Human Strivings, between Social Change and Lifelong Learning

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Abstract: *This paper explains the relationship between social change and life-long learning, based on human efforts. The connecting element turns out to be the permanent process of transformation, both in terms of social change and education focused on lifelong learning. It is obvious that lifelong learning has become largely dependent on digitization, and the dominant method of this is becoming more and more pronounced as a new form of pedagogy of the self. This aspect leads to the new identity of the pedagogue/teacher, who, being also a dynamic element in the process of social change, transforms himself and at the same time the subject of learning. In this study, it is explained the need for a common vision about the interdependence between continuous and permanent social change on the one hand and the social need or the citizen's right of the adult to train throughout life, on the other hand.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Our civilizations are strongly related to the process of adult learning, as well as to the set of related attempts to form and organize creative motivational opportunities for adults to continue learning throughout their lives. They are connected to a set of stakeholders in various contexts, each with specific perspectives and goals, and consequently with a wide variety of opportunities for many reasons.

These organized adult learning opportunities have the potential to function as a powerful communication channel concerning the challenges of social change if approached from a systemic perspective and led by a skilled team. These strivings must aim to achieve the proposed objectives and target both the aspects related to inclusion and those related to quality, on the one hand, but also the definition and continuous redefinition regarding their purpose, functioning, and effectiveness, on the other hand. They also make it possible to deal with persistent communication distortions caused by unequal social power and resource distribution.

Change is a defining feature of social life. For this reason, efforts to coordinate and organize the adult learning process are fully justified.

Social change is a permanence of social life. The effects of social change trigger the manifestation of the material and mental strivings of the human being. Adult learning includes a gap between a person's already existing knowledge, acquired skills, and self-awareness and the needs that arise according to the effects of social change, which he inevitably faces, according to Osborne and Sim (2022).

Because the individual's needs change over time, he will constantly make efforts to find a solution. An important basis will refer to the accumulation of individual capabilities, which will constitute personal experience. Personal experience is the foundation on which the individual builds values throughout life.

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2.   LIFELONG LEARNING

A learning strategy known as lifelong learning acknowledges the fact that education doesn't end with formal education or training for a particular job. It assumes lifelong learning that is driven by the desire for both personal growth and societal adaptation.

Lifelong learning allows both the continuous development of skills and competencies, as well as the necessary adaptation to the characteristic requirements of the labor market, which are constantly changing. This process equally includes formal learning within educational institutions, as well as informal learning based on daily experience and social interaction with other individuals, in the work of Johnson and Majewska (2022).

New education emerges as a realistic answer to the need for lifelong learning and the issues of the modern world. They stand for a cutting-edge educational strategy that attempts to transform the learning process and modify it to meet the requirements of a world that is always changing.

The focus of modern education is on helping students acquire vital life skills that are tailored to the requirements of a world that is continuously changing. Education in the areas of ecology, human rights, peace, democracy, demography, change and development, communication and mass media, nutrition, leisure activities, and others are among them. New forms that emphasize integrated activity and the practical aspect of learning are available in addition to these:

- education in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics represents an approach to the integrated learning of these fields, intending to develop skills related to analysis, solution, and collaboration;
- digital education, to integrate new technologies into the activity of the learning process, as well as the development of digital skills;
- competence-based education – aims to develop critical thinking, creativity, communication, cooperation, etc;
- experiential education - emphasizes learning through experience, applying knowledge and skills in daily practice, to develop practical skills and adapt to challenges;
- project-based education - a form of learning focused on project-based training, which has the merit of practically and creatively involving the people in training, in collaborative action, according to Fitzgerald et al. (2021).

To exist in a global network implies a strong connection to reality and implicitly permanent adaptation to social life. This requires skills of the human individual on three levels: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal, according to Olcott (2022). On this basis, a multitude of vital knowledge and skills, characteristic of the 21ˢᵗ century, grouped according to these three dimensions, come into the discussion. In the aforementioned work, knowledge and skills have been given names such as: "21ˢᵗ-century skills," "college and career readiness," "deeper learning," and "higher-order thinking." These categories contain some specific differences. However, they were addressed together as 21ˢᵗ-century skills, according to NRC (2012).

Each skill among the named skills of the 21ˢᵗ century belongs to one of the following three categories:

- *Learning skills* (the four C's - critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication) involve the mental processes with a role in the permanent adaptation to newly emerging social needs and the improvement of the organizational climate.

- *Literacy skills* (IMT- information, media, technology) require a high degree of concentration regarding the student's ability to distinguish and use, on consciously selected sources, the valuable/true information from the false, which must be avoided.
- *Life skills* (FLIPS- flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity, social skills) - presuppose careful protection regarding both the student's personal qualities and his professional ones, considered intangible elements throughout the daily activity, according to Geisinger (2016).

