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Benefits of lifelong learning

Marjan Laal^{a*}

^aTehran University of Medical Sciences, Sina Trauma & Surgery Research Center, Sina Hospital, Tehran 11555/3876, Iran

Abstract

Numerous benefits have been ascribed to Lifelong Learning. Before proceeding to the topic, this review article attempts to present a clear concept of the term, while giving a brief account of the top advantages created by learning lifetime. Lifelong learning means that education is diverse, adapted to the individual and available throughout our lives. Greatest benefits can be summarized into three categories, as: coping with the fast-changing world, greater paychecks by giving job opportunities, and the huge last one is enriching and fulfilling the life. Lifelong learning is viewed as strategies to create opportunity for people to learn throughout life span.

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Keywords: lifelong learning, concept, benefits, advantages;

1. Introduction

There are a number of benefits that are associated with the concept of Lifelong Learning (LLL). It is through understanding the benefits, that we can truly use it to our benefit. Before one can make a judgment on the merits of LLL, it is important to understand exactly what LLL is.

The term lifelong, as applied to education or learning, has been in circulation for more than a quarter of a century (Friesen, N. & Anderson, T., 2004). LLL, it is asserted, requires that learning outcomes from different settings and contexts can be linked together.

No doubt is about a dearth of information as applied to the meanings and values of LLL. LLL literally means that learning should take place at all stages of life cycle (from the cradle to the grave) and, in more recent versions that it should be life-wide; that is embedded in all life contexts from the school to the workplace, the home and the community. The learning society therefore, is the vision of a society where there are recognized opportunities for learning for every person wherever they are and however old they should be (Green, A., 2002). LLL is the continuous building of skills and knowledge during one's life, that occurs through experiences faced lifetime (Wikipedia, 2011).

In various attempts to produce a clear account of the topic, it may be perceived the presence and operation of a particular preconception. In many scientific works on LLL, there seems to be an implicit acceptance of the notion that it is possible to arrive at some uniform descriptive definition of the term LLL. The common assumption

* Marjan Laal. Tel.: +98-216-675-7001-3; fax: +98-216-675-7009.
E-mail address: laal.marjan@gmail.com.

particularly the earlier ones, seems to be that a clear agreement on the meaning and applicability of the term is conceivable, possible and attainable (Aspin, D. N. & Chapman, J. D. 2007).

LLL is a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environment (Bryce, J., Frigo, T., McKenzie, P. & Withers, G., 2000; Longworth, N. & Davies, W. K., 1996). This paper is an attempt to describe the top benefits follow LLL.

1.2. Material and Method

This review article outlines the top benefits of LLL, begins with the concept of the term which includes all forms of learning, and continues with the advantages created by LLL. Key issues were identified through review of literature on LLL and through review of literature on the main benefits that follow learning lifetime.

1.3. Results

LLL is viewed as involving all strategies that are put in place to create opportunities for people to learn throughout life. It therefore should be a process of conscious continuous learning that goes throughout life and directed towards providing both the individual needs and that of the relevant community (Abukari, A., 2004).

LLL concept refers to the activities people perform throughout their life to improve their knowledge, skills and competence in a particular field, given some personal, societal or employment related motives (Field, J., 2001; Aspin, D. N. & Chapman, J. D., 2000). LLL covers the whole range of learning that includes: formal, informal and non-formal learning. Tissot (2004) defines the core concepts of various forms of learning as follows:

- Formal learning consists of learning that occurs within an organized and structured context (formal education, in-company training), and that is designed as learning. It may lead to formal recognition (diploma, certificate), (p. 70);
- Non-formal learning consists of learning embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designated as learning, but which contain an important learning element such as vocational skills acquired at the workplace, (p. 112);
- Informal learning is defined as learning resulting from daily life activities related to family, work or leisure. It is often referred to as experiential learning and can, to a degree, be understood as accidental learning (p. 76).

Whether it's in schools, at home, on the job or in the community, people are always gaining new knowledge and skills. This is LLL. It's essential to recognize and value all forms of learning, because we live in a world where people must have the skills to understand, interpret and process different information. Five benefits that LLL conveys, as Hildebrand D. S. (2008) says, are:

- Sharpens the mind
As getting older, continuous learning helps to keep the mind sharp and improve memory. It is a known fact that learning in general has beneficial effects on the brain. Research has shown that people with more education are less likely to have dementia in old age.
- Sharpens the confidence
Sometimes, when someone has not stepped out of their routine for a while, they haven't taken on a new challenge or really applied themselves to learning something new, they may find the experience a bit daunting. With LLL this fear is more easily overcome. LLL helps to gain confidence in ability to learn and to share the information with others; gain confidence in who we are and what we have to offer.
- Sharpens the interpersonal skills

Opportunity to socialize can help to greatly improve our interpersonal skills. When we are learning, we are engaged in life; we are engaged in those around us. And when we share what we know, we help others learn and further enhance our relationships.

- Sharpens the career opportunities
For anyone who has aspirations of moving their career to the next level, LLL will very much need to be part of the package. Not only can learning enhance the skills we already have, it provides the opportunity to learn a new skill or trade and improve chances of career growth.
- Sharpens the ability to communicate

Learning generally employs the skills of reading, listening and writing; skills essential to the ability to communicate. Enhancing these skills, improves our ability to write a business letter, compile a marketing report, give a department presentation or even speak one-on-one to the company president.

