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## Adult education in Turkey: in terms of lifelong learning

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### Abstract

Information, access to information and communication technologies leading to rapid and profound changes in economic and social life makes the lifelong learning a must for everyone and mostly adults. In Turkey, adult education, in terms of lifelong learning, starts in such institutions which aimed to make the individual freer, transformative and egalitarian so-called Village Institutions in 1940s, Open Education at Anadolu University etc. Adult education varies in all over the world. However, it has some universal goals such as managing the individual' life, self-sufficiency, learning by doing and practicing, In the philosophy of adult education lies making the adults contemporary, secular and responsible citizens who quest, think, comment and try to make the life easier and happier. Lifelong learning, together with the European Union Harmonization Laws, is a term widely used today in Turkey, though, was actually adopted in the history of Republic of Turkey from the first day of national development and applied in our educational history.

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### 1. Introduction

The globalization process that started in 90's and has been continuing with the effects increasing gradually until today has accompanied the transposability of knowledge and labour force. As the labour has become a commodity in the international markets, the labour force is obliged to have the qualifications in the determined measures. With the effects like the increase of the international cooperation organizations like European Union, OECD, and NAFTA, it has been reached the last point at the field of informatics and communication technologies, to arrange the education in respect to some generally acceptable measurements has become inevitable.

Technology has created cyberspace, and with this, a great potential for global and borderless education (Adekunle, 1999). This boundless approach has carried the education that is in a formal type at the same time to the informal and non-formal levels. This case can be related with the lifelong learning concept. The education with a contemporary approach is not a procedure that exists in the walls and in a certain type, but it is an on-going action in every field of the life.

The major problems of our age deal with human relations; the solutions can be found only in education. Skill in human relations is a skill that must be learned; it is learned in the home, in the school, in the church, on the job, and wherever people gather together in small groups (Knowles, 2011).

As a dimension of lifelong learning, adult learning encompasses all aspects of learning and training for adults. (Monitoring and Evaluation of Adult Learning Report, 2003) The resource of highest value in adult education is the learner's experience. If education is life, then life is also education (Lindeman, 2011).

Education conceived as a process coterminous with life revolves about non-vocational ideals. In this world of specialists everyone will of necessity learn to do his work, and if education of any variety can assist in this and in the further end of helping the worker to see the meaning of his labour, it will be education of a high order. But adult

education more accurately defined begins where vocational education leaves off. Its purpose is to put meaning into the whole of life (Lindeman, 2011).

Burns (1995b) discusses the notion that ‘definitions of the adult are not clear’ and says ‘the same is true of adult education.’ He discusses the ‘petrol tank’ view of school education: ‘fill the tank full at the only garage before the freeway, then away we go on life’s journey’ (Burns, 1995b, p 227). He goes on to discuss that problems can arise when people have not had their tank filled completely at school and he extends the metaphor to suggest that there should be service stations along ‘the length of the highway of life.’ (Burns, 1995a). ‘Rapid changes require enhancement of adult learning’ HRMonthly June, pp 16-17.)

According to Okçabol (1996) an adult sometimes learns without having any aim. Sometimes he/she wants to learn something that is purposed to be learnt. The person is a worker who does not have any skill and he/she wants to gain a skill or he/she is a farmer and he/she looks for new insemination, fertilization, and watering methods or he/she is a carpenter and he/she is keen on working in classical methods or he/she is a civil servant and he/she wants to improve in his/her job by learning a foreign language and so he/she will benefit from the foreign language payment or he/she is a teacher, doctor, and engineer and he/she wants to update his/her knowledge in his/her occupational field or he/she is a solicitor, public prosecutor, and judge and he/she wants to use Turkish words instead of foreign words. He/she is person who has a good job and income. He/she wants to learn how to play tennis or bridge. He/she is divorced or he/she has lost his/her spouse or he/she is retired or he/she has moved to another city and he/she wants to harmonise to new situation (Okçabol, 1996,p.2).

## **1. Republic of Turkey and adult education**

Concepts of lifelong learning and adult education in the European Union harmonization process are commonly used today; however, the concepts have been of great importance in the education history of Republic of Turkey in the process of national development and mobilization. The first systematical movement related to education started with the congress of Ministry of Education in Ankara, 15 July 1921. After sharing his observations and experiences related to education, Gazi Mustafa Kemal, stood on the principles of the work to be done and had left educators fulfill the rest (Binbaşıoğlu; 371, 2009).

Adult education-related applications to be addressed by the government started with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. An educated society was the only prerequisite to perpetuate the establishment, survival and development of a new form of governance. Primary education had to be spread out within the people of the country who were tired of a long and hard war. In this context, on 3 March 1924, by the law of Unification of Education, all the educational institutions were engaged to Ministry of Education. Besides, educational affairs have been carried out by a single management (Akyüz, p.19, 2011).

In our country, the first official organization for adults, under the name of "Department of Public Decency" was issued on March 25, 1926 within the authority of the Ministry of Education with the Organization Act 789. During the initial years of the Republic, implemented educational policies had three main objectives. These three objectives are as follows:

1. Supplying the unity of national culture,
2. Promoting citizenship education,
3. Educating the qualified people who The Republic of Turkey needs .

1927 Public Classrooms, 1928 The Public Schools, in the same year Evening Art and Trade Schools , 1932 the Public Houses, 1938-39 Rural Courses for Men and Women were the first steps of the adult education taken in Republican period of Turkey (Earged, 2011, p. 1).

