

Lifelong Learning Education Programs for Personality Development (With Case Study from Australia)

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Abstract

Lifelong learning is the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual. It occurs through experiences encountered in the course of a lifetime. These experiences could be formal- training, counseling, tutoring, mentorship, and apprenticeship, higher education, etc. or informal -experiences, situations, etc. Lifelong learning, also known as LLL, 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.

The aims of this paper are to discuss how lifelong learning can lead to overall personality development under various settings. It also presents brief description of lifelong education programs for personality development in Australia, as a case study. The paper concludes that everyone should accept the concept of personality development as part of their career and lifelong learning approach. The Australian education and training system appears well-placed to meet the demand for high skills in the new economy. High-skilled, and full-time jobs in Australia are growing fast in aggregate terms. Till date, Australia has successfully met the education and training needs of the new economy.

KEYWORDS: Lifelong learning, personality development, Australia, self-motivated learning, and universal participation.

Introduction:

Lifelong education means education resulting from integration of formal, non-formal, and informal education so as to create ability for continuous lifelong development of quality of life. Learning is therefore part of life which takes place at all times and in all places. It is a continuous lifelong process, going on from birth to the end of our life, beginning with learning from families, communities, schools, religious institutions, workplaces, etc. The African traditional society envisioned lifelong learning by the roles one was expected to play in society from child, youth (boy or girl), young adult, and junior elder to senior elder. Today, with less defined changes in life roles, there is need for new strategies to motivate lifelong learning.

Objectives of lifelong learning programs are:

- 1) To develop professional skills through lifelong learning
- 2) To develop the skills for personality development
- 3) To apply acquired knowledge for the study of individual development, and
- 4) To identify the needs and issues of the people

Methodology:

This study is descriptive in nature. Data which are qualitative in nature, have been obtained from various secondary sources and have been analyzed in the view to the laid down objectives

Characteristics of Lifelong Learning:

The concept of lifelong learning spans a wide range of education and training issues and speaks to many different audiences. Common themes conveyed in literature on lifelong learning articulate four characteristics which transform 'education and training' into the concept of 'lifelong learning'

Informal learning:

The first characteristic of lifelong learning is that it encompasses both formal and non-formal/informal types of education and training. Formal learning includes the hierarchically structured school system that runs from primary school through the university and organized school-like programs created in business for technical and professional training. Whereas informal learning describes a lifelong process whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educational influences and resources in his or her environment, from family and neighbors, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media.

Self-motivated learning:

The second common theme of lifelong learning is the importance of self-motivated learning. There is a heavy emphasis on the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own learning. Lifelong learners are, therefore, not defined by the type of education or training in which they are involved, but by the personal characteristics that lead to such involvement. Cassandra B. Whyte emphasized the importance of locus of control and successful academic performance. Personal characteristics of individuals who are most likely to participate in learning, either formally or informally throughout their lives, have acquired:

- a) The necessary skills and attitudes for learning, especially literacy and numeracy skills
- b) The confidence to learn, including a sense of engagement with the education and training system
- c) Willingness and motivation to learn.

Although education and training may have economic benefits for individuals, it is

recognized that economic incentives alone are not necessarily sufficient to motivate people to engage in education and training. A range of motivational barriers need to be identified and addressed in order for some people to participate in education and training. While some of these barriers are economic and can be overcome with financial assistance, many people are deterred from engaging in education and training by social and personal factors.

An Australian survey of participants in adult education courses identified a range of factors motivating people to undertake adult learning, such as:

- a) To upgrade job skills
- b) To start a business
- c) To learn about a subject or to extend their knowledge
- d) To meet new people
- e) To develop self-confidence
- f) To get involved in the community
- g) To develop personal skills
- h) To participate in social networking

By acknowledging the range of factors that act as both a motivation and barrier to engagement in education and training, lifelong learning policies tend to promote participation in learning for its own sake rather than as a means to a specific end (i.e. employment). The goal of participation in learning thus appears to be more significant than the reason why. This can be seen as an acknowledgment of the range of factors that motivate people to participate in formal and informal learning other than, or in addition to, instrumental goals.

Self-funded learning:

Self-funded learning is the third characteristic of the lifelong learning literature. The concept of self-funded learning is linked to the characteristic of self motivated learning. In recognition of the costs involved in subsidizing lifelong involvement in education and training, the lifelong learning policy agenda emphasizes the responsibility of individuals to finance their own continuing education and training with minimal support from government. The West report defines a lifelong learner as a person who takes responsibility for their own learning and who is prepared to invest time, money and effort in education or training on a continuous basis.

