CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF LEARNING

Learning theorists . . . in their own words

SECOND EDITION

ROUTLEDGE

Contemporary Theories of Learning

This tenth anniversary edition of Knud Illeris's classic 2008 text is an updated and definitive collection of today's most influential learning theorists, now containing additional chapters from John Hattie and Gregory Donoghue, Sharan Merriam, Gert Biesta and Carolyn Jackson. This book brings together world-renowned experts, who each present their understanding of what learning is and how human learning takes place, addressing the social, psychological and emotional contexts of learning.

In this clear and coherent overview, Professor Knud Illeris has collated chapters that explain both the complex frameworks in which learning takes place and the specific facets of learning. Each international expert provides either a seminal text or an entirely new précis of the conceptual framework they have developed over a lifetime of study, such as adult learning theory, learning strategies, and the cultural and social nature of learning processes.

Elucidating the key concepts of learning, *Contemporary Theories of Learning* provides both the perfect desk reference and an ideal introduction for students; it is an invaluable resource for all researchers and academics involved in the study of learning, and provides a detailed synthesis of current learning theories … all in the words of the theorists themselves.

Knud Illeris is Professor Emeritus of Lifelong Learning at Aarhus University, Denmark, and founder of Simonsen & Illeris Educational Consultancy. He is internationally acknowledged as an innovative contributor to learning theory and adult education. He has been an honorary professor at Colombia University in New York and is a member of The International Adult Education Hall of Fame. He is the author of numerous books, including *Understanding Learning and Motivation in Youth* (2018); *How We Learn*, 2nd edition (2017); *Learning, Development and Education* (2016); *Transformative Learning and Identity* (2014); and *The Fundamentals of Workplace Learning* (2011).

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Learning Theorists… In Their Own Words

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Introduction

The first edition of this book was published in 2008. The immediate background for this was that for almost 20 years, I had worked my way through a very broad and international selection of learning theories with a view to writing my books on *The Three Dimensions of Learning*, which was published in Danish in 1999 and in English in 2002, and *How We Learn* from 2006/2007. In this connection, I had also published two edited books in Danish with articles by, in my opinion, the most important learning theorists. So it was an obvious idea to create a similar book in English.

However, I thought that an international book of this kind should be both more exclusive and more selectively concentrate on the most important and contemporary theorists. So whereas the two Danish books included about 50 authors altogether, the English version only had 16 contributors, whom I regarded as the most representative and up-to-date learning theorists at that time. In order to maintain this, I have in this second edition made the following alterations.

First, in order that the selection can still be regarded as contemporary, I have changed the time limit for the contributions to be accepted from 1990 to 1995, which has led me to leave out the chapters by John Heron (1992) and Jean Lave (1993), as I have not been able to find more recent relevant writings from these two authors. Immediately, it might perhaps seem more natural to choose the start of the new millennium in 2000 as the boundary, but actually, during the last five years of the 1990s, some (in my opinion) very important contributions were made, especially by Jerome Bruner (1996), Robin Usher (1997) and Etienne Wenger (1998), and these can certainly still be regarded as contemporary.

Second, two contributors, Bente Elkjaer and Mark Tennant, have wished to replace their chapters from the first edition with newer writing. And finally, I have chosen to invite four new authors to be represented. One of these, Sharan Merriam, is certainly not a new name in the field of learning as she has been publishing since the early 1980s, and the first edition of her and Rosemary Caffarella's well-known volume of *Learning in Adulthood – A Comprehensive Guide* is from 1991. So her presence in this edition can rather be regarded as making good a deficiency in the first edition by a brand new chapter from 2017. In contrast to this, the three other new contributions by Carolyn Jackson, Gert Biesta,

and John Hattie and Gregory Donoghue, respectively, are clearly presenting new angles of approaches taken up by new important contributors in the field of learning theory – and in this way they signify the continuing new development, which is constantly taking place in the field of learning theory, and how this reflects new societal developments.

Further, it shall here be repeated from the introduction of the first edition of the book that the understanding of what can be regarded as proper 'learning theory' in this book does not include what has been primarily the character of system theory or of brain research. This is not because these two fields are not relevant or interesting in this connection but because their foundation and point of departure are taken outside the area of what is usually regarded as the field of learning.

As to the sequence of the now 18 contributions, it follows the theoretical model of the dimensions of learning, which is presented in my own first chapter. After this come six chapters which in different ways deal with a general overview and structuring of the field of learning – the chapters by Peter Jarvis, Robert Kegan, Yrjö Engeström, Bente Elkjaer, Sharan Merriam, and John Hattie and Gregory Donoghue, respectively. Then there are two chapters by Jack Mezirow and Howard Gardner, which mainly deal with the learning content dimension, and after these, three chapters by Carolyn Jackson, Peter Alheit and Mark Tennant, which predominantly focus on the incentive dimension. Next follow five chapters, which are oriented towards the interaction learning dimension, of which the first three by Jerome Bruner, Robin Usher and Thomas Ziehe mainly refer to the cultural context, whereas the last two by Etienne Wenger, and Danny Wildemeersch and Veerle Stroobants adopt rather a social context. Finally I have then placed the chapter by Gert Biesta, which both in general and in relation to the learning model is distinguished by its superior and more philosophical approach to learning in the time of late modernity.

In this way this book will take the reader through a broad variety of perspectives on learning. I have chosen not to divide it into sections as each of the 18 contributions in a way forms its own section or universe. It has been my aim to achieve a broad and adequate representation of contemporary important approaches to the topic of learning, and it is my hope that I have succeeded in producing a volume that can provide an overview of the current situation and the multitude of learning theoretical understandings, thereby inspiring the readers to deal with this topic in qualified and differentiated ways.

Knud Illeris

Chapter 1

A comprehensive understanding of human learning

Knud Illeris

By the 1970s, Knud Illeris was well known in Scandinavia for his developing work on project studies in theory and practice. In this work, learning theory was applied, mainly as a combination of Jean Piaget's approach, Carl Rogers' ideas of significant learning and the understanding of late modern qualification needs as developed inside the so-called 'critical theory' of the German-American Frankfurt School. After several years of practical developmental work in youth and adult education and working life, Illeris returned to his learning theoretical roots during the 1990s, now involving many other theoretical approaches in building up a general and comprehensive understanding of learning, which was first presented in his book, The Three Dimensions of Learning *in Danish in 1999 and in English in 2002. This was then in 2006/2007 fully worked out in* How We Learn: Learning and Non-learning in School and Beyond, *and completed by the new edition of this in 2015/2017. The following chapter presents the main ideas of Illeris' understanding and is an elaborated version of a presentation given at a conference in Copenhagen in 2006.*

Background and basic assumptions

Since the last decades of the nineteenth century, many theories and understandings of learning have been launched. They have had different angles, different epistemological platforms and a very different content. Some of them have been overtaken by new knowledge and new standards, but in general we have today a picture of a great variety of learning theoretical approaches and constructions, which are more-or-less compatible and more-or-less competitive on the global academic market. The basic idea of the approach to learning presented in this chapter is to build on a wide selection of the best of these constructions, add new insights and perspectives and in this way develop an overall understanding or framework, which can offer a general and up-to-date overview of the field.

Learning can broadly be defined as *any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing* (Illeris 2007, p. 3). I have deliberately chosen this very open formulation because the concept of learning includes a very extensive and complicated set of

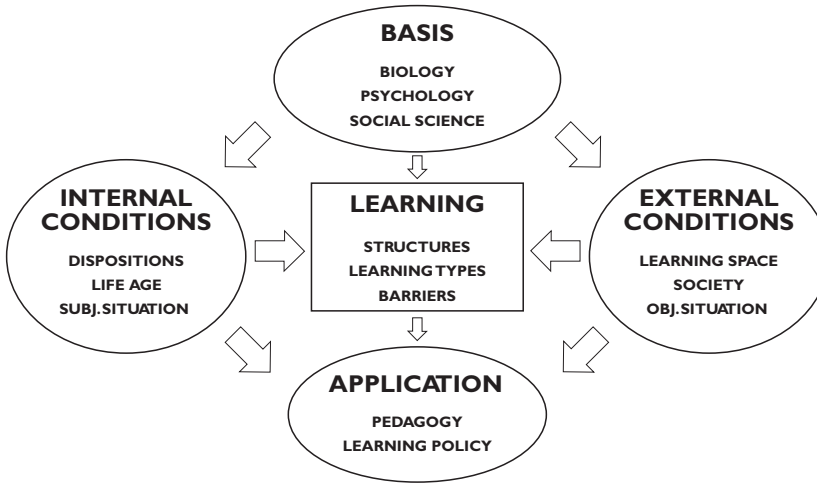

Figure 1.1 The main areas of the understanding of learning.

processes, and a comprehensive understanding is not only a matter of the nature of the learning process itself. It must also include all the conditions that influence and are influenced by this process. Figure 1.1 shows the main areas which are involved and the structure of their mutual connections.

On the top I have placed the basis of the learning theory, i.e. the areas of knowledge and understanding which, in my opinion, must underlie the development of a comprehensive and coherent theory construction. These include all the psychological, biological and social conditions which are involved in any learning. Under this is the central box depicting learning itself, including its processes and dimensions, different learning types and learning barriers, which to me are the central elements of the understanding of learning. Further there are the specific internal and external conditions which are not only influencing but also directly involved in learning. And finally, the possible applications of learning are also involved. I shall now go through these five areas and emphasise some of the most important features of each of them.

