
LIFELONG LEARNING IN EUROPE AND ITS APPEARANCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

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Abstract. Since we encounter with globalization, fast changing economy and the explosion of technological development the task of human and society is to figure out how we can face all these changes? This review article aims to set out the need of lifelong learning (LLL) in the European society. The paper begins with an attempt to conceptualize the lifelong learning term, further on it presents the indispensability and European Union's policy regarding LLL. The article highlights the advantages of lifelong learning process; benefits become observable and recognizable at individual level and in society too. Our intention is to give a brief insight into the appearance of lifelong learning in formal education.

Keywords: lifelong learning, EU's lifelong learning policy, basic competencies.

Introduction

Amazing and quick changes in economical, technological domains had powerfully influenced the education and training system worldwide. Since we are facing information society, knowledge based economy the relevance and importance of adult learning have been considered indispensable in every modern society.

The globalization process and the growth of the fast-changing knowledge economy prompt people to upgrade their skills, it also stimulate them to cope with modern life, both in their work and in their private lives. In ever-changing technological universe: ability to learn and adapt to the needed new skills and training are basic skills.

The globalization process that started in the 90's and has been continuing, technology has created a new platform called cyberspace, and with this, in one hand borders in the labor market and education disappeared, on the other hand created a great potential to transmit knowledge and bring about a flexible labor force (Adekunle, 1999). At the beginning of the third millennium UNESCO presented a new interdisciplinary Project, "Learning without Frontiers", in which the establishment of culture of learning was highlighted.

Concerning the learning concept we had been facing with a paradigm shift; we are no longer considering learning as a formal process, which occurs in school benches, rather we are taking account of the informal and non-formal levels too. Contemporary education approach perceives learning as an on-going action in every field of life; life is education (Lindeman, 2011). According to Woodrow perspective "learning occur in our entire life from cradle to grave" learning is regarded as a conscious and intentional process. After the adaptation of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 education and training has received laureate attention, therefore they highlighted the importance to work together and learn from

one another in order to increase global competitiveness of the European Union, information flow and innovation (Kayman, Ilbas, and Arturmer, 2012).

Lifelong Learning

The process in which individuals maintain a high level of interest for further development throughout their career and after can be called lifelong learning. Here the individual has a continued desire to develop his skills and ability to digest information (Richardson, 1978).

Pongratz (1996) defined lifelong learning as a process of learning which occurs throughout life. In conformity with his theory lifelong learning refers to formal and informal learning. Formal learning is provided by schools, colleges and universities; community, state, military or occupationally sponsored programs; professional counseling and proprietary schools.

Informal learning can be seen as a process of self directed learning; individuals seek relevant information by using libraries, data resources, asking advice from an expert, experienced peer or adult (Pongratz, 1996).

In accordance to Cotton's theory (1998) positive attitudes toward learning, the willing to learn, reading, writing, speaking and listening, independent learning, research, forming learning strategies, developing higher order thinking skills, reflecting on own thought are possible ways to develop lifelong learning skills.

Lifelong learning is not a new concept; in 1980 Malcolm Shepherd Knowles predicted that LLL would become the organizing principle of education (Duyff., 1999). LLL refers to "all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competence within a personal, civic, social, and/or employment-related perspective" (European Commission, 2001; p.9).

In present time the learning society is the brick of modern, complex societies. Lifelong learning can be deemed like a guiding principle, leads to personal and professional development, economical growth and social cohesion (Laal and Laal, 2012).

Fleming (1997) regards LLL as an adult learning process, while people become aware of their way of thinking, acts, feelings, become critical, they can also work out adequate frames to adopt themselves to the dynamic, changing environment.

LLL involves all the strategy repertoires to create opportunity for people to take part of a conscious, continuous learning process. This process conduces to implement individual needs in relevant community needs (Abukari, 2004).

