

LIFE LONG LEARNING: A HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR EXTENDING OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT : *Learning needs to be examined across the lifespan because previous notions of a divided lifetime—education followed by work—are no longer tenable (Gardner, 1991). The scope of lifelong learning is quite broad and covers both formal and non-formal educational settings. Lifelong learning is a principal element of long-term strategy and a core component of the social model. Lifelong learning, the indispensable key to the twenty-first century, now requires universities to radically review their structures, modes of functioning, and attitudes. The purpose of this paper is to survey the emergent terms, themes or discourses that seem to possess sustained or recent resonance for conceptualizing lifelong learning. It attempts to summarize the UGC XI plan guidelines on lifelong learning. A strategy framework is also defined & presented, what could be done of stable trends for the coming years.*

Keywords: *Life-long learning, Strategy, Quality control, Higher Education, Work-based learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

A successful modern economy & society require citizens with a strong foundation of general education, as this will enable them to become progressively qualified in a lifelong process. Individual should have the desire and ability to continue to learn for personal development & growth, which will in turn lead to a more rewarding life and the creation of a stronger economy. Today search for solutions to the country's educational problems include a commitment to lifelong learning. Lifelong learning means new education options throughout life. It is an opportunity to acquisition and productivity.

Universities and colleges are already contributing to lifelong learning through their existing learning and teaching, research and partnership activities. But the fast-changing economic climate and challenges are making it more likely that the demographic profile of higher education programmes is set to change.

Learning needs to be examined across the lifespan because previous notions of a divided lifetime—education followed by work—are no longer tenable (Gardner, 1991). Professional activity has become so knowledge-intensive and fluid in content that learning has become an integral and irremovable part of adult work activities. Creativity and innovation are considered essential capabilities for working smarter in knowledge societies (Drucker, 1994). The scope of lifelong learning is quite broad and covers both formal and non-formal educational settings. Lifelong learning includes learning for personal purposes such as personal fulfillment and adaptability, social purposes such as social inclusion, civic purposes such as active citizenship and employment-related purposes such as employability.

2. LIFELONG LEARNING (LLL)

Definitions of Lifelong Learning (LLL) vary according to the perspectives and priorities of the policy makers at a given moment. But international organizations have provided a set of definitions that are widely used today.

The European Commission (2000) defined Lifelong learning as 'all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.'

It is about acquiring and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge and qualifications from the pre-school years to post-retirement (CEC, 2000) and this can occur in formal, non-formal or informal settings. According to the OECD (2004), Lifelong Learning has four main features:

1. **A systemic view:** the Lifelong Learning framework views the demand for a supply of learning opportunities, as part of a connected system covering the whole lifecycle and comprising all forms of formal and informal learning.

2. **Centrality of the learner:** this requires a shift in attention from a supply side focus (e.g. on formal institutional arrangements for learning) to the demand side of meeting learner needs.

3. **Motivation to learn:** requires attention to developing the capacity for 'learning to learn' through self-paced and self-directed learning.

4. **Multiple objectives of education policy:** the lifecycle view recognizes the multiple goals of education (personal development; knowledge development; economic, social and cultural objectives) and that the priorities among these

objectives may change over the course of an individuals' lifetime.

Lifelong learning is therefore about:

Acquiring and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge and qualifications from the pre-school years to post-retirement. It promotes the development of knowledge and competences that will enable each citizen to adapt to the knowledge-based society and actively participate in all spheres of social and economic life, taking more control of his or her future.

Valuing all forms of learning, including: formal learning, such as a degree course followed at university; non-formal learning, such as vocational skills acquired at the workplace; and informal learning, such as inter-generational learning, for example where parents learn to use ICT through their children, or learning how to play an instrument together with friends.

3. TYPOLOGY OF LEARNERS

To better understand and analyze the motivations and expectations of lifelong learners the survey used the typology of adult learners in formal education as proposed by Hefer and Markowitsch (2010). As can be seen in the table, five main types of Lifelong Learners are identified. The first three types are Lifelong learners with focus on education:

- **Completing**, with sub-type "finishing" (working while completing formal education without particular connection of work and education) and "entering" (being hired in late phases by an employer in need of graduates)
- **Returning**: re-entering HE and revising a temporary transition from learning to work
- **Transforming**: significant transformation of an existing career pathway and/or individual development.

Two other main types of Lifelong Learners can be distinguished with the focus on work:

- **Reinforcing** an existing career pathway (use offers of formal HE to solve developmental issues or to support progress within the chosen line of occupational/professional development)
- **Compensating** for shortcomings of an existing career pathway.

4. DIMENSION OF LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong learning became key concept for any educational establishment and guiding principle for the development of education and training policies. Lifelong learning is a principal element of long-term strategy and a core component of the social model. Dimensions of enabling support to be more responsive to the needs of lifelong learners include: a. Work-based learning b. Technological based learning.

