

***THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LIFELONG LEARNING TOWARDS DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURS AMONG EX-EMPLOYEES OF A GLC COMPANY IN MALAYSIA**

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Abstract

The importance of lifelong learning in Malaysia is understated. With the advance and rapid technological changes, the pressures of globalization, and changing demography of the country, issues pertaining to the accessibility for lifelong learning for its populous needs to be addressed with more effort and collaboration from all sections, be it the public or the private sectors. With these combine efforts; a lifelong learning culture can be created. However, with the definition of lifelong learning by the Commission of the European Communities, EC 2000, as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective”, can this country achieve such goal? Learning should be available lifelong, everywhere and at any time, in each student’s native language. Learning should be enjoyable and in order to promote this, a global learning society should exist, with learning available and desired by all. Lifelong learning is a variety of learning processor throughout life that transforms experiences into knowledge, skills and ability. In this paper, we propose to measure the success of the existing informal learning towards developing entrepreneurs, conducted by one of the giant producing power utility company for its employees. The measurement of the success will be based on the following framework revolving around knowledge, skills and abilities for the purpose of personal development. The respondents for the study were ex-employees of the company who are at present senior citizens enjoying retirement life.

Key words: Lifelong learning, Knowledge, Skills and Ability, Personal Development

Introduction

To date lifelong learning has most often been modeled after traditional learning in schools and universities. Furthermore, lifelong learning has increasingly been cited as one of the key principles in the educational and development fields. Generally, lifelong learning is about any learning which will help us to develop knowledge, skills and understanding. People learn in different ways throughout their lives, through formal education at school etc, but people also learn through job related training. For example in Malaysia, a certain number of the companies has provided courses or training for their employees before their retirement in order to equip them with more knowledge and skills to be used in their lifetime. However, to what extent does the training contribute to their Knowledge, skill and attitude for their life after retirement? Therefore this paper aims to study the success of lifelong learning in Malaysia, specifically towards developing entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

Lifelong learning

Historically, lifelong learning is the extension of lifelong education. Lifelong education has been replaced by lifelong learning 28 years ago after the Faure report (1972). The shift from lifelong education to lifelong learning was not only semantic but also substantive. In the early 1970s, lifelong education was associated with the more comprehensive and integrated goal of developing more human individuals and communities in the face of rapid social change. On the other hand, the more dominant interpretation of lifelong learning in the 1990s was linked to retraining and learning new skills that would enable individuals to cope with the demands of the rapidly changing workplace (Matheson and Matheson, 1996; Bagnall, 2000).

It also seems that lifelong-learning is more individual oriented whereas lifelong education often referred back to the community. The emphasis of lifelong learning on the learner could also be interpreted as assigning more agencies to individuals in contrast to lifelong education's thrust on structures and institutions.

Lifelong learning can be defined as aims to give students the skills to go on learning throughout life and also positive attitudes towards learning which accept and even welcome change and new learning (Royce, 1999). Lifelong learning involves either formal learning or informal learning.

Livingstone (2001) has defined informal learning as any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria. The research conducted by New Approaches to lifelong learning showed that 95% of all Canadian adults were involved in significant informal learning activities and the average number of hours per week devoted to informal learning activities was 15 hours.

Delors Report (1996) has identified that importance of learning has been supporting the other types of learning namely, learning to know, learning to do and learning to be. Visser (1999) has argued that learning communities may be complex webs of interconnected people who share a

common interest and who either implicitly or explicitly-work together in a continuous process of creating new meanings.

Entrepreneur

An entrepreneur is a person who operates a new enterprise or venture and assumes some accountability for the inherent risks. The term is a loanword from French and was first defined by the Irish economist Richard Cantillon (1755). In French the verb “entreprendre” means “to undertake”, with “entre” coming from the Latin word meaning “between”. A female entrepreneur is sometimes known as an entrepreneuse.

The new and modern view of entrepreneurial talent is a person who takes the risks involved to undertake the business venture. In doing so, they are said to efficiently and effectively use the factors of production. A business that can efficiently manage this and in the long-run hopefully expand will become successful (Long, 1983).

Scholar R.B. Reich (1987) considers leadership, management ability, and team-building as essential qualities of an entrepreneur. This concept has its origins in the work of Richard Cantillon in his *Essai sur la Nature du Commerce en General* (1755) and Jean Baptiste Say (1803) in his *Treatise on Political Economy*.

