

Comment by Balázs Nemeth

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(English)

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The article of Priti Sharma from PRIA on the roles and impact of soft skills collected and developed in non-formal education to develop the capacities of the youth resembles the realities that young generations have to be supported with accessible sources and places of non-formal education so as to found and develop soft skills necessary to successfully integrate into community-based, organisational forms of labour, production and/or services most of potentially employable young people face in the knowledge economies.

In this respect, Sharma provided a convincing approach in bridging the collection, development and sharing of soft skills and related knowledge with potential climate in education, training and, moreover, of labour organisations which can effectively demonstrate soft skills developments amongst the youth by relevant programmes and services for their future employees and clientele. The aspect I would have raised, according to the above topic, is what the impact of lifelong learning policies and strategic thinking have had on the development of soft skills in non-formal environments since this issue has got an approximately twenty-years of background both in UNESCO and OECD, and EU protocols referring to the development of lifelong learning competences and related skills. Still, what new context we can find in the paper is the connection of the development of soft skills to better positioning of the youth in the labour market and in the society via stronger and broader soft skills.

I also think that the development of 4Cs, namely, communication, critical thinking, creativity and collaboration is generally difficult for a great number of youngsters and young adults in most continents for the lack of places, accessible opportunities and even relevant situational learnings. Most employers would basically reject a role to help the youth develop their soft skills while most of the require young employees to hold high level soft skills from the early stages of their career. Sharma correctly refers to the mission and responsibilities of local communities and organisations having been engaged in social capacity building amongst youngsters to get this target group of adult education into accessible and friendly community-based adult learning and education in order to step forward on basic skills without which the 4Cs could not be developed. It is a significant element of this article to call UNESCO's EFA goals from 2012 into consideration its reference to basic skills, like foundational skills based on literacy and numeracy, technical skills to support job-related working activities, and, thirdly transferable skills like communication and creativity. According to Sharma, not only organisational implications, but also mobility-based intercultural factors influence the success of organisational work, production and understanding. However, not only communication, but also language skills play, in my understanding, a key role

and may be recognised as driver of both economic and social interactions. Although, Sharma reflects mainly to skills-based issues of the youth in the social context, that is why she explains some changing social roles of the youth, but this narrative provides a rather complimentary reasoning about non-formal education and impacts in skills-development, this article must be valued for its attempt to make it clear that it is very important societal challenge to prepare the youth for balanced social interactions. This approach basically gives a totally different aspect of skills development than those provided mainly around and with a direct support of OECD, the World Bank, ILO, and some other employment oriented groups and platforms.

At the same time, next to mobility, migration, it is demographic changes the urges educational and training providers to recognise the choices and barriers for cross-sectoral non-formal education and training, especially for youngsters. The example Sharma brought from India explains the shortages and barriers of educational providers in skills and competence development which, in reality, is not very far away from capacities of educational providers in other continents, for example in Europe.

The PRIA-based case is an outstanding example is that its programmes for the youth focus on engagement of youngsters in education and learning, also on development of skills and competences in the area of crime prevention and to help them discover the capacities of their own settlements in water supply, housing and waste management. Moreover, PRIA's input particularly raise some need-oriented actions upon the changing roles, status and working and living conditions of women in the scope of equal opportunities and contrasted to organisational provision of non-formal educational services. Issues like collaborations, team work and leadership are also demonstrated through activities in non-formal education of PRIA having formed partnerships with DVV international on youth education to signal soft-skills development for trainers and trainees coming from local societal environments. The move of such programmes into cross-border partnerships raise some distinguished matters referring to professional development of trainers. Additionally, one may conclude that it is an outstandingly relevant and hot issue to develop the skills and competences of trainers and mentors who work with adult learners wanting to explore the choices of and barriers to their own soft skills to be developed. Yet, another angle beyond professional development of adult learning professionals is the matter is also tackled through special events where useful and practical knowledge can be gathered around the development of soft skills. The focus on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders is a significant input of this article, and that is one can only recommend it to be explored by other ALE (adult learning and education) providers, NGOs and platforms working with young adults across India, Pakistan, and other countries in Indo-China so as to tackle illiteracy, unemployment and social exclusion. Reconfiguration of learning provision can also be an appropriate approach to bridge existing practices of local and regional realities can be related to international trends and issues. That is what makes capacity building meaningful for young adults, both as educators or as lifelong learners.

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