



The GULL Story

Part 1: Mission

By Richard Teare

Global University for Lifelong Learning
Enabling YOU to make a difference in OUR world

The Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) is a not-for-profit foundation registered in California, USA. GULL is recognized by the Government of Papua New Guinea & endorsed by other Governments, Leaders & Institutions.

Overview

The purpose of this article is to explain why the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) was launched in October, 2007. GULL's mission might best be characterized as a movement that seeks to provide an inclusive, practical, affordable and credible alternative to traditional forms of education and development. We are not seeking to compete with the existing provision, but to provide a broader-based, holistic form of lifelong learning with recognized certification that is accessible to all. Our goal is to ensure that any who wish to participate can do so - regardless of their circumstances, financial means or qualifications. All that is required is a willingness to embark on a personal development journey and to generate practical outcomes and applications. The article also explains how we have sought to ensure that GULL's awards at Professional Bachelor, Master and Doctor levels are recognized, free-standing qualifications that reflect professional attainment and offer change potential for the learner, the workplace and/or community and the wider possibilities for organizational and even National transformation.

Key words: Lifelong learning, action learning, professional attainment, recognition and endorsement

Why was GULL established?

In short, because the world needs a practical, holistic, integrated and inclusive global system for lifelong learning.

However you view the prospects facing the world's majority, the statistics are horrifying. It is estimated that half the world's population live on the equivalent of one US dollar a day - or less. This means that the majority have little prospect of laying an educational foundation for themselves or of making changes to their own situation. The organization 'One laptop per child' comments: "More than two billion children in the developing world are inadequately educated - or receive no education at all... and so children are consigned to poverty just like their parents." The harsh reality for those who aspire to develop themselves without pre-qualification or the means of paying fees and related study costs, is that they face a high barrier to entry. Imagine then, a different way - one without barriers - where GULL is the vehicle for knowledge transfer and balancing - from rich to poor, have, to have not. Unlike money, wealth and physical resources, knowledge that is shared is doubled for the benefit of all. GULL's response is reflected in the following extracts from the official launch statement prepared by my colleague Edward Mooney:

GULL is established to extend opportunities for learning and human capital development around the world, particularly to those people and communities underserved by traditional approaches to academic education and workplace training. We face great challenges in this century, as identified by the United Nations 'Millennium Development Goals' and other initiatives - calling for broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, a recognition of a common humanity in all its diversity, and the objective that participation in the global economy be made fully inclusive and equitable. We believe that the solutions to the economic and environmental issues facing mankind will be more forthcoming and more comprehensive by engaging more and more of the earth's population in the dialogue of what each of us needs to learn in order to be a better person and achieve our personal goals. We are all created equally to live fully and to serve and respect one another. GULL is founded on the principle that each of us, given the opportunity and resources, holds the innate capacity to know what we want to learn and need to learn to lead a more fulfilling life. Our simple mission is to expand human capital development through innovative means - dependent not on technology, but on the human spirit.



Perhaps our Creator's greatest gift to us is the ability to learn. Learning is the essence of being human. Learning can be formal, informal or even accidental. All are important in the course of our life. But nothing is as powerful or life transforming as that which we learn from each other in a supportive environment. GULL is committed to creating and recognizing structures and opportunities to facilitate lifelong learning through sharing of knowledge, as simple as one person to another, or as far reaching as enabling easy and immediate access to the great body of human knowledge. Access to this body of knowledge is our birthright; adding to this body of knowledge is our life's work and legacy.

GULL's mission is endorsed by Sir Howard Cooke, (centre) former Governor General of Jamaica

How is GULL offering a credible alternative?

GULL offers formal recognition to the vital learning that occurs outside of traditional education and training programmes. In fact, in a person's lifetime, only a small percentage of what a person needs to live, work and grow, comes from traditional learning in a classroom or training room. The world is alive with knowledge - GULL recognizes 'active' learning as essential to the individual, the community, societies, and our fragile, interconnected planet.

