



Development Of Lifelong Learning Skills For Sustainable Development In Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The speed of change and the explosion of knowledge require individuals to engage in constant learning. Knowledge has become more broadly defined and flexible, diverse and available at different times and in different places. Thus, for the sustainability of individual development, lifelong learning remains mandatory as it promotes learning beyond traditional schooling and throughout adult life. The basic premise of lifelong learning is that it is not feasible to equip learners at school, college, or university with all the knowledge and skills needed to prosper throughout their lifetimes. Therefore, individuals need to continually enhance their knowledge and skills, address immediate problems, and participate in a process of continuous vocational and professional development. The issue of lifelong learning skills is imperative to empower teachers and students to manage their own learning in a variety of contexts throughout their lifetimes.

Keywords: learning skills, development, Lifelong learning

INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning skills have become a foundation for intrinsic learning activities as they foster a mixture of skills necessary in a changing world. It is a crucial necessity to build individuals and societies. It strives for essential learning dimensions such as self-directed learning, collaborative learning, learning on-demand, and organizational learning (Loyens, Magda, & Rikers, 2008). It is a core dimension of learning that leads to initiative and diagnosis of learning needs. Consequently, formulating appropriate learning goals, identifying of human and material resources for learning, choosing best alternative tools, implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating teaching and learning outcomes are fundamental.

Integrating lifelong learning promotes career readiness in every sphere of human development, hence leading to changing paradigms for the assimilation of 21st century skills (AACTE,2010). In other words, every program is designed so as to reinforce teachers' and students' generic skills in communicating, collaborating, problem-solving, computer literacy, and foreign language efficiency. By implication, it aims at designing knowledge, values, and skills that provide for confidentiality and creativity. Hence, the premise of lifelong learning relies on learning that has the characteristics of developing attitudes towards researches, independent study skills, learning strategies, as well as higher-order thinking skills.

The Concept of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is a process of developing knowledge, skills, and interests that provides opportunities for teaching and learning. It is not restricted or constrained to specific time, periods, years, certain organizations or institutions .Since, it is a natural tendency to improve personal capacities, it becomes a continuous process in which individuals retain and develop their life-based conduct, knowledge, and skills. The main aim of lifelong learning is to reinforce and improve the quality of an individual's life or to develop their personal potential to the utmost level (McGarrah, 2015).

In the educational sector, or in whatever situation, lifelong learning has served as a supportive process. This is because it stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire the knowledge, values, skills, and understanding they require throughout their lifetimes. In other words, the characteristic or desire for lifelong learning is based on the fact that it incorporates permanent, compassionate, stimulating attributes that amalgamates knowledge, values, and skills that span throughout a lifetime. Thus, it reinforces corporate confidence, creativity, and inclusiveness in all functional activities. As a matter of fact, it is asserted that lifelong learning entails a broad range of skills and professional attributes that reflect creativity, divergent and critical thinking, as well as teamwork, especially in heterogeneous groups. This circumstance generates work autonomy that develops cognitive and interpersonal skills among individuals' social and civic competences.

Traits and Skills of Lifelong Learners

Lifelong learning is principally self-directed learning. The humanistic characterization of self-directed learning implies a sense of unique responsibility, self-actualization, and the acceptance of personal responsibility for one's own learning. The process involves taking certain initiative, with the support and collaboration of others. In other words, it reflects on constant interaction and social awareness that critically analyzes and diagnoses learning needs with specific reference to competencies (McGarrah, 2015).

Also, lifelong learning skills specifically require commitment and passion for knowledge. Thus, having access to a relevant knowledge-base is fundamental for sustaining permanent skills and confidence. When competency in a domain increases, the learner begins to develop his or her own domain-related goals, chooses and employs more adequate strategies, and shows an increasing ability to operate independently (Svetlana, 2016). An expert does not only possess a vast amount of domain knowledge, but is also expected to contribute knowledge to the domain. Lifelong motivation comes from strong internal goals such as a desire for personal growth, capitalizing on existing knowledge to supplement professional competence, and ensuring accountability for practice renewal.

Lifelong learning skills and their attributes are derivable from experiences and social context and sometimes from the teachers, parents, or peers' modeling. For instance, when someone has to see knowledge as factual or objective truth, the adoption of a critical and constructive attitude toward learning will not be visible. Thus, the application of lifelong learning systematically aim at making learning more provocative and constructive activity, in which prior knowledge plays an important role in facilitating further learning. A prerequisite for lifelong learning is to activate and make explicit prior concepts that are relevant to the topic and process of learning. Without this prerequisite, the learning will result in inert knowledge and lack transferability to other situations.

