

R E V I E W

The Importance of Lifelong Learning of Traditional Foods and Nutrition and the Role of Real and Virtual Information Organizations

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Summary. Traditional foods and connecting the concepts of lifelong learning and real and virtual information organizations is the main focus of this review/opinion paper. Encouraging empowerment of these concepts is believed to improve the nutritional status of all people among the society. In this review/opinion paper, it has been aimed to accentuate the importance of advancing real and virtual information organizations to the highest quality as well as lifelong learning programs and services that support and improve use of traditional foods of all people within different age groups, genders and socioeconomic status in the society. Documentary source analysis, descriptive research methods and data collection from scientific literature and documents techniques were used in the study. Topics of this study are subjected to review under the headings of “Traditional foods and nutrition concept”, “Lifelong learning concept”, “European Union concept and perspective of lifelong learning”, “The role and importance of real and virtual information organizations as centers of lifelong learning for traditional foods and nutrition”.

Keywords: Traditional Foods and Nutrition, Lifelong learning, Information Organizations

Introduction

This study is based on the argument that “real and virtual information organizations, which are the main access points in lifelong learning, are very important tools to accelerate and the development of traditional food and nutrition area”. The key purpose of this study is to emphasize the importance of lifelong learning concept from different perspectives, and connection of the lifelong learning concept to traditional foods. In addition, the objective of the study is to give opinions about contribution and improvement of traditional foods concepts for both professionals in all fields of nutrition and dietetics and related science and practice, and people of all ages, genders and education levels within the society. Furthermore, to explain the issue in a general framework by dealing with traditional food and nutrition, the general concept of lifelong learning, and lifelong learning in the European Union. In line

with the argument and purpose of the study, documentary resource analysis, descriptive research methods and data collection techniques are used in the study. Turkish Bibliographia, Turkish Articles Bibliographia, TÜBİTAK ULAKBİM databases including Turkish Medical Database, Life Sciences Database, Turkish Librarianship Journal, and Information World Journal are used as online national databases as well as KnowEurope, EbscoHost, FirstSearch, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, Pubmed, Cochrane Library, Ovid-LWW, and MEDLINE are searched as online databases for literature search. In this study, the subject is examined under the titles “Traditional foods and nutrition concept”, “Lifelong learning concept”, “European Union concept and perspective of lifelong learning”, “The role and importance of real and virtual information organizations as centers of lifelong learning for traditional foods and nutrition”.

Traditional Foods and Nutrition Concept

Nutrition is a building block of human life, development, and health throughout the life cycle. Adequate and convenient food and good nutrition are accounted as a necessity for survival, physical and mental development, performance, health and overall well-being (1). There are four main aspects of nutritional well-being which are food and nutrient security, care for the vulnerable, health for all and safe environment (1).

According to Bertozzi (1998), a traditional food product is defined as “representation of a group, it belongs to a defined space, and it is part of a culture that implies the cooperation of the individuals operating in that territory” (2). Another definition by European Union has stated “Traditional means proven usage in the community market for a time period showing transmission between generations; this time period should be the one generally ascribed as one human generation, at least 25 years” (3).

Traditional foods are a big part of the cultural legacy of a specific region which changes society’s dietary patterns (4). Traditional foods are part of that country’s history and one of the factors to differentiate that country from the globalized world (4). This might be one of the reasons where traditional foods are becoming more popular and are being thought of as having higher quality and sustainability (5). Promoting traditional foods along with proper nutrition is of vital importance for the people’s health and economic status as sustainable traditional foods might increase a country’s economic and productivity powers (6).

As in all fields of science and practice, innovations, new structures, new concepts, formations, methods and techniques, tools and technologies, especially microelectronics, information technology, and biotechnology, leading to transformation in all structures. However, the transformation requires understanding and comprehension of people and organizations and their applications to be renewed with knowledge/information. The astonishment of this change occurs by many innovations that assume their human qualities (new structures, new concepts, formations, methods and techniques, and tools and technologies) to support lifelong learning.

