

## PART-TIME STUDIES AS AN INSTRUMENT TO ENCOURAGE LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH MODERN TECHNOLOGY

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### Abstract

*When individuals or organizations promote the development of knowledge and competences that will enable each citizen to adapt to the knowledge-based society and actively participate in all spheres of social and economic life, the citizen takes more control of his or her future. By valuing all forms of learning, including: formal learning, (such as a degree course taken at university); non-formal learning, such as vocational skills acquired at the workplace; and informal learning, such as inter-generational learning, for example where parents learn to use ICT through their children, or learning how to play an instrument together with friends. Such individuals and organizations are promoting "Lifelong Learning". In this paper the writer will try to x-ray concept of lifelong learning, especially with trends in education sector, and the benefits the society at large will derive from it. Again, he will show in his own estimation the right time to be involved in lifelong learning. Then the challenges involved with the modern trends in education will be treated and also suggest ways to encourage lifelong learning even in the educational system.*

**Keywords:** *lifelong learning, modules, education, library, programme, Formal, Non-formal, Informal.*

### 1. Introduction

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. Lifelong learning crosses sectors, promoting learning beyond traditional schooling and throughout adult life. (Delors, 1996). On the other hand, Watson (2003) Opined that Lifelong learning is 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

A recent graduation ceremony of a University in Nigeria saw a 53-year-old man getting his B.Sc. in Mass Communication; working on it for 25 years. This took him five times the normal time to obtain! This is definitely not what I mean by lifelong learning. Though, it is admirable for anyone to have persevered for twenty-five years pursuing that one degree, the stops, and starts that came with it, meant a redoing of outdated modules, replacement of discontinued ones and even changing majors as curricula shifted over the period. You may be tempted to ask; but why did it take him 25 years to finish? I want to believe that, the work schedule of program and challenge, maybe the root cause of this delay. This is because if this person in question could be working in a sales and marketing environment, where unpredictable job demands drew his focus away from his studies, or rather, made the focus on studies difficult over the period, knowing that, he had registered to do the degree by part-time or correspondence, which means little or no peer interaction, and he had limited or no lecturer support with unfamiliar academic material especially in this country where there are often strikes. With deliberately planned bite-size chunks of education such as modules, courses, programmes or short qualifications, one acquires relevant education that is applicable at the appropriate time to one's career, enabling one to operate at the required level.

Thus, one's advancement is not only beneficial to the organization, but the different milestones that come with each acquisition make lifelong learning a series of joyful bouts of accomplishment and ongoing personal fulfillment or development.

So, instead of a 25-year long-awaited qualification, one can achieve five times as many qualifications, and also have applied the knowledge exponentially over the period!

Academically, lifelong learning is ongoing learning, pursuing knowledge or expertise, in one or more fields of study. This is done deliberately, with time-specific goals and pre-planned outcomes. There is a specific use, or short/long-term targeted benefit, planned for the knowledge acquired. This would also be undertaken through a formal institution that can attach laudable academic value to the course. Such institutions like NOUN, ICAN, CIS, IAN etc. that run their programmes on modular bases, designed to fit in with one's time and work challenges. Modules are short enough, and may be planned as evening classes, daytime, or weekend study blocks, live-streamed remote classes with full class participation, or self-programmed studies using recorded lectures, and online material with full support from lecturers or facilitators, with the advent of technology.

National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) has a flexible mode of learning which ensures that you have both classroom and remote study options, depending on what your work or life schedule permits at a particular time. This can also be dependent on how much face-to-face lecture supports your need per module, so that you can schedule to do tricky modules when you know you will be able to attend physical lectures. Simply put, lifelong learning is ongoing acquisition of knowledge for personal learning and self-development. It can be promoted through exposure to general knowledge and wide reading, across disciplines or subjects, pursued at different times with different intensities, to fulfill different areas and levels of curiosity, each time.

The primary organization (that mainly renders services in this form of learning) is the Library, and to be precise, the Public library. Lifelong learning can take place in a variety of environments, both inside and outside formal education and training systems. This implies investing in people with knowledge; promoting the acquisition of basic skills, including digital literacy and broadening opportunities for innovative, more flexible forms of learning. The aim is to provide people, of all ages,

with equal and open access to high-quality learning opportunities, and to a variety of learning experiences, for the total development of man in his society.

The ideal thing is that learning opportunities should be available to all citizens on an ongoing basis. In practice, this should mean that each citizen should have individual learning pathway suitable to his/her needs and interests, at all stages of his/her live. The content of learning, the way learning is accessed, and where it takes place, may vary, depending on the learner and their learning requirements. Lifelong learning is also about providing second chance, to update basic skills, and to offer learning opportunities, at more advanced levels. This means that formal systems of provision need to become much more open and flexible, so that such opportunities can truly be tailored to the needs of the learner, or indeed the potential learner

By following lifelong learning programme, professionals all over the world pursue the same goals: improving their qualifications, bringing their skills up to date, or retraining for a new line of work. Corporate training has similar goals, with the concept of lifelong learning, used by organizations to promote a more dynamic employee base, better able to react to a rapidly changing environment. One of the reasons lifelong education has become so important is to keep up with the acceleration of scientific and technological progress. The knowledge and skills acquired during formal education are usually not sufficient to support a professional career, spanning three or four decades. Therefore almost all businesses have adopted aspects of lifelong learning.