A more generally held theory is that entrepreneurs emerge from the population on demand, from the combination of opportunities and more people well-positioned to take advantage of them. The entrepreneur may perceive that they are among the few to recognize or be able to solve a problem. A prominent theorist of the Austrian School in this regard is Joseph Schumpeter (1934) who sees the entrepreneur as innovator.

An entrepreneur is a man who organizes and manages the business. The responsibilities of an entrepreneur are planning, organizing, staffing and controlling (Bell, 2005).

Importance of Lifelong Learning

Research shows that there are two main reasons why lifelong learning is becoming very important to Malaysia. These can be attributed to:

- a) the pressures of globalization and rapid technological changes; and
- b) Malaysia's changing demography.

a) Globalization and rapid technological changes

The globalization and rapid technological changes have generated an obvious demand for implementation of lifelong learning. Since productivity and skill intensity are positively related (World Bank, 1996), for the knowledge economy to be realized, the skill intensity for the different economic sectors has to increase drastically. More funding for education and training,

new attitudes and values, new teaching methods, and new forms of control are also required. A statement to this effect is spelled out in the OPP3 document:

“A system of lifelong learning will be promoted to ensure that workers can continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge in order to remain relevant in the environment of rapidly changing technology and work processes as well as to nurture a learning society.”

(OPP3, Malaysia, 2001b, p. 134)

b) Changing demography

Demography also plays a major part in the political and social arena, not least in education and training policies. The population of Malaysia is estimated to reach 26.04 million people by the year 2005. 7.74 million (33 %) of this would comprise those below 15 years, 0.9 million (4 %) would be 65 years and above, while there would be 14.62 million (63 %) people in the working age group of 15-64 years old. The population is expected to increase to **28.9 million in 2010 and the working age group (15-64) is expected to increase to 65.7 % of this (Malaysia, 2001b)**. The median age of the population in 2000 was 23.9 years and will increase to 26.7 years for the year 2010, indicating that Malaysia continues to have a young population age structure. The growth in the working age population also implies the need to create more employment and training opportunities for this group. About 48.9 percent or 11.4 million of the total population in 2000 were female. Although 48% of women are in the working age group of 15-64 years, they account for one-third of the labour force. The intake of females in public universities expanded from 50 % in 1995 to 55 % in 2000 and account for 65 % of the total students enrolled in the arts and humanities courses (Malaysia, 2001a). The challenge would be to encourage more females to enroll in the technical and professional courses which will be needed in the future.

In 2000, only 14 % of the labour force in Malaysia possesses tertiary education qualifications and this will have to be significantly increased in order to meet the needs of a knowledge-based economy. In this sense, lifelong learning can play a key role in the struggle for equality of opportunity, in remedying school failure and in contributing to cultural, economic and social development in Malaysia. It may also allow for individual development to the highest qualification levels. Within the national education and training policies, the role it can play in the learning and qualification pathways, as well as in the professional and continuing education and training sector has generally been recognized. It may also be regarded as an instrument in the diversification of the educational and training system, and the democratization of access to qualifications. Hence from the above developments, lifelong learning and continuous education and training will be an important feature in the Malaysian education and training scene.

Entrepreneurship Education

Research shows that education has an impact towards becoming entrepreneur in the future. The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education supports the concept that entrepreneurship is a lifelong learning process that has at least five distinct stages of development. This lifelong learning model assumes that everyone in our educational system should have opportunities to

learn at the beginning stages, but the later stages are targeted to those who choose to become entrepreneurs (Ashmore, 2002). Each of the following five stages may be taught with activities that are infused in other classes or as a separate course that is:

Stage 1 - BASICS: In primary grades, junior high and high school, students should experience various facets of business ownership. At this first stage the focus is on understanding the basics of our economy, career opportunities that result, and the need to master basic skills to be successful in a free market economy. Motivation to learn and a sense of individual opportunity are the special outcomes at this stage of the lifelong learning model.

Stage 2 - COMPETENCY AWARENESS: The students will learn to speak the language of business, and see the problems from the small business owner's point of view. This is particularly needed in vocational education. The emphasis is on beginning competencies that may be taught as an entire entrepreneurship class or included as part of other courses related to entrepreneurship. For example, cash flow problems could be used in a math class and sales demonstrations could be part of a communications class.

