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A critical look at lifelong learning

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Education, which is a fundamental right of human being, has been transformed into a kind of lifelong prisoning by marketing step by step under the name of lifelong learning. Adult education as one of the most crucial parts of the educational system has also been affected by the global trend of an international actor, the European Union through its lifelong learning approach discoursed in EU official documents correspondingly to globalization and tried to be converted to adult learning instead. Therefore, globalization is a primary factor that formalizes this context with the support of creating marketing systems in which the capital plays its magnificent role to reconstruct social organization and so of capitalism in a global scale as integrated with its institutions by eliminating social state praxis. Then, it starts to regard education as profitable and appetitive sector to ensure the success of knowledge-based global economy of the 21st century. Hence, this study is aimed for a look to lifelong learning approach of EU with a critical eye by signifying how it is being shaped by global marketing policies in the name of emancipation of the individual.

Key words: Lifelong learning, adult education, globalization, knowledge society.

INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning is defined as all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. Lifelong learning is, therefore, about acquiring and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge and qualifications from the pre-school years to the post-retirement. It promotes the development of knowledge and competences that will enable each citizen to adapt to the knowledge-based society and actively participate in all spheres of social and economic life, taking more control of his or her future (EC, 2010). According to the European Commission, the scale of current economic and social change, the rapid transition to a knowledge-based society and demographic pressures resulting from

an ageing population in Europe are all challenges, which demand a new approach to education and training within the framework of lifelong learning (Kaya, 2013).

However, in global economies, individuals feel obliged to be a part of lifelong learning in order to gain new qualifications and so increase their chances of finding jobs when their opportunities of employment are limited. No longer are a long-term employment and the demand of the capital shaped in this direction, but individuals perceive the current system as a guarantee of employment. Within this context, in addition to the devalued owned, the tendency for the various professional documents and certificates are gone up, the acquisition of education via individual learning through training courses and other programs that are now out of school

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school or job come to the fore. As repeatedly emphasized, the certificates and documents are obtained in a fast gain speed and flexibility of the labor market, then the capital marketing programs, which are expected to meet the demand for qualified personnel, creates a new area for its own profit.

On the other hand, the case is not limited to the capital and the organization of courses is encouraged for the sake of improving the professional qualifications by the care of public educational institutions that are now established in the process of market. This also causes to the emergence of a significant inequality since it is in fact only free for the ones who can afford while being shown as if there is a kind of equality with the discourse of "learning is certificate and free for everybody". The target of education is no longer producing a common culture but now described as learning the basic and general skills necessary for the adaptation of individuals to the changing technology quickly and having a place in the labour market. The most important phase of achieving this is to make the system competitive and to subject the context together with the standardization of the produced knowledge for the central control, then to plan flexible training of the labor force demanded through global educational policies in a prompt way.

GLOBALIZATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Due to the advanced technology, globalization is frequently mentioned by gradually accelerated through communication more and more widespread in accordance with the objective of finding a new market of the capital. Although the growing economic crisis in the first half of the 1970s was tried to be overcome through the reconstruction of capitalism on a global scale, the term was started to be called with the processes of capital accumulation. In the 1970s, during the economic crisis period and the gradual decrease of revenue and profit rates as well as increase in unemployment rates, the capital which finds the remedy in reconstruction of social organization and so of capitalism in a global scale as integrated with its institutions and processes began to accomplish its actions devoted to eliminate social state praxis under the mask of globalization step by step. As pointed out by Macrow (2009), globalization takes on a dominant role in promoting economics, finance and market principles and shapes the national social and cultural policy-making processes in the restructuring praxis of education.

The primary target of the capital is to double its profit rates in any case, and no step is taken to provide full employment with the fear of losing their profit and competitive opportunities. Besides, after 1974 to 1977, the so-called period of stagnation, there was a change in the historical context of capitalism such as "the trend of capital accumulation towards financial markets", "total

growth retardation" and the "multi-national companies spread throughout the world" (Sweezy, 1997). Within this direction, capital groups from different countries came together in a global scale and started to form sectoral marriages on behalf of setting multi-national companies in a kind immensity, then continued to grow up by also taking the cultural and educational processes into its scope. By that way, the national education systems begun to leave their places for "lifelong learning" approach which became dominant in global education policies.

On the one hand, while the global capitalism promotes for the self-investment of human capital, it also causes unemployment or working in poor conditions even for people who invest on their own learning with hope of finding a good job. On the other hand, it stands on the sidelines for the increase of the qualified but cheap and flexible labour force through the marketization of education (Tight, 1998). Since the advanced technology and growing capitalist structuration bring about by the changing skills, the differentiations required in the context of both social and labour life occur and then the professional and vocational qualifications obtained before becomes insufficient and new demanded qualities steadily expand. Then, educational policies of the aging continent EU implement programs in the series to train individuals who are forced to change, to be educated and equipped with new skills.

