

Review Article

A REVIEW of LIFE-LONG LEARNING in HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This journal explores that the technological changes and globalization have transform higher education institutions into lifelong learning institutions. The concept of lifelong learning has varying definitions and meaning in different context. This paper explored Lifelong learning in the context of higher education perspective. Desktop research was used that allowed the analysis of this concept based on the selected sources. The study reveals the unambiguous definition of life-long learning (LLL). An intensive exploration of the topic disclosed that most institutions have not well implemented life-long learning following the various reasons such as the lack of working strategies, awareness of LLL, experts, and funding. However, this journal also reports the efforts made by majority of higher institutions towards enhancing life-long learning in the professional context. This paper recommends Higher Education Institutions to formulate policies that would enhance lifelong learning skills.

Keywords: Lifelong Learning, Policy, Higher Education, Knowledge Economy, Globalization, Saud Arabia.

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics in knowledge economy have revealed the need for everyone to develop his/her knowledge, skills, and experiences in both personal and professional levels. This is where lifelong learning comes in. Lifelong learning, abbreviated as LLL has gained a wide range of definitions, but at the European level, the concept is defined to include cultural, regional, national specifics (Laal, 2011). For example, Yang *et al.*, (2015) explained that lifelong learning entails all aspects ranging from informal, formal, and non-formal and ages of learning. However, London (2011) defines it as "the continuing development of knowledge and skills that people experience after formal education and throughout their lives" (p.3). On the other hand, Kaplan (2016) explains that LLL is a lifetime process that begins at birth. Following the varying definitions, this study seeks to explore the concept from the higher education perspectives by taking a desktop approach. More importantly, this journal article compares lifelong learning in various jurisdictions with that of Saudi Arabia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea that most people can acquire knowledge and new skills throughout a lifetime which is not a new concept in formal and informal contexts a person finds himself/herself (Cropley&Knapper, 1983). As a result, the increased interests of obtaining knowledge beyond the typical professional levels have been explored by various scholars and organizations including UNESCO (Yang *et al.*, 2015). This reveals an increased interest in determining the possible role (s) of higher institutions in promoting it. Life-long learning in higher institutions is increasingly becoming a significant trend for higher education learners. The path to higher education involves choosing a career one needs to adventure, but this is not the case when it comes to LLL in higher institutions: the demands of the new economic changes are leading adults back to the classroom for varied reasons, the primary being today's changes in the knowledge economy.

According to Vargas (2014), an employee of the future is likely to get new jobs every five years for possibly 60 to 80 years, and every one of these will need the skills others did not learn in college. To meet the demands of this new job market, higher education is evolving to embrace lifelong learning or the "60-year Curriculum (Atchoarena, 2021). In addition, the proportion of adults across the globe is still growing, and these individuals have much to contribute to the development of society. Thus, they need an opportunity to up skill or re skill on equal terms with the younger generation. The skills of adults and abilities need to be utilized, valued, and recognized. This reveals that higher education institutions have a vital role in enhancing lifelong learning in education settings. The international education community has highlighted and discussed the implications of lifelong learning for universities.

The New Lifelong Learning in Higher Education

Lifelong learning is not a new concept. Professional development and community classes have been around for people who need to sharpen their skills or learn, and they still exist (Atchoarena, 2021). What has become new is the ever-growing need and requisite to engage in learning opportunities that may assist one cope with a host of shifts in their career life. Today, the world is in the fourth industrial revolution, and the rapid advancements in technologies are resulting in many disruptions in the labour market in every industry. In Župarić (2009), the future workforce faces changing jobs that need new skills and emerging skill sets, and multiple careers because some occupations appear while others disappear almost fortnightly. These changes are caused by societal forces like technology and others like public health issues, globalization, political and economic instability, environmental crisis and career changes. The remedy to these changes is developing the long-term capacity building, which involves promoting the student's skills for a lifetime of agility, creativity and just-in-time preparations. Higher education is evolving to encourage a lifelong education model to ensure that people are equipped with the necessary skills to work effectively. Higher education institutions offer a variety of programs to up skill and reskill, ranging from two-day noncredit workshops to flexible online master's degrees (Barhouni *et al.*, 2013). While the concept of higher education degree is typically

