THE ADULT LEARNING DIMENSIONS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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This Report consist of the following:
1. **Report on the Seminar**
   List of papers
   List of participants
   Reflexive piece: Alan Rogers
2. **Background paper (revised)**
   Comments by Ian Cheffy, Brian Street, Mari Yasunaga, Ehsan ur Rahman, and Anna Robinson-Pant.
3. **Presentation by Aaron Benavot**

1. REPORT OF SEMINAR 7-9 APRIL 2016
Note: this report has been compiled by Aditi Bhutoria, Alan Rogers and Pallawi Sinha from detailed notes taken by Aditi and Pallawi during the seminar. We have not given names to contributions made during discussions, only for the more formal presentations made.

SUMMARY

This Uppingham Seminar explored the encouragement which the SDGs have given to adult learning opportunities and activities, under four headings:
Philosophy: definitions and concepts of 'adult education' (AE), 'adult learning and education' (ALE – UIL's preferred term) and lifelong learning/education (LLL/E).
Policy: how governments, intergovernmental bodies (such as UN and World Bank etc), INGOs and NGOs regard and implement the adult learning opportunities and activities in regard to the SDGs, and how information on such a diversity of activities can be collected for monitoring and evaluation.
Pedagogy and Practice: how far adult learning calls for distinctive kinds of provision, especially in terms of teachers and other professionals, and what indicators of learning outcomes are appropriate for adult learning.
Partnerships: how those concerned for the promotion of adult learning opportunities and activities can build partnerships both with formal and non-formal education and with other sectors of development as outlined in the SDGs, overcoming the resistance to co-operation which appears to exist.

The key issue appeared to be *whether adult learning (in its widest sense) should retain its current distinctivenessfrom mainstream education (in its widest sense), seeking its own partnerships to implement the adult learning targets listed in the SDGs and its own indicators of learning outcomes; or whether it should be mainstreamed within a concept of LLL/E, and universal indicators of learning outcomes should be sought*. In the tradition of the Uppingham Seminars, each participant will have come to their own conclusion on these questions.

Introduction

Twenty-two academics, practitioners and researchers with UNESCO representatives assembled at Dunford House, Sussex, UK, to conceptualise the spaces for adult learning provided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Participants came from emerging and developed economies including Bangladesh, France, Germany, India, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the USA. Two participants, Alemayehu Gebre from Ethiopia and Samuel Asnake from South Africa, were unable to attend owing to inability to obtain visas in time (see list of participants at end).

The key theme for the Seminar in relation to the SDGs was: *'Why have adults been marginalised in education in the past and what hopes do the SDGs give that adult learning will feature more strongly in the future?'*

DAY 1 THURSDAY 7 APRIL 2016

DAY 1: Session 1: Opening Plenary: *Chaired by Anna Robinson-Pant*

Anna introduced the Uppingham Seminars: each had been very different in terms of topic, approach, participants and outcomes. This first session was critical, since there is no formal programme, determined outputs or formal presentations. The aim is to provide an opportunity for academics and practitioners to reconceptualise and reflect upon a subject related to education in international development.

Alan Rogers introduced the background paper (revised version attached) on **the adult learning dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals:**   17 different Goals, of which SDG 4 is education, include gender, health, environment, livelihoods, literacy, citizenship, microfinance and others. He divided his presentation into three sections, each with a flip chart sheet.

1.   SDG 4 (education) and adults
SDG 4 built on Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While there were many mentions of adults in the plans for both programmes, in their implementation there was very little provision for adult learning. Secondly, in the debates leading up to the formulation of SDG 4, adult learning hardly featured, despite much advocacy from UIL, ICAE or DVV (see 2015 *Adult Education in an Interconnected World*) and others; the European Association for the Education of Adults suggested that in that negotiation process, stakeholders working in primary education mainly represented education, and organisations representing adults were "largely excluded".

Thirdly, his survey of discussions about the implementation of SDG4 again usually excluded adults. He gave two examples: the Girls' Education Challenge has only one mention of adults (i.e. parents should send girls to school), and the disabilities (inclusive education) lobby only speaks about inclusive education of children with disabilities; when asked about education for disabled adults, none provided reasons why adults were excluded from their considerations.

He explored briefly some of the arguments used, especially the economic (human resource development, HRD) argument that investing in children promises a better rate of return, and the political argument that the electorate demanded education for their children. And he also identified some of the unspoken assumptions, especially the "social imaginary" of 'education' which is commonly taken to mean 'school education' for children and youth. Adult learning is marginalised – which raises the question, '*Why?'*

2.   The relationship between SDG4 and the other goals
Almost all of the SDGs contain references to adult learning, either explicitly or implicitly; which raises a second question, *What is the relationship between SDG4 and the other SDGs?*

He suggested four possible scenarios: the relationship may be seen by different agencies as -

SDG4 (Education)	The other SDGs
1. Education	Extension – *is 'extension' a form of adult education?*
2. Children and youth only (Formal)	Adult Education (Non-Formal Education/ALE) including adult literacy
3. Basic education (literacy learning) and 'schooling'	Post-literacy and continuing education. *Does a 'literacy-comes-first' model imply that adults cannot engage with the other SDG learning goals (health, environment, citizenship etc)* **unless** *and* **until** *they have learned literacy? Is 'post-literacy' exclusionary for non-literate adults?*
4. Lifelong learning (LLL/E) – bridging both sets of goals *Question for the Seminar: Does the concept of LLL/E provide a framework for the whole of the relationship? i.e. does LLL/E embrace both SDG 4 and the others? Do the other SDG targets provide a curriculum for lifelong learning?*	

3.   Lifelong learning and all the SDGs

Looking at lifelong learning as a framework, he suggested that a number of issues need to be faced:

Curriculum – If the SDG framework is seen to provide an adult curriculum framework, it is not enough: there is no mention of art or music (though 'culture' comes into SDG4), nothing on history (perhaps in citizenship) or literature, languages, spirituality etc

Crosscutting issues – One danger of the SDGs is increased sectoralisation - that there will be 16/17 different development sectors, each with its own goals, budget, and its own indicators. This hides the fact that some of the SDGs, such as gender, are both a sector and a crosscutting issue. Other crosscutting issues include literacy and language; adult learning could also be a crosscutting issue. 'Education' (SDG4) too could be seen as both a sector and a crosscutting issue. *How can the other SDGs be included in SDG4; and how can SDG4 relate to all the other SDGs?*

Issue of resistance –Thirdly, he pointed out that there is resistance to linking across the sectors. Peter Easton's recent study, *Sustaining Literacy in Africa: Developing a literate environment,* argues that literacy needs to be incorporated in every development sector but that there is strong resistance from these sectors (what Easton calls 'the great divorce'). Alan related his own experience of this resistance in Malawi. But he suggested that resistance also comes from educators who claim that only qualified 'teachers' can teach adults; he cited one agency who insisted that the trainer of women in tailoring could not teach the literacy practices of tailoring; that must be taught by a literacy teacher who knew nothing of tailoring. While teams (teachers and skills trainers) may be one answer, this will not always be possible: he suggested that both sides must be willing to compromise if we are to build partnerships.

So, *How can partnerships be built?*

During time for reflection, participants put nearly 40 post-it notes on the three flip chart sheets.

Plenary: the five participants who sent out comments on the paper were each given a few minutes:
Ian Cheffy commended the fact that language and marginalised groups are being mentioned more and more. Although there is less explicit reference to language and to marginalisation in the SDGs, SDG 4.5 refers to indigenous people; he was not worried about 'language slipping off the radar' if we remain vigilant. He asked how to foster **research** that may serve advocacy, since there is an emphasis on measuring today: only qualitative research can provide information about what happens when people learn to read and write, can communicate the power of adult education to policy-makers.
Brian Street wondered whether, if we persuade governments and policy-makers to include adults' education, there is a danger of "narrowing", given that they are used to packaging, measurements and formal features. Maybe we are better leaving it as it is; there is a danger that if we push too hard on the governments, they will make ALE more formal, measured.
Mari Yasunaga drew attention to a number of papers (see her comments attached to the background paper below for links) which had been missed in the background paper as circulated, especially UNESCO's Recommendation on ALE (and its companion, Recommendation on TVET). The term 'Adult Learning and Education' (ALE) is currently used instead of 'adult education' (AE). Issues of targets, languages, and learning outcomes are relevant in today's world of measurements and results-based approaches. Indicators have been prepared for monitoring (see link to paper below), but we should not lose sight of areas where adult learning may not be covered by limited indicators. Qualitative research is necessary but different types of partners and processes need to be brought into discussions around ALE and they may prefer quantitative data. There are both opportunities and dangers in the role of non-state actors and the privatisation of education but these avenues need to be pursued. The SDGs are very ambitious, but they provide an opportunity to observe what other sectors are doing and learn from them. On literacy, she preferred to keep it simple, since there are many forms of literacies around: some documents still talk about illiteracy being eradicated, which is linked to previous notions of literacy, but now literacy is envisioned as a continuum in LLL/E, eradicating illiteracy seems inappropriate.
Anna commented that her reading of the situation was more positive. She asked what kind of adult learning/education is envisaged in the relation between SDG4 and the different targets; where does 'everyday informal learning' come into the discussions, since the emphasis in the past has mostly been on 'formal learning'? She noted gender was seen as a crosscutting in the preamble to SDGs. We could explore synonyms around adult learning (for example, extension) which are adult learning under other names. She reflected upon education politics; there are many reasons for promoting adult learning - for example, in Nepal, government had other goals such as the employability of

youth in rural areas. And she was struck that in some contexts, LLL/E had entered the discourse in a big way, yet with differing understandings; she desired a stronger conceptualisation, as it had often been brought into education sector plans from the school sector but they were not sure how it could be translated. The SDGs gave an opportunity for such conceptualisation. Thinking in terms of outcomes is important; but with some NGOs, group mobilisation is valued more than tangible learning outcomes, and much women's literacy has been more concerned with social interaction within a group, women coming together regardless of what they were actually learning - is this a good or bad thing?.

Finally, **Ehsan** asked how different are the roles of 'educationists' and 'extension agents'? Is there scope for sharing budgets?' The problem is the isolation of education from other development agendas - how are or can these be linked, since accountability rests with different government ministries? In his own work, the Ministry of Education does not recognise the Ministry of Health or Agriculture extension services as 'education' and does not share a budget; there is no connectivity. Equally, adult educators do not recognise extension workers of the Agriculture Department to be a resource for education. Education ministry and practitioners do not recognise that the other SDGs include educational elements, and this resistance is mutual. Adult educators, he felt, have failed to be self-critical about the need to promote learning programmes that catered to the diverse learning needs of adults, and to develop operational partnerships with other sector development actors.

In **discussion**, the following points were made:

How can governments be engaged with or convinced of their role, if it is true that AE plays a role in development? In recent Presidential and parliamentary debates in Uganda, none of the five local council chairpersons or the eight presidential candidates ever spoke about AE. How can we convince governments to commit resources to implement "these beautiful ideas" in the SDGs? Research on the impact of differing adult learning approaches was needed to convince governments, since all the focus is on children's education.

One speaker said that, while the initial document was "enormously useful for getting the discussions going", he disagreed with many of the things in the document; the seminar was "barking up the wrong tree". The SDGs and their targets are part of a "very fragile, intergovernmental, UN-driven process that engaged participant-states" and had "very little input by international agencies". Few people believed that there would be agreement upon the SD agenda, and initially, there was not even going to be a goal on education. The document most reflective of the views of the "formally recognised representatives of the education community" is the *Education 2030: Framework for Action* (*FFA*). Agreed upon by 180 Ministers of Education at UNESCO Headquarters in November 2015, this took 18 months to be developed: every word, every sentence and paragraph was contested, and its analysis would most accurately reflect the conceptualisations of AE and the support for SDG 4 by education communities. While the term 'adult education' does not occur in the document, 'lifelong learning' occurs multiple times: UIL's definition of education envisioned 'education' not just as formal but as "lifelong and life-wide, formal and non-formal, informal, intentional and non-intentional". Some of this may be rhetoric but we can be more positive, since now there is a goal (SDG4) and the goal specifies lifelong learning. The document is laced throughout with lifelong learning which governments have committed to, and it can be embedded in education plans from one part of the world to the other. Could the term life-long learning be used, and not make reference to adult education? Many representatives of the AE community who were engaged in these negotiations consciously decided not to employ the term 'adult learning', instead preferring 'lifelong learning', because they saw it to encapsulate everything that they considered to be important in education. However, this might be problematic since in many countries, agencies talk about lifelong learning as including youth and tertiary education but then it drops off. Theoretically and analytically, the speaker believed that everyone in the room would agree that if LLL/E is employed, every aspect of AE is substantiated in one way or another.

It was pointed out that ALE is "obvious" also in the *FFA 2030*; although the specific targets there do not speak of ALE, *FFA* makes consistent reference to adults as learners; and learners are referred to as 'children, youth and adults' which is UNESCO's understanding of 'education'. The speaker could not understand the problem about the 'exclusionary' character of literacy; if literacy is envisaged as the foundation of life-long learning, is it 'exclusionary' of those who do not have the key and the basis of literacy? While there are various forms of literacy, people may be, or are in danger of being, excluded from a huge part of learning which cannot be made easily accessible without literacy. With reference to crosscutting issues, we may find education and literacies throughout the various sectors but as easily, health or economy could be defined as crosscutting issues; it is only a matter of perspective and is due to the "tacit inferiority complex of adult education as a whole and adult educators as professionals" who seek prominence.

Others asked whether higher education was not a part of education; there is danger in employing terms such as 'adult learning' or 'adult education', since it is equated with adult literacy rather than LLL/E which is a better term. But this promotes resistance, since the terms mean different things to different groups. For example, what is literacy? Is literacy health-, gender-, skill-specific or related to the environment, security? Is there a separate literacy for each? We need to be clear about the definition of literacy and education. Some educationalists do not consider extension workers as a resource for literacy and education since they believe that these workers do not have understanding or practical experience of adult education.

Break for participants to put their comments and questions for the seminar agenda on post-it notes.

DAY 1: Session 2: Discussion on agenda for the rest of the seminar: chaired by Anna
Taking the questions and issues listed in the post-it notes, the background paper and the discussion, twelve topics for discussion were identified and these were eventually combined into four major themes: Philosophy, Pedagogy and Practice (taken together), Policy, and Partnerships.

