The profound analysis of lifelong education problem has been carried out. A new approach to such learning, which presupposes critical and substantial choice of education forms and teaching methods, has been highlighted. Special attention has been paid to such characteristics of lifelong education as attractiveness, accuracy, reliability, objectivity. The importance of education offer evaluation and continuous...
monitoring of a teacher’s activities has been stressed. The essence of the modern strategy of lifelong education has been described. Priorities of lifelong education program have been outlined; some aspects of its fulfillment in Poland have been highlighted.

Key words: lifelong education, education forms, teaching methods, evaluation, monitoring, Poland.

Education, as defined by Z. Kwieciński [1], means influence on individuals and groups that encourages their development and the use of skills to maximize conscious and creative belonging to social and national, as well as cultural and global communities. This influence also facilitates one’s self-realization, establishment of unique and lasting identity and autonomy, formation of one’s self through “beyond personal” tasks and engagement in “long-term tasks” [18, p. 13–14]. The concept of education covers instruction, personality formation and self-development.

Lifelong education encompasses all activities in the field of learning performed throughout one’s life and it aims to master and develop knowledge and competences oriented towards individual, civic, social and/or professional goals [23]. Continuity understood in this way ... is the everyday experience combined with periods of intensive studies and it requires repeating and mimicking different behaviors. What is more, it leads to personal and creative development, combines out-of-school with in-school learning, and development of talents with acquisition of new competences. Education, unrestricted by time or space becomes a dimension of life [21, p. 888].

In this article our main task is to analyze and generalize all available scientific and pedagogical literature concerning the problem of lifelong education, characterize new approaches to lifelong learning and to formulate our own view on the issue.

T. W. Nowacki, an acclaimed Polish educator, believes that lifelong education is built on a premise of lifelong learning and continuous personality development, hence it can be referred to as “continuous education”. This notion influences contemporary educational system that should grant everyone the possibility to extend their knowledge throughout their lives. It also characterizes a modern adult who has to face new challenges connected with technological and organizational advances and transformations in social life, and who is expected to develop their personality even in the final stages of life. According to the author, continuous education should:

- provide possibilities to continue and complete education after graduation from the current school;
- grant everyone, regardless of age, the possibility to complete, renew, and develop their knowledge and skills, and to adapt them to new circumstances;
help all citizens, regardless of their position and responsibilities, understand social problems on national and global scale;

- provide conditions for permanent and multifaceted development of one’s personality [20, p. 110].

It can be established that lifelong education comprises development of both individual and social qualities in all forms and contexts. It can be divided into formal system, namely schools, vocational training institutions, adult education and higher education, and informal education at home, work, or local community [11, p. 150]. Hence, it covers education understood as activities undertaken or initiated by one or more people whose aim is to introduce changes in knowledge, skills, and behaviors of individuals, groups and communities. The central figure in this type of education is the educator who stimulates and enhances learning. Another form constitutes learning focusing on people in whom such changes occur or are expected to occur [15, p. 22].

J. Półturzycki, a renowned andragogist, stresses that lifelong learning integrates all forms of personal formation and educational activities, mitigates the differences between general and vocational education, and guarantees appropriate use of free time. He finds the division of lifelong learning into horizontal, vertical and inward still valid. These three dimensions were introduced by James R. Kidd in the 1960s.

Vertical education is to provide efficiency and availability of all levels of education, from kindergarten, through primary and secondary, to higher and postgraduate education. It should guarantee the participants’ satisfaction with learning regardless of their age, profession, place of residency, or any factors hampering education.

Horizontal education aims to facilitate experiencing different fields of life, science, and culture. It is independent of vertical education and serves to remove artificial barriers between different areas of life and culture through activities of individuals and educational institutions.

Inward education is closely connected with the quality of education and it is expressed through motivation, self-education skills, intellectual interests, and life governed by the idea of continuous learning and free time devoted to culture [21, p. 69–70].


