

Institutional partnerships point to an action agenda for developing a system for lifelong learning in America.

Lifelong Learning and Higher Education: Future Perspectives

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As a concept, lifelong learning had its beginnings with early civilizations and is reflected in the writings of philosophers and thinkers. It is evident that most civilizations have recognized and then placed great importance upon learning as basic to their existence and successful functioning over time. In fact, the concept of lifelong learning is so inextricably woven with life and living that only lately have academicians begun to single out the shortcomings of education that is limited to preparation for the future or the attainment of an ultimate goal of a diploma or degree. The focus of lifelong learning has to be on awareness, improved skill and practice, and the ability to develop individual environments which will enhance the accomplishment of learning and behavioral change.

The terms lifelong learning and lifelong education have been used interchangeably; however, writers such as Jarvis (1986) have drawn distinctive conceptualizations for each term. In the context of this article, lifelong education is viewed as the organized system whereby individuals gain competency in developing and directing their learning behavior and events. It includes initial education for youth as well as education for adults in providing opportunities to renew and revitalize their knowledge, skills and attitudes as they relate to work, leisure and social responsibilities. According to Williams (1977), the essence of lifelong learning lies in three primary assumptions involving (1) individuals as continuing learners, (2) organizations as providers of education and (3) society, representing political, economic, and cultural perspectives as the recipients of the benefits of lifelong learning. Education elicits the facilitation of learning through goals, resources, and expediting it through process and association with formal schooling and related procedures of acquiring attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Learning, on the other hand, is the personal, internal pro-

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cess of developing these learning outcomes.

Individuals as Continuing Learners

Learning throughout the lifespan is necessitated by the daily problems associated with life and living. Basic to the development of lifelong education designs is the assumption that individuals begin and progress through a series of life stages, represented by similar occurring experiences at each stage until death. In the lifespan scenario, the educational process identifies the commonalities in life stages and formulates the most appropriate educational processes for a particular stage. Lifespan learning, as defined by Houle (1984), incorporates conceptual ideas that: (1) learning continues over a life time, as in lifelong learning; (2) education can be appropriate at any point in time; (3) learning and life are co-linear and continuous; and (4) periods of study and learning begin and end at different intervals during life, as in recurrent education.

Organizations as Providers of Lifelong Education

Although there is no universally applicable design of what is most appropriate for higher education institutions relative to their educational services or functions (Williams, 1977), there are emerging imperatives for institutions to (1) develop closer relationships with the world beyond the campus, (2) broaden institutional clientele beyond the traditional group of students, (3) make adjustments of instructional modes to personalize learning, and (4) encourage learning through the bridging of theory and practice (Lynton and Elman, 1987).

Re-examination of modern day educational institutions is necessitated by the changing nature of knowledge, the growing importance of information, and the increasing number of people participating in higher education. The concept of lifelong education then relates to the organizational side of the education/learning scenario (Jarvis, 1986) but is not limited to the disassociation from traditional didactic practices long associated with schooling (Collins, 1987). Nor is it associated with the ultimate error of legislating lifelong schooling as denounced by Ohliger (1971) and viewed as a new form of mandated education by Zwerling (1986). Educational institutions can initiate changes toward a continuous provisions of programs and activities from research, instruction, and service perspectives to the development and growth of environments for lifelong learning.

Society Representing Political, Economic, and Cultural Perspectives

The support of proactive social attitudes for continuing development and improvement of a society as opposed to its stagnation and decline calls for a lifetime of enlightened participation and human interaction (Brookfield, 1985). The constructive reaction to challenges presented by rapid development of technological changes and new information which impacts all societal members is an enabling aspect of lifelong education. If the challenge is to be met, according to Giroux (1986), it will require a critical educational methodology which is based upon the experiences of learners in that "... it takes the problems and needs of the students themselves as its starting point" (p. 234).

Public Policy for Lifelong Education

The public policy for lifelong learning of the past has contributed to the notable success of American adult education. The Cooperative Extension Service, the G.I. Bill, and Title I of the Higher Education Act are examples which provided specific information and learning opportunities for

adults. In addition, a host of regulatory and legislated programs have provided a broad variety of adult education programs associated with the provision of quality in health care, equal rights, and consumer protection through educational programming. Little can be said of lifelong learning efforts regarding the education of youth.

