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Life Long Learning

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Abstract

This article discussed about the education of the society that received informally known as Lifelong Learning (LL). LL has long been practiced by the society as a way to improve the quality of life. Additionally, the challenges in new era enforce everyone to continue learning regardless of age. LL is a platform for educational leaders to increase their knowledge in education field. This article will explain comprehensively on LL among Principal, Vice Principal, Academic Director and others educational leaders. This article is also expected to give importance input to policy makers in the Ministry of Education Malaysia and other educational institutions in Malaysia. This article will also look at lifelong learning practices and what the benefits can be receive for responding to the government's call to implement LL.

Keywords: Lifelong Learning, Educational Leaders, Knowledge, Improvement

Introduction

Lifelong Learning means learning for adults who have worked and steady income or have their own source of livelihood. LL shows the learning and facilitation that are implemented throughout life without the limitation of time and age. It is purposely to improve life and skills in the field work, improve practice and personality as well as knowledge in the field that they interested to ventured into.

Therefore, this article will discuss about LL among educational leaders to see the effectiveness of the knowledge they gained from the LL they went through. In this article, phase 3 in National Education Blueprint (2013-2025) is included that shows the transition towards excellence through self-management. Self-achievement towards expand the knowledge over long distance learning method, online method, and face to face method through lifelong learning also explained in this article.

According to Knassel et al (2000), there are three important matters that had been discussed in lifelong learning, that are employment, empowerment, and pleasure. When LL been practiced, it increases quality of work and certainly gives pleasure in their work. Longworth, Keith, et. al (1996) defines LL as a process development and improvement of human self-potential continuously and regardless of time. Hence, all the knowledge from the LL will be applied in daily life.

Lifelong Learning Practices

Informal education or lifelong learning has been going on for a long time as a round to complete one's life. Current world changes that require to increase the knowledge of society or middle leaders to make a lifelong learning as the government's agenda to produce human capital according to the current situation. Lifelong learning culture allows to complement them by expanding knowledge from time to time. After all, traditional teaching methods cause the learning process to occur shallow, not deep and do not develop students' thinking (Yusof, 2006). Thus, the study of lifelong learning on educational leaders was conducted to see to what extent they made this platform to increase knowledge in education field. According to Mohamad et. al (2019), LL can be received in many ways for those who wants to upgrade the knowledge, skill, and competence. This article will be focused on educational leaders like Principal, Vice Principal, Headteacher, and, Course Leader who give respond to the government's call to continue learning through LL. To discussed further about lifelong learning practices, there are few things that need to be discussed which:

Online Learning

To make the LL success, the strategies must be in line with current needs and wants to enable teachers to use those strategies. Thus, strategies learn through online is very important to be apply by the presenters of LL, while the candidates must know how to use the online learning method, so that they will not be missing anything.

Online learning has become one of the most important strategies in this new era with evolving technology. Despite the goodness in technology, it is also a challenging for anyone who does not have an access to technology as it is hard to communicate with the lecturers and getting new resources from the internet. By having the gadget and the internet, they can simply access in any time and the place.

Online learning strategies are important because the candidates come from a different career background and different age because there is no age limit in order to join this lifelong learning method. Therefore, every candidate with a different career background and age must be master in online learning strategies to allow them to access materials anywhere and anytime.

A few local universities had been applied LL using online technology to support the module apply in the class. There are also learning conducted through module that required the candidates to attend physically and some of the universities that applied LL are University Malaysia Pahang (UMP) and Open University Malaysia (OUM).

UMP Advanced (University Malaysia Pahang) has implemented strategy using technology to support modules conducted in lecture rooms conventionally. UMP Advanced combines activities from the module that are implemented conventionally together with online activities. The medium of online learning are video conferencing, audio conferencing, notes in the form of multimedia, Facebook, and other social media to adapt with Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) technology. The strategic relationship between LL agencies and industry can provide mutual benefits through program sharing, expertise, infrastructure facilities, skills transfer and technology.

Short-Term and Long-Term Course

Schools have the potential to nurture short courses to the local community as long as it is not interfering the existing formal learning. Therefore, the role of education leaders in school need to show the school's authority through the implementation of LL by recognize school as a local socialization center because it is closest to the community. LL can also be implemented through collaborative practices that will bring benefits to the school and community can be carried out in the form of shared facilities and expertise.¹ Teachers and the community can collaborate in the short or long term depending on the agreement and understanding signed.

To increase professionalism of the teachers, there are variety of courses including short-term and long-term courses. A short-term course take three to six months and they will be given a certificate of participation. While long-term course takes a long-times depending on the course taken such as diploma, master's degree, and advanced degree offered to the teachers who want to continue their studies. The purpose is simply for teachers to add more knowledge in their respective fields. Short-term or long-term course is to ensure that industry demand can be met.

Course that need to meet industry demand is very suitable for teachers who teach in skills institution such as Vocational Colleges, Polytechnics, *Giat Mara* and institutions that teach student using latest technology. Community Colleges also implementing LL in their syllabus. According to a study conducted by Buang et. al., LL increase the added value in students and have a positive impact on students' skills and knowledge competencies.²

It is very important for teachers to have the benefit of skills and knowledge and transfer to the students. All these skills are not only for teaching the student but also for the teachers to apply in a daily life, even if they are retiring, it will not be a waste as it is useful to practice the skills and knowledge forever.

These skills-oriented courses are also part of the main courses in the implementation of LL. In the process of making Malaysia a developed country, the need to develop a skilled workforce is very significant to support the economic growth. A research by Mohaffyza et. al (2009), continuous training and education is necessary due to the pressures of economic changes, technological advances and global environment lead to a change of the environment of workplace. Lifelong learning is a combination of a continuous learning process in which the whole individual and mind go through changing situations to produce constant change of anyone.³ Therefore, it is required for education leaders to also be given skills courses in order to support and fill the gap in human resource needs in the future.

