

# THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN OUR SOCIETY

*Senior lecturer Irgasheva Shokhida*

*Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Tashkent Financial Institute*

**Abstract.** *I wish we didn't so exclusively connect the concept of learning with formal education and going to school or being a (college) student. Because learning actually happens everywhere, all the time. At school learning is just more focused and targeted to meet the standards or performance measures of the course. Lifelong learning is so important in these times when there is more information available in our fingertips than ever before! Unfortunately many students are schooled out of their minds with too tight performance measures and learning objectives that leave very little or no space for wondering and creativity. How can we help students to become interested in learning, not just expecting to be schooled or pass a test? How to help more students to become lifelong learners? One way is to equip students with the skills to self-regulate their learning. Helping students to think about their learning (tasks) and how they relate to a bigger picture, focus on their own thinking and learning while engaging in the task, and self-evaluate their learning?*

Our lives consist of such learning or studying concepts as perceiving, comparing, analyzing, concluding, giving feed-back. From the very early childhood a human being learns by listening, then by reading and writing. This is the main life rule! Learn! Study! That is lifelong learning. That is why all learners (people) must find out special learning strategies for themselves no matter what professions they have. Why is it so important? In order to find out best suitable methods of learning for himself, to scan his own abilities, strong and weak points, for managing any difficulties not only in studying period but throughout the life. What is lifelong learning? Lifelong learning is the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual. In a lifelong learning model, people learn by doing – individually, in groups, and from each other. And they put learning into practice and reflect upon the learning. Instructors are guides encouraging students to acquire knowledge and reflect on their learning. Research shows that reflection and practice are necessary for deep learning.

Lifelong learning, also known as LLL, is the "lifelong, lifewide, voluntary, and self-motivated"<sup>[1]</sup> 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.<sup>[2]</sup>

The term recognises that learning is not confined to childhood or the classroom, but takes place throughout life and in a range of situations. During the last fifty years, constant scientific and technological innovation and change has had a profound effect on learning needs and styles. Learning can no longer be divided into a place and time to acquire knowledge (school) and a place and time to apply the knowledge acquired (the workplace).<sup>[3]</sup> Instead, learning can be seen as something that takes place on an on-going basis from our daily interactions with others and with the world around us.

Lifelong learning may be most usefully thought of as a policy response by largely western governments to a changing world. These underlying changes are a move away from manufacturing to a services economy, the emergence of the knowledge economy and the decline of many traditional institutions which has been requiring individuals to become more active in managing their lives.<sup>[4]</sup>

This has led to the realization that formal learning, typically concentrated in the earlier stages of life, can no longer sustain an individual throughout their life.

In a book by Christopher Day, published in 1998, *Developing Teachers: The Challenge of Lifelong Learning*, there was recognition towards the role of teachers in inculcating lifelong learning in the formal teachings of his/her students while at the same time realising the need for teachers to practice lifelong learning, in order to develop themselves as well. Through this realisation, that throughout a teachers/educators professional being, lifelong learning is a must [1].

In October 2006 the European Commission published a Communication entitled "Adult learning: It is never too late to learn."<sup>[2]</sup> This document suggests lifelong learning to be the core of the ambitious Lisbon 2010-process, in which the whole of the European Union should become a learning area. In December 2007, the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education published a "Report on Adult learning: It is never too late to learn", which recognized the Commission

Communication and a number of related recommendations and resolutions, and which urged member states to establish a lifelong learning culture.<sup>[5][6]</sup>

### **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

Most people associate learning with formal education at school, college, university etc. We are all told, from an early age, that we should ‘get a good education’. Generally speaking it is true that a formal education and the resulting qualifications are important. Education may maximise our potential to find better, more satisfying jobs, earn more and, perhaps, become more successful in our chosen career. However, ‘schooling’ is only one type of learning. There are many other opportunities to further your knowledge and develop the skills you need throughout life. Knowledge can be acquired and skill-sets developed anywhere – learning is unavoidable and happens all the time. However, lifelong learning is about creating and maintaining a positive attitude to learning both for personal and professional development.

Lifelong learners are motivated to learn and develop because they want to: it is a deliberate and voluntary act.

Lifelong learning can enhance our understanding of the world around us, provide us with more and better opportunities and improve our quality of life.

In conclusion I would like to say that learning makes us more interesting. Knowledge enables a different perspective, fascinating conversation and a deeper understanding. It makes us better people; allows us to make better, informed decisions; and assists us in becoming more successful in our careers.

The advancement of technology has boosted the pace of our lives, and requires us to learn something new each day just to stay current in the workplace. Although on-the-job training is wonderful, you can't rely on your company to provide the necessary education. It's advantageous for everyone to make time for learning, seek out their own opportunities, use available resources wisely, and find new resources.

If you've decided to take a particular course of learning and apply it to your career, you have to be smart about what you're learning. When it comes to selecting a class or program, make sure that you're targeting your needs. Can the teachings of that class be applied to your life and the real world? Think about your current position and how it can be enhanced by additional coursework. Would the knowledge of a particular software package help? Or would an advanced degree increase your marketability? Once you've identified what you need to know, decide how you're going to learn. Will you request a short training course or seek help from an institution?

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