
UNIT 7 LIFELONG LEARNING: INTERVENTIONS AT GLOBAL LEVEL

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

From Unit-1 of Block-1, you may recall that there is transition from initial notion of 'lifelong education' (a wider concept, from systemic perspective) to 'lifelong learning' (more of an individual-centric, learning-centred, socio-economic perspective), though both of them included formal, non-formal, and informal learning. Subsequently, unintended and incidental learning, among other things, got added to the concept in the form of 'life-wide learning'.

The present unit (i.e. Unit-7) is the third and last unit of the second module/Block-2, which deals with the historical developments in lifelong learning. Given the discussions in the preceding two units -- Unit 5 (Lifelong Learning in India) and Unit 6 (International Perspective) – we attempt to present here various interventions at the global level, mainly those that are concerned with the humanistic perspective, active citizenship and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. You can notice a common thread in the discussions across these interventions – that is, the three notions of lifelong education, lifelong learning, and life-wide learning – together aimed at holistic development of individuals, communities and societies.

7.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

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- Analyse the context of lifelong learning from the perspective of global interventions;
- Appreciate the role of UNESCO from the humanistic perspective of lifelong learning;
- Explain the interrelationship between lifelong learning and active citizenship; and
- Examine the role of lifelong learning in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

7.3 THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL INTERVENTIONS: SOME ASPECTS

Following the establishment of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) on November 4th, 1946 as a specialized agency of the UN, the world witnessed the reports of two important commissions relating to education and development: i) *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow* (Faure, et al, 1972), and ii) *Learning: the Treasure Within* (Delors, et al, 1996). In the 1972 report, Lifelong Education was considered as instrumental to educational reforms and developing holistic individuals responsible for furthering the cause of a learning society. Subsequent to this, considerable socio-economic and technological changes took place. International competition, economic instrumentalism, and neo-liberal economic developments led to further considerations, and the 1996 Delors' Report came up with emphasis on *lifelong learning* (i.e. '*Lifelong Education*' got replaced by '*Lifelong Learning*'). In this replacement, there were considerations of 'knowledge workers', 'knowledge economy', and 'knowledge society'.

There was change in the posture of lifelong learning toward economic rationalism concerning education as investment for both social benefits of increase in economic growth and GDP and individual benefit in terms of increase in income and social mobility. In the educational discourse, over the years, there have been shifts from education to learning and from teacher-centred approach to learner-centred approach to learning along with gradual shift of onus of learning to the individual learner himself/herself. This shift also suggests that the state's responsibility toward 'right to education' slips to market-determined demand and supply of knowledge workers. In other words, the emphasis on 'learning' (or what Biesta, 2015 brands as 'learnification') has shifted public responsibility regarding education and training to market forces and privatization (which further widens inequalities in the society). This shift has also undermined the humanistic perspective of lifelong education.

Vargas (2017) articulated the 21st century's dominant discourse on lifelong learning, relating to four aspects:

- i) Promotion of economic development and employment.
- ii) Ensuring social inclusion, cohesion and democratic participation.
- iii) Development of the self and self-fulfillment.
- iv) Cultural development and enrichment.

Lifelong learning is considered by governments as an instrument toward work symmetry, organizational discipline, professional code of conduct and discipline, economic productivity and benefits, and therefore healthy and happy life. But, as Biesta (2015) points out, there is non-articulation of debate about the content, the purpose, and the relationships in education (or even learning). Adaptability to the learning society is the major goal, instead of developing critical thinking and consideration of alternatives in development, social transformation, and well-being. There is a distinction between ‘adapting to socio-economic changes’ and ‘critically analyzing the causes and consequences of socio-economic changes’. Such context of change also reflects the decline of the welfare state, and rise of neo-liberalism, the market, and the phenomenon of privatization.

In the new formulation, there is stress on continuous learning throughout the life to meet the changing demands of the new liberal economy and the labour market through constant upgrading of knowledge and skills. Also, continuous learning is required to deal with changing patterns of production, consumption and distribution of goods; technologisation of the economy; and increasing service sectors or service-based economy.

