

Making Future Tracts
Thinking our way to success

Workshop 4
Life-long learning

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According to the Buddha, the one constant is change. Longer living, advancing technology, multiple career paths, the complexity of life within a global environment and the personal need to grow and develop make life-long learning an integral part of life in the 21st century. As our knowledge and understanding grows as a species there is an imperative that the whole of humankind is able exploit that knowledge for personal and communal benefit.

Some of the key imperatives are the changes that are taking place within a working career and the competitive pressures this may put on individuals. There is a need for greater flexibility, multi-skilling and re-skilling that requires great access to ongoing professional development and learning opportunities. Government, companies and individuals need to make this investment so that learning and working go hand in hand.

There are numerous benefits from such an investment. At an individual level there is more personal satisfaction and opportunity for growth and greater creativity. From industry's point of view this can result in higher productivity and staff loyalty and morale as their workers are more stimulated and have more buy-in to the company and its objectives.

Aside from this, ongoing learning enhances equality of opportunity and results in a healthier community and a more highly motivated society. Moreover, there is growing knowledge about the processes of learning, itself, which leads to cultural changes taking place in society and the work place through a greater melding of work, learning and leisure.

South Australia needs people who are continuous learners, who research and question with tenacity and resilience. People who are open to change, can accept new challenges and are prepared to communicate and learn from friends and foes alike. Ongoing learning should be fun and learning should take place on the job and be immediately put into practice as and where it arises. We would all benefit if our people were creative problem-solvers at all levels of society while, at the same time, remaining laid back, cool, calm and in control while taking on new challenges and extending the boundaries into new areas of knowledge and endeavor.

What can we do about it?

- Make a societal investment in educators - we need to invest in more, younger, motivated and well-resourced educators at all levels.
- Ensure adequate resources – commit greater government contribution and encourage more private sector commitment.
- Build a campaign to promote ongoing learning as a value – and promote the benefits all round.
- Consider some significant incentives – make it mandatory, but fund it.
- Develop more collaborative strategies – nationally, internationally and at local community level.
- Introduce some changes to the culture of learning – instill the value of learning at all ages.
- Consider more integrated approaches to life-long learning – change pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary levels as well as business environments in ways that integrate ongoing learning into the whole of life.

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1. Some of the attributes of 'life-long learners – what we would be looking for:

- They are continuous learners - always questioning and researching,
- Have tenacity – they don't give up,
- Resilience – they ride with the punches,
- Openness and exchange – capacity to learn through communication,
- Preparedness to learn from friends and foes alike,
- Accept new challenges – over reaching and extending in every situation,
- Ability to learn through doing and to put ideas into practice,
- Have fun and are humorous,
- Laid back – cool, calm and in control,
- Defy the odds and learns from mistakes,
- Creative problem-solvers.

2. Some reasons why 'life-long learning' is an integral part of living in the 21st century:

- There is a need for a more flexible workforce, so re-skilling needs to become more a part of working life.
- Changing technologies requires a response to learn to update and keep pace.
- People are living and working longer and have healthier lives and need to keep learning and developing.
- Technology increases opportunities for less labor driven work as people as they grow older and now can continue longer.
- We understand more about the capacity of the brain to grow with new experiences right throughout life.
- Individuals are exposed to a greater diversity of opportunities.
- Ability to keep up with advancing knowledge, technology and consciousness.
- The ability to harness potential, maintain currency and to engage in all aspects of life.
- Information is coming at us so fast we need to upgrade our skills at interrupting and managing it.
- Personal evolution - understanding the importance of values such as love, creativity, etc as opposed to money, etc.
- People are always trying to get ahead and have to keep learning. There is also an element of competition.
- Change is the only constant, things are continually evolving, there is no one right way of doing things.
- There is no longer a job for life and people are constantly changing careers and having to learn new skills.
- People work in teams and are all expected to contribute to the big picture and to keep learning about where they fit.
- Generational change and the growth of understanding. There is a need to understand relationships better- providing a societal role for all groups in community - including the ageing and life learning provides this.