Philosophy: discussion here focussed around issues of terminologies and meanings of AE, ALE and LLL/E. What do we mean by 'lifelong learning' and by 'adults' - do we understand what policy-makers, practitioners, learners understand, particularly in developing countries? Would we arrive at a better definition and understanding if we were to consult adult learners rather than those in position of power and privilege? 'Adult education' versus 'education of adults': is it conceivable to use the term LLL/E without referring to adult education?' Does LLL/E hide the difference between teaching adults and teaching children? Does primary education provide a model for teachers of literacy to adults? And is 'development' envisioned as human development or global capitalism?

Pedagogy and Practice : Among the questions raised were: What are the implications of LLL/E for the school curriculum? If learning is an individual phenomenon, how can individual learning goals be accommodated in a generic curriculum? What are the training implications if the tailor is to teach/support tailoring literacy? ALE requires contextualised approaches; keeping all age groups in mind could help maintain broader (non-functionalist) approaches to education. There is "need to honour" the learners' culture and language, the social context and the power of adults' own stories, central to the customisation of curricula and to devising authentic strategies and content. How does adult education/literacy programming differ from the motivation of learners themselves?

Policy (political and policy agendas). In response to the HRD argument about the costs of AE, it was pointed out that there is evidence in the context of developing countries that the cost of making an adult literate is maximum $100 while primary education costs $150 per pupil. Some agencies have argued that investing in school or children's education over ALE will mean that "over time the problem [of non-literacy] will take care of itself". Is there an assumption that the next generation

should resolve the sustainability changes, which often suits political agendas, and if so, can we challenge this? The assumption, particularly in conflict-affected states, that education is for children only is exceptionally dangerous; how can this be addressed? Is there any evidence that conceptualising LLL/E as a continuum has seen more people go into work; does LLL/E consider people as a human resource? Is it the duty of academics to make policy makers really listen?

Partnerships (Cross-cutting): Among the points raised, it was suggested that while ALE programmes are governed by government structures (ministries), NGOs are freer to cross boundaries. It seems that sectoral resistance mirrors the isolation found in government departments and in the non-formal/NGO sectors; how may this be challenged? And which Ministries should be targeted - Industries, Health, Agriculture? How do we address the blurred boundaries between youth and adult programmes? The current perception of 'education' was isolating it from other development interventions, and adult educators seem to be making little effort to break this isolation. Investigating examples of good practice of integrated/holistic approaches may help to address resistance; examples were given from north Uganda and Senegal (Tostan) of merging AE with skills development and community development.

Timetable: A draft timetable for the next two days was designed by the participants, some of whom offered to facilitate particular sessions.

End of Day 1

DAY 2 FRIDAY 8 APRIL 2016

DAY 2: Session 1: Plenary – Philosophy of ALE and LLL. *Introduced by Ehsan*

Ehsan invited participants to reflect on what policy-makers, practitioners and learners understand by lifelong learning in their respective countries. There are individual and broader philosophies, political dimensions and government interpretations. We need to deconstruct 'adult education', 'adult learning' and 'lifelong learning/education'. Who defines these terms, people in positions of power or the providers of AE; does the AE community speak a common language?

Discussion started around the **discourses** and semantics employed with regard to ALE and LLL/E in different contexts. Some felt that LLL/E was an Anglo- or Euro-centric construction; in developing countries, education was often conceived as a collective or communal activity rather than individual. AE in the many Western countries was often conceived as a "remedial or state-mandated deficit education", limited primarily to middle class, middle-aged women and local communities. Perhaps state and national interpretations of AE are reductionist. While some participants acknowledged the substantive nature of UIL's definition which engaged in a broad and inclusive understanding, others questioned whether this was rhetoric, and noted the disparity in how different organisations or countries translated these terms. There was a danger in not distinguishing between the terms, since LLL/E is not just what comes after schooling; is ALE a distinctive part of LLL/E? One participant suggested that LLL/E is primarily individual, and AE is a more collective form of learning and should not be placed under the umbrella of LLL/E.

Embracing multiple definitions: It was suggested that for the scholarly community, definitions were frequently elaborate, "measured" and "pure"; but ALE needed to observe a wider and political understanding or else it could not be operationalised. Embracing these wider understandings, however, means that terms may have varying meanings, practical implications and philosophies in different contexts, and we need to consider ways of linking or synergising them to be able to contribute or add value to the field. UIL's definition was helpful in bridging the broad scope of both developed and developing countries, the collective and the individual, autonomous and social learning, and the increasing array of technologies and distance learning. Perhaps we need to "live with contradictions", since the world cannot always be standardised. Each of these terms has a history that has been socially constructed at the international, national and community levels, and they all have meanings which cannot be disregarded. For instance, LLL/E in international policy-making allowed actors from different sectors and contexts to buy into the notion without feeling left-out, demonstrating its inclusive nature. For this reason it was added as part of SDG4 but is not referenced in any of the targets, which speaks to the contradiction but also reflects its negotiated nature.

It was asked where **literacy** fits in within these conceptualisations. Literacy was envisaged differently in differing cultures - for well-being, social cohesion, and more than the dominant functional literacy or numeracy skills. The role of literacy in LLL/E depends on whether it is seen primarily as skills; this is dependent on its varying contexts. But even if we are looking at "fundamental literacy or numeracy" as a baseline, it may have different expected or unexpected outcomes beyond instrumentality, helping develop individuals and their well-being. Capturing those changes becomes problematic when measurements are brought into the discussion. More quantifiable factors such as skills are easier to measure, gratify appraisals and diminish misinterpretations. Such measurements assume that teaching and learning provisions and conceptualisations, globally, can isolate the "nuts and bolts of grammar and language" to be learnt right through to critique level skills; much international work is very functional and thus generic. Discussion about the nature of 'literacy' revealed that on occasion the term is employed in such an open way (e.g. film or emotional literacy) that it does not require any skill of reading and writing at all and has lost its meaning.

Data collected by UIL on how countries conceived or employed the term LLL/E in different policy frameworks revealed great variations. While some countries may or may not use the concept, others used the term but located it narrowly within adult education, non-formal or formal. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights refers to education and not LLL/E as a Right; the next UNESCO Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) refers to ALE and not LLL/E. There are all kinds of contradictions which may never find a solution, but (it was asserted) the normative definition forwarded by UIL reveals the broadest and most inclusive understanding of adult education and thus should be embraced.

ALE-LLL/E in different languages and contexts: Looking at different linguistic markers of current discussions could help in understanding how concepts are 'tailored' by different contexts. In Brazil,

for example, the term used for literacy, *alphabetisation,* has now been replaced by *letteramento.* This gave rise to the thought that, in a field like adult education where many key terms are contested, either we could continue contesting or explore the consequences of differing interpretations; perhaps it does not matter which terms we use so long as the consequences of these uses are made explicit. There are political ramifications for whatever definition we agree upon. But it was argued that if we do not have a broad, cross-national understanding, nothing can be measured or it will be measured poorly, and the result may be increased marginalisation. The SDG agenda with its complexities, unlike earlier agendas, opens up spaces and reflects learning that goes beyond instrumental skills-based notions or employability, space to interpret learning and education in a more humanistic or emancipatory way. Seeing the nature of learning as formal, non-formal, and informal, although related primarily to the pedagogy and praxis of ALE/LLL, is also valuable for conceptualisation and policy of learning.

Small-groups: Conceptualisations of the Philosophy of ALE/LLL
After the plenary debate, participants in small groups discussed the definitions, terminologies and broader constructs of adult learning and education, life-long learning, and literacy. Reports were made from the groups as follows:

<u>Group 4:</u>
Education may be seen as a continuum from infancy through to adulthood and death. Its first consideration is the individual; contemplating the purpose(s) of education for the broader society is more of a challenge since it includes pragmatic and personal factors and also philosophical and political dimensions. Starting from schooling, the group saw a more nuanced understanding of the concept of adult literacy and literacies, from fundamental reading and writing skills to a broader, society-based understanding of literacy such as critical thinking skills, citizenship and capacity building. The group suggested that 'adult learning' was more of an individual pursuit, what the learner does, while 'adult education' reflected the systems and structures (whether formal, informal or non-formal) that provided the learning opportunities and fostered a culture of learning. This facilitated understanding of ALE in broad terms, beyond basic skills to knowledge, capability

and capacity - a more programme-based strategy and pedagogy-based provision leading to purpose-based learning and education.

Group 3:
This group discussed individual participants' experiences of ALE, which led to discussions about where, within the continuum of education, does 'adult education' begin. In statistical terms, this could start at 15 years of age but may vary according to different contexts, countries or cultures. This led to consideration of the contextualisation and internationalisation of ALE, especially certain skills which would seem to be contextualised and not uniform. This raised the prospect of "living with an elegant fudge"; complex diplomatic efforts end with part success and look very good but only due to compromise, which allows countries to proceed transnationally or proceed to large-scaled global efforts. Perhaps everyone has to arrive at a terminological compromise in order to proceed to action, accept the fact that the terminology that makes stuff happen, reinforces ideas or crafts policy, changes. Terminology impacts practice; but if we accept that meanings are multiple, how do policy-makers who want to have uniformity deal with it? Not recognising the provisional nature of terminology would be a mistake.

Group 2:
In this group, the terms ALE and LLL/E were considered in terms of Opportunities and Risks. The **opportunities** lie in both its micro perspective (one individual learning from another) and its macro perspective (different sectors and countries learning from each other), making a more integrated, holistic approach. The group saw LLL/E as a continuum that is not fragmented and believed it was a matter of recognition and validation, mainstreaming adult learning practices, a useful holistic framework. In terms of **risks**, there is the possibility of ALE being subsumed by LLL/E, leading to the disappearance of AE and its identity. How then do we obtain evidence and measurement of LLL/E and implement LLL/E initiatives? The group noted the mushrooming of activities through duplication of efforts, the underutilisation of budgets of different ministries, and increase of agencies engaged in the same things.

Group 1:
This group felt that learner choice was crucial to the definition of AE and literacy as opposed to child education. They saw education as a movement from basic education to continuing education; from literacy to post-literacy; from individual activities to community enterprises; and as involving formal, non-formal or informal education, skills, TVET and community with multi-stakeholders and negotiations. This led to discussions around "what is valued, how is that recognised, and how does it gets funded?". There is a contrast between flexible menu-style learning (where the adult learner can dip in and out of different types of provisions) and inflexible learning associated with national qualifications frameworks. LLL/E would be conceptualised in any given country or context according to local community or national priorities, which linked with the idea of the 'universal fudge' where everyone can tailor it for themselves. Issues of control, particularly the extent to which governments are happy with uncontrolled activities, structures or content, were raised. Contexts, and learner choice responding to context, are critical.

Break

DAY 2: Session 2: Presentation: *Werner Mauch*

Werner drew attention to the UNESCO Recommendation on ALE and the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE). While 'Conventions' were binding on participant-states, 'Recommendations' were not binding but were guidelines for "good practice". But, although weaker, they were valuable since they empower civil society to question those governments who

have signed up to them, increase the mechanisms for accountability and provide a common framework for setting objectives, future action and monitoring. For example, in GRALE (produced every five years), six instruments have been developed to measure ALE (Policy, Governance, Financing, Participation, Quality, and International Cooperation) across three learning fields (basic skills, vocational skills, and active citizenship). Extensive online consultation of the draft had been engaged in among National UNESCO Commissions, AE institutions, NGOs and the academic community. That UNESCO/UIL does not have a mechanism to collect *qualitative* information on how ALE is evolving is a matter of concern.

The two Recommendations for ALE and TVET were formulated towards LLL/E based on the recommendations of CONFINTEA with regards to terminologies, such that adult literacy was no longer limited to adult education but was combined with adult learning into Adult Learning and Education (ALE); literacy, skills development and adult learning are developed simultaneously. While the ALE Recommendations are intended to strengthen ALE, the TVET Recommendations engage with new trends that promote skills, competencies and knowledge for work and life. Recommendations on gender issues across all the sectors are not very strong. Much of UNESCO's work had been focused on schooling, they had not put in enough effort into the non-formal or informal sectors of adult education. While literacy might not be strictly comparable, UIL was developing an affordable and manageable tool for measuring literacy. The next GRALE Report plans to engage with the wider benefits of ALE to health and community development. UNESCO has a universal mandate for adult education and is committed to continually reassess itself and develop further instruments.

Plenary discussion *chaired by Ashley*
Discussion on this presentation related to **data collection and measurement** and accountability. It was suggested that the data around ALE was problematic in relation to programmes and funding, measuring instruments, mechanisms to monitor data, data providers (such as governments), and the ways in which reports were returned. Since measuring instruments were mostly quantitative in nature (with some open-ended questions), "a data revolution" was essential for identifying correlation alongside causality, and for engaging with multiple dimensions of literacy. "The world values surveys", as is made evident by the UNESCO Technical Advisory Group [TAG]. On the other hand, ethnographic and mixed-methods designs might better access the authentic meaning of learning; there are quantitative and qualitative dimensions of adult learning in different contexts. This was of particular importance in this debate, since the focus of the SDGs is on outcomes and

impact embedded in "quality". Academic research as well as community programmes could provide quality evidence founded in long-term studies; ethnographic perspectives would be most useful in confronting the issue of the marginalisation of ALE. However, "the kind of questions that ethnographers and economists are formulating are decisively not in tandem", and there is a "sparsity of qualitative data monitoring". While ethnographers may have troubled relationships with economists, ethnographers do provide critical questions; perhaps multi-perspective, multi-stakeholder evidence would ensure quality of evidence and relieve some of UNESCO's responsibility in this regard. But it was suggested that "UNESCO was guilty of dropping the ball on ALE", and that OECD had brought new data to light; others pointed to IIEP systematising data around ALE. The "pertinent issue of accountability" at global, transnational and national levels might be addressed through "league tables in the context of ALE". There was a lack of clarity about accountability for ALE; seminar participants were invited to contribute to a paper on accountability for ALE.

Attention turned to the **ALE Recommendations** wherein literacy, vocational skills and citizenship appear to be the primary concerns; gender is not strong, and wider aspects of ALE are missing. Policies that prioritised AE were needed. The current call for evidence-based policy-making was noted, but "Yesterday it was advocacy, today monitoring, what would policy concerns be tomorrow? Might it be the community?" Reaching out to communities would be valuable in understanding the challenges faced and would ascertain quality evidence. Evidence had been employed more for monitoring rather than advocacy of ALE; if we are to increase the visibility of ALE, different elements that speak to different peoples or aspects must be drawn upon. But UNESCO's position in the context of ALE appeared to be either one that enables countries to hide behind the justification that "UNESCO tells us to", or one that considers it its prerogative to go into countries "to put them right and tell them how to do it". The conceptualisations of ALE or LLL/E at local, regional or sub-national policy levels were not understood at the global level, and often organisations of power dictate rather than debate policies. Perhaps there cannot be a consensus, especially when context is so important as in ALE.