Towards the end of the 1960s, the term non-formal education emerged from the need to meet the changing demands of education and became an alternative for the young people and adults in the 3rd World Countries to support formal educational institutions taking the growing population into account. In addition, it was also used for troubleshooting in social needs such as health care, nutrition and unemployment. Actually, it was the education

known and applied out of schools but was formalized by the way. In industrialized countries, it was used to support the children, the youth and the schools which were criticized for lack of flexibility but authority. Non-formal education helped them gain the basic skills. It meant individual and social development, being informed about health and safety and receiving the training for getting a job. (La Belle, 2010, p. 161) The first syllabus for the primary schools was prepared in 1926. It aimed at growing up and educating effective and compatible people with their surroundings. It highlighted the “adaptation” and “good citizenship” (Binbaşıoğlu, p.379, 2009).

In 1960s, under the authorization of Ministry of National Education, it was named as General Directorate of Public Education. Then it was renovated in 1977 and re-configured as the General Directorate of Non-Formal Education. In 1983, it was again renovated to cover the responsibility of career training and was named the General Directorate of Apprenticeship Training and Non-Formal education. The directorate has the greatest responsibility in the field of adult education in Turkey (Earged, 2011).

In addition to these, Anadolu University is the first institution which introduced Open and Distance Learning System serving the modern distance education in higher education in Turkey.

5 and 12. Articles of 2547 No. Law which rearranged the Turkish Higher Education again came into force on November 6, 1981. It recognized the right to Turkish Universities for “Continuous and Open Education”. Later, this task was assigned to Anadolu University which scientifically and technologically developed itself on July 20, 1982 by Decree No. 41. Anadolu University has the great breakthrough in open and distant education, however, nowadays most of the universities offer distance education in Turkey as well.

In the field of adult education, both Ministry of Education and Lifelong Learning Centers of higher education continue their education efforts to support the citizens of the country to adapt the age they are in, additionally, in that harmony, to make them feel adaptive, modern and happy. In the following table are the statistics on those who continue non-formal education between the years 2003-2009.

The statement “No one shall be deprived of the right to education and training” places in the article No.42 of the Turkish Republic constitution emphasizing the education is the basic right of the citizens. Furthermore, in the 9th article of Basic Law of National Education No.1739, the statement “Public and professional education of individuals is essential to continue throughout life. In addition to education of young people, it is an educational duty to take the necessary measures to ensure that adults should have the continuous education which helps them comply with the life and business areas in a positive way” takes place to emphasize both the importance adult learning and the responsibility of the government (Mevzuat, 2011). In this context, lifelong learning and adult education get the power from the Constitution and the National Education Basic Law and that is not a unknown concept to our daily life.

The Law on the Organization and Duties of the Ministry of Education No. 3797 defines the people to be addressed and the responsibilities non-formal education. Vocational Education Law No. 3308, a law that covers all levels and types of vocational education and is related to adult vocational education. Ensuring the Literacy of Citizens’ Out of Compulsory Primary School Age Law No 2841 assures that illiterate citizens become literate with providing a license or a diploma. Vocational Qualifications Institution Law No.5544 (2006) leads to bring professional standards and non-formal education to gain qualifications (Yayla, p.20-23, 2009). Legal framework, having the membership of OECD and European Union integration process help our people internalize this concept rapidly.

SVET (Strengthening The Vocational Education and Training System in Turkey) Life Long Learning Strategy Document was prepared in September 2006, to follow up the lifelong learning policy in Turkey. In the document, lifelong learning has been defined as the individual’s all learning activities, individual, social, whether relevant to their professions or not, in schools, universities, at home, at work anywhere in society, encompassing all the information and skills to improve the individual himself/herself (MEGEP, 2011, p. 5).

European Union, politicians have figured out the importance of education and training in today's information society and knowledge economy, therefore they highlight the strategy of the union as working together and learning from one another. European Union education and training policies have gained importance in 2000 and accelerated after the adaptation of the Lisbon Strategy. The Union's program is focused on growth and jobs. With increasing global competition, information and innovation will be Europe's most important values on education.

The Union's long-term strategic objectives of education and training are as follows;

- realizing the lifelong learning and mobility,
- improving the quality and efficiency of education and training,
- developing equality, social cohesion and active citizenship,
- improving creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in all kinds and levels of education and training (Europa, 2010).

## 2. Conclusion and suggestions

It is necessary for Turkey that the institutional attempts that have been realized in order to support and spread the adult education are to be gathered under a single roof and to reach the education sources and materials is to be facilitated. In order to continue the adult education, namely the lifelong learning, the contributions for the skill, “learn how to learn”, are to be provided for individuals. Using mass media or developing civil society initiative, these kinds of skills should be supported. There are the recommendations shown below in the lifelong learning concept and system policy document for SVET-TURKEY.

- Institutional system and infrastructure – the changes in horizontal plane – the integration between the governmental sectors and social partners.
  - Including formal education, business market, informal education, civil society, and cultural fields.
  - Sophistication of the system and indigenisation of the system on regional and local levels
  - Data collecting for comparison and actively utilization on determination and evaluation of policy.
  - Updating of juridical provisos and simplifying legislations.
  - Research, analyse, and systematic evaluation.
  - Formation of capacity in both professional and nongovernmental organizations.
  - Participation of the nongovernmental organizations and other social partners.
  - Forming a learning culture.

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