

Original Paper

Effects of Intergovernmental Organizations on Countries in the Field of Lifelong Learning

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1. Introduction

The concept of lifelong learning has been increasingly popularized in the world and has featured widely in educational policies and practices for several decades (Aspin et al., 2012). It covers a full range of provision of learning opportunities. As a broad concept for reshaping people's understanding of study and extending education beyond the confines of time and places, it has been initially developed and supported by a number of international organizations since the early 1970s (Schuetze, 2006). Evans and Newnham (1998) argue that historically intergovernmental organizations, as one type of international organizations, play a key role in promoting its conceptualization and applying this idea in reality. These organizations have a major influence on policies and practices of not only their member states, but also countries around the world in the field of lifelong learning.

Intergovernmental organizations differ in goals, functions, scales and membership. Therefore, their advocacy in the area of lifelong learning has disparate focus and different degrees of effects. Similarly, the ways of their activities diverge as well. However, in spite of these differences, they work together in similar ways to make progress among countries in this field. At the same time, the content of lifelong learning has been constantly enriched by intergovernmental organizations against different historical backgrounds in order to meet demands of the continuously developing ages. Since the 1970s, these organizations have been always exerting considerable influences on policies and practices of nation states around the world with their efforts on this agenda. Among these intergovernmental organizations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Union (EU) and the World Bank are main proponents and contributors.

In this essay, the effects of intergovernmental organizations on policies and practices of nation states in the field of lifelong learning are discussed by using the examples of UNESCO, OECD, EU, and the World Bank. The essay is primarily divided into two parts to illustrate the argument. The first part of

this essay explores contributions made by these four organizations to the development of lifelong learning among countries. Nonetheless, various focus on the content of lifelong learning developed by different organizations and the embodiment of this difference in policies and practices of countries are also indicated to show different effects of intergovernmental organizations. The second part further demonstrates how these intergovernmental organizations have influences on policy-making and actions of countries, chiefly focusing on clarifying and concluding the similar ways used by organizations of producing effects. In addition, a major limitation related to the effects of these intergovernmental organizations is also mentioned shortly at the end of this part.

2. From Concept to Practice: Common Contributions, Different Focus

After the Second World War, driven by force to reconstruct the world and satisfy the increasingly growing need of adult and continuing education, nation states worked actively to create more peaceful, just, democratic and humane societies. In this context, amounts of intergovernmental organizations, including UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank, were established in order to promote collaboration among countries. Against this background, stepping into the second half of the 20th century, intergovernmental organizations attempted to find ways to help nations conform to trends of times. One of their efforts was trying to reorganize the traditional education system which no longer met requirements of social development. In this respect, intergovernmental organizations turned to the idea of learning throughout life.

UNESCO could be regarded as the first intergovernmental organization which adopted the idea of lifelong learning as a general guiding principle for reforms of traditional education system. With the publication of Faure Report in 1972, one of the early forms of the concept of lifelong learning - lifelong education was initially proposed. The report revealed the essence of this concept. Education was no longer a privilege of the elite and limited to formal and official schooling, but was entitled to every individual through a whole lifelong learning process (UNESCO, 1972). UNESCO mostly associated lifelong learning with the overall development of individuals and the promotion of social equality. After this seminal report, the idea of learning through the whole life quickly received recognition of international society. Many other intergovernmental organizations, such as OECD, made efforts to propose new concrete educational concepts in relation to this idea. Moreover, because of different goals of intergovernmental organizations, they had distinctive definitions of lifelong learning. In 1973, publishing the document *Recurrent Education: A Strategy for Lifelong Learning*, OECD further argued that post-compulsory education should be arranged in a recurring way in alternation with phases of work and other social activities (OECD, 1973). Recurrent education was mainly set out to “bridge the gap between education and employment” (Vargas, 2017, p. 2). Therefore, particular emphasis was placed on adult education in this context. At the same time, the Council of Europe developed another similar concept of permanent education (Titz, 1995), which “aimed at preserving and renewing European cultural heritage and promoting cultural integration” (Vargas, 2017, p. 2). Meanwhile, the

World Bank also sponsored studies which intended to investigate the need of lifelong learners and find out new paths to lifelong learning. Thus, in the early 1970s, officially conceptualized by intergovernmental organizations, lifelong learning took the first step towards its generalization around the world.