This paper will try, as much as possible to x-ray the importance of lifelong education, to the society as whole, build on existing principles to prove why lifelong learning is important to any individual or organization; and, finally, bring to light the dynamic services rendered by the vanguard of lifelong learning.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Conceptual Framework



and informative materials for the total education of the citizenry. That is why UNESCO described it as an organized collection of published books and periodicals, other reading materials and audio-visual materials facilities of staff to provide and interpret such materials as are required to meet the informational, research, educational or recreational needs of the users. The place of the library as one of the vanguards of lifelong learning cannot be overemphasized. This is a media center known as an academic rendezvous for prospective information users.

Human beings consciously or unconsciously keep on learning and training themselves, throughout their lives. This may be as a result of the influence of the surroundings, which mould their behaviour, their concept of life, and the content of their knowledge. Alexander and McKenzie (1998) stated that the major 'benefits of online distance education are an improved quality of learning; an improved productivity of learning; an improved access to learning; and an improved student attitude to learning'. One of the advantages of new online distance education is interacting with other and gaining a more sophisticated and global understanding of complex international issues. One of the other advantages of online distance education is lifelong learning that has been more accessible for all people. 'Lifelong learning has been perceived as both a social ideal, involving personal growth and active citizenship, and an economic necessity in a knowledge economy. That requires people to undertake continual retraining and the acquisition of new skills, in response to technological and structural economic changes for the development of a nation

### 2.3 Benefits of Lifelong Learning

A number of important socio-economic forces are pushing for the lifelong learning approach. The increased pace of globalization and technological change, the changing nature of work and the labour market, and the ageing of populations, are among the forces emphasizing the need for continuing upgrading of work and life skills throughout life. The demand is for a rising threshold of skills, as well as more frequent changes in the nature of the skills required. It has also been said that: Lifelong learning's core values of learning, exploring, and serving, are

coupled with benefits for the mind, body and spirit, that make it an incredibly powerful tool for personal transformation and enhancement, said Nancy Merz Nordstrom (2006), She went on to list top 10 benefits of lifelong learning as such: (10) Lifelong learning helps fully develop natural abilities. (9) Lifelong learning opens the mind. (8) Lifelong learning creates a curious, hungry mind. (7) Lifelong learning increases our wisdom. (6) Lifelong learning makes the world a better place. (5) Lifelong learning helps us to adapt to change. (4) Lifelong learning helps us find meaning in our lives. (3) Lifelong learning keeps us involved as active contributors to society. (2) Lifelong learning helps us make new friends and establish valuable relationships. (1) Lifelong learning leads to an enriching life of self-fulfillment (Nordstrom, 2008).

### 2.4 Limitations and Criticisms of Lifelong Learning

Observations of learners, in our environments, in the past, indicated that they took advantage of multiple learning opportunities. However, there is the need to carefully investigate possible limitations of our approach, for example, the strengths and weaknesses of learning on demand. Limitations may include: - The acquisition, of certain essential skills, should not be deferred until they are needed; because the time to learn them may not be available or the environment may be too dangerous for safe learning processes. Learning on demand is task driven; and, therefore, may be limited to exposing users to isolated pieces of knowledge, while providing only limited support for learning essential principles; (a) users may encounter difficulties in decontextualizing knowledge, so that it can be used in new settings; (b) whereas learning on demand may be well suited for evolutionary extensions of a knowledge base, it may not support substantial restructuring; because, the additional features learned occur only in the neighborhood of what learners already know. Another main criticism of lifelong learning is the predominantly economic interpretation of the term. It has become problematic for many educators, and practitioners, who have come forward with such terms as "Lifelong (L) "Earning" and "Learning to Earn", as their succinct criticism, of the way the term is being promoted.

### 1. Conclusions

Through this writer's review and search, it is widely believed that a lot of people start with learning, at any possible time, at their disposal. This actually shows that lifelong learning can take place anytime, depending on the choice of the individual. By developing human capacity, from time to time means that the human resources of a nation are being developed as well. Using modern trends, with its implements (technologies) in education, will help build up lifelong learning.

### 2. Recommendations

From the fore-going, it is quite clear that lifelong learning should be highly recognized, and given all the support, to thrive seriously in this country, with a good enactment to back it up. The vanguards of this Lifelong Learning should be equipped to carry out their work effectively and efficiently. Policies that will back up lifelong learning, in Nigeria, should be looked into by the Minister of Education, National Assembly, and all that is involved in educating the citizenry, especially the academics.

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