BEING A TEACHER IN KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY:
TEACHING AS A LIFELONG PROCESS OF LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

India is emerging as a knowledge society. The thrust is on acquiring new knowledge with the integration of formal, non-formal education and informal education which is available to us in the form of unlimited learning opportunities at every step of our lives. In the changing world and globalization, lifelong learning has become quite important which brings to the fore the fact that one has to keep him or herself abreast with the change around and adapt to lifelong learning situations. Lifelong learning helps in smooth transition in a rapidly changing workplace environment.

This paper explores the crucial role that a teacher has to play in a lifelong learning process in the context of Indian society. The paper focuses on the significance of a teacher in lifelong learning sector in India in striving for continuous improvement in the learners through reflective practice. A teacher has to create and provide effective and stimulating opportunities for learning through high quality teaching that enables the development and progression of all learners.

KEYWORDS: Lifelong learning; India; Knowledge Societies; learning opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

With the changing world and globalization, the learning needs of the society around us are also changing. The society is no longer the traditional learning society but has emerged as a “lifelong learning society”. The world today realizes the fact that learning occurs at all stages of life, in different forms and in variety of arenas. Learning never ceases and continues till death, hence the concept of ‘cradle-to-grave’ for lifelong learning gains prominence in the present day world and work environment. Thus we can say that the present society around us is a knowledge society; it is a human society in which thrust is on knowledge for justice, solidarity, democracy and peace. This is a society in which knowledge is a force for changing society.
DEFINITION OF LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong education covers “formal, non-formal and informal patterns of learning throughout the life cycle of an individual for the conscious and continuous enhancement of the quality of life, his own and that of society” (Dave, 1976). According to the Free Dictionary, Lifelong learning is the provision or use of both formal and informal learning opportunities throughout people's lives in order to foster the continuous development and improvement of the knowledge and skills needed for employment and personal fulfillment. Lifelong Learning is more necessary than ever in our changing world, ecologically and economically precarious world. Lifelong learning has also been defined by the Commission for a Nation of Lifelong Learners (1997), as “a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals; help 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.”

This definition emphasizes lifelong learning as:

1. Continuous (it never stops);
2. Supportive (it is not done alone);
3. Stimulating and empowering (it’s self-directed and active, not passive);
4. Incorporating knowledge, values, skills, and understanding (it’s more than what we know); Spanning a lifetime (it happens from our first breath to our last);
5. Applied (it’s not just for knowledge’s sake);
6. Incorporating confidence, creativity, and enjoyment (it’s a positive, fulfilling experience); and
7. Inclusive of all roles, circumstances, and environments (it applies not only to our chosen profession, but to our entire life).

In this context UNESCO has highlighted the following four pillars of lifelong learning for the 21st Century.

- Learning to know by mastering cognitive skills & collaboration.
- Learning to do by mastering skills & production.
- Learning to be by admitting multiple intelligent (MI) and sustainable human development.
- Learning to live together by dialogue and tolerance.
These four pillars of knowledge cannot be anchored solely in one phase in a person's life or in a single place. There is a need to re-think when in people's lives education should be provided, and the fields that such education should cover. 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 advantages of lifelong learning in the long run in real life settings in work environment are immense. These are:

**EMPLOYERS**
- Better trained workforce
- Up-to-date knowledge
- Improve employee morale and commitment
- Improve staff problem solving potential.

**EMPLOYEE**
- Improve promotion prospects
- Improve employability
- Improve earning potential
- Gain university-recognized or accredited qualifications.

**LEARNERS AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

In the Knowledge Society, every learner is a lifelong learner. To keep up with the changing world and the new emerging challenges, a learner has to keep him or herself updated with the new emerging knowledge and thus there is increasing need to focus on lifelong learning. The content and methods of basic education have to take into account preparation for lifelong learning. The development of lifelong learning needs an integration of education into the real world. The challenge for lifelong learning is to fundamentally rethink learning, teaching, and education for the information age in an attempt to change mind-sets. Lifelong learning involves and engages learners of all ages in acquiring and applying knowledge and skills in the context of authentic, self-directed problems. By integrating working and learning, people learn within the context of their work on real-world problems.