GULL has no formal curriculum (the curriculum is derived from the learner's workplace or community) and each pathway to professional certification is aligned with the learner's level of life experience and workplace or community role.

Prior to GULL, I had been a career academic and to sustain my own learning, took an opportunity to spend almost a decade travelling the globe, working with large corporations and with other kinds of organizations. During this time, I came to appreciate the potential of active learning as a change enabler and a means of fostering breakthrough style solutions. This fascinating work had taken me to a variety of developing countries and I began to think about what could be done to enable many more people, especially the poorest, to participate in an affordable and easily accessible form of lifelong learning.

The GULL story began in August 2004 when I met an extraordinary man shortly after he arrived in the UK from Papua New Guinea. Paulias Matane is the eighth Governor General (Head of State) of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and he had come with his wife and team to receive his knighthood from Her Majesty the Queen. As we talked he listened to my stories and ideas and wanted to know more about action learning and the potential benefits that it might offer for all of PNG's citizens. We began a dialogue by email and, some years on, we continue to share thoughts, prayers and dreams almost every day of the week.

As we talked by email and occasionally met in Papua New Guinea, I grew to appreciate Sir Paulias' wisdom and insight. We began a deeper exploration of the ways and means that might be used to enable those without the funds and/or the qualifications (especially those needed to enter further and higher education) to participate in a new kind of inclusive, practical and professional initiative. I knew from my own prior experience of the traditional world of learning that we would need a credible alternative to 'validated' or 'accredited' learning and our solution was to develop an inclusive statement of recognition that Sir Paulias and Sir Michael Somare, the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea would feel able to support, sign and champion for the Nation of PNG and for the World. A profile of Sir Paulias Matane (who is also GULL's Founding Chancellor) and the text of the 'Statement of Recognition' can be found in Appendix 1. As you will read in the Statement, our focus is to help the poorest - but we want to encourage **ANYONE** and **EVERYONE** to participate and by working with those who can afford to pay, we can help to fund those who do not have the financial means to fund themselves.

In March 2007, GULL's co-founder and Chairman, Edward Mooney (a native Californian) began the process of registering the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) as a not-for-profit foundation in California. Edward and I had met some years before, at a conference organized by an American accrediting body. We had talked there and ever since about the need for a new, broader and holistic approach to learning that would not be confined by the relatively narrow boundaries that define academia and accredited learning. GULL does not and will not compete with established educational providers - we simply determined that we would create a genuine alternative that is practical, holistic, accessible and affordable to the majority. We did however, need to ensure that our new paradigm for lifelong learning would provide a rigorous, trackable pathway for each and every learner (coupled with an effective quality assurance system) and provide credible certification. To secure credibility, we knew that we would need to work beyond the established frameworks for accreditation or validation and our solution was to seek and secure global Government recognition for our awards, with multiple endorsements by other Governments. Thanks to the leadership of Sir Paulias, Sir Michael and the Nation of Papua New Guinea, GULL has its global recognition and the process of gathering multiple endorsements from Governments, Leaders (e.g. Heads of State) and Institutions (like the World Bank) is ongoing. I have included below some sample extracts from the letters of endorsement that have been offered by the Malaysian Government and by other National Agencies in Malaysia in the past few months. The GULL Asia team initiated the dialogue with Government. It is notable that all these endorsements identify specific ways in which GULL can assist with Nation building:

"I appreciate and congratulate your efforts in implementing the GULL internship programme in collaboration with local private institutions of higher education. This programme will assist students to obtain industrial training and related GULL professional qualifications while undergoing relevant industrial training." Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Government of Malaysia.

"I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate GULL for introducing the concept of an in-house corporate school. I am confident that by establishing their own corporate schools, our national industries will benefit from teams of knowledge workers who are culturally competitive ... it will also assist the nation in its efforts to achieve Developed Nation status by 2020. I urge management in all industries to establish their own corporate school as part of their initiative to upgrade their organizational productivity and competitiveness." Minister of Human Resources, Government of Malaysia.

