

Lifelong learning in Europe and Vietnam: some distinguished figures.

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Abstract: *Industrial Revolution 4.0 has been accelerating a rapid change in all domains of human life, requiring a new capable work force to adapt requirements of this current world. Learning at schools or universities is not enough, so employees have to pursue their learning to acquire many other skills and knowledge during their life time in order to avoid eliminating from the labor market. In this article, the writer analyzes how lifelong learning has performed in European countries and Viet Nam and compare its practices in both circumstances.*

Keywords: *Lifelong learning, European countries, Vietnamese context.*

1. Introduction

‘Given the rapid changes affecting the world today, it has become necessary to provide adults with lifelong learning opportunities to acquire new skills that effectively empower them to improve their living and health conditions and enjoy decent lives.’ said H.M. King Mohammed VI, Kingdom of Morocco. Those speeches raised in a conference with more than 1,000 participants – heads of state, education ministers and representatives of the United Nations–attended CONFINTEA VII, which took place from 15 to 17 June 2022 in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco. Lifelong learning (LLL) has been a hot issue worldwide for a thirst to enhance people’s knowledge to adapt the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

LLL does not seem possess a long history. UNESCO celebrated its 70th of its Lifelong learning Institution in 2020 for its crucial roles in supporting Member States in developing successful policies and practices to provide everyone with the chance to learn. It now wide spreads among 300 cities around the world (UNESCO, 2022). LLL was adopted in European union in 1990s (Holford, J., Milana, M., 2023) and was carried in Vietnamese education in 1993 (Vietnam Communist Party [VNCP], 1993, cited in Tien, 2014). This Decision is required “to implement a permanent education for all, and to assign that LLL is a right and obligation of every citizen” (p.62). Beside that UNESCO has implemented and promoted LLL activities in South East Asian countries, especially in Vietnam, towards education for the whole society to learn together, regardless of age, gender, culture or region. Policies,

guidelines and teaching methods aimed at enhancing learners’ active learning skills are increasingly focused on in schools and after schools. Although LLL in Europe & Viet Nam generally aim to assist their citizens maintain their learning activities “from the cradle to the grave”, its practices in both two contexts seem somehow different so far.

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of lifelong learning

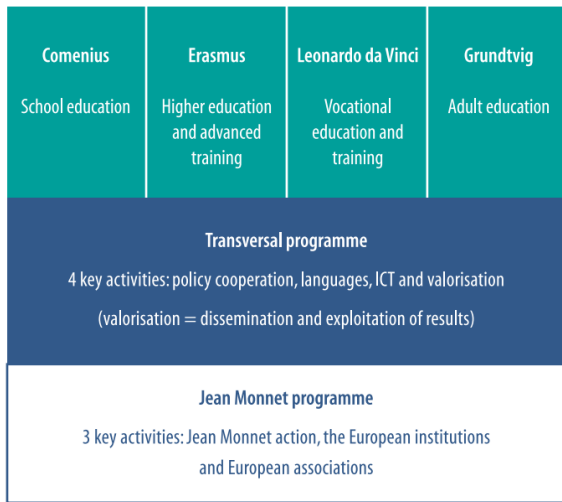
There are differences in defining lifelong learning. LLL is traditionally “all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective” (European Commission, 2001, p.9). The Commission of European Communities (2000) defined LLL as a “continuum of learning throughout life” (p. 7). Encantar (2008, as cited in London, 2011, p. 4) defined lifelong learning as “development after formal education: the continuing knowledge and skills people experience after formal education and throughout their lives.

2.2. Lifelong learning in European countries

Lifelong learning has been a focused issue in European Union learning cultures since 1990s (Holford & Milana, 2023). However, it was evoked by the requirements of active labor markets rather than the whole educational context at all levels. In Europe LLL was processed to assist EU citizens’ skills to adapt the globalization (Commission of the European Communities, 2001; World Bank, 2003; European Commission, 2015). The launch of vocational learning in 1990s emphasized the

importance of LLL in the European education system (Schürmann, 2007). EEA EFTA States decided a new LLL program 2007 - 2013 with four pillars: Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig address learners' ages and types of education. Comparing to LLL learning programs in 1990s, this program expanded learners' all ages from pre-school to adults with multiple kinds of education: school educations, higher education and advanced training, vocational education and training and adult education. The following figure describes the four pillars of LLL in European education program from 2007 -2013 (Schürmann, 2007, p3).

Figure 2.1: The Lifelong Learning Program in Europe from 2007 -2013



European Commission, (2014) considered investment in LLL as a tool to resolve the economic and social crisis, fulfill the Europe 2020 goals for employment and reduce poverty, education, sustainability, and innovation (Holford, 2023). According to Marjan Laal (2011), many authors like Mocker & Spear (1982); Colardyn and Bjonavold (2004) and Tissot (2004) agree that LLL keep up with different forms of learning consisting of formal, non-formal, informal learning or self-directed learning. LLL in form of formal learning performs under school programs, and learners have little control what and how they are learning. Non – formal LLL requires learners to decide what to learn, but the learning methods are still created by the organizer, and the learners partially control their learning process. Meanwhile, the learners have some control over the decision-making process, but they still determine what and how to learn in formal LLL.