The session concluded with an observation that up till now, the conversations and policies around ALE appeared to be motivated by economic and human development objectives; "where is the **transformative element** in ALE?"

LUNCH

DAY 2: Session 3: Presentation by Aaron: From EFA to Sustainable Development Goals
This is a summary: for a longer description of this session, see separate paper.

Aaron discussed the changing role of ALE in the developmental agenda. The focus of the MDGs was largely on universal primary education; adults did not feature significantly in the discourse. The EFA agenda was broader and covered goals on higher education and TVET. In the SDGs, adults feature in SDG4, specifically under target 4.7, and there are also mentions of crosscutting and embedded themes like 'culture'. Nevertheless, issues of the implementation of targets, of synergies across SDGs, and of measurement indicators remain.

Lifelong learning is meant to be **holistic and all-pervasive**, a departure from sectoral thinking; it is therefore important to understand how synergies can be identified across goals. There is a move away from implementing each goal independently to seeing how to work across goals.

Transforming adults through education is very deeply embedded in all the other SDGs. It would be useful to identify how the different SDGs have implications for the world of education, especially adult education. Once the role and importance of ALE is established in the SDGs, it is possible to argue that ALE is transformative and even more important than school education is today. But embedding learning goals in other sectors could lead to education being seen solely as a means of change rather than as having a value in itself.

Every target has to have at least one **global indicator**. TAG has created a list of 47 indicators, and countries are required to collect and report data on these indicators. SDG4 already has 11 of its 12 indicators approved. But although adults are more prevalent in the SDG targets, they have not made it to the indicators. There is a missing link which accentuates the need for monitoring the goals and the ALE agenda within them through direct assessments. And as has been pointed out, some crucial aspects are missing from the present policy discourse on SDGs. For example, gender in education has received a very narrow focus; and there is little acknowledgement of traditional knowledge, languages and culture.

In the discussion which followed, it was pointed out that there are many forms of adult learning which are beyond the reach of surveys. There is little in the SDGs on informal learning; and the difficulty of identifying all the different forms of (largely voluntary) adult learning people engage in was highlighted. There are many people who teach adults who do not believe that they are adult educators such as health workers, religious leaders and legal agents; these are issues of definition and self-identification. There have been some surveys - attention was drawn to the UK *Wider Benefits of Learning* survey which covered most of the topics of the SDGs. Concerns about gender were expressed – the SDGs are calling for gender parity but not for equality; but different cultures will hold different views about gender equality which make agreement about targets for gender equality problematic. Perhaps the term 'gender equality' can be replaced by 'gender equity'.

This was followed by a **presentation: Monica Ramos on Communities and adult education**
Monica shared her experiences of engaging parents, local communities and immigrants in the education process. Understanding the identity of those we serve as adult educators is critically important. Further, LLL/E implies intergenerational learning and intercommunity and inter-heritage linkages. Language too forms an integral part of culture; language is deeply related with empowerment of individuals and communities; thus the medium of instruction in ALE is important. People often want to learn English (given its market demand), but programme developers for various reasons (political and social) often prefer local languages; there may be a discrepancy between what students want and what educators teach. The dichotomy between demand and supply of AE programmes needs to be acknowledged; it is not necessarily an either-or situation, and a possible policy stance is to value 'bilingualism'. There cannot be a single way of looking at languages; perhaps the policy attention needs to be re-focused to 'what the learner wants'.

Tea break

DAY 2: Session 4: Groups on Pedagogy/Practice: Introduced by Ehsan
Ehsan raised some questions to help steer the group discussions. He asked whether vocational training is employment- or demand- driven. How can the voice of the learners be conceptualised and incorporated? How important are foundation skills and basic literacy, and in what ways do they feed into other higher-order skills? Is there a most productive age for adults to learn and how can practitioners tap onto adults at that age? In addition, how can practical experiences like apprenticeships, collaboration between industries and educationists, and flexible modes of course delivery, be fitted into the current educational pedagogy? Finally, there is a need to appraise teacher education and monitoring and evaluation practices, as well as the role of ICTs in ALE, while discussing the course for future research and policy.

The participants broke into groups.

Ian chaired the **report-back session**.

Group 1 stressed the importance of developing an ALE pedagogy which fosters sustainable development. The pedagogy needs to factor in flexible learning that is experiential, not just theoretical. They re-iterated that if a tailor is teaching tailoring literacy practices, then the ALE pedagogy used needs to be supportive, reflexive, content- and context-specific.

Group 2 indicated that adult and youth literacies have been reconceptualised from a direct bipolar literate-illiterate categorisation to continua of contextually applied cognitive skills. This presents challenges for developing a suitable pedagogy, one that can allow for present challenges and can be evaluated coherently to inform policy evidence.

Group 3 pointed out the need to differentiate the pedagogies of ALE from education for children. The learning objectives for adults are both more specific and diversified, and hence the curricula should be more customised. Further, there are challenges in being creative while teaching AE programmes, and there is also a lack of robust evidence on the current teaching practices.

Group 4 discussed pedagogies in relation to literacy. They highlighted that pedagogies for literacy need to accommodate indigenous knowledge, skills, prior learning and career opportunities. Further, literacy trainings as well as other adult education programmes need to be monitored and their impacts should be evaluated and evidenced. The evidence garnered could focus on measuring effectiveness in terms of empowerment, community development and citizenship, while appraising welfare gains. A holistic approach to evidence-building, is needed

Discussion: It was suggested that adult education is not a supplement to mainstream education, it is intrinsically important. ALE is not just about one-off sessions on cake making, it is primarily about developing long-term income-generation activities and building employability of adults. Nevertheless, with the measurement of welfare impacts, every type of learning programme is important. There is however, a difference between the 'demand-led model', which responds to the needs of the learners, and the 'remedial model' that is state-mandated and aims to address deficits.

The discussion on pedagogies developed into a semantic debate on the differences and commonalities between ALE and LLL/E. While some participants considered ALE as a subset of LLL/E, others suggested that they are distinctive. They argued that these terms have been socially constructed and have their own policy anchors. Lifelong learning is an inclusive term and is more

flexible, whilst ALE can be considered as a separate collective activity. In both cases, however, it was agreed that the issue of measurement and lack of evidence remains.

End of Day 2

DAY 3 SATURDAY 9 APRIL 2016

DAY 3: Session 1: Partnerships: *Introduced by Tara Furlong*

Tara suggested that partnerships in ALE are at different levels with varied stakeholders. Partnership endeavours are amorphous, involving broad discussions with different kinds of people. In specific, she shared her experience of working on projects for integrating literacies where establishing partnerships is key, for example, literacy programmes that require sales pitches and marketing fliers; she suggested that these may lead to high overhead costs for developing curriculum and teaching-learning materials. Further, it is difficult to measure success of such programmes which involve embedding literacy with vocational training skills. There are many challenges in integrating literacies; can we have different literacies for every integrated package? Further, with respect to the SDGs, which institutions should be approached for partnerships?

Group discussions and feedback: The participants broke into groups to discuss these and other questions related to partnerships.
Kate Jere chaired the session when the groups re-assembled.

All the groups pointed out that a substantial number of the SDGs imply the need to derive synergy for partnerships. **Groups 1 and 2** shared the view that the SDG framework can be used as an opportunity to promote ALE in partnerships. Such partnerships need to be created at regional, national and global levels, and identification of stakeholders at each of these levels is required to map the activities and interests. This involves an extensive communication task, which can be supplemented by the development of a matrix of different SDGs alongside a comprehensive skills analysis which factors in prior learning.

Group 3 brought a perspective on 'financing' into the discussion and highlighted that the institutional blockages in funding mechanisms for adult education programmes needs to be addressed for partnerships to work. In developing countries, there are likely to be fewer constraints in mobilising partnerships but demotivating points are probably greater; the opposite holds for the developed countries. Hence the partnerships need to be context-specific to address the different needs.

Group 4 added another layer to the contrasts between developed and developing countries. Making the invisible visible is important for developed countries which need to focus on goal implementation in their own territories. Further the Group emphasised the need for partnership and accountability at the regional level as well as national level. Perhaps forming a coordination body for universality at the higher policymaking level could be one solution for this.

Coffee break

DAY 3: Session 2: Plenary discussion, - the next steps *Introduced by Mari Yasunaga*
Mari summarised what seemed to her to be the key points that were raised during the three days of the Uppingham Seminar and developed some immediate action points for the participants. These included collaboratively sharing information on policy and pedagogy. It had been suggested that a common platform to upload and access free resources should be considered. Secondly,

sharing evidence on cross-sectoral research, participants could contribute towards the Global Monitoring Report 2017. Other reports like the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE IV) could also be shared and the participants could provide suggestions on the contents of that Report. Thirdly, with regards to influencing policy and establishing connections, Mari suggested that International Literacy Day on 8th September would provide an opportunity to network and collaborate. UNESCO Institute for Learning (UIL) is organising this global event on literacy, and any suggestions with respect to the theme or otherwise could be shared with them.

In **discussion**, it was pointed out that there is a lack of funding for research and policy advocacy for ALE. The need for collaborative research and the flexibility to use different research methodologies for generating meaningful evidence were stressed. There was discussion of the possibilities of using social media – for example, a blog on how ALE can be embedded in the SDGs; or the use of Twitter and Google for campaigning and dissemination. The use of individual means of influence at all levels to raise awareness about the opportunities with respect to the SDGs was urged. The inclusion of the dialogue between ALE and the SDGs in university-level seminar series, and the preparation of a policy brief or statement after the Seminar to directly influence the current discourse were proposed by participants. Specific areas also need to be addressed; for example, it was pointed out that there is (so far as is known) no discussion on disabled *adults'* access to education. Interested participants could take up writing on adult learning dimensions and related issues (like disability and other marginalised groups). It may be that bodies such as the Global Campaign for Education might agree to circulate such statements and include such research in their discussions. Various participants indicated that they would write reports on the Seminar for their various sponsoring bodies in order to take the ALE and LLL/E discussion forward.

DAY 3: Concluding remarks: Brian Street
Brian provided a formal conclusion to the Seminar proceedings. He summarised the key themes which had emerged from the three days of debates. Given the participants were from diverse backgrounds, the discussions had been rich with diverse viewpoints, meanings, interpretations and conclusions. Specifically, with respect to meanings, there have been multiple semantic interpretations. He suggested that there is a general tendency to try get an 'un-diverse' meaning, what he called a 'fixity' of meaning, to every term used, but it is useful to acknowledge the diversity, especially in the discourse of ALE. One of the power issues with 'fixity' is that it makes some things dominant, controlling or bound to personal attachments like "my/our meaning". Brian added that if we accept a provisional rather than a fixed meaning, it is important to identify how the meaning itself influences the relationship between context, purpose and age of the participants in ALE. There is pressure on agencies and governments to rely on fixity and standardisation, since a provisional view tends towards relativism. However, as recurrently discussed during the Seminar, language and literacy as well as learning all vary across different contexts and populations. Hence it is important to accept that diversity encourages reflexivity, which is a big strength. There is a generic need for partnerships, dialogue and synergy and these will strengthen and share this provisional view. In discussion, it was pointed out that fixity is also related to governance and measurement which are also very important; in measurement, it is important to indicate the specific meanings being used the collection of data. There was a general consensus that, in an integrated approach towards understanding ALE and its place in the SDGs, flexibility to context and informed learner choice were critical components, as in all adult education.

The seminar dispersed

List of documents:

Sustainable Development Goals (September 2015):
http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

Thematic Indicators to Monitor the Education 2030 Agenda: Technical Advisory Group Proposal
(October 2015): http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/43-indicators-to-monitor-education2030.pdf

 New recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (November 2015):
http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49354&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Recommendation Concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (November 2015):

http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49355&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

The Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) (November 2015):
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002432/243278e.pdf

List of Participants

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Roy Carr-Hill	UCL Institute of Education, London
Tara Furlong	RaPAL
Ved Goal	former Education Officer, Commonwealth Secretariat
Werner Mauch	UNESCO UIL, Germany
Willy Ngaka	Centre for Lifelong Learning, Makerere University, Uganda

REFLEXIVE PIECE
Alan Rogers

I suppose the thing which most impressed me with this Uppingham Seminar was that the issues were much more complicated than I had imagined. That is shown, I think, by the fact that during the opening session some 40 post-it notes of questions and suggested agenda items were put on the wall. The diversity of the participants' experience and interests made for a rich social and intellectual environment and an open questioning approach. The language issue was solved surprisingly quickly – while there was one dissent to the use of the term 'adult education', the consensus focused on ALE (adult learning and education) within a wider framework of LLL/E (lifelong learning and education); there was no felt need to explore the difference between learning and education in this context.

The most valuable thing to emerge for me was the realisation that the many and strong references to adult learning in most of the SDGs (e.g. health, environment, economic development etc) gave a mandate to challenge those who work in those sectors about the provision of learning opportunities for adults. In consequence, many at the Seminar were concerned to collect data about the provision for ALE in its widest sense across the other sectors of the SDGs - and therefore to clarify the nature of the indicators of ALE. The participants were informed about the existing steps taken by UNESCO to this end. Despite the hesitation of one participant, ALE was thus felt to be one of the cross cutting issues which we identified (others included gender and language); ALE runs through 16 of the 17 goals. And a key theme of the discussions was how to further partnerships with those sectors in the light of the resistance to involvement in ALE from other development sectors which was noted.

My biggest disappointment was that the Seminar did not engage more deeply with the relationship between ALE and SDG4 (Education), with how adult educators can develop partnerships with mainstream educators. The key question of the background paper – *why do mainstream educators such as the Global Campaign for Education marginalise adults? Why do they regard ALE as*

"someone else's business"? - was not discussed. It is not clear why this was so. Might there be a hint of resistance among some ALE practitioners and theorists to involvement in mainstream education, perhaps some territorialism here? A feeling that adult educators prefer to be in their own silo? The two key documents for the implementation of the adult learning targets in the SDGs, the *Recommendations on ALE* (with its companion*, Recommendation on TVET)* and the *Framework for Action (FFA) 2030,* appear to have been developed outside the framework of the mainstream groups involved with the implementation of SDG4. Why for example is there no lobby for an **adult** dimension to the campaign for education for people with disabilities, currently seen by most advocates as only for young people with disabilities? Nor did we fully explore how to engage mainstream education (SDG4) in the other sectors of development – in health or environment, for example; in other words how to see SDG4 (like gender and ALE) as a crosscutting issue as well as a sector in its own right.

