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Community-Based Lifelong Learning and Adult Education

Adult Skills and Competencies for Lifelong Learning



Community-Based Lifelong Learning and Adult Education:

Adult Skills and
Competencies for
Lifelong Learning

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Foreword

AS ONE OF THE MAIN OUTPUTS OF UNESCO BANGKOK'S project "Transforming Education and Training Systems to Create Lifelong Learning Societies in the Asia-Pacific," supported by the Japanese-Funds-in-Trust, UNESCO Bangkok has released the publication "Community-Based Lifelong Learning and Adult Education: Situations of Community Learning Centres in 7 Asian Countries" to present the key findings of a comprehensive education sector review on how the concept of lifelong learning has been implemented in the selected countries, including recommendations to assist countries in the region in reorienting their education and training systems towards creating lifelong learning societies.

The current emerging contexts in the Asia-Pacific region entail substantial needs to promote the new sets of skills and competencies required for lifelong learning in the 21st century. This sequential booklet on Adult Skills and Competencies for Lifelong Learning, as part of the aforementioned Community-Based Lifelong Learning and Adult Education publication, was developed and synthesized based on the comprehensive education sector review and relevant researches to consolidate the essential knowledge, skills and values for adults and learners of community learning centres (CLCs) in the region.

The booklet provides competency definitions, existing frameworks and practices, proposed competency framework in Asia-Pacific contexts contributed to the SDGs, and the applicability of the framework at the country level. The contents were enriched by technical inputs and recommendations of national experts from 11 Asian countries; namely, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Viet Nam, plus Australia, during two consultative meetings held in November 2015 and September 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand.

We hope that the proposed Asia-Pacific competency framework in this booklet will provide valuable recommendations for policy-makers and CLC managers in developing the related frameworks and delivery mechanisms in their respective countries in order to emphasise the critical skills and competencies for adult learners in both non-formal and informal settings. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to the author, Ms. Cecilia Victorino-Soriano, of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), for her tireless efforts in the development of this booklet and useful contributions at both consultative meetings.



Gwang-Jo Kim
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Rationale for an Asia-Pacific Competency Framework

A competency framework is best defined in a specific context where it will be used. A workplace identifies the set of knowledge, skills and competencies that workers need to achieve a company's targets. A country likewise identifies existing and would-be competencies that its citizens need in order to meet its development goals. In Asia and the Pacific, many countries face similar opportunities and challenges, a reality that augurs well for a discussion on an Asia-Pacific Competency Framework. At the same time, with increasing intergovernmental cooperation in education and development, such a framework will provide an overview of possible areas for collaboration for education, training and lifelong learning.

Since 2015, UNESCO Bangkok has initiated discussions with Member States on an Asia-Pacific Competency Framework for Lifelong Learning. "The new education agenda addresses the new role of lifelong learning as a sector wide approach that extends beyond non-formal education (NFE) and community learning centres (CLCs). It is crucial for the Member States to realign their education system towards LLL in response to the emerging contexts in Asia-Pacific region."¹ The Asia-Pacific Competency Framework is a key component of UNESCO Bangkok's Programme on "Transforming Education and Training Systems to Create Lifelong Learning Societies in the Asia-Pacific."

The proposed Asia-Pacific Competency Framework is a common reference framework that will identify, define and collate a set of key skills and competencies that are critical to Asia-Pacific citizens' personal development, employability and active citizenship in an increasingly knowledge-based society. It is envisaged that when people develop their capabilities around specific sets of knowledge, skills and values, their actions collectively and strategically will have an impact towards shared growth, social cohesion and sustainability across the region.

The competency framework proposes a guide for education planners and providers in a lifelong learning system. It can be adopted to formal, non-formal and informal education settings. In a lifelong learning system, learning is a continuum. Regardless of age, sex, location, ethnicity, social and economic status, people should have access to acceptable education and learning opportunities throughout their lives. With this in mind, the competency framework hopes to motivate various education players to contextualise these recommended sets of competencies in their education strategies, taking into consideration the specific needs and situations of their learners, communities and respective countries.

¹ From the welcome address of Mr. Libing Wang, Chief of the Section for Educational Innovation and Skills Development (EISD), UNESCO Bangkok, during the Consultation Meeting on the Regional Guidelines on the Role of Community Learning Centres and Adult Competencies for Lifelong Learning, 13-14 September 2016, Holiday Inn Sukhumvit, Bangkok, Thailand

The competency framework calls for inter-sectoral collaboration, and thus it has to be considered beyond the confines of the education sector. There are sets of competencies around health, employability/decent work, sustainable living and citizenship participation that can be more effectively promoted in partnership with respective government agencies. Apart from conducting trainings, it will be useful for agencies to review data dissemination and information strategies and see how these competencies can be embedded in their extension work with communities.

Defining the Asia-Pacific Competency Framework has been a work in progress. At a workshop on 19–20 November 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand, experts and practitioners from different countries in Asia-Pacific identified relevant contexts and the reasons why these are important to consider in the competency framework. They also evaluated the different domains and identified which ones should be prioritized given the realities on the ground in the region. The domains discussed were as follows:

- Intrapersonal competency
- Social intelligence
- Critical and innovative thinking
- Global citizenship and cross-cultural competency
- Entrepreneurship
- Digital, new media and information literacy
- Functional literacy and transdisciplinarity
- Learning to learn

The deliberations focused on youth and adult contexts, as well as needs, and on the pivotal role of non-formal and informal learning settings in helping develop the required competencies. Building on these discussions, the follow-up workshop of experts on 13–14 September 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand identified specific knowledge, skills and attitudes along these domains based on country contexts.

