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ANALYZING THE SITUATIONS OF EFFECTIVE LIFELONG LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE BANGLADESH

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Abstract: Lifelong learning is considered as the one of the key concepts for the onward march of the nation. Lifelong learning has a great impact on education in a person's whole life span. Lifelong learning helps individuals to improve their knowledge, skills and critical thinking abilities by engaging in planned interactions with the environment. The study is focused on finding the ways of effective lifelong learning for skill based development of human resources. The main object of this research is to analyze the situations of effective lifelong learning among the tertiary level students. This study followed both qualitative and quantitative approaches where maximum participants agreed with skill-based lifelong learning. This research has tried to identify various types of sources students use to find information about personal and career development, involvement in local community and learning strategy of young graduates. The findings of this study highlights the value of the strategic community-based non-formal lifelong learning opportunities. Our overpopulation can be turned into great resources for the country through the proper practices of lifelong education and fill the void of our local human resources. Selecting appropriate lifelong learning programs is a major challenge. Lifelong education conduction through the mass media can be an effective strategy but sufficient budget and restructure is needed. Learning through ICT based program and awareness about economic independence among the people can be steps towards lifelong learning. Developing a learning society can be effective ways to ensure lifelong learning.

Keywords: Lifelong Learning, Critical thinking, Community-based learning.

Introduction

The world is moving faster. People now get the access to the door of information more swiftly and vastly. There is a paradigm shift from books to ICT. Developing personal skill is so easy and affordable now a days. ICT and digital content is changing the world radically. Anyone can learn anything

desired without or instead of institutionalization by using technology. Truly educated and skilled citizen is the demand of today's world. (World Development Report, 2019)

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly set unanimously the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2016-2030. Seventeen major goals have been adopted where the fourth one is on education that includes 10 targets. The SDG 4 agenda announced in the World Education Forum 2015 at Incheon, Korea as the Education 2030 agenda for the next 15 years have been incorporated into SDG 2030. SDG 4 reads:

"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

(Education watch, 2016)

Expanding world of technology is giving the people to do whatever they want to support their livelihood as well as for their mental satisfaction. Many individuals are becoming financially solvent by doing the thing that s/he is passionate about. Innovation is creating new types of jobs. Many current jobs are being retooled into new forms, resulting in new and sometimes unexpected skill combinations. Workers who bring emerging skills into relevant technical fields of expertise—such as teachers who are good at web design and actuaries who are proficient in big data analytics—are likely to be in high demand (World Development Report, 2019).

Lifelong learning promotes a learning society where all participate in and contribute to learning throughout life (Ahmed, 2014). This study is focused on the university level students' understanding about lifelong learning and the effectiveness of it through their lifelong journey. The objective of the study is to find out the present status of lifelong learning among the university level students' and how to make it more effective to prepare them as good citizens.

Literature Review

The concept of lifelong learning came into focus in the 1970s and was discussed at different global forums. A passionate plea was made in the UNESCO report titled 'Learning to be to all nations of the world to reorganize their education structures along the lines of lifelong learning'. It stated, 'we propose lifelong education as the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries' (Faure 1972). A learning society is one in which all agencies in a society become provider of education and all citizens take active part in learning (Faure 1972). Later in 1996, the Delors report emphasized on renewal of knowledge, skills and learning abilities of individuals. The report promoted acquisition of sound general education and learning throughout life. They said, 'a key to the twenty-first century, learning throughout life will be essential, for adapting to the evolving requirements of the labor market and for better mastery of the changing timeframes and rhythms of individual existence' (Delors et al. 1996).

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Lifelong learning is the development of human potential through 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. (Longworth and Davies, 1996).

Lifelong learning comprises learning for life, learning for livelihood and learning throughout life. Development of human society demands, among others, the services of competent professionals to research, plan, implement and continually improve education and training systems and programs contributing to lifelong learning, sustainable economic growth, peace and stability. Though it applies equally to developed and developing societies, such need is urgent in the developing countries to make them competitive in an increasingly globalized world characterized by rapidly developing knowledge economy. Promoting social, economic and human and upholding peace and developing cultural values are major challenges of modern times. (Bangladesh Institute of Lifelong Learning, 2018).