Universal participation:

The fourth distinctive feature of the lifelong learning policy literature is a commitment to universal participation in education and training. In advocating 'lifelong learning for all', the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) argues that universal participation is necessary for meeting the economic demands of the 21st century. The concept of universal participation includes both informal and formal learning for all purposes - social, economic and personal. In arguing that universal participation in lifelong learning is necessary for social cohesion in a time of rapid

economic and social change, the Delores report proposes four characteristics of lifelong learners that would be the Pillars of a learning society:

- Learning to do (acquiring and applying skills, including life skills)
- Learning to be (promoting creativity and personal fulfillment)
- Learning to know (an approach to learning that is flexible, critical and capable)
- Learning to live together (exercising tolerance, understanding and mutual respect)

Importance of Lifelong Learning:

The importance of lifelong learning/education has been repeatedly stressed in several educational policy documents and discourses in India. While 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. Although these policies were translated into practice and a number of lifelong learning programs were implemented by governmental, nongovernmental organizations and universities in the country during the last three decades, the bulk of the programs continued to focus on adult literacy and continuing education mainly due to the massive number of non literates (300.14.million) and neo literates(110millions) as estimated by the National Literacy Mission (NLM-Literacy Facts At A Glance ,2007) .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, several socio economic factors. In a technology driven knowledge based competitive economy; the landscape of learning is fast changing in India. The growth of Indian economy at an average rate of 9.2% per annum during 2006-7 (Economic Survey, 2006-7), tremendous expansion of Information Communication Technology and the rapid globalization have all been instrumental in bringing about changes in the job skills so that the workforce keeps on learning and updating their skills to be globally competitive. The country's economic performance depends critically on access to and the adoption of new technology and improving the skills of the labor force. Since 92.4% of India's workforce is in the unorganized sectors (National Sample Survey, 61st Round, 2004-5), they need regular upgrading of skills to compete in the globalize economy. Equipping the labor force with relevant skills implies the need for creating a variety of learning and training opportunities. In this process, the university system in India will have to play an important role.

What Constitutes Personality Development?

Personal development involves:

- Keeping abreast of current affairs;
- Developing our ability to communicate and relate to others;
- Monitoring and learning new/improved methods in our fields of expertise;
- Keeping our professional qualifications current and up-to-date; and
- Adapting to and adopting new organizational and business approaches.

Organizations have been adapting to their environment for years. If they haven't, then in all likelihood, they no longer exist. New styles of operating continue to emerge. Employee participation and involvement in decision making has increased with growing significance of lifelong learning.

Lifelong Learning, Personality Development and Learning Organizations:

A commitment to personal development is a commitment to lifelong learning or continuous learning. As the name implies, people continuously learn throughout their lives.

“A good example is my father. He originally qualified as a carpenter. Later he became a builder, building houses and similar domestic buildings. Along the way he developed skills in welding, tiling, painting, fitting and turning, sheet metal work and other building tasks not associated with his original trade as a carpenter. Now retired, he is actively developing his computer and internet skills. His learning is continuous”. (Published on <http://derekstockley.com.au/learning.html>, accessed on November 17, 2011.)

Continuous learning applies to individuals, but organizations can learn as well. Organizations should have a dedicated approach to ensure experience gained or new information and research is incorporated into every operation. The current focus on Knowledge Management (KM) is an example of an appropriate approach.

Customer interaction should be monitored and evaluated. Customer enquiries should be analyzed to see what can be learnt. For example, if an internet site is receiving the same basic question on a regular basis, then the site should be reviewed to ensure that the information requested is more visible and accessible. It should not be hidden away. It perhaps should be included in the FAQ (Frequently Asked Question) section. Figure-1 shows lifelong learning and personality development process.

including employability and entrepreneurial skills, to ensure that our graduates have the competence that employers are entitled to expect from them.

- New forms of learning arising from developments in ICT and other technologies distance learning and blended learning.
- The need to increase the provision of part-time, community and work-based learning, including students learning off campus

The Role of Educators in Lifelong learning:

- Educators are guides to sources of knowledge
- Educators serve as facilitators for the student's acquisition of knowledge
- People learn by doing, or Action Learning
- People learn in groups and from each other
- Assessment is used to guide learning strategies and to identify pathways for future learning.
- Educators develop individualized learning plans
- Educators are lifelong learners. Initial training and ongoing professional development are linked
- People have access to learning opportunities over a lifetime.
- Learning is put into practice.
- Learners reflect upon learning and analyze their personal development

Critical Target Groups on Lifelong Learning Programs for Personality Development:

In addition to general adult and youth groups that probably come quickly to mind, the following are suggested as special groups of people with educational needs:

- **Women**--The consciousness-raising efforts of women's groups have uncovered a variety of continuing education needs and interests.
- **Elderly**--Gerontology programs will become increasingly needed in the future, especially as baby-boomers reach retirement ages.
- **Minority groups**--Racial, ethnic, disadvantaged, and undereducated individuals have a multitude of needs not being met by traditional programs of education.
- **Health-related employees**--The knowledge explosion has greatly affected health-related employees.
- **Citizen/consumer**--Distrust of the political system, energy crises, continued inflation or economic woes, and environmental concerns increasingly will prompt needs and interests related to consumer awareness and civic literacy.