Mascle (2007) noted 5 great benefits for LLL as follows:

- First is the prospect of a fatter paycheck. Job promotions go to smart people who keep up with the latest information and technology. It's just good sense to refresh and retrain for the workplace.
- Second is the enhanced self-esteem when reaching for new horizons, accepting tough challenges and arriving at a whole new level. New learning is not a picnic but the joys of accomplishment are real.
- Third is the freedom given to adult learners. Adult classmates share ideas and teach each other. Assignments may culminate in a group project or program rather than a graded exam. Memorizing facts is at a minimum; answers are not absolute. True, there are some studies where exactness counts and tests are mandatory. But a quick Internet search turned up references to the use of adult education theories in highly regimented disciplines, such as nursing and medicine. Getting ready to pass state boards did not prevent creative teaching where students' views are respected and acted on. It is possible to combine traditional methods with adult learning styles.
- Fourth is the shift of schooling to a 24/7 model and long-distance or online methods. Trading the classroom for the computer enables to stay home and study in the bathrobe. Earn a degree without ever stepping on campus. With time and space constraints removed anyone who truly wants to go on learning can do so. Further, some class enrollments are open with start dates at our convenience.
- Number five is making scholarship a habit. Education becomes second nature; it's who we are as much as what we do. People live longer now and their health stays robust.

The demand for more flexible educational environments increases according to continuous learning which comes to be seen more and more as a necessity for almost everyone in our rapidly changing and increasingly global society (Chen, T., 2003).

In the 21st century, we all need to be lifelong learners. Our world is changing around us in such a frantic pace that if we do not continue to grow and develop; we will soon be left behind. We need to continually keep our skills sharp and up to date so that we have an edge in all we do (Eggelmeyer, S. 2010).

1.4. Discussion

LLL is about providing second chances to update basic skills and also offering learning opportunities at more advanced levels (European Commission, 2007). Nordstrom and his son (2006), offer the top ten benefits of LLL, as the following:

- LLL leads to an enriching life of self-fulfillment.
Nordstrom concludes that through academic learning, educational adventure travel and our renewed sense of volunteerism, we expand our awareness, embrace self-fulfillment, and truly create an exciting multi-dimensional life.
- LLL helps us make new friends and establish valuable relationships.

Through LLL, older adults are meeting new people, forging friendships and relationships with others, and enjoying an active social life. LLL is a brilliant way to keep in touch with people, meet new friends, and enjoy life surrounded by the company of folks who are truly embracing the excitement of our later years.

- LLL keeps us involved as active contributors to society.
We're taking part in educational programs, traveling all over the world, and offering our expertise to society through meaningful community involvement. We're not a strain on society, we're an incredible asset.
- LLL helps us find meaning in our lives.
Nordstrom says; sometimes it's difficult looking back on our lives, but LLL gives us the benefit of real perspective and enables us to find true meaning in the hills and valleys of our past.
- LLL helps us adapt to change.
Society is in a state of constant flux. LLL enables us to keep up with society's changes - especially the technological ones. A learning environment with our peers not only makes it possible to stay abreast of change, it also makes it fun.
- LLL makes the world a better place.
Through the community service aspect of LLL, older learners can give back to their communities and to the world. Nordstrom says; we've spent 30, 40 or more years interacting with the world, what we've learned during that time can be translated into real value for the betterment of society. Our wisdom, insight, it's all of tangible benefit to the world around us.
- LLL increases our wisdom.
LLL enables us to put our lives in perspective. It increases our understanding of previous successes and failures, and helps us understand ourselves better. We more fully develop the wisdom that can come with later life.
- LLL creates a curious, hungry mind.
The more older learners discover about history, current events, politics, or the culture of other countries, the more they want to learn. Our drive and desire to learn keep us going, constantly looking for more to feed our hungry minds.
- LLL opens the mind.
An integral part of LLL is the free exchange of ideas and viewpoints among older learners. Listening to or taking part in stimulating discussions help us to see the other side of an issue. That give-and-take opens our minds and brings us to a whole new level of enlightenment.
- LLL helps fully develop natural abilities.
We all have innate natural abilities. Once we're no longer working full time, we have the opportunity to fully explore and develop these abilities.

We all have a natural desire to learn. We really need to focus on this desire and nurture it to reap its many benefits. From quality of life, financial advantages to helping us to adapt in this crazy and chaotic world we live in, we must embrace these many benefits of LLL and make good use of the brief time we have on this planet (Eggelmeyer, S., 2010).

1.5. Conclusion

Whether it's in schools, at home, on the job or in the community, people are always gaining new knowledge and skills. This is LLL. LLL is about learning what one wants to learn, how one wants to learn and when one wants to learn it. LLL can help one get his/her high school diploma, get a post-secondary education, or learn new skills or get a better job. As the job market becomes more competitive, LLL can help people keep up with the latest technologies, and gain knowledge or skills needed. LLL benefits individuals, communities and the economy, as it provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and understanding they'll need in life, it makes communities more productive and innovative, as workers create and discover new abilities and ideas. In our

knowledge-based economy and society, change is constant in the workplace. It also strengthens the economy. The more skills, knowledge and ability that individuals develop, the greater the level of capacity in the economy would be. A stronger economy means citizens benefit from the chance to earn more, live better and contribute to the economic system (Canlearn, 2009).

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