The two basic processes and the three dimensions of learning

The first important condition to realise is that all learning implies the integration of two very different processes, namely an external interaction process between the learner and his or her social, cultural or material environment, and an internal psychological process of elaboration and acquisition.

Many learning theories deal only with one of these processes, which of course does not mean that they are wrong or worthless, as both processes can be studied separately. However, it does mean that they do not cover the whole field of

learning. This may, for instance, be said of traditional behaviourist and cognitive learning theories focusing only on the internal psychological process. It can equally be said of certain modern social learning theories which – sometimes in explicit opposition to this – draw attention to the external interaction process alone. However, it seems evident that both processes must be actively involved if any learning is to take place.

When constructing my model of the field of learning (Figure 1.2), I started by depicting the external interaction process as a vertical double arrow between the environment, which is the general basis and therefore placed at the bottom, and the individual, who is the specific learner and therefore placed at the top.

Next I added the psychological acquisition process as another double arrow. It is an internal process of the learner and must therefore be placed at the top pole of the interaction process. Further, it is a process of integrated interplay between two equal psychological functions involved in any learning, namely the function of managing the learning content and the incentive function of providing and directing the necessary mental energy that runs the process. Thus the double arrow of the acquisition process is placed horizontally at the top of the interaction process and between the poles of content and incentive – and it should be emphasised that the double arrow means that these two functions are always involved and usually in an integrated way.

As can be seen, the two double arrows can now span out a triangular field between three angles. These three angles depict three spheres or dimensions of learning, and it is the core claim of the understanding that all learning will always involve these three dimensions.

The content dimension concerns what is learned. This is usually described as knowledge and skills, but also many other things such as opinions, insight, meaning, attitudes, values, ways of behaviour, methods, strategies, etc. may be

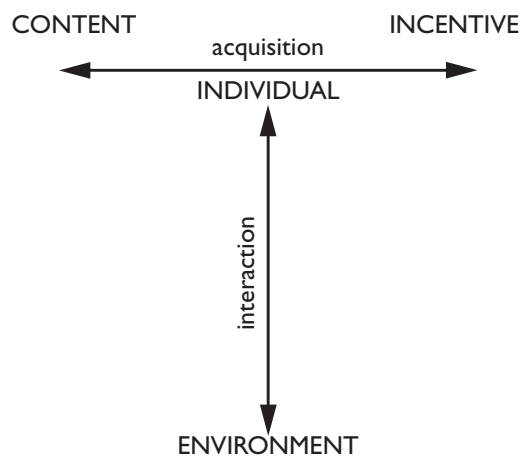

Figure 1.2 The fundamental processes of learning.

involved as learning content, and contribute to building up the understanding and the capacity of the learner. The endeavour of the learner is to construct *meaning* and *ability* to deal with the challenges of practical life and thereby an overall personal *functionality* is developed.

The incentive dimension provides and directs the mental energy that is necessary for the learning process to take place. It comprises such elements as feelings, emotions, motivation and volition. Its ultimate function is to secure the continuous *mental balance* of the learner and thereby it simultaneously develops a personal *sensitivity*.

These two dimensions are always initiated by impulses from the interaction processes and integrated in the internal process of elaboration and acquisition. Therefore, the learning content is, so to speak, always 'obsessed' with the incentives at stake – e.g. whether the learning is driven by desire, interest, necessity or compulsion. Correspondingly, the incentives are always influenced by the content, e.g. new information can change the incentive condition. Many psychologists have been aware of this close connection between what has usually been termed the cognitive and the emotional (e.g. Vygotsky 1978; Furth 1987), and recently advanced neurology has proven that both areas are always involved in the learning process, unless in cases of very severe brain damage (Damasio 1994).

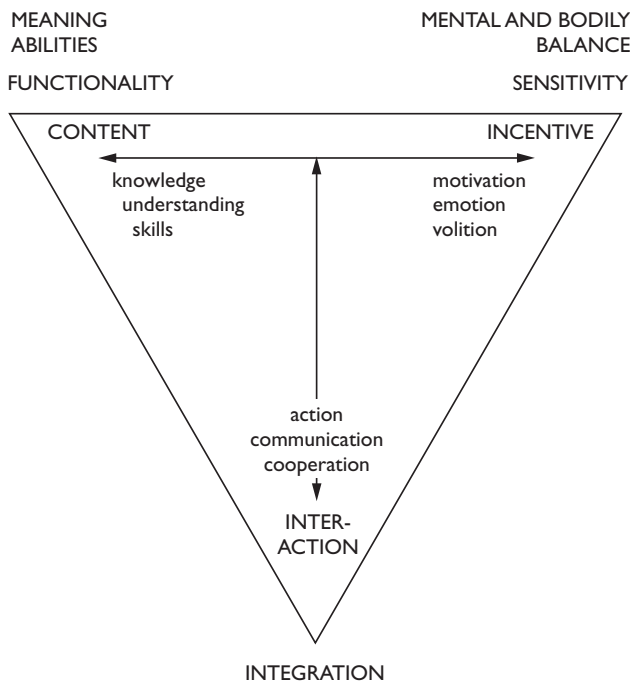

Figure 1.3 The three dimensions of learning and competence development.

The interaction dimension provides the impulses that initiate the learning process. This may take place as perception, transmission, experience, imitation, activity, participation, etc. (Illeris 2007, pp. 100ff.). It serves the personal *integration* in communities and society and thereby also builds up the *sociality* of the learner. However, this building up necessarily takes place through the two other dimensions.

Thus the triangle depicts what may be described as the tension field of learning in general and of any specific learning event or learning process as stretched out between the development of functionality, sensibility and sociality – which are also the general components of what we term as competencies.

It is also important to mention that each dimension includes a mental as well as a bodily side. Actually, learning begins with the body and takes place through the brain, which is also part of the body, and only gradually is the mental side separated out as a specific but never independent area or function (Piaget 1952).

An example from everyday school life

In order to illustrate how the model may be understood and used, I shall take an everyday example from ordinary school life (which does not mean that the model only deals with school learning).

During a chemistry lesson in the classroom, a teacher is explaining a chemical process. The students are supposed to be listening and perhaps asking questions to be sure that they have understood the explanation correctly. The students are thus involved in an interaction process. But at the same time, they are supposed to take in or to learn what the teacher is teaching, i.e. psychologically to relate what is taught to what they should already have learned. The result should be that they are able to remember what they have been taught and, under certain conditions, to reproduce it, apply it and involve it in further learning.

But sometimes, or for some students, the learning process does not take place as intended, and mistakes or derailing may occur in many different ways. Perhaps the interaction does not function because the teacher's explanation is not good enough or is even incoherent, or there may be disturbances in the situation. If so, the explanation will only be picked up partially or incorrectly, and the learning result will be insufficient. But the students' acquisition process may also be inadequate, for instance because of a lack of concentration, and this will also lead to deterioration in the learning result. Or there may be errors or insufficiencies in the prior learning of some students, making them unable to understand the teacher's explanation and thereby also to learn what is being taught. Much of this indicates that acquisition is not only a cognitive matter. There is also another area or function involved concerning the students' attitudes to the intended learning: their interests and mobilisation of mental energy, i.e. the incentive dimension.

In a school situation, focus is usually on the learning content; in the case described, it is on the students' understanding of the nature of the chemical process concerned. However, the incentive function is also still crucial, i.e. how

the situation is experienced, what sort of feelings and motivations are involved, and thus the nature and the strength of the mental energy that is mobilised. The value and durability of the learning result is closely related to the incentive dimension of the learning process.

Further, both the content and the incentive are crucially dependent on the interaction process between the learner and the social, societal, cultural and material environment. If the interaction in the chemistry lesson is not adequate and acceptable to the students, the learning will suffer, or something quite different may be learned, for instance a negative impression of the teacher, of some other students, of the subject or of the school situation in general.

The four types of learning

What has been outlined in the triangle model and the example above is a concept of learning which is basically constructivist in nature, i.e. it is assumed that the learner him- or herself actively builds up or construes his/her learning as mental structures. These structures exist in the brain as dispositions that are usually described by a psychological metaphor as *mental schemes*. This means that there must in the brain be some organisation of the learning outcomes since we, when becoming aware of something – a person, a problem, a topic, etc. – in fractions of a second are able to recall what we subjectively and usually unconsciously define as relevant knowledge, understanding, attitudes, reactions and the like. But this organisation is in no way a kind of archive, and it is not possible to find the different elements at specific positions in the brain. It has the nature of what brain researchers call 'engrams', which are traces of circuits between some of the billions of neurons that have been active at earlier occasions and therefore are likely to be revived, perhaps with slightly different courses because of the impact of new experiences or understandings.

However, in order to deal systematically with this, the concept of schemes is used for what we subjectively tend to classify as belonging to a specific topic or theme, and therefore mentally connect, and are inclined to recall in relation to situations that we relate to that topic or theme. This especially applies to the content dimension, whereas in the incentive and interaction dimensions we would rather speak of *mental patterns*. But the background is similar in that motivations, emotions or ways of communication tend to be organised so that they can be revived when we are oriented towards situations that 'remind' us of earlier situations when they have been active.