Automation is reshaping work and the skills demanded for work. (WDR, 2019). The demand for advanced cognitive skills (Krueger and Kumar, 2004) and socio-behavioral skills (Cunningham and Villaseñor, (2016); Deming, (2017)) is increasing, whereas the demand for narrow job-specific skills is waning. (Hanushek et al., 2017). Adaptability is a great skill increasingly demandable in the job market. This combination of specific cognitive skills (critical thinking and problem-solving) and socio-behavioral skills (creativity and curiosity) is transferable across jobs. (WDR, 2019).

Candy, Crebert and O'Leary (1994) and Knapper and Cropley (2000) have discussed just how this might be achieved, especially in the context of higher education. They argue that universities and colleges have traditionally seen their roles as imparting to students the accepted wisdom of the day in terms of knowledge and skills in different fields, whereas an even more important task is to equip students with the generic ability to guide their own learning throughout their lives and in the wide variety of situations they will encounter after leaving formal education. This is especially important in an era of unprecedented rapid and fundamental change, in which comparatively few students will ever directly use the disciplinary knowledge they acquire in university. These authors call for a shift in emphasis that would teach students to 'learn how to learn'. They describe effective lifelong learners as able to:

- (1) Set goals,
- (2) Apply appropriate knowledge and skills,
- (3) Engage in self-direction and self-evaluation,
- (4) Locate required information, and
- (5) Adapt their learning strategies to different conditions.

It is difficult to undertake controlled empirical research on a concept as broad as lifelong learning, and a good deal of the literature in the field relies on case studies of exemplary practice and attempts to implement lifelong-learning principles in real settings (e.g. Stehlik 2003, Nicol 2007). An additional problem is that there are few instruments available to measure adoption of lifelong and life-wide learning skills, though there exist a number of scales that might be said to tap aspects or components of the concept, such as self-directed learning (e.g. Zimmerman 2008). Deep and surface learning, for instance, have been studied extensively, and a good deal is now known about the factors that encourage the adoption of deep strategies in university settings (Knapper and Cropley 2000) or the workplace (Kirby et al. 2003).

How our university students are thinking about lifelong learning is the main concern of the study. Analyzing the situation of citizens who are continuing higher education can provide us a general scenario of lifelong education in Bangladesh.

Research questions

1. What kind of sources students use to find information about personal and career development, and involve in their local community?
2. How young graduates are building effective learning experience throughout their everyday learning strategy?

Methodology

The study followed a mixed method approach. Both survey and focus group discussion were conducted in a parallel session during the same period. The participants of this study were selected from the students of University of Chittagong. Data collected through FGD supported the findings to gain insights about the present practice of lifelong learning among the students' involved in higher education which helped to maintain the validity of the findings.

Data gathered through field survey using questionnaires. Two types of questionnaires were used: One structured and one semi structured questionnaire. Focus group discussion was conducted to understand in depth thinking of the participants. There were 126 participants who responded to the scripts of the survey between age ranges from 18 to 25 years. Participants were selected through convenient sampling (who agreed to participate voluntarily). From these participants, 6 participants were again selected conveniently for focus group discussion.

Data analysis was conducted by following two steps. The numerical data was analyzed through descriptive analysis to understand the level of learning of the participants and the focus group discussion was analyzed through thematic analysis.

This study focused on understanding the learning needs of the learner and their practices as based on the characteristics of 'Lifelong Learner' introduced by Cropley and Knapper (2000). Participants responded on five points Likert

scale ranging from strongly agree 1 to strongly disagree 5 where lower score indicate greater strength in lifelong learning.

Rating	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Value	1	2	3	4	5

16 statements were included in this questionnaire to get the idea about students' level of learning. For the statements the rating and the corresponding value was like this:

Findings

The questionnaire along with its characteristics is given below-

Items	Characteristics	Mean
I like to study for my own sake	Goal setting	1.71
I know my learning style	Self-direction and evaluation	1.86
I am a self-directed learner	Self-direction and evaluation	1.81
I regularly read professional journals, articles in my field	Locating information	2.88
I have my own learning goals	Goal setting	2.30
I have specific plans to advance my learning	Goal setting	2.10
I genuinely enjoyed learning	Self-direction and evaluation	2.23
I never become defensive when someone offers feedback that could improve my knowledge and skill	Adaptable learning strategies	2.17
I recommend others to learn	Application of knowledge and skills	1.77
I look for educational informational in television, radio and internet	Locating information	1.76
I attend community seminar and workshop	Locating information	2.52
I always do more than the minimum requirements in courses, seminars, or workshops	Adaptable learning strategies	2.72
I get involved in community groups and organizations	Locating information	3.01
I search for computer-based teaching program	Self-direction and evaluation	2.12
I start by doing what I want to learn and learn from my success and mistakes	Locating information	1.68
Finding self-study let me know about my own objectivity and pace	Locating information	1.80