Adult literacy, as one most obvious form of ALE, featured a great deal in the discussions; but its role as both a sector and a crosscutting issue was left rather vague. Learning a relevant literacy can be seen to be a feature of every sector of development, not confined to SDG4 (Education). If (as adult learning theorists tell us) adults learn best *by* doing rather than *for* doing, then those engaged in learning about citizenship, human rights, micro-finance, health, skills for livelihoods etc may best learn their literacy through engaging in those activities rather than in separate literacy classes.

One participant suggested that every one of the SDGs could be seen as a crosscutting issue, involved in all the others. The issue of increased sectoralisation which the SDGs could lead to still remains to be resolved. The question was raised whether there are too many SDGs, leading perhaps to 16 different sectors, each with its own budget, targets and indicators. And this raised the further question, should all the learning targets, including SDG4, be integrated to avoid compartmentalisation, and if so, how? Some argued for an integrated approach, others for indicators from each separate sector.

The aim of the Uppingham Seminars is to raise questions, to challenge assumptions, but to provide an opportunity for each participant to provide her/his own answers. The fact that this Uppingham Seminar – perhaps more than most – left very large questions unresolved may (perhaps perversely) be seen as a sign of its success. There is a huge amount of work still to be done in exploring the relationship of ALE, not just to 15 of the SDGs but also and especially to SDG4 – and I hope that the report and papers from this Uppingham Seminar will help to promote and facilitate that work.

Alan Rogers
April 2016

2. BACKGROUND PAPER - ALAN ROGERS AND COMMENTS SENT OUT

Note: what follows is an amended version of the background paper circulated to all participants early in February 2016. It has been changed in two ways. First, that paper did not give enough emphasis to some of the documents relating to the implementation of the adults dimensions to the SDGs, especially the Framework of Action (FFA) 2030, and the Recommendations regarding Adult Learning and Education (ALE) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), both issued in November 2015) and the Global Review of Adult Learning and Education (GRALE). Secondly, the third section has been expanded to discuss the relationship of ALE not just to the other goals and targets but also to SDG4 (Education) in the concept of Lifelong Learning and Education (LLL/E). All the other parts of the background paper have been retained. it is followed by five written comments on it sent out to all participants before the seminar began.

ADULT LEARNING AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Abstract:

In this paper based on a survey of a range of documents and consultations with educational agencies, I propose that our discussions might focus round three points.
First, SDG 4: Education: *Noting a) the relative absence of adult learning from the implementation of the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), b) the almost complete absence of adults from the discussions leading up to the formulation of SDG 4; and c) the current prioritising of children in the discussions on the implementation of SDG 4, I suggest we do not challenge that prioritising but seek to understand the reasons for it. I outline a number of the arguments and assumptions suggested by my survey, and argue that unless we understand these reasons, we are unlikely to influence their programmes. We might seek to help those who make them to become more aware of their tacit assumptions.*
***Secondly**, adult learning in the other SDGs:* *I note the inclusion of adult learning targets explicitly or implicitly within many, if not most, of the other SDGs, and the discussions of these in the* Recommendation on ALE *(2015) and the* Framework for Action (FFA) 2030 *(2015), and this leads me to ask: what is the relationship between the education envisaged in SDG 4 and these other learning targets? Is there a danger of polarisation, that focusing on provision for adult learning under these other SDGs may reduce the felt need for adult provision under SDG 4? Where is the provision for adult literacy learning and basic education best located, under SDG4 or the other goals and targets?*
Thirdly, *I note that since 1990 the concept of* **lifelong learning/education (LLL/E)** *has become more common in educational policy contexts in developing countries and is strongly advocated in the* Recommendation on ALE *and FFA 2030. This leads me to ask whether the conceptualisation of LLL/E as embracing both SDG 4 and the other learning targets would help to ensure a greater provision for adults? How can we avoid this discourse being rhetorical? Can such a LLL/E agenda which covers both SDG 4 and the other learning targets be operationalised and its learning outcomes measured? Is adult learning and education a cross-cutting issue across all the 17 SDGs?*

PART I: INTRODUCTION

"The new Sustainable Development Goals confirm the importance of ensuring life-long learning opportunities for all". *IIEP News* 14 January 2016

1.1. It is important that this paper is seen as an **individual statement**. I have consulted a number of persons but none of them is responsible for what is here and what is not here. These are not the views of Uppingham Seminars.

1.2 Development context: The concerns of the Uppingham Seminars are primarily with education (formal and non-formal) in the so-called 'developing countries'. But in today's globalised world, many of the same issues are faced in other countries; and developing countries are often influenced greatly in their policy-making by international cultural assumptions. The Sustainable Development Goals[1] (SDGs) "are conceived as a global agenda, thus they are not only focused on the countries of the Global South or 'developing countries' but include all countries worldwide" (EAEA 2016), so some of our discussions may refer to wider contexts than just developing countries.

1.3 Language: Discourses: We also need to remind ourselves that part of what we shall discuss relates to language. Rosa Maria Torres (Torres 2001) has warned us that the tendency for policy makers to use Western categories of thought and expression can be harmful for the educational concerns of developing countries. Thus the terms used in these debates, such as adult education and lifelong learning, recurrent education and continuing education, are important for their consequences. For example:

a) **education:** this term is used in both a wide sense to include all learning, planned and unplanned, inside and outside of school, and also in a narrower sense to refer to the hierarchical stream of provision for (mainly) children and youth, purposeful learning programmes, taught courses (as Wiltshire says[2]), usually state-run or state supported.

b) **learning** too is used in a wide sense to mean all the universal and ubiquitous learning which everyone does throughout the whole of life, most of it unintentional and unconscious; but the word is also used in a narrower sense to refer to planned and purposeful learning (including self-directed learning) (Rogers 2014).

c) **lifelong learning (LLL):** The term 'lifelong learning' thus has a wider and a narrower meaning. For some people, it means all forms of learning from the cradle to the grave - formal (such as schooling for children), non-formal, and informal learning - planned and unplanned, intentional and unintentional, undertaken by children and adults. But LLL is also frequently used in a narrower (almost a technical) sense, to refer to planned learning *activities*, including those outside of educational institutions (e.g. workplace learning and private sector provision). In the first sense, *no-one is a non-participant; everyone is involved in lifelong and lifewide learning throughout the whole of their lives*, even if it is unconsciously and unintentionally. In the second sense, there are *some people for whom it can be claimed that they "have done no 'learning' [in this sense] since leaving school"*; and the aim of 'lifelong learning' policies is to ensure that more and more adults participate in learning opportunities such as work-related training, private sector courses or public programmes throughout life.

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[1] I found that some agencies are referring to the SDGs as Global Goals (GGs); I suggest that, to facilitate communication, the seminar continues to refer to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

[2] Harold Wiltshire discusses the two uses of the word when he says that 'education' is :
  planned processes of learning undertaken by intent, the sort of thing that commonly (though not by any means always) goes on in classrooms and that involves some who are teachers and some who are taught . . . In much discussion of adult 'education', the word is used much more loosely. . so as to include the whole range and apparatus of leisure-time activities – cinemas, libraries, television and sports clubs – on the grounds that these exert an educative influence on people who use them and are therefore aspects of education. Certainly there is a sense in which anything that happens to us, from getting drunk to listening to Beethoven, may be said to be 'quite an education'; and certainly we learn (living tissue can hardly help doing so) from our experiences, including those of our leisure. But such learning is unplanned and largely unintended: we do not go into either the pub or the concert-hall with a primary intention of learning. If we intend to learn we behave differently: we join a class or buy an instruction manual; we adopt the role of student and submit ourselves to a planned process of tuition. (Wiltshire 1977 pp 136–7)

d) learning and education: The contrast between these two meanings of the term 'lifelong learning' (everyday learning for all on the one hand; and planned and purposeful learning programmes for some on the other hand) carries important implications for both policy and practice. Some prefer to use two terms to distinguish between the two meanings - **'lifelong learning'** (**LLL**) for the universal learning, and **'lifelong education'** (**LLE**) for the planned learning activities. There have been strong protests by leading educationalists at what is seen as the "tendency to treat education and learning as synonymous concepts" (Duke 2001 p 502) which leads to "the persisting confusion of education with learning" (Jarvis 1990 p 203), and pleas to "cease using the words *education* and *learning* interchangeably. If we want to argue for more resources for *adult* education …, let us say education" (Duke 2015 p 246).

The seminar will need to be aware of these issues of language.

e) adult learning and education (ALE) is a term used widely by UIL and other agencies to denote the adult section of LLL/E.

1.4 Different voices: One implication of this diversity of language is that there is not just one constituency but different voices are being used – and these need unravelling.

1.5 In general, I will use the term 'lifelong learning/education' (LLL/E) – for the concepts of lifelong learning/education will be important for our discussions. I will also use ALE, although from time to time I will speak of 'adult education', to mean 'learning opportunities for adults' in their widest sense. I am not going to try to define 'adult', as this varies from context to context; but adult learning opportunities relate to provision of any kind for the learning for those who are past the normal age of schooling and are outside of further and higher education. We may not be able to define the elephant but we all recognise it when we see it.

1.6 The theme of the seminar is **the adult learning dimensions in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).** 'Learning' comes into the SDGs in two areas, SDG (4) Education, and in many of the other SDG targets. I propose to deal with these separately at first and then together in a final section of this paper.

PART II: SDG 4 (EDUCATION) AND THE PRIORITISING OF CHILDREN

2.1 First, SDG 4: Education: Adults are very prominent in the statement of SDG4, both explicitly and implicitly. Nevertheless, the background suggests that, as in the past, adults may not receive their due share in the implementation of SDG 4. There are three elements to this fear.

2.2 Adult learning and EFA/MDGs: First, although there were similar commitments to adults in both the Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is widely recognised that adult learning programmes did not feature to any major extent in the implementation. The Global Campaign for Education, in reviewing the lessons of EFA and the MDGs for education, noted, "There has … been much weaker progress in significantly advancing adult literacy and learning (other than as a side effect of greater schooling)" (GCE 2015 p 8).

2.3. Adults in the formulation of SDG 4: Secondly, in most of the debates leading to the formulation of SDG 4 (Education), adult learning was noticeable in its absence, despite a large amount of powerful advocacy[3], and the many statements calling for the *right* to education for all

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[3] For example, by UIL: Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) 2009 and CONFINTEA, the Belem Framework 2009: "adult learning and education (ALE) are imperative for the achievement of equity and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies"; and also by DVV, see especially *Adult Education in an interconnected world*

(including adults)[4]. In these discussions about the post-2015 education goals, 'education' was taken to mean 'schooling for children'. One example is the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) of UN in 2012 where every target for education which could refer to adults was only related to children. The Oslo Summit papers in 2015 made no mention of adults. The European Association for the Education of Adults summed up their view of the situation:

> "In the negotiation process, new stakeholders such as the BRIC states (consisting of Brazil, Russia, India and China), civil society organisations, think tanks and the private sector were included. However, education was mainly represented by stakeholders that are working in primary education. Organisations representing adult education, such as the ICAE were largely excluded from the negotiations. … adult education is not mentioned explicitly in the SDGs".(EAEA 2016)

2.4 Planning for the implementation of SDG 4: Thirdly, in many of the discussions in preparation for the implementation of SDG 4, adult learning is largely missing. Many agencies still barely include adult learning in their education policies or programmes. For example, the Commonwealth Ministers' Nassau Declaration of November 2015 focuses solely on educational goals for 'boys and girls', and 'pupils'; there is no mention of adults[5]. This is particularly noticeable in two very effective current campaigns for post-2015 education, girls' schooling (e.g. Girls' Education Challenge, UK AID) and education for people with disabilities (arising in part from the disabilities Olympic Games). Both omit adults: one organisation working in the area of education and multiple disabilities writes: "our key concern is … inclusive education, … getting children … into school in the first instance since most are denied education in developing countries. Adult education is an issue for us that comes further down the line. Without basic education, our beneficiaries [children] struggle with basic life skills … adult education is not our primary focus" (pers com - the writer has asked to remain anonymous).

2.5 Adults in support of schooling: In some of the discussions, there is one exception, although relatively small – adults seen as a support for children's schooling: "adult women should be given parenting education so as to promote their daughters' education" (GCE 2003 p 58). As one consultant reports, the current review of the strategic goals for USAID Education Sector has "just opened the door a crack for organizations to work on activities that affect children's reading

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2014; see also *Convergence* 2004. For the papers relating to the implementation of ALE and LLL/E, see below sections 4.4.1-3.

[4] For example, the **Muscat Agreement**, May 2015, and the **Incheon** Declaration of the World Education Forum, May 2015, described by IIEP as a policy document "recently adopted as a roadmap for transformational change in education over the next 15 years". Incheon speaks of the need to move "towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all", but there is nothing specifically on adult learning and education.

[5] **The Nassau Declaration** June 2015 does not mention any adult learning goal, target, programme or activity: in the two clauses where adults could have been included, clause 7 and clause 12, the emphasis is still on 'boys and girls' and 'pupils'; 'parents' are acknowledged only as 'supporters' of education.
7. … Addressing the Post-2015 Development Goals, Ministers note the importance of continuing to meet the needs of all learners, regardless of gender, race, or religion, or other aspects of marginalization – recognizing continued challenges in relation to provision for boys and girls (both of whom continue to face issues of equitable access in various Commonwealth contexts), as well as pupils with special educational needs.

12. Ministers acknowledge the key role of parents, and wider civil society, in education, without compromize to equity and quality. Ministers commit to strengthening engagement with these parties to support the development of education systems that serve the needs of their communities, while recognizing the key role of families in shaping culture.

Clause 7 does not say 'regardless of age' as does the Recommendation on ALE 2015. This Declaration has been described as "even weaker than SDG4 on adult education". Professor Simon McGrath drew my attention to this Declaration.

outcomes, like student and teacher absenteeism"[6], thus including some forms of adult learning as support for children's schooling: "Save the Children's Literacy Boost includes a … community/parent/ child literacy connection"[7].