In relation to learning, the crucial thing is that new impulses can be included in the mental organisation in various ways, and on this basis it is possible to distinguish between four different types of learning which are activated in different contexts, imply different kinds of learning results and require more or less energy. (This is an elaboration of the concept of learning originally developed by Jean Piaget (e.g. Piaget 1952; Flavell 1963).)

When a scheme or pattern is established, it is a case of *cumulative* or mechanical learning. This type of learning is characterised by being an isolated formation, something new that is not a part of anything else. Therefore, cumulative learning is most frequent during the first years of life, but later occurs only in special situations where one must learn something with no context of meaning or personal significance, for example a PIN code. The learning result is characterised by a type of automation that means that it can only be recalled and applied in situations mentally similar to the learning context. It is mainly this type of learning which is involved in the training of animals and which is therefore also referred to as conditioning in behaviourist psychology.

By far the most common type of learning is termed *assimilative* or learning by addition, meaning that the new element is linked as an addition to a scheme or pattern that is already established. One typical example could be learning in school subjects that are usually built up by means of constant additions to what has already been learned, but assimilative learning also takes place in all contexts where one gradually develops one's capacities. The results of learning are characterised by being linked to the scheme or pattern in question in such a manner that it is relatively easy to recall and apply them when one is mentally oriented towards the field in question, for example a school subject, while they may be hard to access in other contexts. This is why problems are frequently experienced in applying knowledge from a school subject to other subjects or in contexts outside of school (Illeris 2008).

However, in some cases, situations occur where something takes place that is difficult to immediately relate to any existing scheme or pattern. This is experienced as something one cannot really understand or relate to. But if it seems important or interesting, if it is something one is determined to acquire, this can take place by means of *accommodative* or transcendent learning. This type of learning implies that one breaks down (parts of) an existing scheme and transforms it so that the new situation can be linked in. Thus one both relinquishes and reconstructs something, and this can be experienced as demanding or even painful, because it is something that requires a strong supply of mental energy. One must cross existing limitations and understand or accept something that is significantly new or different, and this is much more demanding than just adding a new element to an already existing scheme or pattern. In return, the results of such learning are characterised by the fact that they can be recalled and applied in many different, relevant contexts. It is typically experienced as having understood or got hold of something which one really has internalised.

Finally, over the last few decades, it has been pointed out that in special situations there is also a far-reaching type of learning that has been variously described as significant (Rogers 1951, 1969), expansive (Engeström 1987), transitional (Alheit 1994) or transformative learning (Mezirow 1991). This learning implies what could be termed personality changes or changes in the organisation of the self, and is characterised by simultaneous restructuring of a whole cluster of schemes and patterns in all of the three learning dimensions – a break of

orientation that typically occurs as the result of a crisis-like situation caused by challenges experienced as urgent and unavoidable, making it necessary to change oneself in order to get any further. Transformative learning is thus both profound and extensive, it demands a lot of mental energy, and when accomplished it can often be experienced physically, typically as a feeling of relief or relaxation.

As has been demonstrated, the four types of learning are widely different in scope and nature, and they also occur – or are activated by learners – in very different situations and connections. Whereas cumulative learning is most important in early childhood, and transformative learning is a very demanding process that changes the very personality or identity and occurs only in very special situations of profound significance for the learner, assimilation and accommodation are, as described by Piaget, the two types of learning that characterise general, sound and normal everyday learning. Many other learning theorists also point to two such types of learning; for example, Chris Argyris and Donald Schön have coined the well-known concepts of single and double loop learning (Argyris 1992; Argyris and Schön 1996), Per-Erik Ellström (2001) and speak about adaptation-oriented and development-oriented learning, and also Lev Vygotsky's idea (1978) of transition into the 'zone of proximal development' may be seen as a parallel to accommodative learning.

However, ordinary discussions of learning and the design of many educational and school activities are concentrated on and often only aimed at assimilative learning, as this is the sort of learning that the usual understanding of the concept of learning is about. But today this understanding is obviously insufficient, and the much-demanded generic competencies can only be built up by a combination of assimilative, accommodative and, eventually, transformative learning processes.

Barriers to learning

Another problem is that much intended learning does not take place or is incomplete or distorted. In schools, in education, at workplaces and in many other situations, very often people do not learn what they could learn or what they are supposed to learn. Therefore, I find it important also to discuss briefly what happens in such cases.

Of course, it cannot be avoided that we all sometimes learn something that is wrong (cf. Mager 1961) or something that is inadequate for us in some way or another. In the first instance, this concerns matters such as mislearning, which can be due to misunderstandings, lack of concentration, insufficient prior learning and the like. This may be annoying and in some cases unlucky, but simple mislearning due to 'practical' reasons is not a matter of great interest to learning theory as such mislearning can usually be corrected rather easily, if necessary.

However, today much non-learning and mislearning are not so simple, but have a background in some general conditions that modern society creates, and in some respects the investigation and understanding of such processes are

definitely as important as more traditional learning theory to understand what is happening and to cope with it in practice.

The central point is that in our complex late-modern society, what Freud called *defence mechanisms* – which are active in specific personal connections (cf. Anna Freud 1942) – must necessarily be generalised and take more systematised forms because nobody can manage to remain open to the gigantic volumes and impact of influences we are all constantly faced with.

This is why today people develop a kind of semi-automatic sorting mechanism vis-à-vis the many influences, or what the German social psychologist Thomas Leithäuser (1976) has analysed and described as an *everyday consciousness*. This functions in the way that one develops some general preunderstandings within certain thematic areas, and when one meets with influences within such an area, these pre-understandings are activated so that if elements in the influences do not correspond to the pre-understandings, they are either rejected or distorted to make them agree. In both cases, this results in no new learning but, on the contrary, often the cementing of the already-existing understanding.

Thus, through everyday consciousness, we control our own learning and non-learning in a manner that seldom involves any direct positioning while simultaneously involving a massive defence of the already-acquired understandings and, in the final analysis, our very identity. (There are, of course, also areas and situations where our positioning takes place in a more target-oriented manner, consciously and flexibly.)

However, not only the volume but also the kind of influence can be overwhelming. Not least, on television we are faced every day with so much cruelty, wickedness and similar negative impact that it is absolutely impossible to really take it in – and people who cannot protect themselves from this are doomed to end up in some kind of psychological breakdown. Other new forms of similar overloading are caused by the endless changes and reorganisations many people experience at their workplaces, social institutions, etc., or by the helplessness that can be felt when consequences of the decisions of those in power encroach on one's life situation and possibilities.

In the most important cases, for instance when a change to a basically new situation in a certain life area must be overcome, most people react by mobilising a genuine *identity defence* which demands very hard work of a more-or-less therapeutic character to break through, usually by a transformative learning process. This happens typically in relation to a sudden situation of unemployment or other fundamental changes in the work situation, divorce, death of closely related persons or the like, and it is worth realising that such situations happen much more frequently in the modern globalised market society of today than just a generation ago.

Another very common form of defence is *ambivalence*, meaning that in a certain situation or connection one is both wanting and not wanting to learn or do something. A typical example is that people who unwillingly and without

any personal fault have become unemployed on the one hand know very well that they must engage themselves in some retraining or re-education, and on the other hand strongly wish that this was not the case. So they go or are sent to some courses, but it is difficult for them to concentrate on the learning and they use any possible excuse to escape, mentally or physically.

In all such defence situations, learning is obstructed, hindered, derailed or distorted if it is not possible for the learner to break through the defence, and the task of a teacher or instructor will often be to support and encourage such a breakthrough before more goal-directed and constructive training or education can take place. But teachers are usually not trained for such functions, although they quite frequently are necessary if the intended learning shall be promoted.

Another psychological mechanism which may block or distort relevant learning is *mental resistance*. This is not, in itself, so very time-specific, as all human beings in any society will experience situations where what they try to accomplish cannot be carried through, and if they cannot understand or accept the barriers, they will naturally react with some sort of resistance.

In practice it is sometimes quite difficult to distinguish between non-learning caused by defence and non-learning caused by resistance. However, psychologically there is a great and important difference. Whereas the defence mechanisms exist prior to the learning situation and function reactively, resistance is caused by the learning situation itself as an active response. Thus resistance contains a strong mental mobilisation and therefore also a strong learning potential, especially for accommodative and even transformative learning. Often when one does not just accept something, the possibility of learning something significantly new emerges. And most great steps forward in the development of mankind and society have taken place when someone did not accept a given truth or way of doing or understanding things.

In everyday life, resistance is also a most important source of transcendent learning, although it may be both inconvenient and annoying, not least for teachers. In any event, today it should be a central qualification of teachers to be able to cope with and even inspire mental resistance, as precisely such personal competencies which are so much in demand – for example, independence, responsibility, flexibility and creativity – are likely to be developed in this way. This is why conflict or dilemma raising may be taken in as effective but demanding techniques in some particularly challenging educational situations.

Internal and external learning conditions

What has been discussed in the above – the processes, dimensions, types and barriers of learning – I regard as features which should be included in any learning theory that aims at covering the whole field of the concept. However, there are also other issues that influence learning without being directly involved in learning as such and thus can be termed the conditions of learning. These issues are

also taken up in my book *How We Learn* (Illeris 2007), but in this article I shall only shortly indicate what they are about.