The idea of lifelong education has been present in the works of distinguished humanists and educators for a long time, yet it has recently grown in importance. Investment in people turns out to be much more profitable than investment in real capital. The research shows that there exists an important relation between human capital and economic growth. There is a cause and effect relationship between investments in education measured by its duration and quality, and the pace of social
and economic growth, and personal and professional satisfaction of individuals [13, p. 276; 9]. Human capital is understood as “a stock of competences, knowledge, health and vital force in an individual and society...that determines the ability to perform labor, adapt to changes and suggest new solutions" [19, p. 266]. It is believed that professional competence defined by knowledge, skills, attitudes and qualifications of the employees is not the most valuable asset. Competitiveness of a given company does not depend on goods, but rather on the quality and quantity of human capital [13, p. 276].

The notion of human capital has entered the scientific and everyday language thanks to different programs and research conducted by the European Union. The programs are addressed to municipalities, counties, bigger local communities and different social entities.

A modern European society has now moved to a new stage of development in which the economic growth is based on knowledge, especially on information processing, potential of knowledge and science that is governed by the need for continuous adult education [3; 8; 10; 12].

Human capital is increased mainly through education. It is also the main factor contributing to the economic growth. The importance of education cannot be, however, reduced to its economic functions, as it also has autotelic value. Its positive effects include, among others, strengthening social unity and supporting development of democracy.

The economy based on knowledge performs three main functions: discovering knowledge (research), sharing knowledge (education) and using knowledge (innovation).

According to J. Bengtsson [6], routine tasks that do not require qualification are being replaced by those demanding higher level of competency, especially team work, manners, responsibility for oneself and others, independence and ability to deal with unexpected situations [27]. Hence, changes in the work environment are triggered by the intellectualization of work. One can also observe integration of tasks in different occupations and reduction in the number of professions [16]. The classification of occupations undergoes constant changes: some professions disappear, other, especially those connected with the developing areas of knowledge like IT, biotechnology, environmental protection, or genetic engineering, appear [5; 25, p. 15]. Also work systems undergo some changes. Taylorism and fordism, the so-called low trust systems characterized by little autonomy and control over the performance, treating money as the only incentive, very narrow specialization that were to ensure discipline and high production standards, are being replaced by alternative solutions. These include implementation of team work in order to provide effective work incentive, and task-based system to improve efficiency, lower the costs and optimize the production [12; 26, p. 25–28]. According to U. Jeruszka [13], job market segmentation splits it up into better and worse market. The differences are visible not only in the types of work, but also in remuneration. Better job market welcomes higher qualifications (both in creative and reconstructive jobs); worse one seeks employees with lower competence. The proportion of employees with higher education to those with lower education now
came to 70–80 % to 20 %. J. Kargul emphasizes the fact that contemporary job market is driven by contradictions: company crisis, new competitors, necessity to delegate tasks, threat of unemployment, tendency to hire people on short-term contracts, new technologies, or the need for re-qualification. There exist also pathologies like workaholism, burnout, or interpersonal communication disorders [14, p. 38–39].

The factors that condition success on the job market include not only completed education, but also, more importantly, the ability to learn, acquire new skills, and to shape creativity, innovation and enterprise [25, p. 7]. According to J. Bengtsson [6, p. 34], competences enable people to change their professions, understand technology, provide basis for intercultural competence required in an international work environment [7; 16, p. 29]. The employers are no longer interested in employees with very narrow specializations, but they look for talented people who can learn through work. In the past, education and professional qualifications were the basic criteria for employment, claims A. Giddens. Nowadays, most employers seek people who adapt easily and learn quickly. Therefore, according to this sociologist, the ability to use a given software may turn out to be less useful than the ability to adopt new ideas. Specialization is still an asset, yet if an employee cannot use their skills in a creative and innovative way, they will not be desired in a dynamic and innovative workplace. It should be emphasized that versatile qualifications require different forms of training. Professional training is an important way to learn new skills and to improve the chances of promotion [12, p. 407–408].