The conceptualization of lifelong learning provided countries with general principles for policy-making. Influenced by these organizations, a number of countries began to make changes by enacting related laws. The Peruvian *General Law on Education*, promulgated in 1972, counted the concept of lifelong education proposed by UNESCO as one of leading principles in their future educational reform (Malpica, 1980). Compared with UNESCO, recurrent education formulated by OECD narrowed lifelong learning to a more specific type of education for adults. Therefore, it was easier and more practical for countries to make educational policies from this perspective. In 1967, publishing related educational decrees, Brazil confirmed adult education as the focus of implementation of lifelong education policy. Denmark also pointed out the importance of providing more learning and training opportunities to adults in the *Danish Act* of 1968 (Titmus, 2014). German Education Council's *Structural Plan* of 1970 regarded adult-specific curricula as their central theme and linked the concept of lifelong education with these curricula (Titmus, 2014). In 1976, Norway passed the world's first *Adult Education Act* for funding and regulating the non-formal sector in lifelong education (Bjerkaker, 2016).

Responses made by countries closely accorded with the initiative of these intergovernmental organizations. However, in spite of organizations' efforts of conceptualization of lifelong learning, there still lacked practices in reality at that time. In particular, due to the early 1980s recession, investments of many countries in educational reform was greatly reduced. It was only from the 1990s that "a number of new and emerging factors rekindled the debate of lifelong learning" (Schuetze, 2006, p. 292). Due to the development of science and technology, especially the Internet, people have stepped into a brand-new era, in which knowledge is a core economic factor. The rapid replacement of knowledge and the trend of globalization have made lifelong learning a prerequisite for the development of modern society.

In this context, intergovernmental organizations developed the concept of lifelong learning in the light of social demands and put it back on the agenda. In 1996, following the spirit of Faure Report, UNESCO published another report, entitled "Learning: The treasure within" (UNESCO, 1996). This report further considered learning throughout life as the key of education and the foundation of a learning society (UNESCO, 1996). At the same time, a new comprehensive term, lifelong learning, replaced lifelong education. Since then, UNESCO has been continuing to focus on the advocacy of a universal, cultural, "humanist and utopian" (Elfert, 2015, p. 91) vision of lifelong learning which aims at achieving individual fulfillment, protecting human rights and promoting a just world. During the same period, OECD, EU and the World Bank also added new content to lifelong learning. Compared with the terms used in the seventies, they had new goals in the field of lifelong learning. They regarded

lifelong learning as a powerful tool to cope with possible challenges in the new upcoming era. Despite attempts of the other three organizations on defining lifelong learning from personal and civic perspectives, they considered the development of lifelong learning more as a strategy to contribute to economic progress in contrast with UNESCO. Publishing *Lifelong Learning for All* in 1996, OECD aimed to set up an education system for both young and old in order to assist them in adapting to changing jobs and labor markets, rather than concentrating only on post-compulsory education (OECD, 1996). Rationales, which included the crucial role of knowledge and information in a learning economy, the need of well-educated workforce adaptive to technical change, were mainly related to economy (OECD, 1996). Since 1995, sharing similar ideas with OECD, a series of documents on policy-making around the subject of lifelong learning were issued successively by the European Commission in order to enhance the competitiveness of member states in EU. In these documents, the emphasis on skills and competences for economic development occupied main parts. Furthermore, the World Bank directly defined lifelong learning as “education for the knowledge economy” in its report (WB, 2003, p. xiii).

Various focus of these intergovernmental organizations makes it possible for countries with different situations to develop lifelong learning in their own needs. For example, Japan incorporated the concept of lifelong learning into its educational law *Basic Act on Education* in order to cultivate people who “long for truth and justice, honor the public spirit, and are rich in humanity and creativity” (2006). It could be seen that Japan mainly supports lifelong learning as a way to achieve people’s potential and lead fulfilling lives from cultural perspectives, which is closely associated with the humanistic spirit advocated by UNESCO. In Thailand, the *National Education Act* (1999) was based on principles of lifelong learning. It comprised all aspects of social development. In particular, it pointed out the importance of lifelong learning in developing Thai identity and local knowledge, which accorded with the cultural aspect of lifelong learning stressed by UNESCO. Compared with these countries, the situations in the following countries reflect economic aspects related to lifelong learning supported by OECD, EU and the World Bank. Norway, as a member of EU, aims to develop a strategy in line with the *Treaty of Lisbon* (2006). It attaches great importance to lifelong learning with purpose of strengthening competences for adults in working lives. In Germany, the concept of lifelong learning is committed to promoting education as most important resource for economic success. Singapore even directly considers setting up the system of lifelong learning as a powerful tool to improve the international economic competitiveness in the 21st century (Kumar, 2004).