2.6 Why is adult education neglected? Why, in the light of human rights to education (Cowan 2013), of an ageing world-wide population, of the urgent need for social integration, and attention to radicalisation, drugs, the increase in violence and other major social concerns, does adult education come so low on the list of educational priorities, in both policy and implementation? Why are adult basic education programmes in many developing countries among the most poorly supported sectors of education, in terms of equipment, accommodation, teaching-learning materials, and teacher training and remuneration etc:

> "Governments have been unwilling, or unable, to provide adequate funding [for adult education]. Many communities perceive nonformal education as an inferior substitute for the formal system, and the devolution of authority to ensure the responsiveness of programs to local needs has often been withheld. Formal education, consequently, continues to be perceived as the most desirable system, and access to the modern employment sector remains the pre-eminent goal" (Hall 1986)

While we have to be careful not to exaggerate this situation, for adult basic education is often included as a footnote to statements about 'education' in general[8], even if in rhetoric[9], we note:

> "[R]esources available to support learning have historically been directed to the education of children, and the formal setting continues to consume the largest or second largest (second possibly to health) proportion of most countries' social program expenditures" (Blunt 1988 p 39).

Thirty years later, the situation has not changed. Even among those committed to adult education, there is a strong feeling that 'children come first'. I well remember Professor Asa Briggs (later Lord Briggs), who was deeply committed to adult learning programmes of which he had professional experience, saying to me in a conversation, "If I had £100 to spend on education, I would spend it on the children".

2.7 Understanding before advocacy: I want to suggest that the key issue with SDG 4 is this question of priorities. While few would be against prioritising children, the reasons behind the *exclusory prioritising*, largely excluding adults from education, for not seeing that 'inclusive education' includes adults, are opaque. This leads me to ask, *Why do adults appear so rarely on the agendas for the implementation of SDG4? What are the reasons for prioritising children in education to the exclusion of adults?* Many have for many years stressed the importance and value of the education of adults to both the individual and society, and to education itself – but (if we are honest) with relatively little effect. I suggest that we need to try to understand why children are prioritised over adults before we advocate for more adult education. Therefore my aim here is to start the process of trying to *identify some of the arguments and assumptions behind the prioritising of children's education.* My aim is not to argue, as the ICAE World Assembly 2015 argued, that the

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[6] "USAID … were given a mandate to concentrate on a … few strategic [education] goals so that they could make/see an impact, and primary reading is at the top of their list", pers comm., former consultant to USAID

[7] My correspondent continues: "It is part of their regular program.   It still isn't adult basic education or literacy." pers comm.

[8] For example, "States have a clear responsibility to remain the key actors in the education sector, focused on ensuring free quality education from early childhood to at least completion of secondary level, including basic adult education" (GCE 2015 p 15)

[9] I am however reminded that "rhetoric matters if you want to inspire organisational change" (Tett 2015).

SDGs should "accord priority to universal adult literacy and adult education"[10]. Rather, it is to listen, to ask questions, to try to understand, and to help those who make these arguments and assumptions examine for themselves the grounds of their discrimination.

3. SOME ARGUMENTS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In this connection, I list below some of the arguments used and assumptions made by educational campaigners in my survey. As stated above, there are different voices being heard, so the arguments below are made by different groups at different times and in different contexts.

3.1. Adult education is a specialist area and needs specialists to promote it – as recently said to me by a leading umbrella organisation for education in development contexts. They claimed they knew nothing about adult education and so excluded it from their discussions. Perhaps those of us who have been asserting that 'teaching adults is different from teaching children' have been more successful than we hoped. 'Adult education' is seen by some as a different animal from schooling or formal education, requiring different policies and practices to be developed by 'experts'. There is something about the nature of this 'social imaginary' (Taylor 2004) of 'adult education' that makes some people reluctant to engage with it. Simon McGrath suggests that adult education is "out of the compass of most politicians, at least in how it is conventionally understood. Just as politicians typically have valued things that are vocationally useful but look down on VET, so they … see 'adult education' as something for the marginalised in society" (pers comm.).

3.2. The logistical arguments: One thing that makes adult education different is the fact that it is for 'adults' - and (it is argued) adults have other commitments which make it difficult for them to attend formal education. Most of them have family responsibilities, especially the need to earn enough to support themselves and (if necessary) others. Many are committed to a work schedule which would prevent attendance at specific learning centres at the required times. They often have urgent priorities like the health issues of themselves or of others which will take precedence over any commitment to learning programmes - they are unable to make a commitment to attend regularly. The assumption behind this is that 'education' needs to take place in special locations and at set times - despite the progress made with flexible distance and open learning.

3.3 Diversity of motivations and formats: A third argument arises from the fact that adult education is almost always voluntary; adults - precisely because they are adults - cannot normally be compelled to attend education[11]. This fact leads to a range of assumptions about adult motivation for participating in learning programmes. Adults, already busy, will only attend and continue to attend if they see the real value of the learning in their daily lives. Their motivations will thus almost always be immediate and short-term. Agencies may be convinced of the value of and need for generic lifelong learning programmes available for all adults, but most potential adult learners do not see these as relevant to them *at that time* - they focus on their own immediate aspirations.

And of course these aspirations and motivations are multiple and constantly changing. They will vary from individual to individual. And from what we know about adult learning, adults will learn what they feel they need to learn *at the moment*; they cannot wait for some months for a course to start - by which time their immediate issue may have been resolved and different priorities may have taken over.

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[10] Calls for at least equivalency go back a long way: in 1972 the UNESCO Conference in Tokyo 'Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning' drafted 150 resolutions aimed at achieving 'equivalent recognition' alongside primary, secondary and university education – see Lowe 1975

[11] Apart perhaps from some workplace training or professional development programmes.

Faced with this situation, policy-makers sometimes feel that the provision for the education of adults is too complicated for them to make. What appears to be necessary is a wide menu of learning opportunities for adults to choose[12] as and when they are aware of their need for some specific learning:

> "a mix of program offerings is required due to the demographically diverse population of adults … there is no one marketing strategy or campaign that could reach such a diverse population" (Adams-Rogers 1997, cited in Taylor 2006 p 500).

3.4 Recurrent education: It has been argued that the concept of 'recurrent education' (popularised by OECD) – by which is meant opening existing educational provision to adults throughout their lives (access) and encouraging adult participation, so that adults may 'return' to 'education' throughout their lives - can lead to the assumption that we do not need special provision for adults. "A much greater proportion of learners in mainstream education provisions are now 'adults' than in previous times - as evinced by the growth of higher education and post-basic education provisions … " (Lauglo pers comm)[13]. While recurrent education in this sense would appear to be less feasible for 'developing countries' than OECD countries (although, of course, opening access to formal schooling to adults, mainly younger adults, is important), this focus on recurrent education in Western discussions of education may help to account for the relative neglect of adults in SDG 4; for a large part of the discussions of the SDG 4 was led by Western agencies. If the adult dimension means opening access to existing provision, it is argued, there would seem to be less need for specific adult learning provision.

3.5 The difficulties of managing diversity[14]: This leads to another identified issue with adult learning programmes - the difficulty of managing this wide range of adult learning programmes. In many countries, 'adult education' programmes are under the aegis of Ministries of Education. Ministries of Education are very good at managing standardised educational programmes - a national system of primary schools, for example. Other ministries such as Ministries of Labour may be better at managing diversity; but those who prepared the various documents relating to SDG 4 tended to assume that 'education' is the responsibility of Ministries of Education. Adult learning programmes do not fit into this neat categorisation. Once again, it is best left out of consideration as too difficult to cope with.

3.5 The definition of 'adult education': The fact that adult learning programmes take a diversity of modes means that – apart from a wish to regulate it and apply National Qualifications Frameworks to it - governments and agencies tend to regard most forms of adult learning and education as outside the remit of government. Similarly many agencies do not regard what they do as 'adult education'; as one agency, heavily engaged in agricultural development, health activities and livelihood promotion, reported to me during this survey, "we do not have extensive work or expertise in the area of adult education"[15]; their work with these forms of adult training and

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[12] I find it hard to explain the reluctance of agencies to provide drop-in learning centres which appear from experience to be both effective in meeting the diversity of adult learning concerns and cost-effective (see Aderinoye et al 2005).

[13] It is worth suggesting that this perceived predominance of adults in Western educational contexts is mainly in programmes *outside* formal contexts such as workplace or private sector learning (see below); there appears to be a diminishing involvement of 'adults' in formal educational programmes; also that opening existing formal learning programmes to adult participants usually seems to deny to the adult learners any say in their own learning – the curriculum is almost always unnegotiable.

[14] See report of Uppingham Seminar 2000 Managing Diversity, on website http://www.uppinghamseminars.co.uk

[15] e-mail 29 January 2016; the agency wishes to remain anonymous

learning is not seen as 'educating adults'. And as such their practitioners are not felt to need any training for teaching adults. Many of those who promote learning with adults feel that, although one must be highly trained to teach children, "anyone can help adults to learn"[16].

3.6 Adults do not learn easily: There are those who argue that adults cannot or do not learn quickly - or at least as quickly as children; that adult learning provision would need to be more extensive (and therefore more expensive) than provision for children. There are those who assert that the adult brain is hard-wired and is incapable of much adult learning - although what we now know about informal (unconscious, unintentional) learning which everyone does in the course of their everyday lives demonstrates that adults are not only capable of learning but do in fact learn much from their daily social intercourse and through critical reflection (see Rogers 2014). But a stronger case may be made for the fact that many adults find it difficult to learn formal school-based subject matter which differs from their everyday experience and practices.

3.7 There is a feeling sometimes expressed that **adult learning programmes in development have been to a large extent a waste of money:** Several agencies such as the World Bank have reviewed their experience of programmes in fields such as adult literacy compared with agricultural and health extension, and have come to the conclusion that, judged by the admittedly limited evidence of achievements and of rates of success, they have not yielded enough gains to warrant continuation - and so such programmes have been dropped for some years until something spurs a new interest. As Helen Abadzi of the World Bank said in a recent paper, citing four reports ranging from 1976 to 2012:

> For decades governments and international donors have financed adult literacy programs for the unschooled populations of low income countries, in the hopes the poor will read information that may improve their lives … one characteristic that programs have in common is disappointing results. Few learners acquire usable and stable literacy skills" (Abadzi 2012 p 1)

3.8 Lack of evidence: Which brings me to a further point – the lack of evidence of the impact of adult learning programmes. Those who work in the promotion of ALE, especially when advocating innovative approaches, are frequently asked to "show us where it works". But while it is easier to show examples of innovative programmes as collected (for example) by UIL and ASPBAE, it is much harder to show the outcomes of such programmes.   As one of my correspondents said:

> "when it comes to adult learning and basic education/literacy, we need to be much better at assessment and evaluation. … When I was in […], the deputy minister asked me for evidence related to learning outcomes as to why we wanted to extend the program duration (the learning hours). I searched previous projects … contacted colleagues. And I couldn't find much …" (pers comm)

McGrath comments: "Part of the reason why adult education is [felt by policy-makers to be] unimportant is that there is not believed to be a strong economic case" for it. Research into the outcomes of adult literacy learning remains very thin.

3.9 Human capital theory: And this is important, for perhaps the biggest assumption behind the prioritising of children's education is the human capital theory - that education is an investment for the future, and therefore that it is best to invest in children with long-term potential growth rather

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[16] As an example, I found this idea among clergy when I was doing some training of clergy - "we recognise we are teaching adults but we don't need training for this". Research continues to show that a very large number of adult literacy facilitators have had no training at all.

than in adults who have already 'used up' part of their 'future'[17]. The neo-liberal approach to post-school education implies that adult learning is the responsibility of either the employers or the adults themselves rather than of the state. The main focus for state education in development contexts today is to get more children into school for longer periods, and secondly, to improve the quality of learning in schools[18]. As Simon McGrath comments: "I think the human capital argument is central … the problem is getting worse in the sense that the economic-instrumentalist logic that it demonstrates is becoming even more apparent.[19].

3.10 The political dimension: It is also possible that behind some policy-making in education, there are political issues.

> "Faith in the benefits of formal education systems [has] remained unshakeable for so many years because education [is] also a doctrine firmly entrenched in the global geo-politics of development. Education [has been] the generic solution to social and economic change proposed by the Western nations just as revolution was a prescription of the Eastern bloc nations" (Blunt 1988 p 39).

I found in several contexts that to spend money on children's education was seen as a vote winner, especially among parents and carers, many of whom say, "I want education for my children, not for myself, so that they have wider choices than I had". It is a wise politician who listens to such demands for schooling rather than urging adult education.

3.11 Conclusion: There are, I am sure, other arguments and assumptions behind the prioritising of children's education; and it is hoped that the seminar will unearth some of these. But the above have either been adduced as reasons for, or can be perceived as tacit assumptions behind, the prioritising of children and marginalising adults in the discussions leading up to, and in making plans for the implementation of, the SDGs.

3.12 Action in response: Since advocacy has on the whole failed to persuade mainstream educational campaigners from including adults in their campaigns, one answer may be that those committed to adult learning and education should themselves mount such campaigns from an adult perspective. For example, in my discussions with campaigners for the provision of education for persons with disabilities about the absence of an adult dimension, I was urged by those campaigners that, since it lay outside their remit and expertise, adult educators should provide that dimension themselves. They argued (reasonably, it seemed to me) that it was unreasonable to expect them to include an adult dimension to their campaigns. And this raises a further question: how might such dimensions be formulated and promoted to policy-makers?

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[17] Although the human capital approach to education dates back to the 1960s (Harbison and Myers 1964), it is still very strong in the international development field today; see UFHRD at http://www.ufhrd.co.uk/wordpress/.

[18] Strangely, the argument that educated adults behind children have a strongly positive impact on their performance in school and thus the quality of learning achieved seems to have relatively little force, although I understand that empirical studies have demonstrated this in several different contexts.

[19] McGrath goes on to say: "DFID have launched a new education research programme that is run by an economist and where all the reference group of "experts" are economists. For them only a human capital argument for education and only methods such as randomised controlled trials count. Because of the rising faith in RCTs, there is an … imperative to find RCT evidence that adult education is important. This is a difficult issue for much of the adult education constituency, I would suspect, for reasons of philosophy as well as technical competence, and probably because of the complexity of forms and impacts of adult learning".

Questions for the Seminar arising from Part II of this paper:
What are the reasons for the prioritising of children to the exclusion of adults?
How can the many diverse adult dimensions to SDG4 be formulated and promoted to policy makers.

PART III: ADULT LEARNING IN THE OTHER SDGs

"[T]he impact of schooling is inseparable from other MDG-related initiatives in health, gender equity, water, environment and [employment]" (Birdsall and Vaishnav 2005 p 27)

4.1 Learning targets in the SDGs.   It is important to remind ourselves that the SDGs include many references to the importance of adult learning in various provisions, not just Goal 4.

