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## Lifelong Learning And Life Long Skills: Paradigms For National Development

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### Abstract

Lifelong learning and lifelong skills are critical drivers of national development, offering pathways to personal growth, economic prosperity, and societal transformation. The paper examined lifelong learning and lifelong skills as a paradigm for national development in Nigeria. The paper revealed that lifelong learning is an ongoing process that integrates formal, informal, and experiential education, fostering continuous development while lifelong skills, such as communication, adaptability, creativity, and problem-solving, are essential for individuals to remain relevant in a dynamic job market and contribute effectively to national development. This paper also revealed the relationship between lifelong learning, lifelong skills, and national development, emphasizing the need for integrated educational practices, contextualized curricula, and a balance between formal and informal learning. It discussed strategies to promote these paradigms, such as developing a culture of continuous learning, incorporating lifelong learning into national education systems, and leveraging real-world learning experiences. The paper concluded with recommendations for policy reforms, including a comprehensive lifelong learning framework and enhanced partnerships between government, education, industry, and civil society to drive national development.

**Keyword:** *Lifelong learning, lifelong skills, paradigm and national development*

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### Introduction

The concept of lifelong learning and the acquisition of lifelong skills have emerged as fundamental pillars for individual growth and national development. Nigeria, with its vibrant cultural tapestry and diverse economic landscape, stands at a critical juncture where embracing these paradigms can catalyze sustainable progress and socio-economic transformation

Lifelong learning could be perceived as an educational engagement that one gets involved in throughout life. This may mean an educational process that unfolds where one idea links to another, a concept connects a new one and the linkage continues. It is such a process that the finding on a problem leads the researcher or student to identifying an or more new idea(s) that may be deeper or not but the ideas having integration with one another and capped with the intention of proffering solution to a prevailing problem area in the society. Kalz (2015) sees lifelong learning as a process that engenders education for life. This means that a person gets in contact with a learning process and decides to probe into it further daily for life or where learning one thing leads to another learning process and it continues for as long as the researcher continues. Furthermore, it is said to have both formal and informal arrangements embedded in it.

Cheary (2022) perceives that lifelong learning is a type of education that is wide in scope than what goes on in the classroom. By inference, lifelong learning should pass as any change in behaviour resulting from continuous ideation on issues, the ability to transfer knowledge in one area to solving problems in another area among others. It could also be depicted by apprenticeship practice, all tilted towards enhancing the livelihood of the people and society. The practice of lifelong learning invariably develops in the learner the ability of lifelong learning but based on the idea that learning is continuous. Thus, lifelong learning is not restricted to formal education or classroom learning alone but knowledge that could be gained and skills acquired through the process of lifelong learning. Skills You Need (SYN, 2022) says that lifelong learning is in pursuant of the building and improvement of self towards acceptable outlook on life both in the perspectives of personal and professional development. This conveys that lifelong learning has two major benefits:

1. To develop self
2. To develop profession

It must be made clear from the foregoing, that lifelong learning is both voluntary and deliberate. This by extension has the capacity in helping people develop potentials originally known to them, improve their quality of life and that of society, hence the place of skills.

A skill could be described as the ability to show dexterity in managing a problem or dealing with a situation or capacity to do something well. According to Careers (2020), skills spans from the capacity to do something well through expertise. Skill is said to grow through experience. Skills do not happen to people but they are consciously, voluntary and deliberately developed or cultivated in people who want the said skills. For Rick (2018) skill is an ability to carry-out defined activities to a high proficient degree. Like an earlier assertion, skills are developed through dedication and outmost commitment based on practice. It then means that skill is developed from knowledge, right attitude and regular practice. This shows that skills can only be developed with the three domains of learning fully engaged (cognitive, affective and psychomotor). It further could mean that skills could be categorized into practical, academic or personal. However, the modern society seem to be yearning for more of two of the three categorization than the other one, that is, practical and personal skill than academic skill, even though it is clear that academic skills is a necessity and an enhancer of the other two sets of skills. Careers (2020) has said that the two most valuable skills in recent times are the practical and personal skills, that is, going by the domains of

learning; the affective and the psychomotor domains seemed to be much more priced nowadays, than knowledge or cognitive but permit me to say that the previous skills categories would remain crude and unembellished without knowledge. Be that as it may, experts in curriculum studies are now calling for an inclusion of skills in all educational programmes for national development.

Drawing from empirical research, studies have underscored the pivotal role of lifelong learning and lifelong skills in driving national development. For instance, a report by the World Bank highlighted the positive correlation between investments in human capital development, including lifelong learning initiatives, and economic growth in emerging economies. Similarly, research conducted by Nigerian scholars has emphasized the transformative potential of lifelong skills training programs in mitigating youth unemployment and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

The adoption of lifelong learning and lifelong skills as a paradigm for national development aligns with global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063. These frameworks recognize the intrinsic link between education, skills development, and inclusive growth, urging member states like Nigeria to prioritize investments in human capital as a catalyst for sustainable development.