Lifelong Learning Concept

The concept of lifelong learning has been proposed by many as a notion of a cradle-to-grave education system free from bureaucratic, sectoral, financial and cultural barriers. This concept has been recognized as a key factor for the endless endeavor of good living including personal development, more health, career success, a wider array of options in lifestyle and learning opportunities, raising the value of civilized society, pursuit of democracy and citizenship, and so on. Lifelong learning is appealing to many of those who prioritize the right and opportunity and ability to benefit from the education of groups that have previously been excluded and/or left out of education. For some people, the radical nature of lifelong learning may also appear to include reporting of credit transfer systems and previous learning experience, developing effective ways of advancing without expectation of any form of profit (7).

According to the analysis of lifelong learning, it is reported that there is an increasing need for investment in this concept (8); where this makes it easier to speak in favor of this widely perceived concept of education, a soft and pleasing add-on in the political arena. While talking against this concept seems to be difficult. However, in recent years, there have also been critics of serious and detailed speeches/writings around the notions of flexibility and adaptability to new conditions that accompany lifelong learning [see also: (9)]. Yet, these criticisms should not negatively be account for. These criticisms might also provide a better consideration of social change theories, often devoid of debate and usually used as justifications for lifelong learning policies (7), and thus giving a better and more accurate understanding of the concept of lifelong learning.

There are two important social change concepts preferred by those who propose lifelong learning. These are the concepts of ‘globalization’ and ‘post-industrialization’. Murphy, states that the concepts of ‘globalization’ and ‘post-industrialization’ for lifelong learning policies are developed in other disciplines and adapted to the field of education without criticism; it emphasizes that these theories of social change encompass the real foundations of power relations be-

hind the rationale for lifelong learning, while enriching a narrow but limited definition of information as important (7, 10). Accordingly, for example, it claims that the meaning of lifelong learning included in the European Union is competing in the European region.

According to Murphy and those who think like him, lifelong learning, along with its historical ancestors, lifelong education and continuing/permanent education, has been around for several decades and has become widely the focus of different ideological perspectives over time. For those who think so, the value attributed to lifelong learning is who the winner in this ideological struggle.

Although the issue is closely related to educators, there is a lack of constructive/positive criticism of lifelong learning among educators, many flat views on repetitive issues in international conferences and reports, it is claimed that there is an environment of intellectual insecurity that narrows the field of imagination which is almost synonymous with paralysis of disengagement (7, 11-12). In addition, paralysis of disengagement is used as a phrase to describe structured silences about the political and economic character of lifelong learning and is reported that this will continue to be the case unless the bitter truth of the post-compulsory educational world is increasingly confined by the order of the state and the market (7).

Lifelong Learning Concept in European Union

The concept of lifelong learning in the European Union (EU) can enable us to approach the concept from a wider, objective and comparative point of view. This might both help to have a more accurate and better understanding of lifelong learning concept and to help North Cyprus, which is found within the European Union acquis, to develop an understanding and attitude to in all areas of lifelong learning and in the field of traditional food and nutrition in the European Union.

The EU reports stated that lifelong learning, as the name implies, is a very long process which starts from infancy until a person becomes a senior citizen (13, 14).

According to the mentioned negotiations on lifelong learning, lifelong learning includes formal learning (usually provided by body a qualified institution, structured education organization); non-formal learning (not provided by body a qualified institution;

generally does not lead to certification; however, provides structured education organization); and informal learning, (does not provide structured education organization, usually learnt from social environment, but mostly unintentional or second-degree, coincidental learning) (14).

The concepts of equal learning opportunities is prioritized by the EU in order to increase self-satisfaction (both socially and personally) and emphasize the importance of learning and certain applications of lifelong learning (14).

In summary, the most recent documents on lifelong learning in the European Union defines the concept of lifelong learning as all learning activities undertaken from the beginning until the end of life with the aim of developing knowledge, skills and capability in a personal, social and/or employment perspective (14).