The internal conditions of learning are features of or in the learner that influence learning possibilities and are involved in the learning processes. *Intelligence* is supposed to be a measure of the general ability to learn, but it has always been disputed whether or not a general and measurable instance of this kind exists, and there is certainly not a general agreement about its definition. Since 1983, American psychologist Howard Gardner (1983, 1993, 1999) has claimed that there are several independent intelligences – a view which to some extent corresponds to the understanding of learning presented here because it includes not only cognitive but also emotional and social abilities. A somewhat similar concept is about individual *learning styles*, but the nature and existence of these still seem to be more an open question. In contrast to these general measures, it is obvious that the more specific individual features of gender and life age to some degree influence the learning possibilities.

The external conditions of learning are features outside the learner that influence learning possibilities and are involved in the learning processes. These can roughly be divided into features of the immediate learning situation and learning space and more general cultural and societal conditions. The kind of learning space makes up for differences between everyday learning, school learning, workplace learning, net-based learning, interest-based learning, etc. and for difficulties in applying learning outcomes across the borders of these spaces – the so-called 'transfer problem' of learning (Eraut 1994; Illeris et al. 2004; Illeris 2008). General societal conditions are dependent on time and place: obviously the learning possibilities are much more wide-ranging today than a century ago, and they also differ between the countries and cultures of today.

Finally, some important questions about the use and applicability of learning theory, especially in the areas of educational practice and policy, are also briefly discussed in the book. Some very common misunderstandings in these areas are pointed out, as well as some typical connections between different understandings of learning, different schools of pedagogy and different fundamental assumptions of learning policy. In the last chapter, the book concludes by mapping the most important understandings and theorists of learning in relation to the learning triangle shown in Figure 1.3.

Conclusion

The general conclusion is that learning is a very complicated matter, and analyses, programmes and discussions of learning must consider the whole field if they are to be adequate and reliable. This implies, for instance, that all three learning dimensions must be taken into account, that the question of relevant learning types must be included, that possible defence or resistance must be considered and that internal as well as external learning conditions must also be dealt with. This is, of course, a very wide-ranging demand. To word it differently, it could be

said that if for some reason it is not possible or appropriate to include all these areas, it must be clear that the situation or process has not been fully covered, and an open question will remain as to what happens in the areas that are not discussed.

I shall round off by illustrating this more concretely through two examples from my own research and practice.

The first example has to do with youth education. Many Western countries have a high ambition to the effect that all or the great majority of young people should complete some academically or practically qualifying post-16 education programme. The goal of the Danish government is for 95 per cent to receive such qualifications, but although 95 per cent commence a programme, less than 80 per cent complete it.

This, of course, has been the subject of a great deal of research, debate, reforms, etc. but with almost no or even negative effect. From a learning point of view, it would seem not to have been fully realised that today young people of this age are highly engaged in a process of personal identity development, which is an absolute necessity to be able to navigate in the late-modern, globalised market society. Therefore, young people fundamentally meet all learning initiatives – consciously or unconsciously – with such questions as: What does this mean *to me?* or What can *I* use this for? – implying that it is only worth paying attention to if it is subjectively accepted as a usable contribution to the present demands of the identity process. And the premises of this judgement lie equally in all three learning dimensions, i.e. the programme offered must not only have an acceptable, interesting and challenging content, it must also contribute to an acceptable positioning in relation to contemporary trends on the youth lifestyle market, and it must be organised in ways and by teachers or other persons who are in harmony with the personal needs of the young learners. One may think that such demands are not relevant or acceptable, and many people in the educational field are of this opinion, but the inevitable consequence will then be a continued high drop-out rate (see e.g. Illeris 2003, 2007).

The second example is about retraining of low-skilled workers who against their will have become unemployed – which is a very frequent state of affairs in today's society. These adults are very often referred to various practical courses to acquire a basis for employment in a new trade where it is possible to get a job. But the process leading to this has been experienced not as guidance (as it is officially called) but as placement. Furthermore, even when the person in question realises that the training may lead to a return to the labour market, which is usually a very strong wish, their identity is tied to their former trade and a strong defence blocks the engagement in new learning. If the guidance received had made time for personal reflection and participation in the decision, this defence could have been overcome. When asked, the great majority of people in this situation answer that they would probably have chosen the same course, but they had not been given the opportunity to make the mental switch before the course. Now they are forced to undergo

a demanding transformative learning process at the same time as they are expected to acquire a great many new practical qualifications (see e.g. Illeris 2006).

In learning terms, in both of these examples a lot of resources are invested in endeavours that have little or no chance of success because the considerations of the 'system' or the authorities have not included an adequate and realistic analysis of the learning situation.

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Chapter 2

Learning to be a person in society

Learning to be me

Peter Jarvis

Peter Jarvis is today one of the best-known figures of international learning theory and research. He was trained as both a theologian and a sociologist, but only later did he take up the topic of learning, primarily in relation to adult education. Since the late 1980s, Jarvis has been extremely productive in this area; he was the founder and for many years the chief editor of the International Journal of Lifelong Education*, he published a steady stream of books and articles; in 2006–2008 he worked out his comprehensive trilogy on* Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society*; and he has been the editor of the two large* Routledge International Handbook on Lifelong Learning *(2009) and the* Routledge International Handbook of Learning *(2012). The following chapter stems, like the previous one, from the one-day conference on learning theory in Copenhagen in 2006. At the same time it presents the main ideas of the first volume of his trilogy,* Towards a Comprehensive Theory of Human Learning*, and can be seen as a concentrated presentation of Jarvis' extensive understanding of learning.*

Introduction

Many years ago I used to be invited to speak at pre-retirement courses, and one of the exercises that I asked the participants to undertake was that well-known psychological one on identity. I would put on the flip chart the question, 'Who am I?' and the response which began 'I am (a) … '. Then I asked the participants to complete the answer ten times. We took feedback, and on many occasions the respondents placed their occupation high on the list – usually in the top three. I would then ask them a simple question: 'Who will you be when you retire?'

If I were now to be asked to answer that question, I would respond that 'I am learning to be me'. But, as we all know, 'me' exists in society and so I am forced to ask four further questions:

- What or who is me?
- What is society?
- How does the one interact with the other?
- What do I mean by 'learning'?

This apparently simple answer to the question actually raises more profound questions than it answers, but these are four of the questions that, if we could answer them, would help us to understand the person. I want to focus on the 'learning' for the major part of this chapter, but in the final analysis it is the 'me' that becomes just as important. This is also a chapter that raises questions about both 'being' and 'becoming', and this takes us beyond psychology, sociology and social psychology to philosophy and philosophical anthropology and even to metaphysics.

My interest in learning began in the early 1980s, but my concern with the idea of *disjuncture* between me and my world goes back a further decade to the time when I began to focus upon those unanswerable questions about human existence that underlie all religions and theologies of the world. It is, therefore, the process of me interacting with my life-world that forms the basis of my current thinking about human learning, but the quest that I began then is one that remains incomplete and will always be so. I do not want to pursue the religious/theological response to disjuncture (the gap between biography and my current experience) here, but I do want to claim that all human learning begins with disjuncture – with either an overt question or with a sense of unknowing. I hope that you will forgive me for making this presentation a little personal – but it will also demonstrate how my work began and where I think it is going, and in this way it reflects the opening chapter of my recent book on learning (Jarvis, 2006). In the process of the chapter, I will outline my developing theory and relate it to other theories of learning. The chapter falls into three parts: developing the theory, my present understanding of learning and learning throughout the lifetime.

Developing my understanding of human learning

As an adult educator, I had a number of experiences in the early 1980s that sparked off my interest in learning, but the one which actually began my research was unintentional. I was invited to speak at an adult education workshop about the relationship between teaching and learning. In those days, that was a most insightful topic to choose since most of the books about teaching rarely mentioned learning, and most of the texts about learning rarely mentioned teaching. I decided that the best way for me to tackle the topic was to get the participants to generate their own data, and so at the start of the workshop, each participant was asked to write down a learning experience. It was a difficult thing to do – but after 20 or 30 minutes, everybody had a story, and I then asked them to pair up and discuss their learning experiences. We took some feedback at this stage, and I then put the pairs into fours and they continued to discuss, but by this time some of their discussion was not so much about their stories as about learning in general. At this point I introduced them to Kolb's learning cycle (1984) (Figure 2.1).

I told the groups that the cycle was not necessarily correct – indeed, I have always maintained that it is too simple to reflect the reality of the complex social process of human learning – and so I asked them to re-draw it to fit their four experiences. We

took feedback and produced four totally different diagrams. By good fortune, I had the opportunity over the next year to conduct this workshop in the UK and USA on eight more occasions and, by the third, I realised that I had a research project on adult learning. During all the workshops, I collected all the feedback and, after the second one, I told the participants that I was also using the outcome of their discussions for research. Nobody objected, but rather they started making even more suggestions about my work. By 1986, I had completed the research and wrote it up, and it contained my own model of learning based upon over 200 participants in nine workshops all undertaking this exercise. In 1987, the book *Adult Learning in the Social Context* (Jarvis, 1987) appeared, in which I offered my own learning cycle (Figure 2.1).

As a sociologist, I recognised that all the psychological models of learning were flawed, including Kolb's well-known learning cycle, in as much as they omitted the social and the interaction. Hence my model included these, and the book discussed the social functions of learning itself, as well as many different types of learning. However, it is possible to see the many routes that we can take through the learning process if we look at the following diagram – I actually mentioned 12 in the book. I tried this model out in many different workshops, including two very early on in Denmark, and over the following 15 years, I conducted the workshop many times, and in different books, variations on this theme occurred.