It is in this changing context that you need to understand the global interventions related to humanistic perspective of lifelong learning, active citizenship, and the role of lifelong learning in achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). We shall discuss these three important aspects vis-à-vis lifelong learning in the following three sections.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write the answer in the space given below the question.

b) Check your answer with the one given under “Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’ Questions” of this Unit.

1. What are the three aspects of global interventions for lifelong learning?

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7.4 HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE OF LIFELONG LEARNING: ROLE AND APPROACH OF UNESCO

Though UNESCO originated at the behest of the post-second world war world-order, in the beginning, its goal for education was more humanistic, and was

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not influenced by the American imperialism. On the other hand, the then USSR had refused to join in on the ground that education is an internal matter of a nation and cooperation, other than political and economic, is intrusion into the national affairs of a country. Since Britain, France and the United States were the three joiners of the establishment of UNESCO, it is not surprising that the first director general was British, the site of permanent UNESCO office was in France, and the UNESCO constitution was written by the Americans (by Archibald MacLeish). The Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) which conceived this organization initially as UNECO (United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization) gave in to UNESCO (in which the word 'Scientific' was added) in the 1945 founding conference, with a push received from Julian Huxley (a British), the first Director-General.

Maritain Jacques, the then French ambassador to the Vatican, developed the philosophy of 'integral humanism' which subsequently influenced the humanism of UNESCO through his colleague Jacques Delors (who wrote the 1996 report). '*Integral humanism*', as against 'secular humanism', was more spiritual in nature. However, the first Director-General believed in unification of world mind and world culture, against the then existing pluralism and world diversity. There emerged a need to unify human beings irrespective of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, Huxley proposed '*scientific humanism*' (as against 'integral humanism'), since simple 'humanism' may not be acceptable to various global religious groups. The early (scientific) humanism of UNESCO was based on the principles of human dignity, mutual respect, and educational opportunity. There was talk of world civilization, world community, world citizenship (through unified pool of tradition), though it is not clear if that tradition would be based on the tenets of Christianity! However, the overarching agreement was on science, scientific truth and reasoning driven by '*secular humanism*'.

Therefore, it is not surprising that when the Americans drafted UNESCO's constitution, in the very preamble, the constitution talked of human mind for construction of peace. As such, the very beginning was more humanistic.

By the time UNESCO was being established, the Nazis in Germany had developed their racial theory of superiority (of Aryans); and therefore, UNESCO needed to counter any such superiority based on race. It commissioned many studies, and two prominent views emerged. One was that of Julian Huxley (scientific humanism) which proposed scientific rationality, and evolutionary progress of cultures from dark zone to enlightened zone through literacy and education. The other was proposed by Claude Levi-Strauss that there was nothing like differences in race on grounds of genetic, or anatomical or geographical differences. Rather, geographical, historical, and sociological circumstances were responsible for causal cultural differences between civilizations. This was mere lip service to what was propagated by secular humanists.

Subsequently, UNESCO's educational, cultural projects (including 'history of mankind' project) and scientific portfolios were based on the premise of 'unity in diversity' which was humanitarian, idealist, and a unifying tradition. Even in the case of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the underlying principle was 'universal protocol' applicable to all, as also protection of universal dignity

and the humanistic aspects of the unique worth of each ‘individual’.

Though UNESCO’s foundational formulation was based on the notion of universal humanity (including human dignity and human rights), there was also the imperative of freedom of the nation-states to consider the other human aspect of ‘nationalism and patriotism’. The emphasis of ‘solidarity of mankind’ (in spite of diversity) is visible as the guiding force behind its educational schemes of ‘fundamental education’, ‘lifelong learning’, and ‘education for all’. The post-war universal humanism movement of UNESCO subsequently could not be followed fully due to pressure from various quarters, and also due to the neo-liberal developments within ‘globalization’.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write the answer in the space given below the question.

b) Check your answer with the one given under “Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’ Questions” of this Unit.

2. Explain the transition in discourse of UNESCO’s philosophy underlying the humanistic perspective of education and lifelong learning.