4.1 Work Based Learning

We live in an environment of constant innovation, change and invention. It is predicted that 70% of the jobs, products and services that will exist in 2020 have not yet been invented (Ellyard, 2000). Employees increasingly have the responsibility for managing their own learning and skill development. There are questions about how well an individual-centered approach will meet national education and economic needs.

The literature describes many approaches to learning in the workplace. The following synthesis is adapted from a model developed by the JISC project Technology-enhanced learning to support a Welsh Centre for Workforce Development at Cardiff Metropolitan University (2010).

Learning in Work	Learning through Work	Learning for Work
Acquisition & application of new job-related knowledge. Emphasis on enhancing participants' capability to perform current duties or respond to role changes	Accreditation of work-integrated learning outcomes. Emphasis on experiential learning opportunities that test and expand participants' capability and contribute directly to organizational goals	Preparation for a new career or major career change. Emphasis on building participants' capacity to perform future work

4.2 Technological based learning

Over the last decade, higher and further education institutions have made considerable progress in embedding technology to the benefit of lifelong learners. The availability and ease of use of digital technology has created new opportunities to deliver learning in locations off campus, such as in the home, community or workplace. Any technological change has implications for staff development and skills. Ultimately, a flexible and adaptable institution that responds to the demands of the lifelong learner is one that has a workforce of individuals who are reflective

and acknowledge the need constantly to update their skills, including information and digital literacies. Technology can offer the following benefits:

- Improved access to up-to-date institution and course information
- Faster response to initial enquiries and streamlined online application processes
- Access to institutional services from mobile devices, from any location
- Enhanced support for transition into higher education

- Easier engagement with stakeholders, particularly employers, in curriculum design and delivery
- Responsive programmes that meet learners' and employers' needs
- Learner choice in the timing and location of study
- Flexible ways of delivering the curriculum and assessment and providing learner support
- Opportunities to extend higher education to new markets by distance and online learning
- Increased opportunities for learners to demonstrate a range of achievements and prior attainment
- Efficient assignment-handling processes
- Rapid and timely feedback that prompts reflection
- Improved data collection and transfer across processes
- Online integrated points of access to institutional services for practitioners, learners and other stakeholders such as employers

5. UGC XI PLAN GUIDELINES

The Report of the Education Commission (1964-66) observed that education does not end with schooling but is a lifelong process; the National Policy on Education in India - 1986 (modified in 1992) considered Lifelong Education as the cherished goal of the educational process which presupposes universal literacy, provision of opportunities for youth, housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue the education of their choice at the pace suited to them. It observes that the critical development issue is the continuous up-gradation of skills so as to produce manpower resources of the kind and the number required by the society.

With the formulation the Eleventh Five year Plan (2007-2012), the Government of India put forward the idea of expanding the scope of the Continuing Education Program by developing it as Lifelong Education and Awareness Program (LEAP). This may be partly influenced by the global discourse on Lifelong Learning and partly due to the socio economic changes taking place within and outside the country.

It was mainly after the launching of the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) by the Government of India in 1978 that the UGC began to encourage the universities and colleges to participate in Lifelong Learning programmes and started funding it. In the XI Plan the UGC shared the following vision to all the universities:

- promote the philosophy of Lifelong Learning as a part of total education programme of the institution;
- make concerted efforts towards integration between formal and non-formal education and out of school learning processes;

- reach out to larger sections of community specially deprived groups through Lifelong Learning Programmes;
- enrich the learning process of faculty and students mainly through extension activities;
- provide professional manpower to implement the programmes through innovative courses;
- contribute to generation of new knowledge through researches and publications.

6. STRATEGY FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING LIFELONG LEARNING (LLL)

What are the tools that can better integrate learning environments and open up access for all Indian citizens to good quality learning opportunities appropriate to their needs at any time of life? Four essential elements for coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies which can be implemented for:

- **Creating a learning culture** by giving learning a higher profile, both in terms of image and by providing incentives for the people most reticent to opt for learning.
- **Adequate resourcing**, involving a substantial increase in public and private investment in learning. Investment in human capital is important at all points in the economic cycle; skills gaps and shortages can certainly co-exist with unemployment.
- **Striving for excellence** through the introduction of quality control and indicators to measure progress. In concrete terms, provision must be made for standards, guidelines and mechanisms whereby achievements can be recognised and rewarded.
- **Facilitating access** to learning opportunities by making them more visible, introducing new provision and removing obstacles to access.

7. CONCLUSION

Learning throughout life is a common principle nobody will argue about. Lifelong learning presents higher education with a new challenge. Lifelong learning, the indispensable key to the twenty-first century, now requires universities to radically review their structures, modes of functioning, and attitudes. The following areas are the matter of concern in future: Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship.

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