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four years across the globe and five years in Saudi Arabia, soon, the idea will become obsolete. The new pathway for lifelong learning in higher education is anchored on the idea that the new curriculum is not delivered continuously as the four-year programs have traditionally operated. Instead, students are allowed to choose the kind of training or education right for them as they need them. This promotes lifelong learning since they still have the chance to choose the higher education institutions to learn or train what they feel they lack for the adequate performance of their careers. While on the job or between careers, individuals need to decide whether they need a competitive edge gained by improving their skills or continuously learning (Eschenbacher, & Fleming, 2020). The options available for the new lifelong learning in higher education includes enrolling on online courses to earn graduate degrees, joining higher education workshops and evening classes to attain competency skills needed for job promotion and career excellence, taking massive open online courses to find interests in new fields, and pursuing self-guided learn via through reading, in-person seminars and online courses. A lifelong learner is not a single person. They can be individuals who join the job market after completing high school and go back to school after five or ten years to earn a degree. These individuals can also be PhD holders seeking to enhance their non-technical skills after many years in the field. Therefore, with the growing need to up skill or re skill and the increasing ways of doing so, lifelong learning in higher education has become a norm than an exception. In the past, adults returned to school to finish a degree or pursue graduate studies. However, the need and demands of the new changing economy will force them to go back to classrooms for many reasons. Education for life-long learning in higher education is a hot topic contemporary. It must be researched to know what is required to promote lifelong learning in higher education and what other jurisdictions have done to enhance lifelong learning (Boeren & Field, 2019).

The Lifelong Learning University

In Saud Arabia, just like in other countries across the globe, different initiatives that aim at enhancing lifelong learning among higher institutions of learning have been evident (Izzet *et al.*, 2019; Barhoumi *et al.*, 2013; Saudi Gazette, 2022; Siddiki, 2020). For instance, the Mumbai Statement of lifelong learning, Active citizenship and Reform of higher education (1998) and the 1998 UNESCO world conference on higher education (HE) (Vargas, 2014) encourage universities to promote long-life learning for adults because of technological changes and globalization. The Mumbai statement provided a holistic approach which:

"(a) supports institutions to become LLL communities; (b) integrates academic, financial and administrative elements; (c) provides structures which are responsible for organizational, staff, student and curriculum development and community engagement; and (d) aligns the various supportive structures such as academic information systems, library provision and learning technologies to the new mission of universities in learning societies" (Vargas, 2014). The main preconceptions of the signatories were the common social challenges occurring in society because of economic, rapid development of technology, globalization, and developed societies that have led to an unprecedented increase in inequality and unemployment among countries and between jurisdictions. From the statement, it is clear that universities are urged to adopt long-life learning to recognize that democratic citizenship relies on factors that promote effective economic development and attention to demand, LLL is a no exclusion (Kamol Holding, 2019). The lifelong learning university must have a particular guideline to ensure effective lifelong learning for higher education.

Stages of a Higher Institution Towards Becoming a LLL University

According to Yang *et al.*, (2015), a higher institution become equipped by following five major stages: strategic analysis, strategic planning, development, implementation, and monitoring. The stages are interdependent, and each lead stage leads to another as shown in the figure 1 below:

Figure 1

The schematic for becoming LLL University (Yang *et al.*, 2015)