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7.5 LIFELONG LEARNING FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: UNESCO’S ORIENTATION

The UNESCO Institute of Education (UIE) at the April 1998 meeting at the University of Mumbai, India reiterated its Hamburg declaration of 1997 (referred to as the Mumbai statement) in the following words:

“Adult education thus becomes more than a right; it is a key to the twenty-first century. It is both a consequence of *active citizenship* and a condition for full preparation in society. It is a powerful concept for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice” (<https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/confintia/mumbai-statement-lifelonglearning-active-citizenship>).

The Mumbai statement also reemphasized the Declaration of the Fourth UNESCO Conference on Adult Education, Paris (1985) that “The act of learning, lying as it does at the heart of all educational activity, changes human beings from objects at the mercy of events to subjects who create

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their own history”. The emphasis was that lifelong learning has the greater purpose of ‘*democratic citizenship*’. Many factors contribute to this: economic development, needs of the disadvantaged people, the empathetic and caring dimension of the processes and results of industrialization. Citizenship is not simply a declaration of belonging to a country or its citizenship identity cards, rather it is how individuals and communities are connected to the social, political and economic activities within the community, within the country, and in the global contexts.

In terms of teaching and learning, especially in the context of higher education, traditionally the knowledge has been bounded to certain ways of thinking or ideology or personal preferences of teacher. In other words, in a historical sense, knowledge has been colonized. In this context, the major goal of lifelong learning is *decolonization of the mind*. This is possible when the students (as citizens) are facilitated to re-examine and connect between the official scientific knowledge and the indigenous contextual knowledge of the communities.

When, in the 1960s, ‘lifelong education’ was the prevalent discourse in both policy and operational strategies, ‘active citizenship’ referred to citizens actively engaged with nourishing the human communities who could contribute to individual and social development. However, as noted in section 7.3 above, with the changing concept of lifelong education to ‘lifelong learning’, in the 1990s, the notion of active citizenship changed to more of economic activities whereby people as individuals take part in community activities with the purpose of economic productivity and creation of wealth. There was a *shift from the community-based approach (socio-cultural) to workplace-based approach (economic)*. Though there was a visible change in the concept and approach in the 1990s, in the 2001 communication of UNESCO, goals like social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development very much formed the part of agenda of UNESCO, even though the economic goal of employability and creation of wealth dominated the lifelong learning agenda. This was largely due to the global economic liberalization and the emergence of neo-liberalism which demanded free cross-border international trade and human beings as human resources.

After a critical review of literature, Magazine (2017) divided interpretations of active citizenship (within lifelong education/learning) into three categories or *orientations* – ***democratic action, human capital, and social capital***. These three are briefly outlined as follows.

i) Democratic action orientation

This interpretation suggests that active citizens are aware of their rights and responsibilities. They willingly participate in various democratic processes, and interact in a socially acceptable manner. They are aware of or make attempts to learn about democratic processes, values, interaction, participation, arguments and debates, and social involvement, all of which contribute to both individual and social well-being. In some cases, they also contribute to leading socio-political changes in a democratic manner. Active citizenship contributes to strengthening of active civil society which further contributes to democratic participation and well-being (interpreted these days as ‘happiness quotient’).

ii) Human capital orientation

The human capital theory suggests that citizens (or even knowledge workers) engage in lifelong and life-wide learning which further contributes to stimulating the knowledge economy. Though there is more stress on economic orientation to learning (i.e. learning toward degree and employment), however, there is also consideration of learning for personal and social development. Individual knowledge contributes to the global knowledge society which is the framework for development and well-being. Even if individuals develop their own ‘identities’, the individualized identity formation also contributes to and is a part of a job satisfaction and economic well-being. An active citizen considers transparency in earning and payment of taxes, as also efficient income-expenditure planning, which contributes to peace of mind for oneself, for the family, and for the society. There has been criticism from some academics that there is too much stress on economic well-being. Rather than ‘learning for earning a living’ it should be more about ‘learning for living’.

iii) Social capital orientation

Alongside individual (human) capital development, citizens also contribute to social capital in terms of assets to social development, environmental maintenance, balance in the eco-system, conflict resolution, cooperation and collaboration, and social change for happiness and well-being. They facilitate social capital formation through education, and contribute to the promotion of mutual trust, belonging to the community, cordial social relationships, and mutual reciprocity. Networking and collaboration also increase the growth of social capital. The major goal of social capital is to ensure access, equity, justice and peace. A section of the intelligentsia also promotes affirmative action and critical pedagogy toward a just society.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write the answer in the space given below the question.

b) Check your answer with the one given under “Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’ Questions” of this Unit.