The integration of lifelong learning and lifelong skills into Nigeria's national development agenda represents a strategic imperative for fostering inclusive growth, enhancing human capital development, and achieving socio-economic transformation. By embracing these paradigms, Nigeria can unleash the full potential of its burgeoning youth population, foster innovation and entrepreneurship, and position itself as a global player in the knowledge-driven economy of the 21st century.

### **Concept of Lifelong Learning**

Lifelong learning is a conception of continuous learning that is necessitated by knowledge, habit and creativity. It is a type of learning that could be associated to mean without borders or restrictions. This seems to indicate a learning approach for self-development, professional development, and skills acquisition for self-improvement and societal advancement. Valamis Learning Solution (VLS, 2022) sees lifelong learning as an educational engagement that takes place outside an educational establishment yet not restricted to informal learning alone. This shows that lifelong learning ensures to strike a balance between formal and informal learning patterns and also to close the gap between them in that learning takes place at all times no matter what the learner is engaged in doing, if trading, teaching, practicing medicine or working in the laboratory, library, doing laundry e.t.c. So, there is no exception as to the right place where learning could be assumed to take place better.

According to an assertion by Drew (2022) lifelong learning is very important in that as the world changes rapidly, there is need also for up-skilling in the various areas of life in order not to be left behind. This is hinged on some of the ideas of the proponents of lifelong learning like Yeaxlee (1929)

#### **Reasons for Lifelong Learning to Take Place:**

1. Encouraging full functionality of individuals and society
2. Charting purpose and path in life

3. Driven by passion and life satisfaction
4. Encourages employability and higher levels of employability
5. Economic enhancement
6. Leadership growth
7. Transferability
8. Development of social awareness and change in perspective
9. Practicability
10. Staying alive for longer

It would be good to have a highlight of few of these

1. Life-long learning encourages functionality, the in day to day life of people and the society. A person who is given to learning is definitely going to function better in this noisy world in that he could easily carve a niche for self and function more to become self-reliant in it and by his work the society becomes a better place to live.
2. Economic enhancement has some connection with the extent of learning that an individual has at times such that technological change is connected to extent of learning and in this age of World Wide Web, this also determines people's economic power.
3. Employability is also hanging on the extent of learning and skills acquired by a person and people. Those who go to school to gain knowledge and acquire skills they may need for job entry would always need new facts and principles known to remain and grow in the job, proficiency in skills learned which is associated with lifelong learning is vital too, thus, to remain employable and deployable at all times lifelong learning is imperative (Vander-Ark, 2017).

There exist several types of lifelong learning that people could choose from and they are:

1. Formal Learning: This occurs in schools and institutes where people take courses. It follows a predetermined time frame for learners and colleagues.
2. Self-Directed: This is common with people who desire to take control of their own pace and path in life. They do not need to be regulated on what they should learn or should not learn, they just spend time studying in their areas of passion e.g. studying online courses.
3. Professionalization: This is tilted towards professional advancement after a regulated learning season. The aim is to develop the individuals to become masters in their chosen fields.
4. Indirectly: This happens at times without the knowledge of the learner. It could be part of a person's daily work activities and it eventually develops the person more, others are personal, Information etc (Vender-Ark/ 2017).

Life- long learning perhaps could occur based on or through the following means

1. Learning new skills
2. Joining a club
3. Downloading educational podcasts
4. Keeping reflective journal
5. Use of metocognitive strategies, that is, reflecting on a thinking, ideas etc (Drew, 2022)

## **How To Maximize Learning towards National Development**

1. Encourage the learning process for education for life
2. Encourage non-vocational educational practice
3. Begin with a situation at hand not the named subject
4. Build on the learners experiences
5. Use changes to build focus on a new education
6. Utilize the new idea to develop new learning paths. Innovate for the people and the society (Smith, 2021)

These can only be attained if there is regular practice leading to mastery; an avenue for skills development.

### **Concept of Life Long Skills**

Skills could be conceived as peculiar types of ability applied by a person in carrying out a role function. IGI (2022) posits that skills are special competencies that are utilized in specific areas to solve determined problems. It is an indication that skills are unique performance competencies possessed by people in order to effectively and/or efficiently play a role or carry out a responsibility. Skills are further said to be time, energy or both bound, also, skills are said to be domain-general and domain specific. This means that for one to perform adequately and acceptably in a particular area, there are general assignments demand of such, however, there are certain job roles that demand specific abilities that general knowledge and skills or attitudes would not allow someone to perform well with, thus, skills are said to be based on dexterity, physical abilities and intelligence. Based on the position of (Career Guidance, 2021) skills are developed over time from life and work or practice experience in life, a situation that depicts that learning experience is very crucial in skills development. From the idea of general and specific domain skills, it could be inferred that some skills are meant to be needed for life, then the idea of lifelong skills while others may serve for a time.

