From Learning for Living to Lifelong Learning
"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave"
Prophet Mohammed's saying

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Abstract

This study attempts first to investigate how best to implement the concept of lifelong learning (henceforth LLL) as a guiding framework for the education policy in Iraq in general and for the higher education in particular. The paper identifies strategies for LLL, discusses its significance and key features, and opens up access for higher education students to good quality learning opportunities appropriate to their needs at any time of life. Secondly, the study intends to examine two hypotheses: 1) University does not properly prepare its students for LLL; 2) Students do not keep pace with the quick changes of information in order to survive in an ever-changing, information-driven world. The aim of this study is to improve students' knowledge, skills and competence, and to give them opportunities to undertake further learning organized and directed by themselves in order to be active participants of a knowledge-based society for the whole life.

The paper summarizes the current situation and concludes that further steps should be taken by the university and schools in general to make students prepared for a life in which they will be prompted to learn through the whole life span.

Questions

Answers for the following questions will constitute the core of the present study:
1. Why is learning a must?
2. Why is lifelong learning necessary?
3. What does LLL entail?
4. What are the teaching strategies for LLL?
5. How can LLL policy be best implemented in the Iraqi educational institutions?

1. Why is learning a must?

People learn for a variety of reasons, above all may be to get a good job, earn some money, and support a family. To improve chances for new careers and promotion could be a second cause as well as to secure a good social position and respect which may form a third reason. Still there may be other justifications for learning (1), for example, improving intellectual and emotional intelligence, getting smarter and learning how the real world works and finally learning everything one needs to survive life.

2. Why is lifelong learning necessary?

Lifelong learning is inevitable because the knowledge and skills acquired at school, despite the increased duration of primary, secondary and university education (16-18) years, are usually not sufficient for a professional career

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spanning 3 or 4 decades of one's life(2). Equally, improvement of new skills and competencies is constantly required due to the huge acceleration of scientific and technological progress which requires keeping pace with in order to keep one's job, ensure one's position in society, and avoid exclusion (3). What is more, knowledge is a crucial factor in economic and social growth. Consequently knowledge plays an important role in reducing poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war (2).

3. What does lifelong learning entail?

Lifelong learning entail three major concepts (ibid): (1) cradle to grave learning; (2) all forms of learning including: formal, non-formal and informal learning; and eventually (3) new pedagogical approaches.

3.1 Cradle to grave learning

This concept emphasizes the necessity of learning across the lifespan and it becomes more urgent due to the acceleration of scientific and technological progress. Undoubtedly, lifelong learning is broader than the notion of adult education or recurrent education previously shaped the debate on education policy (4).

Interestingly, lifelong learning is hardly a new concept as a glance at Prophet Mohammed's saying 14 centuries ago "Seek knowledge from the cradle to grave" reveals. It is also based on the concept that "It is never too soon or too late for learning"(5) and contradicts the axiom "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" (ibid) or the local saying "When he became an aged man he was taken to school (to learn)."

3.2 All forms of learning

Lifelong learning can take all forms of learning (3). This may include **formal** learning, such as a degree course followed at university; **non-formal** learning, such as vocational skills acquired at the workplace; and **informal** learning, such as learning how to use the mobile or the computer together with friends.

These different forms of learning show that LLL approach represents a shift in the educational policies from the supply of formal learning to the demand side in order to cater for the diversity of learner needs (6).

LLL may also be accomplished through distance learning or e-learning, continuing education or correspondence courses (7). It also includes postgraduate programmes for those who want to improve their qualification, bring their skills up to date, or retain for a new line of work.

In recent years 'life long learning' has been adopted in the UK as an umbrella term for post-compulsory education that falls outside of the UK Higher Education system such as Further Education, Community Education, Work-based Learning and similar voluntary, public sector and commercial settings (5).

3.3 New pedagogical approaches

Lifelong learning requires new pedagogical approaches which form a shift from the current approaches to some new ones. The first approach focuses on learning rather than teaching; the second asserts that learning should be tailored to the needs of individuals and thirdly, learners have to active thinkers not passive participants;

As for the teacher, he has to be a guide and a facilitator. There should be heavy reliance on advanced technology; and

lastly his teaching aim should be achieving a learning goal rather than teaching material.

4. What are the teaching strategies for LLL?

Teaching strategies for lifelong learning can form a very long list (8), however; strategies can be divided in three groups keeping in mind that it is the teacher's role to enhance them.

4.1 Teaching strategies (1)

• Motivate students to be enthusiastic and to enjoy their work
• Assist students to learn how to learn
• Implement problem-based learning
• Enhance higher-order thinking skills
• Enable student to offer original ideas or solutions to a problem.

