

LIFELONG LEARNING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITIES

ÎNVĂȚAREA PE TOT PARCURSUL VIEȚII – PROVOCĂRI ȘI OPORTUNITĂȚI PENTRU UNIVERSITĂȚILE TRADIȚIONALE

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Through increasing differentiation of skills and globalization, it has become necessary to continually update knowledge and competences to ensure an individual's life development and self-fulfilment. To ensure that the Republic of Moldova maintains its high standard of living and social cohesion, it is necessary to further enhance the citizens' high level of qualification and to draw less educated people into the modern society. Responding to the rapid economic and social changes, lifelong learning aims to actively deal with the dynamics of changing the environment and to take advantage of new opportunities in the social, cultural and employment contexts. The development of the informational society and the widespread diffusion of information technologies give rise to new opportunities for learning and establish new challenges and practices regarding the way how teaching and learning should be organized and carried out.

Keywords: *lifelong learning (LLL), concept, strategy, opportunities, challenges, skills*

Datorită globalizării, dezvoltării și diferențierii abilităților, a devenit necesară actualizarea continuă a cunoștințelor și a competențelor pentru a asigura dezvoltarea vieții și autoîmplinirea individuală. Pentru a se asigura că Republica Moldova își menține un nivel ridicat de trai și coeziunea socială, este necesar să se îmbunătățească în continuare nivelul înalt de calificare al cetățenilor și să se atragă oamenii mai puțin educați în societatea modernă. Răspunzând schimbărilor economice și sociale rapide, învățarea pe tot parcursul vieții își propune să facă față în mod activ dinamicii mediului și să profite de noi oportunități în contextul social, cultural și în cel de angajare. Dezvoltarea societății informaționale și răspândirea pe scară largă a tehnologiilor informaționale, dau naștere la noi oportunități de învățare și stabilesc noi provocări în practicile consacrate modului în care ar trebui să fie organizată și desfășurată predarea și învățarea.

Cuvinte cheie: *învățare pe tot parcursul vieții, concept, strategie, oportunități, provocări, competențe*

Introduction

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 accepted to refer to the learning that occurs outside of a formal education 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 fulfilment. The means to achieve this could result in informal or formal education.

Today's depressed economic environment and challenged work force have dramatically increased the needs and demands of learners to retool their capabilities, acquire new competences and align their knowledge to the emerging new economy to avoid being laid off. At the same time, leaders within traditional education institutions, colleges and universities, are aggressively seeking new sources of revenue to count exact current budgeting short falls [1 p.1].

Universities and other higher education institutions are fundamental to the human capital development and innovation, and can do much to help the labour force to become more innovative and globally competitive. However, to do this they need to change, and in some cases to change dramatically. According to Conner, universities and other higher educational institutions need to come out

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of their “ivory towers” [2]. They need to become more active in order to play a meaningful role in the local and global setting. They must do more than simply provide education and research; they need to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and contribute to the development of knowledge - intensive jobs which enable graduates to find local employment and attract talent not only from the region but also from elsewhere. Whether pursuing personal interests and passions or being in chase of professional ambitions, lifelong learning can help people achieve personal fulfilment and satisfaction. It recognizes that humans have a natural drive to explore, learn and grow and encourages the improvement of one's own quality of life and sense of self-worth by paying attention to the ideas and goals that inspire.

The Concept of Lifelong Learning

Sometimes lifelong learning is used to describe a type of behaviour 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. Responding to the rapid changes in economy and society, lifelong learning aims to actively deal with the dynamics of changing the environment and take advantage of the new opportunities in the social, cultural and employment contexts. Through increasing differentiation of skills and globalization, it has become necessary to continually update knowledge and competences to ensure an individual's life development and self-fulfilment. To ensure that the Republic of Moldova maintains its high standard of living and social cohesion, it is necessary to further enhance citizens' high level of qualification and to draw less educated people into the modern society. AMTAP's Lifelong Learning Strategy is guided by the next principles: promotion of art education as the only university in the country in this field, Art – Therapy, promotion of the psycho – pedagogical module, life phase orientation (all ages), placing learners at the centre (flexibility of learning), lifelong guidance (facilitating the learning process), competence orientation (recognition of informal learning), and promotion of participation in lifelong learning (enhancing the motivation to learn).

