LIFE LONG LEARNING: NEED AND IMPORTANCE IN 21ST CENTURY

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Introduction:

Lifelong learning is the lifelong, voluntary, and self-motivated, pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. As such, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, but also competitiveness and employability. Lifelong learning is now recognized by educators, governing bodies, accreditation organizations, certification boards, employers, third-party payers, and the general public as one of the most important competencies that people must possess. Promoting lifelong learning as continuous, collaborative, self-directed, active, broad in domain, everlasting, positive and fulfilling, and applicable to one’s profession as well as all aspects of one’s life has emerged as a major global educational challenge. Meeting this challenge will require changes in the way teachers teach and learners learn, as teachers take on a more facilitative role and learners take more responsibility for setting goals, identifying resources for learning, and reflecting on and evaluating their learning.

The philosophies of lifelong learning is learn throughout life anything, anywhere, anytime. Today in the 21st century, we find ourselves amidst the new loud voices proclaiming the importance of lifelong learning. What is clear is that the context of lifelong learning has changed and the utopian and generous vision hitherto characterizing lifelong learning has now become a necessary guiding and organizing principle of education reforms. It is recognized today as an indispensable tool to enable education to face its multiple current and emerging challenges.

Key Words: Lifelong learning, Professionals, Model, Contexts, and Vocational learning

Concept of Lifelong Learning:
The concept of lifelong learning as an educational strategy emerged some three decades ago, through the efforts of the OECD, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. The concept of lifelong learning throughout life is the key that gives to access for the 21st century. It goes beyond the traditional distinctions between initial and lifelong learning.

The origins of the concept of Lifelong Learning can be traced back to authors such as Basil Yeaxlee and Eduard Lindeman in England in the 1920’s. They understood education as an ongoing process, affecting mainly adults, and certainly not restricted to formal school. They also introduced the concepts of “life-as-education” and the valuing of individual’s experiences as much as their formal education (Faris: 2004). These two authors helped to define the limits and the basic principles of adult education, and therefore Lifelong Learning.

A concept of "learning" generally accepted today is that of a lasting change of behavior as a result of experience. The experience itself involves such things as the gathering of information and the acquiring of intellectual and social skills whereby to put this information to work for whatever purpose the learner has in mind. The concept of lifelong learning generally embraces both learning by chance and learning by design, and it has three dimensions—perpendicular, horizontal, and depth. The perpendicular includes formal learning throughout the life-span, from nursery school through post-doctoral work. The horizontal envisages breaking through the artificial barriers surrounding a field of study to unite with other fields in a cross-disciplinary pattern. The third dimension, depth, transcends all formal approaches to reach almost a metaphysic. One problem affecting lifelong learning is the threat of compulsion created through legislation and social pressure, aiming to transform lifelong learning into lifelong schooling. Instead of participating in learning, the individual may find himself undergoing compulsory adult education which would undermine the humanistic element. Another problem is the tendency to treat the concept of lifelong learning as a kind of popular cliché or slogan to be used to promote adult education offerings. A strategy proposed to foster lifelong learning is to work through existing schools and universities to diffuse the concept as widely as possible to educators and students alike. Adult educators need to learn to use the media consistently and efficiently and help adults acquire the skills needed to embark on their own styles of lifelong learning. (Author/CK)

Characteristics of Lifelong learning:
Lifelong learning is based on the premise that people learn throughout all phases of their lives.

Lifelong learning has four main characteristics:
• Occurs throughout a person’s life across a learning continuum.
• Involves both learning and education.
• Occurs across a spectrum of formal and informal settings.
• Involves civic engagement and community involvement with the goal of building stronger communities.

The Need for Lifelong Learning:

The general need for lifelong learning has been recognized since ancient times but it wasn’t until the 20th century that serious and effective methods were employed on a large scale to provide adult education opportunities. Since the 1970s major international organizations like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and later the European Union have researched and documented specific needs and opportunities for lifelong learning around the world. In the current era of a knowledge-based global economy, the need for lifelong learning is urgent in every country and it is mainly distance learning or online education that has the capability to fulfill that need. Online education requires digital literacy and broadband internet connections which must be made readily available to those who want better lives.