LLL takes place at all stages of life cycle and it is life-wide; it is embedded in all life contexts from the school to the workplace, the home and the community. A society based on learning carries the vision where every individual receives ample opportunities for learning irrespective of age and location (Green, 2002). LLL is viewed as a continuously supportive process which guides individuals to accumulate the wealth of knowledge, skills and values they will need during their lifetime to be deployed with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all aspects of fast-changing environment (Bryce et al, 2000).

LLL proposes that individuals further enhance the quality of their level of existence by developing their life based conduct, skills and knowledge. LLL also means that individuals are enabled to aim at perfecting their potential by continuous reinforcing and improving. LLL can be identified with the following: the entire educational system should focus on raising lifelong students; in addition to the educational system; industries, business and organizations will also need lifelong learning processes; individuals, within this respect, should be self-directed learners (Reinsch, 2007).

European Union policies regarding Lifelong Learning

In the second half of the 20'st century Europe was weakened by the two world wars. The growing economy of the United States of America, Japan's role in technology evolution and global market, the opening of Chinese market urged the signing of the Treaty on European Union (Official Journal of the European Union, 1992).

Commission of the European Communities (1995) adjudge that education is the root of unification progress, social stability and economic prosperity of member states, at the same time it states that education needs to be flexible, efficient, accessible and lifelong.

According to the Treaty of Amsterdam (Official Journal of the European Union, 1997), education assures economic and social progress, in particular. The objectives of the European Union- growth and market efficiency, ensuring a high level of education and training when entering the labor market and active participation of citizens in the knowledge economy, social cohesion, national identity, social justice, tolerance, multiculturalism, human rights and equality- can be achieved by life long learning (Panitsidou, Griva, Chostelidou, 2012).

The importance of lifelong learning was recognized by all member states, even if every member state had a different definition for lifelong learning, using different terminology and concepts to describe much the same notion of Lifelong Learning (LLL) (Laal, 2010).

The Council of the European Union (2000) considered education as being an integral part of economic and social policies, furthermore ensures social cohesion, enables integration of all citizens. The aim of education is to make knowledge accessible throughout life, therefore lifelong learning ensures transparency of qualifications promotes new basic skills, focuses on developing new learning centers.

The search for unified learning principles and set of rules valid throughout regions, was driven by the search of the EU Parliament to adopt strategies of employment

and social inclusion and was further consolidated by the adoption of the European Youth Pact in March 2005 (Summary on the European Youth Pact, 2005).

The Strategic Framework for education and training, born out of the need to consolidate and build upon the need of further development of learning in Europe, gave foundation for creating a framework for lifelong learning (European Parliament, 2006).

In May 2009, the Council adopted a new learning strategy "Education and Training 2020".The main objectives is to promote education and training; the Council set the following: personal and professional development of all citizens, economic prosperity and employability, while promoting democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue (Official Journal of the European Union, 2009).

Lifelong learning (LLL) plays a significant role in the strategy for 2020, new jobs will be created and it will require new skills. At the same time four indicators promotes LLL: improving quality and effectiveness of education, enhancing social cohesion and active citizenship, and fostering innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. LLL is priority not only at unskilled adults, but at the "more flexible" employment scheme ensures transition between jobs and other activities, helps to avoid loss of human capital and long-term unemployment (Commission of European Communities, 2009).

To better unify the concept, LLL is seen as the competence based learning, key factors, or competencies were identified in order to strengthen the concept and create an institution for LLL. Competencies recommended by the EU Council were defined in line with the EU's principles on equality and access for all. Thus, lifelong learning received a content that was built taking into consideration all social aspects. On the recommendation of the European Parliament and that of the Council, eight competencies were listed as being the defining elements of lifelong learning (European Parliament, 2006):

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competencies in science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competences

- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression

The European Union's long-term strategic objectives regarding education and training are the followings:

- Realizing lifelong learning and mobility.
- Improving efficiency and quality education and learning.
- Developing equality, social cohesion and active citizenship.
- Improving creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship in all kinds and level of education and training. (Europa, 2010).

