

THE ESSENCE OF LIFELONG EDUCATION: THEORETICAL AND APPLIED ASPECT

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1. Introduction

Contemporary dynamics of global socio-economic relations, the making of post-industrial society, globalization, stronger integration links, introduction of innovative technology, growing of world economy competitiveness set new strategic challenges to be solved. One of the most important goals for the national economy is the transition to the knowledge-driven economy based on higher role of information technology, development of intellectual capital and introducing post-industrial models of society development.

Studies reveal that the developed countries have made the transition from the industrial society to the informational society where knowledge and creative approach are far more efficient resources than any material means of production. According to the World Bank, physical capital in the contemporary economy comprises 16% of each country's national treasure, 20% are natural resources, and 64% – human, with up to 80% in Germany and Japan [1, p.112].

Economists have calculated that about 2/3 of the world treasure is encapsulated in the human capital made of employee's knowledge and ability to adjust to the new knowledge-driven economy. As a result, the key factor in the transition period from industrial to post-industrial economy is generation and dissemination of knowledge for the socio-economic development of the country.

The need for the knowledge-driven economy is especially crucial for Ukraine. Recent economic evaluations showed that if our country stimulated the development of the intellectual capital, with its 5% of the world's scientific potential, it could expect \$100 billion US Dollars worth of revenue annually, which is ten times higher than Ukraine's raw material export. Japan's share in global economy is 34% of technology sold over the world, the US – about 33%, Russia – 0.1%, Ukraine – nil [2]. Thus Ukraine's primary strategic goal is to develop its human resources.

An important role in the development of human capital stemming from knowledge generation and dissemination belong to the lifelong education. Its significance for the country's economic development is indisputable due to how it shapes an intellectual component in the system of knowledge-driven economy. The need to research lifelong education is stipulated by the following factors of the knowledge-driven economy: intellectual capital is the most promising and competitive economic resource on the world market; knowledge-generating and implementing technology is a constituent of economic growth and investment, ever-increasing role of education in the generation of new knowledge and information used for solving economic and social problems.

Thus, establishment and development of the lifelong education system is now a very pressing problem for Ukraine.

The issue of lifelong education in the context of knowledge-driven economy has been researched by many Ukrainian and foreign scholars. Among the world father-founders of the human resource doctrine and post-industrial theory are D. Bell, H. Becker, M. Blaug, W. Deisard, P. Drucker,

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R. Inglehart, D. Riesman, E. Toffler, P. Pilzer, H. Clodt. Polish researcher R. Patora studies lifelong education as an important component of educational services. Russian economic researcher studies these issues as well: S. Beliakov, V. Inozemtsev, S. Glazyev, T. Kliachko, V. Shchetinin and others. Ukrainian scholars who worked on problems of human resource capital are: A. Ambrosova, L. Antoshkina, Y. Vovkanych, N. Holikova, M. Danko, H. Dmytrenko, Y. Dutkevych, O. Hrishnova, O. Serdiuk, L. Semiv, M. Stepko, B. Klymevko, A. Krykliy, A. Kolot, V. Nykyforenko, L. Kuzmenko, L. Fedulova, L. Yankovska and other well-known scholars. However, all these researchers view lifelong education not as a holistic research issue but rather in the context of higher education development and human resource capital overall.

Analytical review of scientific sources proves that Ukrainian and foreign researchers diverge in their treatment of lifelong education. It also lacks systemic approach to studying socio-economic essence of the lifelong education. In most cases this phenomenon is viewed through pedagogical prism. It is also important to note that the rapid social development, transition to knowledge-driven economy and information society adds new characteristics to this notion and reveals its essence through more complicated functions.

The objective of this paper is to substantiate the essence of lifelong education based on the results from analytical review of informational sources and applied sociological research into the understanding of lifelong education by various categories of its participants.

2. The essence of lifelong education

The idea of lifelong education has a key importance for the development of contemporary society. Nowadays, lifelong education is a study object in pedagogy, sociology, and economics. The roots of lifelong education are found in Ancient philosophers' treatises – Confucius, Socrates, Aristotle, Solon, Plato, Seneca. Lifelong education, education activity as a special life goal for each person was advocated in the Roman Club speech "Education is limitless," in particular in E. Fore's paper "Learn to be" [3, p.18]. A historical overview shows that lifelong education was seen both as a practical aspect and as a pedagogical concept. For the first time this idea was presented at the 1965 UNESCO conference by a well-known theoretician of lifelong education P. Legrand. His idea was that a human being needs to grow as a personality, activity subject and communication throughout lifetime.