The mental activities involved in learning may be divided into four categories:

(a) Social interaction,

(b) Processing verbal and other symbolic information,

(c) Direct experience, and
(d) Reflection

TEACHERS AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN INDIA

Teachers have a crucial role in lifelong learning sector. They have to value all learners individually and equally and thus strive for continuous improvement through reflective practice. A teacher has to create and provide effective and stimulating opportunities for learning through high quality teaching that enables the development and progression of all learners.

The challenges for a teacher in lifelong learning society are immense. Being a teacher in the Knowledge society requires new specific competencies: a teacher has to deal with new knowledge, new ways for accessing knowledge; with a networked world and with new types of co-operation and collaboration; with a society in which knowledge plays a crucial role. As such, teaching in not a static but an evolving, continuous and lifelong process. Learning has become a determining factor in ensuring that content and relevance of teaching pedagogy is in accordance with the technological practices existing. The concept of continuous learning has become important because it places priority on acquiring, adapting and learning from change. It is closely related to continuous professional development, not just taking courses but developing skills and learning how to learn so that life's experiences become a learning lab. The concept of continuous learning for a teacher has become quite prominent over the past few years.

PRE-REQUISITES OF LIFELONG LEARNING FOR TEACHER

In the teaching profession acquired knowledge, skills and competencies need to be optimally used to suit the changing educational scenario. If the teachers do not understand the reforms and cannot apply them and are not committed to them, they will not be able to achieve the set goals of improving the quality of education. Lifelong learning is therefore about acquiring and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge and qualifications from the pre-school years to post-retirement. Teachers are expected to value all forms of learning formal, non-formal and informal. A teacher has to know and identify the needs of the learner, his motivation levels and his immediate environment. The teacher needs to identify ways to offer effective support for learning, recognize learner entitlement in the learning process, enhancing learners’ access to and participation in programmes of learning. A lifelong learner has to be motivated for enjoying his learning so that effective and appropriate methods and strategies are adopted for teaching and supporting learning and learning objectives.

In lifelong learning, the teacher has to be careful about effective communication and interaction with the learner and for this there has to be an impressive verbal power, proper and effective teaching and learning sessions in which not only the learner has to be encouraged to take responsibility of their own learning but also encourage learners’ understanding of the assessment process and its importance.

Equally important is for a teacher to remain in touch with current trends and developments in one’s field and associated domain of knowledge and on the basis of it, seek regular feedback about the world happenings and its relevance with one’s activities, remain open to the feedback and positive criticism and make appropriate adjustments with ongoing feedback so as to ensure...
meeting closely priorities and values. The follow up in lifelong learning settings has to be building of a body of knowledge to solve problems and generate great ideas which can further inspire lifelong learners and encourage him or her to develop a temperament of their own to think more innovatively and rigorously and thus develop a culture of learning at all stages of life.

CONCLUSION

Most of the teachers in Indian settings are still not comfortable with the concept of lifelong learning in the knowledge societies and the traditional formal education is still part of most of their routine teaching. However, the teacher needs to understand that if a learner is not encouraged for lifelong learning, he or she may be left behind and the opportunities surfacing in the new global knowledge society may not be available to them. The responsibility lies on the shoulders of the teacher to use lifelong learning as a guiding principle to shape the lives of the learners and also encourage other fellow teachers to adopt lifelong learning to development and strengthen their teaching which recognizes the need to grow and learn. Every teacher has to inculcate a variety of required skills and develop suitable attitudes to become lifelong learners. A teacher can contribute to effective lifelong learning in the learners by following steps:

• Reflection
• setting goals
• assessing knowledge and skills
• creating a learning plan
• putting the plan into action
• evaluating and refocusing

A teacher has to do lot of reflection and fully understand the important of lifelong learning and thus align it with curriculum, set goals to achieve these and then assessment knowledge and skills of the learner which can effectively promote student-achievement and create environment to support learning which will help them grow as lifelong learners.

As lifelong learning is concerned with the personal growth of individuals throughout their lifespan, pedagogy related to different learning styles and different types of intelligence need to be demonstrated by the teacher besides creating new learning opportunities including integrating formal, non-formal and informal learning with new information and communication technologies. The teacher can use transaction strategies like collaborative techniques, experiential learning, effective technology, reflective model, etc. After the teacher put the plan into action, there has to be evaluation and if the need arises after assessing the outcomes of the lifelong learning process, there can be refocusing of the entire process. This can result in a stable learning society in India which otherwise is not possible unless teachers in training and teachers in service understand and come to terms with lifelong learning ideas, concepts and practices.
REFERENCES