As a result, five elements are associated with each of the stages: averaging frameworks, Strategic partnerships and linkages, research, administration policies and mechanisms, and student support system and services. Averaging frameworks entail regulatory, financial, and social-cultural support to serve as a foundation for building a lifelong learning culture through high education institutions. On the other hand, strategic partnerships and linkages involve international partnerships, cross-cultural collaboration among the individuals and institutions, stakeholders of higher education institutions and policymakers. The process aims at promoting research across all traditions, institutions and disciplines. This also includes collaborative research, recognition of the plurality of research paradigms, and the legitimacy of lifelong learning as a discipline of study. The teaching and learning process constitutes guidelines on how educators encourage self-guided learning, engagements with different forms of knowledge, interests, and life situations that learners bring to their education. These interests enhance autonomous and experiential learning techniques and opportunities. Administration policies and mechanisms are guidelines that bring the learners to the centre of their learning process and all other functions. This includes recognition of prior learning, accreditation, and flexibility of programs, formats and courses that enable the learners to choose what they want to learn and build their learning paths. Consequently, student support system and services. These guidelines include the services that support learning, enhancing conditions for learning like costs, financial assistance, transport and accessibility. Although these guidelines were supported and published by the UNESCO Institute of education, little is known about the extent to which higher education institutions have embraced them to transform and reform higher education systems in Saud Arabia and around the globe at large (Kehm, 2013). The only documented case is the university of western Cape, South Africa, The University of Missouri, USA, and the Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, which adopted lifelong learning as an institutional paradigm. In Europe, the most recent lifelong

learning can be seen in the European universities' charter on lifelong learning (EUA 2008). IN PARIS, the EUA held developed commitments that universities and governments should subscribe to if they wish to transform higher education institutions into lifelong learning institutions (Kehm, 2013). The universities' commitments entailed promoting LLL and embedding lifelong learning as an institutional principle of Higher education, providing education to a diverse student population attracting adult learners, offering guidance and counseling services, and developing internal quality.

University as Learning Institutions

This study argues that universities must become learning institutions to comply with the five elements of learning institutions mentioned above. Together with the social aspects discussed this far, there are also financial considerations to fully support and promote lifelong learning (Tchamyou, 2020). The fact that learning institutions have many stakeholders, including governments, learners and enterprises, presents the diversity that is required to transform them into learning institutions and provides learning opportunities and research objectives that focus on solving and satisfying personal, professional, and social demands for education and training the changing economy offers. According to Tchamyou (2020), the mission of higher education institutions to produce knowledge and organize higher levels of expertise has been challenged by the changing knowledge economy, and newer demands have arisen from industry, government and stakeholders. Moreover, the authors recognize that knowledge production and its organization in solving private and public matters is far beyond the academic spectrum. Most often, universities are presented with opportunities to partner with other partners to understand research and training. Thus, they must become learning institutions to promote lifelong learning. Therefore industry can seek to address the learning needs of its workforce by up skilling and re-tooling through the university's lifelong learning programs. Moreover, the public sector can have an opportunity to benefit from the university's provision of continuous learning as a means to enhance active citizenship, social inclusions, and cultural and personal development. The corporation between the three sectors, the industry, university and governments, are a model to enhance innovations. This approach acts as a model for the universities to improve lifelong learning because it serves as the leader in the relationship between government and industry (Medina, 2018). The approach required learning for all the stakeholders, which led to the promotion of lifelong learning, including both the youth people and the elderly.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a desktop approach to reach the goal. Using Google search engine, various studies on the topic were searched and retrieved, but inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to relevant and appropriate studies for the research. At an abstract level, the inclusion criteria incorporated the articles written in English language and published between 2013 to 2022. On the other hand, the exclusions criteria included articles not written in English, those published before 2013, and non-academic sources and web-based sources like Wikipedia. Below is the selection criteria for the studies:

- Google search engines were used: Google Scholar, eric.ed.gov, harvard.edu, and UNESCO
- Searched "life-long learning in higher education"
- The search engine was set to return studies between 2013-2022
- Pre2013, one study was found
- Journals were considered

As the table below indicates (see Table 1), five keywords were used: "lifelong learning," "higher education and lifelong learning", "lifelong learning education", "higher education learning and lifelong principles" and "Lifelong learning in Saudi Arabia." The studies returned one each keyword is indicated in the table.