Lifelong Learning means the continuous development and improvement of the knowledge and skills needed for employment and personal fulfilment through formal and informal learning opportunities. Learning is, therefore, part of life which takes place at all times and in all places. It shares mixed connotations with other educational concepts, like adult education, training, continuing education, permanent education and other terms related to learning beyond the formal educational system. In Watson's opinion, lifelong learning is lifelong, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. It not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, but also competitiveness and employability [3]. Lifelong Learning may also be defined as learning that is pursued throughout life. This process is based on four pillars of education for the future:

1. **Learning to know:** mastering learning tools rather than acquisition of structured knowledge.
2. **Learning to do:** equipping people for the types of work needed now and in the future, including innovation and adaptation of learning to future work environments.
3. **Learning to live together, and with others:** peacefully resolving conflicts, discovering other people and their cultures, fostering community capability, individual competence and capacity, economic resilience, and social inclusion.
4. **Learning to be:** education contributing to a person's complete development: mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality.

Strategy statement on University Lifelong Learning (ULLL)

ULLL strategy should strive to adopt the “want-to-learn” attitude and is based on the competences to be able to learn. It is strengthened through the subsequent provision of learning and development opportunities and services for the personal and professional development. A good connection with all the Academy’s faculties (Music, Theatre and Fine Arts) offers support in relation with our target group, on the way to develop, also admin and support services. It targets diverse groups of individuals and creates opportunities for creating public and personal goods in the arts and cultural domains of the social life. The strategic goal is to transform AMTAP into an open university which serves a wide range of Moldovan and international population of different ages, education, profession etc., using modern and varied educational tools and technologies. So, being a part of an international project, which provides lifelong learning, **COMPASS – „TOWARDS EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY LIFE LONG LEARNING MODEL IN MOLDOVA”**, the ULLL strategy implementation will help the AMTAP to:

- to attract new groups of learners into the university including non-traditional target groups;
- to meet the needs of citizens in the cultural aspects of their life;
- to provide personal development programmers for graduates;
- to increase the AMTAP teachers\institution revenues

The objectives of the Compass project in Moldova are to promote and strengthen the LLL culture in Moldova and to build national consensus of the key-actors on the development issues; to develop and advance a national legislative framework and stimulate regulatory changes in LLL in Moldova; to build up the university’s integrative function in Moldova through developing the integrated university LLL strategies and to enhance the university’s institutional capacities in Moldova for the efficient and effective implementation of the LLL reform.

Implications for Higher Education

The concept of lifelong learning and the related policies have a number of implications for the structure of higher education institutions and the organization of knowledge. Kehm considered that creating more learning opportunities for new and different categories of students means that students will no longer all of them start from a broadly shared knowledge base but will instead have acquired their knowledge from multiple sources and diverse types and fields of knowledge (family, work experience, etc.) [4]. Most major universities accepted the new educational challenges and were expanding their traditional, degree credit offerings with a variety of adult, continuing and executive education experiences, some for credit and some for non-credit. New education programs were offered through a combination of organizational mechanisms: extension divisions, adult and continuing education units, schools of professional study, executive education programs and distance learning units. The diversity of these programs and their unique operations propagated completely new organizations within the traditional universities. New processes for education delivery and learner support mechanisms advanced to meet the dynamic needs of the adult learner market place. Lifelong learning offers a systemic view of learning, since it examines the demand for, and the supply of learning opportunities, as part of a connected system covering the whole life cycle and comprising all forms of formal, non-formal and informal learning. It, also, emphasizes the centrality of the learner and the need for initiatives that cater for the diversity of the learner’s needs. This represents a shift of attention from the supply of learning to the demand side. Lifelong learning is focused on the motivation to learn, and draws attention to self-paced and self-directed learning and it stresses the multiple objectives of the education policy, which include economic, social or cultural outcomes; personal development and citizenship. According to Smith & co the lifelong learning process also recognizes that, for the individual, the priorities among these objectives can change over the life cycle; and that each objective has to be taken into consideration in policy development [5].

Conclusions

In conclusion, Lifelong learning can enhance our understanding of the world around us, provides us with more and better opportunities and improve our quality of life. It should be appreciated that the lifelong learning's core values of learning, exploring, and serving, coupled with benefits for the mind - body and spirit make it an incredibly powerful tool for personal transformation and enhancement. The demand to implement the new concepts linked to the idea of lifelong learning is often met by rhetoric and a simple replacement of the term "continuing education" by that of "lifelong learning" without any change in practices and provisions. On the other hand, many diverse pilot projects, experiments, and new models are integrating the concept of lifelong learning into university programs and making it part of the structure of tertiary education.

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