). Self-employment and short-term contracts may benefit some workers, but they leave many others in

precarious situations. Moreover, this trend shifts more responsibility for training and skill development from organizations to individuals.

Such trends call for major reflection on the role of technical and vocational education and training within ALE. Countries will need to find the right balance between public and private provision of ALE, and to identify institutions that can govern and regulate ALE activities. Governments will need to provide more incentives to encourage organizations to raise their employees' skills levels. Funding mechanisms will need to be in place to enable individuals to invest in their own training and education. Countries may need new systems to recognize and accredit the acquisition of competencies from different learning settings, including non-formal and informal settings.

### 5.2.4 GROWING INEQUALITIES

This chapter has already addressed the issue of gender inequality in ALE. Of course, many other forms of inequality need to be tackled too. In different countries and contexts, people receive different treatment because of their socioeconomic status, origin, location, caste, disability, ethnicity or race. This report also points to inequalities at a higher level, between countries or regions.

Education can promote equality, but it can also serve to reinforce and accentuate inequalities. One of the guiding principles of the new Sustainable Development Goals is that no one should be left behind. However, as more people gain access to initial education, those who do not have the opportunity of attending school will be further marginalized. Even for children who do attend school, success is very often linked to family background and socioeconomic status. Later in life, people who have had greater access to initial schooling are more likely to participate in adult learning of all kinds. In this way, inequality accumulates over the life course (Blossfeld *et al.*, 2014).

Inequality can also be exacerbated through the interaction between education and other sectors, which was examined in Part 2 of this report. For example, structural inequalities in the labour market such as hiring discrimination or gender-based wage differences compound inequalities in qualifications and skills. Ill health, which is experienced more commonly by disadvantaged people, further impedes learning, and so prevents them from having a fair chance of improving their circumstances. International evidence shows that societies and communities with high inequality have less chance of flourishing generally (International Monetary Fund, 2016; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016, Wilkinson and Pickett 2009).

Social and economic inequality poses an ongoing challenge for all forms of education. However, neither education in general nor ALE specifically can master this challenge on their own. As policymakers look to the future, they will need to develop a deeper understanding of the interrelationships of different policy solutions, and of how different mixes of policy can either exacerbate or redress inequalities.

### 5.2.5 ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

*Sustainable Development Begins With Education* is the title of a recent publication by UNESCO (2013). The publication examines each Sustainable Development Goal in turn and discusses how education can help achieve it. But what might be the specific contribution of ALE?

There can be little doubt that ALE will contribute to progress on almost all Sustainable Development Goal targets by raising awareness about the goals and encouraging people to make decisions that are compatible with sustainable development (Noguchi, Guevara and Yorozu, 2015). ALE programmes all over the world inform people of issues such as climate change, food security and energy use, and provide them with scientific evidence that enables them to make more environmentally conscious decisions.

ALE raises the chances that sustainability issues will be sensibly debated in public forums, and it promotes dialogue between groups with different perspectives.

Going beyond information and debate, ALE programmes can equip people with skills that allow them to find employment in more environmentally friendly businesses. They can promote more environmentally friendly lifestyles and encourage communities to manage their local environments in sustainable ways. Not least, ALE programmes can enable people to learn to live together with tolerance and respect as citizens of the world.

### 5.2.6 THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that we are living in a time of immense opportunity. It sees in the 'spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness' a 'great potential to accelerate human progress'. Access to technology has expanded exponentially in the last decade. According to the International Telecommunication Union, 'in 2015 there were more than 7 billion mobile cellular subscriptions worldwide, up from fewer than 1 billion in 2000. Globally, 3.2 billion people are using the internet, of which 2 billion are from developing countries.' While this is having the most profound transformative impact on the way many people live, work, communicate and learn, there is still a digital divide that excludes a large proportion of the world's people. For example, only 7% of households in least developed countries have internet access (International Telecommunication Union, 2015).

Nevertheless, emerging information and communications technologies have the potential to enormously improve the quality and reach of ALE. Both autonomous learning and peer-learning opportunities can be considerably enhanced through digital tools that are increasingly becoming ubiquitous and user-friendly. Various internet applications, including video tutorials, webinars, social media and video conferencing, are transforming the ways in which youth and

adults access information and knowledge. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) offered on platforms like Coursera, Udacity and edX have created a new paradigm of adult learning that opens up access to quality learning opportunities to learners across the globe. Quality learning is becoming increasingly affordable and accessible almost anywhere, any time. However, if the digital dividends are to realize their transformational potential, they must be integrated with what the *World Development Report* (World Bank, 2016) calls 'analogue components'. One of these components involves the need to 'focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills, connect teachers to content, and promote adult literacy'. By promoting critical thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, entrepreneurship and creativity, digital technologies may have a transformative effect on the youth and adult learning landscape. However, there must be greater national efforts to develop digital learning tools in learners' native languages. The initial investment in creating tools, materials, courses, platforms and infrastructure is worthwhile if one considers the negligible marginal production costs and scalability of such tools. The potential seems endless and, at present, largely untapped.

### 5.3 A WORLD WITHOUT ALE

This report has highlighted the benefits of ALE for individuals and the societies they live in. It has also shown how investing in ALE will be crucial in addressing major global trends and challenges. However, this report has also highlighted the difficulty of attracting investment in ALE. National budgets are under acute pressure, and ALE competes with well-defined constituencies for attention and budgets, both within and outside of the education sector. Within the education sector, the importance of investing in children cannot be doubted. However, this should not be seen as a zero-sum game: shifting attention away from ALE has very negative consequences for people of all ages. So what would these consequences be? What would happen if ALE was no longer regarded as a public good worthy of public investment?

A world without ALE would represent the denial of the human right to education. It would undermine social justice, sidelining the many adults who have been failed by initial education and have left school without basic skills and literacy. It would condemn many adults to a lifetime of inequity and restricted opportunities. It would also represent an unsustainable burden for younger generations who have benefited from educational investment.

