A Comparative Study of Lifelong Education at Present between Countries Iran, England and Japan

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this research is to investigate the role of lifelong education in Iran, Japan and England. The study population includes different aspects of adults and lifelong education role in Iran, England and Japan. Using purposeful sampling methods, England and Japan were selected among successful industrial developed countries and Iran was selected from developing countries. Considering breadth of the subject, the role of lifelong education, the programs performed in this direction investigated differences and similarities of lifelong education in the sample countries. Research method is a descriptive – comparative method and a library method is used to collect information and then the data was analyzed by Jeorge Berdi's method. The research findings suggest that lifelong education in Japan and England, especially from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth, has become more widespread. Japan, in direction of performing the lows of extension and promotion of lifelong learning, has provided public and lifelong education outside the formal education system and England has also taken effective steps in this area by establishing international adult schools and consulting the other European countries about improving lifelong and adult education, whereas in Iran, basic learning is still the most important challenge in lifelong education. In investigating lifelong education in these countries, differences and similarities are observed among which we can refer to these three countries’ efforts in the area of illiteracy eradication, promotion of technical and vocational training, creation of broad changes in the field of high education in the course of generating a lifelong education and learning – based community as the most important similarities. However, what differentiates the lifelong and adults education in Japan and England from that of Iran is that Japan and England have been able to obtain great achievement as a result of the nation and government’s widespread support from lifelong and adult education and they are determined to perform adults programs, whereas Iran has not been successful in this regard yet and it seems that, despite widespread supports of the constitutional law and Islamic consultative assembly for lifelong and adult education, there is no seriousness and continuity in this area. Keywords: Lifelong education, Adult education, Informal education, Teaching to update knowledge

INTRODUCTION

Interest in learning is a Divine blessing which God Almighty has endowed in human being and motivated His esteemed prophet with the message of “Read” to guide us through the way of knowledge from the cradle to the grave. Only those communities can continue to live whose people learn all the time. In this way, we have entered a century some have named it “the learning century”. Paying attention to these characteristics has caused the idea of “lifelong education” to be proposed more than before and taken new dimensions. Learning, whether formal or informal and incidental, should be a continuous process throughout one’s life. These learning are not limited to the formal environments, but all places including school, university, Home, library, museum, and park are learning places[1]. Teaching and learning are normal and natural or inherent psychological processes which occur all the time in all palaces and at all ages and can help us to fall in steps with the world changing continuously in social, economic, cultural, physical, and spiritual dimensions. Our efforts to learn should not come to an end after completing the elementary education and a basic literacy program, but we should continue these efforts throughout
our lives. Most people suppose that learning is just obtaining knowledge; however, the scope of learning is much wider than this. When we involve ourselves in lifelong education, we learn to know, we learn to do. We learn to study alive, and we learn to live all together[6].

**Purpose of the Study**

Lifelong education is a subject that has occupied most people’s minds and has been discussed and investigated in detail. This subject has obtained a top priority in policy – makers ‘speeches’[3].

Since the early 20th century, the concept of lifelong education has been proposed more seriously than before. Lifelong education is a teaching – learning process throughout humans’ lives whose purpose is to understand the meaning and concept of life and achieve happiness therefore, it should not be limited to a special tome of one’s life[6].

Lifelong education consists of all learning opportunities one has after the end of education in each course including adult education, complementary and in – service, which requires coming back to the formal and informal educational institutions. This education can be full-time, part-time, technical –vocational or cultural – social, scientific, artistic, etc[5]. lifelong education has usually been mentioned as “an aspect of learning “, of course some theorists have also viewed it as a type of “attitude” and international commission of education considers it as a principle[6]. In other words, lifelong education is not a special education, but it is a principle which should be a base for improvement and extension of the elements constituting the education system. Although the idea of lifelong education has been under much consideration and support in recent years, proposing it dates back thousands of years, as Watterston[7] (2001) quotes from Long Werth (1999).

The serious beginning of these efforts was in 1972 by International Commission of Education Development; this commission presented its effort’s result under the title of “living for Learning”. Since 1990s, these efforts have been shaped more seriously. For example: UNESCO International Conference about education for all (1990, Jamtin, Thailand ) Lifelong Education Conference (1994, Cananda) that in the some direction European Society named the year 1996 As the year of “lifelong education and learning “, and International Meeting of education in 2000.

