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Lifelong Learning

Dr. Rita Jhajhria

Sanjay Teachers Training College, Lal-Kothi, Jaipur
Email- ritajhajhria47@gmail.com, Mobile- 9414265698

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Abstract

Lifelong learning is the pursuit of knowledge, skills, and competences beyond formal education for personal or professional reasons. It's a voluntary, self-motivated process that can occur naturally through life experiences, both on purpose and by accident.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, knowledge, skills, competences etc.

What is Life Long Learning?

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.

Lifelong learning does not necessarily have to restrict itself to informal learning, however. It is best described as being voluntary with the purpose of achieving personal fulfillment. The means to achieve this could result in informal or formal education.

Importance of Lifelong Learning

Whether pursuing personal interests and passions or chasing professional ambitions, lifelong learning can help us to achieve personal fulfillment and satisfaction.

It recognizes that humans have a natural drive to explore, learn and grow and encourages us to improve our own quality of life and sense of self-worth by paying attention to the ideas and goals that inspire us.

We're all lifelong learners

But what does personal fulfillment mean?

The reality is that most of us have goals or interests outside of our formal schooling and jobs. This is part of what it means to be human: we have a natural curiosity and we are natural learners. We develop and grow thanks to our ability to learn. Lifelong learning

recognizes that not all of our learning comes from a classroom.

- For example, in childhood, we learn to talk or ride a bike.
- As an adult, we learn how to use a smartphone or learn how to cook a new dish.

These are examples of the everyday lifelong learning we engage in on a daily basis, either through socialization, trial and error, or self-initiated study.

Personal fulfillment and development refer to natural interests, curiosity, and motivations that lead us to learn new things. We learn for ourselves, not for someone else.

Key checklist for lifelong learning:

- Voluntary
- Self-motivated or self-initiated
- Doesn't always require a cost
- Often informal
- Self-taught or instruction that is sought
- Motivation is out of personal interest or personal development

Examples of lifelong learning

Here are some of the types of lifelong learning initiatives that you can engage in:

- **Developing a new skill** (eg. sewing, cooking, programming, public speaking, etc)
- **Self-taught study** (eg. learning a new language, researching a topic of interest, subscribing to a podcast, etc)

- **Learning a new sport or activity** (eg. Joining martial arts, learning to ski, learning to exercise, etc)
- **Learning to use a new technology** (smart devices, new software applications, etc)
- **Acquiring new knowledge** (taking a self-interest course via online education or classroom-based course)

Benefits of lifelong learning

Incorporating lifelong learning in your life can offer many long-term benefits, including:

- **Renewed self-motivation**

Sometimes we get stuck in a rut doing things simply because we have to do them, like going to work or cleaning the house.

Figuring out what inspires you puts you back in the driver's seat and is a reminder that you can really do things in life that you want to do.

- **Recognition of personal interests and goals**

Re-igniting what makes you tick as a person reduces boredom, makes life more interesting, and can even open future opportunities.

You never know where your interests will lead you if you focus on them.

- **Improvement in other personal and professional skills**

While we're busy learning a new skill or acquiring new knowledge, we're also building other valuable skills that can help us in our personal and professional lives.

This is because we utilize other skills in order to learn something new. For example, learning to sew requires problem-solving. Learning to draw involves developing creativity.

Skill development can include interpersonal skills, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, leadership, reflection, adaptability and much more.

- **Improved self-confidence**

Becoming more knowledgeable or skilled in something can increase our self-confidence in both our personal and professional lives.

- In our personal lives, this confidence can stem from the satisfaction of devoting time and effort to learning and improving, giving us a sense of accomplishment.
- In our professional lives, this self-confidence can be the feeling of trust we have in our knowledge and the ability to apply what we've learned.

Organizational lifelong learning

Sometimes lifelong learning is used to describe a type of behavior that employers are seeking within the organization.

Employers are recognizing that formal education credentials are not the only way to recognize and develop talent and that lifelong learning may be the desired trait.

Thanks to the fast pace of today's knowledge economy, organizations are seeing lifelong learning as a core component in employee development. The idea is that employees should engage in constant personal learning in order to be adaptable and flexible for the organization to stay competitive and relevant.

This type of personal learning is often referred to as continuous learning. You can read more about continuous learning and what it means for both the employee and employer here.

According to some researchers, however, there is criticism that organizations are leveraging the concept of lifelong learning in order to place the responsibility of learning on employees instead of offering the resources, support and training needed to foster this kind of workforce.

Do I need to be proactive about lifelong learning?

Most people will learn something new at some point in their daily routine just by talking with other people, browsing the internet based on personal interest, reading the newspaper, or engaging in personal interest.

However, if making more effort to learn something new is important for either personal, family, or career reasons, or there is a need for a more organized structure, then here are some steps to get started.

How to adopt lifelong learning in your life?

- **Recognize your own personal interests and goals**

Lifelong learning is about you, not other people and what they want.

Reflect on what you're passionate about and what you envision for your own future.

If progressing your career is your personal interest, then there are ways to participate in self-directed learning to accomplish this goal.

If learning history is your passion, there are likewise ways to explore this interest further.

- **Make a list of what you would like to learn or be able to do**

Once you've identified what motivates you, explore what it is about that particular interest or goal that you want to achieve.

Returning to our example of someone having a passion for history, perhaps it is desired to simply expand knowledge on the history of Europe. Or perhaps the interest is so strong that going for a Ph.D. is a dream goal.

Both of these are different levels of interest that entail different ways of learning.

- **Identify how you would like to get involved and the resources available**

Achieving our personal goals begins with figuring out how to get started.

Researching and reading about the interest and goal can help to formulate how to go about learning it.

With our history example: the person who wants to simply learn more about a particular historical time period could discover books in the library catalog, blogs, magazines and podcasts dedicated to the subject, or even museums and talks.

The individual who wanted to achieve A Ph.D. in history as a personal goal could research university programs that could be done part-time or online, as well as the steps one would need to take to reach the doctorate level.

Structure the learning goal into your life

Fitting a new learning goal into your busy life takes consideration and effort.

If you don't make time and space for it, it won't happen.

It can easily lead to discouragement or quitting the learning initiative altogether.

Plan out how the requirements of the new learning initiative can fit into your life or what you need to do to make it fit.

For example, if learning a new language is the learning goal, can you make time for one hour a day? Or does 15 minutes a day sound more realistic?

Understanding the time and space you can devote to the learning goal can help you to stick with the goal in the long-run.

Make a commitment

Committing to your decision to engage in a new learning initiative is the final and most important step.

If you've set realistic expectations and have the self-motivation to see it through, commit to it and avoid making excuses.

Conclusion

In conclusion, lifelong learning is a valuable pursuit that can benefit individuals in various aspects of their lives. Whether it's for personal growth, career advancement, or simply a love for learning, the benefits of lifelong learning are undeniable. By embracing lifelong learning, individuals can stay relevant, adapt to change, and continue to grow and develop throughout their lives

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- 4) "How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading" by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren - This book offers valuable insights into how to read actively and effectively, which is crucial for lifelong learning.