Furthermore, a world without ALE would reduce the value of education as an instrument for social, political, cultural and economic progress. It would represent a denial of human potential. It would disregard the growing body of scientific evidence that people can continue learning and contributing to their societies and economies throughout their lives (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007).

Compared to an 'ALE-rich' society, an 'ALE-poor' society would be likely to have the following characteristics:

1. Adults, communities and organizations would be less able to adapt and change. Workers would find it difficult to change jobs or occupations, making the labour market less efficient. Workers would be likely to experience lower job satisfaction, to resist technological change and to be afraid of innovation.
2. Adults would be less able to look after themselves and their physical and mental well-being. They would also be less equipped to look after the health and development of their children. Their low sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem would make them more vulnerable, exposing them to exploitation and encouraging them to adopt risky behaviour.
3. Adults and communities would be less open to others, and xenophobia and intolerance would grow. People would have fewer opportunities to connect with and learn from people outside their immediate circle. Society would become less cohesive.



4. Adults would become more dependent on their families or on the state, leading to tensions between generations and within families. Older people and people aiming to return to the labour market after a break (especially women), would have fewer job opportunities, leading to an overall loss of expertise and burdening welfare budgets. Inequity and inequalities of all kinds would be higher.
5. People would be less likely to understand environmental change and know how to change their behaviour. They would lack the confidence and motivation to join collective efforts to tackle environmental degradation.

Attempts to green the economy would be far less likely to succeed, and societies would be less resilient in dealing with the consequences.

The world would pay a high price if it ignored the potential of ALE. The slow growth of ALE could lead to populations being overwhelmed by global changes that are much larger than any one individual, group or country. Drawing on the evidence gathered in this report, UNESCO encourages countries to look to the future and construct stronger approaches for ALE within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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## CHAPTER 6

# CONCLUSION: REALIZING THE POTENTIAL OF ALE IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*GRALE III* comes at a pivotal moment in the international debate on sustainable development and education. The 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All goals has passed. Countries have taken stock of their progress over the previous 15 years and have agreed on an ambitious global agenda for the next 15 years. This chapter sets out a practical agenda for future work on ALE.

The chapter begins by examining where ALE sits within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Education 2030 Framework for Action. These agendas, which were adopted by global leaders in 2015, include ambitious ALE-related targets that will be pursued between now and 2030. The chapter examines what these ALE-related targets are, how they improve upon previous ones, and how they relate to the commitments made in the Belém Framework for Action. It also discusses how the agendas pave the way for greater intersectoral collaboration on ALE and for a better balance of educational opportunities across all ages. The chapter then asks how progress towards these global agendas might be monitored. In particular, it casts a critical eye on the availability of data to measure progress on ALE.

*GRALE III* concludes with an examination of the future role of the *GRALE* series in monitoring progress, developing stronger evidence on ALE, and promoting policy dialogue and mutual learning among countries.

## 6.1 ALE AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Education 2030 Framework for Action give ALE unprecedented global potential as a tool for progress. At the 2015 World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea, governments promised to ensure that ‘all youth and adults, especially girls and women, achieve relevant and recognized functional literacy and numeracy proficiency levels and acquire life skills, and that they are provided with adult learning, education and training opportunities’. The Education 2030 Framework for Action identifies ‘children, youth and adults’ as its principal beneficiaries (UNESCO, 2015).

Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goal 4 is of the greatest relevance to ALE. It calls on countries to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.’ Sustainable Development Goal 4 includes seven substantive targets, each of which is discussed in detail in the Education 2030 Framework for Action. Five of the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 4 relate directly to ALE, while two of them address the needs of children.

Target 4.3 calls on countries to ensure that citizens have access to technical, vocational and tertiary education. The Education 2030 Framework for Action goes further, calling on countries to provide ‘lifelong learning opportunities for youth and adults’ and stressing that lifelong learning ‘encompasses formal, non-formal and informal learning’.

The related Sustainable Development Goal indicator adopted by the UN Statistical Commission takes this broader understanding of ALE on board, stating that to measure progress, countries must monitor changes in the participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training over the previous 12 months (United Nations, 2016).

Target 4.4 calls on countries to provide more people with the skills they need to find decent jobs. The Education 2030 Framework for Action reminds countries of the need to go beyond work-specific skills and to equip learners with transferable skills like problem-solving, creativity and teamwork. It also states that learners need opportunities to update their skills through lifelong learning. However, the related indicator has a much narrower approach, stating that countries should only measure the proportion of people with skills in information and communications technology.

Target 4.5 focuses on eliminating gender disparities in education and providing equal access to all levels of education. It calls on countries to ensure ‘that all women and men have equal opportunity to enjoy education of high quality, achieve at equal levels and enjoy equal benefits from education.’ The indicator calls for the establishment of parity indices on the basis of disaggregated data for all the indicators related to Goal 4 (United Nations, 2016). This should help to develop a better picture of the range of ALE programmes as well as actual participation in ALE programmes that promote gender equality.

Target 4.6 calls on countries to ensure that ‘all youth and a substantial proportion of adults achieve literacy and numeracy’. The Education 2030 Framework for Action recognizes that literacy and numeracy exist on a continuum: people are literate at different levels. Nevertheless, it sets a threshold to help measure progress: it calls on countries to ensure that all people reach levels of proficiency that correspond to the successful completion of basic education. To measure progress, countries will assess the skill levels of adults, as well as their participation in literacy and numeracy programmes.

Target 4.7 covers education for sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, peace and global citizenship. As shown in Chapter 4, ALE has an important role to play in these areas. The focus in the Education 2030 Framework for Action is on developing better policy approaches, but these focus mainly on schooling. There is one reference to learners ‘of all ages’, emphasizing their contribution to peaceful, healthy and sustainable societies. The proposed indicators appear to focus on schooling (e.g. curricula and student assessment), and it remains unclear how countries will measure progress with respect to ALE.

It is important to stress that the new goals, targets and indicators are a major improvement on the Millennium Development Goals, which remained silent on ALE. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development understands the importance of ALE, identifies the needs of learners of all ages, recognizes different forms of ALE (i.e. formal, non-formal and informal) and updates our understanding of literacy within the framework of lifelong learning.