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- Global environment broadens our understanding of how things are done in other places and the cultural differences.
- Learning applications pervade all aspects of living in a community. Technology now enables access to greater information with more opportunities to develop knowledge and apply it directly.
- There is an expectation to learn more – and with it an obligation for social functioning, e.g., mobile phone use.
- Adaptation to rapid change and growth. For organizations to survive they need to learn faster than the pace of change.
- Knowledge increases by the minute. It is about making sense out of complexity and supports tolerance.
- People are living longer and have more leisure. You're not fully alive unless you're learning!
- New technology means that people in inaccessible places can participate in learning what may only have been available in populated centers.
- The jobs of today not life long jobs as in the past. The current generation have different expectations and are unlikely to stay in one job/career
- Workforce profile quite different to that over history. More casual/part timers
- Information easier and faster to get although accuracy can be problematic.
- Consumer advocacy is increasing and will have significant impact on policy direction.
- Rapidity of change and innovation. In a more competitive society, learning becomes vital.
- Generational change in the family unit – the material world requires more money, more work and the need to balance recreational time.
- Living longer means more time to learn more.
- More resources available to learn (media, internet).
- Society is changing – learning is necessary to catch up to that change.
- New value set – the traditional values that used to be passed down are changing.

2.1 The rationale for life-long learning determined by level of significance:

- *Changing workforce and inherent competition.*
- *Change and rapid innovation.*
- *Increasing knowledge and understanding.*
- *Advances in communication technology and access.*
- *Generational differences.*
- *Increased complexity and diversity.*
- *Longevity and the impact.*
- *Synergy of teams and connectedness.*
- *Globalization and its imperatives.*
- *Personal satisfaction and growth.*

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2.1.a) Some possible ways to proceed in terms of the first reason, namely, 'Changing workforce and inherent competition':

- Ensure greater flexibility, multi-skilling and re-skilling opportunities to create greater participation in the workforce across all sectors
- Provide access to professional development and learning opportunities for all by encouraging employers to spend money on staff development.
- Encourage young people to acquire an adaptable skill set from whatever source.
- Promote a level of public debate that values positing without rancor
- Antidote to boredom and prevention for dementia
- Investment in Research and Development by government and industry in the form of funding, contracts and joint research.
- Retraining of older entrants into workforce
- Research targeted at workforce issue to find data to support decision/policy making
- Create workforce flexibility but with accountability, ownership and responsibility
- Encourage internal training in lateral thinking to develop new points of difference
- Ensure that ALL members of society are participating in the changing society by stakeholder research and a guaranteed minimum entitlement to learning.
- Learning is one of the only ways on engaging all people in society - can develop a more interactive society
- Reintegrate learning with work e.g. Traineeships and apprenticeships (VIVASA mentoring and work guidance project which builds connections between youth and business, RTOs and universities) and SA workforce development strategy.
- Flexibility by organizations/employers to allow employees to design their lives around their interests, not those of the company
- Multiple opportunities and pathways developed for people in the face of change. Developing new ways to reengage and to rethink their priorities - a sabbatical to consider options. Developing real family friendly initiatives that allow more flexibility.

3.1 The benefits to society in encouraging and supporting life-long learning:

- Benefits to the individual as well as an increased capacity to contribute to society.
- Greater knowledge growth across all sectors.
- There is greater respect for learning and education generally, therefore an increase in participation.
- Greater capacity to generate wealth - both economic and cultural.
- Increased time with kids and family and increased leisure time coupled with increasing health and longevity.
- Increasing creativity as there is more diversity, more opportunities, and more respect towards engagement in life-long learning.