In self-directed LLL, the learners are in complete control of what and how they study.

Although there are different kinds of LLL forms, European committees target LLL as a continuing adult education to assist their citizens, mainly young adults keep up with the market changes (Holford, 2023).

2.3. Lifelong learning in Vietnamese context.

Vietnam has a history of implementing nationwide education policy reforms since 1993. The Education Law (National Assembly, 1998) formally institutionalizes LLL, which the Vietnam Communist Party claims is a citizen's right and obligation (Pham, 2014). Additionally, LLL in the Viet Nam is a part of a non-formal education system that may aid people in adapting to both the workforce and oneself (Phan, 2022). It is also called continuing education - the second choice for ones who fall formal education or lack conditions to pursue formal education.

LLL in Viet Nam also widespread into two forms: open and distance learning ‘focusing on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners’ (UNESCO, 2002, p.8, cited in Yorozu, 2017). To accelerate these two LLL forms, in 1990s Viet Nam government established two universities - Hanoi Open University and the Open University of Ho Chi Minh City in order to transform Viet Nam into a learning society providing Vietnamese learners opportunities to learn continuously throughout their lives anytime, anywhere and at any level (Yorozu, 2017). These universities supply multiple choices via distance, conventional (face-to-face) and blended learning for both undergraduate and graduate levels with a wide range of academic and vocational fields. Currently, twenty-one providers of open and distance learning in Viet Nam have been running online and blended courses in natural sciences, social sciences, business, engineering, education and other disciplines (Yorozu, 2017).

On November 9, 2023, the Prime Minister issued Decision 1315/QĐ-TTg on the Plan to implement the Movement “The whole country emulates building a learning society, promoting lifelong learning in the period 2023 - 2030” (LawNet, n.d.). LLL in Viet Nam now moves to one of the key elements of a learning society. LLL in this Decision is not only benefits for adults only but for the whole communities without

the distinction of Vietnamese's ages, background or cultures. To bring this Decision to reality, Viet Nam government made emulation criteria and assigned for multi-levels of its organizations from national to local ones, for household and families, for businesses and for individuals. As considering that LLL is not the duty of the schools or higher education as in the years in 20th century. In fact, the whole society contributes to giving a chance for people to approach to any learning chances around them.

LLL in the current time comes up with the digital technology platform. LLL is not just a formative approach in pages of national laws or education policies. It is remarked with a social event like a Lifelong Learning Response Week hold in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh (two biggest cities in Viet Nam) in October, 2023 to raise people's awareness of the value of lifelong learning and inspire them to pursue education. LLL in Viet Nam is not just a policy but is also considered as an event that carries out close to the community.

2.4. Comparison of lifelong learning in European and Vietnamese contexts.

LLL in Europe countries and Viet Nam context are similar in its purposes. Both contexts evoke LLL for the globalization, economic changes and information technological trends (Holford, 2023; Holford, & Milana, 2023; Phan, 2022; Schürmann, 2007; Yorozu, 2017).

LLL in two contexts aims at providing learning chances for all ages of learners. However, this notion has been carrying out in different stages with different programs. European countries and Viet Nam started LLL for adults and young adults in 1990s (Phan, 2022 & Holford, 2023), and then LLL have been applied to multiple levels of education for all citizens since 2007 in Europe and in Viet Nam since 1990s (UNESCO, 2002, p.8, cited in Yorozu, 2017). However, throughout its time of practices, LLL in Europe focuses much on adult learners in form of non-formal education. Meanwhile, LLL in Viet Nam is not just provided for adult learners but for the whole community with the contribution of all walks of life.

LLL in both settings are varied. In European education systems, LLL is proceeded in continuing educational formula, adult education through public-private partnerships involving other partners (non-governmental organizations, religious communities and organizations) and volunteer work (Dudaitė et

al., 2021). Vietnamese government establishes LLL in numerous systems as adult education, continuing education, open education, distance education and especially encourages a learning society contributed by economic development corporations, state-owned corporations, enterprises, cooperatives, and cooperative unions, families, profit & non-profit organizations, religious organizations, charities (Prime Minister, Decision 1315/QĐ-TT).

3. Conclusion

The vital roles of LLL cannot be denied in any educational circumstances. Even though there are some differences of its practices in European countries and Viet Nam, LLL still contributes to fostering the high qualified work forces in order to adapt the requirements of this globalization, international market context and technological era. Through online learning in the open education system, distant learning, adult education, active engagement in the global network of learning cities, and lifelong learning, LLL in Vietnam will have access to international trends and experiences in these areas.

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