Advantages of Life Long Learning on Individual and Society levels

The Commission of European Communities (2006a) states: It is never too late to learn. According to the Commission LLL brings along several social and economical returns: civic participation in social fields, better health, individual well-being and fulfillment.

Education permits people to cope with changes and challenges, also enables them to maintain mental and physical health, increase well being and self confidence, and combat feelings of social isolation or exclusion (Panitsidou, Griva, and Chostelidou, 2012).

Therefore, the interest of LLL is rooted in: a) increasing overall skills levels and ensuring basic skills acquisition by all citizens, b) helping respond to demographic changes, such as population aging in Europe and problems arising from migration and c) enhancing social integration, as low levels of initial education, unemployment, rural isolation and reduced opportunities may lead to marginalization of large numbers of people, while new forms of illiteracy, in the form of access to and use of ICT, intensify the phenomena of social exclusion (Commission of European Communities, 2006a).

The necessity of LLL became clear for the 21'st century individual, besides of this researchers try to clarify the impact of LLL on individual and society.

Hildebrand (2008) found five benefits of LLL:

- Sharpens the mind- continuous learning is bountiful for the brain, improves memory, keeps the mind busy and impedes the "aging" of the brain.
- Sharpens the confidence- new challenges, applied new learning helps people to gain confidence in their ability of learning, sharing information, with others and raises self confidence by becoming aware of their selves.
- Sharpens the interpersonal skills- usually learning is realized in social context, where people can improve their interpersonal skills by building relationships, sharing what they know and helping others to learn.
- Sharpens career opportunities- for those who have a strong desire to step forward to the next level in their career, LLL is essential, because they need to enhance their existing skills and probably also need to learn new skills or trade.
- Sharpens the ability to communicate- learning requires reading, listening and writing skills, these skills are the base of communication; communication is one of the condition to make one's way in life.

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

- First is the possibility of a better-paid job for those who can keep up with the latest information and technology; people who are flexible enough to refresh and retrain have greater opportunity to find bid fair jobs.

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- Second is the thriving of the self-esteem. Through lifelong learning people discover and accept new challenges, they can experience real accomplishment that leads them to a whole new level of self-awareness.
 - Third is freedom in the learning process. During the learning adults can share ideas and also teach each other. The outcome of the learning process may culminate in group project, but in the same time there are learning programs in which exactness counts and test are obligatory, even there creative teaching, traditional methods and adult learning style can be combined.
 - Fourth is the online learning method which means the school shifting to a 24/7 model, enable individuals to stay home and learn via e-instruments.
 - Fifth is making scholarship a habit, education becomes our second nature; who we are is what we learn, experience and do.

Nordstrom and Merz (2006) found the following advantages of LLL. While leading to a more enriched and fulfilling life we can expand our overall experience of life have a deeper understanding of all its elements, like: multidimensional life, academic learning, educational adventure, travel, and volunteerism. Further, LLL attracts personal relations, developing the social network. As effect LLL increases wisdom, therefore people can reflect and understand their successes and failures, become more aware of them and can shape their life perspectives. Simultaneously it creates a curious, hungry mind. It is a psychological fact that the more a human learns about a subject the more she/he wants to know. At the same time LLL opens the mind, learners can exchange their experiences, ideas, share input and values. LLL also nurtures the development of our innate natural abilities, aids in complete exploration of these abilities. Through the practice of lifelong learning every individual will bring her/his contribution to society. Having an elderly generation with much healthier brain functions on average would enable the transfer of knowledge from the older generation to the new one, bringing about a welcome social impact, and also bridging the generation gap. Pursuing LLL enhances our ability to adapt to change and to perform and to respond more adequately when faced with challenges (Laal, 2012).

What are the roots of LLL in school education?

Lifelong learning and the need to formulate practices that prepare students for lifelong learning, have their roots in our society turning into an information driven society, something what we now call "the 21st century".

