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# LIFELONG LEARNING FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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**Introduction:**

Lifelong learning, which includes regular school education and adult learning, can be seen as a strategy in the context of the life-course approach. According to international labour organisation (ILO), lifelong learning is " a policy strategy directed towards integrating older persons into the contemporary labour market, to give them the necessary education level to adapt to the educational system in order to meet the changing economic, social and demographic conditions" lifelong learning does not necessarily take place during the traditional education period at a young age, but can be undertaken later. As such it pertains to older persons working or in retirement as well as young and middle-aged people. Its societal impact is two fold: first, education and qualifications have a direct economic impact, by increasing the employability of people in all ages; second, lifelong learning promotes the integration, participation, and well being of its recipients, which also has an economic impact.

**Life-Long Learning**

According to the definition, life long learning is "the activity of seeking out new knowledge or developing a skill, and participating in educational activities over the course of a person's entire life". In other words, life long learning is the process of one educating itself from his/her early childhood till his/her late senior years.

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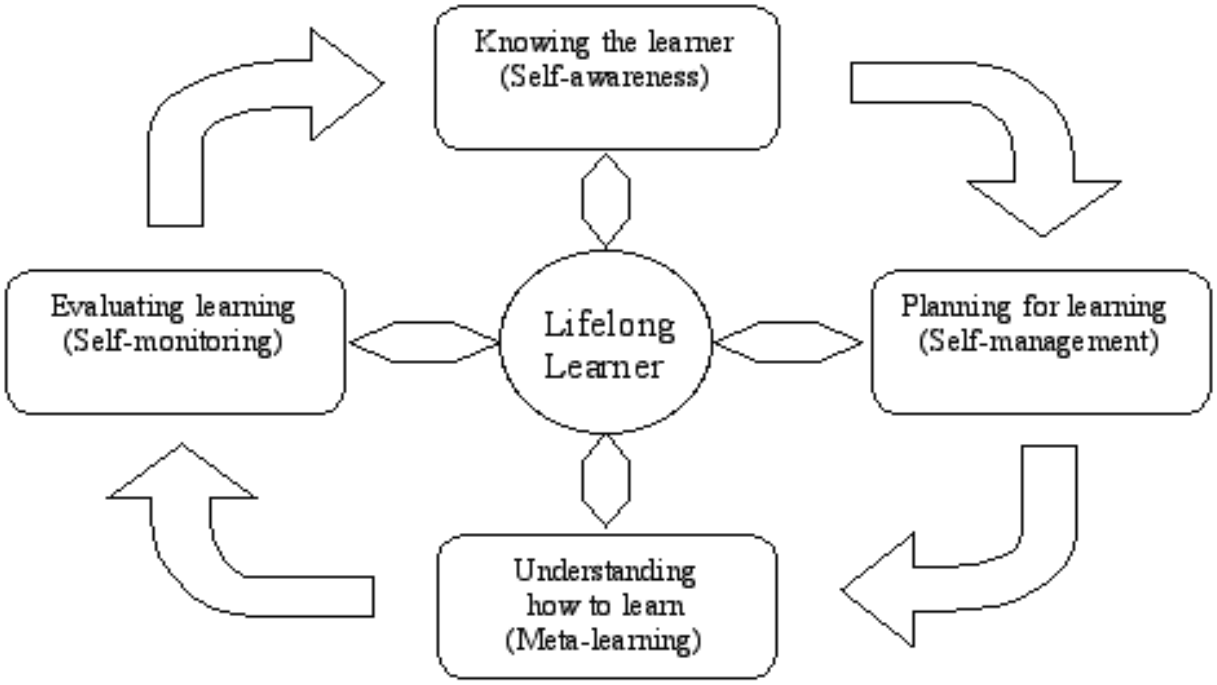
**Lifelong learning method:**




**Information technology and Lifelong learning**

"Technology can make lifelong learning a reality" is in a nutshell presented the North American point of view. With electronic tools, people can (theoretically) learn virtually anytime and anyplace they choose without obstacles in place, time and social status.

