

Lifelong Learning and Adult Education: A Literature Review

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Article History:

Received 31.01.2024

Received in revised form

30.03.2024

Accepted

Available online 31.03.2024

Although lifelong learning is not a new concept, there are various definitions for it. One of the main aims of lifelong learning is to equip people with the necessary talents and skills to continue their self-learning after the end of formal education. Contrary to this definition, which emphasises the period after formal education, another definition emphasises the whole life; lifelong learning as learning that includes all types of learning experiences in life. In addition, lifelong learning is much more than education. People constantly need to learn on their own to adapt to the new situation after education. Adult education, which is conducted by different educational institutions under the title of lifelong learning, includes activities to improve individuals' abilities, skills, and knowledge in addition to their formal education. This review study examines the development and changes in the concepts of lifelong learning, adult education, and psychology.

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Keywords: Psychology, lifelong learning, adult education

INTRODUCTION

Although the concept of lifelong learning emerged in the 1960s, it began to be adopted as a concept by international organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organisation (UNESCO) only in the 1970s. The concept of lifelong learning is clearly expressed in UNESCO's landmark report "The Education World of Today and Tomorrow". Although there are many different definitions of the concept of lifelong learning in the literature, it is generally seen as all kinds of activities carried out to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the individual throughout his/her life, unlimitedly and continuously (Özbay, 2023). Lifelong learning is a type of learning that covers all formal or non-formal education activities. This policy was used by UNESCO in the 1970s and later became commonly used as the concept of continuing education (Güleç, Çelik & Demirhan, 2012). Today, the advancement of technology and the differentiation and proliferation of information have increased the need for learning, and thus, the concept of lifelong learning has become more important (Karagöz, 2018; Karagöz, 2019a; Karagöz, 2019b; Özbay, 2023).

Lifelong learning is a concept that includes formal, non-formal, in-service, etc. types of education. Therefore, it argues that learning can take place anywhere and anytime without any space or time constraints. It also states that lifelong learning will be realised without classifying individuals in terms of age, income level, and education level (Günüç, Odabaşı & Kuzu, 2012). Lifelong learning has reduced the role of the school and emphasised the environment outside the school. It has made education continuous without limiting it to school hours. It has been said that Humanism is the sine qua non of lifelong learning. Humanism argues that the individual has innate potential (Güleç, Çelik & Demirhan, 2012)

To adapt to today's information and technology age, lifelong learners should be able to consciously produce information, use the new information they have learned, and develop themselves as individuals who learn to learn, which is one of the main objectives of lifelong learning (İzci & Koç, 2012). The tendency towards lifelong learning is a continuous process carried out to improve one's knowledge, skills, and abilities, but it also includes learning activities for more than one purpose. Lifelong learning contributes to "economic cohesion in society, self-development, and democratic understanding (Yılmaz, 2020).

In Turkey, different studies have been conducted from past to present in line with the main objectives of National Education in the development of lifelong learning. An important study to develop lifelong learning in the process of harmonisation with the European Union is the "Lifelong Education or Non-Formal Education Special specialisation Commission Report" within the framework of the Eighth Five-Year Development Plan prepared in 2001 (Tunca, et al., 2015). When the developments in lifelong learning around the world, lifelong learning was first introduced in 1970 by Paul Lengrand in the paper "Introduction to Lifelong Learning" presented at the UNESCO Conference. Then, in 1972, the International Commission for the Development of Education published a report entitled "The Present and Future of World Education", emphasising the importance of lifelong learning. For the first time, the report develops a holistic philosophy of lifelong learning that encompasses the concepts of "individual, education and society" (Tunca, et al., 2015). In 1996, UNESCO established the aims of lifelong learning. In response, the European Union declared this year the year of lifelong learning. The objectives for this year are as follows: Promote the concept of lifelong learning, explain its meaning and characteristics, and review its relevance for all European citizens (Diker Coşkun & Demirel, 2012). 21st century skills include learning to learn and internalising lifelong learning.

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In schools, teachers need to teach their students how to organise the process of learning to learn (Demiralay & Karadeniz, 2008). When teachers have lifelong learning competencies, they increase the tendency of society and individuals to have lifelong learning skills. Teachers' possession of lifelong learning competencies positively affects the continuous development of students. Teachers can develop students only if they themselves possess these competencies (Selvi, 2011).