Stage 3 - CREATIVE APPLICATIONS: There is so much to learn about starting a business it is not surprising that so many businesses have trouble. We teach future doctors for many years, but we have expected a small business owner to learn everything by attending several Saturday seminars.

At this stage, students can take time to explore business ideas and a variety of ways to plan the business. Although it is still only an educational experience, students must gain a greater depth and breadth of knowledge than either of the previous stages. This stage encourages students to create a unique business idea and carry the decision-making process through a complete business plan.

This stage may take place in advanced high school vocational programs, two-year colleges where there are special courses and/or associate degree programs, and some colleges and universities. The outcome is for students to learn how it might be possible to become an entrepreneur.

Stage 4 - STARTUP: After adults have had time to gain job experience and/or further education, many are in need of special assistance in putting a business idea together. Community education programs are widely available in the vocational schools, community colleges, 4-year colleges and universities to provide startup help.

Stage 5 - GROWTH: Often business owners do not seek help until it is almost too late. A series of continuing seminars or support groups can help the entrepreneur recognize potential problems and deal with them in time.

This paper has adapted the key competences for lifelong learning from European reference framework (2005) to be applied in lifelong learning among the Malaysian retirees. The eight competences are: communication in the mother tongue, communication in the foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence,

learning to learn, interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competence, entrepreneurship and cultural expression. All those competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, will then turn them into entrepreneurs.

Objectives

The objectives of the research are to:

1. to study the relationship between the informal learning and knowledge, skill and attitude
2. to study the effect of knowledge, skill and attitudes towards developing entrepreneurs.

However, from the eight (8) competencies of the European reference framework (2005), we are only concentrating only on developing entrepreneurs.

Research framework

Consistent with the literature of lifelong learning, this paper proposes a framework for examining relationships between the informal learning and the impact towards lifelong learning. Figure 1 outlines these relationships

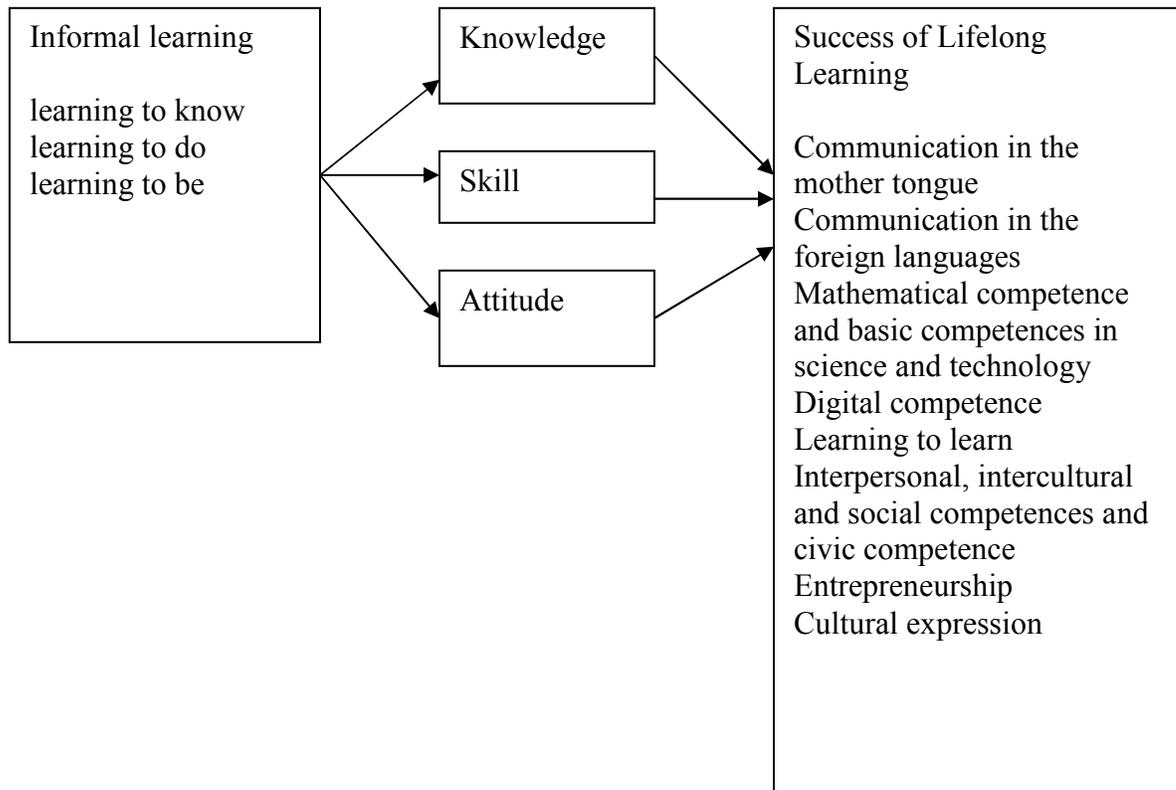


Figure 1: The relationships between the informal learning and the impact towards lifelong learning

