

## **East Asia: Some Background Influences**

Peter Kearns

This paper draws on several East Asian papers, including several comparative papers, to give background on some of the influences that bear on learning in older life in these countries. In particular, several of the papers comment on the importance of traditional philosophies, such as Confucianism, that influence learning by seniors and the position of seniors in these societies. In addition I have attached a list of number of comparative studies, mostly involving East Asian countries, that are held in the Library of the Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg. Some UIL papers can be accessed online.

### **Building a Learning Society in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore**

This paper by Jin Yang and Risha Yoruzu was prepared for the UIL Publication Series on Lifelong Learning Policies and Strategies (No 2). The authors review the national socio-economic contexts of these countries (including cultural background) and discuss national policies and strategies. A set of seven lessons learned is given.

They discuss the influence of Confucian philosophy in the following terms.

*Due to the influence of Confucianism, citizens of all three countries value harmony within the family, community and society as a whole, which contrasts with the greater emphasis on individualism found in the West. The Confucian sense of community encourages individuals to put group needs ahead of their own personal desires. In Japan, for example, the strong sense of community and harmony has had a positive impact on facilitating lifelong learning in the community and bringing about changes that enhance local life. On one hand, Japanese society has become more individualistic as it has experienced social and economic changes such as declining birth rates, urbanisation and the transition to an information society (Tanaka, 2000). On the other hand, however, a new form of solidarity has emerged in which formerly isolated individuals have established new types of bonds with others by initiating their own learning activities (Sawano, 2012).*

### **The Role of Higher Education in Promoting Lifelong Learning**

This publication in the UIL series Lifelong Learning Policies and Strategies (No 3) ranges across Asia, Europe, and Africa. Several useful overview chapters are included as well as a chapter on Elder Education in Shanghai.

*The role of universities in elder education: the experience of Shanghai and the Shanghai Normal University*

*A chapter by Professor Roger Boshier (a member of PIMA) is also useful*

*From Marx to Market: Limitations of university-led “collaboration” in the Yangpu (Shanghai) Innovation Zone.*

### **Learning Cities in East Asia: Japan, the Republic of Korea & China**

This article by Han and Makino was commissioned for a special September 2013 issue of the UNESCO International Review of Education (ed. Osborne, Kearns, & Yang) on learning cities. The authors review the approach to lifelong learning and learning cities adopted in these countries.

*They were a countermeasure to the increasing challenges of global as well as post-industrial uncertainties at the turn of the century, when cities were trying to find governmental instruments to engage in cultural processes, community building and personal development in the new way of urban life.*

Han and Makino regard the way learning cities developed in these countries as a “community relations” model supported to alleviate the stresses of the modern world which they contrast with the “individual competence” model found in the West. Although they don’t discuss Taiwan, I would regard learning cities in Taiwan as also a community relations model.

They also see the Confucian heritage as important in linking to the modern world.

*The Confucian tradition, in this sense, can be reconsidered as linking the modern experience to the historical heritage.*

### **Quiet Dynamism of Local Communities: Restructuring of Grassroots Municipalities and Lifelong Learning in Japan**

This very good paper by Professor Makino (Tokyo University) was prepared for the PASCAL PIE program and may be accessed on the PIE web site (<https://www.pie.pascalobservatory.org>).

Makino reviews evolving approaches to lifelong in Japan in the context of building a modern industrial state and then adapting to financial and other pressures. His overview of the structure of post-war Japanese society, and the subsequent retreat from the centralised is very useful, with the shifts in the roles of central and local governments. Lifelong learning is discussed as a policy for social integration in this context. This has led to the important role of local “self reliant communities” in what Makino calls “the quiet dynamism of local communities”. Institutions such as the *kominkan*, which have a key role in this approach, are discussed.

It is interesting to compare the changes that have occurred in Japan with the experience of China in building a “Socialist harmonious society”.

### **Making all People Full Members of the Society: New Directions of Lifelong Learning Policy and Practices in Japan**

This further 2013 article by Professor Makino carries forward a number of the themes in the two papers listed above. He discusses the transition of Japan from an industrial society to a consumer society accompanied by demographic change with an ageing population. This shift from a centralised government led society to smaller localised communities has impacted on the way lifelong learning is perceived, and the situation of seniors in local communities.

### **Learning and Social Participation by Seniors in Japan: Analysis of Major Issues from an International Perspective**

This paper by Toshio Ohsako was prepared for a joint OECD and US Department of Education conference on *How Adults Learn* held in Washington in April 1998. The paper draws on two surveys:

- International Comparison of Learning and Social Participation of the Elderly (ICLSE 1997);
- Integrated Study of Policy and Program Development for Lifelong Learning in an Ageing Society (ISPPD)

The Ohsako paper was also a contribution to the 1997 UNESCO CONFINTEA conference. Ohsako concludes “that the notion of learning for the elderly is deeply rooted in the Japanese concept of lifelong learning.

### **Adult Learners: The Social, Cultural, and Economic History Behind Present Attitudes towards Learning in Japan**

This 1998 paper by Yamaguchi was also prepared for the OECD & US Department of Education conference on Adult Learning. Yamaguchi gives a detailed historical account of the evolution of adult learning in Japan back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. He draws on a number of surveys in covering recent years.

### **Shanghai Stimulus Paper**

The Shanghai Learning City stimulus paper was written by Jian Huang for the PASCAL PIE program. The paper may be accessed on the PIE web site ([www.pie.pascalobservatory.org](http://www.pie.pascalobservatory.org)). Huang reviews the development of a learning society in Shanghai, one of the largest cities in the world where the elderly population over 65 by 2010 had reached 2.33 million, 10.12 per cent of the total population. Huang points out that in Shanghai approaches to learning have changed in line with the developmental phases of building a learning society.