The analysis of lifelong education against social transformation cannot neglect the fact that society of today is focused on consumerism. It should also consider all its negative aspects [4]. In a consumer society, one is in the forefront not because one displays special features of character, knowledge, or exceptional achievements. People are important because of their possessions or success that defines their market value and demand. To have is more important that to be. People become commodities and care about the attractiveness of the goods they become. They constantly promote and sell themselves (marketing becomes very important in all professions). People try everything to attract voters, fans, and employers. Such behavior is encouraged by different educational programs, for instance: how to find an attractive job, how to make professional training more appealing, how to successfully present oneself to a client. Companies oftentimes treat employees like commodities that wear out and need to be replaced with new ones. There is no time for adaptation, integration, or trainings for new employees (they are perceived as losses incurred by a company). Companies want to employ people fully prepared to perform their duties, people who bring profits. Another issue is the process of privatization of responsibility, that is shifting the responsibility for one’s own life and development onto individuals. The employer oftentimes makes employees work in unfavorable conditions. As far as goods and people are concerned, consumer culture promotes novelty and transience over stability [24, p. 51–52].
The above mentioned conditions define a space for educational activity in the European Space for Education. Education is based on four pillars:

- learning to know – sharing general knowledge and creating the need for lifelong education
- learning to do – developing competence in dealing with untypical situations and working in a team
- learning to live together – developing empathy for others, understanding their history, traditions, and values
- learning to be – appreciating all gifts: memory, logical thinking, imagination, manual skills, sense of esthetics, or communication skills [8].

The so-called White Paper states that gaining new knowledge, recognizing and verifying qualifications, educational mobility, connecting schools with workplaces through apprenticeships, practices and trainings, are essential for implementing ideas of the learning society.

The research emphasizes the role of out-of-school educational centers in the process of continuous education. It also stresses the necessity to accept the fact that professional career may require changing place of residence and professional contexts [1; 2; 22; 25]. Hence, lifelong learning is connected mostly with the quality of work, keeping the current position or finding a new one. U. Jeruszka notices that learning is inspired by educational and professional aspirations, ambitions, need for achievement, recognition, honors, promotion, seeking prestige or better wages, as well as by pragmatism and evaluating education through its usefulness for a given individual [13, p. 135].

According to S. M. Kwiatkowski [17, p. 6], the idea of lifelong learning has been given a definite shape in 2000 when the European Commission issued the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. This document enumerates the following aims of lifelong learning: locating and forming basic non-professional skills (new basic skills for all); more investment in human resources; innovation in teaching and learning; valuing learning; rethinking guidance and counseling; bringing learning closer to home.

The essential feature of the new approach to education is the revival of the idea that education does not only mean sharing the knowledge, but also applying theory to practice, searching for information, and forming proper social and professional behaviors. Lifelong learning enables adaptation to changes in technology and civilization, including surviving on the job market.

J. Półtuczyci believes, therefore, that lifelong learning is an important strategy for Europe. It leads to creation of the learning society that will become progressive and be able to make Europe independent from economic and socio-political powers of the world. It will define Europe’s position in the world [22, p. 73]. The growing demand for intellectual and decreasing need for physical work will changes forms and structures of employment in the area of services. It will trigger international job migration and rise in unemployment.
The above mentioned premises impose certain tasks on our country. According to S. M. Kwiatkowki [17, p. 17], Memorandum provided a basis for defining priorities in Polish lifelong learning:

- focus on the role and importance of lifelong learning;
- increased access to lifelong learning;
- high quality of lifelong learning, development of cooperation, partnership between state and local institutions, scientific associations, and social organizations;
- introduction of a balanced employment system that encourages individual training;
- preparation of an Internet database providing information on learning and training opportunities and the situation on job market.

The new approach to lifelong learning is characterized by criticism and selectivity in regard to previous forms of education, teaching methods, especially in terms of their attractiveness, accuracy, reliability and objectivity. It requires evaluation of the educational offer, teaching methods, as well as constant monitoring of one’s own activities. Nowadays, lifelong education strategy aims to create a learning society with equal opportunities for all and with no limitations and exclusions. Continuous education understood in such way is not a distant idea, but a systematically introduced reality. May such education become multidimensional, and facilitate learning for knowledge, activities and skills. May it also help to find the meaning of life and feel empathy for others.

Taking into consideration the role of modern multicultural approach to education, it is rather up to date and urgent to consider the issue of lifelong education in this respect.

References