This proposed Asia Pacific Competency Framework integrates the results of highly rewarding discussions from the two aforementioned workshops.



Defining Competencies/ Competency Framework

There is a lot of current debate around the meanings and uses of the term “competencies” (also as distinguished from learning outcomes). This paper refers to a few definitions that can help aid in the formulation of the Asia-Pacific Competency Framework.

Many definitions on competencies abound in the world of work. Joyce Foundation in its publication “Empowering adults to thrive at work: personal success skills for 21st century jobs” builds on the OECD 2013 definition: *“Competency is the capacity to generate appropriate performance: to marshal the resources (tools, knowledge, techniques) in a social context (which involves interacting with others, understanding expectations) to realize a goal that is appropriate to the context. Commonly, competency is described in terms of the application and use of knowledge and skills in common life situations as opposed to the mastery of a body of knowledge or a repertoire of techniques.”*

The European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning stated that “competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.”

The UNESCO definition elucidates on what competencies are and how they are acquired: “... Competencies are diverse in scope ranging from core skills, content knowledge, cognitive skills, soft skills, to occupational skills and enable us to meet a complex demand or carry out a complex activity or task successfully or effectively in a certain context. Their typologies and approaches are as diverse as entities – countries, organizations and individuals – that define them. Competencies are acquired through learning cycles and throughout one’s life.”

To reiterate: competencies are developed not only in formal and non-formal educational settings but also, importantly, through life experiences. Therefore, for youth and adult education advocates and providers, making visible the competencies acquired through experiential learning is a key advocacy. “Without recognition and validation of non-formal and informal modes of learning, there will be no lifelong learning. As lifelong learning values all kinds of learning experiences, learning outcomes should be recognised and validated independently of how, where and by whom they are acquired” (Ouane, UIL 2011).

The recognition, validation and accreditation of competencies acquired through work, cultural practices and other life experiences are of utmost importance for youth and adults who were not able to complete education but who would like to pursue further learning and certification for work. While competencies are often related to qualification, this paper will focus only on a competency framework.



Competency Framework in Asia-Pacific Contexts

Integral in developing a competency framework is defining the goal/s for which the competencies will be needed. One way of defining those goals is by identifying the contexts in which the competencies of people will have to be developed. The National Framework of Qualifications of the Republic of Ireland calls this category of competencies as “competence in context”. This refers to “competence in terms of human situations, whether occupational or general social and civic ones, supplying the context within which knowledge and skills are deployed for practical purposes. Acting effectively and autonomously in complex, ill-defined and unpredictable situations or contexts requires higher levels of learning.”

It is often said that there is a huge diversity in the Asia-Pacific region. This diversity, however, is highlighted by marked contrasts that persist. The region, for instance, is exceptionally rich in biodiversity yet faces serious environmental problems due to increasing consumption, pollution, deforestation and other side-effects of economic and population growth. Asia and the Pacific has been an economic growth centre for years, yet a lot of people remain without decent jobs and need to migrate to other regions so as to earn a living. The region is culturally and linguistically diverse but many ethnic and minority communities remain marginalised and dispossessed. Considering such disparities across the region, it was a challenge to zero in on contexts whereby the competency framework will be defined.

In aid of framing the competency framework, the participants at the November workshop studied trends in demography, economy, education and future technologies that will have a bearing on the knowledge, skills and value sets or competencies needed presently and in the future.

Demographic shifts

The Asia-Pacific Human Development Report “Shaping the future: How changing demographics can power human development” provides useful insights on the changes in population distribution and related issues for developing the competency framework.

Growing workforce

There is a growing work force in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2015, there were 2.8 billion people aged 15-64, comprising 58% of the global total work force, and their number continues to grow. A huge working-age population presents both a potential for economic growth and a challenge for countries to provide more jobs and decent work. A large part of the work force is accommodated in the small and medium enterprises which account for two-thirds of total employment in Asia-Pacific.

The gender gap in the work force persists where female labour force participation declined between 1990 and 2013. The report says that “Part of the reason for the decline could be that women’s labour force participation tends to fall during intensifying urbanization and shifts away from agricultural employment, where women’s work is often concentrated, particularly at low income levels. At higher income levels, women’s labour force participation rate tends to pick up again.”

Ageing population

Asia-Pacific has the world’s largest number of older people at 489 million, with East Asia having the largest share of older people (over 209 million live in China) and South Asia with the smallest share. According to the report, “Rapid ageing in Asia-Pacific poses particular issues in terms of human development, including those related to health, housing, poverty and gender.”

Migration to cities

Asia-Pacific is witnessing rapid urbanization with 47% of the region’s population already living in cities. In 2015, youth and adult working-age people accounted for 67 to 70% of urban populations in South Asia, East Asia and Pacific. The report noted that many women from rural communities are also drawn to the cities given the limited opportunities in traditional rural areas as well as in order to escape the social constraints of local communities. Given the increasing number of environmental disasters that afflict many rural areas, “climate migrants” have also moved to urban areas, abandoning their homes in rural communities not by choice but by necessity.