Four Pillars of lifelong learning:

The ELLI project references the conceptual framework developed by UNESCO’s International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century under the leadership of Jacques Delors had given four pillars of lifelong learning as follows

1. Learning to know - the formal education system
The dimension of learning to know predominantly assesses the learning of young people within the formal education system. By including data on the formal system, ELLI measures the input and outcomes of the area in which most ministries of education allocate the majority of their budget and on which policy decision making and policy directions currently place their emphasis. In terms of investment, this dimension contains indicators on total expenditure on education and training. The ranges of learning opportunities for formal education that are included in ELLI are pre-school, school, higher education and adult education institutions. This pillar also measures learning outcomes from traditional core disciplines such as math, science and reading in secondary schools, as well as completion and attainment rates for post-secondary education. The learning to know pillar covers the majority of the political priorities related to education as stated by European member states.

1. Learning to do - vocational learning

This dimension measures the participation rates, learning opportunities and investment (by employers, government and individuals) in job-related skills. These skills can improve economic performance and social inclusion through increasing job prospects and career opportunities for the individual and improve competitiveness of the enterprise, region or country. This dimension predominantly measures adults’ continual professional development at their place of work through formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities. It also measures students’ participation in the vocational track of the formal education system which, depending on the country/region, can also include young people within compulsory education. The variables used to construct this dimension predominantly reflect investment in learning by employers, government and individuals.

2. Learning to live together – learning for social cohesion

This dimension measures individual-level attitudes and dispositions that promote social cohesion such as trust, intercultural competence and political and community engagement. Learning and education has long been considered more than an issue of creating skills for employability and has been part of a social policy tool to sustain democracy, create social mobility and increase levels of health and social inclusion. This dimension tries to capture the learning of the values of democracy, tolerance and trust and the skills and interest to be able to engage other people. Learning to live together starts at home, with learning from parents.
and siblings, and continues through interactions at school and work and through involvement in civil society organizations. In most European countries there is a specific curriculum subject on citizenship through which many of these competences are developed; however, research has indicated that it is the level of democracy at school that is the key driver for developing these competences. The investment of individuals, families, communities and countries is often much more hidden for the learning to live together dimension as there are fewer exams and qualifications in this field compared to traditional subject-based disciplines.

3. Learning to be – learning as personal growth

This dimension predominantly measures self-directed learning and individuals’ efforts and investment in learning. This learning is facilitated by government provision and information provided on learning opportunities, but these provisions are considerably less than the provisions for compulsory formal education. This dimension captures informal and implicit learning that happens through engagement and participation in the home and through community and cultural activities. The implicit learning measures include activities undertaken in which the individual does not set out with a learning objective in mind and for which there is no certification of learning achievements from participation. Nevertheless, learning is often highly successful through this style of learning because participation is usually motivated by personal interest. Learning in the home often makes use of the internet, incidental access to information, virtual communities and virtual relationships. In addition to implicit learning, there is one indicator in this dimension on explicit participation in lifelong learning. This indicator, which could potentially fit in all dimensions, is placed here because individuals participate in learning for many reasons. Ultimately, participation in lifelong learning is largely voluntary, which means that those who choose to engage in it are more likely to be motivated by the interests of personal growth and development, which is the focus of this dimension.

Models of lifelong learning:

Lifelong learning is based on three basic models, as described by Hans Schuetze of the University of British Columbia. All three models, while they emphasize lifelong learning, chart different courses. “They envision and advocate different models of education and learning, of work, and ultimately of society.”
• Model 1: Lifelong learning for ALL

This option values lifelong learning and education as means to create equality and opportunity. The end goal is a society in which equality and opportunity exist for all.

• Model 2: Lifelong learning for all who want, and are able, to participate

This option promotes learning for learning’s sake, cultural education, and learning as a leisure activity. The end goal is a society that emphasizes learning and education because of their intrinsic value.