Entering the 21st century, strongly advocated by these intergovernmental organizations, the concept of lifelong learning has been worldwide translated into actions by a number of countries. In spite of different purposes of UNESCO, OECD, EU and the World Bank, as international organizations, they have the same mission to support the development of lifelong learning. Therefore, they also work together to make contributions to not only policies, but also practices of nations in the field of lifelong learning. Taking the foundation of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as an example, it is an important part of UNESCO commitment to the development of lifelong learning. Except for UNESCO,

OECD and the World Bank has also been devoting to this area. Beginning in 2001, OECD organized an activity called The Role of National Qualification Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning in collaboration with EU. The activity was designed to investigate the influence of different national qualifications systems on patterns and the quality of lifelong learning within countries, and to find out effective actions in this area. According to the results of investigation, countries could take corresponding measures to promote lifelong learning. Overall, 24 countries participated in this activity, such as Ireland, New Zealand, Greece and so on. In this way, OECD helps countries better design and manage qualification systems in accordance with their own country experiences. According to the report of the World Bank (2003), appropriate quality assurance mechanisms which certify learners and accredit various kinds of institutions are needed to promote lifelong learning because of its function of capturing important skills and valuing informal and non-formal learning. Sharing common goals in this respect, UNESCO has been in collaboration with OECD, EU and the World Bank in order to make it an international trend in reforming national education and training system. According to an inventory published by UNESCO (2015), an important aspect of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is setting up closer connections between secondary education, VET (Vocational Education and Training) and higher education. The AQF aims to strengthen the relationships between these three sectors by linking qualifications across and between them in both structured and unstructured ways. In China, the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework has a relatively complete system which covers the vocational, academic and continuing education. Botswana has already adopted a ten-level, outcomes-based and credit-based NQF in order to create links between academic and vocational qualifications.

3. Working Together: Having Effects on Countries in Similar Ways

Looking through the history and the current situation of the development of lifelong learning, it could be seen that intergovernmental organizations exert influences on policies and practices of nation states in this area mainly by means of the following methods. First, publishing a variety of documents, such as the ones stated in the first part of this essay, they make great contributions to the conceptualization of lifelong learning and continuously enrich its content with the changing times. The formulation and the perfection of this concept are beneficial to its recognition among countries. Moreover, in this way, these organizations could offer countries general guidelines and recommendations for policy-making and action outlines around the subject of lifelong learning.

Second, intergovernmental organizations assist member states in having consensus and making commitments to promoting development in the area of lifelong learning by concluding and signing a series of treaties, declarations and agreements. For example, as the most important outcome of the CONFITEA VI held by UNESCO, the *Belán Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2009) was adopted by 144 member states, which greatly stimulated the advancement of adult learning and education all over the world. A *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* issued by EU triggered a heated discussion on forming a comprehensive strategy for implementing lifelong learning “at individual and institutional

levels, and in all spheres of public and private life” in Europe (EU, 2000, p. 3).

Third, intergovernmental organizations have been running a series of programmes on lifelong learning to push forward practices of countries in the field of lifelong learning. These projects are mostly divided into two directions: the ones focus on helping countries set up lifelong learning system, the other aim at monitoring and evaluating outcomes in this field, as well as giving data support in relation to this area from different countries. As for the former one, UNESCO is a typical example. UNESCO Institute for lifelong learning has been carrying out programmes covering three aspects: Lifelong Learning Policies and Strategies, Adult Learning and Education, Literacy and Basic skills. Thus, concrete projects consistent with the instruction of these programs could be implemented in a number of countries. Moreover, it could be seen that these programmes involve a relatively complete system from the very basic illiteracy elimination to high level of education. Therefore, it is possible and reasonable for UNESCO to aid countries in educational reforms at different levels according to their practical situations. Most importantly, they also pay much attention to the development of lifelong learning in developing countries and regions by offering technical assistance and capacity-building activities. For example, influenced by UNESCO, amounts of programmes have been launched in Africa, such as Adult Basic Education Programme in Botswana, Adult Literacy and Skills Training Programme in South Africa. With regard to the latter one, UNESCO and OECD have been devoting themselves to conducting detailed research and gathering data for policy-making of countries. For example, Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences (PIAAC) set out by OECD concentrates on evaluating adults’ proficiency in key skills required in the Knowledge Age. UNESCO’s Global Report on Adult Learning and Education monitors developments on ALE in its member states. Thus, in this way intergovernmental organizations help countries better design and refine their lifelong learning practices.