European Perspective of Lifelong Learning

As discussed from the information given above on the concept of lifelong learning in the European Union, the lifelong learning memorandum and its negotiations contribute to the creation of a European region of lifelong learning. The objectives of the memorandum and negotiations encourage the people of all nations to easily access learning environments, jobs, regions, and countries. This development would aid education by delivering series of actions, promoting youth, recruitment, social involvement, and research policy, which are important elements of the current European Union perspective. This encourages countries to develop, improve and use the traditional tools and methods in order to help the economy of country to grow stronger. Involvement of all people among in lifelong learning in particular to increase the interest and earnings of people of all ages in science and technology careers might reflect the EU perspective (14).

As a result of the negotiations on the memorandum on lifelong learning in the European Union, priorities for action in the field of lifelong learning in Europe were identified and presented under the six main points. These six priorities and the key points are: "valuing learning, information, guidance and counselling, investing time and money in learning, bringing together learners and learning opportunities, basic skills, and innovative pedagogy (14).

The first three of the above key messages which address the actions seen as indispensable for the establishment of the European Union's lifelong learning area are of general interest to the European dimension of lifelong learning. The other three require more support from all levels of society both from public and industry (14).

Considering lifelong learning in Europe, it is obvious that the history of lifelong learning policies, which started in the 70s and ongoing (15), is crucial. European Union's lifelong learning development, concept, and policies are refined, comprehensive, creative, cooperative, communicative and interactive (see also: 16-18). This is an advantage in the European Union in developing and improving lifelong learning.

The Role and Importance of Lifelong Learning Centers as Real and Virtual Information Organizations for Traditional Foods and Nutrition

Information organizations (libraries, information centers, archives, museums, etc.) are places where people from every age (children, adolescents, adults and elderly) gender and educational level can express their thoughts and have access to information. Real and virtual information organizations are playing a key role in better, longer, healthier and more efficient lifestyles for all parties involved. Furthermore, they are the centers of lifelong learning in terms of personal, allegiance, cultural, social, economic and professional development in terms of knowledge, skills, and proficiency (19).

Communities are investing in real and virtual information organizations like science, applications, culture, and lifelong learning. The role of these organizations is verified by all, so that they can become a lifelong learner. The following examples are also valid for professionals of traditional foods and nutrition and lifelong learners of traditional foods and nutrition.

- Information literacy programs and information discussion groups,
- Partner presentations and job, profession and career information programs,
- Consumer information and supplier and applicator information programs,
- Economical, political, social, cultural, educational awareness programs,
- Common environment programs,

- Programs for Professional and trainer programs in every discipline,
- Use of information technology (computer, internet, etc.) programs,
- And other financial, cultural, social and educational activities. (19)

Real and virtual information organizations, as in every concept, are playing a key role in professionals and people of all ages, genders, and levels to become a lifelong learner of traditional foods and nutrition. The information professionals in real and virtual information organizations, teach how to assess traditional and numerical formats of information, thought and creativity and how to use these resources in, correct, dependable, real, up to date and valid information to achieve fast, efficient, effective and economical way to the professionals and other students of traditional foods and nutrition (19). Shortly, in person and/or virtually, information organizations integrate communities and co-workers no matter what their background is, with regards to ideas and information. Real and virtual information organizations have a unique stance as lifelong learning centers for traditional foods and nutrition concepts that enable anyone interested to take part in lifelong learning. Similar to the European concept, lifelong learning in traditional foods and nutrition is multi-aimed and should be supported by real and virtual information organizations as lifelong learning centers.

The nutritionists and dieticians have a duty of transforming scientific information into more plain and simple language for all public levels to understand. In addition, being part of this career requires promoting health and well-being of the population by dissemination robust and truthful information to people which is totally inter-connected with lifelong learning process (20).

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be stated that the discussions and debates about lifelong learning are not over, in fact, it is picking up its pace. Every field should be a part of, actively involved and help improve the activities regarding the concept in these discussions. Especially the field of traditional foods and nutrition should be a focus of this concept and should assume and apply the responsibilities.

