Chapter 16

The Role of Life-Wide Learning on Design of Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

There is an incredible development in twentieth first century in the area of education and technology. These changes affect education system as they do all systems. When we look at contemporary educational approaches, we see that education system proceeds toward distance education and web-based education. Today individuals want that they could get a flexible education independent of time and space in accordance with their interests and demands. From this point of view, there appears the concept of life wide learning as a new and transformative concept. Life wide learning is a concept that allows individuals to get education in more than one area in any time of their life. In this situation, an individual, either young or old, employee or retired or never joined work life, can get education in more than one area he needs or is interested in and can contribute to both personal development and national economy. The main problem here lies with the situation that curriculums –by welcoming these changing educational terms- should keep in step with new developments. Curriculum development in distance education has gained popularity recently. Studies of curriculum development are oriented by changing and developing knowledge and needs and this is an indication of what a vital role it has in terms of future education system. From this point of view, the main topic of this chapter is constituted by the need which requires that curriculum development studies in life wide learning should be adapted to web-based education in order to create equality of opportunity.

INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century is going through a transformation process which is structured by high technology, digital industry, mass-media, global communication and online learning environments. The age we live in is called many names like Information Age, Computer Age, Digital Age or New Media Age. Today’s high technology requires a knowledge-based society.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8844-5.ch016
Education today aims to raise individuals who are technology-literate and conduct their own learning using different utilities in different spaces based on their personalized needs. The rapid increase of technology in daily life at most places like home, office, shopping centers and mobile areas changed life styles and perspectives of education. Perspectives of education and instruments of instruction in this New Media Age cannot be the same with ones in 1900’s.

It is not easy to satisfy all these new emerged necessities of learners in traditional schools within four walls away from utilization of new emerged opportunities. Therefore, in order to respond to changing needs, there have emerged the concepts of life-long learning and life wide learning in educational area which support learning opportunities from childhood to very old age in every single life situation (The European Parliament and Council, 2006). Life-long and life-wide learning emphasize that learning is multi-dimensional and learning takes place in other areas of life even after school life finishes.

**BACKGROUND**

**Life-Wide Learning and Reflections on Life**

European Commission’s The Future of Learning: Preparing for Change Report (2011) sets forth that “personalization, collaboration and informal learning will be at the core of learning in the future. The central learning paradigm is characterized by life-long and life-wide learning and shaped by the ubiquity of Information and Communication Technologies”.

While the concept of life-long learning is known by most people, life-wide learning is less popular and more complex to identify than lifelong learning. Life-wide learning takes place as part of life-long learning but different from it in some aspects. According to Swedish National Agency for Education (2000), “the life-wide dimension refers to the fact that learning takes place in a variety of different environments and situations, and is not only confined to the formal educational system. Life-wide learning covers formal, non-formal and informal learning.” (Clark, 2005)

*Figure 1. The relationship between life-long and life-wide learning*