Following the ways stated above, these intergovernmental organizations provide countries with good opportunities for international communication and collaboration in the area of lifelong learning, which in turn assist these organizations in having effects on policies and practices of nation states. Nonetheless, during the process of promoting the advancement of lifelong learning there also exist obstacles. Based on the ways concluded above, a major limitation is that intergovernmental organizations do not directly participate in policy-making and practices of countries. They exert influences through indirect ways. Therefore, the degree of effects largely depends on their constitutional relationship with member states. Although they could reinforce the impact through “moral persuasion and pressures arising from international benchmarking or comparisons” (Schuetze, 2006, p. 298), the development of lifelong learning in countries mostly relies on practical actions of nations themselves.

4. Conclusion

Reviewing the process of the development in the field of lifelong learning, intergovernmental organizations play a major role in conceptualization of the idea and its translation into reality. From theory to practice, this essay argues with examples of four representative intergovernmental organizations that they have considerable influences on policies and practices of nation states in this area. At the same time, their ways of producing effects are shown in the essay to further demonstrate the importance of these organizations in making progress in this field among countries. In the 21st century, lifelong learning plays a more and more significant role in promoting the global sustainable development. With the trend of globalization, countries in the world have been increasingly interconnected. The close relationships among nations require them to strengthen cooperation with each other. Therefore, the existence of intergovernmental organizations provides international platforms for countries to make collaborations. Although various organizations differ in goals and scales, the common mission of supporting the advancement of lifelong learning to create a better world makes them work together to produce effects on countries around the world. Meanwhile, their differences also give them chance to complement each other in diverse aspects. This essay aims to help readers have a general understanding of intergovernmental organizations' effects on countries in the field of lifelong learning, and draw people's attention to the significance of intergovernmental organizations. Based on the topic of this essay, several directions could be given for further studies. First, there could be more research on analyzing the effects of intergovernmental organizations at a micro level, selecting a particular area in the field of lifelong learning, such as adult education, learning cities and so on. Second, it is also vital to conduct studies on limitation of intergovernmental organizations, which could assist them in reinforcing the influence around the world. Third, not only do intergovernmental organizations have effects on countries, nations could in turn impact on organizations as well. Thus, the mutual relationship between organizations and countries in this area should be studied.

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Original Paper

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1. Introduction

The concept of lifelong learning has been increasingly popularized in the world and has featured widely in educational policies and practices for several decades (Aspin et al., 2012). It covers a full range of provision of learning opportunities. As a broad concept for reshaping people's understanding of study and extending education beyond the confines of time and places, it has been initially developed and supported by a number of international organizations since the early 1970s (Schuetze, 2006). Evans and Newnham, (1998) argue that historically intergovernmental organizations, as one type of international organizations, play a key role in promoting its conceptualization and applying this idea in reality. These organizations have a major influence on policies and practices of not only their member states, but also countries around the world in the field of lifelong learning.

Intergovernmental organizations differ in goals, functions, scales and membership. Therefore, their advocacy in the area of lifelong learning has disparate focus and different degrees of effects. Similarly, the ways of their activities diverge as well. However, in spite of these differences, they work together in similar ways to make progress among countries in this field. At the same time, the content of lifelong learning has been constantly enriched by intergovernmental organizations against different historical backgrounds in order to meet demands of the continuously developing ages. Since the 1970s, these organizations have been always exerting considerable influences on policies and practices of nation states around the world with their efforts on this agenda. Among these intergovernmental organizations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Union (EU) and the World Bank are main proponents and contributors.