The Cooperative Extension Service became a reality through the establishment of the land-grant colleges by the Morrill Act of 1862, the development of agricultural experiment stations by the Hatch Act of 1867, and Smith Lever Act of 1914. These Acts represented strong commitment to the need for research and information in the growth and development of a dominantly agricultural society. Now, as the agricultural sector of the economy represents a smaller slice of the U.S. population, Extension is experiencing role confusion in maintaining traditional services while developing programs for new clientele (Warner, P. and Christenson, J., 1984). Extension lacks a consensus as to the appropriate role in serving new audiences; there is the rising question as to the desire by legislative bodies to provide the resources for implementing Extension services for new audiences. Extension is linked to higher education through the land-grant tradition and in its lifelong education role is challenged to help people to put useful knowledge to work by becoming self-reliant and central to the educational process (Leagans, 1961). In this role learners take active part in the design and process of their educational activities.

In generic sense, the challenge to the organized educational enterprise is that of assisting all people of all ages to exercise their right to participate, to learn, and to develop until the end of life (McClusky, 1974). The means to this end is obviously beyond the capabilities of a single educational program or agency. The most probable scenario for success would require the cooperation of all organizations and agencies with educational potential to systemically serve learners equally and justly (Cross and McCartan, 1984; Dave, 1975) as outlined in the global concept of lifelong learning set forth by UNESCO (1977).

The Role of Higher Education

The role of higher education in lifelong learning for the future should be dynamic and extrinsic. Dynamic in that higher education and higher adult education in particular have a vital service to perform in providing learning opportunities at the graduate level which will move the knowledge of research into practice through graduates that are effective in a myriad of adult education service organizations and settings.

Higher education's role is extrinsic in that the adult education "purists" in our colleges and universities are challenged to liberate themselves from the singular and limiting concept of being "keepers of the kingdom" of adult education. Educators need to invest time and resources in the sharing of mutual knowledge and expertise with academia at large for fulfilling excellence in adult learning and development and the best possible educational experiences for our learner clients.

Time has indicated a move from adult education occurring at the margin of sponsoring institutions to where educational activities for adults are on a par with the main stream of providers including a broad array of organizations such as colleges, business, industry, labor unions, churches, and associations. Knox (1977) alludes to a crucial ingredient in this lifelong learning movement in that the learners themselves assume an increasing responsibility for their own education as outlined by Houle, (1984) and Tough, (1971). Therefore, new and appropriate roles for learners and

educational providers are emerging.

Institutions of higher education can play a vital role in the development of a learning society in addition to typical course work and academic programming. Critical to the achievement of excellence in academic programming (Astin, 1985) is the development of awareness and understanding of the centrality of lifelong learning in the post-information and learning society.

Colleges and universities have a challenging role to play in establishing the understanding and the approaches to the educative community wherein all those institutions with educative potential can provide for individuals continuing to learn and develop through their lives. In this respect, Astin (1985) believes any educational institution can be "excellent" if it deploys its resources effectively for its students and faculty through involvement. Learner involvement is also a key feature in the lifelong learning concept.

The role of higher education institutions in lifelong learning is summarized in five specific agendas as described by Knox (1974):

1. Creating an educative community that provides the incentives, resources, and rewards for individual adults to continue to learn and grow.
2. Including adult and continuing education practices as a part of preparatory education through the inclusion of relevance, mentoring, and self-directedness.
3. The preparation of people to develop and administer continuing education programs for adults including non-credit opportunities, research, and evaluation studies in addition to master's degrees and doctoral programs.
4. The provision of assistance to other sponsors of adult and continuing education in the form of in-service education of staff, research and evaluation studies, consultation, and collaboration on demonstration projects.
5. The development of models, rationales, and materials that facilitate lifelong self-directed education in which learners perform more of the mentor role for themselves and for others (pp. 21-22).

Knox (1977) believes the most important contributions for institutions of higher education to lifelong learning is in assisting learners to "... increase their repertoire of effective strategies for alternating between action problems and knowledge resources" (p. 22).

