

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 0:00

Hi, it's Monica this interview is with Jihan Osman, the Assistant Professor at the graduate school of education.

So first question is what's your definition of lifelong learning?

Gihan Osman 0:14

My definition of lifelong learning is that throughout life, you continue on developing yourself and growing in different ways. Of course, you know, nowadays, we talk about that we constantly need to update our skills and knowledge areas for employability, but people by nature learn throughout life. However, when it came to specific knowledge in the past, you would get your degree or get your certification or get your apprenticeship and then you would use those skills for the entire your entire work history, you probably would work in the same place using the same skills and you would not have to undergo constantly learning, training and growing and you would probably stay in the same job. So in the past, things were different. We looked at Yes, that we learned throughout life and we learn till the day we die. But formal training and formal education happened, you know, to a specific point in your life and then it stopped now was how the world and knowledge is progressing and like, knowledge is growing exponentially so quickly, that you cannot afford at any point to just say, Okay, this is what I learned for my undergraduate degree, for example, and that's it announced stop, you can't because you'll be obsolete. So, for anybody who wants to work or even Personally you have to grow with the accumulation of knowledge let's say for example, you are not working, but technology is changing so much to be able to handle maneuvering life your normal everyday activities like managing your bank accounts like paying bills like you know responding to someone using your phone, you have to learn something new. And so the world is changing and we cannot we cannot afford to stop learning.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 2:37

So, when was the first time when you recognized the concept of lifelong learning?

Gihan Osman 2:43

When I recognized the issue of lifelong learning. Okay, so I think that by nature, I'm someone who likes learning Not necessarily being a student, but I love the idea of learning and I'm very curious person. So this was something that, that my parents always encouraged since I was a very young child. So I I regard myself as a lifelong learner to start with, but professionally, I realized the idea of lifelong learning after I got my PhD, and I discovered that every day, there are new things in my profession. So I'm a specialist in instructional technology and design. So I'm closely related to technology. And I cannot stop learning not not that I, even if I'd like to, I can't afford to stop learning and be obsolete. So it is an essential component there is it is not negotiable innocence.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 3:55

So that's like when you decided to be a lifelong, lifelong learner when you became in that career?

Gihan Osman 4:05

No, I mean, I think I think, as I told you, I've always been informally a learner. And I never stop learning I, I try to you know, I'm curious about things. So I'm constantly learning but it's when I when I, you know, when, when I started after my PhD and when I started working, especially at AUC, I really realized the importance of lifelong learning in a more formal way. So I could see you know, that if I go to a conference, the issues that are discussed this year are very different from last year. And the issues that are last year are obsolete. So, if you want to remain current, if you want to remain a fuse, if you want to even you know, keep your employability in general you have to go with the times you have to present the knowledge and skill areas that are needed by society. And so I think I realized at that point that, you know, that lifelong learning is a lot more serious than I ever thought it would be. And that we constantly have to be alert to what's happening in the environment around us.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 5:27

So how did that change your life?

Gihan Osman 5:30

How did that change my life? Well, I mean, it has its negatives and it's positive. It's it's negative is that you always have to be active and alert and looking around you how society is changing, and and how the world is changing. So with globalization and how we are connected, So much more. You are no longer isolated in your bubble. And part of and so you have to see what's happening all around you not just in Egypt but but worldwide. And AUC really, in the area of education is is always looking at the world and globally at what is happening and trying to stay in line with that. And so anybody working in education or at AUC and in technology and all that has to be active in pursuing what is new, and is it relevant or not? And what of this should we integrate or not.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 6:48

So you mentioned your family role in inspiring you to be a lifelong learner. Would you elaborate on that?

Gihan Osman 6:57

I mean, I think so for example, as a child You know, my family, we we had a lot of books at home, we did a lot of projects at home. If I was curious about something and asked why they never said, you know, you're too young, you know, they, they would explore whatever question I had in a simplified way that was appropriate to my age. So whenever I was curious, I was never told not to be curious. They would explore it with me and we will try and find answers to my question. So. So I learned that, you know, if you want to know something, go and know it. And this is something good. So I had a lot of books where I could read and be curious about new things. Of course we can, I mean, when I was a child, it was before the time of the internet and all that so it was more simple. But I was never told why Are you asking this question or you shouldn't ask a question or things like that. I think that's very important.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 8:09

So, so in addition to your family, who have been your strongest influences in life?

Gihan Osman 8:16

my strongest influences in life? Well,

my good experiences in school and in college were a strong influence in life. So I can remember, you know, teachers or professors who tried to make the content attractive and alive and vivid and interesting. And it was more of a process of exploration, rather than us just receiving something passively. So these people definitely when you experience The joy of learning. This was a strong influence in my life. Even the majority of my schooling that was very boring and traditional. This was a strong influence in my life. I wanted to have better experiences. And when I decided to become an educator, I wanted others to have a better experience, to experience that joy of learning something. So the good and the bad. Were a strong experience in my life. I a very strong experience in my life as well was when I discovered the power of the individual to change things around him or her. The idea that you are you can shape your destiny and and that was a turning point in my life.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 9:57

Do you remember a specific incident that affected you in that way?