In addition, the attributes common among lifelong learners relate to an ability and willingness to be self-critical, self-correcting, and flexible in thinking and acting (Loyens, Magda, & Rikers, 2008). Lifelong learning is an attitudinal shift that means one can be open to new ideas, decisions, skills, or behaviors. Skills for lifelong learning relate to the need to acquire, process, and transfer knowledge. In this case, some of the processes or the curriculum is designed for adults, teachers, and students to determine what they need to learn and how to make and carry out relative learning plan (Albanes, 2000). Individuals need to know how to locate appropriate information, evaluate its quality, organize it, and use it effectively. This is because there is a need to be critical and creative thinkers, problem solvers, and decision makers for regular self-reflection in learning perspectives.

An abundance of lifelong learning skills supports the role of experiences and reflection in continuing education. It allows learners to uncover gaps in knowledge and skills that form the basis of learning goals. Thus, the steps to lifelong learning can be articulated as reflection, setting goals, assessing knowledge and skills, creating a learning plan, putting the plan into action, and evaluating and refocusing.

Lifelong Learning Skills as Emerging Paradigm Shift for Sustainable Development

Lifelong learning, fundamentally, intends to recreate learning, teaching, and education for the information age. It is an attempt to change mind-sets, thus producing an emerging paradigm shift from the traditional

aspect of knowledge to an informative age for sustainable development. In this case, it integrates and applies knowledge and skills in the context of authentic and problem-based learning perspectives.

Learning flows from a variety of activities in respect of observing how other people functions through discussion, looking up information, trying something for oneself and learning from trial and error, and reflecting on all the previous activities (Salim, Mahmood, & Ahmad, 2018). On this note, the mental activities reflect on four components: social interaction, processing verbal and other symbolic information, direct experience, and reflection. These have remained the categories in which lifelong learning skills are acquired.

Lifelong learning is a form of self-initiated education that is focused on personal development. While there is no standardized definition of lifelong learning, it has generally been taken to refer to the learning that occurs outside of a formal educational institute, such as a school, university, or corporate training. The emergent skills required for lifelong learning involve a shift from the traditional model of learning to the development of innovation skills. New technology and business models have prompted innovative thinkers and employees with a growth mindset. The development of innovation skills in the classroom has become the basic objective as a way to help equip students with the 21st century skills to succeed in the future. In knowledge-oriented societies, the inevitability of lifelong learning implies that circumstance and environment designate different objectives and characteristics that define society's and individuals' current expectations. This therefore resulted in the generation of new ideas, new theories, new products, and new knowledge that must be fully integrated or internalized.

Communication and Lifelong Learning Skills

Communication requires the ability to express thoughts clearly and persuasively both in orally or writing form, articulate opinions or coherent instructions through speeches. Communication skills are also embedded in information, media, and ICT competencies. These skills are highly valued in the workplace and public life (Salim, etal 2018). By implication, lifelong learning is shaped by current and emerging technologies, taking into account the large proportion of messages that are mediated by one or more digital devices. In this context, effective communication skills can help to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunications among teachers and students in the school system.

Lifelong learning becomes more accommodating and convenient for grabbing certain skills through effective communication strategies. It has remained a viable element in drawing relationships and ideas, thus generating the capacity for critical thinking and problem-solving. In these circumstances, there is the possibility of collaboration in human activities, developing the potential for initiative and adaptability in blending learning activities that will provide the medium of engaging in effective oral and written communication (Chris, Serena & Amonoo-Kuofi, 2019).

As expressed by Felix (2001), communication is embedded with time flexibility, a wealth of information, and reinforcement of learning exercises, which helps to personalize knowledge, create flexibility in discussion, as well as develop confidence in classroom interaction. Therefore, improving communication skills plays an important role in the process of lifelong learning or personal development and career advancement. Being knowledgeable is not enough; one needs to know how to communicate the knowledge clearly in order to drive progress.

Critical Thinking and Lifelong Learning Skills

Scriven & Paul (2007) asserts that critical thinking is a process of evaluating information as a guide to belief and action. For Wade (1995) it is the ability and willingness to assess claims and make objective judgments on the basis of well-supported evidence. Thus, the success of every individual highly depends on critical thinking, which is the ability to analyze an idea or opinion rather than simply accepting personal reasoning as sufficient proof.

Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It presupposes assent to rigorous standards of excellence and command of interests for job disposition. It remains fundamental for lifelong learning and problem-solving embedded with the domain of general thinking skills.