A person has to "learn how to learn" means that she/he has to be equipped with vital skills, elementary knowledge in order to understand and process information (Cornford, 2002).

Educational institutions that commit to LLL focus on the student as the center of interest, at his or her needs, promote self-regulated learning and the advantages of learning life cycle. Creating LLL within the ranks of students creates the development of a different set of skills then before the inset of LLL, students are required to also have an increasing ability to identify the information required and to build specific attitudes towards learning. (Bryce and Withers, 2003; Boynak, 2004).

Çalik and Sezgin (2005) view education as a social aim and responsibility and focus on the role of teachers in the schooling process; teachers should be able to discover, recognize and take into consideration the different pace of learning, different rhythm and attention level of students. As educators they need to find the corresponding learning style for students, channeling them to fields that are more appropriate for their learning profiles.

In the new age of education individuals are expected to have certain basic skill set like: analytical thinking, synthesizing, problem solving, effective communication to perform in the knowledge-based society (Numanoglu, 1999).

The rapid change of technology has impacted society on a global level. Access to information and the need to process more information on a daily basis quickly became a necessity. The individual needs to be able to work with this "new" amount of information, filter, summarize and embrace parts of the information that is hurled towards him or her on a daily basis in increasing amounts. Thus the individual has to have the ability and tools necessary for learning to learn, in the years of development

and after, in order to be able to manage oneself in the information society. Productivity in almost every sector is directly linked to the ability and skill of every individual to process and better assimilate information, turning it into knowledge, once applied (Demirel, 2009).

The changes inherited from the information based society create the need for schools to look at education from a different perspective. Differences between 20th century education and the 21st century lifelong learning concept are the following (Longworth, 2003):

- Objectives – in the 20th century education systems focused on achieving academic objectives; in the 21st the objectives have to include besides academic achievement long term planning for learning and long term values. The aim of curriculums is to develop skills among students that can bridge the gap between school and life after school in order to utilize their knowledge.
- Relationship with the industry - in the 21st century LLL develops in school and covers all aspects of school activities. LLL also sets out long term planning, involving skills required after and outside school, taking into consideration the requirements of industry and society.
- In-service training of teachers – in the 20th century concept teachers would select their self-development based on personal aspirations, needs and desire. The 21st century concept requires every person in the educational system to have a personal and professional improvement plan which is embedded into the school development plan.
- The role of the teacher – 21st century approach requires not only the teacher to deliver curricula to students, but involves the entire community, seeking contribution from outside of the school, to bring in all walks of life in the development of LLL.
- Curriculum – in contrast with 20th century curriculum, LLL focuses on competencies, skills and knowledge development, building self-esteem and lifelong values among students. Changes in feedback and evaluation processes are also necessary, where the focus is not on faults but on the development of skills.
- Support services – LLL introduces a support system that aids and helps the student to, the individual, up to their families, involving guidance and counseling systems available for students and their families.
- Evaluation – this process in the 21st century LLL concept would include a student centric evaluation, where the performance of individuals would be measured and evaluated towards development plans and competencies chosen by them.
- Instruction methods and techniques – in the 20th century teachers had the role of delivering knowledge by using chalk, talk and paper exercises. However, teachers in the 21st century are required to be developers of learning skills using motivation and tools like multimedia and Networks to support the activities.
- Relationship with parents- in contrast to the last century, involvement of parents in the school life is required and develops awareness about active participation in school events.
- School activities- in order to enhance confidence, creativity, cultural vision of children, teacher, parents and the community, schools needs to organize extra-curricular activities, programs for all.

Taking a more general approach to create LLL in schools the curriculum and the teachers should confer social, life and learning skills to students, teaching also how to build on opportunities and create opportunities for themselves. To implement LLL into school curriculum a skill-based curriculum would need to be developed. Teachers should have the skills necessary to recognize and develop student potential and have active links and relations to other teachers, forums of knowledge sharing within industries and elements out of social life as well. Obtaining a higher educational result, institutions should take advantage of the informational net available and of other communication channels to further encourage the exchange of information (Bryce et al, 2000).