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the following methodology was adopted:-

i. The Respondents

We had selected the ex-employees of a GLC company. They were the pioneer group of the company's ex-employees that had attended the preparatory course prior to their retirement. The respondents were selected on a random basis from the list of employees obtained. Approximately 20 ex-employees were called via telephone, but only 6 employees responded to the call. The response rate were quite good, with approximately 30% of the respondents responded to the questionnaires.

ii. The Questionnaires

The questions were read to them via telephone and their answers were then marked in the questionnaires. The questionnaires consist of questions which covered the respondents' background or the demography, and questions related to Informal Learning, the Effects of the Lifelong Learning and their Competences resulting from Lifelong Learning.

iii. The Measurement

To measure the success of Lifelong Learning, the respondents were instructed to indicate the extent of their agreement with each item. All the items were measured based on a seven-point Likert scale, whereby the scale was from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree).

iv. Data Analysis

The data has been analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) system version 12.0 to achieve the research objectives.

Various statistical tests were conducted to compute means, reliability test by using demographic analysis, analysis of variance, correlation, and frequencies based on the questionnaires conducted on respondents.

Findings

The study shows that the degree of the relationship between Informal Learning (specifically: Learning to Know and Learning to Be) and Knowledge is very strong with $R = 0.804$. However, the result shows that there is little significance between these two variables.

As for the degree of relationship between Informal Learning and Skill, the result shows $R = 0.791$. This shows that the relationship between these two variables is also strong. The result also shows that there is little significance between these two variables.

On the other hand, the degree of relationship between Informal Learning and Attitude shows there is a very strong relationship, with $R = 0.804$. However, the result shows that there is little significance between these two variables.

As for the relationship between Knowledge, Skill and Attitude and Competencies, the results are as follows:

Table 1: The Relationship between Knowledge, Skill and Attitude and Competencies

Variables	R	R ²	Significance
Knowledge	0.823	0.677	0.044
Skill	0.908	0.824	0.012
Attitude	0.823	0.677	0.044

The study shows that there is strong relationship between Knowledge, Skill and Attitude and Competencies. However, there is also little significance between these variables.

On the other hand, this paper also study the relationship between learning to know, learning to do and learning to be and the characteristics of entrepreneur. Table 2 presents the result of the relationship between learning to know, learning to do and learning to be and the characteristics of entrepreneur.

Table 2: Relationship between learning to know, learning to do and learning to be and the characteristics of entrepreneur.

Model	R	R square	Significance
1	0.888	0.789	0.018

Predictors: (Constant), learning to know

Dependent variable : the characteristics of entrepreneur

Table 2 consists of Model 1. In Model 1, learning to know is the only variable to enter the equation and explains 79% of the characteristics of entrepreneur. From the table above, it shows that there is a significant strong positive relationship between learning to know and the characteristics of entrepreneur. The results support the second objective.

Conclusion and Discussions

The study shows that there is strong relationship between the variables studied, particularly the relationship between Informal Learning (specifically Learning to Know and Learning to Be) and Knowledge and Skill.

The result of the study also shows that there is a strong relationship between Knowledge, Skill and Attitude with Competencies.

However, the result shows little significance between Informal Learning and Knowledge and Skill; and Knowledge, Skill and Attitude and Competencies. This could be due to the very small number of respondents. As mentioned earlier, the group of respondents chosen was the pioneer group of the company's ex-employees that had attended the preparatory course prior to their retirement. Learning to know has a strong impact in developing entrepreneurs. This could be due to their keen interest in learning to know, thus they became entrepreneurs. Nobody is too old to learn something new. Continuing to pick up new and interesting courses, talks and activities is a great way to keep the mind and body active.

Hence, lifelong learning is very important in ensuring the betterment of human life.

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