Critical thinking and lifelong learning skills has remained fundamental in the acquisition of knowledge. This is because of the inherent relationship in globalization or mobility in skills. The global knowledge is driven by information and technology. In other words, technology has placed increasing demands on lifelong learning skills to accelerate academic excellence in different areas of specialization (Voogt & Roblin, 2010). This depicts that every lifelong learning activities must reflect on flexible potential skills that will integrate diverse sources of knowledge in solving problems.

Sustainability in lifelong learning requires critical thinking that is purposeful and judgmental. In this circumstance, what is expected is visible interpretation of results, visible analysis, visible evaluation, and visible inference. In other words, critical thinking requires explanation of the evidential, conceptual, and methodological considerations upon which every judgment is based.

Critical thinking and lifelong learning skills intertwine as knowledge is bordered on for forming a decision. This also helps to empower individuals to manage themselves and persevere in the face of challenges. Indeed, given that problem solving, critical thinking, and reasoning skills are essential for lifelong learning (Sawyer, 2007). These skills allow teachers and students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary not only for academic success but also for their overall well-being.

In another development, critical thinking requires individuals to engage in as much careful thought and assessment of educational institution mandates as possible in order to not lose sight of their needs as social beings and what makes life worthwhile. This resulted to repositioning individual experiences or mind set for a fulfill life. In today's world, individuals need the provision of relevant educational experiences that nurture passions, problem-solving abilities, higher level thinking skills, and creativity. This is because critical thinking draws on skills such as communication, information literacy, and the ability to examine, analyze, interpret, and evaluate evidence.

Creativity and lifelong learning skills

Creativity and lifelong learning skills are most often cited when referring to 21st century skills. It is increasingly being recognized as an attribute that separates those who are prepared for more and more complex life and work environment in the 21st century from less articulate ones. On this note, Scott (2015) defines creativity as the ability to generate new ideas and solutions, break new ground that inspires new ways of thinking, pose unfamiliar questions, and arrive at unexpected answers. In a context of global competition and task mechanization, individual capacities for innovativeness and creativity are increasingly seen as requirements for lifelong learning skills.

Creativity is the main source of progress in lifelong learning. Indeed, it plays a key role in increasing human capital, which is one of the main drivers of progress and sustainable development in knowledge society. Creativity is often seen as a special ability that is not common to every individual in society (Pasi, 2009). In recent years, there has been a growing understanding of the role of creativity in lifelong learning. The development of creative thinking underpins continuous learning. The need to integrate creativity and innovation into lifelong learning requires adult learning curricula to be reshaped so that learners become confident and active citizens capable of creating new ideas in their communities and societies.

Creativity has remained more novel or logical as it includes many different ways of thinking, communicating, and exhibiting of behavior that are equally important in daily life activities. Hence, it is part of individual and collective thinking for transformation of ideas. Building lifelong learning skills that embedded creativity has become an important aspect of learning in most organizations or institutions that are operating at the edge of creative businesses and innovation industries (Sawyer, 2007). Thus, the application of creativity requires an ingredient of intelligence, imagination, and novel ideas that can generate multiple results. Different intelligences are related to different forms of creativity. In other words, imagination feeds creativity, and creative ideas give meaning to our lives. This implies that everyone has creative abilities and talents of some kind. The challenge is that individuals are not always aware of what their creative capacities are, or how to use them in situations that are not directly related to particular creative processes.

Consequently, creativity and lifelong learning are highly correlated in respect of improving motivation, self-esteem, sensitive and open to new ideas. In this context, it emphasizes understanding of the need to solve problems using alternative approaches and techniques, collaboration, exploring and discovering of visible facts.

Problem Solving and Lifelong Learning Skills

Society is becoming more dynamic through the forces of technological diversifications, which has resulted in a variety of conflicts in thoughts, imaginations, and ideas. This conflict can only be addressed or solved by the process of a problem-based learning (PBL) approach. Problem-based learning skills are a constituent element of lifelong learning targeting working with real issues, peer collaboration, and focusing on critical questions that frame the issue.

Lifelong learning skills are integral to the aspirations of young people and adults. The continued development and establishment of clear lifelong learning skills has become a key component that addresses the issues of problem-solving-based learning (Svetlana, 2016). This, of course, is dependent upon building knowledge and skills together with developing intellectual and professional growth.

Problem-based learning is instructional methodologies that probes or makes individuals have a deeper understanding of the subjects. It is a format that simultaneously develops both problem-solving strategies and disciplinary knowledge base skills. It is also a centered-approach activity that makes a paradigm or fundamental shift from teaching to demonstration approach and from a convergent way of thinking to a divergent way of thinking (Hosseini & Assareh, 2010). The process is aimed at using the power of reliable problem solving to enhance learning and motivation.