Gihan Osman 10:02

Well, I mean, I was, I was reading a book that is pretty famous. That is by Stephen Covey The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. And, and the book had such very simple ideas but powerful ideas that are easy to understand the talked about that you are not a victim of your circumstances or your environment, but you have the power to, to choose how you react. And it really pushed the idea of productivity, meaning that that you take charge of your life that you do that, that it's not just a reaction, it's an action. And I think I was very inspired by that. And I tried it out and it would make A difference, and I will try it out again and it would make a difference. So, if I, if I had, if I had just followed circumstances, I don't think I would have done so much and, and and travel them. And you know when changed my area of specialization, gone to a different country to learn more. I think I think that was very important to me and, and that is something that I try and do with my students that here at AC when I work with my students, I always try to remind them of their capacity of changing the world and they can influence others and that they are not victims to any circumstances and to remind them of all the strong things about them and their potential and Whether that potential materializes or not, is partially up to them. And, and so I don't focus that you always have to learn, but that you are an integral and vital component of your life. And the shape that your life takes depends on how you decide to interact with it. And that is learning.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 12:29

So how do you see education in Egypt, in general?

Gihan Osman 12:36

I mean, if you think of education in Egypt in general, of course, we have a massive system and we have massive problems. And I think we need to think of it in ways that are outside of the box to address these major issues. Education in every society and is a major catalyst for change and development. So we see places like Singapore and Korea, that, that manifest very clearly the power of education to change a nation. And I'm hoping to see that we have the same will to do that. So if you want education to make a difference, you have to invest in education the way in a way that that is serious. So you know, invest in education, invest in teachers, take it very seriously. So that it really makes a difference. And I think this is an area where we can still grow as Egyptians. I think that education in Egypt has to focus on you know, on the idea that students should love learning and see its benefit, rather than take exams and grades. So I think our orientation has to be slightly different. Because it is simply we cannot afford to do otherwise. The world has no space for under-skilled people. It has no space for people who are not flexible and adaptive and ready to learn and grow constantly. It's a different world and we have to change with how the world is changing.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 14:37

So how do you see education in AUC?

Gihan Osman 14:40

I see education at AUC? I think that education at AUC is definitely in a totally different area than education in Egypt in general. I think AUC is very serious at remaining on the on whatever is cutting edge in education, that we take education seriously, definitely, there is room to grow. And there is room to innovate. And I think what I would like to see change is that we help our students focus more on learning, rather than grades. to, to, to see all the potential that our students have. And that I mean, I remember when I first started, you know, teaching undergrads, I mean, there's so much potential there. There's so much positivity there. There's so much energy there. And if we make our students aware of this, this energy and potential and give them opportunities to use it, I think it would be fantastic and I think Education at AUC is powerful, but it can be more powerful by giving our students more power and allowing them to realize that they have a lot of power.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 16:12

So do you remember a specific incident with a student who was inspired to be a lifelong learner?

Gihan Osman 16:21

I think in my classes, and I am an education major. So I try to show them how education and learning could be very different from what they have in mind that it does not necessarily have to be about them being passive and them being quiet and then answering exercises, but that they really contribute to the quality of their learning experience. And I think that is originally shocking to students. But then, at least with my classes, Try to show them a different face for education. And I believe that I don't remember a particular incident. But I often get the feedback and the reflection that this was a very different experience for them. I remember I came to a UC as a graduate student and being at AUC was a very different experience. I was, I was, at that time

very much impressed by how faculty try to see that students really learn get value from their education. I loved how professors respected their students and cared about their individual growth as professionals. I was really impressed by that. And I think that was another life changing moment, period in my life.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 18:05

So what advice do you give to younger generations in order to be lifelong learners?

Gihan Osman 18:19

Yeah, I mean, I don't know if I can give them advice or whether that is something that they will experience and learn on their own. But it is very reality the current reality that you cannot stop growing and learning. And this is exciting, and you grow in ways that you never thought possible. And you realize that you have strengths and talents that you never knew the there were there. And the way you can really experience that is by being open to taking more risks. being open to going out of your comfort zone by exploring by having courage to be different. And although this is sometimes challenging, but the rewards are always very high so don't let anything. I mean, I have to say that I'm a very strong believer in the power of education to change people to improve people's lives. And that I'm very excited about our students at AUC and that I see them as fantastic fountain of skills and possibilities and energy and that they will change the world. So I really am excited every time I interact with them because I cannot even begin to imagine how they will change the world. So that excites me, motivates me. And I learned from them. I always try and learn from them. So I see learning really as a two way process. So I'm constantly learning from them.

Monica Mamdouh Naguib 20:18

Thank you so much.

Gihan Osman 20:19

You're welcome.

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