The term “lifelong education” is a multi-purpose and complex concept. Today, most knowledgeable focus on the hidden idea behind lifelong education, i.e. lifelong development of one’s talent for developing him/her in order to be compatible with the ever-changing conditions[8,9]. The lifelong education system is not limited to the formal education including public education, complementary education (Post – school), high education, and vocational education, but it includes adult education, local education, and at work –centered learning. Also, it includes some opportunities for accessing to learning in the other environments which are not usually considered as learning places such as media, libraries, social and religious groups as well as electronic databases[10]. Lifelong education includes formal, informal and non-class patterns of education and there is effort to explain and compose all structures and steps of education in the course of vertical and horizontal dimensions. Its other characteristic is that it is changeable according to the time, place, contents and techniques of learning. Therefore, it is necessary that one determines his / her learning direction him/herself, informs him. Herself and the others, and uses various learning methods and policies. In this way, there is no doubt that realization of this broad meaning entails important applications for the whole education system, each of the educational institutions, academic courses or programs and finally, for each of the members, whether teachers, professors, students, and other staffs.

**Importance and necessity of research**

Guiding the people and saving them from ignorance and darkness are among the Divine prophet’s purposes. Universal Declaration of Human Rights has paid special attention to the free, public, and lifelong education*. The right of the public and lifelong education is among the basic rights of citizens which the constitutional law of both Iran and the other countries emphasize it based on the international agreements and Universal Declaration of Human Rights supports it. This imagination that humans can continue their lives with a given set of intellectual and technical concepts disappears quickly. Due to the pressure of the internal needs and in order to meet the external ones, education system is achieving its true concept, a concept that is not to obtain a set of information, but it is to raise a creature who attains self-identification more than before as a result of successive experiences[11]. As we know, schools, colleges, and universities can meet only the needs of a small number of children, youths and adults and many other people do not have the opportunity for a complete education.

* Declaration of Human Rights Adopted by the UN Human that on December 10th in 1948
Lifelong education is a way to compensate for the formal education deficiency and gives the opportunity for those who cannot continue their formal education. Education can occur throughout one’s life through the formal, informal and incidental - empirical / non-class experiences\textsuperscript{12,13}. Communities should provide continuous educational programs in order to prevent wasting skills and improve the existing skills to prepare the people for confronting the future challenges. They should provide the opportunities for learning through continuous education which meets the people’s needs and demands throughout their lives\textsuperscript{14}. Lifelong education should not be considered as a luxurious education for a handful of exceptional people. Also, it cannot be viewed as a subject including only a short time of the humans’ early youth. However, it should be considered as a national everlasting necessity and an inseparable section of the human civilization and for this reason it is a public and lifelong subject\textsuperscript{15}. Therefore, it can be said that lifelong education, like the other principles such as liberty, justice, and equality is still in the process of being created. So, it is no exaggeration to say that lifelong education is not still performed in its real mining anywhere\textsuperscript{16}. Furthermore, due to rapid and global scientific challenges and changes which occur continuously, the need for implementing lifelong education and its importance is sensed more than before.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

This research is a descriptive one based on a comparative analysis because the researcher’s purpose of this study is a true objective description of lifelong education in the countries being studied. In this study, it is tried to collect all related to the subject without any intervention or subjective conclusion, express it, and draw an objective result based on the steps of Berdi’s method including description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison.

**Description Step**

In this step, according to Berdi, researcher should describe impressions and phenomena being studied based on evidence and information obtained from different sources, whether through studying documents or reports of the others. In Berdi’s opinion, description step is step of noting and preparing adequate findings in order to criticize them in the next step.

**Interpretation Step**

This step includes investigating information described by researcher in the first step. Information analysis, according to Berdi, should be based on the principles and methods common in social sciences.

**Juxtaposition Step**

During this step, information investigated in the first step is categorized and packaged and a framework is provided which paves the way for the next step, i.e. Comparison of the similarities and differences of the phenomenon under research.

**Comparison Step**

In this step, the research subject, considering the similarities and differences, is investigated and rejection or acceptance of the research hypothesis is possible in this step\textsuperscript{17}.

**Statistical Universe**

Our statistical universe in this research includes different aspects of the adult and lifelong education role in Iran, England and Japan.

**SAMPLE GROUP AND ITS SELECTION METHOD**

In this research, England and Japan were selected among industrial developed countries and Iran among developing countries by using purposeful sampling method and considering the breadth of dimensions and domains of the adult and lifelong education, the followings were investigated:

- Place of lifelong education in the sample countries.
- Programs and plans existing in lifelong education in the sample countries.
- Obvious differences and similarities in the lifelong education domain in the sample countries.
METHOD OF IMPLEMENTING RESEARCH

The information analysis in this research is based on Berdi’s method. Berdi emphasizes that research on social – educational phenomena should be based on deliberate programs and plans. Berdi’s method includes four steps: description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison. In this research, at first we described the lifelong education place in three countries of Iran, Japan and England based on evidence and information obtained by using different sources and studying collected documents. According to Berdi, the description step is the step of noting and preparing adequate findings to criticize them in the next step. After noting, we interpret and investigate the collected information. Information analysis should be based on the principles and methods common in social sciences. Then, the obtained information is packaged and categorized and a framework is provided for the next step, i.e. comparison of similarities and differences existing among the place and programs of lifelong education in Iran, Japan and England. Finally, the research subject is investigated and compared comparatively and analytically considering details obtained by studying documents and evidence existing in the lifelong education of the countries being studied.