In this essay, the effects of intergovernmental organizations on policies and practices of nation states in the field of lifelong learning are discussed by using the examples of UNESCO, OECD, EU, and the World Bank. The essay is primarily divided into two parts to illustrate the argument. The first part of this essay explores contributions made by these four organizations to the development of lifelong learning among countries. Nonetheless, various focus on the content of lifelong learning developed by different organizations and the embodiment of this difference in policies and practices of countries are also indicated to show different effects of intergovernmental organizations. The second part further

demonstrates how these intergovernmental organizations have influences on policy-making and actions of countries, chiefly focusing on clarifying and concluding the similar ways used by organizations of producing effects. In addition, a major limitation related to the effects of these intergovernmental organizations is also mentioned shortly at the end of this part.

2. From Concept to Practice: Common Contributions, Different Focus

After the Second World War, driven by force to reconstruct the world and satisfy the increasingly growing need of adult and continuing education, nation states worked actively to create more peaceful, just, democratic and humane societies. In this context, amounts of intergovernmental organizations, including UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank, were established in order to promote collaboration among countries. Against this background, stepping into the second half of the 20th century, intergovernmental organizations attempted to find ways to help nations conform to trends of times. One of their efforts was trying to reorganize the traditional education system which no longer met requirements of social development. In this respect, intergovernmental organizations turned to the idea of learning throughout life.

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The conceptualization of lifelong learning provided countries with general principles for policy-making. Influenced by these organizations, a number of countries began to make changes by enacting related laws. The Peruvian *General Law on Education*, promulgated in 1972, counted the concept of lifelong education proposed by UNESCO as one of leading principles in their future educational reform (Malpica, 1980). Compared with UNESCO, recurrent education formulated by OECD narrowed lifelong learning to a more specific type of education for adults. Therefore, it was easier and more practical for countries to make educational policies from this perspective. In 1967, publishing related educational decrees, Brazil confirmed adult education as the focus of implementation of lifelong education policy. Denmark also pointed out the importance of providing more learning and training opportunities to adults in the *Danish Act* of 1968 (Titmus, 2014). German Education Council's *Structural Plan* of 1970 regarded adult-specific curricula as their central theme and linked the concept of lifelong education with these curricula (Titmus, 2014). In 1976, Norway passed the world's first *Adult Education Act* for funding and regulating the non-formal sector in lifelong education (Bjerkaker, 2016).

Responses made by countries closely accorded with the initiative of these intergovernmental organizations. However, in spite of organizations' efforts of conceptualization of lifelong learning, there still lacked practices in reality at that time. In particular, due to the early 1980s recession, investments of many countries in educational reform was greatly reduced. It was only from the 1990s that "a number of new and emerging factors rekindled the debate of lifelong learning" (Schuetze, 2006, p. 292). Due to the development of science and technology, especially the Internet, people have stepped into a brand-new era, in which knowledge is a core economic factor. The rapid replacement of knowledge and the trend of globalization have made lifelong learning a prerequisite for the development of modern society.

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effective actions in this area. According to the results of investigation, countries could take corresponding measures to promote lifelong learning. Overall, 24 countries participated in this activity, such as Ireland, New Zealand, Greece and so on. In this way, OECD helps countries better design and manage qualification systems in accordance with their own country experiences. According to the report of the World Bank (2003), appropriate quality assurance mechanisms which certify learners and accredit various kinds of institutions are needed to promote lifelong learning because of its function of capturing important skills and valuing informal and non-formal learning. Sharing common goals in this respect, UNESCO has been in collaboration with OECD, EU and the World Bank in order to make it an international trend in reforming national education and training system. According to an inventory published by UNESCO (2015), an important aspect of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is setting up closer connections between secondary education, VET (Vocational Education and Training) and higher education. The AQF aims to strengthen the relationships between these three sectors by linking qualifications across and between them in both structured and unstructured ways. In China, the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework has a relatively complete system which covers the vocational, academic and continuing education. Botswana has already adopted a ten-level, outcomes-based and credit-based NQF in order to create links between academic and vocational qualifications.

3. Working Together: Having Effects on Countries in Similar Ways

Looking through the history and the current situation of the development of lifelong learning, it could be seen that intergovernmental organizations exert influences on policies and practices of nation states in this area mainly by means of the following methods. First, publishing a variety of documents, such as the ones stated in the first part of this essay, they make great contributions to the conceptualization of lifelong learning and continuously enrich its content with the changing times. The formulation and the perfection of this concept are beneficial to its recognition among countries. Moreover, in this way, these organizations could offer countries general guidelines and recommendations for policy-making and action outlines around the subject of lifelong learning.

