

Chapter 14

Learning Competence for Youth in Digital Lifelong Learning Society

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to identify challenges and opportunities of learning in rapidly changing digital age, and to propose a theoretical framework of classifying potentially useful learning competences for youths in digital lifelong learning society. The rapid development of technology, economics and society have placed unprecedented challenges to people in all countries and all walks of life, thus demand new ways of learning, or lifelong learning to help people function in this ever changing world more successfully. The framework of learning competences proposed in this chapter encompasses meta-cognition, learning strategies, transfer of learning, and information literacy. All of them are discussed in details in the chapter. Although the framework has the function to help learners achieve learning success in digital environment, a further research involving youth on development and application of it in the digital lifelong learning environment is needed as a next step of research. Therefore, experimental research is needed to further test and adjust the proposed theoretical framework in a digital lifelong learning environment.

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INTRODUCTION

In the twenty first century new expectations and demands on education are mounting rapidly, as social and economic development becomes geared around the concept of constructing a Society of Knowledge. Citizens need strong, autonomous, responsive and inclusive educational institutions to provide them with research-based education and learning in order to meet with the many challenges facing them ahead. Lifelong learning is considered as a positive response to such a changing world (EAEA, 2006). In its Resolution of 27 June 2002 on Lifelong Learning, the Council of the European Union considered that Lifelong learning “facilitates free mobility for European citizens and allows the achievement of the goals and aspirations of European Union: to become more prosperous, competitive, tolerant and democratic”.

It has become obvious that traditional teaching and learning are not adequate enough to meet the needs of learners in today’s fast-paced, rapidly changing environment. Lifelong learning, flexible learning, mobile learning and online learning become necessary (EAEA, 2006). The implementation of these new learning models requires new learning competence and skills (DeSeCo, 2005). It is necessary to identify and develop new learning competence for youths and to facilitate their learning successfully in digital lifelong learning environment.

By identifying the challenges and opportunities of learning in rapidly changing digital age, this research proposes a theoretical framework to classify potentially useful learning competences for youths in digital lifelong learning society as deliberate response to the challenges of rapid development of technology, economics and society.

This research mainly used literature review and policy survey to obtain information. By using Internet search engines, such as Google Academic,

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Psychological Abstracts (PsychLit) databases literature searches were conducted to determine the pressing challenges and potential opportunities, and in turn came up with appropriate theoretical framework. By paying attention to how different countries are responding to the challenges, the research learned insights from different national or regional resources. When the theoretical framework was chosen, additional literature searches were conducted to identify studies that had determined the success of specific learning tactics.

As background of the study, this part of the Chapter illustrates the challenges of the rapidly changing world and the evolving significance of lifelong learning in responding to the changes.

Part one of the Chapter identifies the challenges and opportunities of learning in digital age and points out that in the new digital learning environment, teacher becomes a facilitator, a coach, a guide and co-learner, and the learner becomes an information seeker, an explorer, a problem solver and a co-teacher. The role change both for teachers and learners requires new competences to adapt to the new learning environment.

Part two discusses the study of competence conducted in different countries and regions, and a working definition of competence is provided as “abilities help individual be successful in the society, includes knowledge, skills and attitudes.” Similarly, the concept of learning competence has been defined as abilities help individual be successful in a learning context.

Part three elaborates on the components of learning competence needed in the digital lifelong learning environment. They are divided into four aspects: meta-cognition, learning strategies, transfer of learning, and information literacy. Detailed discussion about the definition, components and relative knowledge, skills and attitudes has been offered to provide the readers with a broad outline of each component of learning competence.

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