3. Explain UNESCO’s orientation to lifelong learning for active citizenship.

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**7.6 ROLE OF LIFELONG LEARNING
IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)**

There is definite role for lifelong learning to contribute to the achievement of the ‘sustainable development goals’ (SDGs) of the United Nations adopted in 2015 by all the 193 member countries. Over and above the ‘millennium development

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goals' (MDGs), the SDGs call for all nations (rich and poor) to work toward achievement of these goals so as to promote sustainable prosperity. The SDG-4 is concerned with education (more so, 'quality education' for all), though it is also related to many of the 17 SDGs underlined as 2030 Agenda. UNESCO (2016) defines quality education as to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". As can be seen, lifelong learning is a significant part of SDG-4 as also the achievement of this goal.

There are three principles which underline the SDG-4:

- i) Education is considered as both fundamental right as well as enabling right.
- ii) Education is considered as 'public good'. This has also been considered so in the new *National Education Policy 2020* of the Government of India.
- iii) When right to education for all is considered, gender equality forms the prime consideration.

The incorporation of lifelong learning into the SDG-4 suggests it to act as the main driver toward improving health, ensuring economic growth, increasing employment opportunities thereby increase production and consumption, and protecting the environment. It has been pointed out that in order to achieve all the SDGs all the nations are required to go beyond solutions which are facilitated by technology interventions, regulatory frameworks, and financial investment. Vieira (2019) writes: "... People must learn to live sustainably. They require certain skills, values, and attitudes, if they are to contribute to the creation of sustainable societies and address the challenges to achieve this goal" (p.7). Besides government interventions, each individual is required to take a considered view of their own actions and be responsible for their actions relating to social, cultural, economic and environmental issues. Therefore, they need to learn to navigate through socio-political processes to ensure sustainable action and sustainable society. Lifelong learning, therefore, assumes importance in contributing towards this goal.

In the changing socio-economic and political scenarios of current times and in the future, people must learn continuously for the whole life, and learning itself needs to be flexible and updating from time to time in order to address the required competencies at any point of time. The focus is more on youth and adults who need to learn to live together in their own communities so as to achieve the goal of living together in the global village. Besides the formal education (schooling and higher education), the lifelong learning approach can address the socio-economic, cultural and environmental challenges of today and tomorrow.

The entire globe is facing significant challenges relating to international conflicts, environmental degradation, unemployment, hunger, gender inequality, to name a few. The governments, besides sustainable community and social development, can use lifelong learning as a tool for international cooperation, stakeholder engagement, inclusion and gender equality, and addressing unemployment and poverty.

Relating to contemporary state of affairs, Webb, et al (2017) remarked that: “Researchers and educators should engage with what the notion of lifelong learning for sustainable development implies and requires. If they do so – if they are allowed to do so – country-specific practices may begin to recognize that lifelong learning for global sustainability needs to question current notions of learning solely for economic purposes. Current models with their emphasis on the race to be the winners rather than on losers, have done little to end inequalities” (p.511).

Each county is responsible for its own actions and for the implementation of the SDG-4, based on guidelines provided by the UN Development Group. Integration of lifelong learning in the existing educational frameworks at school, college and university levels has been the major challenge. Further, this integration also needs to be related to the life experiences and unintended learning. Interventions are needed at policy level (local, provincial and national), sector-wide education level, and stakeholder level (local panchayats and NGOs, communities, educationists, civil society, students and teachers, among others).

In this context, what English and Carlsen (2019), in a recent editorial to the special issue of *International Review of Education*, underline is worth noting. Based on the review of various papers in that special issue, they highlighted that the current governmental notion of lifelong learning is limited, whereas the benefits of lifelong learning goes beyond education and learning. As the authors point out, one important omission in the past has been the role of popular education and informal learning. The educational institutions, the stakeholders, as also the governments have not fully articulated the concept and dimensions of lifelong learning before developing strategic action plans. It is time now that they do so, so that there could be greater convergence and balance between formal and non-formal education, popular education and informal learning and education for sustainable development and happy life.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write the answer in the space given below the question.

b) Check your answer with the one given under “Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’ Questions” of this Unit.