"In this era of globalization our country is in great need of a large number of educated and talented youth ... I am grateful that GULL Asia has taken the initiative to assist in enhancing the quality of our national human capital development. I fully endorse GULL's work ... the mode of learning is flexible, innovative and far sighted." Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, Government Malaysia.



"One of the objectives outlined by the Sabah State Government is to develop our industrial sector and in particular, its small and medium enterprises. In this respect, I am confident that GULL's lifelong action learning programme will assist students to obtain training that meets their needs and at the same time, fulfil the relevant needs of industry. I fully support this programme which I am sure will benefit the small and medium industry sector in Sabah." Minister of Industrial Development, State Government of Sabah, Malaysia

Pictured left (centre): Datuk Ewon Ubin, Minister of Industrial Development, State Government of Sabah, Malaysia. The Minister has endorsed GULL and a state-wide plan for human capital development using the GULL system.

“The National Small and Medium Enterprises Council (NASMEC) regularly organizes activities for its members for the purpose of updating knowledge and skills ... I am glad that GULL has taken a parallel step (forward) in line with the government’s policy. I fully support GULL’s programmes and hope that they will bring about many benefits for the small and medium enterprises in our country.” Chairman, National Small and Medium Enterprises Council, Malaysia.

In addition to endorsements, we have also started to create a broader support team of honorary officers in two categories: A panel of Pro Chancellors, with nominees to include: heads of state, senior public servants and politicians and, a panel of Elders to include influential figures from industry, commerce, the community, professions and other spheres. All honorary officers are expected to commit to GULL’s mission and to serve as active champions in their respective locations.

Where can I learn more about GULL’s work?

The Statement of Recognition and the full list of endorsements (letters and videos) are featured at the central GULL website: www.gullonline.org. Here, we upload official letters of endorsement (in the original language and with an English translation if applicable). We also feature video endorsements by leaders, government ministers and from other institutions, industry and commerce. At the ‘Media’ section, it is possible to view video endorsements (e.g. by Sir Howard Cooke, former Governor General of Jamaica) and discussions with government ministers and other leaders.



For example, you can view a meeting with Dato’ Liow Tiong Lai, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, Government of Malaysia (pictured left) on Wednesday 16 January, 2008. Here we discussed a number of questions, including:

- (1) How can GULL assist marginalized teenagers who have few if any qualifications?
- (2) Malaysia produces many graduates who are unable to find jobs. How might GULL help the Nation to address the ‘soft skills’ gap that currently exists?

How does GULL encourage lifelong learning?

Learning is a precious gift; it is personal and unique to each participant. We want to re-ignite the desire, the enthusiasm and the curiosity for learning that small children exhibit. GULL’s approach is based on the philosophy of action learning. It is a process that honours the individual and engages the learner’s colleagues and community. Nothing is more powerful than people working together to better themselves, solve problems and create stronger societies for their families and future generations. Typically, action learning occurs when people learn from each other, create their own resources, identify their own problems and form their own solutions. The world over, this process works - in any culture, language and tradition. The point of commitment and engagement - heart and mind - comes when learners realize that they don’t necessarily need a teacher or textbooks to learn important things that can help them in life and work. After this, learners go on to achieve remarkable things.

During my visits to an array of different kinds of workplaces, I have discovered ways of helping busy people to learn at work and/or from their community involvement. The process only works effectively though if participants are able to customize the learning journey so that they can work out for themselves **WHAT** they need to learn and then **HOW** they can address their own needs in a convenient way. The approach I use involves light touch facilitation (but no teaching or curriculum). My aim is to help people to integrate their learning with workplace challenges and broader life roles, experience and aspirations. This is challenging because each person starts from their own reality and learns whatever they feel they need to learn. A benefit of this level of customization is that even the busiest of people value the chance to review what they know already so as to determine what else will help them on their continuing life journey (e.g. new insights, experiences, skills, behaviours and knowledge).

