

Chapter 4

Lifelong Tools for the Learner, Educator, and Worker

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ABSTRACT

Discussing lifelong learning is a chance to revisit notions of education, learning, and employment. In response to the Handbook's call for "technological workforce tools" for lifelong learning, this chapter shifts toward philosophical perspectives serving as the "lifelong tools" of learning and education for considering society in communal ways. These lifelong tools may repair old thoughts or private matters of learned, education, and employment for new collaborative ideas and spirits, breathing life into all areas of learning, educating, and working. This chapter compares lifelong learning with other terms such as lifelong education and community education, and concludes that the emergence of learning cities and regions could be the twenty-first century testing ground for practicing lifelong learning.

INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning continues to expand. It is a term from a troubled past, challenged and compared among other terms such as permanent, recurrent, and lifelong education. Lifelong learning has emerged as a broader term that encompasses multiple principles and perspectives. All underscore the breadth of education, roles of communities and governments, and essential connections of work and employment. Each perspective has proponents

and critics that add to the multiplicity of lifelong learning where any discussion might consider a wealth of views. Some traditional principles of lifelong learning exist in the context of work, society, and the economic value of education.

This chapter argues for a new philosophical perspective serving as "lifelong tools" of learning and education for considering society in communal ways. In a time of efficiency and optimal outcomes, finding alternatives to do more with less may also require a new outlook than tradition: Viewing

education beyond schools, learning beyond the individual, and work beyond paid employment. An example involves “learning cities,” where work, education, and learning become a collaborative and lifelong effort at all levels of society. The implementation of learning cities must not only consider different cultures, countries, and educational systems, but also understand multiple meanings of “lifelong learning” expressed by learners, educators, and workers.

This chapter also invites an analytic-philosophical approach to education that explores concepts and terms to uncover meaning, purposes, and applied practices. A common criticism of this approach is that it advocates a “value-free” kind of “essentialism” for distinguishing differences between educational terms (Chapman & Aspin, 1997). However, this chapter accepts these values as not only fundamental to analytic philosophy, but also reveal the kind of problems and challenges that lifelong learning must address. One of these challenges involves the notion of work and employment in society, which has a broad international range. Such a range requires a philosophical outlook about the role of education in our society, the implementation of education by institutions, communities, and governments, and the continual practice of lifelong learning.

Overall, the objective compares “lifelong learning” with other terms, such as lifelong education and community education for addressing a twenty-first century workforce. Such an objective will explore not only the background of these terms, but also a new philosophical outlook toward education and learning, work and employment, and learning cities and societies. In other words, this new philosophical outlook and perspective serve as “lifelong tools” for the learner, educator, and worker in our twenty-first century society. The following supports a discussion that encourages reform to schools, colleges, and universities, communities and organizations, as well as governments and societies.

BACKGROUND

In order to consider lifelong learning in a new philosophical outlook and perspective, some components are necessary to address. Given the debate between lifelong learning and lifelong education, this chapter spots a troubled past in need of reconciliation. Community education is viewed as an important strand of lifelong education that can help improve the lifelong learning concept. Because a new philosophical outlook is advanced concerning new “lifelong tools” for learning and education, three perspectives are presented. These perspectives are 1) education and learning; 2) work and employment; and 3) societies and learning cities. Attention is given to elements such as community education; community service and volunteerism; human, social, and cultural capital.

Troubled Past of Lifelong Learning

Exploring the term *lifelong learning* comes with a bit of history. The history of how it came about starting with arguably a troubled past—or at least a debate about its differences to *lifelong education*. Both lifelong learning and lifelong education comes with underlying intentions as expressed by many educational thinkers and philosophers. Ultimately, the history and debate would lead to other terms such as *continuing* and *community education*. These terms should not be taken lightly, because their historical underpinnings could help reshape new perspectives relevant to current times and for all constituencies.

Lifelong-Learning vs. Lifelong-Education Debate

Lifelong learning goes back to an earlier movement called “lifelong education.” In the 1970s, the lifelong education movement provided recommendations for changing education at all levels.

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