Much work remains to be done in putting the ALE elements into a powerful, actionable and affordable agenda. However, the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015), which replaces the 1976 Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education, provides a good starting point (see Annex 2). All three fields of learning identified in the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015) – literacy, continuing training and professional development, and active citizenship – reflect Sustainable Development Goal targets.

Taken together, the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015), the Belém Framework for Action, the Education 2030 Framework for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are strong, integrated tools that will drive progress in ALE from now until 2030.



## 6.2 THREE POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR ALE

The previous section examined how Sustainable Development Goal 4 integrates and recognizes ALE. This section examines three overarching policy implications. Firstly, countries need to see education as a fundamental and enabling human right. Secondly, they must view ALE as part of a balanced educational life course. And finally, they must see ALE as part of a holistic, intersectoral sustainable development agenda that will have multiple benefits and lasting impact.

### 6.2.1 EDUCATION IS A FUNDAMENTAL AND ENABLING HUMAN RIGHT

The Education 2030 Framework for Action refers to education both as a fundamental and enabling human right, and as a public good. It declares that inclusive and equitable education should be free and compulsory.

While these principles can be directly applied to initial schooling, interpreting them in the context of ALE is more complex. In some cases, ALE is free, and in some cases it may indeed be obligatory, for example when adults need to obtain specific professional certifications. However, the right to basic ALE should best be interpreted in terms of access to high-quality opportunities across the life course. Governments will therefore not only need to ensure that learning opportunities are available; they must also help adults to take full advantage of such opportunities. Governments can do this by making adults aware of opportunities and providing them with financial and other forms of support.

### 6.2.2 ALE IS PART OF A BALANCED EDUCATIONAL LIFE COURSE

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promotes intersectoral collaboration, but there is also a need for greater balance within the education sector itself. The Sustainable Development

Goals and the Education 2030 Framework for Action both emphasize the concept of lifelong learning. This challenges recent tendencies to shift attention towards the very early years of life. As this report has shown, however, there is no contradiction between investing early and investing for all: a lifelong approach combines investments for all ages and recognizes, for example, that investments directed at adults can also bring immense benefits for children.

The *GRALE III* survey reveals that most countries are spending more on ALE than they did in 2009. However, out of the 120 countries that reported on their ALE spending, one in three stated that they spend less than 1% of their education budgets on ALE. Only one in six said that they surpass the still-low recommended threshold of 4%. Despite evidence of the value of ALE, the allocation of education spending still reflects the view that education is about providing for the needs of children and youth (Schuller and Watson 2009).

A more balanced approach to education spending will be needed in order to achieve the 2030 promise of lifelong learning for all. As yet, the initial education system continues to produce school leavers who lack basic skills, and 124 million children and adolescents remain out of school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015). To help address the needs of these people, major investments in ALE will be needed for decades to come. Moreover, even adults who have received basic education will need continuous learning in order to keep their skills up-to-date.

Even within ALE itself, there is a need to achieve greater balance in investments. Policy planning is focused on the more visible and easy-to-measure ALE programmes, which generally target formal labour-market outcomes. However, learning today is increasingly taking place outside the formal sector, thanks also to the emergence of new technologies. Non-formal and informal learning are particularly difficult to track, and countries lack effective systems to monitor, measure and record information on the outcomes of such ALE activities.



Governments are making efforts to recognize and validate non-formal and informal learning, and to translate them into qualifications. However, these areas of ALE need to be recognized in the very design of education systems.

### 6.2.3

#### **ALE IS PART OF A HOLISTIC, INTERSECTORAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has made it clear that different policies and practices can no longer be discussed in silos. Despite its proven benefits and impact, ALE by itself cannot overcome issues like discrimination in the labour market or gross income inequalities. This means that stakeholders need to learn how different policies interact with one another, and to understand how to best combine them to achieve lasting impact. As this report has demonstrated, ALE needs to be seen as part of a larger set of social, cultural and economic practices.

Public value analysis provides the following examples of the cross-sectoral benefits of ALE (Schuller and Watson, 2009):

- By helping parents engage with what their children are learning at school, ALE programmes can reduce the chances of costly school failures and drop-outs, allow teachers to fulfil their professional roles better, and improve the integration of young people into labour markets.
- By helping adults understand health risks and the advice of health professionals, ALE programmes may avoid or reduce the need for medication, help prevent patients from wasting or misusing medication and save valuable professional time. They may also allow for a closer match between risks, needs and provision, potentially reducing the use of health services and need for hospitalization as well as expensive residential care for older people.

- By showing criminal offenders how to manage their behaviour more appropriately and providing them with skills for employment, ALE programmes can reduce recidivism. Besides the benefits for individuals and their families, this can reduce crime rates and lower the overall costs of law enforcement and prisons.

Yet proponents of holistic policymaking continue to face major obstacles (see Yang and Valdés-Cotera, 2011). Different sectoral communities have vested interests to protect, and even when ministries want to cooperate across boundaries, administrative rules may prevent co-financing across sectors. Furthermore, awareness of the potential benefits of intersectoral approaches still appears to be weak.

The *GRALE III* survey provides some grounds for optimism, however. Many countries say that they have strengthened their understanding of the impact of ALE on other sectors. Among the 120 countries that responded to the relevant question, more than 9 out of 10 countries said that they now knew more about ALE's impact on society and community than in 2009. Almost as many said that they now knew more about ALE's impact on health and well-being, and on employment and labour-market outcomes. The challenge will be to translate this knowledge into inter-ministerial collaboration and co-financing arrangements. The Education 2030 Framework for Action calls for whole-of-government approaches to education. This means that ALE would need to be made an integral component of, for example, health budgets.

Such intersectoral cooperation and partnerships with private and non-profit organizations are even more necessary if the contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole, and not just the goals related directly to education, is taken into account. The indicators for the very first goal, for example – to 'end poverty in all its forms everywhere' – recognize that a multitude of resources across national government budgets will be needed. Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 1.1.2 requires data on 'spending on essential services

(education, health and social protection) as a percentage of total government spending', which indicates that funds devoted to ALE should be seen as a contribution to the alleviation of poverty.