• Model 3: Lifelong learning for finding or keeping jobs in a changing labor market

This option advances lifelong learning as a means to provide people with the skills and knowledge they need to find and keep employment in our fast-changing economy. The end goals are: a society with a healthy economy, based on an innovative and internationally competitive workforce; and individuals that benefit through enhanced employability and career options

Lifelong learning contexts:

Although the term is widely used in a variety of contexts its meaning is often unclear. There are several established contexts for lifelong learning beyond traditional "brick and mortar" schooling:

• **Home schooling** where this involves learning to learn or the development of informal learning patterns.

• **Adult education** or the acquisition of formal qualifications or work and leisure skills later in life.

• **Continuing education** which often describes extension or not-for-credit courses offered by higher education institutions.

• **Knowledge work** which includes professional development and on-the-job training.

• **Personal learning environments** or self-directed learning using a range of sources and tools including online applications.
In practice of lifelong learning:

In India and elsewhere, the "University of the Third Age" (U3A) provides an example of the almost spontaneous emergence of autonomous learning groups accessing the expertise of their own members in the pursuit of knowledge and shared experience. No prior qualifications and no subsequent certificates feature in this approach to learning for its own sake and, as participants testify, engagement in this type of learning in later life can indeed 'prolong active life'.

In Sweden the successful concept of study circles, an idea launched almost a century ago, still represents a large portion of the adult education provision. The concept has since spread, and for instance, is a common practice in Finland as well. A study circle is one of the most democratic forms of a learning environment that has been created. There are no teachers and the group decides on what content will be covered, scope will be used, as well as a delivery method.

Sometimes lifelong learning aims to provide educational opportunities outside standard educational systems — which can be cost-prohibitive, if it is available at all. On the other hand, formal administrative units devoted to this discipline exist in a number of universities.

For example, the 'Academy of Lifelong Learning' is an administrative unit within the University-wide 'Professional and Continuing Studies' unit at the University of Delaware.

In recent years 'Lifelong Learning' has been adopted in the UK as an umbrella term for post-compulsory education that falls outside of the UK Higher Education system - Further Education, Community Education, Work-based Learning and similar voluntary, public sector and commercial settings.

Most of the NGO's, colleges and universities in the United States encourage Lifelong Learning to non-traditional students. Professional licensure and certification courses are also offered at many universities, for instance for teachers, social services providers, and other professionals.
Lifelong learning professionals:

As the Jagiellonian University Extension defines it, there are seven main professional profiles in the Lifelong Learning domain:

- Trainer
- Coach
- Competency assessor
- Consultant
- Training project manager
- Curriculum designer
- Mentor

Lifelong Learning and the Education System:

The policy discourse of lifelong learning usually projects it as an expansion of learning opportunities, but not always as the expansion of public provision. Is it, for example, possible to construe lifelong learning as a form of educational privatization, as nation states adopt a neo-liberal and market-oriented stance towards the provision of all kinds of public services? If this is, indeed, the case, then the consequences for access and equal opportunities in education may be serious, since only governments can redistribute in these directions, and markets reproduce inequality. The arguments are familiar ones. Neo-liberalism and globalization are eroding the capacity and will of states to interfere in the economic market place. Communications technology is making teachers redundant to the learning process. Virtual campuses will spell the end of the traditional sites and institutions of education, from schools to universities. Above all, the responsibility of individuals and organizations for their own learning in relation to employability and competition means that public forms of education seem increasingly incapable of meeting the needs of post-industrial, post-welfare and post-modern society.

Conclusion:

Lifelong learning is simply another word for adult education, or professional development, or "joined up" systems of provision (which many of its advocates would deny) it will prove difficult to construct as an object of research. It is much vaguer than any of these, and certainly much less identifiable than what has hitherto been understood as the
public education system. It has always been clear from research just who was advantaged and who disadvantaged by public education systems, but lifelong learning apparently advantages everyone and disadvantages no-one. The problem about this, in terms of policy analysis, is that in free or market economy societies, no such policy could be implemented. Lifelong learning taking an initiatives for empowerment, how continuous and enriched learning empowers the learner to use update and upgrade knowledge and skills during day to day activities and help to develop the learners professional skills. Therefore in 21st century lifelong learning become enquiry for learning.

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