Chapter 12
Innovative Method of Lifelong Learning in the Digital Environment

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ABSTRACT

When the term lifelong learning (LLL) is the matter of discussion, its features, benefits, and limitations are also to be derived. In the era of digitization, digital learning is a buzz word for educating people irrespective of age. The concepts of digital learning must be clearly understood before embedding LLL in a digital environment. The contribution of web technology for the fusion of digital learning with LLL cannot be overlooked. To look deeper into it, a methodology is to be derived for LLL to best focus on the features. A framework for knowledge management (KM) has been proposed to create virtual learning communities (VLCs), which in turn will foster collaborative learning. Also, it is to be observed that by inducting the principles and practice of LLL in the digital environment, a blooming educational concept has erupted for the creation of knowledge society (KS). The chapter gives a clear discussion of LLL embedded in a digital learning environment.

INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning (LLL) is the "continuous, willful, and self-motivated" pursuit of knowledge either for personal or professional uses. Therefore, it enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, along with self-sustainability, competitiveness and employability. Thus, LLL is the learning activity undertaken throughout life, for the improvement of knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related paradigm. It is often considered learning that occurs after the formal education years of childhood (where learning is instructor-driven—pedagogical) and into adulthood (where the learning is individually-driven—andragogical). In today's fast-growing world filled with continuous changes, formal education seems to be insufficient and inappropriate for the needs

of modern society. These shortcomings can be removed by introducing LLL through formal, non-formal, and informal education. LLL enables individuals of all ages to access knowledge and development of competency (Pureta, 2015). LLL allows acquisition of knowledge to persons whose have crossed the age of formal learning and informal learning is not close at hand. The term LLL stands for a consistency in learning over one's life in and beyond educational settings that means there are many common ways in which learning takes place (Laal et al., 2013). With the rapid change of technology, individuals must adapt and learn to meet day-to-day demands. The concept of LLL has become more significant with the emergence of new technologies such as Internet, which change the way of receiving and gathering information, collaboration among people, and communicate. Digital technology has a strong influence on all aspects of learning that make the world of knowledge accessible at any places and at any times to suit students' requirement. The incredible growth of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) brought a significant change in learning by allowing people to learn at any time and anywhere such as sitting at home. It is the new form of learning characterized by e-learning (EL). LLL, with the help of digital technology, has the ability to give each individual the knowledge that they need if andragogy principles and the needs of students have an advantage over the technology (Pureta, 2015). But learning should not be lifelong only but should be present in different forms to attract learners of all age groups. The various aspects of LLL in this regard can be described as follows:

- *Formal learning* refers to the official education and training system of a country. It is structured and organized by Government/Private organization/Institution and provides formal level of qualification which as a whole recognized by certification. Formal education is offered inside classroom in full-time mode and supervised by a teacher. It includes primary, secondary, post-secondary, higher, professional, technical as well as adult education.
- *Informal learning* takes place at any place in our daily activity either in the performance of a person or interactions within work, family and leisure time. It is non-institutional without having any external support. The teacher is someone with more experience such as parents, grandparents, friends or anybody else. It is achieved through conversation, and exploration and enlargement of experience (Knowles, 2016). It is developed through sharing time with people by listening and talking. Since knowledge is used to achieve informal learning, it is fostered through knowledge management.
- *Non-formal learning* takes place outside the formal curriculum may be offered separately or as a part of large activity. Though, it does not provide any certification. It is highly enriching and has a significant role in improving individual's skills and capacities. People of all age groups can participate in non-formal learning. It may be taught by experienced teacher or by any experience person. LLL is also a part of non-formal learning.

The inclusion of young learners and adult learners will definitely foster the literacy rate all around the globe. There is a paradigm shift from classroom learning to virtual learning and from print-based content to digitized content. Assistive Technologies are also important considerations under the umbrella of emerging technology and LLL. Collaboration in digital environment is performed through virtual mode. Web 2.0 technologies have the potentiality to support LLL by allowing informal learning. Developing methodology for LLL is really challenging. Collaboration enhances student-centered learning by encouraging knowledge construction and critical thinking.

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