In consideration of the above contributions for higher education toward lifelong learning, reflection on the lifelong learning literature is useful. The current literature is overflowing with recommendations, action agendas, and "laundry lists" for successful applications of the theories and practices of lifelong learning through principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1980) and adult education. This is as it should be—a sign of healthiness in the struggle to describe and elevate the growing potential of all learners. It appears that among the many proposals for building the lifelong learning agenda in the information society (Hutchins, 1968) are three ideas that surface during review of the literature and reflection upon the quiescent development of higher education in the current social, political, and economic environment.

The three prescriptions which surface for enhancing the role of higher education in developing a national agenda for higher education are (1) empowerment of individuals as learners, (2) development of organizational partnerships for promoting lifelong learning, and (3) the exercise of leadership in higher education through the traditional avenues of research, teaching, and service.

Empowerment—The empowerment of people as learners involves the acceptance and development of an agenda for preserving basic human rights and a resolution for institutional change in higher education. Essentially, empowerment for learning encompasses the basic ideas set forth by Lindeman (Brookfield, 1987) and applied by Knowles (1980) in that individuals can and should develop responsibility for their own learning. In this emphasis from education to learning, organized education will need to turn loose its traditional hold on the educational process, primarily as information providers. In this new role for adult education, the educator becomes "a guide or pointer-out [facilitator] rather than an authority or oracle" (Lindeman, 1926, p. 160). The process involves a self-directed, experiential, and problem solving approach to adult education wherein learners exercise their individual rights to not only ownership of the learning process but also equality in opportunity to participate and exercising a choice in such areas as the geographical location and timeliness of educational opportunity.

Partnerships—Program and service relationships among organizations that recognizably contribute to the educational development of youth and/or adults is not a new or astonishing idea. Long (1974) and Knox (1974) report the advantages of such relationships in terms of specific agendas for the enhancement of learning opportunities and improvement of learning activities or episodes (Houle, 1978).

Provider partnerships in education have been suggested as a means to the accomplishment of the lifelong learning agenda (Botkin, 1979; Dave, 1975; Knowles, 1980). This follows the ideas set forth in the UNESCO definition of lifelong education which calls for the restructuring of traditional education hierarchies in favor of a learning system incorporating a key but broad variety of provider organizations (UNESCO, 1977). According to Williams (1977), "the principal role of the higher education institution in the provision of lifelong education opportunities is as a part of a network of institutions of various kinds which combines to provide a range of opportunities and facilities" (p. 26).

Developing partnerships among the providers of educational services usually requires alterations in organizational structure and operational procedures (Williams, 1977). The approach of organizing the entire educational enterprise around the concept of lifelong learning is, according to Houle (1984), "the central conception of education in the future . . . although most of the specialists in both childhood and adult education do not yet fully recognize that fact" (p. 223). This also suggests replacing the time honored grade-level, graduation-oriented system (Knowles, 1983) which would be an overwhelming undertaking and highly unlikely in a short-range perspective. Progress in this direction will certainly be deliberate and will likely be provided by those at the interface of learners and facilitators of learning. Organizational support through institutional policy for establishing realistic models for the enhancement of learning environments which maximize assumptions of andragogy, however, are relatively nonexistent (Oakleaf, 1987).

Leadership—If an agenda for lifelong learning does exist, at least in the hearts and minds of educational leaders, and if American higher education is going to revise its traditional view of service toward a lifelong learning system which makes use of all the learning resources, the responsibility for the renewal rests with its leaders. In this regard, responsible leadership includes top academic officers, leading scholars, trustees, officials of state systems and national policy makers (Astin, 1985).

Leadership is also needed at the level where learners impact with the learning environment. A most appropriate

role, especially for those responsible for facilitating the learning environment, is that of advocate; showing advocacy behavior conducive to the most appropriate involvement of learners in their own learning and development of their own most appropriate learning environments.

Lifelong Education: Basic Considerations

The literature of higher education presents an ambiguous picture of the adult education/lifelong learning terminology (Cross, 1981); however, learning and education have received distinctly different usage in that education is institutionally or organizationally oriented as in a provider of educational services.

Institutional Policy for Lifelong Learning

Although the concept of lifelong learning has received "lip-service" attention at the public policy level there is little evidence of it in the literature on institutional or operational policy (Oakleaf, 1987). Organizational mission and policy for lifelong learning, for the most part, rests on a verbal consensus and surface level commitment of organizational resources. A limited number of adult education providers including universities, the Cooperative Extension Service, community colleges, and adult service organizations have solid, straight forward formal mission and guidelines in support of lifelong learning.