However, I was always a little concerned about this model, which I regarded as a little over-simple, but far more sophisticated than anything that had gone before. While I was clear in my own mind that learning always started with experience and that experience is always social, I was moving towards a philosophical

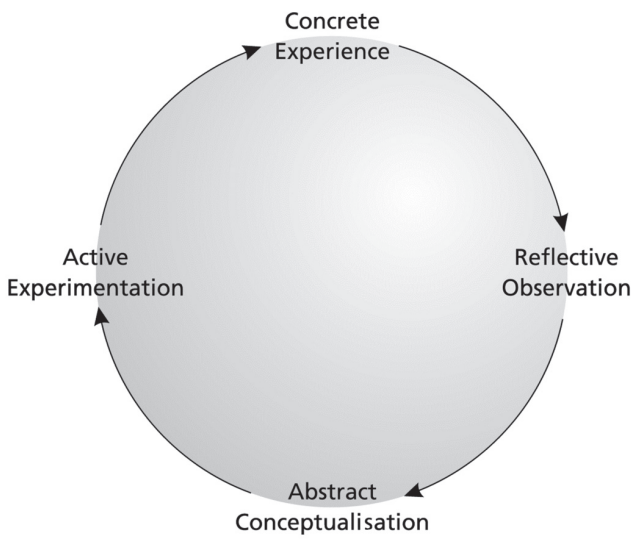

Figure 2.1 Kolb's learning cycle.

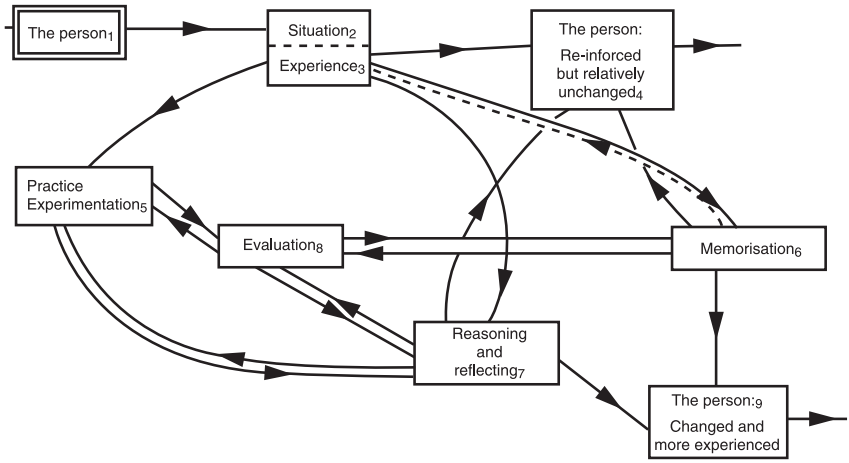

Figure 2.2 Jarvis' 1987 model of learning.

perspective on human learning, and so an existentialist study was then undertaken – *Paradoxes of Learning* (Jarvis, 1992). In this, I recognised that, although I had recognised it in the 1987 model (Figure 2.2), the crucial philosophical issue about learning is that it is the person who learns, although it took me a long time to develop this. What I also recognised was that such concepts as truth and meaning also needed more discussion within learning theory since they are ambiguous and problematic.

To my mind, the move from experientialism to existentialism has been the most significant in my own thinking about human learning and it occupies a central theme of my current understanding (Jarvis, 2006). It was this recognition that led to another recent book in which Stella Parker and I (Jarvis and Parker, 2005) argued that since learning is human, then every academic discipline that focuses upon the human being has an implicit theory of learning, or at least a contribution to make to our understanding of learning. Fundamentally, it is the person who learns and it is the changed person who is the outcome of the learning, although that changed person may cause several different social outcomes. Consequently, we had chapters from the pure sciences, such as biology and neuroscience, and from the social sciences and from metaphysics and ethics. At the same time, I was involved in writing another book on learning with two other colleagues (Jarvis, Holford and Griffin, 2003) in which we wrote chapters about all the different theories of learning, most of which are still psychological or experiential. What was becoming apparent to me was that we needed a single theory that embraced all the other theories, one that was multi-disciplinary.

Over the years my understanding of learning developed and was changed, but in order to produce such a theory, it was necessary to have an operational definition of human learning that reflected that complexity – a point also made by

Illeris (2002). Initially, I had defined learning as 'the transformation of experience into knowledge, skills and attitudes' (Jarvis, 1987, p. 32) but after a number of metamorphoses, I now define it in the following manner:

> Human learning is the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person.

What I have recounted here has been a gradual development of my understanding of learning as a result of a number of years of research and the realisation that it is the whole person who learns and that the person learns in a social situation. It must, therefore, involve a number of academic disciplines including sociology, psychology and philosophy. These have all come together recently in my current study of learning (Jarvis, 2006, 2007).

Towards a comprehensive theory of human learning

As I have thus far argued, learning is both existential and experiential. In a sense, I would want to argue that learning occurs from before birth – for we do learn pre-consciously from experiences that we have in the womb, as a number of different disciplines indicate – and continues to the point when we lose consciousness before death. However, the fact that the individual is social is crucial to our understanding of learning, but so is the fact that the person is both mind and body. All of our experiences of our life-world begin with bodily sensations which occur at the intersection of the person and the life-world. These sensations initially have no meaning for us as this is the beginning of the learning process. Experience begins with disjuncture (the gap between our biography and our perception of our experience) or a sense of not-knowing, but in the first instance experience is a matter of the body receiving sensations, e.g. sound, sight, smell and so on, which appear to have no meaning. Thereafter, we transform these sensations into the language of our brains and minds, and learn to make them meaningful to ourselves – this is the first stage in human learning. However, we cannot make this meaning alone; we are social human beings, always in relationship with us, and as we grow, we acquire a social language, so that nearly all the meanings will reflect the society into which we are born. I depict this first process in Figure 2.3.

Significantly, as adults we live a great deal of our lives in situations which we have learned to take for granted (Box 1), that is, we assume that the world as we know it does not change a great deal from one experience to another similar one (Schutz and Luckmann, 1974), although as Bauman (2000) reminds us, our

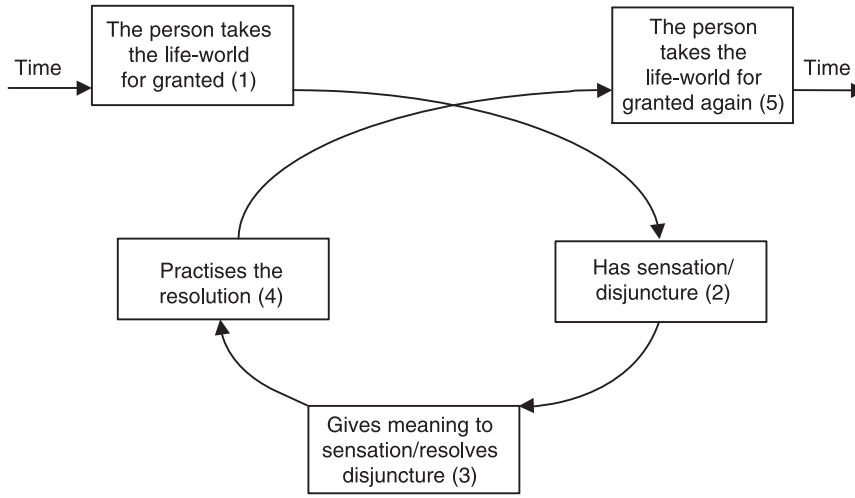

Figure 2.3 The transformation of sensations: learning from primary experience.

world is changing so rapidly that he can refer to it as 'liquid'. Over a period of time, however, we actually develop categories and classifications that allow this taken-for-grantedness to occur. Falzon (1998, p. 38) puts this neatly:

> Encountering the world ... necessarily involves a process of ordering the world in terms of our categories, organising it and classifying it, actively bringing it under control in some way. We always bring some framework to bear on the world in our dealings with it. Without this organisational activity, we would be unable to make any sense of the world at all.

However, the same claim cannot be made for young children – they frequently experience sensations about which they have no meaning or explanation and they have to seek meanings and ask the question that every parent is fearful of: Why? They are in constant disjuncture or, in other words, they start much of their living reflecting Box 2, but as they develop, they gain a perception of the life-world and of the meanings that society gives to their experiences, and so Box 1 becomes more of an everyday occurrence. However, throughout our lives, however old and experienced we are, we still enter novel situations and have sensations that we do not recognise – what is that sound, smell, taste and so on? Both adult and child have to transform the sensation to brain language and eventually to give it meaning. It is in learning the meaning, etc. of the sensation that we incorporate the culture of our life-world into ourselves; this we do in most, if not all, of our learning experiences.