It needs to be mentioned that the competences of the teachers providing knowledge transfer within educational institutions are the main influencers of results obtained among students.

„However, the teaching of teacher educators cannot be equated with classroom teaching. They are required to deploy specific, additional competences, which set them apart from other teaching staff or academics. In fact, their competences have to do not only with first-order knowledge – about

schooling, as related to specific subject areas – but also second-order knowledge – about teacher education itself, teachers as adult learners and related pedagogies, as well as organizational knowledge of their own and their student teachers' workplaces." (Snoek, Swennen, and Klink, 2009)

The development of skills required for LLL in schools could be speeded up by the implementation of the following ideas (Helterbran, 2005):

- Deployment of different learning strategies - as students learn in different ways, our approach to learning should be guided by the preferences of students when learning.
- How to use curricula, when to deploy it and the manner in which feedback is provided on learning is paramount in LLL. Using in class evaluation that is in line with the LLL concept would further add value to the educational system.
- Providing evaluation, feedback in a general sense, on the activities of students should be motivating in order for the individual to be able to assess their own performance and draw conclusions for development.
- Implementing knowledge with real life application will bring students closer to valuing their learning and focusing more on the development of their skill set.

Discussion and conclusion

In the new view of the world, learning without boundaries has gained new meaning in the process of teaching-learning. As the result of globalization the labor market undergoes continuous change. In the age of technology and information the individual can only then keep up the pace with our changing world if she or he gathers information; adapts to change with success and changes also him or herself. The key to successful adaptation to change is Lifelong Learning.

The concept of learning throughout life was born in the second half of the 20th century. Definition of the concept of Lifelong Learning (LLL) was the calling of many authors; they describe a process that enables the individual to have carrier planning, advancement in the specific field, and successful adaptation to the new conditions on the labor market. (Richardson, 1978 & Pongratz, 1996). Others look at LLL as a positive attitude towards learning, the will to better and develop one in order to be more competent, knowledgeable.

Lifelong learning is the cornerstone of a learning society, where the individual is aware of his or her thoughts, feelings and actions, all this is at the same time a conscious and continuous process. (Feleming 1997, Abakuri, Green 2002, Laal 2012). As a guiding principle, LLL sets the foundation for our search of knowledge, development of abilities, appreciation/embrace of values, with the purpose of preparing the individual to face with confidence our changing environment.

LLL was viewed as the key for successful placement on the labor market, healthy lifestyle and adult training, however later it was adopted as being a form of school education.

The Commission of European Communities (2006) recognizes that the foundation of social stability and economic prosperity is teaching. The position of the EU regarding LLL is that it is necessary in order to maintain and materialize cultural diversity, tolerance in all forms and social cohesion. In the absence of a unified and adequate education system, there cannot be a labor market allowing the free passage of citizens and successful placement on the labor market. The EU Parliament (2009) developed and published a list of competencies that ensure in terms of LLL a successful lifestyle/implementation into everyday life. To the central position of Lifelong Learning within the EU's Educational policy can be underlined by the following arguments:

- Personal well-being
- Economical development and economical stability
- The participation of the individual in civic activities
- Reduction of unemployment.

(Commission of European Council, 2006)

In the development of modern society, implementation of LLL is paramount, as it has a positive impact on the mind, confers confidence in one's abilities, develops interpersonal skills, creates career opportunities, and develops communication skills (Hildebrand, 2008).

Based on the literature obtained during the creation of this paper, LLL was first mentioned in schools or in relation to educational environments in the year 2000, and reveals much about the continuity of education and teaching within the EU. The competencies and skills required for LLL start to develop early in life, starting in school.

In one hand it would be the object of a further study to analyze how the roots of LLL are present in elementary education?

On the other hand it would be interesting to find out which are the LLL components that we need to acquire during basic formal education?

How does current education create the necessary foundation for LLL?

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