**Tools of collecting data**

Using the existing books in the field of lifelong education and learning in Persian and England languages.
Using the existing articles in this area, preferably in English language;
Using the researches performed on lifelong education and learning;
Using different internet sites;
Using domains of international organizations like Uunesco, European-Asian committee of lifelong learning and the other centers active in this area; and
Using graduate students’ theses of complementary education

**RESULTS OBTAINED IN THE FIELD OF LIFELONG EDUCATION IN THREE COUNTRIES OF IRAN, JAPAN AND ENGLAND**

Today, the idea of lifelong education has been supported seriously by the people, communities and international organizations because:
- Lifelong education and learning causes access to the high-quality labor force and as a result, economic development;
- Lifelong education and learning causes growth and development of capabilities of each of the people, one’s feeling of satisfaction and as a result, individual development;
- Lifelong education and learning causes active citizens to be reared, social integration and as a result, social development;

In the contemporary world, a broad spectrum of countries has composed scientific and practical frameworks of lifelong education and learning. However, the evidence suggests that thus far, there have not been any serious efforts to investigate this subject that to what extent presentation of this idea is necessary in developing countries, especially Iran and how we can respond to this necessity\[18\]. At the present time, in most countries of the third world and Iran adult vocational education courses in the field of lifelong education are not in required agreement and conformity with the whole educational system, conditions of employment, opportunity for acquisition of more learning in the country and so on. Furthermore, the adult vocational education courses are usually too short and this time limitation often causes the education quality to fall down\[19,20\]. Since Iran is a country with a civilized history of many thousands years and a rich culture and among the founders of the human civilization history as well as because of its population composition, it should take required steps to accomplish the idea of lifelong education as an inevitable necessity.

In Japan, lifelong education has been well established and is defined as a mechanism for developing a learner community and different public and private organizations in Japan present many types of lifelong educational activities for the adults. In Japan, lifelong education is of the greatest importance where the concept of lifelong learning and education was better understood day by day. At the present time, the opportunities for lifelong learning exist throughout Japan and are supported by the regional and national governments. 8.5% of the financial budget of the education system in Japan in 2007 which equals 452.5 milliards Yens was allocated to the lifelong education\[23\].
Ministry of education of Japan tries to train a lifelong learning community at regional and national level and in the same field; it has developed the opportunities for comprehensive learning including:
Establishment of air university (this institution has the potential to play an important role in lifelong learning in Japan because it is accessible to the public and has no customary entrance examination).
Educational information Satellite communications Network (ELNET)† and Lifelong education festivals‡

England is mainly a learner community and lifelong education has been well established in it. The agencies responsible for promoting post literacy activities include unit of basic skills and adult learning, national institution of adult education in England and Wales, and Scottish unit of basic education for adults[24]. At central level, there is a national advisory council for adult and lifelong education which is associated with national institution of adult education. One of the important post literacy work methods in the field of lifelong education is presented by the national library services. During recent years, the government of England has introduced and supported the adult right to lifelong education. It also provides such facilities as free education for adults older than 25 who are interested in lifelong education. At the present time, in England, lifelong education for adults is presented in order to help the people older than 25 who have become unemployed for 6 months or more to provide security, employment or self-employment for them[25].

Educational policy in England seeks to create a lifelong education–based community being capable of creating thought and mentality in the people so that they learn more and flourish their capabilities being unused up to now. Therefore, lifelong education for all is a strategy that protects life, peace, and human dignity.

Table 1. similarities of Iran, Japan and England in the field of lifelong education and learning

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<th>Similarities of Iran, Japan, and England in the field of lifelong education and learning</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. All three countries have mentioned eradication of illiteracy and improvement of informal education quality, in-service courses, vocational and technical trainings, and adult education as the general objectives and have concentrated on programs to achieve lifelong education. The subject is quality promotion of the adults and employees’ work including: promotion thematic contextual knowledge, improving skills and attitudes requires for effective services to the community, effective communicative skills, having moral commitments and ability for lifelong education and updating.</td>
</tr>
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<td>2. In these countries lifelong education programs have been formulated in a nation-wide scale and all three countries under study try to promote the quality of adult education programs and in-service courses through improving practical programs and establishing communication and keeping a balance between theoretical and practical trainings and establishing communication between universities and vocational and technical institutions in order to improve lifelong education skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In all three countries, changes and evolution in education and high education systems have been created in the course of creating a lifelong education and learning–based community. Of course, in this field, Japan has made more considerable progress than Iran and England (Like Air university in Japan which is accessible to all adults without any entrance examinations through radio and TV).</td>
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†. Educational Information Satellite Communications Network
‡. Manabia Pia
Table 2. Differences and similarities in the field of lifelong education in Iran, Japan and England