With the UNESCO's recognition the idea of lifelong education has radically changed the contemporary concept of education. We no longer speak of a particular period in the person's life when they get education before starting independent work, but rather of a continuous education that takes a lifetime. Lifelong education is an essential element of higher education in Europe. The education policy that Western Europe implemented in the 1970-s was a very significant factor that influenced the implementation of lifelong education based on humanism, democracy, mobility, leadership, transparency and continuity. Its essence lies in the fact that higher education ceased to be limited to the elite but rather became open to masses, more flexible forms, with new types of educational institutions appearing and some of them structurally belong to universities. For example, in Europe, these are short education programs that vary in their social composition of students, in the content and objectives of educational process (diversification of higher education) [4, p.30].

International legal practice treats the notion of lifelong education quite broadly. In particular, the UN Convention on Technical and Vocational Education, Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the European States, International Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean, the International Labor Organization XXX Resolution on Youth Employment, project concept for the model Education Code for the CIS countries regard lifelong education as a fundamental principle for higher education reform.

Post-Soviet research space views lifelong education more as a category of pedagogy. Historically, most fundamental views on the lifelong education are the following three [5, p.68]:

- the first view stipulates that this idea is as old as the humanity itself (O. Darvinsky, H. Gumiliov, G. Yagodin);
- the second view says that this idea appeared in modern times characterized by active processes in the spiritual, social, productive, economic and scientific domains (A. Kuptsov, V. Osipov);
- according to the third view, the idea of lifelong education has existed for a while but only recently did it acquire a new sense (O. Vladyslavliev, G. Zinchenko, V. Onushkin, N. Pobirchenko).

Thus, the essence of the lifelong education is changing in relation to historical circumstances and social needs.

The research into the essence of lifelong education in the international practice has produced numerous terms. The most common term in scholarly literature is lifelong education, alongside with continuing education. Some authors resort to the term recurrent education. When speaking of adult education and wanting to emphasize its independence from formal educational structures, scholars talk of the out-of-school education and non-formal education.

The analysis of literary sources showed that scientific publication, proceedings of research conferences and training seminars very often use the notions of lifelong education and continuing education. It is thought that these two notions should not be perceived as the same because there are significant differences between the two. According to the definition given by [6, p.13] “lifelong education provides with possibility to stay in the common of civilization development, to maintain competitiveness throughout your lifetime, to strengthen state national security, society and personality... to teach a human being to efficiently, systematically and consistently master new knowledge and information as they permanently accumulate and develop, it means to provide with a life-long education meant to become a style of socio-individual life in the information society.” The category of lifelong education emphasizes continuing learning, re-training, increasing qualification, self-education, traineeship, learning throughout the lifetime.

On the contrary, the category of continuing learning is used to refer to technology and mechanisms for training specialists and professionals [6, p.13].

In other sources continuity means some succession between all stages of educational process, particularly, between updating knowledge and skills, competence for designing a new action path; between introduction into the system of knowledge and revision [7, p.30].

However, the research into the etymology of notions of lifelong and continuing education has revealed the identical meaning.

The Great Dictionary of Ukrainian Language defines lifelong as “not interrupted, unbroken; happening all the time without intermittence, permanent” [8, p.43], and continuing as “lasting continually, constantly, without stops = continuous” [8, p.610]. The abovementioned fundamental monograph studies the notion of lifelong educations and the following are used to define lifelong: “education for people who did not complete the educational cycle in their youth; the term encompasses a whole range of possibilities for primary, secondary and post-secondary education provided by public and private educational institutions for the person to acquire academic and professional knowledge, as well as knowledge that will help them to have quality leisure and develop their personality” [8, p.43]. To our mind, more expedient for the practical use in the context of developing socio-economic processes is a notion of lifelong education under consideration.

In Ukraine, the principle of lifelong education is reflected in numerous legal normative acts, in particular, in the Strategy for Economic and Social Development of Ukraine (2004 – 2015), in regional development strategies until 2015, annual President's Addresses, in action programs of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine since the time Ukraine was declared independent, the National Doctrine for the Development of Education, Laws on Education, Decrees by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. For example, the Law of Ukraine on Higher Education and the National Doctrine for the Development of Education consider lifelong education as fundamental educational values.