4. Explain, in brief, the role of lifelong learning in achieving the sustainable development goals.

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7.7 LET US SUM UP

At the global level, international agencies make interventions in the field of (lifelong) education/learning. Over the years, there has been a transition from initial notion of ‘lifelong education’ to ‘lifelong learning’, though both of them included formal, non-formal, and informal learning. As a result, interventions at the global level too laid focus on those aspects of lifelong learning concerned with the humanistic perspective, active citizenship and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. In this unit, we have highlighted the role and approach of UNESCO with reference to humanistic perspective of lifelong learning, lifelong learning for active citizenship, and the role of lifelong learning in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs).

7.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’ QUESTIONS

- 1) Three main aspects of global interventions for lifelong learning include: humanistic perspective of lifelong learning, lifelong learning for active citizenship, and the role of lifelong learning in achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs).
- 2) To start with, UNESCO’s goal of education was more humanistic and was not influenced by the American imperialism. Also, some members considered education as an internal matter of a nation and that cooperation, other than political and economic, is an intrusion into the national affairs. However, UNESCO attempted to come out with a broad-based philosophy that can be useful in unification of world mind and world culture, against the then existing pluralism and world diversity. As a result of efforts made by different experts, articulation of the philosophy of humanism underwent a change from ‘*integral humanism*’, which was more spiritual in nature, to ‘*scientific humanism*’, based on the principles of human dignity, mutual respect and educational opportunity, to ‘*secular humanism*’, driven by overarching agreement on science, scientific truth and reasoning.
- 3) Lifelong learning plays crucial role in promoting active citizenship. *Active citizenship* is considered as a consequence of education and also a condition for full preparation and effective participation in society. The emphasis in lifelong learning has been that it serves the greater purpose of promoting ‘*democratic citizenship*’. In this context, the major goal of lifelong learning is *decolonization of the mind*, which is preceded by decolonization of knowledge. With change in concept of ‘lifelong education’ to ‘lifelong learning’ in the 1990s, the notion of active citizenship changed to more of economic activities whereby people as individuals take part in community activities with the purpose of economic productivity and creation of wealth. There was a *shift from the community-based approach (socio-cultural) to workplace-based approach (more of economic)*. In 2001 communication of UNESCO, goals like social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development very much formed the part of agenda of UNESCO, even though the economic goal of employability and creation of wealth dominated the lifelong learning agenda. From relevant literature it can be

noticed that the interpretations of active citizenship include three types of orientations – democratic action, human capital, and social capital.

- 4) Lifelong learning has significant role to play in achievement of sustainable development goals. The entire globe is facing significant challenges relating to international conflicts, environmental degradation, unemployment, hunger, inequalities based on gender, age, income, social class and so on, to name a few. The governments, besides sustainable community and social development, can use lifelong learning as a tool for international cooperation, stakeholder engagement, inclusion and gender equality, and addressing unemployment and poverty. As can be seen from sustainable development agenda 2030, lifelong learning is a significant part of SDG-4, which also is the basis for the achievement of other goals of this agenda.

7.9 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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7.10 UNIT-END EXERCISE

In your own interest, you may prepare the answers to the following questions which may be useful to your preparation for your term-end examinations.

- 1) Explain the need and nature of global interventions in lifelong learning. Explain some global interventions in this regard.
- 2) Explain the philosophy of UNESCO underlying the humanistic perspective of education and lifelong learning.
- 3) What is UNESCO's orientation to lifelong learning for active citizenship? How do you categorise the interpretations of active citizenship?
- 4) Discuss the role of lifelong learning in achievement of 'sustainable development goals'.

7.11 UNIT-END ACTIVITY

If you like to further enhance your interest, you may attempt to perform the following activity.

Do you think the global interventions always play crucial role in transforming education and lifelong learning at international level? Justify your answer within 500 words.