Sustainable Development Goal 3, with its focus on ensuring 'healthy lives and promot[ing] well-being for all at all ages', involves a range of indicators for assessing the success with which health risks are being addressed. One of these indicators is the HIV incidence rate (Indicator 3.3.1). Such indicators will reveal the extent to which preventive learning is achieving success. Progress with regard to Sustainable Development Goal 8 on 'full and productive employment and decent work' will be measured by establishing the 'percentage of youth (aged 15-24) not in education, employment or training' (Indicator 8.6.1). This indicator confirms the importance of ALE programmes aimed at developing vulnerable young people's skills.

Progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 11, which aims to make 'cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable', will be measured among other things in terms of the existence of a 'direct participation structure of civil society in urban planning and management' (Indicator 11.3.2). Again, then, ALE – in this case, in the form of community learning – has a clear role to play.

Achieving these goals will require more coordination between diverse stakeholders. This is particularly important for ALE, where the provision and funding of programmes involves the broadest possible range of actors, be they governments, private providers, employers, civil society organizations or individual learners themselves

### 6.3 MONITORING ALE AND STRENGTHENING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has both substantive and informational implications for ALE. As discussed above, its new goals and principles may change the policies and practices that countries prioritize and fund. However, the Agenda also introduces a strong knowledge focus, calling on countries to improve the way they monitor progress and collect data.

The UN anticipates a data revolution, with greater standardization, sharing and use of data, and more resources devoted to statistical capacity building (Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, 2014). The Education 2030 Framework for Action includes a call for better monitoring, reporting and evaluation in education. It states that 'a research and evaluation culture is necessary at the national and international levels to learn lessons from the implementation of strategies and policies and feed them back into actions' (UNESCO, 2015). For ALE, the benefits of better data would be enormous. Better information on household spending on education, for example, would provide valuable evidence to inform the design of ALE policies and practices.

It must be recognized, however, that the ALE knowledge base remains very weak, even in high-income countries where well-developed information systems exist. It is particularly difficult to obtain robust and comparable data to monitor progress in each of the five areas of the Belém Framework for Action. Any efforts to improve data on ALE will need to set careful priorities and ensure that their ambitions are in line with available resources in different countries and contexts. A comprehensive and dynamic information system is needed, comprising descriptive data and indicators; comparative studies; in-depth research probing causal relations; and policy research addressing cost effectiveness and public value analysis.

## 6.4 ENGAGING WITH *GRALE III* AND PARTNERING ON *GRALE IV*

*GRALE III* has sought to gather the best evidence available on the current state of ALE around the world. It has made a case for ALE, showing how investment in ALE benefits individuals and societies, and how these benefits cut across sectors and ages. The report has also presented ideas, provided examples of innovation and highlighted important questions for debate and policy dialogue.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning invites readers to visit the *GRALE* website (<http://uil.unesco.org/grale/>) for comprehensive *GRALE* data and information on many of the examples discussed in this report. This website gives individual analysts across the world the opportunity to delve further into the data and help develop a clearer picture of the national, regional and global state of ALE. It will also help national governments to keep track of their achievements and those of their peer countries as part of an ongoing process of improved analysis, evaluation and monitoring.

Above all, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning considers the *GRALE* series to be an opportunity to learn, share experiences and reflect on new courses of action. *GRALE* does not attempt to identify a single model of best practice in ALE. Each country has its own development trajectory and, accordingly, needs to design its own approach to ALE.

It is hoped that this report will provide a rich source of information for participants preparing for the Mid-Term Review of CONFINTEA VI, which will be held in 2017. The Mid-Term Review will provide a valuable opportunity for countries to reflect on how *GRALE* can best monitor progress in ALE in future. In particular, countries will need to consider how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development affects priorities in monitoring the Belém Framework for Action and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015). Another important question to consider is how *GRALE* monitoring might be better integrated with Sustainable Development Goal-related monitoring.

*GRALE IV*, scheduled for publication in 2019, is already on the horizon. It is likely to include developmental work on ALE indicators that allow for better comparison across countries and across time. Discussions during the coming months will provide guidance on the focus and design of the report, and on the background research that will help ensure the report is a success.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning looks forward to engaging with readers and partners throughout this preparatory process.

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## ANNEX 1

## LIST OF COUNTRIES

Region	Country	Narrative report for GRALE		Participation in GRALE survey
		GRALE I	GRALE II	
<b>Arab States</b>	Algeria	yes	no	yes
	Bahrain	yes	yes	yes
	Djibouti	no	no	no
	Egypt	yes	yes	yes
	Iraq	yes	no	no
	Jordan	yes	yes	yes
	Kuwait	yes	no	no
	Lebanon	yes	no	yes
	Libya	yes	no	no
	Mauritania	yes	no	yes
	Morocco	yes	yes	yes
	Oman	yes	yes	yes
	Palestine	yes	yes	no
	Qatar	yes	no	no
	Saudi Arabia	yes	no	yes
	Sudan	yes	no	yes
	Syrian Arab Republic	yes	yes	yes
	Tunisia	yes	yes	yes
	United Arab Emirates	yes	no	yes
	Yemen	yes	yes	no
<b>Central Asia</b>	Armenia	yes	yes	yes
	Azerbaijan	no	yes	yes
	Georgia	yes	yes	yes
	Kazakhstan	yes	no	no
	Kyrgyzstan	yes	no	yes
	Mongolia	yes	yes	yes
	Tajikistan	yes	no	no
	Turkmenistan	no	no	no
	Uzbekistan	yes	yes	yes
<b>Central and Eastern Europe</b>	Algeria	yes	no	yes
	Albania	no	no	no
	Belarus	no	no	yes
	Bosnia Herzegovina	no	yes	yes
	Bulgaria	yes	yes	yes
	Croatia	yes	yes	yes
	Czech Republic	yes	yes	yes
	Estonia	yes	yes	yes
	Hungary	yes	yes	yes
	Latvia	yes	yes	yes