Second, intergovernmental organizations assist member states in having consensus and making commitments to promoting development in the area of lifelong learning by concluding and signing a series of treaties, declarations and agreements. For example, as the most important outcome of the CONFITEA VI held by UNESCO, the *Belán Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2009) was adopted by 144 member states, which greatly stimulated the advancement of adult learning and education all over the world. A *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* issued by EU triggered a heated discussion on forming a comprehensive strategy for implementing lifelong learning “at individual and institutional levels, and in all spheres of public and private life” in Europe (EU, 2000, p. 3).

Third, intergovernmental organizations have been running a series of programmes on lifelong learning to push forward practices of countries in the field of lifelong learning. These projects are mostly divided into two directions: the ones focus on helping countries set up lifelong learning system, the

other aim at monitoring and evaluating outcomes in this field, as well as giving data support in relation to this area from different countries. As for the former one, UNESCO is a typical example. UNESCO Institute for lifelong learning has been carrying out programmes covering three aspects: Lifelong Learning Policies and Strategies, Adult Learning and Education, Literacy and Basic skills. Thus, concrete projects consistent with the instruction of these programs could be implemented in a number of countries. Moreover, it could be seen that these programmes involve a relatively complete system from the very basic illiteracy elimination to high level of education. Therefore, it is possible and reasonable for UNESCO to aid countries in educational reforms at different levels according to their practical situations. Most importantly, they also pay much attention to the development of lifelong learning in developing countries and regions by offering technical assistance and capacity-building activities. For example, influenced by UNESCO, amounts of programmes have been launched in Africa, such as Adult Basic Education Programme in Botswana, Adult Literacy and Skills Training Programme in South Africa. With regard to the latter one, UNESCO and OECD have been devoting themselves to conducting detailed research and gathering data for policy-making of countries. For example, Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences (PIAAC) set out by OECD concentrates on evaluating adults' proficiency in key skills required in the Knowledge Age. UNESCO's Global Report on Adult Learning and Education monitors developments on ALE in its member states. Thus, in this way intergovernmental organizations help countries better design and refine their lifelong learning practices.

Following the ways stated above, these intergovernmental organizations provide countries with good opportunities for international communication and collaboration in the area of lifelong learning, which in turn assist these organizations in having effects on policies and practices of nation states. Nonetheless, during the process of promoting the advancement of lifelong learning there also exist obstacles. Based on the ways concluded above, a major limitation is that intergovernmental organizations do not directly participate in policy-making and practices of countries. They exert influences through indirect ways. Therefore, the degree of effects largely depends on their constitutional relationship with member states. Although they could reinforce the impact through "moral persuasion and pressures arising from international benchmarking or comparisons" (Schuetze, 2006, p. 298), the development of lifelong learning in countries mostly relies on practical actions of nations themselves.

4. Conclusion

Reviewing the process of the development in the field of lifelong learning, intergovernmental organizations play a major role in conceptualization of the idea and its translation into reality. From theory to practice, this essay argues with examples of four representative intergovernmental organizations that they have considerable influences on policies and practices of nation states in this area. At the same time, their ways of producing effects are shown in the essay to further demonstrate

the importance of these organizations in making progress in this field among countries. In the 21st century, lifelong learning plays a more and more significant role in promoting the global sustainable development. With the trend of globalization, countries in the world have been increasingly interconnected. The close relationships among nations require them to strengthen cooperation with each other. Therefore, the existence of intergovernmental organizations provides international platforms for countries to make collaborations. Although various organizations differ in goals and scales, the common mission of supporting the advancement of lifelong learning to create a better world makes them work together to produce effects on countries around the world. Meanwhile, their differences also give them chance to complement each other in diverse aspects. This essay aims to help readers have a general understanding of intergovernmental organizations' effects on countries in the field of lifelong learning, and draw people's attention to the significance of intergovernmental organizations. Based on the topic of this essay, several directions could be given for further studies. First, there could be more research on analyzing the effects of intergovernmental organizations at a micro level, selecting a particular area in the field of lifelong learning, such as adult education, learning cities and so on. Second, it is also vital to conduct studies on limitation of intergovernmental organizations, which could assist them in reinforcing the influence around the world. Third, not only do intergovernmental organizations have effects on countries, nations could in turn impact on organizations as well. Thus, the mutual relationship between organizations and countries in this area should be studied.

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