> "Each of the 17 goals has a set of targets and each set has at least one target that deals with or implies learning, training, educating or at the very least raising awareness for one or more groups of adults. Goals 3 [health], 5 [women], 8 [economy], 9 [infrastructure], 12 [consumption] and 13 [climate] especially include targets that imply substantial learning for ranges of adults - and organised, programmatic learning at that" (Oxenham pers comm).

4.2 Relationship of SDG 4 and these other learning targets: This leads me to ask about the relationship between the education envisaged in SDG 4 and these targets. A number of scenarios can be identified.

4.2.1 Scenario 1: Education and extension: For some people, the learning programmes expressed or implied in the other SDGs tend not to be seen as 'education', but as 'extension' programmes in health, gender, agriculture, skills development, environmental management and citizenship/community development etc. They are not regarded as the responsibility of Ministries of Education but are often run by other Ministries. But others would point out that 'extension' is amongst the most effective forms of adult learning programmes.

4.2.2 Scenario 2: Formal versus non-formal: It is possible to see a situation where SDG 4 will focus primarily on (formal) schooling for children and young people (up to tertiary level) to the exclusion of adults, and that the other learning targets will focus primarily on (non-formal) provision for adults, thus excluding children and youth from any part of the implementation of these other SDGs. It may be argued that, since there is elsewhere in the SDGs substantial concern for adult learning, the absence of adults from discussions about SDG 4 may not matter. Some may even argue that this is a good thing, for it could free adult learning programmes from formal schooling. But might this result in a situation where the focus on the provision for adult learning under these other SDGs may reduce the felt need for adult basic education for those adults who both need and want a more formal approach?

4.2.3 Scenario 3: Basic education (literacy) versus post-literacy: It is possible to conceive of situations in which adult learning under SDG 4 will focus on adult literacy and numeracy and the other SDG targets focus on development-related post-literacy learning for adults?   Will literacy and numeracy learning (adult basic education) be separated from literacy/numeracy-in-use (literacy/numeracy practices) in these other SDG targets?

4.2.4 Scenario 4: Lifelong learning/education: Does the concept of LLL/E (education from the cradle to the grave, embracing both formal schooling and adult learning programmes) provide a frame for bringing the two together?

4.3 Need for theorising the relationship: Simon McGrath, comparing adult education in the SDGs with his study of TVET and the SDGs, speaks of the "multiple likely adult-education-to-SDG-relationships", similar to those which he sees for VET. There is, he reports, a move to "try to theorise" the way VET relates to the multiple SDGs. "I wonder whether it would be worth trying to argue for a similar exercise for adult education" (pers comm).

4.4. Exploring the implementation of the other adult learning targets: Considerable work has gone into exploring the implications of these adult learning targets. I would draw attention to the products of three such explorations:

4.4.1 The Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA): The FFA was adopted by 184 Member States and the global education community at the high-level meeting (Paris, November 2015) organized during the 38th Session of the UNESCO General Conference. The main objective of the FFA is to provide guidance for the implementation of Education 2030 (FFA 2030)

4.4.2 Recommendation on adult learning and education November 2015:
With its fellow *Recommendation Concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training* (November 2015), this represents the fullest policy commitment to ALE for many years (Recommendation of ALE 2015) It revises the 1976 statement on adult education in the light of LLL/E. It does not specifically refer to the SDG adult learning targets.

4.4.3 GRALE (Global Review of Adult Learning and Education) – a programme run by UIL to collect data on the provision of learning opportunities for adults; with published version in 2009 and 2013, it is currently re-designed to monitor the achievement of the adult learning targets in the SDGs.

4.5 Questions for the seminar: The considerations in this section raise at least two important questions:

a) *Does the provision for adults in these other goals mean that there is a feeling that adults are already well catered for, that separate provision of 'education' for adults is less necessary since there is so much other provision for them? That is, do we **need** a Goal 4 for adults?*
b) *What (if any) is the relation between the education provided under SDG4 and the learning targets set in the other SDGs? Do children and youth have any role to play in the other SDGs; and do the other goals have any place in the education provided in SDG4?*

PART IV: LIFELONG LEARNING/EDUCATION

5.1 How to build relationships between SDG4 and the other learning targets. The issue surely now must be – how can we avoid compartmentalisation; how can we, for instance, get the substance of all the other SDGs (gender, health, environment, citizenship, finance, skill development etc) into SDG4; and equally how can we get those involved in SDG4, especially children and youth, involved in all the other SDGs?

5.2 Theorising the relationship between SDG4 and the other adult learning targets – is LLL/E the answer? There has in recent years been a remarkable growth of interest in LLL/E. In many circles, lifelong learning has been embraced as the panacea for all the ills of education; it has been seen as "a new doctrine of education more mindful of realities and of the truth of man than traditional

doctrine" (Lengrand 1975). LLL/E is actively promoted, both in Western and developing country contexts. It has been suggested by UIL and others that LLL/E would provide a suitable framework for bringing the two SDG educational commitments (SDG4 and the other adult learning targets in the other SDGs) together. The question thus arises: does LLL/E provide a basis for theorising the relationship between SDG4 and the adult learning targets in the other SDGs? Would seeing all these forms of adult learning within a framework of LLL/E help to increase legitimacy for adult learning programmes?

5.3 The success of LLL/E: This drive towards lifelong learning appears to be successful in some contexts; studies have revealed that there is a great deal of involvement of adults in learning outside of the formal education system:

> "more resources (public and private) are now devoted to the education of 'adults' than in previous times, simply because a greater share of adult people are now either in full time education or … engage in episodic education and training events. But this large scale activity may not be labelled 'adult education'. … A Swedish attempt to estimate expenses on education and training … concluded that, in that country, it was likely that most expenditure was incurred outside the formal education system (mainly in work organizations - firms, offices, public services) for people already working. If correct, this points to a massive investment in education and training geared to … 'adults'. … it may be that mainstream formal education provisions [for adults] are less important than previously" (Lauglo pers com)[20].

5.4 While this is of course mainly true of Western contexts, interest in LLL/E in educational policy-making contexts in developing countries also seems to be growing, largely through the influence of international development agencies, in particular the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning, Hamburg.

5.5 Implementing LLL/E: One difficulty is how to implement such a wide programme of LLL/E, how to ensure that it becomes more than rhetoric. Would such a lifelong programme of learning opportunities embrace both the schooling of children envisioned in SDG 4 and these other targets, or will LLL/E be confined to adult learning in the other SDGs? And how should the learning outcomes of such programmes be measured?

5.6 An all-embracing LLL/E?   I would like to make three comments on this matter:

5.6.1 A curriculum for ALE? One suggestion is that these other SDG targets could form an agenda for lifelong and lifewide education. One might however point out that these targets omit a great deal from their purview – there is here no art or music, no language or philosophy, no literature or history (except perhaps in citizenship), no spirituality. The Recommendation on ALE (see above 4.4.2) envisages a much wider agenda of ALE. An approach based on the SDG targets would perhaps emphasise the socio-economic and instrumentalist approach to the education of adults at the expense of the cultural; and the fact that cultural education is mentioned under SDG4 might again cause it to be segregated from other forms of adult learning.

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[20] Canada in the 1980s reported that the combined public and private expenditure on the education of adults exceeded that for 'pre-adults', and that more adults were participating in forms of non-formal and adult education than the total number of adult and younger participants in the formal education system: see Thomas 1981

5.6.2 Cross-cutting issues: My second comment is such an approach might lead to ignoring the fact that some of these SDGs are in fact cross-cutting issues. Gender, for example, should surely be seen as an aspect of every SDG as well as a sector in itself (SDG .. tends to deal with 'women' rather than with 'gender'). Literacy and language are also surely cross-cutting issues. Surely 'education' itself could be seen as both a sector and a cross-cutting issue?

5.6.3 Partnerships: The most productive approach would seem to be the building of partnerships - partnerships between those agencies who work in the various SDG sectors and adult educators; and between adult educators and those who work in mainstream education (SDG4). The Recommendation on ALE sees the necessity of inter-ministerial forums for ALE; and the same may be true of other agencies.   So that ALE would become pre-eminently a cross-cutting programme, creating in association with mainstream educationalists a true LLL/E.

5.7 Legitimisation of ALE: It seems to me that the greatest potential of these SDGs is to legitimise ALE in every sector. The SDGs give adult educators a mandate to work with every sector on the provision of adult learning opportunities, to enquire what parts of their programmes incorporate activities designed to meet the adult learning targets in the SDGs. Whereas in many sectors of development, ALE has been marginalised or even ignored, the SDGs validate the mainstreaming of ALE into those sectors. It is true that there is a danger that these 17 SDGs will perpetuate and indeed strengthen the sectoral divisions in development, resulting in 17 different development sectors, each with its own budget, goals and indicators. But at least there is now justification for enquiring about the role of ALE in every sector.

5.8 Resistance : Such attempts have been made before – and in the course if attempting such partnerships, resistance has been identified. Many developmental sectors show resistance to the inclusion of ALE into their programmes : Peter Easton, in his recent study of adult education in Africa, notes what he calls 'the great divorce':

> "the lack of connection and even the strongly ingrained mistrust that tends to prevail between educators and their institutions on the one hand and the agencies and personnel most concerned with economic development and employment on the other". (Easton 2015: 164).

But we must also the equally "strongly ingrained mistrust" of many adult educators who uncompromisingly insist that only adult educators can teach adults (especially in the field of literacy); that a skill trainer, for example, cannot teach the literacy practices of their skill, but that such teaching must be done by a literacy facilitator who knows nothing about the skills area. So that the final question in this enquiry must surely be, how can we best facilitate partnerships on both sides, the other SDG sectors and the educators, both youth and ALE? Perhaps to build such partnerships will require a measure of humility and a willingness to compromise on all sides in order to advance ALE in all its richness in SDG4 and in the other sectors in the context of LLL/E

5.6 Questions for the Seminar: I suggest that in this third section, we might seek to explore
a) *Will the framing of both children's education and adults' education in 'lifelong learning/education' redress in the imbalance between children's schooling and adult learning programmes?*
b) *How can we avoid this discourse being more rhetorical than literal? How can such a framing be operationalised and the learning outcomes be measured?*
c) *How can we build partnerships with others engaged in both SDG4 and the other SDGs in a way which will enhance LL/E and ALE?*

6. COMMENTARY

6.1 It seems to me that the above arguments focus around two different approaches - the *positive value of schooling* and *negative images of adult learning programmes*. Schooling, it is felt, will add value in future years; it is easier to promote and manage; and its (standardised) outcomes can be more easily measured. Adult learning programmes are thought to be more difficult to provide and manage and yield fewer (and more diverse) results which are less amenable to measurement. This is (I suggest) one reason why, despite many counter-arguments, the implementation of adult learning programmes is still so poor.

6.2 I therefore suggest that, to advance the cause of **adult learning in and through the SDGs,** both of these issues – the value of schooling and perceived disadvantages of adult education - need to be addressed - and perhaps addressed in harness rather than separately. It is not enough to advocate for the benefits of adult learning programmes in an age of limited resources: we need at the same time to ask why "if I have only £100 to spend, I will spend it on the children" is a satisfactory justification. The aim of this seminar is not just to argue that the exclusion of adults from any share in this £100 needs to be seen as discriminatory; rather it is to help those who plan to implement SDG 4 to become more aware of the tacit assumptions about education they make.

6.3 For the main reason seems to me to be the social imaginary of 'education' – what people see when they talk of education and what they do not see. 'Education' is for many a matter for children and youth, for pupils and students – and this imaginary excludes adults. I am reminded of a campaign a few years ago in England called 'Think Bike', an attempt to get drivers and other road users to become conscious of cyclists and motorcyclists. Currently there are two remarkably successful educational campaigns to 'think girls' and 'think disabilities' in education; perhaps what we need is a 'think adults' in education campaign. We need to talk about *adult education* (or education with/for/of adults) in its widest sense once again.

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS FOR THE SEMINAR

Perceptions – are these correct?	Questions for debate
1. The absence of adult education from SDG 4 (Education)	a. What are the reasons for the prioritising of children to the exclusion of adults?
2. The inclusion of adult learning in the targets of many (most?) other SDGs	b. In what ways does the education envisaged in SDG 4 relate to these other educational and learning targets? c. Is there a danger of polarisation, that SDG 4 will focus primarily on (formal) schooling for children and youth to the exclusion of adult basic education, and that the other learning targets will focus primarily on (non-formal) provision for adults, thus excluding children and youth?
3. Lifelong learning/education can embrace them both	d. Will the framing of both children's education and adults' education in 'lifelong learning/education' redress in the imbalance between children's schooling and adult learning programmes? e. How can we avoid this discourse being more rhetorical than literal? How can such a framing be operationalised and

	the learning outcomes be measured?

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COMMENTS ON BACKGROUND PAPER CIRCULATED TO ALL PARTICIPANTS

IAN CHEFFY

I agree that the learning needs of adults have received relatively little attention in the last 15 years. This, I feel, came about because of the desire of the international community to focus on a limited range of specific development goals concerning many aspects of development and not education alone, as seen in the MDGs. However, I take some encouragement from the new SDGs in that they do not reduce the focus on education to simply one of primary schooling but are concerned now with education at all levels – lifelong learning. The thinking about education for all ages which was a feature of the 2000 Dakar Education for All agenda has now been integrated (with updating) into the SDGs themselves. This at least opens up opportunities for international development efforts to pay attention to the needs of adults without in any way stepping outside what are now set up as the priorities.

I am not much aware of discussions so far this year on the implementation of the SDGs but I would like to believe that The Education 2030 Framework for Action document which was formally adopted at UNESCO in November will not be overlooked. It amplifies the ten targets within SDG4 and gives a good deal of recognition to the needs of adults. We have to recognise, of course, that adults are not the only target group of concern in relation to development but they do feature quite significantly in this document. This is not entirely surprising in the view of the new emphasis on lifelong learning – for children youth and adults. It indicates that within the lifelong learning framework, "special measures are needed to address the needs of adult learners" particularly as concerns relevant skills for employment (TVET) and basic education. Adults in conflict or emergency situations are specifically acknowledged too.

2.4 It's certainly important to see the role of adults in relation to the schooling of children. This can be in the form of parenting education, as you say, but we also need to recognise the contribution which adult literacy makes to children's schooling even if it concentrates simply on parents learning to read and write. I came across an example from Cambodia recently where adults who learned to read and write in a church-based literacy programme ended up setting up a school for their village – which now has 300 pupils.