Region	Country	GRALE I	GRALE II	GRALE III
<b>Central and Eastern Europe</b>	Lithuania	yes	yes	yes
	Montenegro	yes	yes	no
	Poland	yes	yes	yes
	Republic of Moldova	yes	no	no
	Romania	yes	yes	yes
	Russian Federation	yes	no	yes
	Serbia	yes	yes	yes
	Slovakia	yes	yes	yes
	Slovenia	yes	yes	yes
	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	yes	yes	yes
	Turkey	yes	no	yes
	Ukraine	no	no	yes
	<b>East Asia and the Pacific</b>	Australia	yes	no
Brunei Darussalam		yes	no	no
Cambodia		yes	yes	no
China		yes	yes	yes
Cook Islands		no	no	no
Democratic People's Republic of Korea		yes	no	no
Fiji		yes	no	no
Indonesia		no	yes	yes
Japan		yes	yes	yes
Kiribati		no	no	no
Lao People's Democratic Republic		yes	yes	no
Macao, China		no	no	no
Malaysia		yes	yes	yes
Marshall Islands		no	no	yes
Micronesia (Federated States of)		no	no	yes
Myanmar		no	yes	no
Nauru		no	yes	no
New Zealand		yes	yes	yes
Niue		no	no	yes
Palau		yes	yes	yes
Papua New Guinea		yes	yes	no
Philippines		yes	yes	yes
Republic of Korea		yes	yes	yes
Samoa		no	no	no
Singapore		no	no	no
Solomon Islands		yes	yes	no
Thailand		yes	yes	yes
Timor-Leste		no	no	no
Tokelau		no	no	no
Tonga		no	no	no
Tuvalu	no	no	no	
Vanuatu	no	no	no	
Viet Nam	yes	yes	yes	

Region	Country	GRALE I	GRALE II	GRALE III
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	Anguilla	no	no	no
	Antigua and Barbuda	no	no	no
	Argentina	yes	yes	yes
	Aruba	no	no	no
	Bahamas	no	yes	no
	Barbados	no	yes	yes
	Belize	yes	yes	yes
	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	yes	yes	yes
	Brazil	yes	yes	yes
	British Virgin Islands	no	no	no
	Cayman Islands	no	no	no
	Chile	yes	yes	no
	Colombia	yes	yes	yes
	Costa Rica	yes	yes	yes
	Cuba	yes	yes	yes
	Curaçao	no	no	yes
	Dominica	no	no	no
	Dominican Republic	yes	yes	yes
	Ecuador	yes	yes	yes
	El Salvador	yes	yes	yes
	Grenada	no	no	yes
	Guatemala	yes	yes	yes
	Guyana	no	yes	no
	Haiti	yes	no	no
	Honduras	yes	yes	yes
	Jamaica	yes	yes	yes
	Mexico	yes	yes	yes
	Montserrat	no	no	no
	Nicaragua	yes	no	yes
	Panama	yes	yes	no
	Paraguay	yes	yes	yes
	Peru	yes	yes	yes
Saint Kitts and Nevis	no	no	no	
Saint Lucia	yes	no	no	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	yes	yes	yes	
Sint Maarten	no	no	no	
Suriname	yes	yes	yes	
Trinidad and Tobago	no	yes	no	
Uruguay	yes	yes	yes	
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	yes	no	yes	
<b>North America and Western Europe</b>	Andorra	no	no	yes
	Austria	yes	yes	yes
	Belgium	yes	yes	yes
	Canada	yes	no	yes
	Cyprus	yes	yes	yes
	Denmark	yes	yes	yes
	Faroese	no	no	yes
	Finland	yes	yes	yes
	France	yes	yes	yes
	Germany	yes	yes	yes
	Greece	yes	yes	yes
	Iceland	no	no	no

Region	Country	GRALE I	GRALE II	GRALE III
<b>North America and Western Europe</b>	Ireland	yes	yes	yes
	Israel	yes	yes	yes
	Italy	no	no	no
	Luxembourg	no	yes	yes
	Malta	no	yes	yes
	Monaco	no	no	no
	Netherlands	yes	yes	yes
	Norway	yes	yes	yes
	Portugal	yes	yes	yes
	San Marino	no	no	yes
	Spain	yes	yes	yes
	Sweden	yes	yes	yes
	Switzerland	yes	yes	yes
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	yes	yes	no
	United States of America	yes	yes	yes
	<b>South and West Asia</b>	Afghanistan	yes	yes
Bangladesh		yes	yes	yes
Bhutan		yes	yes	yes
India		yes	no	yes
Iran (Islamic Republic of)		yes	no	yes
Maldives		no	no	yes
Nepal		yes	yes	yes
Pakistan		yes	no	yes
Sri Lanka		no	yes	yes
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	Angola	yes	yes	no
	Benin	yes	no	yes
	Botswana	yes	yes	no
	Burkina Faso	yes	yes	yes
	Burundi	yes	no	no
	Cabo Verde	yes	yes	yes
	Cameroon	yes	yes	no
	Central African Republic	yes	no	no
	Chad	yes	yes	yes
	Comoros	yes	no	yes
	Congo	no	no	no
	Côte d'Ivoire	yes	yes	yes
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	yes	yes	yes
	Equatorial Guinea	yes	no	no
	Eritrea	yes	yes	yes
	Ethiopia	yes	yes	yes
	Gabon	yes	yes	yes
	Gambia	yes	yes	yes
	Ghana	yes	yes	yes
	Guinea	yes	no	yes
	Guinea-Bissau	yes	no	yes
	Kenya	yes	yes	yes
	Lesotho	yes	yes	yes
	Liberia	yes	no	no
Madagascar	yes	yes	yes	