The importance of a formal organizational commitment and administrative direction for programming to meet the special needs of adults as learners is evidenced throughout the literature (Houle, 1978; Knowles, 1980; Cross and McCartan, 1984).

The Renewal of Education Systems

Lifelong learning is a broad-based concept wherein a major concern is the necessary and systematic renewal of educational systems and the establishment of a guiding light for the educational system at large.

The future direction of education is based on the need for educative environments. According to Long (1974), such environments are oriented to the future rather than a preservation of the past, they are naturalistic and a part of living, informal and incidental but inherent and integral. In this environment, each aspect of the life process is instructive.

Issues

Both public and institutional policy makers are faced with a dilemma of a definition for lifelong learning as an institutional concept. The natural psychological and sociological aspects of human endeavor, learning and living, suggest the individual and personal nature of learning throughout life.

Lifelong education suggests learning with a purpose (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982), a relationship with others, individually, and/or organizationally where there is support or direction toward the shaping of learning activities. The dichotomy raises the concern referred to as lifelong schooling where individuals are caught up in mandated learning or lifelong schooling (Ohliger, 1971) versus lifelong learning as an individuals lifelong interaction with their human and physical environments.

Actually, educational institutions having a primary aim of facilitating the democratization of society are supportive of the ideal of lifelong education. Inherent in this idea is the availability of educational opportunities for all as opposed to a few, the opportunity for relevant learning opportunity over the lifespan, and the protection of learner rights (Cross, 1984).

The challenge of lifelong education poses a challenge for universities and higher education institutions. In this respect, the higher education component of the lifelong learning scenario is referred to as lifelong higher education (Williams, 1977). Lifelong education thus becomes interwoven with the fabric of institutional structure and organization.

In reference to higher education, Williams (1977) believes the concept and practice of continuing education should not be confused with continuing education for adults but should provide a rethinking of the larger educational system, integrating the diversified education opportunities for adults on an equal basis and that existing universities and institutions play a central role in this effort.

One of the basic mistakes made by enthusiasts is the exclusive association of lifelong learning with the adult education movement in the United States. The application of lifelong learning is vitally important to the development of youth as well as adults (Houle, 1984). The utilitarian point of view would suggest that the earlier individuals receive their orientation to the ideals of lifelong learning, the easier it will be to learn and grow throughout life and the longer the period they can provide benefits to the society.

The Education of Youth in Lifelong Learning Systems

A basic consideration in the evolution of lifelong learning in the global view of educational systems is that education for youth should include the preparation of individuals for subsequent lifelong learning. The overall success of lifelong education being dependent upon preparation for it during the initial education of youth, however, speculative, is supported by Williams (1977) in that a viable system of lifelong education for society is impossible without the foundation for it being laid during the initial period of compulsory education.

Renewing Higher Education through Lifelong Education

Accelerating changes in our society affect every aspect of life. The development and maintenance of competence over a lifetime is essential if an individual is to be effective as a citizen and as an economic contributor.

Adult education has been the harbinger of the importance of lifelong education since the beginnings of the field. Lynton and Elman (1987) state: "... we seem to have reached the point long predicted by the advocates of adult education where the maintenance of competence as a citizen and on the job should be recognized as a continuous and coherent process through lifelong learning, in which successive phases of organized instruction alternate or are interspersed with periods of work" (p. 96).

Whether viewed as an obligation or as an opportunity, higher education can make a significant contribution to the maintenance of lifelong competence in the world of work and in education for citizenship. Several options seem appropriate for higher education:

1. Strengthen efforts to meet the educational needs of adults including improvements in the content and methodology of the learning environment.
2. Provide flexibility in location, timing, availability, and format of courses and related educational programming.
3. Increase participation in employer-sponsored instruction in a supra system of learning.
4. Bring traditional university and college activities to bear on the lifelong education agenda including research and outreach services.

Obviously, the future of human growth and development will benefit from the application of lifelong learning concepts in both the vitalization of educational delivery systems and the enhancement of the individual learning process.

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