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- Improved approaches to societal problems as more individuals have a role to play.
- Increased competition. Higher productivity of the community.
- People will learn to take responsibility for their lives and reduce the energy spent blaming others and directing this energy to continually improving everything around them.
- A healthier and more energized society. Personal satisfaction from life-long learning means more members of our society become stronger and more motivated to contribute to that society.
- Happier community through a greater understanding of others and more acceptance of different people.
- Less fast paced society with time to reflect and energise.
- Equality. Creating opportunity for more people and a better match between job seekers and available jobs due to more diverse training.
- Work becomes inherently more rewarding and so will work harder or even longer?
- Blur work and leisure distinction.
- Utopia. Greater social cohesion and a better quality of life makes for a more attractive place to live.
- The elderly can continue to be an integral part of society and continuing to make contributions beyond retiring which leads to a decrease in depression amongst retirees and an antidote to boredom and possible prevention for dementia.
- Productivity increases through a more satisfied, fulfilled workforce
- New ways of operating traditional business models and a change in the culture to one of enterprise and innovation where creativity is celebrated not crushed.
- Life-long learning is more possible because of a more diverse range of learning choices and subsequent increases in new knowledge acquisition.
- A new 'Circle of work and learning' leading to improved work and more learning and the continuation of that cycle.
- Focus on learning how to learn - not just learning raw facts - learning then becomes limitless
- Higher productivity and less depression because of a sense of personal worth and satisfaction.
- Learning is one of the only ways on engaging all people in society - can develop a more interactive society.

3.1.a) Main reasons for encouraging life-long learning:

- **Personal satisfaction and growth**
- **A more highly motivated society**
- **Equality of opportunity**
- **A healthier community**
- **More engagement and interaction**
- **Higher productivity**
- **More creativity**
- **A new focus on the processes of learning**

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- Melding of work, learning and leisure
- Culture changes in society and the workplace

3.2 The possible benefits to employers in encouraging and supporting life-long learning amongst their employees:

- Increased faith in the company and loyalty leading to increased motivation and pride within their workforce resulting in increasing productivity.
- Ability to tap into creative opportunities that reside in the collective minds of their employees. This acceptance of creativity as paramount to the evolution and survival of a company leads to increased opportunities for diverse experiences and the capacity for lateral thinking with its potential spin offs.
- Opportunity for the company or the industry to have greater community relevance by creating links with government opportunities and initiatives.
- Opportunities to participate in employment growth by encouraging connections with training and re-skilling.
- Happier employees are more willing to contribute their time to improve work.
- Motivated, creative, willing, participative and loyal employees are more likely to have a well rounded and balanced life.
- Better motivated workers, more innovation with its benefit to the company and the opportunity to develop a good reputation.
- A happy workplace with less sick leave from an engaged workforce who contribute more new ideas and innovation. It also means they won't spend so much time recruiting and having succession planning while enjoying a skilled and experienced workforce.
- Diverse opinions leads to a more capacity for innovation and a healthier, better motivated staff.
- Attraction of best staff due to desirable work culture and practices
- Finding resources within their own workers and greater productivity through better product development arising from team synergy.
- Increases abilities within the state which benefits each employer.
- Stimulating the minds of workers improves their ability to innovate so that work may become more interesting and interesting work means happier workers who are up to date in their fields of expertise.
- Retention of quality staff and subsequent business improvements
- Better quadruple bottom line including corporate citizenship benefits. Becomes an employer of choice because of improved morale and the consequent company loyalty.
- Improved company value in marketplace through demonstrated stability and quality in workforce.
- Ideas may come from all levels of staff through more engagement and higher productivity as well as greater capacity for innovation being a competitive point of difference.
- People who tend to be motivated in one aspect of their lives are motivated in others – so it is in the best interest of companies to encourage this!
- Communication channel needs to be put in place to benefit from the increased capacity of all workers. Often the best ideas come from the floor.