If it is to work well, the GULL process has to be finely balanced, with two parallel strands of action and reflection that underpin a learning cycle. As noted, lifelong learning is a journey and if it is to be sustained, it must be meaningful - both personally and in the context of the setting in which the person is living and working. I use some simple frameworks to assist the learner to create an outline plan for their own learning and as a guide for all that follows. At the point when participants have a plan, they generally commit to the journey and begin to realize that they can become lifelong learners and change/adapt just about anything that is blocking them. The active element helps to ensure that action happens and so this process is aptly called ‘action learning’. At the end of the formal journey, the learner must reflect on what they have accomplished for themselves and for the other stakeholders. In all cases, the outcomes should have a hard edge - in the form of practical, implementable and trackable contributions to real work/community issues. In this way learners, sponsors and others can really discern a difference.

The process I have described here is so enriching that every learner is able to identify personal and life transforming outcomes. These commonly include expressions of enhanced self confidence, self belief, renewal, enthusiasm for learning, a new sense of direction and purpose for career and life - along with new skills, insights and the sense of being equipped for the future. These outcomes are all the more remarkable because they happen without expert tuition or intervention and without teaching inputs or expert curriculum. All that is needed is a willingness to engage and to learn, a readiness to learn from others and a determination to bring about change. At GULL, we view every learner as an expert in their own learning and our challenge, particularly for the facilitators, is to guide participants in mastering the action learning process - without getting in the way.

Velina's story ...

To re-cap, GULL wants to provide a wholly inclusive, holistic learning journey - for anyone and everyone - regardless of their economic circumstances and geographical location. The process we use provides a rich, customizable approach so that learners can integrate their life with their work, beliefs (spirituality) personality, skills and abilities and in so doing, engage in a deep, personalized form of learning and development. We especially want to encourage those who feel that they have little hope, low self-esteem and are lacking in self confidence. We want our learners to realize that they are experts in life and in all that they do - even if they don't feel this way at the beginning - and to help them to envision their future - for better things, with hope, solutions, enthusiasm for life and for learning. To illustrate, here is Velina's story. It is shining example of what can happen when all these elements come together.

Velina was a member of a group of about 40 people who gathered for a briefing on action learning at the Government Department of Personnel Management, Papua New Guinea. This group ranged in age from mid 20s to mid 50s and as we talked about their workplace, they told us not to expect much from them as they were totally self-trained. Although they were sceptical, they committed to a year-long action learning journey. For some, this was their first ever learning or training experience. Velina was among those who said nothing at all during the initial meetings (despite our efforts to include her) and I later found out that she has never spoken in public before - not even in Departmental meetings. She didn't feel as though she had anything to offer (she had no qualifications either, she could not afford to stay on at school) and presumably others felt this way about Velina too as they never asked her for an opinion or an input on anything. Like many of the other women in this action learning group, Velina saw an opportunity to change things and even though most of the female participants had large families to tend to, they coped by working late and even sleeping overnight at the office the night before their output reports were due. Velina not only coped with the pressure of raising a young family, but with the death of her husband during the course of the year when we were working with her. As she dug in and hung on to the action learning journey, she gradually came out of her shell. I attended her first ever presentation - she was nervous, but she got through it. As the journey progressed, Velina's team members began to appreciate her intelligent questions and Velina grew in confidence. It was Velina that asked the key question in her team project that led to a significant breakthrough. As an outcome of her questions and line of investigation and her team's project implementation, some 78,000 public servants in PNG now have more income in their weekly/monthly pay packets. Today, Velina is a completely different person. She has overcome adversity and she is affectionately known as 'Money Mary' by her colleagues. All this happened without any form of tuition but with the skilled guidance and encouragement of my colleague Winston Jacob, the group facilitator.

On the day we launched GULL in PNG, Velina stood on the platform - flanked by Sir Paulias, the Head of State and Sir Michael, the Prime Minister (PM) and told the audience about her journey and the outcomes. She even challenged the PM on something he had said that she didn't agree with! Velina's success reflects a simply astounding transformation - from a person who never spoke and felt she had nothing to offer - to a confident, secure and effective lifelong learner who has helped to make a breakthrough that is of National significance.