<table>
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<th>Iran</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>England</th>
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<tr>
<td>Iran in spite of having a lot of economic resources (like petroleum) has not been able to train a high-quality and up-to-date human force</td>
<td>But Japan despite inadequacy of economic resources has been able to reach a considerable economic boom by training an effective, committed and powerful human force.</td>
<td>England is among developed countries and this development is due to its educated and trained human force.</td>
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<td>Iran, despite much effort to create and enhance book reading culture and library use in society, has not been able to be so successful in this field yet</td>
<td>In Japan and England, using libraries and museums in the course of improving lifelong education skills has great importance in public minds.</td>
<td>In Japan and England, using libraries and museums in order to improve lifelong education skills has great importance in public minds.</td>
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<td>Despite broad supports of the constitutional law and Islamic consultative assembly, and…, for adult and lifelong education, Iran has not been successful yet and evidently, these supports were only words and have not been performed.</td>
<td>Japan and England have been able to perform related programs and be successful due to the broad supports of the law and assembly for adult and lifelong education.</td>
<td>Japan and England have been able to perform related programs and be successful due to the broad supports of the law and assembly for adult and lifelong education.</td>
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<td>In Iran, there have been inadequate annual researchers and studies as well as related seminars in the field of lifelong education.</td>
<td>Performing broad annual researchers and studies in order to evaluate the effectiveness rate of lifelong education on educational policies of Japan as well as increasing 11% in the classes and seminars held by lifelong and public education agencies in 2004.</td>
<td>In England, there are inadequate annual researchers and studies in lifelong education; however, many meetings and seminars are held in this field.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Iran and Japan unfortunately, learning is still teacher-centered and this is why the adults have no incentive to learn and this teacher-centered learning is an obstacle in the way of lifelong learning.</td>
<td>In Iran and Japan unfortunately, learning is still teacher-centered and this is why the adults have no incentive to learn and this type of learning is considered as an obstacle to the lifelong learning.</td>
<td>In England, learning is of the student-centered type and teachers work in accompanied and step with students. As a result, adults have more incentive for lifelong education and learning.</td>
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<td>Iran is weaker than other two countries from the viewpoint of computer-aided training (Virtual training).</td>
<td>Japan was successful in the field of virtual training including: establishment of online university for adults in 2007 through mobile phone.</td>
<td>The first online university was established in England. England, like Japan, in the field of computer-aided training was successful.</td>
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**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The research findings suggest that lifelong education is provided for all English and, especially Japanese citizens and this fact is accompanied by new technologies in adult education. Japan and England have taken effective steps to fulfill the aim of changing educational society in to a lifelong education and learning one. The idea of lifelong education is now well-institutionalized and is accepted increasingly. On the one hand, the government has also realized its importance and supported it, especially Japan, in this field, will progress towards a lifelong learning community where all people will be able to participate in learning opportunities throughout their lives. Educational policy of England seeks to invest in different private sectors and states in order to create a lifelong learning–based community. Only in this way, English community will be able to cope with the future dangers and threats and as a result of such awareness and insight; it provides a favorable environment and climate for lifelong learning. In such an environment, lifelong which protects life, peace and human dignity, Evidence and results show that Iranian community, like other communities, has also entered the third millennium when lifelong education is an inevitable necessity for it, the reason of this necessity is that rapid changes which have occurred and also continue increasingly in the world have deeply influenced Iran and will also continue to influence it. These changes have brought new learning requirements to the people and want them to learn continuously in order to become compatible with the ever-changing and unpredictable world and play an effective role in social and economic development of society. Therefore, an effort to accomplish lifelong learning is the best way of helping Iran to develop in all directions as fast as possible and actively attend the international arena while protecting its national interests. In the present century, because of such necessities as logical confrontation with globalization phenomenon and necessity of protecting economic power and national identity, the idea of lifelong education should be noted.

Undoubtedly, the whole formal education system has an effective role in responding to this society’s need because the continuation of learning demands capabilities whose foundations should be shaped from the first years of one’s life and gradually develop. But as most knowledgeable people emphasize the presence of the elite
and intellectuals in universities and youthfulness of the student class show that in the present conditions, pioneering in university and an effort to spread and promote lifelong learning is an inevitable principle. It is clear that a part of the universities’ activities for implementing this mission is to provide the learning opportunities in different forms and a more important part of these activities is helping students to become lifelong learners. Of course, as most educationalists emphasized, fulfillment of adult and lifelong education demands the general mobilization so that lifelong learning is accepted as the philosophy of the whole education process at societal level and belief in necessity of continued learning throughout one’s life become a public faith.

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