Economy

The Asia-Pacific region witnessed economic growth for several years as evidenced by its increased share in global GDP, with South Asia, East Asia and Pacific contributing 27% share to global GDP in 2012. It also has a rising middle class population, which may soon reach 1.74 billion people in Asia and the Pacific, or 54% of the global share (World Bank, 2012).

Despite the global slowdown in recent years, the economy in Asia-Pacific has been reported as resilient and in most East Asia countries local economies have enjoyed robust growth. However, the East Asia and Pacific Economic Update 2016 reported that “in several countries, poverty reduction has been slowed by limited labour market opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged groups of the population.”

Education and other youth-related issues

With the United Nations’ Education 2030 agenda, there are still unfinished Education for All agendas: 18 million primary school-age children are out of school who will grow up with limited formal education. Around 781 million illiterate adults remain neglected across the region, with two-thirds of them being women.

Alarming trends in the youth sector also need urgent attention. An astonishing 34% of youth in

Asia-Pacific are neither in school nor in the labour market. Suicide is the leading cause of death for 15-to 19-year-old males and females in Southeast Asia, and among the top five causes of mortality for both sexes in all regions.

Technology, Artificial Intelligence and work

Due to rapid technological advances, there will be quick shifts in the world of work, which have implications on the kind of education required and, therefore, new competencies needed. The American futurist Thomas Frey foresees “2 billion jobs to disappear by 2030” and cites five industries that will be affected: Power industry, Automobile transportation, Education, 3D printer and Bots (robots). He argues that with the rapid advance of technology, many current jobs will become obsolete, which means that there is an urgent task to prepare people for new jobs. In the power sector, for example, there will be a shift from power generation plants to manufacturing small generation units; in the education sector, from teachers to coaches or mentors; in the transport sector with the advent of driverless cars, from drivers to automated traffic designers, architects and engineers; and lastly, with the widespread use of robots, the need for robot designers will grow.

Generally, these trends although limited to specific spheres – economy, migration, education, and technology – highlight some considerations that could be factored into the framework. They call attention to competencies that ensure access to decent work and future work skills, health promoting and facilitates social cohesion and sustainability.



Competency Framework founded on the SDGs

Yet another approach to defining the competency framework is by defining the needed competencies around a forward-looking goal such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report asserts that education is at the heart of sustainable development and SDGs. It has demonstrated how education can significantly contribute to all SDGs. Of particular interest for drafting the competency framework is GEM's articulation of education in relation to the 2030 Agenda of Planet, Prosperity, People, Place and Peace. It is useful to cite a few examples from the GEM as starting points to explore how the competency framework can be patterned after the SDGs:

Planet

- Education is the most effective tool for reducing fertility rates
- Environmental education can increase green knowledge
- Education is crucial for disaster preparedness

Prosperity

- Education can help increase agricultural productivity
- Education can provide skills for green innovation
- Education reduces working poverty

People

- Education addresses gender inequality
- Education improves health and reduces fertility rates

Place

- Education helps reduce inequality in cities by giving people vital skills for work
- Education reduces crime in cities
- Education improves cities' prosperity and makes them green

Peace

- Education can encourage constructive political participation
- Education helps people get access to justice systems

What sets of competencies should people develop or what education/learning programmes should be integrated towards achieving the SDGs? How can the Asia-Pacific Competency Framework work towards inclusive growth and sustainable futures in the region?

By analysing specific trends and also using SDGs as foundation, the Asia-Pacific Competency Framework can both be contextualised in addressing the current scenarios and towards a future that we envision by 2030.



Who are the Learners?

The reference framework is being drafted for “citizens” of age 15 and above. Considering some Asia-Pacific contexts, most of them in certain countries would not be in the formal education system but it is hoped that they will be reached through non-formal and informal education and other means of educative/information dissemination strategies.

A key concern raised at the workshop is how these learners will be reached. How can they be motivated to learn? For most adults, learning is a personal decision. They decide to embark on learning due to their specific objectives or particular needs. According to Carniero (UIL, 2011), “The emergence of a new breed of competent and self-regulated learners is absolutely instrumental in the formation of learning cultures.” The question of motivation relates to the five dimensions of lifelong learning as described by Carniero: motivation (to undertake and to overcome barriers to learning), innovation (in content, methods, and delivery), sustainability (over time and space), efficiency (broader reach with fewer resources), and dissemination (showcasing best practices and benchmarks).

There are significant changes, however, in the way youth and adults access information and learn in a knowledge-based society. An important aspect of such changes is how education should be reorganized so as to motivate 21st century learners. Learners with access to technological tools such as mobile phones, computers and internet connections cease to be mere consumers or users of information: they themselves are able to produce and disseminate knowledge and information easily.

Lastly, youth and adult learners come from different backgrounds and have various needs; therefore, they would want to learn towards different sets of skills. There should be a segmented approach in implementing a competency framework to foster such differing learning outcomes.

The Asia-Pacific Competency Framework based on specific contexts in Asia-Pacific is envisaged as a guide or tool that can be used to inform the designing and provisioning of these lifelong-learning opportunities.