This research findings demonstrate an overall moderate tendency toward lifelong learning. Participants have greater intensions to engage in lifelong learning. Based on the work of Candy *et al.* (1994) and Knapper and Cropley (2000), we can say that lifelong learners are likely to engage in deep learning and should avoid surface learning which is exactly indicated by our findings

too. For most of the statements participants responded positively (strongly agree/agree).

Ways in which young graduates are building excellent learning experience

A semi structured questionnaire was developed based on the outcome of the previous analysis which is mentioned above. This questionnaire was developed for in depth understanding of the thinking of participants about lifelong learning and their desire from it.

I. Knowledge about community learning center

Among the participants 63 of them know about the community learning center near their territory on the other hand, 61 of them responded negatively. The participants who responded positively, 60 of them also participated in other similar programs too. They mentioned the name of these organizations/training/workshop like: Youth leadership training by BYLC, Skill development program by BRAC, Learning through excellence conducted by BAFED, Workshop on anger management, News presentation and Recitation, Basic first aid training by Red Crescent Society, Youth engagement in countering Violent extremism, Workshop on Protein Analysis, A confluence of Policy and Practice, Management Communication Club, Computer Training Center, 1/24, One takai shikkha, Spoken English Course at IML, Youth Development Center.

Participants' interest is a prior issue in this case. Maximum participants claimed that they didn't find the way of where to find out courses that they are interested in. And also that they aren't finding interest about the offered or selected courses. They want to learn something new but fail to find the way out of fixing the challenges towards reaching the goals. Some of them claimed that they didn't have time. It seems like an excuse because in this stage time will not a big obstacle if they eagerly want to learn something. Thrust for learning something is the main motivation to divert them into a lifelong learning. Many participants' wanted to say that doing tuition would be a great scope for being a lifelong learner. Cost of the courses is a barrier for a few portion of participants. Cost is a major issue for the participants' of this age group.

II. Using website for continuing learning

Around 78% (98 participants out of 126) use different websites for continuing learning. On the other hand, 22% do not use any sort of websites to learn anything.

III. Interest in learning about suitable courses

Almost all (94%) of them are interested in learning about courses that may be suitable for them while a very few (6%) participants are not interested to learn about any courses.

IV. Career transition

To do something new or do something of their own idea is the idea of a large portion of participants (38%) and want to start something new. They want to work independently by turning themselves into self-employed. A good portion

(36%) want to involve themselves into Volunteering, Mentoring and Part-Time work. A few number of participants (26%) wanted to follow the traditional way that is Employment to Retirement though the number is not that high.

V. Books read per year

The response to an item about reading books was much hopeful about the today's youth because it reflects that they are not giving up the habit of reading completely. Maximum participants read more than 15 books in a year. Highest number is 60 and it is really amazing.

Focus group discussion

The final part of the analysis was the Focus Group Discussion. There are some open ended questions to clearly postulate the idea of lifelong learning of the participants. There positive attitude towards lifelong learning was reflected on the FGD. This focus group discussion was conducted to support information to the findings of data analysis and clear idea about their feelings towards lifelong learning. This portion clarified what kind of works really provide joy and peace for them. This discussion emerged two themes-

i. Desirable skills of the participants

They showed their interest about wildlife photography, graphic designing, increase technological knowledge, competency in spoken English, swimming skill, scientific research related skill, vocational education, mass communication, adaptability, presentation skill, driving, recitation, apply academic knowledge to professional world, sign language, fashion designing, teaching street children, self-development, social welfare, space science, computer typing, babysitting, handicraft work, medical assistance, be a guide by gaining historical & traditional knowledge. It was really a privilege to get to know about their most desirable and versatile skills.

ii. Qualities and competencies to enrich participants' quality of life

They gave their opinion responding in various ways. They mentioned about the qualities like open minded nature and having respect to anyone's view, technical education, efficient use of man power, mathematical competency, knowing about the expending global technology, traveling, ICT literacy, patience, adaptation quality, nursing, outsourcing, non-biased attitude, logical behavior, ethics and values, respect to laws, communication skill, spreading the knowledge, politically awareness, environmental literacy. They wanted to enrich themselves by enrolling into training program, formal institution, ICT based learning, online based learning programs, social media, print and television media.