Traditionally, however, adult educators have claimed that children learn differently from adults, but the processes of learning from novel situations is the

same throughout the whole of life, although children have more new experiences than adults do and this is why there appears to be some difference in the learning processes of children and adults. These are primary experiences and we all have them throughout our lives; we all have new sensations in which we cannot take the world for granted – when we enter a state of disjuncture and immediately we raise questions: What do I do now? What does that mean? What is that smell? What is that sound? and so on. Many of these queries may not be articulated in the form of a question, but there is a sense of unknowing (Box 2). It is this disjuncture that is at the heart of conscious experience – because conscious experience arises when we do not know and when we cannot take our world for granted. Through a variety of ways, we give meaning to the sensation and our disjuncture is resolved. An answer (not necessarily a correct one, even if there is one that is correct) to our questions may be given by a significant other in childhood, by a teacher, incidentally in the course of everyday living, through discovery learning or through self-directed learning and so on (Box 3). However, there are times when we just cannot give meaning to primary experiences like this – when we experience beauty, wonder and so on – and it is here that we may begin to locate religious experiences – but time and space forbid us to continue this exploration today (see Jarvis and Hirji, 2006).

When we do get our disjunctures resolved, the answers are social constructs, and so immediately our learning is influenced by the social context within which it occurs. We are encapsulated by our culture. Once we have acquired an answer to our implied question, however, we have to practise or repeat it in order to commit it to memory (Box 4). The more opportunities we have to practise the answer to our initial question, the better we will commit it to memory. Since we do this in our social world, we get feedback, which confirms that we have gotten a socially acceptable resolution or else we have to start the process again, or be different from those people around us. A socially acceptable answer may be called correct, but here we have to be aware of the problem of language – conformity is not always 'correctness'. This process of learning to conform is 'trial and error' learning – but we can also learn to disagree, and it is in agreeing and disagreeing that aspects of our individuality emerge. However, once we have a socially acceptable resolution and have memorised it, we are also in a position to take our world for granted again (Box 5), provided that the social world has not changed in some other way. Most importantly, however, as we change and others change as they learn, the social world is always changing, and so our taken-for-grantedness becomes more suspect (Box 5) since we always experience slightly different situations. The same water does not flow under the same bridge twice and so even our taken-for-grantedness is relative.

The significance of this process in contemporary society, however, is that once we have given meaning to the sensation and committed a meaning to our memories then the significance of the sensation itself recedes in future experiences as the socially acceptable answer (meaning) dominates the process, and when disjuncture then occurs it is more likely because we cannot understand the

meaning, we do not know the meaning of the word and so on, than it is about the sensation itself. Naturally the sensation still occurs but we are less conscious of it. In this sense, we carry social meaning within ourselves – whatever social reality is, it is incorporated in us through our learning from the time of our birth onwards. Indeed, this also reflects the thinking of Bourdieu (1992, p. 127) when he describes habitus as a 'social made body', and he goes on in the same page to suggest that '[s]ocial reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents'. There is a sense then in which we might, unknowingly, be imprisoned behind the bars of our own minds – a phrase which I think was originally termed by Peter Berger. Significantly, this is the type of learning that adult educators have assumed that adults but not children have: these experiences are secondary ones which occur as a result of language or other forms of mediation – secondary experiences are mediated experiences of the world. These always occur in conjunction with primary ones, although we are not always conscious of the primary ones; for instance, when we are listening to someone speak we are not always conscious of how comfortable the chair is, and so on.

We have a continuing ambivalent relationship with our life-world – both in experiencing sensations and in experiencing meaning, both in knowing and not knowing. We have already described the primary experience since it is about experiencing with the senses, and we can continue to have primary experiences throughout our lives so that Figure 2.3 is as relevant for adults as it is for children when the senses are at the heart of the learning. But when the senses are relegated and we are more concerned with the cultural meanings, when we do not know the meanings or words rather than the sounds etc., then we have secondary experiences – these are mediated experiences which are often through speech and the written word, although we are becoming increasingly aware of visual mediation through television and the Web. These are becoming an everyday feature for many of us. Nevertheless, cognition becomes central to learning and while we still have the primary experience, it is relegated to a subsidiary position in the hierarchy of human learning. In Figure 2.4, I have depicted this secondary process in which we have certain forms of cognitive disjuncture. In Box 1, the whole person is in the life-world and at the point of disjuncture has an experience (Box 2).

Having had an experience (Box 2), which might occur as a result of disjuncture, we can reject it, think about it, respond to it emotionally or do something about it – or any combination of these (Boxes 3–5). But there is a double arrow here since there is always feedback at every point in learning as well as a progressive act. What is important about this observation is that we actually learn from the experience and not from the social situation in which the experience occurs, nor from the sensation once meaning has been attributed to it. As a result of the learning, we become changed persons (Box 6) but, as we see, learning is itself a complex process. Once the person is changed, it is self-evident that the next social situation into which the individual enters

is changed. And so, we can return to my experiences – I do not need to have a meaning to learn from the experience, although I might want to give meaning to my experiences as I reflect upon them (Box 3). However, my emotions are transformed (Box 4), my beliefs are affected and so are many attitudes and values (Box 3) and so on. I might even want to do something about them (Box 5). Finally, we see that as a result of learning (Box 6), we become changed persons, and so only in being can we become and in learning we experience the process of becoming. Indeed, I am changed and so, therefore, is the situation in which I interact. Consequently, we can conclude that learning involves three transformations: the sensation, the person and then the social situation.

In Figure 2.4, I have tried to capture the continuous nature of learning by pointing to the second cycle (Box 1_2). However, this diagram must always be understood in relation to Figure 2.3, since it is only by combining them that we can begin to understand the process of human learning. These two

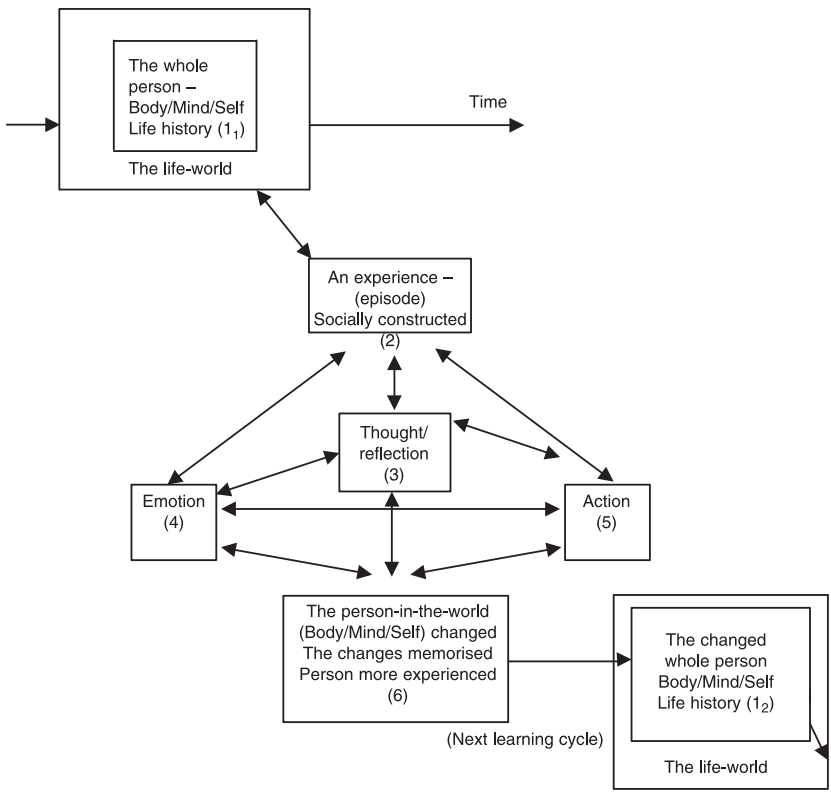

Figure 2.4 The transformation of the person through learning.

diagrams together depict the complex process of experiencing both sensations and meanings simultaneously; it is also a recognition that both primary and secondary experiences occur simultaneously. However, there is a fundamental issue here about the person becoming more experienced which tells us something more about the nature of the person. For as long as I can continue to learn, I remain an unfinished person – the possibility of more growth, more experience and so on remains – or I am still learning to be me! Philosophically speaking, I only am at the moment 'now', and since I cannot stop time I am always becoming; paradoxically, however, through all that becoming I always feel that I am the same self. Being and becoming are inextricably intertwined, and human learning is one of the phenomena that unite them, for it is fundamental to life itself.

I am now, therefore, confronted with another issue in learning to be me and that is to be found in the nature of the person who learns: I have suggested that the person is about knowledge, skills, attitudes, emotions, beliefs, values, senses and even identity, and that through learning each of these can be changed and develop further. But if we look carefully at the literature on learning, we find that there is work on personal and cognitive development (Erikson, 1963; Piaget, 1929), work on religious faith development (Fowler, 1981), on moral development (Kohlberg, 1981) and so on. In precisely the same way, there is research in the way that we develop both our personal and social identities, including Mead (Strauss, 1964) and Wenger (1998) in their different ways. If we are to understand how the person learns to become a whole person, then we need to combine all of these theories, and that is where the book that I am just beginning will take us.

A person's lifetime learning

Since learning is an existential phenomenon, my starting point is the whole person – that is, body and mind. We can describe this process as that of the human essence emerging from the human existent, a process that continues throughout the whole of life, and that essence is moulded through interaction with the world. But that essence does not just emerge unaided, as it were – like the physical body needs food in order to mature, so that human existent needs to have experiences and learn if the human essence is to emerge and develop. The stimulus for this learning is our experience of the world – the point at which we intersect with the world (both physical and social). The only way that we can experience these moments of intersection is through our senses – we see, hear, feel, smell and taste. These then are the beginning of every learning experience, so that the bodily sensations are fundamental to the whole of the learning process. Fundamental to our understanding of learning, therefore, is our understanding of the whole person in the social situation – it is a philosophical anthropology but also a sociology and psychology. Once we recognise that learning is not just psychological and that the exclusive claims

of psychology detract from the fullness of our understanding of learning, we can look afresh at human learning.