Learning from Existing Frameworks and Practices

Four Pillars of Learning

Taking off from the oft-quoted Delors Report, the reiteration of Carniero on the four pillars of learning and what they mean can be considered as a foundation to the competency framework. Taken from his article “Discovering the treasure of learning”, here are several key insights:

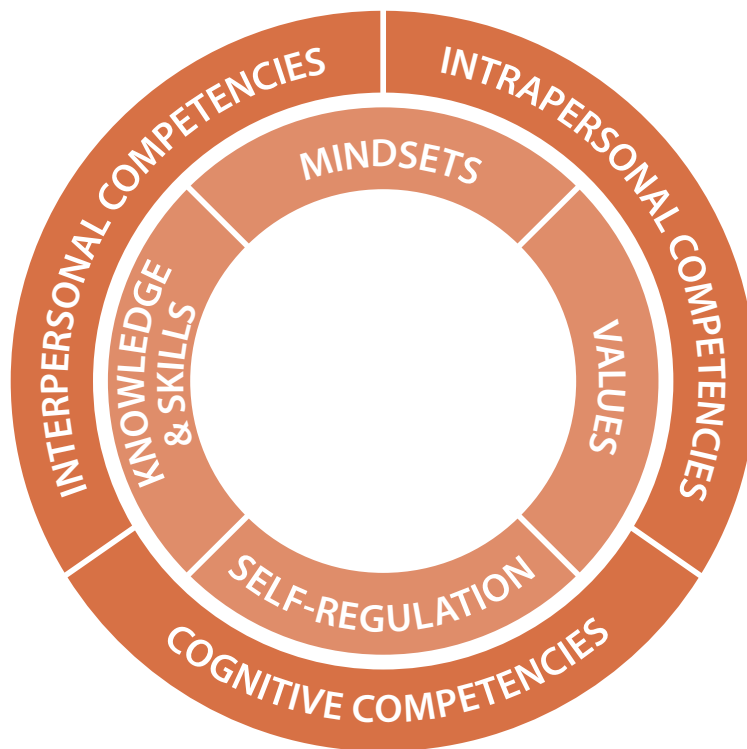
- **Learning to Be** is the inner journey of every one’s spiritual and existential broadening towards discovering the meaning of life and pursuit of happiness
- **Learning to Know** appeals to the urgent need of reacting to multiplicity of information sources, diversity of media content to new ways of knowing that in a society that is closely interconnected
- **Learning to Do** aspires to connect knowledge and skills, learning and competence, inert and active learning, codified and tacit knowledge, creative and adaptive learning
- **Learning to Live Together** encompasses rediscovery of meaningful relationship, raises the threshold of social cohesion and makes viable sustainable foundations for community development. It contains core values of civic life, identity-building within a context of multiple belongings.

Ouane (UIL, 2011) proposed three additional pillars in tune with the “constant influx and forward momentum of the modern world”:

- **Learning to Learn** – a “transferable” skill that supports the remaining pillars and encourages learners to be responsible for their further learning, as an individual and collective duty
- **Learning to Transform** – learner examines the status quo critically, with the aim of changing the current situation for a better life
- **Learning to Become** – encompasses all learning outcomes, enabling learners to develop both as individuals and as members of a wider and more inclusive society.

Work–Personal Success Skills

The current economic and demographic shifts in Asia-Pacific pose both opportunities and challenges for work. The Joyce Foundation, in its publication “Empowering Adults to Thrive at Work: Personal Success Skills for 21st Century Jobs”, integrates two holistic conceptions of personal success skills in its framework.



Source: Joyce Foundation, 2016

“The inner ring represents foundational components, those that underlie successful human functioning—what one knows, how one makes sense of the world, what one values, and how one manages oneself.”

“The outer ring represents applied competencies, the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive abilities that involve application and use of the foundational components to navigate the working world.”

“Integrating these conceptualizations is intended to convey greater clarity about personal success skills, provide new bridges between research and practice, and highlight research that supports the growth mindset by demonstrating how personal success skills are malleable.”

In the foundational components:

- Knowledge and Skills refer to what one knows and can do. These had been “acquired by adults across every aspect of their lives.”
- Mindsets are beliefs that shape how one makes sense of the world; they are the frames through which one interprets situations, challenges, successes and failures.
- “Values are the lasting beliefs about what is good or bad and what is important in life.” Two values are associated with personal success: Being proactive, self-initiated behaviour to bring about change as well as being pro-social – doing things that benefit people or society as a whole.
- “Self-regulation draws on basic elements of cognitive flexibility (i.e., executive functions), awareness of one’s own internal experiences and the perspectives of others, and skills that support goal attainment.”

The applied competencies include intrapersonal competencies by which individuals understand themselves, reflect on their experiences and emotions, and express them outwardly. The interpersonal competencies informs the ways by which “individuals interact and communicate with others to accomplish individual or collective goals”. Lastly cognitive competencies enable individuals to “solve problems, make decisions and create new ideas”.

This framework for personal success skills while oriented towards work reiterates many of the knowledge, skills and values articulated in the Four Pillars of Learning, including the three additional pillars. The applied competencies promoted in the world of work can also apply to other dimensions of life such as in promoting social cohesion in a community.

Global Citizenship Education

Countries and people are becoming more and more interconnected due to the ease of mobility across countries and the increasing accessibility of information and communications technologies. Families with relatives working in other countries can develop awareness of other countries’ economy and culture through the lens of migrant workers. Through internet connections, people are able to communicate and build relationships across countries with ease. The shared realities of climate change, conflicts, epidemics and financial crises stress even more this interdependence of peoples and countries.

How can people participate meaningfully and collectively as global citizens? The Global Citizenship Education is one area of competency recommended to be included in the framework.

According to UNESCO (2014), “Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a framing paradigm which encapsulates how education can develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learners need for securing a world which is more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable.”

