

## LIFELONG LEARNING AS A CRUCIAL EDUCATIONAL MINDSET

ANNA GUSEVA, associate professor, PhD (Linguistics)  
*Kharkiv Karazin National University*

Globalization and the growth of the fast-changing knowledge economy mean that people require upgrading their skills throughout their adult lives to cope with modern challenges, both in their work and in their private lives. Nowadays, there is an increasingly important basic skill in ever-changing technological universe: the ability to learn and adapt to the needed new skills and training. This paper seeks to research into the concept of lifelong learning, giving an account of what we achieve through learning, and explains the reasons for why we need to learn lifetime.

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 [1]. In the 21st century, we all need to be lifelong learners. Our living conditions are changing 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 [3].

Lifelong learning covers the whole range of learning that includes: formal and non-formal learning. It also includes the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that people acquire in their day-to-day experiences [2]. Lifelong learning is a continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual. It not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, but also competitiveness and employability. The term lifelong, as applied to education or learning, has been in circulation for more than a quarter of a century [4]. Lifelong learning requires that learning outcomes from different settings and contexts can be linked together.

The Cedefop glossary [5] defines 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) [5, 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, [5, p. 112];

There are numerous assumptions following lifelong learning. We can summarize the greatest benefits of lifelong learning as:

- 1) Change adaptation. A lifelong learner will keep up with society by staying current and aware of changes in such areas as technology, news and political trends or finance and money issues. Our children adapt and grow and seem to thrive on staying up on the latest technology. Lifelong learners look for opportunities to embrace the new technologies;

2) A bigger paycheck. Job promotions go to the employees who are the best versed and educated in their job fields. New jobs and positions are created all the time. New careers open up all the time. A viable applicant or employee is one who has the certifications and diplomas in place all ready. A lifelong learner stays on top of their field so that when opportunities come knocking, they can answer immediately;

3) Enriching and fulfilling environment. To people for whom continuing education becomes a second nature, they can look forward to active and meaningful lives instead of 20+ years of sitting around and watching life passing by. We all have subjects in which we are interested in. A lifelong learner uses opportunities to explore these topics which they find compelling. That can reduce stress in professional as much as in personal interaction.

Lifelong learning is not a fad or intellectual fashion but an observable and essential part of the world in which we live. It offers an attractive vision of sustainable prosperity, a knowledgeable citizenry and a civilized society in which access and equity no longer figure as constraints. Internationally, there has been a torrent of official reports promoting lifelong education, including three Green Papers in the UK, similar papers in Norway, Germany and Ireland, legislation in Spain, the USA and Japan, as well as a UNESCO world conference, a series of statements from the OECD and a White Paper from the European Commission. Lifelong education is therefore being taken very seriously and has overtaken the more limited approach subsumed under the various concepts of vocational education and training, adult education, community education and recurrent education.

Lifelong education has a range and universality that should be mirrored in diversity of provision: through formal and informal courses at institutions, the workplace, professional associations, adult education organizations, community organizations, etc. The proportion of adults engaging in learning that may or may not be related to their working lives is growing and will continue to grow. This provides a much broader perspective than mere vocational education, confined to specific career preparation and training. From now on one-off front-end education will never be sufficient in an internationally competitive, ever-changing business world.

### References

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