UNESCO's "Policy Paper for Change and Development in Higher Education" urges higher education institutions to make greater use of the advantages offered by the advancements of communication technologies so that "each university should become an open university offering possibilities for distance learning and learning in various points in time". The e-learning is not

seen as a shift from the traditional to open learning, but rather as a support to conventional learning processes with the use of modern information technology and distance educational methods.

According to the cited UNESCO report open and distance learning is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education, and its potential impact on all education delivery systems has been greatly accentuated through the development of ICT – based technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web. E-learning at the tertiary levels shows a two-track development pattern. On the one hand, numerous open universities have emerged to absorb large numbers of new learners, while, on the other hand, increasing numbers of traditional universities have begun to offer their programmes also through distance education. The development of new information and communication technologies has reinforced this trend.

In the book where the role of "Net Generation" is explored, the new ways of learning for the new generation are presented. The new learning process brings up the following shifts:

- from linear to hypermedia learning,
- from instruction to construction and discovery,
- from teacher-centered to learner-centered education,
- from absorbing material to learning how to navigate and how to learn,
- from school to lifelong learning,
- from one-size-fits-all to customized learning,
- from learning as torture to learning as fun, and,
- from the teacher as transmitter to the teacher as facilitator.

Tapscott's research leads him to conclude that the "Net Generation" is a force for educational transformation. They process information differently than previous generations, learn best in highly customisable environments, and look to teachers to create and structure their learning experience. Furthermore, the importance of understanding the behavioral patterns of the network generation exceeds merely appreciating that they are comfortable working online. A crucial element for successfully delivering virtual courses entails transforming the educational experience so that it is meaningful to the information-age learner.

**Importance of lifelong learning :**

The importance of lifelong learning / education has been repeatedly stressed in several educational policy documents and discourses in India. While the report of the education commission (1964-66) observed that education does not end with schooling but is a lifelong education as the cherished goal of the educational process which presupposes universal literacy, provision of opportunities for youth, housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue the education of their choice at the pace studied to them. It observes that that the crucial development issue is the continuous up gradation of skills so as to produce manpower resources of the kind and the number required by the society.

During the last three decades, the bulk of programmes continued to focus on adult literacy and continuing education mainly due to the massive number of illiterate (300.14 million) and neo literate (110 millions) as estimated by the national literacy mission. With the formulation of 11 th five year plan (2007-2012), the government of India put forward the idea of expanding the scope of the continuing education program by developing it as lifelong education and awareness program (LEAP).

The role and importance of lifelong learning in India have increased in recent times due to several socio economic factors. In a technology driven knowledge based competitive economy; the landscape of learning is fast changing in India. The growth of Indian economy at an average rate of 9.2 % per annum during 2006-07, tremendous expansion of information and communication technology and rapid globalisation have all been instrumental in bringing about job skills so that the work force keeps on learning and updating their skills to be globally competitive

**Supporting agriculture**

Research suggests that increasing agricultural productivity benefits the poor and landless through increased employment opportunities. Because the vast majority of poor people live in rural areas and derive their livelihoods directly or indirectly from agriculture, support for farming is a high priority for rural development. ICTs can deliver useful information to farmers in the form of crop care and animal husbandry, fertilizer and feedstock inputs, drought mitigation, pest

control, irrigation, weather forecasting, seed sourcing and market prices. Other uses of ICTs can enable farmers to participate in advocacy and cooperative activities.

To illustrate how useful ICTs can be for farmers, consider the case of farmers in India who in the past were harvesting their tomatoes at the same time, giving rise to a market glut that pushed prices to rock bottom. At other times, when tomatoes weren't available and the prices shot up, the farmers had none to sell. Now, they use a network of telecentres to coordinate their planting so that there is a steady supply to the markets and more regulated and regular prices.

**Creating employment opportunities:**

Two areas of employment opportunity arise from the deployment of ICTs. First, unemployed people can use ICTs to discover job opportunities. Second, they can become employed in the new jobs that are created through the deployment of ICTs.