UNESCO (2014) identifies the set of knowledge, skills and behavioural capacities that need fostering in learners:

- an attitude supported by an understanding of multiple levels of identity, and the potential for a “collective identity” which transcends individuals’ cultural, religious, ethnic or other differences;
- a deep knowledge of global issues and universal values such as justice, equality, dignity and respect;
- cognitive skills for thinking critically, systemically and creatively, including adopting a multi-perspective approach that recognizes the different dimensions, perspectives and angles of issues;
- non-cognitive skills, including social skills such as empathy and conflict resolution, communication skills and aptitudes for networking and interacting with people of different backgrounds, origins, cultures and perspectives; and
- behavioural capacities to act collaboratively and responsibly to find global solutions for global challenges, and to strive for the collective good.

Civic Literacy and Citizenship

A sense of civic awareness, the need for empathy with others, and the importance of acting on community issues were all brought to the fore at the workshop. It was observed that whereas many people have become immersed in the world of digital and social media, they may remain passive and detached from what is happening in their own neighbourhood or community. How can this disconnect be bridged? How can people stay informed of global affairs yet remain committed to local and national affairs? How can they be encouraged to undertake or promote actions at the neighbourhood, school or community level?

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills in its publication “Reimagining Citizenship for the 21st Century” put forward three dimensions of 21st century citizenship where people need to develop and enrich their competencies: civic literacy, global citizenship, and digital citizenship. As 21st century citizens, people embody and act in these three dimensions.

According to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills:

Civic literacy encompasses knowledge of government and the role of citizens — as well as the motivation, disposition and skills for civic participation:

- Understanding of government processes and the local and global implications of civic issues
- Knowing how to exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at the local, state and national levels
- Staying informed
- Participating effectively in civic life

Global citizenship encompasses global competencies required to contribute in a varied society and make sense of significant, global issues:

- Understanding other nations and cultures
- Proficiency in language(s) other than English
- Communication, collaboration, social and cross-cultural skills for cooperative interactions in diverse groups and contexts
- Disciplinary knowledge in subjects such as history, geography, politics, economics and science
- Interdisciplinary knowledge, such as environmental literacy; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; and health literacy
- The ability to investigate the world, recognise perspectives, communicate ideas, take creative action, and apply disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011)

Digital citizenship encompasses the knowledge and skills to use technology appropriately to navigate the digital world, manage the risks and take advantage of the participatory opportunities it offers. A “holistic and positive approach” includes:

- Understanding how to stay safe and secure online
- Knowing how to find, evaluate, manage and create digital content (also known as digital literacy, or information, media and technology skills)
- Understanding how to participate intelligently and ethically as a responsible citizen in online communities
- Understanding the rights and responsibilities of a digital citizen

Drawing from the experiences of working with youth in this new century, how can the Asia-Pacific Competency Framework draw lessons from these sets of competencies around citizenship? How does intersection of civic, global and digital citizenship apply to the realities of the countries of Asia-Pacific?

Imagining the three dimensions as three interconnected circles, the spheres of citizenship may vary based on the contexts – for people in rural communities, civic citizenship might occupy a bigger space compared to the global and digital variety; for urban communities or for youth, the sphere for digital citizenship might be equal to civic citizenship. The Asia-Pacific Competency Framework highlights these three dimensions.

Education for Sustainable Development

Drawing on the Youth and Climate Change guidebook, ESD involves learning for change towards sustainable future. Quality ESD is about:

- learning to ask critical questions
- learning to clarify one’s own values
- learning to envision more positive and sustainable futures
- learning to think systemically
- learning to respond through applied learning
- learning to explore the evidence behind both tradition and innovation (UNESCO, 2011).

For quality ESD, three key competencies have been identified:

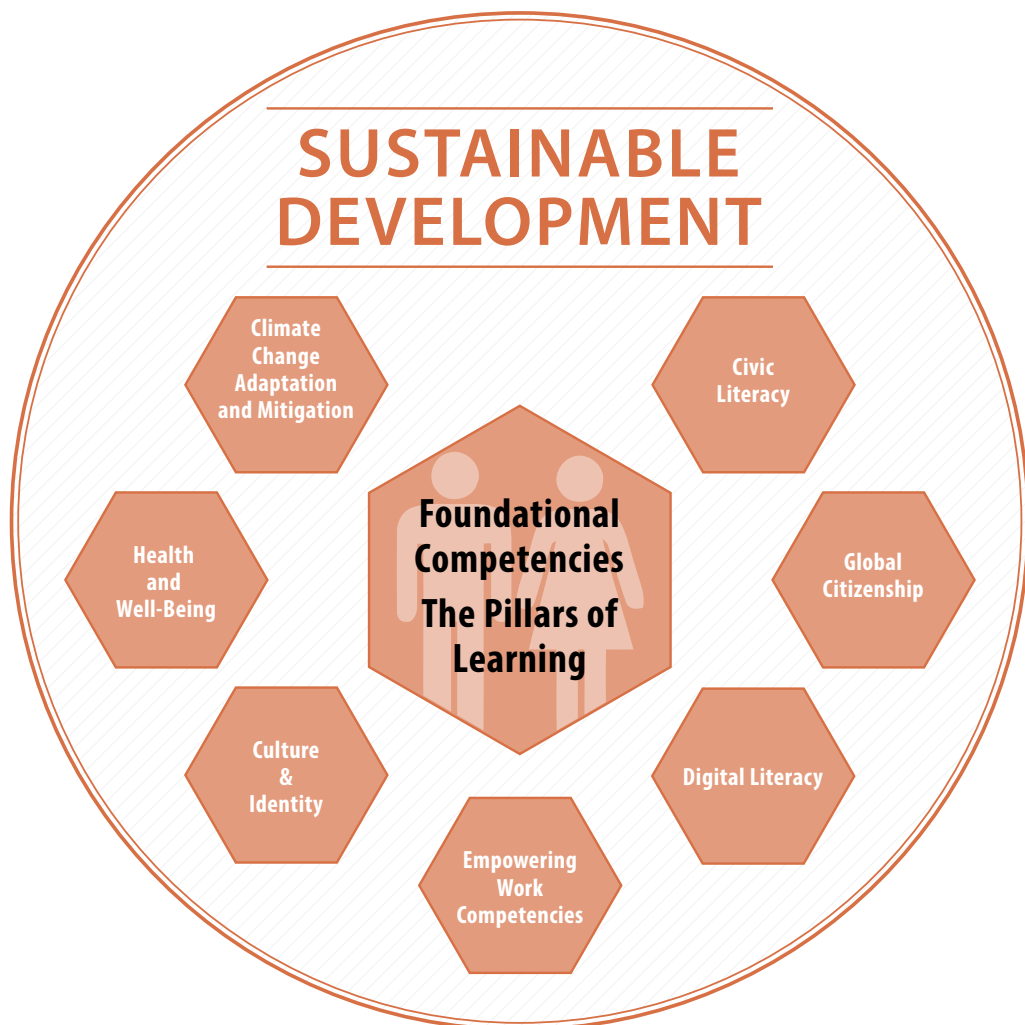
Key understanding	Key skills	Key attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interdependent nature of our society and life on our planet; • The limited carrying capacity of our planet; • The value of biological, social and cultural diversity in maintaining the wellbeing of our planet and our society; • The role of rights and responsibilities in a sustainable society; • The role of equity and justice in a sustainable society; • The presence of risks and the need for precaution in making decisions about our planet and our society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the relationships and connections between issues in order to make decisions and solve problems in a joined-up way; • To enable co-operation and collective decisions even where views and power may not be distributed evenly; • To think critically about problems, issues and situations and to shift thinking from how to make things less unsustainable, to the kind of systems and lifestyles needed to achieve sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence to take actions and believe they will make a positive difference; • Appreciation that individual behaviour must be balanced by our responsibilities as members of a wider society; • Seeing humanity as part of a natural world with limits and living in harmony with it as a resource for human development; • Respect for the biological, social and cultural diversity that is fundamental to our world; • Caring for self, for others, for living things, and for our planet.

Source: The Sustainable Development Education Network’s Framework for the introduction of Education for Sustainable Development

ESD, it is argued, should be the overarching framework for education/learning and development. It encompasses all dimensions of life and envisions sustainability in all of these interconnected dimensions into the future. For some advocates, focusing on climate change adaptation and mitigation is deemed more useful. Climate change education is then interconnected with other competencies in the area of citizenship, work and well-being.

Synthesis-Asia Pacific Competency Framework

Drawing from different existing frameworks-practices and applying them to the contexts of Asia-Pacific, the competency framework is composed of interlocking competencies. At the November 2015 workshop, the participants discussed five domains of competencies for Asia-Pacific; namely, 1) climate change adaptation and mitigation, 2) civic literacy, 3) global citizenship, 4) digital literacy, and 5) work and livelihood. At the September 2016 workshop, two domains were added; namely, 1) health and well-being and 2) culture and identity. It is important to note that the foundational competencies cut across the different areas of competencies.



The seven areas of competencies are in a sense generic and not exhaustive. There may be other competencies that countries in Asia-Pacific may view as important. However, from the experiences and work of experts and practitioners in the region, these are the most important areas where people need to build on their wisdom, skills and values.

Sustainable development is the overarching framework that guides the competency framework. Developing one's knowledge, skills and values should be towards a development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).



Applicability of Framework in Country

What does the competency framework mean at the country level? The experts and practitioners who participated at the September workshop, reflecting on their own contexts and experiences, defined what knowledge, skills and values are valuable for their people and country's development.

Employability

In the Philippines and Lao PDR, there has been increased mobility of young people and adults from the rural to urban areas. In the case of the Philippines, thousands of women and men work outside the country as overseas contract workers. With the increased mobility of people searching for work and seeking a better life, valuable competencies include job and livelihood skills and, equally important, life skills and knowledge to protect their rights as workers. Building on the empowering competencies for work of the Joyce Foundation, the participants identified the following competencies:

- Technical and academic skills (cognitive skills, knowledge on trade and industries)
- Entrepreneurial skills: communication skills, financial management, technology and capital, production management, marketing and branding, sourcing of raw materials
- Critical thinking (problem solving, decision making and self-management)
- Communication skills (oral, written, listening and non-verbal)
- Knowledge of contextual factors (family, school, community, mobility, policies, security and job availability in areas where person will migrate)
- Self-control/management (delaying gratification)
- Positive self-concept (self-confidence, self-awareness)
- Awareness on national and global visions and coping with changing situations

Health

Most literature on health competencies relate to health and medical personnel. It was at the workshop where the competencies towards well-being and health, responsible parenthood and path towards happy lives were surfaced by practitioners and government representatives, many of whom had rich experiences in working with communities. Based on the inputs from Indonesia, Thailand, Viet Nam and Nepal, the health competencies encompass knowledge, skills and values that promote reproductive health, good sanitation, proper nutrition as well as coping with the challenges of poverty in both rural and urban communities and with the fast pace of life, which entails managing stress related to work and social life.