The need to acquire new knowledge and skills throughout one's life and the ability to adapt to changes in the developing age are realised by having lifelong learning skills and competencies. In addition to the intrinsic motivation of the individual, teachers have a great deal to do in realising these. For lifelong learning to be internalised and transferred to life in society and individuals, teachers, who lead the society, must first be role models by having these competencies and then develop individuals. In this way, steps will be taken for comprehensive developments in the name of lifelong learning in society (Kazu & Erten, 2016). Individuals continue adult education to continue their personal development and increase their knowledge and skills while continuing their formal education or for the rest of their lives after their formal education ends. These trainings, which continue within the scope of lifelong learning, have been provided by Open Education middle and high schools from past to present (Bacakoğlu, 2022). The aim of this review study is to examine the development and change in the concepts of lifelong learning, adult education, and psychology.

METHOD

This research is designed as a review study in which the research conducted to examine the development and change of the concepts of lifelong learning, adult education, and psychology and the world from past to present are examined in detail. According to Yılmaz (2006), a review is an analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of scientific research published in scientific journals or by authors who have studies on the specified research topic in light of current developments.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Although the definition of the concept of adulthood is explained from different perspectives in the literature, the three important factors that determine being an adult are age, mental maturity, and the function of the person in society. An adult individual is expected to have completed his/her physical and mental development, to have reached psychological competence, and to have gained economic independence and a position in society (Penirci, 2014).

As all stages have their own developmental responsibilities, adulthood also has its own responsibilities. Havighurst states that factors such as starting a job, marriage, etc. are among the responsibilities of adulthood (Masar, 2021).

Being social beings, human beings want to share their knowledge with their environment and pass it on to future generations. In the early times, the process of sharing and transferring information was very limited. With the developments in science and technology, the need for continuous renewal of knowledge has arisen. Today, this service is provided by schools. Adult education is provided to adults who are not in formal education (Yazar, 2012).

Education appears as formal, non-formal, and informal. Formal education is used for children and adolescents, whereas non-formal and informal education is used for adult education (Bacakoğlu, 2022). The concept of education is not limited to the education given at school, but to meet the lifelong learning needs of individuals, it is sought to reach out to adults and to transfer knowledge to these individuals so that they can learn lifelong. In short, in the developing world, education systems in information societies are not limited to education and training at school, but are a set of systems that all individuals of all ages and regardless of their level of education can benefit from (Dilbaz, 2021).

The aim of adult education is to improve the abilities and skills of adults without ignoring the general principles of society and the qualifications of individuals. The general aim of adult education is to educate adults in all aspects in order to reduce social problems in society and to realise human-oriented development (promoting humanism). To ensure that all individuals internalise lifelong learning by keeping their knowledge and skills up-to-date within the scope of the requirements of the technological age (Masar, 2021).

When look at the history of adult education, the origin of the concept dates back to ancient times, but the emergence of the concept and the beginning of scientific studies are recent. Until the 1950s, adult education, which had previously mostly emerged through religious activities, was offered to overcome the vocational deficiencies of adults. Today, adult education plays an important role in making individuals more conscious and able to make their own decisions (Penirci, 2014).

Looking at the history of adult education in Turkey, it can be seen that adult education has been conducted by different institutions and organisations since the Ottoman Empire. In the pre-Republican period, we encountered masjids, mosques, madrasas, ahilik, guilds, and the army, while the first regular public education activities were free courses at universities, Cemiyet-i lmiye-i Osmaniye, and Cemiyet-i Tedrisiye-i slamiye. Since the first years of the Republic, public education branches, public classrooms, national schools, public houses, and village institutes have been active. In today's adult education; Open Education middle and high schools (Bacakoğlu, 2022), the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, Public Education centres, General Directorate of Vocational and Technical Education, etc. institutions and organisations operate (Penirci, 2014).

There are several factors that affect adult learning. One of these is health. As individuals get older, their health may deteriorate, which negatively affects learning. However, it is not a single factor. Thorndike emphasised that interest and energy towards learning would affect learning. Adults may become resistant to learning as they get older because of their experience and education (Deveci, 2021).

As a result, adult education contributes to the adaptation of individuals to the developing and changing world by reducing problems in many social issues affecting society in general, such as environment, race, health, gender, status, etc. (Tennat, 2019).

Declarations

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by the author(s) with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Ethics Approval

Formal ethics approval was granted by the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Necmettin Erbakan University. We conducted the study in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975.

Funding

No specific grant was given to this research by funding organisations in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the research team's university ethics committee of Necmettin Erbakan University. Hereby, we as the authors consciously assure that for the manuscript the following is fulfilled:

- This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
- This paper reflects the authors' own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
- All sources used are properly disclosed.

Contribution Rates of Authors to Articles

The authors make an equal contribution to this work.

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