How does the GULL system work?

GULL provides a systemized approach so as to assure the consistency of attainments at different levels of certification, each linked to the level and the scope of the challenge that the learner is addressing. We believe that systemized lifelong learning coupled with professional certification is the key to sustaining workplace or community action as it provides both the incentive and the framework needed to secure the participant's active engagement long enough to ensure that breakthroughs are made and solutions are found. There are fifteen (15) outcomes directed steps or levels with three pathways for: (1) younger people (5 levels to professional Bachelor); (2) the more experienced (5 levels to professional Master) and (3) senior leaders (5 levels to professional Doctor). Further details will be provided in the 'GULL Story (Part 2)' as a download from the GULL website.

GULL's local representatives provide learner support and administer the quality assurance system. The output focus requires each and every learner to track, collate and present the evidence of their learning and its application. To assure the consistency of outcomes, all work at professional Bachelor, Master and Doctor level is subject to verification by independent professional assessors.

Case example: GULL as a vehicle for National economic transformation

As I write this article (April 2008) the possibilities for National economic transformation in Papua New Guinea (PNG) have moved a step closer. Last week, the PNG Government formerly requested funding assistance from the World Bank to cascade the GULL system throughout the Nation. GULL's Founding Chancellor, Sir Paulias Matane, has already outlined in one of his many books the nature of the challenge for economic development. I have included a summary of his vision for PNG below.

Sir Paulias believes that significant economic transformation can be accomplished if GULL is able to engage many of PNG's citizens in a sustained, collaborative, action learning initiative. This is what we intend to do in the coming months.

Although PNG is rich in natural resources, about 85 per cent of its population live at subsistence level. Even after three decades of independence, PNG has to look towards other countries for skilled manpower and infrastructural facilities. An increase in migration from rural areas to urban centres has led to a rise in unemployment. Feelings of insecurity and unrest among its people giving rise to sporadic violence at one place or another and these conditions erode its economy and impede progress.

Sir Paulias has been advocating to PNG leaders, and to other Papua New Guineans, that its national economy should be strengthened by revitalizing its agriculture and tourism sectors. He views tourism as the single biggest potential source of income for PNG.



Villagers in Kemabolo, Papua New Guinea

Other smaller countries like Fiji, with a population of approximately 800,000, are able to attract 500,000 tourists annually, while in PNG with six million people, the number of tourists visiting each year is much smaller and even declining. This leads to a loss of foreign exchange, which affects the strength of PNG's currency - the Kina. Sir Paulias wants to take practical action using GULL to universalize access to learning and development for all PNG's citizens. His goal is to create active, lifelong learning avenues in every town and every village, provide electricity to every home, whether it is located in city, town or village, and expand the network of small, medium and large businesses throughout the nation.

How can I get involved?

GULL's motto is: **Enabling YOU to making a difference in OUR world.** If you are interested in using or representing the GULL system, then do please contact me. There are many ways of working with GULL. These include: In your own business (for your employees), in-company or any other kind of organizational setting (for in-house applications such as 'corporate university' or 'academy' initiatives) or by linking the training and/or consulting services you offer to GULL certification. Additionally, if you have the resources needed, you can represent GULL at a country or regional level and in so doing, help many organizations and potentially many thousands of people to participate. If any of these suggestions appeal to you, do please email me on richard@gullonline.org or get in touch by following the 'Contact Us' link at the web site: www.gullonline.org.

Thank you for reading this article. Do please think about what you can offer and how you might inspire others to get involved. Together I believe that we can bring hope and opportunity to the vast numbers of people around the world who are trapped by their situation and circumstances. I look forward to hearing from you.