Table 1

Keywords, Search Engine, and the Number of Relevant Studies Returned

Keyword	Search Engine	No. of Relevant Studies Returned
Lifelong learning	Google Scholar	5
Higher education and lifelong learning	eric.ed.gov	1
Lifelong learning education	harvard.edu	1
Higher education learning and lifelong principles	Google Scholar	1
Lifelong learning in Saudi Arabia	UNESCO	1

FINDINGS

The Studies

The journals used collected were published by Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education, Studies in Higher Education, European Scientific Journal, International Review of Education, International Higher Education, Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, Tuning Journal for Higher Education, and Interdisciplinary Management Research Lifelong Learning Policies and Strategies, and Social and behavioral sciences. A total of nine journals on the topic were collected.

Table 2

Journals that Published Studies on Education for Life-long Learning in Higher Education (n=...Number of Studies by Country (n= 9)

Journal title	Article
Social and behavioral sciences	Lifelong learning: What does it mean?
Studies in Higher Education	Higher Education and the Promotion of Lifelong Learning
European Scientific Journal	The improvement of lifelong learning in Saudi Arabian universities from individual learning to social constructivist learning environment based new educational technologies.
International Review of Education	Transformative dimensions of lifelong learning: Mezirow, Rorty and COVID-19
International Higher Education	The challenge of lifelong learning for higher education
Australasian Journal of Educational Technology	Blended learning: Deficits and prospects in higher education.
Tuning Journal for Higher Education	Lifelong learning principles and higher education policies
Lifelong Learning Policies and Strategies	The Role of Higher Education in Promoting Lifelong Learning
Interdisciplinary Management Research	The Role Of Universities In Promoting Lifelong Learning: European Experience And Croatian Perspective

LITERATURE REVIEW ASSESSMENT

Each of the journals was assessed based on the quality of the research procedures, relevance to the topic, and general organization. From the studies, 55%, 22%, and 11% had superior literature, strong literature, and medium literature, respectively. However, one study, (11% had weak literature. The result is shown in the table below:

Table 3

Studies Literature Review Assessment

Literature Evaluation	f	%
Superior	5	55%
Strong	2	22%
Medium	1	11%
weak	1	11%

METHODOLOGY

Two main methodologies were used in the studies: qualitative and conceptual methods. The qualitative method incorporated the exploration of the studies, whereas conceptual techniques entailed the use of various perspectives in examining the research topic. The table below summarizes the information:

Table 4

Methodologies used in the studies

Methodology	f
Qualitative	6
Conceptual	3

Design of the studies

Except for one journal where the researchers employed an experimental approach, all the articles used desktop research, also known as secondary research. The table below shows the result.

Table 4

Design of the studies

Design	f	%
Desktop research	8	89%
Experimentation	1	11%

Data Collection

The data used in most of the studies (89%) was secondary where one study made use of observation. The table below shows the results:

Table 5

Data collection techniques used

Technique	f	%
Conceptual literature review	8	89%
Observation	1	11%

DISCUSSION

The study found that the issue of adults across the globe seeking higher education is ever becoming vital. This is because the number of adults education in higher education is decreasing, although access to higher education would benefit the involved persons and society at large (Yang, Schneller, & Roche, 2015). Vargas (2014) found that, on the one hand, the adoption of lifelong learning in policy terms has been accepted by OECD countries and many others; there is still an uneven and slow pace of implementation of lifelong learning programs. In the European Union, 36 countries agreed that lifelong university learning promotes knowledge and project results. Higher education ministers in the EU have developed a standard narrative inviting all higher education institutions, including universities, to embrace lifelong learning in their primary activities. They expressed the importance of going beyond continuous and adult education to a detailed implementation of lifelong learning within universities by 2020 (Atchoarena, 2021). In the meantime, many universities have developed provisions for young adults without a university degree, individuals seeking professional development, migrants, unemployed adults, and others. They have developed these projects to promote lifelong learning to meet the demands of the present changing and demanding economy. They have developed innovative and collaborative projects and put together a greater deal of good practice following the LLL guidelines outlined in the literature review. However, despite the quality and the quantity of the initiative, results indicate that there is little effort from the external stakeholders. The internal stakeholders are also fragile because they highly depend on the university's leaders (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2018). The main reason for the slow implements sons of lifelong learning, in general, is the lack of appropriate strategies and policies among the involved parties. Furthermore, lack of adequate funding systems, stakeholder resistance to change, and inadequate promotion programs have derailed the process of implementing lifelong learning in a higher education institution. Therefore, it is evident that the stakeholders need to be educated about the importance of adopting lifelong learning in their institutions as a way of enhancing knowledge delivery and helping in addressing the changing economic demands of all. The European universities have made a efforts to educate the stakeholders on the importance of implementing lifelong learning in their higher institutions of learning, including universities. AUCEN highlighted that the main reason for educating the stakeholders about lifelong learning in higher education included transition issues that are beyond demographic change, globalization, and technological revolution (Yang, Schneller, & Roche, 2015). In addition, moves between jobs have made the universities create new forms of providing education and support the involved individual's transition over the long term and offer flexible reactions to the challenges they face through life. Universities should take it that people have learned from various activities by evaluating formal and non-formal learning and helping them open new pathways and new employment opportunities. The stakeholders should teach people that the main challenge in societies is facing the rapid changes in the economy and community, social, and family life. Thus, lifelong learning in university provides an opportunity for individuals to learn in the various stance of life to live in the present society with less pressure. The universities in developed countries like the US and the EU have acknowledged the fact that acquiring new knowledge is only possible outside the traditional and temporary boundaries. The main questions many people ask are where to learn, when to learn and how to learn over life. As seen in this study, universities are not the only places to keep learning, but they provide a good opportunity for learners because they link the governments and industry. Over the period 2005-to 2012, the EUCEN, in conjunction with the European Union, made strides in educating universities and the public about the importance

of LLL (Yang, Schneller, & Roche, 2015). The projects they did included surveys of the development of LLL in higher education institutions. The outcome of the results did not represent the entire universities in the EU because the data was biased and only attached to the surveyed universities. Thus, there is the worry for drawing the general conclusions about the European universities based on these results. However, the data collected from the case studies, the visit reports, and questionnaires were analyzed scientifically. The results indicated positive development and trends in the field of lifelong university learning (Kamol Holding, 2019). The results from the European University Association showed that different universities had adopted different strategies and definitions of lifelong university learning. ULLL were influenced by cultural and institutional stakeholders who established partnerships with industry and government. The study also found that the way lifelong learning is organized and managed differs from one university to another and from one faculty to another in the same country and between nations. However, different models can be identified in various universities. Some universities have lifelong learning strategies or units that may or may not be exclusively associated with LLL. In other universities, a particular department is responsible (Yang, Schneller, & Roche, 2015). Comparing lifelong learning in Saudi Arabia with that of other jurisdictions, it was found that the design of the instruction based social constructivist online courses have become the pillar for a new instructional strategy that promotes LLL (Kamol Holding, 2019). E-learning adoption has escalated the education about the importance of e-learning in Saudi Arabian universities. Initially, the student went for structured programs that lasted five years. Still, e-learning has allowed even adults to up skills online and encourages the gain of new skills by the younger workforce to meet the current labour market challenges (Tchamyou, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The paper has discussed lifelong learning in higher education. It has heightened important aspects of lifelong learning and the importance of implementing lifelong learning. The study unveiled that universities across the globe know the importance of lifelong learning, but little has been done to implement LLL. In particular, in the EU, most universities have a document that requires them to subscribe to LLL, but not all the universities have adopted and implemented LLL. In other jurisdictions, the situation is the same. Thus, it can be concluded that intensifying education about the importance of implementing LLL will accelerate implementation.

Implications for Higher Education

The concept of lifelong learning in higher education and the associated policies has several implications for the organization and structure of higher education institutions and the flow and organization of knowledge. LLL creates more learning opportunities for students meaning that students will no longer obtain knowledge from a broader shared knowledge base but will have acquired knowledge from multiple sources and diverse fields that allow them to adapt to the transforming economy. Furthermore, accreditation of work-related practical learning threatens the legitimacy of the knowledge organization of universities by replacing the regulating authorities of disciplines and collegiality. This shift means that universities should adopt demand-led provisions for lifelong learning instead of continuing to offer supply led forms of degrees.

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