Ways must also be discovered for meeting the educational needs of handicapped adults and people in correctional or other institutions. In addition, the entire area of job retraining will increasingly require the expertise of skilled educators. Certainly those educators being prepared specifically for the adult education profession will work with the above groups as well as with programs designed to meet general adult interests and needs.

However, because so many people who eventually work with educational programs for adults arrive in such positions by accident rather than by design, it is suggested that teacher preparation institutions and those working with the training of trainers--especially those that attempt to incorporate the concept of educator as a lifelong learning facilitator--need to consider the various types of clientele who will be recipients of educational efforts.

Lifelong Education Programs for Personality Development in Australia - Case Study:

The lifelong learning policy agenda in Australia is built on assumptions about the importance of skills in the new economy. Almost all industrial sectors are increasingly “knowledge-based” and economic returns are obtained from a range of intangible inputs, one of which is workers’ skills. Participation in education and training is increasing and economic rewards are flowing to people with high skills.

The Australian economy appears to fit the paradigm of the “knowledge-based economy” as defined by the OECD. Australia has experienced growth in industry sectors that are relatively intense in their use of technology or human capital as well as growth in demand for highly skilled workers.

The Australian education and training system appears well-placed to meet the demand for high skills in the new economy. High-skilled, full-time jobs in Australia are growing fast in aggregate terms. These jobs are concentrated in fast-growing industries identified with the knowledge-based economy. Australia has high levels of adult participation in both informal and formal education and training. Participation is highest among wage and salary earners, and an increasing amount of work-related external training is financed by individuals rather than employers. These trends are consistent with the lifelong learning policy agenda that emphasizes self-funded, self-motivated participation in both formal and informal learning.

Although overall levels of participation in education and training in Australia are high, there is a widening gap between the participation rates of people with high skills and people with low skills. Australia has experienced strong growth in both high skilled and low skilled employment. As might be expected from the nature of their employment, workers in low skilled jobs receive fewer opportunities and less employer support for participation in training than workers in high skilled jobs. This restricts their opportunities for upward mobility. People with low skills face additional disincentives to participation in education and training, particularly if they are unemployed. The people most likely to participate in adult education and training are those who have completed year 12. People with low skills and the unemployed are less likely to have completed year 12. Education and training courses undertaken by people who are unemployed are less likely to improve their employment prospects than courses taken by people who were employed previously. Inadequate credit transfer arrangements pose an additional barrier for people who enter university from vocational education courses rather than year 12.

Australia's capacity to achieve higher levels of educational participation may be undermined by the widening socio-economic gap between individuals in highly paid/high-skilled jobs and people in low paid/low-skilled work. As it presently stands, the emphasis the lifelong learning policy agenda places on individuals' co-financing of their own learning contradicts its stress on lifelong learning as a remedy for social exclusion. Given the many factors inhibiting participation in education and training for less-skilled individuals in low-wage jobs, governments could play a greater role in breaking the nexus between low skills and non-participation.

Today, Australia has successfully met the education and training needs of the new economy. Government policies should ensure that Australia's education and training system is sufficiently flexible and responsive to meet future demand for skills, including the need for skills upgrading for those with low or obsolescent skills. Areas of interest to policy-makers in this context include:

- The maintenance of course quality;
- The accessibility of finance for post-secondary education and training;
- The predictability, consistency and transparency of credit transfer and recognition of prior learning procedures;
- The effectiveness of different courses of education and training in improving the employment outcomes of people who are unemployed; and
- The utility of incentives for education and training participation for those most likely to suffer educational and labor market disadvantage in the new economy.

Conclusion:

Lifelong learning is the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual. It occurs through experiences encountered in the course of a lifetime. These experiences could be: (a) formal (training, counseling, tutoring, mentorship, apprenticeship, higher education, etc.), and / or (b) informal (experiences, situations, etc.)

The main criticism of lifelong learning is the predominantly economic interpretation of the term. It has become problematic for many educators and practitioners who have come forward with such terms as "Lifelong (L) Earning" and "Learning to Earn" as their succinct criticism of the way the term is being promoted.

The paper concludes that everyone should accept the concept of personality development as part of their career and lifelong learning approach. The Australian education and training system appears well-placed to meet the demand for high skills in the new economy. High-skilled, full-time jobs in Australia are growing fast in aggregate terms. To date, Australia has successfully met the education and training needs of the new economy.

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