Region	Country	<i>GRALE I</i>	<i>GRALE II</i>	<i>GRALE III</i>
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	Malawi	yes	yes	yes
	Mali	yes	no	yes
	Mauritius	yes	yes	yes
	Mozambique	yes	yes	yes
	Namibia	yes	yes	yes
	Niger	yes	yes	yes
	Nigeria	yes	yes	yes
	Rwanda	yes	yes	no
	Sao Tome and Principe	yes	no	yes
	Senegal	yes	yes	yes
	Seychelles	yes	no	no
	Sierra Leone	yes	yes	no
	Somalia	no	no	no
	South Africa	yes	yes	yes
	South Sudan	no	no	no
	Swaziland	yes	yes	yes
	Togo	yes	yes	yes
	Uganda	yes	yes	yes
	United Republic of Tanzania	yes	no	yes
	Zambia	yes	yes	yes
Zimbabwe	yes	yes	yes	

## ANNEX 2

# RECOMMENDATION ON ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION (2015)

## PREAMBLE

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), meeting in Paris from 3 to 18 November 2015, at its 38th session

**Recalling** the principles set forth in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and the principles contained in the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960),

**Reaffirming** that in the framework of lifelong learning, literacy constitutes an indispensable foundation and adult learning and education an integral part. Literacy and adult learning and education contribute to the realization of the right to education that enables adults to exercise other economic, political, social and cultural rights, and which should meet the key criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability in conformity with General Comment No. 13 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (21st session) referring to Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

**Acknowledging** that we live in a rapidly changing world, in which governments and citizens face simultaneous challenges

which prompt us to review the conditions for realizing the right to education for all adults,

**Reiterating** the significant role of adult learning and education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (New York, September 2015), and noting the commitment of the international community to the promotion of social development, sustained and inclusive economic growth, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger,

**In the light of** the Incheon Declaration "Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all" and the Education 2030 Framework for Action,

**Acknowledging** both the achievements made in the development of adult learning and education since 1976, as discussed during the 1985, 1997 and 2009 International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA IV, V and VI) and at the Education for All (EFA) conferences (World Conference on EFA, Jomtien 1990 and World Education Forum, Dakar 2000), and the need to further strengthen adult learning and education, as documented in the 2009 and 2013 *Global Reports on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)*,

**Referring** to the International Standard Classification of Education 2011,

**Underlining** the relevance of improving technical and vocational education and training as expressed in the UNESCO Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training

(2015), which contains specific provisions for continuing training and professional development,

**Having decided** by means of 37 C/Resolution 16 that the 1976 Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education should be revised to reflect contemporary educational, cultural, political, social and economic challenges, as set out in the Hamburg Declaration and the Belém Framework for Action, and to give renewed momentum to adult education,

Considering that this Recommendation sets out general principles, goals and guidelines that each Member State should apply according to its socio-economic context, governing structures and available resources, with a view to enhancing the status of adult learning and education at the national, regional and international levels,

**Having examined** document 38 C/31 and the draft Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education annexed thereto,

1. Adopts the present Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, which supersedes the 1976 Recommendation, on this thirteenth day of November 2015;
2. Recommends that Member States apply the following provisions by taking appropriate steps, including whatever legislative or other steps may be required, in conformity with the constitutional practice and governing structures of each State, to give effect within their territories to the principles of this Recommendation;

3. Also recommends that Member States bring this Recommendation to the attention of the authorities and bodies responsible for adult learning and education and also of other stakeholders concerned with adult learning and education;
4. Further recommends that Member States report to it, at such dates and in such manner as shall be determined by it, on the action taken by them in pursuance of this Recommendation.

## I. DEFINITION AND SCOPE

1. Adult learning and education is a core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure 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 regarded as adults by the society in which they live, 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, recognizing, 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.



2. Adult learning and education constitutes a major building block of a learning society, and for the creation of learning communities, cities and regions as they foster a culture of learning throughout life and revitalize learning in families, communities and other learning spaces, and in the workplace.
3. 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. Adult learning and education provides a variety of learning pathways and flexible learning opportunities, including second chance programmes to make up for lack of initial schooling, including for people who have never been to school, early school leavers and drop outs.
4. Literacy is a key component of adult learning and education. It involves a continuum of learning and proficiency levels which allows citizens to engage in lifelong learning and participate fully in community, workplace and wider society. It includes the ability to read and write, to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials, as well as the ability to solve problems in an increasingly technological and information-rich environment. Literacy is an essential means of building people's knowledge, skills and competencies to cope with the evolving challenges and complexities of life, culture, economy and society.
5. Continuing training and professional development is a fundamental element in a continuum of learning that equips adults with the knowledge, skills and competencies to fully engage in rapidly-changing societal and working environments. The UNESCO Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (2015) contains relevant provisions in this area.
6. Adult learning and education also includes education and learning opportunities for active citizenship, variously known as community, popular or liberal education. It empowers people to actively engage with social issues such as poverty, gender, intergenerational solidarity, social mobility, justice, equity, exclusion, violence, unemployment, environmental protection and climate change. It also helps people to lead a decent life, in terms of health and well-being, culture, spirituality and in all other ways that contribute to personal development and dignity.
7. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are seen as holding great potential for improving access by adults to a variety of learning opportunities and promoting equity and inclusion. They offer various innovative possibilities for realizing lifelong learning, reducing the dependence on traditional formal structures of education and permitting individualized learning. Through mobile devices, electronic networking, social media and on-line courses, adult learners can have access to opportunities to learn anytime and anywhere. Information and communication technologies have also considerable capacity for facilitating access to education for people with disabilities permitting their fuller integration into society, as well as for other marginalized or disadvantaged groups.

## II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

8. The aim of adult learning and education is to equip people with the necessary capabilities to exercise and realize their rights and take control of their destinies. It promotes personal and professional development, thereby supporting more active engagement by adults with their societies, communities and

environments. It fosters sustainable and inclusive economic growth and decent work prospects for individuals. It is therefore a crucial tool in alleviating poverty, improving health and well-being and contributing to sustainable learning societies.

9. The objectives of adult learning and education are (a) to develop the capacity of individuals to think critically and to act with autonomy and a sense of responsibility; (b) to reinforce the capacity to deal with and shape the developments taking place in the economy and the world of work; (c) to contribute to the creation of a learning society where every individual has an opportunity to learn and fully participate in sustainable development processes and to enhance solidarity among people and communities; (d) to promote peaceful coexistence and human rights; (e) to foster resilience in young and older adults; (f) to enhance awareness for the protection of the environment.