Discussion

- Lifelong learning is intended to enable individuals to become active social agents - people who are able to act, reflect and respond appropriately to the cultural, social and developmental challenges, they face both as individuals and as members of society (Medel- Anonuevo et al. cited in Ahmed, 2009, 7). This statement supports the findings of the study. All the participants have access to cellular phones, laptops or other electronic devices with internet connection and they can gather various

kinds of information through this. Participants use it as a device for communicating, education purpose, job searching, getting general and sports news, getting updated information of share market and so on. Participants agreed about getting the access to various types of reading materials instantly and finding learning materials on their desired field. They can get the access to any kind of library from anywhere. It can reshape their knowledge and scaffolding it with proper information in proper way.

- Maximum students want to develop their communication skill and considering it as a source of doing great in both personal and professional life. They emphasis on participating in some training on communication skills if they can get the chance.
- Lifelong learning demands depend on the literacy level of the people. Here the participants' levels of academic education have similarities but all people are different. Everybody does not have the equal demand, interest or access. Individual person has individual plan, taste, learning or knowledge acquisition style and goal. Some participants think that this kind of learning is important for their professional life and maximum students think that it can enrich living standard of both their social and personal life. So, Maximum participants are thinking about lifelong learning and willingly turn themselves into lifelong learner.
- Participants are seeking for proper learning institution or guide. Lifelong learning has two main pillars: widening participation and learning throughout life. As Ferrier (2010) remarked "Higher education institutions that recruit a more diverse student group but do not meet these students' learning and support needs fail themselves and their students. They will not be able to sustain diversity, and will miss out on the benefits it has to offer. Student retention will be affected". Institutions should change their policy in this regards. They have to figure out what to do to make their graduates more efficient.
- Lifelong learning is structurally dependent on the trends of educational policies, the university and the job markets. The collaboration all of these can promote in more effective mode. To build a learning society, social empowerment and economic self-reliance, ensuring people's access to services, and to support and develop people's inner potentialities is essential (Dhaka Ahsania Mission).
- Community-Based Learning (CBL) is a teaching strategy that bridges academic theory and real-world practice. CBL promotes students' academic learning and civic development while simultaneously addressing real world problems, community needs and interests. It is characterized by its emphasis on reciprocity and collaboration with community stakeholders (Fahrenwald, 2017). Community Learning Center (CLC) can be a good source of encouraging and promoting lifelong learning. CLCs are platforms that promote individual learning and social capital within communities. They aim to enable communities to take initiatives to improve their quality of life and enhance participation

in democratic practices (FIVDB). The findings of the study support the necessity of community learning center.

Recommendations

- Students want to learn so all they need is the proper support through proper channel. Ensuring the chance and maximum facilities for all citizens to gain and enrich their knowledge are the major challenges.
- Using ICT as a media of lifelong learning can work as an opportunity. Digital resources and services via internet can provide opportunity to instant learning and opportunity to overcome barrier of time, logistic support and space. But we can do some SWAT Analysis to get the ideas about the opportunities as well as threats because maximum people are not very much aware about the proper use of ICT.
- People should be information literate and be alert about how to gather information strategically and use it appropriately. Rethinking about the design of literacy (information, language etc.) training can be a good strategy.
- As a developing country economical factor is a major concern. Ensuring cost effective lifelong learning opportunity should be introduced which can provide a holistic and personal economic growth by using the skills gained from lifelong learning.
- Effective Community learning Center can be a solution. There are many people who are taking initiative to spread lifelong education program among the community. Basic Education with adequate infrastructure and trained teachers need to be accessible and non-discriminating.
- To make lifelong learning effective we have to ensure that the participation and positive attitude of young generation towards it. We have to find out the thinking and practice of the young adult about lifelong learning.
- A community of learning culture can be developed. Learning community and its impact to peoples' life can be a positive source of promoting effective lifelong learning.
- An overall structured framework for ensuring lifelong learning is needed to make our future generation more skilled and resourceful through this. Apart from limited resources and support, students are trying to find way out to learn something new gives this paper a very positive vive.
- Further research among the mass level of people can provide more vast and in depth knowledge about the complete scenario of lifelong learning in Bangladesh.

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