In the educational system, problem-based learning is a learner-centred approach. The teacher plays the role of a facilitator who guides the learners through an inquiry to solve a problem. It increases deep learning and allows learners to develop skills in problem solving, logical thinking, creative thinking, and communication (Sendag, 2009).

Challenges for the Acquisition Lifelong Learning Skills for Sustainable Development.

Lifelong learning is an extension of traditional corporate learning and development approach; hence, it results in unique challenges as follows:

There is an increased responsibility for learners to discover and pursue learning opportunities once they move beyond formal education. Lifelong learning requires individuals to be active learners who have the skills to learn in a self-motivated and self-directed manner. Individuals must develop the motivation and capacity to learn independently early in life, and an inability to respond positively eventually results in inequality in knowledge and sustainability of development and growth.

The state of the learner will definitely affect the level of lifelong learning skills. Every individual has a unique background with a set of challenges that must be taken into account. Their learning ability, mindset, engagement, and day-to-day emotional states play key roles in determining how effective learning opportunities can be for them (Stefan, 2019).

Learning comes in the form of the learner's mindset. Someone with a fixed mindset will typically believe that intelligence cannot be improved, and will lack the motivation to do so. The learner may have anxiety about learning in the academic sense and even see it as stress instead of self-improvement. Alternatively, learners with a growth mindset believe that intelligence is malleable and take a more positive and engaged approach to learning. In this case, such individuals are likely to be full of curiosity and see difficult challenges as exciting opportunities for growth.

As lifelong learning is not confined to traditional classroom settings, many of the learning opportunities will take place in an individual's own time which is sometimes difficult to create. This could also take place during an exchange, in the evenings, or during weekends in the case of travel and retreats. True lifelong learning happens at all times not only through classroom activities.

Lifelong learning requires consistency or reinforcement for retention of some experiences. In other words, consistency is one of the biggest challenges. This, of course, is the core part of lifelong learning. Unlike corporate training and structured learning, skills and traits such as self-motivation and time management

are critical for consistency as much of the learning will be voluntary. For extracurricular learning, individuals are also giving up their free time, which is a sacrifice that some will struggle with (Stefan, 2019). There is also the fact that some may simply become bored or too challenged by the learning, which can also lead to drop-off rates. These elements negatively impact on all the stages of lifelong learning.

The difference between generations is a visible challenge. Older learners may be more inclined to classroom settings at set periods during work hours. They may be less open to learning outside of work due to family concerns and may be less willing to travel to conferences or retreats. Younger workers may be the opposite, as they have more time and may be more eager to advance their careers. There is also a difference in how generations use technology and different learning techniques. Young employees may be keener on video, animation, as opposed to textbooks or lectures. This situation has its inherent challenge to both adult and young learners.

The curriculum created for lifelong learning skills may generate a new challenge compared to traditional corporate learning in the form of who directs it. Besides, every individual may have a higher level perspective on determining which skills to practice to enhance internal curiosity, autonomy, and motivation. Furthermore, there may be skills and knowledge that either the teachers or students want to learn that is relevant specifically, but it is difficult to capture based on societal demands. Finding a balance here between what is to be learnt and what is not to be studied remains a vicious challenge.

CONCLUSION

Lifelong learning skills are the basis for fundamental learning activities as they cultivate a mixture of skills that are mandatory in the changing world. It is a decisive necessity to build individuals and the future of societies. It strives for indispensable learning outcomes such as self-directed learning, collaborative learning, learning on-demand, and organizational learning. Every program is designed so as to strengthen teachers' and students' generic skills in communicating, collaborating, problem-solving, computer literacy, and foreign language efficiency. In this case, the intention is to ascertain knowledge, values, and skills that provide for confidence and creativity. Lifelong learning skills rely on the characteristics of developing attitudes toward learning, reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It is also asserted that research and independent learning, study skills and learning strategies and higher-order thinking skills is the feature of lifelong learning skills. Integrating lifelong learning objectives endorses career readiness in every sphere of human development, hence resulted to changing paradigm for the assimilation of 21st century skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The administrator and designer of the curriculum should make teaching and learning more practical for lifelong learning skills.
- The teachers should be trained for the enhancement of creative learning activities in the class.
- The adult learners should be trained in a manner to incorporate knowledge, values, and skills that span a lifetime.
- The management of the educational system should provide necessary learning opportunities to recreate learning and reinforce learning exercises that help to personalize knowledge.

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