Here are examples of skills according to (Career Guidance, 2021) which come in the dimension for life: Job skills, leadership skills, organizational skills, life skills while others are specific to individuals based on their roles in an organization. Life skills are important for everybody no matter your role and responsibility or career path. Some of its features are: cooperation, curiosity, perseverance, communication, adaptability, studying, organizing, creativity etc. Doyle (2022) described most of these skills mentioned above as soft skills or interpersonal skills. It includes communication, listening, time management, empathy and other skills. They are said to be skills that employers would need. Thus, they belong to the lifelong skills that anybody would need at any point in time.

Lifelong skills could be seen as those skills that a person would require for the whole of his or her working life in order to remain relevant in the work place. Again, lifelong skills demand constant improvement to be able to stand the test of time. Therefore, it is a function of lifelong learning, again, a characteristic of life experience and work. Lifelong learning precedes lifelong skills. It is vital, as it keeps body and mind in shape, it enriches life, builds profession etc.

Crocket (2022) says that lifelong skills are beneficial in the following areas:

- a. Creativity
- b. Problem solving
- c. Critical thinking
- d. Leadership

- e. Communication
- f. Collaboration
- g. Information management
- h. Adaptability
- i. Curiosity and
- j. Reflection

So, it is vital to reiterate that the place of learning experience and practice plays a major role in lifelong skills development, thus, the curriculum has a lot to do with how and the extent of lifelong skills to develop.

### **Concept Of National Development**

National development is better described than defined. It is a situation where people in a given society are able to afford an averagely acceptable living standard such that everyone or almost everyone is engaged in one role or the other that satisfy the needs of the society. Bawa (2022) sees national development as a process where every sector of the national economy and stay of the nation is growing. The implication is that national development is indicated by the capacity of the citizens, knowledge and skills that are visible and useable in the society. UNESCO (2020) describes national development as growth in addition to change, thus, it is quantitative and qualitative in that there is always a physical representation of the unobservable changes by the observable changes that could be seen.

### **Some Indicators of National Development**

1. Planning of the national economy
2. Utilization of industry to drive development
3. Higher output in agricultural productivity
4. Human capital development
5. Use of science and technology to enhance life and living etc.

Nonetheless, the United Nations stated the following problems as challenges to national development

1. Unpredictable economic growth and poor standard of living
2. Full scale unemployment
3. High population growth rate
4. Drudgery in change process
5. Poor leadership process
6. Poor philosophy of life
7. Poor quality of life

### **How Life Long Learning And Life Long Skills Can Lead To National Development**

The steps enumerated below would help in the development process

1. Discourage knowledge fragmentation but encourage knowledge integration.
2. There should be regular proper situation analysis on learning and skills suitable for the nation and populace in line with global perception.
3. Contextualize the education and training to be given to groups in line with available local human and material resources.

4. Arrange a sequential translation process from where they are to where they should be placed according to their skill level.
5. Ensure that learning produces skill difference in-between in the building process from those who are participating and those who are not.
6. Expose the learners to creative thinking but they should function independently in order to determine individual level of learning and skills development.
7. Put up an adequate feedback mechanism for proper evaluation of the process and practice.

### **Leveraging Learning Experiences for Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Skills: A Catalyst for National Development**

Learning experiences encompass a myriad of educational encounters, ranging from formal classroom instruction to informal experiential learning opportunities in real-world settings. These experiences facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, thereby equipping individuals with the capacity to adapt to evolving challenges and contribute meaningfully to society. In the Nigerian context, leveraging diverse learning experiences is essential for addressing the multifaceted development challenges facing the nation, including youth unemployment, technological advancement, and sustainable economic growth.

Learning experiences serve as catalysts for lifelong learning by fostering a culture of curiosity, inquiry, and self-directed learning. According to Knowles (2020), adult learners are motivated by intrinsic factors such as relevance and applicability, making experiential learning particularly effective in stimulating lifelong learning behaviors. By capitalizing on real-life contexts and problem-solving scenarios, individuals are more likely to internalize knowledge and skills that are directly applicable to their personal, professional, and societal contexts.

Learning experiences play a crucial role in cultivating lifelong skills, which are indispensable for navigating the complexities of the modern economy and contributing to national development. As highlighted by the World Economic Forum (2020), the rapid pace of technological advancement and globalization necessitates a shift towards skill sets such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and adaptability. Through immersive learning experiences, individuals have the opportunity to develop and refine these skills in authentic contexts, thereby enhancing their employability and entrepreneurial potential.