Foreign researchers say that “lifelong education is crossing the line from “desirable” personal investment into “essential” personal investment since more than one diploma is required to maintain your position on the dynamic job market” [9, p.104], thus emphasizing the significance of the lifelong education as a means of increasing professional qualification in relation to job market demands.

L. Antoshkina views lifelong education from positions of personal development as a long-ranging form of leisure with personal benefits [10, p.18].

The interrelation between lifelong education and social policy is emphasized by Rector of European University Professor I. Tymoshenko. He thinks that the state and society lifelong education is growing a leading domain in terms of social policy, mechanism of creating professional and cultural potential, condition for social production. He also points out that “the structure of lifelong education is split into two substructures: basic and additional education; which later comprise four subsystems basic general, basic vocational, additional general, additional vocational” [11]. Thus, the emphasis goes to the structure of lifelong education and the subsystems that comprise it.

Another researcher considering lifelong education from the systemic approach is S. Pobirchenko. According to him, lifelong education systems is “a complex of public and other educational institutions that provide an organizational and essential unity, successive interrelation of all stages of education, which provides possibility for temporary break and resuming of learning, choice of individual education trajectory, increasing qualifications, re-training with purposes of higher level of general education and professional competitiveness, in relation to job market demands” [5, p.69].

According to I. Mykhaylichenko, lifelong education is a phasic and holistic in its elements process taking the entire lifetime and ensuring continuous development of creative potential of a person and enrichment of their spiritual world [12].

Thus, stipulated by the stage of implementing the Bologna process into the Ukrainian education, the researchers view lifelong education as a process comprising basic and additional education, and which, on the second stage, involves alternating between learning activity in specifically designed educational institutions and professional activity [13].

Thus, the developing of personality in the lifelong education takes place in stages and is made up of basic education (preliminary education preceding individual's professional activity) and post-basic education (further learning combined with practical activity in the social production domain) (fig. 1).

According to the procedural approach lifelong education is made up of stages of basic and additional education, involves successive alternation between learning activity in specifically designed educational institutions and professional activity. So, the distribution of educational resources throughout the lifetime is considered more expedient than their concentration in during the young years.

The rigid sequence of education – work – vacation – retirement becomes optional; there is a chance to change this sequence in relation to social demands and personal needs and wishes.

It also means:

- more rational distribution of learning and working periods;
- diving the learning on the preliminary or basic stage or on the post-basic stage;
- acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, competences, values as the need for them arises.

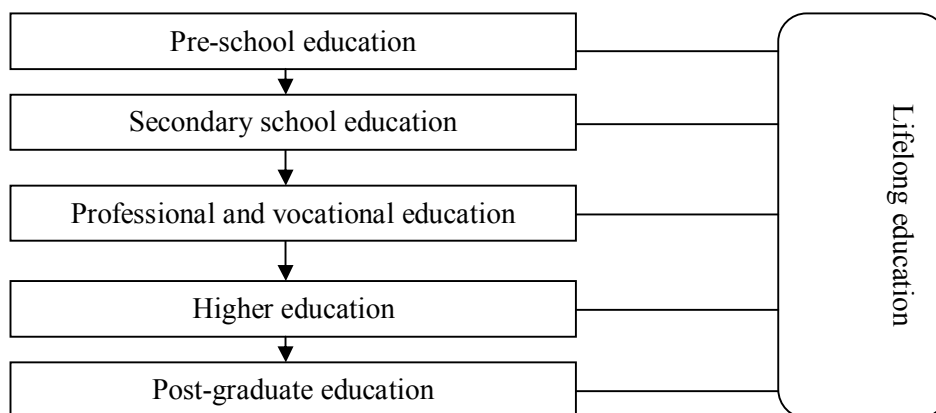


Fig. 1. Interrelation of education elements in the concept of lifelong education

In such system the choice of educational level is not tied to a certain age and shifts within the system are based not exclusively on a certain minimum of knowledge, but rather on the person's overall development and intellect, social status needs and aspiration for self-improvement.

To summarize the theoretical aspect in research of lifelong education, we need to discriminate between major scientific approaches to its treatment, for example:

- factor of personality development throughout the lifetime;
- fundamental principle of reforming higher education;
- system of public and other educational institutions;
- leading domain of social policy, prerequisite for production development;
- phasic and holistic in its elements;
- means of increasing professional qualification according to job market demands.

