

Promoting Innovation and Change in English Education: Towards a Philosophy of Lifelong Learning

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ABSTRACT

Notwithstanding the many opportunities of learning offered to further the EFL learners' knowledge and skills needed throughout life, the majority of learners often associate learning with formal education at school, college or at university. However, with the tremendous changes in education within the globalization process, different teaching and learning types are called urgently to be applied. Lifelong learning is but one method to keep pace with the new perspectives of education and maintain a positive attitude towards learning both for personal and professional development. Hence, the present talk problematises how may the philosophy of lifelong learning promote innovation and change in the EFL teaching/learning process.

INTRODUCTION

(...) The classroom is the crucible—the place where teachers and learners come together and language learning, we hope, happens. It happens, when it happens, as a result of the reactions among the elements that go into the crucible—the teachers and the learners’’. Gaies (1980) in Allwright and Bailey (1991:18)

In Practice, this may denote that an essential pyramid process exists within the teaching-learning process; namely between the teacher, the learner and the classroom. None of these elements go into the classroom with ‘empty-handed’, but rather every one brings into the classroom a number of influencing factors. The learner, on the one hand, will recall in the classroom his own learning experience, his life, his style, his emotions and his personal differences. The teacher, on the other hand, will bring into the classroom his learning/teaching experience, his personal character, and his course entailing all its connected variables. Various interactions take place between the teacher and the learner within the classroom setting. Chemistry of variables may come

to light in the classroom setting, even the best laid-out lesson plans are subject to far reaching modifications as a result of the manifold existing challenges.

Within this pyramid process, one of the main tasks of all teachers is to inculcate in their students a disposition towards lifelong learning. They must, therefore, demonstrate their own commitment towards and enthusiasm for lifelong learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

‘Our whole life is an Education — we are ‘ever-learning,’ every moment of time, everywhere, under all circumstances something is being added to the stock of our previous attainments. Mind is always at work when once its operations commence. All men are learners, whatever their occupation, in the palace, in the cottage, in the park, and in the field. These are the laws stamped upon Humanity.’’

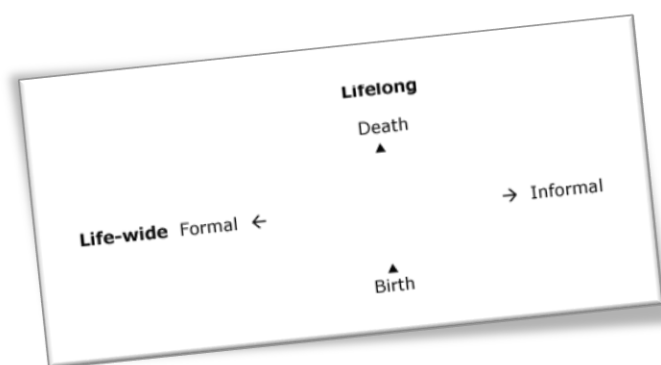
Edward Paxton Hood, Self-Education:
Twelve Chapters for Young Thinkers, 1852.

Lifelong learning may be broadly defined as learning that is pursued throughout life: learning that is

flexible, diverse and available at different times and in different places. Watson (2003: 3) defines it as: “...a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment, in all roles circumstances, and environments.”

As human beings, as language learner/teacher, the conception of lifelong learning appears to be the core skill for this changing age. The philosophy of LLL is part of the life of everybody. The day the process of learning new things professionally / personally, literally, it would be the end of life. Lifelong learning is seen as a holistic view of education and recognises learning from different environments. It consists of two dimensions as proposed by (Skolverket, 2000: 19):

- lifelong learning recognising that individuals learn throughout a lifetime,
- life-wide learning recognising the formal, non-formal and informal settings. This was put as the following



Lifelong Learning Process

The lifelong dimension is relatively non-problematic, as it simply comprises what an individual learns throughout life. It is widely accepted that as knowledge and skills become obsolete, individuals continuously update their competencies in a process of continuous learning. The life-wide dimension is more complex, as it embraces an extensive range of learning settings and contexts, as it is explained in this table:

Table 1: Formal, non-formal and informal learning

Formal	Non-formal	Informal
ACE institutions	Labour market programs	Clubs
Universities	Professional associations	Libraries
VET providers	On-the-job training	Museums
High schools	Work experience programs	Art galleries
Primary schools	Volunteer organisations	Playgrounds
Pre-schools	Childcare centres	Families
U3As	Learning circles	Elder care

How to Become a Lifelong Learner

The obvious question that is worth asking at this level is how to become a lifelong learner? As it is generally believed that specialization is for insects only, language teachers/learners need to have an idea on the tips needed to be lifelong learning:

The first thing to bear in mind is that learning does not have to be in a formal classroom setting *per se*, but rather learning occurs at every moment of life. To

become a lifelong learner, ditch the idea that you need to sign up for a class to actually learn something. Learning opportunities are all around us, thus, they are not confined to what is found in books – acquiring practical skill sets is a big part of it too.

Besides, effective learning requires active participation and reflective thinking, asking questions about everything surrounding our world. Of course

learning cannot take place without practice, and practice and practice. In fact, language teachers, parents, educators and decision makers today have the commitment of developing in students the spirit of lifelong learning. If we take an x-ray to depict the existing situation, we would straight fully find that we are teaching content, but not teaching students how to be lifelong learners and be creative throughout their learning process.

Traits of lifelong learner

Lifelong learning seems to be governed by self-directed learning and autonomy. Lifelong learning presents a continuous process which requires self-directed learners who are willing to take the initiative and collaborate with others. In this sense, a lifelong learner a the learner who:

- can critically analyze and reflect on different situations;
- can diagnose his own learning needs;
- can Formulate and set relevant learning goals;
- can Identify and implement appropriate learning strategies;
- is able to reflect on and evaluate their learning,
- is able to be responsible for his own learning,
- is ready to take risks,
- is motivated to learn and grow
- is confident,
- Is logical and flexible in thinking.

The following table presents the most important traits and skills of a lifelong learner:

Traits
Curious
Venturesome and creative
Innovative in practice
Resourceful
Motivated to learn
Confident in ability to learn from others, share what they know, and accept feedback
Willingness to make and learn from mistakes
Persistent
Flexible in thinking
Interdependent and interpersonally competent as well as independent and self-sufficient
Methodical and disciplined
Logical and analytical
Reflective and self-aware
Adaptable to changing healthcare needs
Responsible and accountable for work
Skills
Well-developed communication skills
Self-directed learning skills
Information-seeking and retrieval skills
Higher-order thinking skills
Metacognitive skills (skills for “thinking about thinking”)
Able to develop and use defensible criteria for evaluating learning
Able to work as a change agent
Able to share good practices and knowledge

CONCLUSION

In today’s hyper-connected world, no nation can instigate a fully effective education agenda, without taking into account the global needs and trends, and nurturing a globally competent citizenry. The philosophy of lifelong learning and leaning to learn may instil creativity, initiative and responsiveness in learners and teachers alike, thereby enabling them to show adaptability, innovation and change within this changing age of globalization.

Transferring our classrooms into classrooms with lifelong learning objectives may create a global vision and culture in our educational systems. It may also recruit and prepare teachers, transform and upgrade our curriculum and instruction by integrating international content that leads to learners’ centered approach. It may also emphasize language proficiency, expand students’ experiences through attaching technology and internationalizing cooperation.

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Dr. Zakia DJEBBARI, an English teacher at Tlemcen University- Algeria. She holds the doctorate degree option TEFL and Applied Linguistics, she has an interdisciplinary set of research and teaching interests including the cross-cultural challenges of academic research and Speaking skills. Amongst her ELT publications include topics about Individual differences in language learning, language policy and Technology in Foreign Language Instruction.

Ms. Houda DJEBBARI, a doctoral researcher option, Didactics and Assessment. She is interested in innovative methods of teaching and assessing learners' achievements. She enjoys cooperation and partnerships between different options for successful language learning/teaching environment.

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