Poor people in rural localities lack opportunities for employment because they often do not have access to information about them. One use of ICTs is to provide on-line services for job placement through electronic labour exchanges in public employment service or other placement agencies. Normally, job brokering is carried out as a closed system involving intermediaries on behalf of their clients. The greater transparency enabled by ICT opens up possibilities for more precise information seeking. Through open job seeker banks, for example, employers can search and directly access résumés, which in turn are linked electronically to job vacancy banks. Tools have been developed to assist employers in screening résumés, or to send e-mails automatically to jobseekers when job vacancy announcements fitting certain pre-selected criteria are posted.

The ILO notes that some developing countries have been able to create employment for thousands of women and men through community-access points and telecentres. One common option is to purchase a mobile phone through a micro credit program and to earn income by providing low cost phone calls to others (Curtain, 2001). Telecentres can also offer use of ICT facilities for business purposes to small and micro-enterprises that do not have their own private facilities.

People with appropriate skills, possibly obtained from ICT-based learning facilities, may gain employment as a result of the growth in remote ICT processing facilities that are located outside

high-income countries. The facilities provide a range of services, including help lines, technical support, reservations handling, sales, data conversion, as well as voice and data transcription. Other remote processing services are payroll accounting, internal auditing and credit appraisals. High-end remote processing includes creating digitized maps of townships, utilities, roads and other facilities. It is claimed that back office functions that are likely to grow in importance are settling insurance claims and summarizing legal documents, such as witness depositions.

A related source of ICT-generated employment for young people is through Call Centres. These offer telephone-based services from a central office to customers in a variety of business sectors. Call Centres handle telephone calls, fax, e-mail and other types of customer contact, in live and automated formats.

The Internet can also play a pre-eminent role in a pro-poor tourism marketing strategy by providing information about remote tourist locations, including photos of key features, and by providing a ready means of low cost communication via e-mail. An example of the use of ICT to help bridge the gap between employment in the informal sector and the mainstream economy is India's Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA). Its 220,000 members are women and young women who earn a living through their own labour or through small businesses. SEWA was one of the first organizations in India to realize the potential for harnessing ICT to help women in the informal sector. It has sought to develop the organization's capacity to use computers by conducting awareness programs and imparting basic computer skills to its team leaders, "barefoot" managers and members of its various member associations. Many of SEWA's member organizations have launched their own web sites to sell their products in the global virtual market place.

**Lifelong Learning for Indian Farmers:**

Agriculture, vitally important for most developing countries, must change to meet today's needs of sustainable food production while at the same time raising the living standards of rural poor and avoiding environmental degradation. This is also true for India. Agriculture is the mainstay of the Indian economy (Agriculture and allied sectors contribute nearly 22 per cent of Gross Domestic Product of India), as about 65-70 per cent of the population and accounts for

around 12.2% of the world's population. Development of the agriculture sector and Indian farmers is essential in the transformation of 'developing India into developed India'.

**Need and challenges:**

Indian farmers need increase in production, poverty reduction, livelihood security and sustainable development and looking for ways to make it possible. The challenges before Indian farmers can be grouped into three broad categories, namely social, occupational and financial challenges. At social front majority of Indian farmers are affected by cast barriers, high population growth and low social status. While at occupational and financial front, they are plagued by poor farming techniques, unstructured marketing systems, less awareness of occupational opportunities, low income and low savings. Literacy among Indian farmers is another major challenge that needs to be addressed. According to Indian Census of 2001 only 59.06% rural folk in India were literate, while urban areas displayed a literacy rate of 80.06%.

Lifelong learning can play a vital role to empower Indian farmers to face developmental challenges as it implies continual learning through out life. Lifelong learning includes natural learning, self-learning, non-formal learning and formal learning and seems an appropriate approach for socio-economic development of Indian farmers. But offering lifelong learning to approximately 700,000,000 people in 634,321 villages (among whom 207,000,000 are adult illiterates) is not an easy task. In this background, information and communications technologies (ICT) supported lifelong learning is globally recognized as a viable and learner-friendly approach that can complement, or even replace, more traditional training and education approaches.

India, over the past decade, has become a test bed for innovations in information and communication technologies (ICT) serving the rural user. Various reason explain this emergence. The most obvious may be that rural India has remained poor while the rest of the country has moved ahead. Undoubtedly, its caste, religious, and other divisions present special challenges, as do its vast geography, many languages, and cultures.