From this point of view, on behalf of global funds to meet market demand, the new terms such as "flexibility" and "harmony" come up with learning and learning society concepts in education and it is aimed that individuals should be trained within that context and be converted to the potential workforce which will serve for the targeted stakeholders. It is crucial that the labour force trained be as flexible as the education is and then adopted with the market conditions if education is compatible with the demands of the market economy and flexible to meet them. The fundamental basis of such an expectation is created on the fear of being unemployed if the person fails to renew his/her skills continuously and adapt himself/herself to the flexible working conditions.

Because of this concern, individuals will wade into learning with the idea of having advantageous in competitive environment and then take their places in the category of life-long learners as being obliged to buy the information but not the knowledge. As paid attention by the critical literature, in an environment where the market economy regards human as a capital, the global actors who have the aim of being shaped by the needs of the market and shaping it as well invest in this learning industry and mandate to have flexible skills with the emphasis on lifelong learning of the employees, but cannot give any job guarantee in full. As stated by Orivel (2002), the lifelong learning approach which in fact rivets inequalities and exclusion rather than eliminating them comes up with the result of its reductive logic on

restriction of learning just as vocational learning and struggle for reducing unemployment in Europe.

Moreover, in a world where global forces decide the limits through the sections such as reduction of public expenditure, taking labor costs down, converting labour more flexible and harmonized, it is inevitable that the capital, which is in shortage of capital gain profit, regards education as profitable and appetitive sector. At this point, "lifelong learning" is come up as the savior and education are transferred into a profitable investment as so-called equality of opportunity but in essence as means of annuity. While all these happen, individuals exposed to drastic changes in their lives are deceived with the utopia of forming a happier world for them and the trick of providing the best for everybody in civilized conditions is tried to be imposed.

However, the most important thing is to look behind the dynamics of lifelong learning declaration of the new world order advocated by neoliberalism since this will provide a better understanding of the process and so the effect of globalization on educational policies. One of the most significant dynamics among these is the particular emphasis stressed on individual's having responsibility for his/her own actions and his/her so-called freedom, but by this way, the right to education and all of its cost are placed on his/her shoulders again. Whereas, lifelong learning idea trains more entrepreneurial and competitive individuals, the social state principal and its praxis are drifted away step by step with the reduced public spending in the camp of privatization and the learning individual is tried to settle down inside the state and market relations through economic, political, and cultural context of privatized social system. Moreover, while the state is desired to be converted to a passive regulatory agency, that individual is treated as customer within such a marketing relation then sandwiched between the private sector and civil society via a global movement and faces with the marketization of everything including his/her own (Bagnall, 2005).

In addition, lifelong learning is structured in a way that information forms the economy in this information age, with the aims of making people get information in a shortest and fastest way and underlines the success for them who reach the information and forges ahead of the competitors. Griffin (1999), stresses that lifelong learning is instrumented in not only international but also national processes and utilized more as the central element of the neoliberal reform policy and treated as both consumption and investment in today's capitalist societies. According to Torres (2001), the above manner comes to a stand on a global scale based on the four trends related to the field of education: "Education for All", "Adult Education", "Literacy" and "Lifelong Learning"; but the fourth trend, "Lifelong Learning" is brought for more and promoted as an umbrella approach within the context of European Union educational policies by ignoring the other three approaches and the strong link between globalization

and lifelong learning reveals itself clearly.

ADULT EDUCATION IN LIFELONG LEARNING

The pioneers of the critical approach like Illich, Freire, Foucault, Field, Jarvis, Apple, Giroux, Crowther, Mayo, Edwards and Usher, points out that the capitalist system constitutes an obstacle for the society and for the emancipation of the individual controlled and dictated by the globalized and localized educational institutions and policies. Thus, lifelong learning is a new form of social control system and is a praxis preferred to ruin the society. For instance, Giroux (2002) emphasizes that the role of education as a controlling mechanism in capitalist society and the access for education of an individual is directly related to his/her socio-economic level, and this level determines his/her future learning. Besides, it is put forward that everyone has the right to benefit from equality of opportunity in education but the possibility for benefiting of the poor or people with low-income from the same educational opportunities is relatively lower than the people with high-income.

Because of this reason, the idea of individuals' taking the advantage of educational opportunities on an equal basis seems impossible in terms of socio-economic conditions and the owned of education and learning opportunities underscore the stratification more in the community (Illich, 1995). As also stated by Field (1999:11), for no one who wants to learn is ready to learn, he/she is exposed to learning as must, then, this situation reveals that individuals are sentenced to be the prisoners of lifelong learning. After all, lifelong learning as an objective of the policy, which desires to guarantee the compatibility in between flexible capitalism and new brave world, not only tries to influence people and hides the narrowing of democratic public space, but also reduces welfare and loads the learning responsibility on individuals' shoulders.