But before we do, we need to note that the person is both body and mind and that these are not separate entities – they are interrelated. Therefore, once we have recognised the significance of the senses in our learning theory, we need to examine the relationship between body and mind. There have been many volumes written on this topic and so there is no place to review the relationship in depth here. Suffice to note that there are five major sets of theory about the body–mind relationship. Maslin (2001), for instance, suggests five main theories:

- Dualism: the human person is a composite of two completely separate entities: body and mind. However, contemporary brain scanning techniques have demonstrated that brain activity can be seen as a result of the body receiving sensations, which suggests that there is a close interconnection between them;
- Mind/brain identity: a monist theory that claims that only physical substances exist and that human beings are just part of the material world; therefore, mental states are identical with physical ones, which raises fundamental problems about the nature of culture and meaning;
- Logical or analytical behaviourism: 'statements about the mind and mental states turn out, after analysis, to be statements that describe a person's actual and potential public behaviour' (Maslin, 2001, p. 106). The objections include rejecting the idea that behaviour is the driving force of a human being, and other forces, such as meaning or even thought itself, are significant;
- Functionalism: the mind is a function of the brain. Such a theory rules out meaning, intentionality, irrationality and emotion;
- Non-reductive monism: Maslin (2001, p. 163) describes it thus:

  > It is non-reductive because it does not insist that mental properties are nothing over and above physical properties. On the contrary, it is willing to allow that mental properties are different in kind from physical properties, and not ontologically reducible to them. It is clusters and series of these mental properties which constitute our psychological lives ... property dualism dispenses with the dualism of substances and physical events, hence it is a form of monism. But these physical substances and events possess two very different kinds of property, namely physical properties and, in addition, non-physical, mental properties.

Having examined five different ways of looking at the body–mind relationship we can find no simple theory that allows us to explain it. Exclusive claims should not logically be made for any single theory, although they are made quite widely in contemporary society. Some of the theories, however, appear to be much weaker

than others, such as mind/brain identity, behaviourism and functionalism. This is unfortunate since these are the ones most widely cited and used in contemporary society. We have accepted a form of dualism that may best be explained as a form of non-reductive monism, although we are less happy with dualism *per se*. Yet we have to acknowledge that none of the theories can claim universal allegiance and in each, there are problems that appear insurmountable.

From the above brief philosophical discussion, we can see immediately that profound doubt is cast on many contemporary theories of learning as providing logical understanding of human learning, including behaviourism, information processing and all forms of cognitive theory. This is not to say that they are not valid in as far as they go, simply that they do not go far enough: they all have an incomplete theory of the person. Clearly experientialism comes much closer because it situates the learning in the social context, but even experiential learning theories do not go sufficiently far since they also build on an incomplete theory of the person and few of them actually examine the social context within which the experience occurs. Two theories which offer a great deal of insight into human learning – in fact to my mind the most comprehensive – are those of Illeris (2002) and Wenger (1998).

Conclusion

As with many other learning theories, the two last mentioned start from the psychological and the sociological angle, respectively. Each of them provides tremendous insights into human learning and points us beyond its own boundaries. Both raise profound questions and both include the idea of the human being in relation to the social world which I try to depict in Figure 2.5.

The psychologist traces the arrows out from the person to the external, objectified culture, while the sociologist starts with the objectified culture and points inwards to the individual person. A person's learning must be seen from both perspectives! This leaves us with major problems about how we

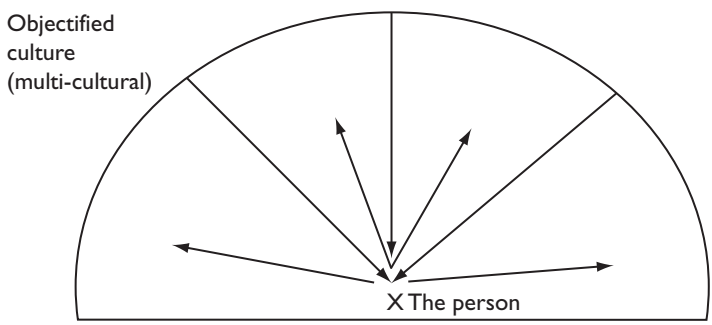

Figure 2.5 The internalisation and externalisation of culture.

study learning. I would argue that we need to start with an understanding of the person – the learner – which is a philosophical perspective that has been sadly lacking from studies of learning, and, thereafter, begin to explore the psychological and the sociological aspects of the leaning process in tandem. But standing in the middle is the person – and analysis of the person calls for a philosophical anthropology. This also leads us to recognising the intersubjectivity of social living and human learning – well captured by Buber's (1994) *I and Thou* – and I believe that this broader perspective will help us understand learning better, although it is impossible to have a theory that explains the learning process in every detail. Paradoxically, despite all that we know and all that we have learned, we will spend the reminder of our lives learning to be ourselves – people in society.

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Chapter 3

What "form" transforms?

A constructive-developmental approach to transformative learning

Robert Kegan

Robert Kegan is a trained psychologist and until 2016 was a Professor of Adult Learning and Professional Development at Harvard University. In 1982 he presented his advanced stage model of human development in his book The Evolving Self*, and in 1994 he elaborated the model further in another important book,* In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*. Later, leadership, change and professional learning and training became the focus of his work. His interest in transformations that lead from one developmental stage to the next led him to take up Jack Mezirow's concept of 'transformative learning' (see Mezirow's chapter later in this book), as can be seen in the following chapter, which is a slightly abridged version of Kegan's chapter in Jack Mezirow et al. (2000),* Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress.

Introduction

Consider the case of Peter and Lynn as they tumble out of bed. "These days," each could say, "my work is too much with me." Different as their work is, they have noticed that in each of their jobs, a similar circumstance has stirred them up.

Lynn has been at Highland Junior High School for twelve years, originally as an English teacher. Three years ago she became chair of the English department, and last year it was decided that chairpersons would become part of the principal's newly formed Leadership Council. The school had decided to adopt a site-based management (SBM) philosophy in which the responsibility and authority for running the school would no longer be vested only in the principal, Carolyn Evans, but shared mainly among the principal and the faculty or its representatives.

Peter has worked at BestRest Incorporated for nineteen years. A bedding manufacturer with twelve regional factories, BestRest hired Peter during the summers while he was still in college. He caught the eye of Anderson Wright, then a plant manager, who became his mentor. As Anderson rose through the ranks he brought Peter along. Eventually, when he became a corporate vice president, he put Peter in charge of an independent product line. Peter enjoyed the continuing close association with Anderson, whom he consulted frequently and easily.

But life became more complicated for Peter when Anderson decided to make the independent product line a separate company division and Peter its new

head. "If you're game, Peter," said Anderson, "and I think you're ready, I want you to think of the new line as a company on its own – SafeSleep Products – and I want you to run it." Peter could hear the excitement in Anderson's voice, his pleasure in offering Peter what Anderson clearly regarded as a wonderful present. So Peter, without hesitation or conscious deliberation, moved himself to rejoin Anderson in this new place.

Thus Lynn and Peter, the teacher and the business executive who seldom feel their work has anything in common, find themselves contending with a similar circumstance: worker-participation initiatives have recast the issues of responsibility, ownership, and authority at work. Both are miserable and demoralized about the changes at work. Let's take a closer look to find out why.

"I can give you an example of why this thing is not working at Highland," Lynn says. "Probably every department chair and most of the faculty would agree that there are big flaws in the way we do faculty evaluations. First of all, faculty evaluations are based on two class visits by the principal. They are announced visits, so teachers end up preparing for a performance and they don't feel that the principal gets a fair sample of their work. The kids know what's going on and act weird – they're on 'good behavior' too, and completely un-spontaneous. The principal writes up a generally innocuous report. Nobody is learning a thing, but at least the principal can tell the central office that 'everyone's been evaluated' and she has the paperwork to prove it.

"I went along with this, but by the time I'd become the English department chair, I got the idea that the school should be a learning place for everyone. I decided that if we want kids to be learning in school, it would help them if we modeled learning ourselves. It was actually some version of this that got me excited about being on the Leadership Council in the first place. I had some different ideas about faculty evaluation. I wanted to return the emphasis to learning, not file-filling.

"So when Carolyn proposed site-based management to our faculty, I admired her for being willing to let some other voices come into the leadership of the school, but I wasn't thinking, 'Good, now we're going to take over.' I don't want to take over. I don't want to be the principal. But I don't want Carolyn being the department chair either, and I felt that we had a better chance of clearing these things up in group discussions, like we'd have on the council, than in one-on-one meetings in Carolyn's office.

"The whole thing started to fall apart for me this semester around just this issue of faculty evaluation, and it wasn't even my initiative. When Alan – he's the history chair – brought in his proposal, it was a complete surprise to me. Basically, his proposal was that the history department be allowed to run a one-year experiment on evaluation. He wanted to get the performance-anxiety, test-taking dimension out of it. He wanted people to have the option of entering supervisory relationships with him or a few other senior members of the department that would really be more consultative than supervisory. The supervisor/consultant would, in effect, be 'hired' by the faculty member to advance the faculty member's learning goals. The teacher could 'fire' the consultant without consequences. No file entries for one year. Try to get a sense of how the faculty used it and how

much and what kind of learning was going on, but all anonymously, evaluating the experiment, not the teachers.