Empirical research corroborates the transformative impact of learning experiences on human capital development and national prosperity. For instance, a study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2019) found that countries investing in experiential learning programs and apprenticeships witnessed significant improvements in youth employment outcomes and economic competitiveness. Similarly, case studies from developed economies like Germany and Singapore demonstrate how strategic partnerships between industry, academia, and government can facilitate the seamless integration of learning experiences into lifelong learning and skills development initiatives.

The strategic utilization of learning experiences represents a powerful mechanism for promoting lifelong learning and lifelong skills acquisition, thereby driving national

development in Nigeria. By harnessing the diverse array of educational encounters available, from internships and apprenticeships to community service and online learning platforms, Nigeria can cultivate a highly skilled workforce, stimulate innovation, and foster inclusive growth. As the nation strives to realize its developmental aspirations, investing in learning experiences emerges as a strategic imperative for unlocking the full potential of its human capital and building a prosperous future for all citizens.

### **Strategies To Encourage Lifelong Learning and Life Long Skills For National Development**

Encouraging lifelong learning and lifelong skills acquisition is crucial for national development, as it fosters human capital development, drives innovation, and enhances productivity.

1. **Promote a Culture of Lifelong Learning:** Develop public awareness campaigns and educational programs to emphasize the importance of lifelong learning at all stages of life. Encourage individuals to pursue continuous education and skills development opportunities through formal and informal channels.
2. **Integrate Lifelong Learning into Formal Education:** Embed lifelong learning principles into the national curriculum at all levels of education, from primary schools to higher education institutions. Emphasize experiential learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills to prepare students for lifelong learning beyond the classroom.
3. **Expand Access to Adult Education:** Provide accessible and affordable adult education programs to enable individuals who missed out on formal education to acquire essential literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills. Offer flexible learning options, including evening classes, distance education, and online courses, to accommodate diverse learner needs.
4. **Promote Skills Development for Employment:** Collaborate with industry stakeholders to identify emerging skills gaps and design training programs that align with labor market demands. Establish apprenticeship programs, internships, and on-the-job training initiatives to facilitate the transition from education to employment and equip individuals with relevant job skills.
5. **Support Entrepreneurship Education:** Integrate entrepreneurship education into the curriculum to nurture an entrepreneurial mindset and equip individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to start and grow successful businesses. Provide mentorship, coaching, and access to resources for aspiring entrepreneurs to foster innovation and economic development.
6. **Harness Technology for Learning:** Leverage digital technologies to expand access to educational resources and lifelong learning opportunities. Develop online learning platforms, mobile applications, and digital libraries to facilitate self-paced learning and skill acquisition, particularly in remote and underserved areas.
7. **Foster Lifelong Learning Communities:** Establish learning networks, community centers, and social forums where individuals can connect, share knowledge, and collaborate on learning projects. Encourage peer-to-peer learning, mentorship, and skill-sharing activities to create a supportive ecosystem for lifelong learning.

8. **Incentivize Lifelong Learning:** Provide incentives such as scholarships, grants, and tax incentives to encourage individuals and organizations to invest in lifelong learning initiatives. Recognize and reward lifelong learners, educators, and institutions that demonstrate excellence in promoting lifelong learning and skills development.

## Conclusion

Lifelong learning and lifelong skills represent indispensable pillars for national development in Nigeria. Embracing these paradigms is imperative for equipping individuals with the competencies needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world and for building a resilient, knowledge-based economy. To realize the full potential of lifelong learning and lifelong skills, concerted efforts are needed from policymakers, educators, employers, and civil society stakeholders. By investing in accessible and inclusive lifelong learning initiatives, promoting entrepreneurship education, and leveraging digital technologies, Nigeria can harness the transformative power of human capital to drive sustainable socioeconomic development and build a prosperous future for all citizens.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are hence proposed to advance lifelong learning and lifelong skills as a paradigm for national development in Nigeria:

1. The federal government through the ministry of education should develop a comprehensive lifelong learning policy framework that integrates formal, non-formal, and informal learning opportunities across the lifespan. This will help individuals to develop their skills through lifelong learning.
2. The government should strengthen partnerships between, academia, industry, and civil society to design and implement lifelong learning initiatives that address the evolving needs of the labor market.
3. The government should prioritize investments in education and skills development, with a focus on marginalized and underserved populations, to ensure equitable access to lifelong learning opportunities.
4. the government should provide educational infrastructures a that will help expand access to lifelong learning resources to facilitate the development of lifelong skills among citizens of all ages.

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