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3.2.a) Value to employers of encouraging life-long learning amongst their workforce in order of significance:

- *Quality staff recruitment and retention.*
- *Greater innovation.*
- *The benefits flowing up the communication channel making stakeholders over everyone in the business.*
- *Increased opportunities for all.*
- *Benefits flowing from corporate citizenship.*
- *Greater productivity.*
- *Higher commitment and loyalty of staff.*
- *Reciprocity and collaboration means more buy-in from everyone.*
- *Reputation and standing in marketplace is enhanced.*
- *Mental stimulation leads to motivation and engagement.*

3.3 Some of the strategies individuals can adopt to ensure life-long learning serves them best in a knowledge society:

- Take an interest in the education of others including your children or your neighbor.
- Be open to new opportunities and new perspectives and be prepared to take a risk and establish new routines.
- Establish healthy living patterns in diet and exercise.
- Try to convince government to invest in life-long education opportunities for all.
- Be prepared to learn from mistakes and to take advice and listen to others.
- Be prepared to be flexible.
- Someone once said: the key to happiness is to find something you love and become really good at it.
- Always be prepared to move outside your comfort zone - do something that scares you everyday
- Realize that you don't have to know everything and find comfort in the fact that you will find out what you need to know.
- Teach others. Encourage a culture of mentoring and support.
- Realize that you have the power to change how you think and therefore to change your life.
- Talk, talk, talk
- Test your assumptions. Try to keep an open mind and flexible approach to what life offers.
- Ensure your happiness and wellbeing and keep in touch with a broad range of people. Increase opportunities for networking and meeting new people.
- Be a sponge - continually seek advice from others. Listen to older people and what they say with their benefit of experience. Have a genuine interest in others and their experiences and listen to their stories.

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- Learn about what you are doing in order to further develop and grow and put into action what you are learning.
- Being interested in what others are doing and listening and learning
- Take control of your own learning and develop a tool for self management of your learning so that you can pre-empt recognition of prior learning.
- Learn the skills of accessing learning which leads to self-empowerment.
- If learning is to be commoditized, at least develop the capacity to judge the value in the learning and always appreciate that knowledge is provisional.
- Put what you learn into practice.
- Keep abreast of trends so that you learn things that are relevant to the future.
- Mentor or be mentored
- Recognize that learning happens everywhere
- Be prepared to try new things and make mistakes. It is OK to be wrong, e.g. Edison principle?
- Be inclusive. Talk to anybody. Have a genuine interest in others and their experiences and listen to their stories.
- Learn a language. Travel.
- Keep up with new communications systems.
- First articulate your passion and goals, then seek learning options and where they are available. Try and match opportunity with desire. Learning about things for which one is passionate makes learning more meaningful.
- Never give up learning something new.
- Fake it to make it!
- If afraid, take one day at a time.
- Establish open and diverse networks to avail yourself of every opportunity.
- Expose yourself to experiences that are out of your comfort zone. Challenge yourself constantly and test your boundaries by putting yourself in scary situations often.
- Consider the ethical perspective of your actions.
- Support life long learning in families.
- Develop more informed decision making.
- Don't just learn what you think is competitive or strategic. Sometimes less obvious knowledge can lead more readily to innovation, creativity etc.
- Harness personal interests or hobbies and turn them into a business.
- Read, read, read – find out what others are saying. Listen to young people - what are they saying?
- Try to be around exciting people
- Ability to identify a community's future needs and be first to market with business solutions(be an early adapter)
- Wise investment of earned funds. Avoid the sharks!
- Identify examples of sound values to pass on to the next generation.

Themes: Mentoring, taking risks, listening, communicating, stretching outside comfort zone, value learning from all sources, different modes of learning, sharing,

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open networks, courage to learn, passion, identify business/personal opportunities, make it fun, learn in different contexts - travel, see learning as an end not just a means, consider the family context, learning is multi-faceted and formal/informal, learn within friendships, recognize the ethical and cultural aspects of learning, the power to change, ethical action, flexibility, learning from mistakes, testing boundaries, flexibility and open-mindedness, autonomous learning and taking responsibility now, resilience and tenacity, keeping up with the technology around us, lifelong knowledge and the development of wisdom, diversity, critical judgment - keeping your head on, recognizing and respecting your own learning, simplicity arising from complexity, applied knowledge, enjoying and imbibing learning, learning how to learn, managing change.

4. Some specific recommendations to ensure life-long learning can become a key component in building SA as a knowledge society:

4.1 Make a societal investment in educators:

- Invest in developing a larger, younger, more motivated teaching workforce.
- Value our teachers, as well as the administrators in the education sector.
- Reopen opportunities for teachers of tertiary sector to move into schooling system and be rewarded for it.
- Develop strategies to enhance respect for 'teachers'
- Raise teacher's salaries, value them more, inspire them.