2.5 Perhaps in the context of the UK, Asa Briggs remark might have some justification. But I strongly feel that in the context of developing countries, the £100 ought to go to adults! It could make a big difference immediately.

2.6 Somehow I think that human survival instincts enter into this! Adults, especially parents, prioritise children since they are the "hope for the future". Parents want their children to have better opportunities than they had – and this spills over into public policy. Unfortunately it's hard to change human survival instincts!

Also (in the footnote) I hadn't realised that the concept of lifelong learning already has a long history.

3.1 Yes, perhaps adult education is a specialist area, but it's not exactly esoteric. The necessary expertise is not difficult to acquire – but there needs to be a willingness to acquire it, so attitudes enter into this as well.

3.3 I feel that I have heard "smorgasbord" used sometimes in a derogatory way as the equivalent of "mish-mash". I'm sure that is not what is intended here!

3.8 It seems that we simply have to find a way to rise to the challenge of showing the human capital benefits of adult education, if only because this is demanded by the environment in which we are having to operate at the moment. I don't know how it could be done; my own research at the moment is based on a qualitative approach although I am convinced that this remains valid. A colleague and I have interviewed 95 people in 5 African countries who learned to read in their own language on average some 15 years ago. They reported wide ranging impacts in terms of their self-esteem, confidence in relating to others in their community, ability to contribute to their community, ability to manage their small businesses more profitably, as well as their ability to support their children's education. All these changes are enormously important and must have some economic impact (if one wants to look at it that way) but the challenge lies in finding a way to express it in a way which communicates to those looking for "hard" evidence.

5.4 I'm not clear what you mean by the "two SDG educational commitments" but I think that we should certainly explore how the concept of LLL/E connects with adult education. Adopting that concept might free adult education from some of the connotations which have led to its marginalisation, which you list in section 3. We need to show how much adult education is taking place already (including workplace learning) and put that under the overarching concept of LLL/E.

EHSANUR RAHMAN

This would be a good discussion paper taking issues/points in various slots of the seminar(s). Thank you for preparing a precise paper.

The point indicating the 'relationship of SDG 4 and these other learning targets' (paragraph 4.2 of the paper) would probably needs to be more thrashed out. The debate would be around the questions - Whether 'extension' is 'education'? What are the roles difference between 'educationists' and 'extension agents'? Whether/How these are or can be linked linked from 'academic' point? Is there space/scope for sharing budgets? etc. etc.

I see the paper does not touch upon the factors and accountability of the adult educators in 'failing' to demonstrate enough flexibility in adult learning programmes, packaging adult learning encompassing diverse learning needs of adults and developing operational partnership with other sector development actors. This is high time to be go for a kind of self-critic exercise around this issue.

BRIAN STREET

Whilst the background paper spells out many of the key issues, I would like to add some theoretical and research perspectives from the field of Literacy as Social Practice (LSP). In an introduction to a forthcoming UNESCO Journal, '*Prospects'*, that addresses these issues, I examine the challenge that authors put forward to the dominant perspective evident in the approach of many Agencies, which we might characterise as a 'skills' approach. The policy assumption on 'skills' is that the 'low levels of literacy' found in many countries are the result of children not being sufficiently brought into schooling; and the educational perspective is that these children should be exposed to fairly standard teaching and learning regarding reading (and writing). The perspective here tends to ignore the role of adults, focussing on schooling and children at the expense of the wider social context and of 'family literacy'.

The alternative perspective shifts the focus from schools and from children and instead sees the importance of linking adults and children in a number of different institutional contexts. This does not simply focus on 'adult literacy' or on 'schooled literacy', as many studies do. Instead this approach works across the boundaries, the age groups and the institutions from a 'social' perspective that sees reading and writing as always embedded in social contexts whose meanings may vary rather than being uniform, as they do in the 'skills' approach.

Such an approach draws upon the concept of '*Social Literacies'* (Street,1995) which refers to the nature of literacy as social practice, and upon the plurality of literacies that leads to quite new ways of understanding and defining what counts as literacy and has profound implications for how we learn and teach reading and writing. If literacy is a social practice, then it varies with social context and is not the same, uniform thing in each case and this leads to quite new ways of understanding and defining what counts as literacy. I would like to discuss, in this context, as colleagues from different parts of the world and from different fields meet in this seminar, that the 'social' perspective has profound implications for how we conceptualise 'literacy and, in educational contexts how we learn and teach reading and writing. If literacy is a social practice, then it varies

with social context and is not the same, uniform thing in each case and this has implications also for Policy, of the kind we see in current national approaches and also such international perspectives as those expressed in the SDGs. Whereas the UK National Literacy Strategy, for instance, sees 'the basics' as the key focus for literacy education, involving surface features of language and literacy, such as rules of grammar in the traditional sense and rules for phoneme/ grapheme relations, the LSP approach, on the other hand, shifts from such narrow views to the larger social and ideological context. By addressing these conceptual issues, I hope to engage practitioners, researchers and policy makers in reflexive debate about these issues and I look forward to continuing the conversation in this seminar.

MARI YASUNAGA

Regarding the background note, thank you very much once again for providing this comprehensive and useful frame with main issues analyzed. While I would still need to read it more carefully, let me share with you some main points that came up to my mind immediately, which I may share with other participants during the discussion. As these are my comments (and not institutional ones except sharing of UNESCO's documents), I may revert to you with more formal, consolidated comments.

• **Tasks of the Seminar and beyond:** This is a very timely event with fundamental and important questions to be discussed to support the implementation of SDG4. It is understood that there will be an outcome document or a report. It would be helpful to know how the outcomes of the seminar are planned to be used. In other words, I wonder if this seminar is part of a broader activity which may be continuing, or if this is an opportunity to exchange ideas to consider any possible follow-up activities?

• **Connecting the seminar discussion with other processes:** "2.3 Planning for the implementation of SDGs" of the background paper addresses a critical issue of interpretation of SDG4 and its translation into action. Some documents included in the attached list are also from some of the ongoing processes and platforms for SDG4 implementation (e.g. the regional SDG4 consultations organized by UNESCO, national consultations, mapping of related policies, programmes, indicators at country level, the work of the Technical Advisory Group to define thematic Indicators to Monitor the Education 2030). It would be useful to explore how different ongoing platforms and processes can benefit from the outcomes of the seminar.

• **Resources mobilization:** "2.5 Why is adult education neglected?" of the background paper highlights the limited public resources made available for adult education and non-formal education. At the same time, there are resources made available by non-state actors, such as communities, NGOs, the private sector and donors (e.g. grass-root level activities, workplace education), about which a state and/or non-state actors may not have a complete picture. Considering the third element of three major state obligations (fulfill, respect and protect the right to education), it might be interesting to explore how government is 'protecting' the right to education, ensuring the quality of and equity in the non-state actors' provision (e.g. coordination of provision, enhancing regulations?). Financing experts may have ideas about effective resource mobilization from non-state actors (e.g. use of corporate tax?).

• **Making learning outcomes and benefits of adult education/literacy more visible:** While an evidence base regarding the multiple benefits of 'education' is expanding (e.g. "Sustainable development post-2015 begins with education" http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002305/230508e.pdf), the equivalent of that for adult literacy, for instance, is still relatively limited. This may be due in part to complex variables which

may need to be counted in connecting adult literacy and its impacts on people's income, livelihoods, health, environment protection, etc. I agree with the point raised by the background paper (3.7) and think that it would be important to enhance the evidence base, especially, the ones on the economic benefit of adult education (and opportunity costs) and on learning outcomes, without leaving out concerns about the other benefits and the right dimension.

• **Linking the argument for adult education with emerging issues:** Our environments are evolving with some emerging issue, including ageing society, an increasing demand for constant updates of knowledge and skills in knowledge-oriented society, higher mobility of people and expanding cities. Several emerging issues may work as supportive factors for advancing adult education. The background paper, for instance, refers to recurrent education which is a phenomenon more in Western countries. If the SDG4 claims for "universality" as its main feature, recurrent education, or adult learning and education (ALE), would deserve more attention in the SDG4 framework.

• **Connecting (fragmented) different areas/administrative units with that for adult education under the umbrella of lifelong learning:** This is easy to say but not that easy to realize, given that national education systems and broader national systems operate under certain structures. Much has been said and done to connect different areas/units, and the SDG4's lifelong learning framework can be used to continue to do so (hopefully in a more systematic and larger scale) - e.g. family literacy with an enhanced adult learning component, equivalency programmes, developing systems for recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of learning outcomes, integrating NFE into EMIS, intersectoral cooperation.

• **Presenting adult learning and education as an integral part of LLL for its better conceptual understandings, images and profile:** Considering making advocacy more effective, it would be good to think about not only *what* (e.g. the benefit of adult learning) but also *how* to present evidence. (e.g. While the slow shrinking population of illiterate adults is a source of serious concern, if we consider other factors, notably the demographic trends, a picture may be different). Positive results and effects of adult learning and education would help raise its profile and to improve the "social imaginary of 'education'".

ANNA ROBINSON-PANT

I found the paper particularly useful in terms of scoping earlier policy discussions and statements from key meetings/players that have contributed to the formulation of the SDGs. The important distinction made in the paper between adult education (as planned activities) and adult learning (as everyday learning which we all do) will be valuable in guiding our discussions at the seminar. My comments relate to both these aspects of the paper:

1.   Adult learning/education and the SDGs

I must admit that my reading of the SDGs (particularly as compared to the MDGs/EFA agenda) is much more positive than Alan's – in that I saw only two of the Goal 4 targets (4.1. and 4.2.) as focused exclusively on children and schooling. As I consider there is a reasonable emphasis on adult learning in the other targets, the issue for me is less around 'the absence of adult education from SDG 4' and more around 'what kind of education or adult learning is envisaged within each target?' For instance, 4.7. seems to mark a significant shift away from the 3Rs and formal skills/education with the potential to support informal and non formal learning around 'global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity', 'gender equality' etc. Thinking about the distinction between adult education and adult learning, a question is around what kind of learning can be planned/supported and how, and whether some everyday learning (which we often do well

anyway, as Alan notes) might be undermined if it is formally supported/provided by government agencies.

I would also like to draw attention to repeated statements in the 2030 Framework for Action where there is a strong emphasis on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as cross-cutting the three dimensions of sustainable development (eg 'A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed'). The commitment (at least rhetorically…) to gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2030 agenda presents an important opportunity to look at what assumptions about learning and education could contribute to these aims. We could use Alan's distinction between informal learning and education to explore what kind of adult learning/lifelong education might support the targets in Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls). Adult learning (particularly 'awareness raising') seems to underlie most of the Goal 5 targets (eg 'enhance the use of enabling technology') but is not stated explicitly.

We could also consider where education (and possible synonyms for adult learning such as 'awareness raising') is mentioned in the other SDGs and what this might mean in practice. Eg '13.3. Improve education, awareness-raising and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation…' This relates to Alan's points about when adult learning in other sectors is seen as 'extension' rather than 'education' (p 11) and the danger that SDG 4 focuses on adult literacy/numeracy whilst the other SDGs only on development-related learning.

2.   Education and politics: what's the sub-plot?

The background paper gives a great summary of the possible reasons why children are prioritised over adults in policy (section 3 on arguments and assumptions). Although most of the points addressed here are in some way related to 'effectiveness' (measuring outcomes, practical constraints re structures, governance), the 'political dimension' (see 3.9) seems most significant to me and we could reflect on it further. As well as the resource angle of political commitment (spending money on children's education as a 'vote winner', p 10), both children's and adult education are often supported for reasons other than learning and it seems important to look at what that other agenda (the sub-plot) might be. For instance, changes in UK schooling like the extended day could be seen to relate more to providing childcare (helping working parents) than to learning. Looking at where adult learning (particularly literacy) has been strongly supported by governments in the South, this has often been part of a political movement (eg Cuba) or to provide employment for educated unemployed youth in rural areas (Nepal). For many NGOs, adult learning has provided an entry point for other development activities – valued as a way of mobilising communities and forming groups, rather than necessarily the skills taught/learned. We could also consider why adults choose to join learning programmes – a major reason is for socialising (an important point in the context of the UK's ageing population). Does the political (or non-educational) agenda undermine or enhance the arguments for adult learning?

3.   (Re)conceptualisation of lifelong learning

A major contribution of our seminar could be to contribute a clearer understanding of lifelong learning within policy debates (and the two meanings outlined in Part II of the paper are a helpful starting point). In Nepal earlier this year, I met with policy makers in the Ministry of Education who explained their current commitment to moving from an 'EFA' (mainly schooling) agenda to 'lifelong education'. Their current School Sector Development Plan (2016-22), being developed in response to the SDGs, proposes that 'lifelong learning and continuing education' is one of their four goals and discusses the desire for lifelong education increasing amongst adults. Lifelong learning is emphasised as starting from the cradle, and colleagues are exploring the connections between

children's and adult education through this definition. Now that Lifelong learning and lifelong education are more centrally on the policy agenda in many countries, there seems to be a need for clearer conceptualisation of the terms (including how they are being used in specific contexts).

3. PRESENTATION BY AARON BENAVOT, CO-SPONSOR OF THIS SEMINAR

Aaron made an extended presentation to the Seminar which is summarised in the Report above; but is here given in greater detail because of its importance to this debate.

Aaron's presentation briefly introduced participants to the historical journey of earlier international education agendas such as the MDGs and the EFA goals, before arriving at the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals. He intended this presentation to explore the world outside of education, in terms of thinking about the broader development discourse that has emerged, and what this might portend for the work that different people at the seminar were engaged in, and how they may re-position themselves given the "earthquake that has occurred in terms of development discourse."

His presentation started with discussions around the post-2015 development agenda, which had been ongoing for 1.5-2 years not only in the education community but more generally, in the development community. He believed that the evolution of the SDG agenda reflects the most open, consultative agenda ever conceived – certainly unlike the MDGs, which involved a small group of 'experts' who sat in a back room and articulated a series of goals, and measurable indicators, and was not part of a broad consultative process. The SDG process, by contrast, was quite open from the very beginning, driven by official representatives of UN member-states and not international agencies, and involving a whole series of consultations with agencies, NGOs, donors, researchers, and many others. In 2014 the UN launched the MY World survey, asking people around the world to vote on which development goals mattered the most to them. Of the most than 10 million respondents, overwhelmingly majorities chose 'a good education' and 'better healthcare' as top priorities from 16 options. This helped legitimate the notion that education should be treated as a standalone goal, and not integrated within a social protection sector such as social welfare or social services.