Life is learning and learning is always a part of a human's life. However, lifelong learning was never regarded as important as it is now. Based on the steady increase in the quality and quantity of the learnable elements in human life and the will of learning quickly, we can state that the importance of lifelong learning will only increase from now on. The questions regarding lifelong learning are "What are you going to learn", "How and where are you going to learn" and "what are you going to do with what you have learned". The aspects of lifelong learning (political, social, cultural, economical, educational, technical, health, foods, and nutrition), should be involved in developing a life learning concept. Between these fields and persons, real and virtual information organizations should deliver information smoothly and be regarded as lifelong learning centers

If we recognize the importance and role of lifelong learning and its real and virtual information organizations as the main access points in traditional food and nutrition as in all other fields, a question should be asked: "what can we do to contribute to and improve lifelong learning in the field of traditional food and nutrition, thus strengthening the traditional food and nutrition field?". In addition, we need to learn to look at ourselves and the field critically. As professionals, we can summarize what we can do as follows:

- First of all, professional education and continuous learning and lifelong learning should be a high priority for professionals of all traditional food and nutrition and related fields.
- Self-education, education of professionals and others about the fact that real and virtual information organizations are the center of lifelong learning in traditional food and nutrition and as well as in every field within society.
- Supporting the ongoing of real and virtual information organizations like educational institutions, professional associations, and organizations of traditional food and nutrition. Collaboration with all relevant fields and professional organizations, boards and associations.
- Different segments of the community (academic, school, agriculture, government, civil society, traditional food and nutrition segments/stakeholders, public, etc.) might be interviewed to determine which

type of educational programs related to traditional food and nutrition that people are most interested in with the help of real and virtual information organizations and pilot studies. Events can be organized where professionals and non-professionals can share their potential ideas on traditional foods and nutrition.

- Collaboration with other organizations, within the context of real and virtual information organizations, to provide continuing education courses and programs for people of all ages, genders and socioeconomic levels.
- Funding resources might be identified which is required to expand and support traditional food and nutrition programs and to provide essential technical resources and training.
- Developing programs and projects that support lifelong learning (for example, information debates, stakeholder presentations and exhibitions, awareness programs, other social and cultural programs, use of information technology, traditional food and nutrition literacy programs, other literacy programs, etc.) for people of all ages, genders and socioeconomic levels. For this purpose, by doing collaborative work with national and international real and virtual information organization associations (Turkish Librarians Association, University, and Research Librarians Association, School Library Association, ALA-American Library Association, EBLIDA-European Bureau of Information and Documentation Associations, etc.) and all manufacturers (individuals or associations) of traditional food and nutrition, projects/collaborative projects can be created.
- Ensuring that the professionals have sufficient training and skills to help others for teaching them new information technologies such as use of the internet, social media and designated equipments.
- Strengthen the role of new technologies and information literacy as teaching tools for lifelong learning in traditional food and nutrition. Developing programs that show what new technologies can provide to people of all ages, genders and socioeconomic levels, along with lifelong learning opportunities, and presenting these in real and virtual information organizations.
- Benefiting from all professional development opportunities offered in national and international environments (19).

There is a need to establish 'centers' to serve as a multi-purpose lifelong learning center, open to all segments of society, that will provide services and activities aimed at the mutual understanding of the European Union and all segments of society, in particular with the knowledge of the European Union and traditional food and nutrition. The mission of these centers should be to collect and disseminate information on traditional foods and nutrition for people of all ages, genders and socioeconomic levels. In addition, promote the improvement of local economy and sustainability by increasing the knowledge and use of traditional foods. The real and virtual information organizations will certainly be required to support all these services. For this purpose, a project might be prepared then a pilot application can be performed.

Finally, in the field of traditional food and nutrition, we as professionals, professional associations, academic institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, all manufacturers should aim to advance information service to the highest quality by leading and providing support to develop real and virtual information organization programs and services that support both professional training of professionals and lifelong learning for people of all ages, genders and socioeconomic levels. This should be done for the right and will of all our people and our extended human family.

It should not be forgotten that real and virtual information organizations, one of the centers of lifelong learning, which support lifelong learning, play an important role in the creation of an information society in which all people have long, healthy, satisfied and productive lives with economic and social prosperity, cultural richness and respect for all differences within the society. Therefore, the support and investment of these institutions should be made a priority within a community.

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