The health competencies include:

- Knowledge on family health management, reproductive health, sanitation improvement, proper nutrition, diseases – This includes, in particular, the knowledge on clean water, family planning, stress management, preparation of balanced diet and prevention methods (or health practices that can hinder development of diseases).
- Skills related to purifying water, handwashing and hygiene and first aid.
- Critical thinking skills such as in discerning traditional beliefs, ability to access information as well as taking steps to prevent behavioural risks were also deemed important.

With the fast pace of life, it is important for people to learn and act on the following health-related knowledge and practices:

- Occupational sickness
- Over usage of antibiotics
- Addiction to digital devices
- Awareness on environment and impact on health
- Food safety, organic food
- Social responsibility and awareness
- Sports and recreation

Asia-Pacific, with the diverse situations of the countries, is experiencing both a youth bulge and an ageing population at the same time. Some competencies that pertain to the specific needs of these two groups were identified as important:

Youth and adults:

- Sex education: Adolescent mothers, infectious diseases
- Critical thinking to prevent them from being at risks (drugs, accidents, etc.)
- Health problems related to early marriage
- Stress management
- Safety in driving and working

Ageing population: From the perspective of Thailand, health literacy includes:

- Preparation of physical and mental health for ageing years
- Motivation for senior citizens to connect with others to contribute their knowledge to society and appreciate their self-value
- Learning on how to pass away with happiness
- Training competencies of caregivers for senior citizens

In the contexts of Asia-Pacific, especially in countries where community health services are badly needed, it was noted that health literacy and competencies can only be possible when the government ensures improved public health insurance system and services. Local initiatives to monitor and promote health care and health awareness should be in place so that people understand both the curative and preventive ways for ensuring health. Working with government medical personnel, the local communities should be capacitated to provide health awareness and basic health services. In this aspect, a competency framework for community health promoters is necessary, taking into consideration the specific health issues in the region; for example, the health problems of ethnic minorities and people living on the margins.

Civic literacy and global citizenship

In the information age, the dichotomy between civic involvement at the community, country and global levels is becoming blurred. In social media circles, it is often said that one is a citizen of the local community and the wider world at the same time. While this is the case, it can be helpful to define what knowledge, skills and values are needed in acting on one's role as a citizen at different levels. The Asia-Pacific is a region with varied belief systems, politics/governance systems and diverse political values and norms. What are the key competencies under civic literacy?

For Indonesia and Nepal, the understanding of rights is key to exercising one's citizenship:

- Rights of citizens, work and social rights
- Right to education (formal and non-formal), enhanced literacy skills so that people can exercise power and lifelong learning
- Social protection rights
- Right and responsibility of people
- Right to information
- Right to participate in decision making process at family, community and national levels
- Civic participation in different sectors (health, education, etc.)
- Increase awareness in civic and community affairs
- Understanding good governance at different levels and be part of good governance

In some communities, however, there are strong impediments to civic participation such as poverty, inequity in education access, lack of information, discrimination and absence of political support or mechanisms for involvement. In these cases, affirmative actions are pivotal

to transform political decision-making processes. In Nepal, the so-called lower castes need to better understand the law and processes of governance in order to participate more effectively in society. In Indonesia, the organization PEKKA (Women Headed Household Development) works with women to enable them to have access to justice and political leadership. Its education programme highlights the interconnected and empowering set of knowledge, skills and values:

Knowledge on women's rights and empowerment:

- Understanding distinct features of women's leadership, women as subjects of development, organizing community, building awareness and working together for rights and public action
- Strengthened awareness on women and family law
- Rights of women in property and access to resources
- Knowledge on information on legal identity (such as birth, marriage), support services and legal literacy
- Financial literacy: economic skills, business skills, entrepreneurship skills

Values

- Equity in family and community
- Building mutual relations between husband and wife/mother and children
- Communication for solidarity
- Respect differences and diversity of opinions

Skills

- Skills for conflict mediation
- Life skills (decision making, critical thinking and participation)
- Budget advocacy at the village level and preparation of women to be involved, understanding procedures in policy in budget and technical data
- Ability to represent marginalised women in legal cases
- Litigation/non-litigation skills to provide assistance to women, how to solve legal issues using formal and informal ways, how to eliminate violence and harassment against women and counselling skills

For Thailand, apart from understanding rights and duties, civic literacy consists of basic yet crucial knowledge such as on traffic law, information law and information-communications law. It also emphasises that knowledge should translate into action beyond the governance arena; therefore, from the country's perspective, social participation, environment protection and energy conservation are key components of civic literacy.