To give a better effect in the implementation of the courses offered, the government needs to take the initiative by distributing budget to such institutions in equipping the infrastructure and facilities to achieve a good LL. As this lifelong learning has long begun in developed countries such as the United States, South Korea, and the United Kingdom, the Malaysian Education Development Plan and the LL Culture Plan have been planned from

¹ http://eprints.uthm.edu.my/id/eprint/2713/1/22._PKPGB_2008_2.pdf

² <http://journalarticle.ukm.my/14394/1/10.pdf>

³ <http://eprints.uthm.edu.my/id/eprint/2851/1/613-623.pdf>

2011–2020 to have a successful LL in society. The government also provides initiatives and gives the teachers options to choose courses that are of interest and need in their respective areas of work.

Flexibility

In the aspect of increasing knowledge through LL, flexibility is a factor that attract and stimulate education leader to continue their learning. Almost all of the education leaders have daily tasks that require them to be within their respective organizational areas. Work commitment makes them impossible to have time with lessons on a scheduled basis. They need a flexible time to attend the class and discussion time with the lecturer. Hence, LL is suitable for education leaders to continue their study to a higher level. Moreover, there is no age limit in any LL program.

Usually, age of the students that continue study through LL starting from fifteen years old and above without any limitation of age as long as they willingly to increase their knowledge, LL is the best program to acquire knowledge. Based on *Pelan Induk Pembelajaran Sepanjang Hayat Malaysia*, it is recommended for age between 15-64 years old to participate in LL because in this range of age they still can be productive to help develop the country. This flexible time provides the opportunity for institutions such as community colleges, technical and vocational training, and *Giat Mara* to offer programs under LL for certificate and diploma levels.

From educational aspect, educational leaders can choose their studies program either full-time or part-time. Based on National Education Blueprint (2013-2025), LL is divided into full-time learning by attending formal classes and short-term informal learning. Both manage the program systematically and structurally.

Formal and informal LL gives an opportunity for educational leaders to make their own choice to improve academic standards for career development. Informal LL will show low structured implementation because educational leaders must be ready at any time and usually this method aims to increase the quality of self.

There are some educational leaders have initiative to test their potential and abilities. They do not mind to spend expenses free time to follow LL learning methods. Many of them use this platform as a preparation after completed the service in government. These are some benefits of LL which allow the leaders to have a flexible time allows them to choose based on their readiness.

Internet Technology Applications

One of the main platforms of LL is learning through technology applications. Technology application has been chosen by educational leaders to communicate with lecturers and educational institutions as well as solve the long-distance problem that prevent them to meet more often. Internet has become preferences for a student because it is an easy e-learning method. Internet is one of the technology developments and it becomes a huge competitor to conventional teaching and learning methods in the lecture room. According to Hunt (2004), the development of technology is an evolution of the internet that gives many challenges to the concept of traditional education.

Educational leaders depend on internet technology as their time is quite limited to attend face to face classes. The concept of virtual learning gives them flexibility to perform daily job and educational management matters at school. Most of the schools have been provided with internet facilities for teaching and learning as well as school administration matters.

Since the management operates during working hours, internet allows educational leaders to deal with the administration of LL education through the internet at any time. That means, they do not have to leave the school to manage LL matters. Hence, the internet facilities at the school indeed help to make it easier for them to deal with work and LL stuffs during office hours. They no longer need to go to the LL premises just to register or ask various other important matters. Through the internet, teaching and learning can be implemented through e-learning. The experience of using the internet to manage schools allows educational leaders to use their expertise to facilitate their e-learning classroom journeys in any LL program.

In this new era of globalization, educational leaders are exposed in using the internet in their daily task. For those who are not proficient in using the internet, they can refer to any expert colleague and usually management will prepare short courses from time to time to enhanced these skills. This opportunity is very suitable for educational leaders who need to manage the organization and family. Thus, alternative of online classes provides benefits that facilitate the daily routine implementation. Most significant benefit of LL learning methods through internet is to produce educational leaders towards knowledgeable society because they can access varieties of information at their fingertips. They need to explore wisely with various approaches or have to master the method of self-exploration.

Practices and advantages of lifelong learning method in the table below:

No.	Practices	Advantages
1	Online learning	Able to learn without attending class physically
2	Short-term course & Long-term course	Allow to choose course suitable with own time
3	Flexibility	Free to choose learning mode
4	Technology Applications	Internet as a learning medium by the student

Conclusion

In general, the practice of lifelong learning (LL) is very beneficial to educational leaders especially who do not have much time on working days. LL provide an opportunity for the candidates that need to increase knowledge. One of the practices applied in LL is online learning that helps the candidates throughout learning process and to have a flexibility of time and place to continue their studies. There are some benefits from LL program including learning mode can be choose, variety of internet mediums to conduct the study, and allow everyone to have the opportunities continue study according to their suitability of time and place.

Lifelong Learning among educational leaders is important to ensure that they are competent in implementing the national agenda. As the globalization of world has changed the educational environment, it is necessary for educational leaders to raise their level of competence by continuing their studies to a higher level in order to be more relevant in the education area. To accomplish educational transformation, it requires leaders to think out of the box to implement changes for the better and be an example to the teachers under their supervision. Significantly to LL shows their readiness to deal with educational changes that later, will put them in line with the great leaders in the education world nowadays. Through LL program, it will show a better result in leadership after seeking knowledge in their respective fields. It shows that lifelong learning is important to all educational leaders. Lastly, this article is very essential to give some exposure to the teachers, policy makers in the Ministry of Education Malaysia and school administrators.

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