According to Crowther (2004), current representative of critical approach, in a global platform where everything goes right to privatization, education is increasingly commercialized, being a learning individual, as now far from being a true citizen, means being a beloved consumer of goods and services by the impose of global actors day by day. Apple (2007) also underlines that similar highlights taking part in the formation of lifelong learning have increased the interest of the neoliberal circles for the approach and staked their claim. Then, developing new skills and just learning only for the sake of being flexible and adjustable in the market are nominated as the sole purpose of individuals, and then the war of getting a proper position in labour force and society is started.

On the other hand, Mayo (2009) underlines that the idea of the individuals' having an active control mechanism on their own presence and life choices

through so-called investing on their own personal development which is imposed by globalization on education is not possible since the society is wished to be controlled by the market and the capital in real. This process instrumentalizes lifelong learning by using international discourse as an official and political tool of both creating a public policy and convincing citizens about the benefits of learning by the political authorities. Similarly, Foucault (2006) who also draws attention to social justice issues state that there is dictation of economic and political power available in "adult education" and these suppress the social justice and community objectives. However, in an environment of increased rhetoric of individualism, consumerism and market competitiveness, it is evident that the belief that the individuals should take the responsibility of improving their employability is encouraged. Again, it is not wrong to indicate that these policies trigger an "adult learning" approach, which serves for the market place providing financial flexibility in order to create a global and daily workforce. Within this framework, adult education is transformed into a piece of symbolic expressions of modern democracy. Apparently, as Jarvis (2006) states, individual lifelong learning has become more of a reality and now, those individuals are in a race of learning for a global market in their later life. On this basis, adults are the part of a main-stream education and day by day this form of education has been taking on a more vocational learning perspective and human capital development.

In this regard, Freire (2000) draws attention that the critical and emancipatory forms of education, especially adult education, are marginalized and that the area in question is increasingly colonized within the neoliberal economic and pragmatic political logic. For this reason, the need to be the subject of our lives is crucial and requires critical reading of the words the world around which characterizes social participation and could contribute to the development of democracy. Actually, the revitalizing and strengthening of the subject are strongly needed in a world where public areas are restricted since these areas are permanently reduced by commodification and a fake perception of freedom structured on an understanding that tolerates the format of being an individual consumer to be realized while digressing to allocate time for social interaction among people.

Furthermore, Edwards and Usher (2001) mentions that adult education is converted into a form of an investment in human capital who will ensure the success of knowledge-based global economy of the 21st century and surrounded with an economic myths that links in between individual learning, organizational productivity and global economic performance. Moreover, Jones (2005) expresses that adult education in lifelong learning as the inevitable part of job market and new business types in EU Lisbon strategy document is highlighted in a form of tools for creating the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy. Hence, knowing the

real concern to say closely related to the preferred word concealed in minds is very important in accordance with the opinion of Foucault who defends that there is a definite message underlying at the bottom of every word used for the discourse set forth in EU's documents related with "lifelong learning" and "adult education".

Mainly, based on the point of view forcing readers to be influenced by the metaphors and rhetorics in texts, the language used should be considered while analysing the relevant documents and the propositions in which each concept reflects a perspective should not be overlooked (Taylor, 2004). Then, adult education today constitutes the indicator of accessing to lifelong learning services (e.g. certification) in unique marketing system taking place as individual's responsibility (Grummel, 2007:191). Therefore, in order not to stay out of the economic order, individuals are forced to compete in the name of proving their learning qualifications more than ever. Within this framework, the temptation of lifelong learning comes from its flexible structure formed as both inside and outside of the formal education system, but thinking of its aiming, a kind of change for individuals and collectives creates an illusion entirely. As a matter of course, under such conditions, adult education that is one of the most crucial services of the welfare state for its citizens in order to reduce inequalities is hampered and how realization of lifelong learning which is taken to the agenda with the discourse of bringing equality of opportunity for everybody will be possible is still discussed in a platform that cost-free adult education cannot be achieved (Miser, 2002).

CONCLUSION

Today, a critical point which runs parallel with the gradual withdrawal of the state from the public domain and seemingly puts the person into the misconception of liberation, but in fact causes being oppressed under the weight of more responsibility loaded on, is reached. In this respect, while lifelong learning tries to raise more entrepreneurial and more competitive individuals, the welfare state is drawn away with the decline of public spending in the grip of privatization gradually and the person in a privatized economic, political and cultural context of social system is forced to get a place in connection with the state and the market. It is clearly visible in an environment of state's being increasingly removed from public service that lifelong learning takes its share of this situation and is also transformed into a global movement stuck between the private sector and civil society and reduced binding to professional.

Thus, when we look at the standard of lifelong learners, it is explicitly seen that for whom lifelong learning approach of global actors is serviced and how it follows a global path across the national boundaries instead of eliminating inequalities. Consequently, unless educational

system is recognized as a fundamental human right and policies in this regard are made, a real lifelong learning concept to be mentioned, which is not designed by the desire and the demand of the capital seems impossible, so just accepting what is coming through lifelong learning will continue to create inequity and injustice among people especially disadvantaged ones.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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