The applied aspect of research into the essence of lifelong education can be defined by studying public opinion on the peculiarities of regional development of lifelong education. The first part of the study applies to the understanding of lifelong education by different categories of participants in the lifelong education system in Lviv region, so that later we will be able to compare key points of perceiving this notion.

The sociological study was carried out on the category of respondents who are direct participants and consumers of education services. These categories include: young people over 18 who completed their secondary education and move on to realize their further educational and vocational plans, students of vocational schools, universities of all levels of accreditation; employees at enterprises of different forms of ownership as direct and main potential consumers of adult education services; administration of educational institutions as direct participants and executors of educational process, employers representing enterprises and institutions of different forms of ownership as the party which always requires qualified and educated employers and makes use of their knowledge and skills. Participants of the survey were people of the above mentioned categories over 18 who form supply and demand on the job market and in the system of lifelong education. Research materials as primary questionnaires were processed on software SPSS Version 14.

The results of the sociological poll undertaken during 2009 in Lviv region aimed to find out the respondent's view on lifelong education showed no unanimity in understanding the concept. The novelty of the research lies in the fact that we questioned those categories of respondents who represent both suppliers of lifelong educational services (university administration) and employs its results (employers), and the direct subjects of the lifelong education systems (employed or unemployed people, students).

Thus, answers to the question "What do you think lifelong education means?" that we posed to Lviv employers and university faculty revealed mostly personal perception of the lifelong education and understanding it as a factor for intellectual development (table 1).

Tab. 1. Distribution of answers to the question "What do you think lifelong education means?" (university administration and employers)

Answer options to the question "What do you think lifelong education means?"	Distribution of answers, in % of the total amount of respondents	
	University administration	Employers
Fundamental principles of the contemporary educational system	29	27
Means of adaptation to new professional demands on the job market, socio-economic transformations	24	30
Way of personal and intellectual development	37	32
Factor of active development of educational services	8	5
Successive alternation of learning activity in educational institutions with professional involvement	18	16

Source: based on the author's sociological study

As could be seen from the poll results, a third of all respondents think that lifelong education is first and foremost a source of personal development. Treating lifelong education as a means of intellectual developments was evidenced by 37% of university administration representatives and 32% of employers. With a view that universities aim to increase the innovative component of the learning process and to teach students learn individually, while employers are interested in engaging specialists with high intellectual level and able to self-improve, this position is understandable.

As a result, lifelong education is becoming a fundamental principle of the contemporary education system. Such is the opinion of 29% of respondents from university administration and 27% of employers. Apparently, reforming the Ukrainian system of education stipulates the transition to a multi-level dynamic system of specialist training which will provide possibilities for an individual to acquire a certain educational and qualification level in a desired fields, and to provide their mobility on the job market.

A high percentage of employers' answers go to lifelong education viewed as a means of adaptation to new professional demands on the job market. It stems from the fact that lifelong education is called to train new innovative personnel able to increase their qualification level according to the dynamic demands from the environment, display creativity, adaptability, ability to create innovations. In the longer run it would mean a higher effectiveness in the workplace and higher employer's satisfaction with the work of his employees, which in turn would lead to economic development.

Practice has shown that the majority of specialized knowledge is renewed every 7-9 years. So, in order to be an up-to-date specialist, you need to study continuously. Yet, the university administration is more reluctant to consider lifelong education as a means of adaptation to new professional demands on the job market and socio-economic transformations, and that might serve as a partial explanation for a very low knowledge level of university graduates

in relation to professional demands from the employers. Such answer also evidences the need for university administrations to review their approaches to providing educational services – to replace teaching students’ information on a certain subject with the methods to renew their own knowledge and skills, which would be more in line with the idea of lifelong education.

A small amount of the respondents from university administration and employers attach the meaning of development factor to the lifelong education. This gives 8% and 5% from the total number of respondents correspondingly. But all the respondents agree that the lifelong education has a multi-aspect manifestation and is closely related to the country’s educational system and personal motives of individuals to learn, and to the job market.

The position of understanding lifelong education by the categories of respondents, who are direct recipients of educational services in the system of lifelong education, has a clear social tendency. Answers to the question “What does lifelong education mean to you?” provided by students and working population show a close connection between lifelong education and professional self-fulfillment (table 2).

