

## LIFELONG LEARNING AND SKILL ENHANCEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

Lifelong learning may be broadly defined as learning that is pursued throughout life: learning that is flexible, diverse and available at different times and places. Education is the knowledge or skill obtained or developed by a learning process which itself is a lifelong progression. An individual requires proficiency, facility, or dexterity developed through training or experience, as skills are required to make life more productive and useful.

Lifelong learning can instill creativity, initiative and responsiveness in people thereby enabling them to show adaptability in post-industrial society through enhancing skills to manage uncertainty ; communicate across and within cultures, sub-cultures, families and communities and negotiate conflicts. It is the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual. Lifelong learning encompasses formal, non-formal and informal types of education and training where the emphasis is on learning to learn and the ability to keep learning for a lifetime.

There is a need to make students at school level aware of life skills and to train them in the different types of skills in accordance with their ability. 21<sup>st</sup> century skills can be applied in all academic subject areas, and in all educational, career, and civic settings throughout a student's life. The present paper suggests various ways of enhancing the lifelong skills in diverse areas.

**KEYWORDS:** Lifelong Learning and Skill Enhancement

### INTRODUCTION

**“Education is not Preparation for Life; Education is Life itself”- John Dewey**

Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training, or research. Education cannot be confined to provide knowledge to children in educational institutions as it goes from birth till death. It includes the effect of everything which influences human personality.

Delors' (1996) report has reinterpreted the philosophical and pedagogical principles of education to meet the emerging scenario. The report neatly balanced the economic, cultural and social aspects of education. It has laid great emphasis on lifelong learning and commended that education in the future should be based on four 'pillars':

**Learning to Know:** Mastering learning tools rather than acquisition of structured knowledge.

**Learning to Do:** Equipping people for the types of work needed now and in the future including innovation and adaptation of learning to future work environments.

**Learning to Live Together, and with Others:** Peacefully resolving conflict, discovering other people and their cultures, fostering community capability, individual competence and capacity, economic resilience, and social inclusion.

**Learning to be:** Education contributing to a person’s complete development: mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality.

These four pillars cannot be anchored solely in the one phase in a person’s life or in a single place. The periods and fields should complement each other and be interrelated in such a way that all people can get the most out of their own specific educational environment all through their lives. The concept of learning throughout life is the key that gives excess to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Learning is a developmental process of life which is purposive or goal directed. It is a relatively permanent change in behavior which occurs as a result of experience or practice. An individual goes on learning throughout his/ her life. Each and every aspect of human life thus is related with learning. Development of the individual from infancy to maturity is a continuous process and his or her adult characteristics depend on his or her previous growth and experience.

**“You can teach a student a lesson for the day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.”- Clay P. Bedford**

Lifelong learning is the "ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated"<sup>[1]</sup> pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. Therefore, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, but also self-sustainability, rather than competitiveness and employability.

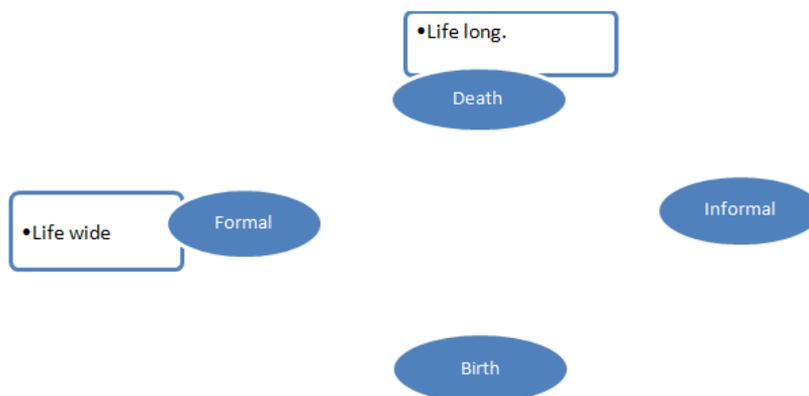
Lifelong learning crosses sectors, promoting learning beyond traditional schooling and throughout adult life (i.e. post-compulsory education).

The European Lifelong Learning Initiative defines lifelong learning as

“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 environments.” (Watson 2003: 3)

The European Commission (2001: 9) has given four broad and mutually supporting objectives of lifelong learning: personal fulfillment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability/adaptability”.

In this regard, lifelong learning has four life wide **dimensions** that transcend narrow economic and vocational aspects. These are:



**Figure 1**

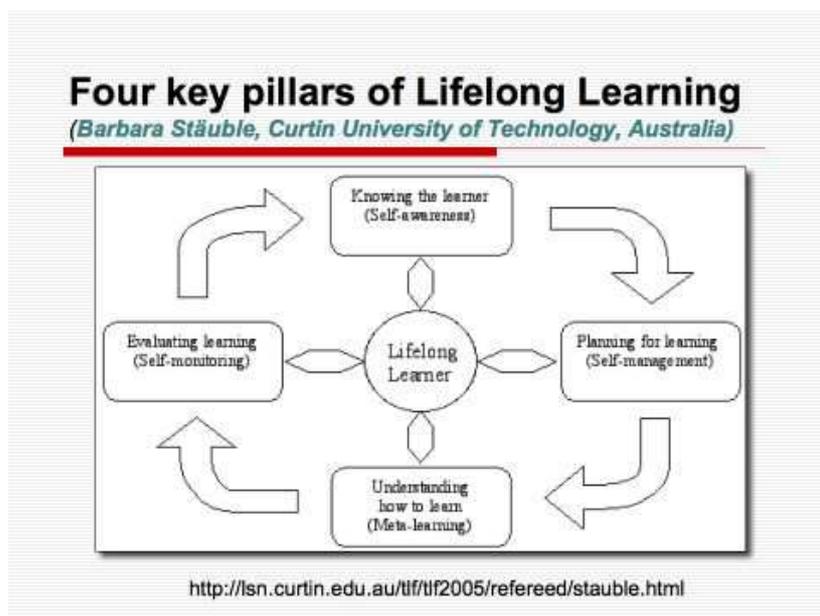
The distinction between formal and non-formal learning environments is about where learning takes place. Formal learning occurs within institutions established primarily to deliver education and training, often leading to recognized outcomes and qualifications while non-formal learning has intended education and training outcomes.

Lifelong learning is self directed and the individual takes responsibility for their learning. In lifelong learning, learners reflect on their knowledge and learning experiences.

Lifelong learning in professional practice refers to: the systematic seeking, acquisition, renewal and upgrading of knowledge skills and attitudes required of specialists throughout their careers.

Learning is a process not a product while skills are the product of learning.

Lifelong learning can be described as a cyclic process with four key pillars as shown below:



**Figure 2**

### **Knowing the Learner (Self Awareness)**

This focuses on understanding the learner's prior knowledge, motivations and attitudes towards learning. The value system of the learner plays an important role in defining his/her identity. The identity of the learner is embedded into a socio-economic context, which will impact his or her commitment to learning at a particular moment in time.

### **Planning for Learning (Self Management)**

This refers to the setting of goals and the development of a plan to achieve these goals. Many different typologies of learners have been identified, depending on their underlying motivation. The typology includes social relationship, external expectations, social welfare, professional advancement, escape/stimulation and cognitive interest. Key decisions for self-planned learning projects include: deciding what knowledge or skill to learn, specific activities or methods for learning, setting specific deadlines or targets.

### **Understanding How to Learn (Meta-Learning)**

This describes the awareness that a learner has developed with respect to different approaches to learning and

different learning styles. "Learning style" can be defined as "the complex manner in which, and conditions under which, learners most efficiently and most effectively perceive, process, store and recall what they are attempting to learn".

### **Evaluating Learning (Self Monitoring)**

This refers to a systematic analysis of all aspects of the learner's performance. Depending on the goals set initially, the outcomes can be of qualitative, quantitative or affective nature. The main feature of lifelong learning is the reflective nature of the entire cycle and upgrading of skills.

### **Skill**

Skill is the ability, coming from one's knowledge, practice, aptitude, etc., to do something well. People need a broad range of skills in order to facilitate the physical, mental and emotional well being. Skills can be classified into general-domain and specific-domain skills. Specific domain-skills would be useful only for a certain job. In general domain time management, teamwork, leadership, self motivation and other skills will be included. Social skills, thinking skills and emotional skills are the major components of life skills. Most important life skill is the ability to learn. Life skills are not always directly learned but often learned indirectly through experience and practice. There is no definite list of life skills; certain skills may be more or less relevant depending on one's life circumstances, culture, beliefs, age, geographic location etc. Life skills are imperative to deal with challenges and setbacks in life with optimism and help in being considerate and empathetic in our relationships, communities and to the environment.

### **Skill Enhancement**

Various skills are applied in various aspects of life; in human relationships; in learning about rights and responsibilities. In order to maintain a balance, one needs to enhance the inherited skills and to acquire new skills throughout life. Learning is skill enhancement and skill enhancement will help in empowering us to take positive actions, to protect ourselves and to promote health and positive social relationships.

Skill enhancement typically uses a combination of cognitive and behavior problem solving approaches, both of which are used to strengthen a persons' positive skill development. There are generally four parts to effect training in specific skill enhancement: assessment, skills program construction and selection, implementation and feedback or evaluation.

There is a need to introduce the skills at lower level in schools in order to enable the students to cope successfully with the lifelong challenges.

### **Suggestions**

Lifelong learners are typically characterised as "self directed" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999) or "self regulated" (Zimmerman, Bonner & Kovach, 1996). Garrison (cited in Merriam & Caffarella 1999, p. 300) presents a model of self directed learning that "integrates self management (contextual control), self monitoring (cognitive responsibility) and motivational (entering and tasks) dimensions to reflect a meaningful and worthwhile approach to self directed learning".

Though the initiative has already been taken by CBSE of introducing life skills education at senior secondary level. There is an urgent need to revamp the syllabus of continuing education to make the adults aware of the current scenario and to enable them to deal effectively with their identity, emotions, relationships, acquiring information, education and services and issues of adulthood. To make them aware of the distinction between livelihood skills and life skills. To

develop their social skills, thinking skills and emotional skills.

## CONCLUSIONS

The development of new skills is necessary for a person to overcome and effectively respond in certain crucial situations. There are still some countries where the lifelong learning is not considered an integral and important part of the national education system. In such countries provision is insufficient, fragmented and ad hoc, and clear linkages with other sectors such as work, agriculture, health are lacking. Here building coherent structures and linkages pose large challenges.

“Being ignorant is not so much a shame, as being unwilling to learn”- Benjamin Franklin

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