Another turning point he identified was in regards to the Global EFA Meeting that took place in Muscat, Oman in May 2014, where representatives of the international education community decided to do away with two separate but parallel policy agendas (MDG and EFA) and bring them together into a unified international policy framework. This decision to marry the development community with the education community was very explicit, even though some people may soon wax nostalgic for a separate education track like EFA. Thereafter, UNESCO and UNICEF representatives conveyed the decisions and priorities of the education community to UN colleagues in New York. They argued that the broad-based process of setting global education priorities necessitates that they be fully integrated into the emergent post-2015 agenda being discussed in New York. However, this task of persuasion was not easy.

He then directed attention to the MDG agenda, wherein the perception of or approach to education and the education component of the MDGs had been very narrowly defined, essentially, the universalization of primary education (i.e. the completion of full primary cycle), and gender parity with respect to primary and secondary education. Adults do not feature at all in the education MDGs. So EFA was always contrasted with the MDGs precisely because EFA was a more comprehensive agenda that included early childhood care and education, primary/basic education, quality issues, adult literacy, life-skills, and gender parity and equality. In a sense, this has created EFA as "primary", because most issues from the EFA movement eventually became embedded into the post-2015 SDG discourse. Instead of having a narrowly construed educational goal, as the MDGs, the SDG education goal includes all EFA goals and adds targets that were not part of the EFA agenda. This is evident, for example, by its emphasis on learning outcomes, higher education and the inclusion of TVET. It is also the first time that the UN talks openly about aims and contents of education. The international education community was thus quite successful in embedding a very

broad agenda into the post-2015 development discourse. In this sense, EFA in its revised expanded form is now SDG 4.

Aaron also felt that one of the most revolutionary parts of SDG4 is target 4.7, which addresses the humanistic aims and purposes of education, and its contents, and not just for formal schooling, since 4.7 is defined in terms of all learners, not just those in school. Another first, he elaborated, was that unlike the EFA goals, in which talk about quality was expressed in general terms, there is now reference to specific education contents -- what people should learn and be exposed to -- in their schools and education programmes. This is a substantial change in the way in which quality in education is defined. Certainly in terms of international discussions around quality issues, the focus previously had been on 'inputs': how much money do countries spend per pupil, do all pupils have textbooks, how many students per classroom. Increasingly quality is about learning, first about whether students have achieved minimal proficiency levels in foundational skills (literacy and numeracy) and second about whether learners have been exposed to topics related to sustainable development and global citizenship. So apart from a generic notion of learning generically (which by default is literacy and numeracy), the new discourse for the first time focuses on issues around sustainable development, the contribution of culture or global citizenship are engaged with. To elaborate,

"All learners acquire the knowledge and skills (so the emphasis again is on outcome) *needed to promote sustainable development including among others through education for sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development".*

While Aaron acknowledged this to be a "mouthful", it does include many concepts with a historical discourse behind them, and is one of the few places in all the SDGs that culture is mentioned. For example, there was a UNESCO Recommendation (passed in 1974), about the importance of a normative framework for promoting values and principles of international understanding, peace, non-violence and human rights. Later issues around gender equality were added to the Recommendation. Even the people at UNESCO, he admitted, had not made the connection between these earlier Recommendations and goal 4.7 until recently. UNESCO's current Executive Board has given authorisation for an international survey to monitor how countries are implementing the revised 1974 Recommendation (an international standard setting instrument). The survey questionnaire now includes items asking about all elements found in Target 4.7. Aaron questioned whether this would be a sufficiently reliable basis for monitoring progress in 4.7 but believed it a step forward since it identifies country efforts and knowledge gaps.

The reason Aaron engaged with the history was because the process of formulating the SDGs was a "very fragile brick castle". As a negotiated consensus emerged from the discussions over the SDGs (and its 17 goals and 169 targets), it was increasingly felt that this structure should not be touched since it was such an elaborate political construction. Member states finally agreed to this complex development agenda and agreed to pass it. Many argued however, that if one brick in the SDG structure were to be taken out, the whole castle might collapse. This also led to the most ambitious universal agenda in education. The SDG agenda is considered universal since the previous agenda (EFA) had been oriented almost entirely to supporting countries in the Global South; the SDG targets on the other hand are relevant for all countries in the world. It is no longer just a matter how the North can support education progress in the South but also how the North gets organised to implement these targets in their own countries. He suggested that many ministries of education in the North have still not understood this.

Another important aspect of the SDG agenda is that it is a holistic agenda and is meant to transcend sectoral thinking. This aspect is critical in terms of implementation. Many emphasise the need for integrated planning and multi-sectorial programmes and the importance of identifying synergies across goals. Many are looking for ways to facilitate progress in several targets by prioritising those key inter-relationships across targets and sectors. In this way policies and programmes could have impacts across more than one goal, rather than thinking narrowly about progressing forward with individual goals within a specific sector. The upcoming GEM Report (to be launched 6 September 2016) contains several chapters that focus on the ways in which education impacts other SDGs and how changes in other SDGs impact education. The Report's theme focuses on the reciprocal links between education (broadly construed as LLL/E) and other SDGs, and how education is embedded and interrelated with the different SDGs. The problem is that while literature surrounding certain interlinkages is quite rich, for others it is lacking. So if one wants to engage with the relationship between climate change mitigation and education (for example), we would be in a quandary; whereas if one were interested in the relationship between health or gender and education, an abundantly rich literature has accumulated over the years. So the report also seeks to identify the knowledge gaps with regards to these inter-relationships.

As Alan has indicated, adults have a prominent place in many of the SDGs beyond SDG4. Certainly if we disassemble some of the assumptions (whether explicit or implicit) about transforming adults, their attitudes, behaviour and lifestyles, then we can see that these are deeply embedded in other SDGs, even if it adults are not prominent in SDG 4. He questioned, "*What would be the role of adult learning and education in contributing to the other goals, if the assumptions are unpacked*?" Aaron thought this would be a valuable exercise, since there is no existing analysis that carefully considers the implications of different SDGs on education, and specifically for the world of ALE. Making these issues explicit might help change the minds of decision-makers, particularly with regards to the prioritisation of funding. Part of the argument is that even if we engaged in very elaborate curricular reform for school students today, it would still take 30-40 years for them to become adults and affect change in their households and communities. It is logical then, to consider what steps could be taken today, in the short term, to change the ways by which the kind of footprints we leave, as adults, could be transformative, so that we become much more conscious about the decisions we may make around things that matter. Clearly, if we reduced poverty and empowered women, these would impact climate change. If the agenda is meant to be transformative and there is a sense of urgency, then ALE should be prioritised, and not just the education of school children. How the discourse may be changed is a challenge involving multiple elements but it is important task.

The current SDG architecture is elaborate with 17 goals, 169 targets and a whole set of global and thematic indicators. Much of the ongoing discussions in the education community have largely focused on defining measurable indicators. Here, the education sector has been "moving at lightning speed" relative to other sectors. In the months prior to the UN agreement on the SDG agenda (26th September 2015), the education sector (which already had a technical advisory group working on developing indicators for the ten education targets) proposed 43 thematic indicators. The UIS, UNICEF and UNESCO proposed 12 of these to relevant UN partners, of which 11 it has been agreed can serve as global indicators for SDG 4, while one was given the grey light, which was for target 4.7. In other sectors, their submissions of proposed indicators were seen [by the UN committee responsible for SDG indicators] in a more problematic light. For the 11-12 global indicators in education, countries will be obligated to collect and report data, and this will be part of the broad monitoring process. The initial global indicator for 4.7 was an OECD indicator about knowledge of 15 year olds about geo-science and environmental science, while the newly proposed indicator identifies the "*extent to which global citizenship education are education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in national education policies, curricula, teacher education and*

student assessment". Aaron directed attention to the fact that while the goal talks about learners actually acquiring knowledge and skills in these areas, the global indicator only focuses on *country efforts* to transform the attitudes and world-views of learners since it may take many years before an instrument for measuring knowledge in these areas is devised.

Aaron said that GEM Report had begun analysing cross-national data on curricular frameworks and textbooks (through content analysis) to ascertain the extent to which many of the concepts noted in 4.7 (e.g., human rights, gender equality, peace, sustainability and others) are embedded within the authorised textbooks used by different countries alongside school-age learners and student assessment. He added that a global indicator (similar to 4.7) has now been proposed in two targets that lie outside of SDG 4: one is climate change mitigation (13.3), and the other is around the sustainable consumption and production (12.8). They both have a very similar format in terms of mainstreaming relevant content, in policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessment. The data for such global indicators does not yet exist. Not only are the targets ambitious but so too are the proposed global indicators, given current data availability. Thus interagency collaborations are needed to devise new forms of evidence that go beyond administrative data. Other aspects of the "data revolution" are the need for more timely information as well as disaggregated data (e.g., by gender, location, socio-economic status, disability status). If Ministries of Education cannot provide such data, various kinds of household or representative surveys are needed. However, he referred to evidence (from Roy Carr Hill) that many marginalized populations (perhaps as many as 500 million people) are not being sampled in existing household surveys, many of whom are adults; this markedly changes our view of who the adults are, how many live in poverty and what their learning needs are, particularly if we are trying to "make visible the invisible".

Discussion

In response to points raised in discussion, Aaron agreed that, though adults are more prevalent in the targets, when targets are translated into indicators, adults begin to disappear and school measures often predominate. This is another way in which adults will go missing from the SDG agenda and evidence-based discourse. Thus another important "battle" is the extent to which adults are present or absent in the proposed global and thematic indicators. The growth of very informal forms of adult learning activities, "kitchen adult education", often spontaneous and unsponsored groups such as reading circles, family or local history groups, would likely be missing from such indicators; while extensive in number but, because they meet privately, unrecorded, with no indication of who was teaching, what monitoring of quality is available, what goals are set or how indicators of their success and achievements are agreed upon.

Aaron agreed that such activities should be considered as part of the SDG agenda; and while there are attempts to better capture adult participation in learning activities, the proposed indicators simply cannot move forward without solid research. He also suggests keeping in mind that the indicators are "not set in stone", and it is likely that in a few years, various committees will be established to revisit them and assess what has been achieved or ignored, which groups have been excluded from an indicator or what kinds of innovative activities might have emerged in particular countries. The biggest challenge was to make visible the many 'invisible' education and learning activities, to find ways not only to recognise the value of those learning experiences but also to monitor the activities beyond the people who have participated in them. Interestingly the word "Monitoring" is not employed in the main SDG 2030 document as a form of accountability since member-states preferred to refer to this process as "follow-up and review". Still countries will be held responsible in relation to each global indicator.

When it was queried whether other sectors realised their stake in education, Aaron observed that there were many leaders in other sectors who had a fairly narrow view of education. The GEM Report saw it as their objective to raise consciousness about what education could entail (beyond narrow definitions), and hoped to launch their 2016 report outside of education circles precisely to speak to people who might not have given much thought to the meaning of 'education' or learning. He felt the education sector had a lot going for it, as it is seen as critical for transforming ideas around the SDGs. Having said that, the new agenda may lead to a view in which education is only seen "as a driver for, an instrument of, or a means for" change, rather than a value in and of itself. Thus there are dangers of embedding education priorities in development discourse.

In terms of literacy, Aaron admitted that one of the biggest problems is that literacy figures have been based on subjective, indirect assessments either by adults themselves or on returns by heads of households rather than direct assessments. In many ways existing measures underestimate the extent to which many of the adults are changed, since it is based on more conventional ways of thinking about literacy. There are tensions between representatives of the institutional and the educational communities; whereas the latter see literacy as a continuum rather than a single standard set of skills. We need to find ways that capture the importance of direct assessment, and not in dichotomous terms. There is an issue around literacy with regards to how it is to be measured or which indicators to employ around it.

On the disappearance of gender from all but SDG5, Aaron suggested that this was another "battle". Rather than having a separate target on gender (as in EFA), it should be included along with all other dimensions of inequality (wealth, language or location etc.). It seems to have been understood that since there is a separate goal for gender, they could allow it to disappear as a distinctive target in SDG 4. Also, members of the gender education community have argued that while there are clear ways to measure gender parity in education, there is no explicit measure of gender equality, either because of measurement difficulties, or because it has disappeared into the background. Efforts to devise instruments and adapt proposed scales that can capture multidimensional views of gender equality and education are being undertaken and may be included in the 2016 GEM Report.

In response to a call for wider aspects of adult education to be made more explicit, in which the focus should not be merely on the functionalist approach to education but also its relationship with knowledge, language and other activities such as dancing or cooking, indigenous traditional knowledge, community and identity, and especially the noted absence of an SDG on culture, Aaron acknowledged this absence. Although the education sector constitutes about two-thirds of UNESCO's budget and staff, the culture sector was uncertain whether or not they wanted to play the development card, and some of the key people did not see the value in contributing to the post-2015 development discourse. Therefore, they engaged in SDG discussions at a very late stage, and so could make very small changes as most things had already been agreed upon, but there are many people who felt let down ideologically.

In response to the suggestion that the possibility of implementation of new visions of adult learning (LLL/E) since even after the CONFINTEA of 1997 very little materialized, Aaron suggested that even where there is no evidence, cogent arguments can be put forward. Certain kinds of evidence allow us to draw clear conclusions with respect to the effects of ALE on various outcomes that can be prioritised but this is very complicated. The next GRALE report, he indicated, would provide some important evidence in these areas. Nevertheless, there is a lot of logical thinking that could be deduced from the text of the SDGs and the targets, which speaks to the potential role of ALE even though concrete 'evidence' is missing; and the textual analysis can go forward even in its absence.

Keep in mind that the SDG architecture will not go away anytime soon. There are many interested parties and many mechanisms that will reproduce it over time, thus its status is different.

In conclusion, Aaron informed the participants that the global indicators noted here were only proposed and would need to be ratified by the intergovernmental agency in July 2016, and then in September by the UN. Given the enormity of the data challenges around ALE, he called for participants collectively to work to build information about provisions and the process, for example through an open resource platform like Wikipedia for ALE, which people could contribute to; the existing compilations are wanting: UIL's LitBase and the ICAE's portal were recommended as possible platforms.

Anna referred to UIL's LitBase, which she felt would be good model. Other references included the World Data on Education file produced by the International Bureau of Education (UNESCO's oldest of institutes), which has compiled information about the curricula in the national profiles by sending drafts to the countries, which they can validate and verify. Also, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) was considered. It was agreed by participants that having a template that exists would be more useful mechanism for countries to correct or expand on rather than filling readied templates in an area, which is so challenged by its diversity.