Tab. 2. Distribution of answers to the question “What does lifelong education mean to you?” (working population* and students)

Answer options to the question “What does lifelong education mean to you?”	Distribution of answers, in % of the total amount of respondents	
	Working population	Students
Learning throughout lifetime in combination with working activity	34	32
Possibility to individually choose methods and forms for self-fulfillment	26	29
Means to overcome knowledge ageing	16	21
Guarantee of social stability and competitiveness on the job market	28	28
Possibility to quickly adapt to new technology and professional requirements	6	20

Source: based on the author’s sociological study

*including the unemployed (respondent with education and employment or able to work)

Results of the sociological study allowed us to see that working population and students attach great importance to lifelong education, estimate highly its permanent nature that gives opportunity to combine learning and working. This is the understanding of lifelong education displayed by 34% of the respondents from the working population, and 32% of students surveyed.

Under the circumstance of education democratization a great factor for students is the chance to choose individually forms and methods for self-fulfillment independent of the stage of the person’s professional development. This understanding of lifelong education was displayed by 29% of surveyed students and 26% of the working population, and this means liberalization of the professional fulfillment under the integration tendencies and departure from the traditionally imposed norms of career growth.

Unanimous are the positions of a great number of respondents on the lifelong education as a guarantee of social stability and competitiveness on the job market. 28% of the working population and students think so. Apparently, this stems from the function of lifelong education in the socio-economic development of the region. High competition on the job market requires

a constant increase of qualification level of employees and changing approaches to training students.

This might explain why 20% of the students surveyed who are focused on perspective knowledge think that lifelong education provides a chance to quickly adapt to new technology and professional requirements. It relates to the introduction of the state-of-the-art information technology into virtually all spheres of society, development and implementation of new computer software, computerization of production etc.

On the contrary, the working population hardly views lifelong education in such context at all.

Only 6% of the respondents answered affirmatively to this question. And yet the working population shares the view of 21% of the students that the lifelong education is a means to overcome knowledge ageing in the contemporary economy, which means they are ready to learn during the entire lifetime.

Thus, for the employed population and for students lifelong education first and foremost means a factor of success on the job market and social stability, which in turn guarantees prosperous life.

Thus, the applied aspect of studying the essence and functions of lifelong education reveals its close connection to the sphere of knowledge and skills application, in such a way reflecting the motivation for learning.

3. Conclusions

To summarize the abovementioned we need to say that the essence of lifelong education needs to be defined through its complexity of understanding in the theoretical and applied contexts. We suggest that lifelong education be regarded as a systemic approach to the complex nature of the system, in particular: both as a unity and as a subsystem of higher levels; a multitude of elements with hierarchical subordination; reflection of connections between elements in a system; using numerous models to describe separate elements, subsystems and of the overall system.

Thus, lifelong education is a complex, multi-level, open and strictly operating system of interaction between government authorities, employers and citizens to implement the principles of lifelong education, that requires a substantial normative, legal, financial and information support, includes both traditional and innovative methods of learning, displays professional motivation and provides the development of intellectual resources capital on the road to knowledge-driven economy. Principal features of lifelong education are succession, continuity, motivation, adaptability, innovativeness, quality, prospectiveness, integrity, rationality, flexibility, wholeness, individualization.

The suggested definition allows us to understand the essence of lifelong education, encompasses all its participants, and points to the major principle of their interaction, allows defining forms of implementing lifelong education and proves its consistency and motivation.

Thus, the results of the undertaken research proved that lifelong education is a unique social institution whose goal is both to develop and increase human resources capital, and also to shape the future of the state, society, organization and personality.

Lifelong education allows maintaining on a high level the development of human potential, to develop competitiveness, to implement innovations into all fields of activity.

That is why a wide access to all forms of lifelong education in the information age is an important indicator of growth of the intellectual potential of the society, development of democracy, and a prerequisite for the implementation of contemporary information technology into the economy.

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Summary

The paper reveals the essence of lifelong education from the systemic approach based on synthesis of analysis of results from analytical review of information sources and applied sociological research into the essence of lifelong education by various categories of respondents. The offered determination enables integrally to understand essence of continuous education, engulfs all its participants, specifies on basic principle of their co-operation, gives possibility to define the forms of realization of continuous education and specifies on its sequence and purposefulness.

Keywords: knowledge-driven economy; intellectual capital; lifelong education; functions of lifelong education; job market.

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