We specify here that about the three levels, in specialized works, it was established that it contains:
- cognitive dimension - information literacy, knowledge, cognitive processes and strategies, critical thinking, creativity, reasoning, and innovation;
- intrapersonal dimension - work ethic and conscientiousness, positive core self-evaluation, intellectual openness, appreciation of diversity, flexibility, metacognition, initiative;
- interpersonal dimension - teamwork and collaboration, communication, leadership, conflict resolution, responsibility.

The ability of the human being to adapt and respond to continuous and unpredictable changes in personal plan, family, workplace, and society throughout the period in which he is integrated into the work process, so in parallel with his professional life, is due to educators. Why? Because educators are the shapers of the human being, throughout this process of knowledge and adaptation. All this action is carried out through learning, under the coordination of educators, based on which those subjected to learning develop and apply the skills of the 21st century, as previously mentioned in each area of competence.

This action takes place throughout the individual's active life because it is necessary for him to develop and apply the acquired knowledge and skills, which can adapt to new situations. However, teaching how to transfer skills, and how to extend a skill acquired in one context to a new situation, has proven to be a difficult operation in most cases. This transfer is dependent on the degree of understanding of the knowledge acquired through assimilation and analysis, which leads to a certain degree of depth, according to Dede et al. (2019).

All these strivings will be applied against the background of practice in the field, because there are high chances that new elements will appear, determined by factors that the individual does not always expect, no matter how much knowledge and capabilities he has accumulated. Only an internship can provide the benchmark of the sufficiency or insufficiency of the efforts made up to that point, as well as the need to persist in learning and adapting, an aspect encountered with great probability.

3. THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE NEED FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING

For adults, as for children, education is a special force that leads to transformation. But it must be stated that in adults, unlike children, this force acts with a much greater power, adults being aware that in addition to society's expectations, the passage of time also acts. That is why the actions of adults are accelerated because they intend to have the necessary physical time to materialize what they learn throughout their lives.

The permanent and continuous form of lifelong learning has recently come to be considered a separate category of pedagogy, namely a "pedagogy of the self". Its purpose is to construct the

identity of a "trainer" with a role in reducing/stopping the welfare of the human individual in society. The first question concerns how this intention arose. Then there is the need to find out how educators can trigger the emergence of a pedagogy of lifelong learning in human individuals to guide them to well-being. Both issues expressed here constitute educational challenges.

Adults learn the most from their own experience, they make economic and social analyses, based on which they often make material and intellectual efforts both to improve themselves in the field in which they have trained, and to change their professional profile in which they were trained, if they consider it is necessary.

Last but not least, we meet adults at the college level who are completing their studies, in the field in which they worked from their youth to adulthood. This happens because in certain jobs, during their youth, in-depth specialized or college studies were not required.

This batch of study must be analyzed from the perspective of the fact that individuals are almost forced to attend university courses, otherwise, they are in a situation of losing their jobs, some of them being very close to retirement.

So, we are talking about elderly people, over 55 years old. These people very interestingly combine personal experience with new information, but online learning methods, because they, being already in the field of work, had to use digital technology, based on individual learning. Here we refer to the process of pedagogy of the self.

4. TRAJECTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

According to the above information, it is necessary to establish a direction of approach regarding the trajectory and characteristics of social change. Looking for this trajectory of how we can relate to the image of social change, it can be concluded that a good way to describe social change is to organize social indicators into categories, as follows:

- The population rate change appears to us as a potential and common indicator, because it is observable how significant changes in the population - especially the reduction in its number - are an expression of social change. An aspect worth discussing refers to the fact that in the US, since 1950, there has been an increase in the Asian, Hispanic, etc. population. The change in the ethnic composition during the last decades has produced gradual changes, which will produce various effects in individual communities, under the conditions that they will become a "white minority".

An increase in the age of marriage was found, which leads to the appearance of the firstborn more and more later. One of the reasons is represented by the need of the human individual to specialize in a field, thus going through all the educational stages (bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctorate), according to Anderson (2014).

At the same time, there is also the need for an environment, which refers to the house with its corresponding equipment, as well as the satisfaction of the need to travel for profit or recreation, and this usually requires the purchase of a mobile. All these and many others require a time in which the human individual produces money through his work, to satisfy all these needs.

The time required to gather all these material goods represents a period that the human individual usually goes through before starting a family, before giving birth to the firstborn. This delay is a positive element in the life of the human individual regarding the material aspect of everyday life, to his professional training, but at the same time, it is also a negative element, because it favors the growth of differences between generations. As a parent, the older he is, the more difficult it will be for him to understand the values that his child cultivates, and just as difficult for him to pass on the educational values of his own family life.

