

Literature Summary:

# Perspectives on “lifelong learning”



## 1.0 Literature Summary:

# Perspectives on "lifelong learning"



Writing and theorising about lifelong learning reaches back a half millennium. The idea of lifelong learning is found in the work of Bishop of the Unity of the Brethren, **Jan Amos Comenius** (1592-1670), *Pampedia* written in 1669, where human life is described through **seven levels of education** (school): 1. Prenatal school, 2. Infancy school, 3. The school of boyhood, 4. Adolescence school, 5. School of youth, 6. School of adulthood, 7. School of old age, and towards the end he adds the school of death.

These schools for Comenius do not represent only institutional, but also **experiential education**, where the young from 7 to 25 years of age get education in the institution of School, but ultimately the experience of education is and should end with a journey.

According to Wikipedia, lifelong learning is the **"ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated"** pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons, thereby enhancing social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development, self-sustainability, as well as competitiveness and employability.

Evolved from the term "lifelong learners", created by Leslie Watkins, the term recognises that learning is **not confined to childhood or the classroom but takes place throughout life and in a range of situations**.

Allen Tough (1979), Canadian educator and researcher, asserts that almost 70% of learning initiatives are self-planned, and in the last fifty years, constant **scientific and technological innovation and change has had profound effects on how learning is understood**. As such, **learning can no longer be divided into a place and time to acquire knowledge (school) and a place and time to apply the knowledge acquired (the workplace)**.

Instead, learning can be seen as something that takes place on an **ongoing basis** from our daily interactions with others and with the world around us. It can create and shape shift into the form of **formal learning or informal learning, or self-directed learning**.

Lifelong learning has also been linked to the scope of learning during the adult phase of life. Alexander Kapp, a German educator, coined in 1833 the term "An-dragogik" and described the need of **learning as a practical necessity in the whole life of adults**.

The American author Eduard Lindeman in his 1926 book "The Meaning of Adult Education" asked for a form of education that **"was not bound by classrooms and formal curricula**. Rather it involved a concern for the educational possibilities of everyday life, non-vocational ideals, situations not subjects, and people's experiences".

Around 1970 in Europe a new chapter in the discussion of lifelong learning began - new in dimension and by new proponents. Using the French term "Education Permanente" ("**Permanent Education**" in English) the Council of Europe, an international organisation promoting cooperation between all countries of Europe, initiated a "Committee for Out-of-School Education". Here the **interest of states and governments in adult education became evident**.

**UNESCO** had years earlier (1949 in Denmark) started an international world meeting on adult education, the CONFINTEA (Conférence Internationale sur l'Education des Adultes"). The conference takes place every 12-13 years, and in the **1997- Hamburg, Germany** instalment, a turning point in the global recognition of and commitment to adult learning and non-formal education was reached. (<http://www.unesco.org/en/confinteavi/background>).

As holistic care and education continue to play critical and pivotal roles in young children's lives, lifelong learning and healthy development, **early childhood care and education (ECCE) received global recognition in 1990** when it was introduced as an integral part of basic education at the

UNESCO World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, whose declaration affirmed that ‘learning begins at birth’.

Now using the **American term “lifelong learning”** adult education became defined in a wide sense as the “the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society’.

Although Lifelong Learning is to many a modern day idea, its philosophical **foundations find its roots in ancient China, India, and Greece.**

**Confucian education philosophy (551–479 BCE)**, a philosophy that is argued is a philosophy of lifelong learning. The Confucian notion of lifelong learning is particularly relevant to describing later life learning, or continued learning, by older people (Tam, 2015). There are two very popular aphorisms of Confucius that espouse the need to keep on learning even in old age: ‘There is no boundary to learning’ and ‘Keep on learning as long as you live’.

**Confucius states that ‘learning should be a lifelong, transformative, self-cultivating process’** (Kim, 2009: 145). It is through learning that a person seeks **self-fulfillment in constantly bettering themselves and others**, through family, society, and even in Confucius’ view, the cosmos. Through lifelong learning one would garner self-growth and betterment to become a virtuous person and to develop wisdom. (Tam: 2017)

**Instead, learning can be seen as something that takes place on an ongoing basis from our daily interactions with others and with the world around us. It can create and shape shift into the form of formal learning or informal learning, or self-directed learning.**

**The Hindu worldview** extends this notion of community even further. In writing about the Hindu perspective on adult learning in the workplace, Ashok and Thimmappa (2006) point out that “individuals, organisations, society, the universe, and the cosmos are all interrelated and integrated. The development of

human resources is thus viewed in terms of facilitating the individual to **realise oneself and to understand the intricate relationship between the individual and his or her role** in the organisation, the role of the organisation in the society, society in the universe, and the universe within the cosmos” (p. 329).

It was in **15th century Greece**, however, that **lifelong education ideals were first fully expressed** in the concept of paideia, which would extend beyond the years of schooling and would last throughout the whole life (Marrouj 1964). While paideia first appears in Homer, its full crystallization takes place during the classical period under the influence of such giants of thought as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

From the **Islamic viewpoint**, The Prophet Muhamad articulated the importance of lifelong learning when he expressed “Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.”

The **dichotomy of the western and eastern ideals** on lifelong learning is evident. Schwartz (1999) gives explanations relating to the different value emphases between hierarchy and egalitarianism; between conservatism and autonomy; and between mastery and harmony. According to Schwartz (1999),

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/paideia>

Paideia, (Greek: “education,” or “learning”), system of education and training in classical Greek and Hellenistic (Greco-Roman) cultures that included such subjects as gymnastics, grammar, rhetoric, music, mathematics, geography, natural history, and philosophy.

Eastern societies are found to value hierarchy, conservatism, and harmony, whereas most Western societies regard intellectual and affective autonomy and egalitarianism as most important.

With a focus on the structure of relationships, Hofstede (1980) offers explanations in terms of the contrasts between individualism for the Western culture and collectivism, characteristic of Eastern culture. Nisbet et al (2001) have tried to explain **East-West differences in terms of cultural cognition**; they describe the **East as holistic and the West as analytic**. Holistic cognition gives attention to the whole picture, seeing the relationship between objects and the context, involving multiple perspectives. Analytic cognition applies abstract rules by detaching objects from their context.

In summary, lifelong learning has its roots way back to traditions that stemmed before the common era. Honed and nurtured by Eastern civilisations the concept is further made pertinent to the dynamics of today's day and age by Western inspiration; thus proving that the idea is vital and essential to the cultivation of the human person. International agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank are globalising lifelong learning through the propagation of discourses that has brought forth corresponding strategies, guidelines and policies; the “Learning Cities” initiative is one such universal agenda.

## ? Question:

- 1 Except for Comenius' 17th century perspective on education, much of the literature expounds lifelong learning from the adult phase of human development. – for reflection (lifelong learning and its connection to the labour market has skewed it to be adult-centric).
- 2 Are the perspectives aligned with CNS's perspective on education?
- 3 What is the CNS perspective on education?