Related to these areas of knowledge, Thailand enumerated 21st century skills, which include 1) analytical thinking (media discretion, self-protection from being victims, digital literacy and meditation) and 2) communication skills with the peoples in ASEAN. Embedded in the competencies is the appreciation of the following key values:

- Cultural diversity (hill tribes, ethnic minorities, migrants, sea gypsies)
- Social responsibility/public mind
- Discipline, respecting others, justice, honesty, generosity (donation)
- Security (reporting to officers in case of incidents and natural disasters)

Many key competencies in civic literacy reverberate in global citizenship. Indeed, citizenship can be considered a continuum and expressed in relation to different concerns from community to national to international level. The reflections from Viet Nam, Lao PDR and the Philippines, strongly articulate the need for competencies that promote social cohesion – understanding different cultures, tolerance and respect for diversity, and an ability to work together. “Global citizenship emphasizes interconnectivity of peoples and a perspective of humanity’s shared vision to resolve global difficulties”.² Below is a list of key competencies on global citizenship from the perspectives of Viet Nam, the Philippines and Lao PDR:

Knowledge

- Analysis of global changes and challenges
- Understanding and tolerance of different cultures and political systems
- Climate change as a shared reality and responsibility
- Convergence on a shared vision and responses to address global challenges

Skills

- Ability to assess source of information
- Ability to live and work in conformity with law
- Willingness and ability to compromise
- Survival skills
- Communication skills (to include English language skills) and ability to dialogue

Values

- Pro-active, ownership of initiatives that have social impact
- Respect, tolerance/empathy, inclusiveness
- Resilience
- Cultural sensitivity
- Social responsibility
- Justice and equality

Digital Literacy

Digital ethics is at the heart of the discussions on digital literacy. Decades ago, the primary preoccupation of ICT users was how to maximize the use of the technology and how to eliminate the digital divide. While these two concerns remain in many countries, currently there is much

² From the output of the group – Philippines and Lao PDR at the September workshop.

attention being paid to cyberbullying, plagiarism and observance of ICT laws. Along with these issues, digital literacy can include the positive uses of ICT, which call for competencies on collaboration as well as productive and creative uses of modern communications technologies.

For Thailand, digital literacy includes:

- Knowledge on domestic and international laws related to digital use (e.g. copyright and intellectual property rights)
- Digital ethics – analytical thinking to prevent people from being victimised
- Use of technologies for positive collaboration/sharing
- Skills in using ICT for teaching and learning and accessing digital content
- Basic ICT skills to utilize different kinds of devices
- Basic software/apps production and use
- Online business
- Networking via online platform

For Viet Nam, the basics for digital literacy means:

- Understanding of basic computer skills
- Ability to search, categorize and evaluate information
- Systematic knowledge on ICT (hardware and software)

Viet Nam also emphasises the importance of the skills in using ICT for work and life. It envisages that as the world moves into a scenario where there are e-citizens, e-governments and e-businesses interacting with one another, and thus the following competencies are seen as crucial:

- Creating and sharing online content
- Using ICT for lifelong learning purposes and updating one's knowledge
- Using ICT and online platforms for the wider benefits of the community

Digital ethics is also of key concern to Viet Nam, which has identified key values related to digital literacy such as:

- Protection of the rights of oneself and others in cyberspace
- Respect for all ideas without negative judgement
- Use of information in a legal way (respect of copyright)
- Awareness of the downside or negative impacts of ICTs

Education for sustainable development is a comprehensive framework that integrates competencies in the different dimensions of life whether this be economic, social or political, including environmental sustainability. For the competency framework, the Philippines and Lao PDR have identified competencies that are related to climate change adaptation and mitigation. These competencies have been promoted in both countries in the formal, non-formal and informal education settings, thus benefitting more people in the community who are thereby better prepared to take actions before, during and after disasters. Partnerships are key to promoting lifelong learning on disaster risk reduction and management. In the Philippines, the national government works with local government units, non-government organisations, communities

and corporate foundations as well as schools and community learning centres on conducting awareness raising on climate change mitigation and adaptation. From the experiences in the Philippines and Lao PDR, the basic competencies should include knowledge and skills on:

- Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM)
- Understanding vulnerability and risks for mitigation measures
- Knowledge on preparedness and rehabilitation in individual/home and community levels
- Ability to do and understand Hazard Risk mapping
- Sustainable use and production of resources
- Risk assessment
- Environmental and plan management
- Consciousness in lifestyle change towards sustainability

Culture and Identity

Respect for cultural diversity and the ability to live in harmony with people in multicultural settings have been known as part and parcel of global citizenship, or even of civic literacy, especially in multicultural countries. Having a separate domain on culture and identity calls attention to the need to recognize and appreciate one's own ways of living, belief systems and varied cultural forms and expressions, such as language. To be able to engage in multicultural dialogues, one has to be grounded in an appreciation of one's own culture/s. Indonesia and Nepal agree that in developing attitudes as key competencies under culture and identity should include:

- Recognition and appreciation of oneself and one's community's culture values and life purposes
- Ethics: positive and open attitude, love of nature, mindfulness for others
- Habit to improve or continuously excel
- Gender sensitivity or transformation of gender inequities
- Building confidence on our uniqueness (proud of nationality, identity and culture)
- Respect for one's own and other cultures/values
- Respect of local wisdom (e.g. customary laws)
- Use of mother tongue in instruction, together with other languages
- Caring for nature
- Developing a sense of community harmony and peace

The Asia-Pacific Competency Framework is a guide that can be expanded, where domains can be added based on the contexts, development needs and priorities in each country and collectively in the region.



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ANNEX I

List of Participants
Regional Expert Meeting on Transforming Education and Training Systems
to Create Lifelong Learning Societies in the Asia-Pacific
19-20 November 2015, Bangkok, Thailand

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**Consultation Meeting on Regional Guidelines on the Role of Community Learning Centres
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13-14 September 2016, Bangkok, Thailand

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