Attempts to ensure comfort frequently lead to delaying the wedding. This results in a concubinage relationship. According to earlier studies, single persons could have less access to social support and personal networks. However, little is known about how older persons' marital status affects the quantity and quality of their social connections. Our findings indicate that marital status has a major impact on social ties, as he thinks Zhang et al. (2023).

- The health shows changes regarding the mortality rate and life expectancy, these being higher in the first half of the 20th century than in the second half. Stress-inducing events are usually associated with an enhanced subjective experience of change. The improvement of the state of public health can be primarily due to the measures applied in the first decades of the 20th century. Here we are talking about actions regarding public education, drinking water treatment, organized waste disposal, food safety, etc., as considered by Schöley et al. (2022).

- The religion. Overall, though, the century-long history of religion in the world has been more about consistency than change, as it shows Montgomery (1991). Currently, the acceptance of a single, global religion is desired at the planetary level.

According to studies, civilizational populism can be considered an expression of the general will of people. Society would exist as an effect of the coexistence of antagonistic groups: the group of pure people in opposition to the group represented by the corrupt elite. The most important thing is that the idea of civilization remains the core based on civilizational terms (Yilmaz & Morieson, 2023).

Gareth (2022) reports that the polarization of countries, determined by political choices based on race and ethnicity, leads to a complex and extensive problem. At the same time, on a global scale, religious conflicts are increasing, this being a phenomenon that arises, among others, against the backdrop of electoral contradictions. It is interesting to research how religious intolerance manifests itself before or after political elections.

- Home, education, and leisure. As expected, an improvement in social change would occur when both marriage and divorce are on the rise. In reality, there are fewer marriages, as a result of more unofficial relationships and their later formalization, hence resulting in fewer divorces.

Education levels have increased steadily throughout the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. In particular, it is noteworthy that the gender balance of graduates is marked by the increased percentage of bachelor's degrees awarded to women. It was intended to determine the perspectives of the stakeholders (teachers, students) about the provision of educational units with IT equipment, platforms, and specialized software developed to support the educational process based on qualitative research, according to Rose (2023).

The findings demonstrated that, for the most part, the educational institutions covered by the study to which we are referring have the required amenities. Modern amenities are available at the investigated educational institutions in urban settings, particularly in large cities.

In a rural setting, the situation is very different because many educational facilities lack the essential fundamental utilities, an Internet connection, and suitable areas. Regarding digital technology, we may state that this is challenging and desirable to realize.

The lack of training for the operation of various IT equipment was mentioned as one of the drawbacks by the respondents who took part in the qualitative research that forms the basis of this work. Additionally, they noted that there are instances in which, despite the availability of such technology, its proper use is impeded by the subjects' lack of training.

Due to inadequate budgets, schools are unable to hire technical staff to handle teacher training, equipment maintenance, etc.; as a result, it is hard to develop a workable system that addresses the use of new technologies.

Another finding from the field research is that no school units have been located where the educational process is entirely supported by computer-assisted instruction, as this approach depends on both the availability of hardware and software resources and a structured environment for its application, as it looks Twenge et al. (2015).

Leisure activities are constantly changing and influenced by fashion, but they are not much different from previous periods.

- The work. Among other things, social inclusion is based on the positive impact of labor and a person's employment in daily life. The interaction between coworkers at work reflects the mentalities brought about by age differences and the educational approach, which ranges from traditional to eLearning. This social theory claims that the generational conflict we are currently experiencing is a result of the competition between the young and the old for resources and employment. The labor market is by far the arena where professional competition takes place. It is a dynamic component that contributes to economic balance but may also create imbalances that might trigger crises, as suggested by Grimm et al. (2023).

- The law. The causes of incarceration rate fluctuations are complex, as is how they relate to social development, but the current statistics indicate that the past several decades have not been particularly unusual and may perhaps have been relatively peaceful compared to earlier times.

Although growth in recent decades has been modest, state and local government employment continued to rise throughout the 20th century. The current period does not appear to be particularly unique.

- The wealth. Another helpful indication of societal development is the distribution of wealth and income disparity data. In general, the public is opposed to the idea of government involvement to lessen economic inequality, according to Kavanagh et al. (2021).

- Globalization. Uncertainty surrounds the economic, social, and environmental effects of globalization, which is without a doubt a contentious issue. It is important to remember that the

concept of sustainable development aims to clarify how human activity can successfully support itself without diminishing the resources on which it depends.