### III. AREAS OF ACTION

10. This Recommendation specifically addresses the following areas from the Belém Framework for Action adopted by the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI): policy, governance, financing, participation, inclusion and equity, and quality.

#### Policy

11. Member States, according to their specific conditions, governing structures and constitutional provisions, should develop comprehensive, inclusive and integrated policies for adult learning and education in its various forms.
- a) Member States should develop comprehensive policies that address learning in a wide range of spheres, including the economic, political, social, cultural, technological and environmental.
- b) Member States should develop inclusive policies that address the learning needs of all adults by providing equitable access to learning opportunities, and differentiated strategies without discrimination on any grounds.
- c) Member States should develop integrated policies using interdisciplinary and intersectoral knowledge and expertise, encompassing education and training policies and related policy areas, such as economic development, human resource development, labour, health, environment, justice, agriculture and culture.
12. To develop adult learning and education policies, Member States should consider:
- a) strengthening or creating inter-ministerial forums to articulate across sectors the roles of adult learning and education in the lifelong learning spectrum, as well as its contributions to the development of societies;
- b) involving all relevant stakeholders, including parliamentarians, public authorities, academia, civil society organizations, and the private sector as partners in policy development;
- c) providing suitable structures and mechanisms for the development of adult learning and education policies, whilst ensuring that the policies developed are flexible enough to adapt to future needs, issues and challenges.
13. To nurture a favourable policy environment, Member States should consider:
- a) raising awareness, through legislation, institutions and sustained political commitment, of adult learning and education as an essential component of the right to education and a key pillar in the education system;
- b) taking measures to provide information, motivate learners and guide them towards relevant learning opportunities;

- c) demonstrating, including through the collection, analysis and dissemination of effective policies and practices, the wider benefits of literacy, adult learning and education to society, such as social cohesion, health and well-being, community development, employment and environmental protection, as aspects of inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

### **Governance**

14. According to their specific conditions, governing structures and constitutional provisions, Member States should consider enhancing the governance of adult learning and education, including through strengthening or creating cooperative structures and participatory processes, such as multi-stakeholder partnerships, at local, national, regional and international levels.
15. Member States should establish mechanisms and manage institutions and processes at the local, national, regional and global levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic, and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships. Member States should consider:
  - a) ensuring suitable representation by and participation of relevant stakeholders in the development of policies and programmes in order to ensure democratic governance and responsiveness to the needs of all learners, in particular the most disadvantaged;
  - b) developing multi-stakeholder partnerships, contributing to offering an enabling environment for good governance, which should involve all relevant actors in adult learning and education from public authorities, civil society organizations and the private sector (such as ministries, local authorities, parliaments, learners' associations, the media, volunteer groups, research institutes and academia, private foundations, chambers of commerce and industry, trade unions, international and regional organizations) including those who organize teaching and learning processes and validate competencies at local, national, regional and international levels;
16. Member States should consider establishing mechanisms and processes at national and local levels that are flexible, responsive and decentralized. Rural and urban areas should have inclusive and sustainable strategies where every individual shall have opportunities to learn and fully participate in development processes.
17. Member States should consider developing learning cities, towns and villages, by:
  - a) mobilizing resources to promote inclusive learning;
  - b) revitalizing learning in families and communities;
  - c) facilitating learning for and in the workplace;
  - d) extending the use of modern learning technologies;
  - e) enhancing quality and excellence in learning;
  - f) fostering a culture of learning throughout life.
18. Member States should mobilize and allocate sufficient financial resources to support enhanced and successful participation in adult learning and education, through appropriate mechanisms, including inter-ministerial coordination, partnerships and cost-sharing.
19. Governments have a fundamental role in budgeting and allocation according to each State's social priorities (education, health, food security, among others) and respecting the principle of shared responsibility between governments, the private sector and individuals. Member States should mobilize and allocate sufficient resources to adult education

### **Financing**

in accordance with national needs. The necessary measures should be taken to use the resources available in a sustainable, effective, efficient, democratic and accountable way.

20. All efforts should be made to put in place a strategy for mobilizing resources across all relevant government departments and from different stakeholders. Literacy, as the foundation for lifelong learning and a key condition for realizing the right to education, should be universally accessible and freely available. For the individual learner, lack of funds should not be an obstacle to participation in adult learning and education programmes. Member States should consider:

- a) prioritizing investment in literacy and basic skills, and continuing adult learning and education;
- b) fostering inter-ministerial coordination between policy areas (e.g. economic development, human resource, labour, health, agriculture, and environment), which is essential in optimizing the use of resources (cost-effectiveness and cost-sharing) and maximizing learning outcomes;
- c) making the allocation and use of resources transparent to reflect the priorities that have been established according to research results on the current situation of adult education.

21. Member States, may consider offering co-financing and setting incentives to facilitate learning. For example, individual learning accounts (ILAs), subsidies (vouchers and allowances) and support for training leave for workers might be considered.

#### **Participation, inclusion and equity**

22. Member States should consider, according to their specific conditions, governing structures and constitutional provisions, promoting participation, inclusion and equity so that no individual is excluded from adult learning and education and that quality learning opportunities are available to all women and men of diverse

social, cultural, linguistic, economic, educational and other backgrounds.