4.2 Ensure adequate resources:

- Provide community access points for information and services i.e. Forums, exchanges, bringing together groups who do not formally or normally engage.
- Encourage governments at federal, state and local levels to spend more money on education and training and to reintroduce a training levy to companies.
- Fund all areas of education to make learning more accessible and support it with a media campaign on the benefits of life long learning.
- Develop a self-assessment tool for businesses to evaluate their capacity as a learning organization.
- Invest in education. Make learning accessible to all age groups
- Fund E-learning research using Zing!

4.3 Build a campaign to promote ongoing learning as a value:

- Change public sector working arrangements to increase participation and to lead by example.
- Promote the benefits. Demonstrate, via exemplars, the value of a knowledge society /town/ community/ enterprise.
- Promote the idea of a personal training fund instead of a pay rise.
- Make education a number 1 election priority.
- Marketing campaign to promote the benefits of learning. Provide incentives for media to present learning more positively and take responsibility for the process of opinion formation.

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- Promote corporate social responsibility as a mandatory component of business and industry.
- Celebrate examples of those who are 'employers of choice'.
- Market SA companies who acknowledge their own.
- Acknowledge life-long learning and reward those who engage it in their business/organization
- Acknowledge and reward those who actively demonstrate corporate citizenship.
- Promote, support and fund innovation in E-learning

4.4 Consider some significant incentives:

- Make the provision life-long learning opportunities a compulsory requirement in organizations. Provide incentives for industry engagement in workplace reform and re-skilling such as tax deductible educational opportunities.
- .Reward people for achievements in learning like we reward people in sport.
- Establish transparent funding priorities that place a high value on education and the generation of social capital.
- Encourage flexible working hours to allow people to learn outside work

4.5 Develop more collaborative strategies:

- Build international and national collaborations in research, education opportunities and exchanges.
- Provide avenues for all levels of society and culture to be heard and make decisions based on community needs not just political expediency.
- Develop employee exchange program with overseas companies in same/different industries
- Allow students to develop their curriculum in conjunction with teachers/academics - take ownership for the curriculum

4.6 Introduce some changes to the culture of learning:

- Instill the value of life-long learning in kids from a young age and promote and support the responsibility of individuals in managing their own life long learning.
- Wisdom does not just come with age - value input from all ages and generations equally.
- Encourage older people that are retiring to share their knowledge through teaching.
- Move from 'fast food' teaching to more of a 'dining experience'!
- Get it right the first time in instilling the learning now rather than fixing it later. Develop the habits of learning in all young people as they enter the work force.
- There is a problem in high schools where excellence in education is not valued, why not, is what is being taught irrelevant?
- Encourage those with an education who have been out of the workforce for many years to return to it by providing refresher courses in their fields of expertise,,

4.7 Consider more integrated approaches to life-long learning:

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- Change your working life into an apprenticeship. Set a goal of acquiring knowledge and try to achieve it.
- Build stronger connections between tertiary and secondary education sectors as well as stronger industry relationships with schools. Bring scientists and researchers closer to the school environment in order to assist with teacher training and motivation.
- Develop a flexible, multi-layered and multi-faceted framework for life-long learning.
- Develop employment pathways into teaching e.g. apprenticeships.
- Mandate life-long learning principles in government sectors to be role models and embed life-long learning strategies and targets into all business plans.
- Adopt mentor and work guidance principles through a life-long learning approach.
- Develop more internal training for personal development with recognized tertiary qualifications including organizational culture innovation and entrepreneurship.
- With a reduced working population due to the ageing of baby boomers, we could adopt a more apprenticeship style learning to all professions so paid work can commence from a persons industry of choice from school leaving age.
- Internal learning would also ensure we produce skill sets that can be taken up by companies so we are not over producing skills that cannot find employment.
- Give universities and schools more autonomy (not less) to develop education for the communities they are involved in

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