### **Some Comments**

Comparative education is a fascinating but complex field where a wide range of factors the things that happen in a particular country. Nevertheless, we can learn from each other, as organisations like UNESCO and PASCAL attest. I hope the references listed above and attached are useful.

Because of the nature of the subject, I feel it is necessary for the SIG to work in 3 or 4 small groups that share ideas and interact in moving forward so that all members of the group are involved.

My suggestions for groups are:

1. East Asia
2. Europe
3. Australia and the Pacific

If each group reports by a given date, the group reports could be shared, circulated to PIMA members, and posted on the PASCAL web site. The second stage of the work of the SIG would be to identify common themes and issues from the group reports for follow up by members of the SIG, possibly in a second round of groups. This would lead to the final report of the SIG which should be widely circulated.

If an approach along these lines is adopted, SIG members would choose which group each wished to participate in. The final SIG report will hopefully identify ideas and strategies that will benefit learning in later life.

It will be for Thomas as convenor to suggest a methodology to harness the experience of all members of the SIG. The suggestions set out above are for consideration by Thomas and SIG members based on my experience of international studies in organisations such as UNESCO and OECD.

## ATTACHMENT 1

1/6

Title: Learning possibilities in an aging Asia  
South East Asia Centre of Lifelong Learning for Sustainable  
Corporate author: Development (Philippines); Philippines. National Commission for  
UNESCO  
Imprint: Manila, South East Asia Centre of Lifelong Learning for Sustainable  
Development, 2013?  
Country: Philippines  
Publ Year: 2013  
Collation: 11 p., illus.  
Original Language: English  
Main descriptors: adult learning; elderly; ageing; Asia  
Conference: Biennial General Conference of the Association of Asian Social  
Science Research Council: Ageing in Asia-Pacific: Balancing the  
State and the Family  
Meeting session: 20th  
Meetings (place): Cebu City, Philippines  
Meetings (date): 2013  
Item available at: [UIL Hamburg](#)  
374.1 Le English

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2/6

Title: Promoting lifelong employability for workforce aged over 45:  
Singaporean workers' perspectives  
Added Title: International journal of continuing education and lifelong learning  
Author: Billett, Stephen  
Imprint: Hong Kong, HUK SPACE, 2011  
Country: China  
Publ Year: 2011  
Collation: p. 57-73  
Original Language: English  
General notes: (In: International journal of continuing education and lifelong  
learning, v. 3, no. 2, May 2011)  
Main descriptors: workers education; lifelong education; elderly; education and  
employment; Singapore  
Item available at: [UIL Hamburg](#)  
Periodicals archive English

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3/6

Title: Situated learning and identity development in a Korean older adults'  
computer classroom  
Added Title: Adult education quarterly  
Author: Kim, Young Sek; Merriam, Sharan B.  
Imprint: Thousand Oaks, 2010  
Country: USA  
Publ Year: 2010  
Collation: p. 438-455  
Original Language: English  
General notes: (In: Adult education quarterly, 60, 2010, no. 5). Bibl.: p. 454-455  
Main descriptors: adult learning; elderly; computer assisted instruction; electronic  
learning; identity; personality development; Korea R  
Item available at: [UIL Hamburg](#)  
Periodicals archive English  
Local holdings: hui  
Document Type: Non-UNESCO serial article  
Catalog Number: 210762  
Source code: hui

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4/6

Title: Retirement preparation education: a comparison of Norway and  
Taiwan  
Added Title: International journal of continuing education and lifelong learning  
Author: Chou, Chuan Chiu; Yang, Chun Ching  
Imprint: Hong Kong, 2009

Country: Hong Kong  
Publ Year: 2009  
Collation: p. 117-130  
Original Language: English  
General notes: (In: International journal of continuing education and lifelong learning, 2, 2009, no.1)  
Main descriptors: retirement; elderly; educational programmes; Norway; Taiwan  
China  
Item available at: [UIL Hamburg](#)  
Periodicals archive English

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5/6

Title: Learning and social participation by senior citizens in Japan: analysis of major issues from an international perspective; issues paper  
Author: Ohsako, Toshio  
Corporate author: USA. Dept of Education; OECD  
Imprint: Washington, United States Department of Education, 1998  
Country: USA  
Publ Year: 1998  
Collation: 28 p.  
Original Language: English  
General notes: Bibl.: p. 26-27  
Main descriptors: elderly; adult learning; lifelong education; social participation; Japan  
Conference: How Adults Learn: an International Conference  
Meetings (place): Washington  
Meetings (date): 1998  
Item available at: [UIL Hamburg](#)  
374.1 Oh ARCHIV English

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6/6

Title: The Aging: a great potential human resource of Taiwan  
Series: International review of education  
Series (vol/issues): XXXVIII, 4  
Author: Chu-Yin Yang, Janice  
Corporate author: UIE  
Imprint: Hamburg, UNESCO Institute for Education, 1992  
Country: Germany  
Publ Year: 1992  
Collation: p. 427-431  
Original Language: English  
General notes: Incl. bibl.  
Main descriptors: ageing; elderly; manpower; human resources development; social status; Taiwan  
China  
Item available at: [UIL Hamburg](#)  
Periodicals archive

[Yang Jin](#); [Schneller, Chripa](#); [Roche, Stephen](#)

The Role of higher education in promoting lifelong learning

*UIL publication series on lifelong learning policies and strategies; 3*

*Publ: 2015; [198 p., illus.\\*](#)*

[Dhirathiti, Nopraenu](#)

Lifelong learning policy for the elderly people: a comparative experience between Japan and Thailand; International journal of lifelong education

*Publ: 2014; p. 770-790.*