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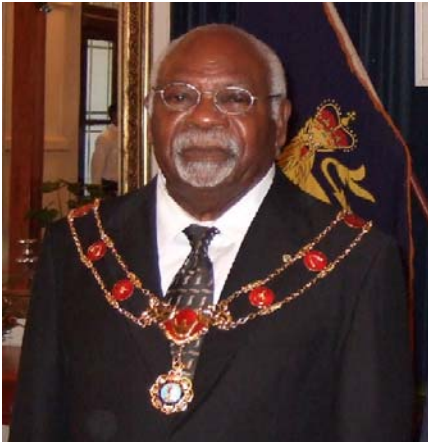


About the author:

Dr. Richard Teare is President, Global University for Lifelong Learning. Richard has been passionately committed to work and community-based learning since the mid-1990s and during the past ten years, he has helped to create learning and development applications for a wide variety of organizations in different parts of the world. Prior to this, he held professorships at four UK universities (Bournemouth, Surrey, Oxford Brookes, Derby). In 1988 he founded and then edited for 20 years, the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. He is now the Managing Editor of *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*. Emerald Group publishes both these journals. His academic publications include 20 co-authored and edited text books on aspects of service management, marketing and organizational learning. In 2007, he co-founded the Global University for Lifelong Learning with Edward Mooney, GULL's Chairman.

Appendix 1:

A Profile of Sir Paulias Matane, Founding Chancellor, Global University for Lifelong Learning



Sir Paulias Matane was born in East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea in 1931 and was raised by his elderly grand parents. His grand father told him that if he wanted to succeed in life, he had to be focused, have vision, set an objective, plan for it, and with total honesty, commitment and perseverance, he would reach his goal. He took up his grand father's challenge, going to school for the first time when he was seventeen years old. He later became a Teacher, Headmaster, Schools Inspector and then National Superintendent of Teacher Education. He has also been a Permanent Secretary, an Ambassador, a High Commissioner and Vice President of the United Nations General Assembly.

Sir Paulias is a recipient of many national and international awards and scholarships. He was also a radio and television personality and as a prolific author of more than 40 books, still contributes to the printed media. On 26th May, 2004, he was elected as the eighth Governor General of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

Statement of Recognition: Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL)

GULL provides the professional frameworks and awards to enable and encourage the poorest to take action, to make a difference and in so doing, to achieve more than they could ever hope or dream - for themselves and for others (family, community, employer, nation).

GULL is a not-for-profit foundation registered in California, USA (GULL Inc.) . GULL uses local, national, regional and internet distribution to support global communities in training, end-user corporations and other organizations, social and faith-based communities, professional bodies and Government agencies. GULL Ltd. is registered in the UK and provides central services and global support to GULL's representatives. All income is reviewed and accounts compiled by a fully qualified independent accountant. These two companies operate GULL on a cost recovery basis and any trading surpluses are used to sponsor GULL's work in developing nations.

GULL offers work-based, professional development frameworks that enable learners to find solutions to work challenges or community-based challenges. There is no formal curriculum (the curriculum is derived from the learner's work) and each pathway to professional certification is aligned with the learner's level of experience and seniority. This approach is accessible and affordable to all and involves action, reflection and personal transformation.

GULL works through organizations, networks and communities. GULL representatives are responsible for learner support, the collection of affordable fees and compliance with a robust, transparent quality assurance system, based on self-review and continual incremental improvement. The learner is responsible for tracking, collating and presenting the evidence of learning and application appropriate to the level of award. All outcomes at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels are subject to independent verification. Our aim is to enable each and every GULL learner to succeed, but if the evidence presented is insufficient, then the learner must continue until they have met the requirements.

GULL awards professional certificates, diplomas and degrees. The accumulation of credit is entirely linked to learning outcomes in the form of practical solutions. This approach ensures that evidence of learning is realistic, practical and valuable to the learner and his or her employer and community.

On behalf of the Government and Nation of Papua New Guinea, the Governor General and the Prime Minister endorse, support and recognize - in perpetuity - the work of the Global University for Lifelong Learning, its Board of Trustees and its full range of professional awards.