4.2 Teaching strategies (2)

• Enable students to make choices or decisions
• Help them to be open to new ideas, decisions, skills and behaviours
• Enhance a desire for LLL
• Provide opportunities for students to transfer learned skills to their world beyond the classroom

4.3 Teaching strategies (3)

• Minimize prejudice and extremism
• Empower students to cope positively in a complex and uncertain future
• Enable students to overcome their anxiety, fear, and grief.

5. How can LLL policy be best implemented in the Iraqi educational institutions?

5.1 The current education policy in Iraq: A terrible waste of productive learning years.

• Many Iraqi students are underchallenged and underappreciated.
• School and college graduates too often cannot compose, create, discover or invent anything.
• They cannot determine other people's needs, solve even minor social, ethical problems or appreciate goodness, beauty, or truth, unless they have learned how outside of school.
• Many Iraqi students can not even attend classes regularly.
• Students fail classes or drop out, or do the minimal necessary just to get by and graduate with a piece of paper called a certificate.
• College is falsely touted as a necessary or beneficial rung on the ladder to success

5.2 Solutions: Change of education policy

As most jobs even good ones do not require much of the information taught in school, but more specialized knowledge or skills, education policy should change.
• Schools should teach students not only how to read and write, how to calculate and understand basic calculation (general knowledge), but they should teach them learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live with others(9).
• Schools should help students refine their thinking, reasoning and creative skills(10).

- Students need to be taught how to learn and create -not just to memorize and regurgitate.
- Theoretical curriculua should go hand in hand with practical ones required by labour markets.
- Schools should adopt continuously updated curricula.
- The growth of online resources has been a major factor in highlighting the need for students to develop effective information literacy skills (11).
- The rapid transition current to a knowledge-based society and the current economic, social and political changes resulting from the new era in Iraq demands a new strategy for education and training with the framework of LLL to catch up with the world.
- As a result, it is preferable to implement problem-based learning, where tasks are presented as problems which provide students with the opportunities for developing original ideas and encouraging critical thinking (12). This is hoped to increase students' enjoyment of school and enhance learning.

6. Hypotheses and Results

Having answered in some detail the questions this study raises, it is time to turn to the second aim of this study in order to verify the hypotheses adopted which claim that: 1) University does not properly prepare its students for LLL; 2) Students do not keep pace with the quick changes of information in order to survive in an ever-changing, information-driven world.
The aforementioned situations and solutions presented in point five verify the first hypothesis concerning schools in general and universities in particular.

University is therefore hoped to play a bigger role in preparing students for LLL. The university degree is not a profession but a mental preparation for development.

In concern with the second hypothesis claiming that university students do not regularly use information sources or show interest in information and news around, a sample of 60 fourth-year students during 2006-2007 were questioned and the results were given below.

- All the students interviewed are aware of the changing world; they feel lucky they are studying a foreign language although they are convinced they are not efficient or eloquent.
- Eighty-five per cent do not have personal computers (PC) to use as an excess to information or knowledge sources.
- Not having PC results in deficiency in using information or knowledge for improving abilities or skills.
- Students feel that university fails to build in them certain abilities like flexibility, determination, self-esteem, confidence, strength of will, tolerance and definitely LLL.
- University they believe does not and could not play a big role in creating special skills and abilities that help them in labour force participation especially when the Ministry of Education is ready to appoint them as teachers these days.
- University also fails to rely on advanced education technology including multimedia, TV, CD-ROM, Internet, and the like.
- University studies are still traditional based on textbooks and

whiteboards rather than on learning and research work
• The curriculum are not motivating, nor are the teaching strategies.

The Students, however, seem to have other problems which require solutions. They believe that solving these problems will help to motivate them to be enthusiastic and to enjoy their work. Among the things they ask for are the following:
a) University needs to equip students with computers and free excess to the internet web.
a) More learning options;
b) Training in the areas they are interested in;
c) Special courses in the subjects they are weak at;
d) More effective learning methods

In general, students appeared to be unsatisfied with themselves and with the circumstances around.

The present study has verified the two hypotheses, the students are aware of the importance of LLL, and university could not play a big role in building special skills and abilities that help them in future. Briefly, it is hoped that the future role of the university would be to increase access to information technology and to educate students in such a way to be active participants of a learning society for the whole life is learning and hence learning can have no endings (13).

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من التعلم لأجل العيش إلى التعلم مدى الحياة

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ملخص البحث

تبحث الدراسه عن تنفيذ افضل لمفهوم التعلم مدى الحياة كهيكل موجه للسياسة التربوية في العراق بشكل عام وفي التعليم العالي بشكل خاص. تحدد الدراسة استراتجيات التعلم مدى الحياة وتناقش اهميته وسماته الرئيسية لتسهيل الوصول الى فرص تعلم متميز و ملائم لحاجات الطلبة مدى الحياة، كما تناقش دور الجامعة في تحقيق هذا الهدف.