23. To promote access and broader participation, Member States should consider, according to their specific conditions, governing structures and constitutional provisions, developing effective educational responses, especially to address accessibility, autonomy, equity and inclusion issues. Particular attention should be given to specific target groups, with a view to acknowledging their contribution to societal development while respecting cultural and other forms of diversity, including multilingualism, and ensure that further qualifications are not only validated but valued with regard to income and status. This implies:

- a) establishing appropriate strategies to promote adults' access to and participation in learning activities and to enhance incentives for them to undertake such activities;
- b) tolerating no discrimination on any grounds, including age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, illness, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement, imprisonment, occupation or profession;
- c) devoting special attention and action to enhance access to quality learning for disadvantaged or vulnerable groups such as individuals with low levels of, or no, literacy and numeracy and schooling, vulnerable youth, migrant workers, unemployed workers, members of ethnic minorities, indigenous groups, individuals with disability, prisoners, the elderly, people affected by conflict or disasters, refugees, stateless or displaced persons;
- d) addressing learners' needs and aspirations with adult learning approaches which respect and reflect the diversity of learners' languages and heritage, including indigenous culture and values, create bridges between different groups and reinforce integrative capacities within communities;

- e) giving special attention to programmes or initiatives that promote gender equality;
  - f) creating or strengthening appropriate institutional structures, like community learning centres, for delivering adult learning and education and encouraging adults to use these as hubs for individual learning as well as community development;
  - g) developing high-quality information and guidance services, which facilitate access to participation, help improve the visibility of the gains resulting from adult learning, and ensure a better match between the demands of individuals and learning opportunities.
24. Member States should guarantee equitable access to adult learning and education, and promote broader and sustained participation by fostering a culture of learning throughout life and by minimizing barriers to participation.

### Quality

25. To ensure effective policy and programme implementation through periodical monitoring and evaluation of adult learning and education policies and programmes, Member States should consider, according to their specific conditions, governing structures and constitutional provisions:
- a) establishing mechanisms and/or structures that utilize appropriate quality criteria and standards, subject to periodic review;
  - b) taking appropriate measures to follow up on the results of the monitoring and evaluation;
  - c) collecting and analysing disaggregated data in a timely, reliable, and valid manner and share effective and innovative practices in monitoring and evaluation.
26. To ensure quality in adult education and its potential for transformation in all relevant spheres, attention should be paid to the relevance, equity, effectiveness and efficiency of adult learning and education. To this end, Member States should
- a) aligning the provision of adult learning and education, through contextualized and learner-centred culturally and linguistically appropriate programmes, with the needs of all stakeholders, including those of the labour market;
  - b) ensuring fair access to, and sustained participation and learning without discrimination in adult learning and education;
  - c) assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes by measuring the extent to which they achieve the desired objectives, including in relation to their outcomes.
27. Member States should promote, according to their specific conditions, governing structures and constitutional provisions, flexible and seamless learning pathways between formal and non-formal education and training, and build necessary capacities for policy and programme evaluation to that end.
28. Member States should foster an environment where quality adult learning and education is provided through measures such as:
- a) developing appropriate content and modes of delivery, preferably using mother-tongue as the language of instruction, and adopting learner-centred pedagogy, supported by information and communication technology (ICT) and open educational resources;
  - b) providing decent infrastructure, including safe learning spaces;
  - c) establishing tools and mechanisms and building necessary capacities for monitoring and evaluation in the field of adult learning and education, taking into account the depth and breadth of participation, learning processes, outcomes and impact measures;
  - d) developing suitable literacy measurement tools;
  - e) establishing quality assurance mechanisms and programme monitoring and evaluation as integral components of adult learning and

- education systems; setting quality standards, certifying adherence to these standards and disseminating, to the general public, information about providers adhering to the standards;
- f) improving training, capacity building, employment conditions and the professionalization of adult educators;
  - g) enabling learners to acquire and accumulate learning, experiences and qualifications through flexible participation and accumulation of learning outcomes at different stages. Learning outcomes from participation in non-formal and informal adult learning and education should be recognized, validated and accredited as having equivalent values to those granted by formal education (e.g. in accordance with National Qualification Frameworks) to allow for continuing education and access to the labour market, without facing discrimination barriers.
- c) ensuring that international cooperation does not merely involve the transfer of structures, curricula, methods and techniques that have originated elsewhere.

30. Member States, as part of the international community, should consider sharing their experiences, increasing and improving mutual cooperative assistance, and help build each other's capacities in adult education, taking into account their national priorities. This implies:

#### IV. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

- 29. To promote the development and strengthening of adult learning and education, Member States should consider increasing cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, including governmental bodies, research institutions, civil society organizations, unions, development assistance agencies, the private sector and the media, whether on a bilateral or multilateral basis, and enhance United Nations interagency cooperation. Sustained international cooperation implies:
  - a) promoting and stimulating development within the countries concerned through appropriate institutions and structures adapted to the particular circumstances of those countries;
  - b) creating a climate favourable to international cooperation with a view to capacity building in developing countries in different areas of adult learning and education and encouraging mutual cooperative assistance between all countries
- a) fostering the regular exchange of information, documentation and materials on policies, concepts and practices and relevant research, as well as adult learning and education professionals at national, regional and international levels. The use and transfer of new information and communication technologies should be maximized and the mobility of learners between Member States should be facilitated;
- b) enhancing South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation, giving priority to countries where the education deficits are the widest, by applying findings from international reports and research;
- c) collecting and presenting data on adult learning and education, through and with the support of UNESCO, including the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), and the established mechanisms to produce relevant reports, such as the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)*. This implies the further enhancement of international data collection mechanisms based on agreed indicators and definitions, building on countries' capacities to produce data, and the dissemination of such data at various levels;
- d) encouraging governments and development cooperation agencies to support the enhancement of local, regional and global cooperation and



networking between all relevant stakeholders. Exploring how regional and global funding mechanisms for literacy and adult education could be established and strengthened and how existing mechanisms can support the international, regional and national efforts mentioned above;

- e) incorporating, where appropriate, specific clauses relating to adult learning and education in international agreements concerned with cooperation in the fields of education, science and culture, and promoting the development and strengthening of adult learning and education efforts in the United Nations and UNESCO, and in the attainment of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.





The third *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE III)* draws on monitoring surveys completed by 139 UNESCO Member States to develop a differentiated picture of the global state of adult learning and education (ALE). It evaluates countries' progress in fulfilling the commitments they made in the Belém Framework for Action, which was adopted at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2009. In addition, the report examines the impact of ALE on three major areas: health and well-being; employment and the labour market; and social, civic and community life. *GRALE III* provides policymakers, researchers and practitioners with compelling evidence for the wider benefits of ALE across all of these areas. In so doing, it highlights some of the major contributions that ALE can make to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.