The importance of ICTs for rural development of India is clearly expressed in the brochure of agriculture's India (2008) conference 'Since the Green Revolution, India has been growing steadily in terms of agriculture productivity and growth. Modern farming practices and inclusive technologies have been implemented in many parts of rural India to foster rural growth. Wireless communication networks and GIS-bossed agro software technology are reaching rural India gibing them access to vital land updated information on weather, farming technologies, fertilizers, livestock, commodity prices and stock markets'.

Number of initiatives has been taken by Government, NGOs and private agencies to use ICTs for rural development in India. In the Indian state of Madhya Prates, 32 villages have been wired to the central databases for access to both government and agricultural information under Gyandoot scheme. At social front, the Ujjas (light) programme allows the women to voice their concerns, learn from each other and interact with the rest of the world. In addition to selling their own produce, users can buy goods and services, email, and manage online banking and insurance. In other side, info Village Knowledge Centers established by M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation derive useful information from the Internet and broadcast it in innovative ways to rural people. The Centers uses public address system at fiddling villages or the siren that awakes fishermen when it is time for them to begin the fishing day and also provides local language newspapers and signboards outside the centers to spread knowledge.

The impact of these efforts for rural development of India is a testimony to the fundamental belief that the innovative use of ICTs can be a powerful tool to meet the lifelong learning needs of Indian farmers. Jhaveri, Dossani & Misra (2005) observes 'Despite large-scale political and bureaucratic attention and the more focused, small-scale efforts of thousands of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society entities, a replicable, catalytic approach to rural development remains to be found. The hope that ICT can surmount at least some of these social, political, and administrative challenges and become a viable technology for the provision of health, education, and other social services is thus ICTs strongest calling card'.

Provision of technology supported lifelong learning using Radio, Television, Computer facilities and the Internet can help a lot for capacity building and sustainable development of

Indian farmers. The Conference brochure of eAgriculture India (2008) states 'despite the usage of advanced ICT tools in many parts of rural India, there are several villages where advanced farming technologies, and interactive communications networks haven't reached yet. Access to these technologies will help secure livelihood of many farmers and consequently build a stronger nation and economy'.

Considering this positivism, the lifelong learning needs of India farmers may certainly be met effectively and efficiently by establishing 'e-lifelong Learning Centers for Indian Farmers' at every block headquarter. The establishment of these centers in every block headquarter will be helpful to meet out the lifelong earning needs of every willing and need farmer. The modus operandi of proposed 'e-Lifelong Learning Centers for Indian Farmers' will be as follows:

- The grant for establishment of these centers may be provided by central and state governments on cost sharing basis. The Central Government may provide grant for buildings and equipments and state government may take care for maintenance and running costs.
- The centers will be equipped with sufficient number of different ICTs namely computers with High speed Internet connections, telephones, Radio, and Television. The centers will also have the teleconferencing facilities for farmers.
- The services of multiple operators-NGOs, the private sector and government entities (such as the panchayat and postal system), social help groups, and voluntary organizations may be sought to run these centers.
- Every center will be required to contact farmers of the region and explain them about the objectives of center, Afterwards; the centers will register all the willing farmers from catchments villages as member of center. The registered farmers may be issued a member card to utilize the services of the center.

**Conclusions:**

Lifelong and adult learning are important strategies for enhancing economic development, the employability of citizens, and social integration and participation. This entails three elements: basic training Retraining and education for pensioners. The following three lines of recommendations can be proposed.

First, receiving training and seeking further education may constitute a challenge for many adults. It is therefore necessary to highlight the advantages of further education by raising awareness of the fact that adult training can lead to higher incomes, brighter career prospects and enhanced social participation.

Second, methods for teaching adults differ from methods for teaching children and teenagers. "Onsite learning methods by trainers should be developed, where appropriate, to teach older persons the skills to handle technological tools for daily life, to use the new communication technologies, and to train their cognitive, physical and sensory skills." It is thus important to adapt learning methods to the needs persons.Third, it may be necessary to develop and promote gender-sensitive education programmes, since women may have different educational needs than men. Member states may wish to consider how resources could be distributed in a way that considers the needs and preferences of men and women to the same extent. .

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