Although a lot of academics concur that the idea of sustainability includes ongoing consumption, there are divergent opinions on how to do so without jeopardizing the requirements of future generations.

Additionally, the hegemonic school of thought saw globalization as the birth of a new world order that, through multinational corporations (MNCs) and international financial organizations like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund, perpetuates injustice in developing nations. The sole goal of these organizations (the WB and IMF) is to promote capitalism accumulation in a setting with unrestricted market forces and a very circumscribed state apparatus.

Therefore, an unequal connection permits environmental costs and pollution to be transferred to developing countries, resulting in domestic environmental damages, the extinction of human and ecological populations, and a disproportionate allocation of trade advantages to the already privileged, as explained in Murshed et al. (2022).

- Social lifelong learning under new dimensions of knowledge. Considering the social changes, we want to achieve, we must pay special attention to social learning. Social learning is a specific form of informal education. This is characterized, among other things, by the fact that it is usually experiential and supported by decentralized groups. People bring personal ideas and experiences to the learning process, and from this, we can deduce disorganization, diversity, and personalization from one individual to another.

At the same time as the need to modernize learning, there is a certain evolution of the procedures through which knowledge is approached. That's why it was necessary to reorient ourselves, from "concentration" to "distribution". Knowledge is now dispersed, diffused, and free, but it should be mentioned that there are also some disadvantages, which fall under the following framework: if in the past we stored information in books, libraries, and specialized learning centers, today this information is dispersed and free, in the sense that it does not prove validity. However, the formality of the information, the rigor, and the verification of their validity remains a constant need in human efforts, in lifelong learning according to Walcutt and Schatz (2019).

Starting from the idea that the information disseminated on a large scale and moderated by the community is not constantly accurate, it is necessary to remember that the information before this stage of the current social change was not completely accurate either. We are still working on the methods of validating previously acquired social knowledge, in the effort made by researchers to reach an increased degree of knowledge validity.

So, the image of human society is not presented as a conclusion on it, a finality. There are still misinterpretations, a kind of tribute to stereotypes, which act in the long term and of course leave their mark on social life. It is important to surprise the changes that take place both at the level of collective consciousness and at the behavioral level.

Of all the forms of manifestation of change in social life, technology is the most pronounced, which lays the foundation for the diversification of forms of communication, which determine social collaboration. Technology is the essential element based on which connections are formed in virtual organizations, Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020).

Because learning is a ubiquitous process, it should be mentioned that lifelong learning includes all phases of learning that take place at all stages of life. This instructive-educational process takes place in different social contexts: at school, at work, at home, in the community, and in special situations, such as specialized institutions, in the work of Laal (2011). Lifelong learning can take place both formally and institutionally in educational institutions such as schools, and universities, as well as non-formal, outside institutions, such as meeting workshops. Last but not least, lifelong learning takes place in an informal, non-institutional setting, and here we are talking about the family group, the group of friends, the group of colleagues, or the information on social media, according to Kalz (2015).

5. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research directions, therefore, require an approach based on the trajectory offered by the categories presented above. This is how social change can be followed, with the respective categories representing the markers of social change. These markers are the ones that can give us an overall picture of social change. On this basis, the trajectory of human strivings in the need to adapt to new social needs can be configured.

6. CONCLUSION

First of all, it should be mentioned that the elements and factors addressed in this material are the subject of a wide range of issues in the sense that they involve complex and difficult epistemological and methodological aspects. The causes of particularly accentuated social change involve socio-psychological phenomena on the one hand and the material side of social and individual life on the other.

Secondly, it should be mentioned that social change is a characteristic of every generation of human beings.

At the same time, continuity and change are normal factors in the framework of history. This is demonstrated by every sociological analysis and not only, in any temporal segment of the historical evolution of humanity.

The absence of change would be impossible. The information collected and mentioned in this article leads to the conclusion that we are enduring a paradigm shift in human society. Online technology, and digitization in most fields of activity, clearly lead to the need for learning throughout the individual's life.

Thirdly, we must take technological changes into account in our analysis, and point out that they offer us consistent support in the practical application of the accumulated knowledge. Lifelong learning is the process by which adults accumulate the necessary information to face the needs triggered by the change in society, using this knowledge in everyday practice.

Digital technology raises serious methodological problems, which is why adults cannot limit themselves to what they learn during school.

Adults have understood the need for continuous learning, approach, and knowledge of new digital technologies, all to be able to adapt to social change and its ever-new demands.

It results in a lot of qualitative data available for future analysis, while social change indicators can provide new models of social constructs. Last but not least, we must mention the importance of the social relationships that arise from these changes at the socio-technological level, relationships that can lead to new theoretical approaches to human society.

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