"I loved the idea, of course. I was envious that I hadn't thought of it myself. It seemed like a good way of putting into operation my idea that the faculty member should run his evaluation, that the evaluation should be aimed at learning, not putting on a show, that the chair could serve as a consultant and a resource to self-directed learning.

"We've now had three long discussions about this on the council, and we still haven't had the first word about the real merits of Alan's proposal. As I now realize, the issue for Carolyn had less to do with promoting faculty learning than with the precedent it sets about accountability in general and accountability to her specifically. Stop visits by the principal? Let the faculty decide what they need to learn? No evaluations for the files by anybody! These didn't go down easily with Carolyn. Rather than take her usual stance of speaking last in a conversation, she was the first to speak after Alan made his proposal, and what she had to say pretty much silenced the rest of us. She didn't identify any merits in the proposal. She didn't even acknowledge the implicit problems the proposal was at least trying to address. She just said basically, 'This is something we can't do.'

"I'm not proud of the way I responded, but it was just such a unilateral and imperial stance for her to take, and I guess I got mad. What I said was, 'Why, Carolyn? Is it illegal what Alan is proposing?' and everyone else laughed and I could see that Carolyn was very angry. I hadn't meant it exactly the way it came out. I didn't mean she was out of line to object to the proposal. I was reacting to the way she framed it. I didn't feel she had the right to just shut down the conversation. At the time I attributed my overreaction and sarcasm to the fact this was an especially important issue to me personally, and I resented how it was being dismissed. That didn't justify my sarcasm, but it did dignify it somehow.

"Anyhow, after that council session Carolyn asked to meet with me in her office, and she read me the riot act: How could I do that to her? Didn't I know how much she counted on my loyalty? Didn't I realize how powerful I was as a department chair, and that to take such a doubting view when she had clearly committed herself was terribly undermining? That she thought of us as partners, that we had worked so well together all these years, and how it was even more important with SBM that we read each other's signals well and be a good team. I had to say, 'Whoa, Carolyn, time out, I'm having too many reactions to all this.'

"We ended up having a good conversation, actually, one of our best in years, but it was really difficult. I had to tell her I thought it was unfair of her to trade on my loyalty to her, that I *did* respect her and I was grateful to her for her support to me professionally over the years, but that I was sure she was not interested in a friend who was a clone. This got us into the whole SBM, Leadership Council thing, and whether that was itself a team, and what were the expectations about how we functioned as members of that council. Carolyn broke down and cried and said she was finding SBM terribly hard, that she had had no idea what she was getting into, that half the time she had nightmares that the school was going to fall apart because there was more chaos than leadership, and the other half of the

time she had nightmares that the school was getting along too well without her running things, that SBM was about gradually making the principal irrelevant."

Were Peter to tell us what his new role as head of a division really felt like, he might say something like this: "Honestly? It's definitely a different ball game! What game is it? Well, let's see. I guess you could say before I was president, I was playing a game of catch. Anderson would throw things at me and I'd catch them, I'd throw things back at him and he'd catch them. And now? Now I'd say I'm a juggler. There's not one ball, there are five, and then there are ten, and then there are fifteen! People keep tossing more in to me to add to those I'm juggling. But I'm not throwing to anyone. I'm just throwing them into the air. And my job as the juggler is to keep them all going up there, to not let any of them drop to the ground.

"You couldn't believe the number of things that come across my desk. 'Anderson says to take this to you now.' 'Anderson says he's not the guy on this anymore; you are.' If it isn't one thing, it's another. You have to deal with a lot of people's feelings about this change. Everybody thought the company concept for SafeSleep was a hot idea when Anderson proposed it, but now that we're actually doing it, a lot of people aren't so sure. I'm not even sure Anderson's so sure at this point. People keep asking me how I feel about the change, but I don't have time to think about how I feel about it because I spend half my day dealing with how everybody else feels about it.

"Take Ted, for example. He's one of our salespeople. I've known Ted ten years in this business. Ted's putting a lot of pressure on me not to separate him from the SafeSleep line. Ted's a mattress salesman and a damn good one. He does excellent work for his customers. They love him and he loves them. The SafeSleep line got its start by accident, or what Anderson called 'entrepreneurial jujitsu,' turning a weakness into a strength. New government codes mandated that we manufacture flame-retardant mattresses, and it cost millions of dollars to set up the capacity. Since we had the capacity, Anderson reasoned, why not use it for other things, too? Presto! The SafeSleep line. But originally these products were just an extra that the mattress salespeople offered their furniture stores. The store used them as 'sweeteners' to sell their customers our top-of-the-line mattresses. Everybody was happy. The furniture store's customer liked the freebie; the store liked the mattress sale; our salespeople liked the increased mattress orders they got from the stores. 'So why are you ruining a nice thing?' Ted wants to know. 'Peter, I'm family,' he says to me. 'And Harold is not,' which is true. 'So why are you letting this guy take the bread off my table?' he says.

"I hired Harold soon after I became president of SafeSleep because Harold had sales experience in bedclothes. He was the first nonmattress salesperson in the place, and I thought we needed that for the new company. He's turned out to be a dynamo. The guy's got more ideas per square inch than I've ever seen, and most of them make sense. But they're also making some people, like Ted, mad. And I'm not so sure Anderson's very keen about him either.

"Harold's take was that BestRest was choking SafeSleep, that the best reason for setting up SafeSleep as a separate company was that its growth was stunted

in the shadow of the mattress company. Furniture stores, he said, were not the place to be selling pajamas and not even the best place to sell quilts. And on and on. It all made sense to me, but whenever you start talking about doing things differently, people get worried about what it means for them. His view is that if SafeSleep is really going to be its own company, it needs its own *identity*, its own *purpose*. It has to get out of the hip pocket of BestRest.

"The problem with this is that as soon as you pull the SafeSleep line away from the mattress sales force, a guy like Ted, who has gotten a lot of mileage out of it, yells 'Ouch.' I think Harold's basically right, but Ted's probably right, too, that his mattress orders will go down, at least for a while, if we pull the SafeSleep line from him. Ted's not just worried about his volume, he's worried about his bonus benefits. Why doesn't he go make his stores feel guilty? It's their fault if they short-order him, not mine. Give me a break!

"I consider Ted and Anderson two of my best friends, and if this new job ruins both of these friendships I won't be surprised. When Anderson offered me the presidency, he said it was a way to move our relationship to a whole new level, that we were becoming true colleagues. It's a whole new level all right! I guess if you never want to see a guy again you should become true colleagues with him! But I know if you ask Anderson he'll say he's just as available, that it's *me*, that I don't call. And that's true. I just stay away from him these days and figure that when he needs to tell me something he will. I'd leave our meetings feeling as if we'd talked a lot, but I had no clearer idea where I was when I left.

"It was very clear that he didn't want to be asked straight out what he thought we should do. It was very clear that he wanted me to have a plan. But it was also clear that he liked some plans better than others. He'd dump all over a lot of Harold's ideas. I'd leave his office and find myself down on Harold for the next three days. I'd feel that he was trying to warn me away from Harold but wouldn't come right out and say so. What I'd always liked about Anderson was that he was a straight shooter. He'd always tell you exactly what he wanted. I want Anderson to sign on to my plans, and he keeps saying, 'If this is where you want to put your chips.' A fat lot of help that is! When I tell him it must be nice for him to be out of it, he gets annoyed and says, 'Don't think for a minute I'm out of it! You're turning SafeSleep from a cute afterthought into a corporate factor, and if it goes down the tubes they'll be asking me what happened.' And then I feel even less reassured because now I'm responsible for Anderson's not getting hurt. That's a lot of what's different about being the president. I've got to worry about Ted. I've got to worry about Anderson. And I'm not exactly sure what I did to deserve this wonderful job."

Peter and Lynn are dealing with what we might call the hidden curriculum of adult life as it expresses itself here in the world of work. If we were to look at the whole of contemporary culture in the West as a kind of school, and consider adult roles as the courses in which we are *enrolled*, most adults have a full and demanding schedule. The "courses" of parenting, partnering, working, and living in an increasingly diverse society are demanding ones, yet most adults are enrolled in all

of them. What does it take to succeed in these courses? What is the nature of the change struggling students would have to undergo to become successful students?

These are the kinds of questions I posed in my book *In Over Our Heads* (1994), of which Peter and Lynn are the heroes. In the last several years since the book has been published, I have heard the thinking of a few thousand adult educators about Peter and Lynn in various workshops, institutes, and summer conferences. Most people see Lynn as more capable and handling better the new demands at work. Although people often want to claim that Peter has a number of external problems that Lynn does not – he has more at stake, they say; his organizational culture is less supportive, they say; he has a male boss, they say, who isn't as open to conversation as Lynn's boss – most people do not attribute Lynn's greater success to these external advantages alone.

Without using the terms, people find Lynn more capable in each of four familiar quadrants of the psychological self: *cognitive* ("Lynn seems to have more of a mind of her own"; "She has a Big Picture and an overall 'take' on things, but Peter seems lost and overwhelmed"), *affective* ("Lynn takes responsibility for how she feels, understands why she feels that way, and can even step out of being controlled by her feelings"; "Peter seems swamped and overrun by his feelings"; "He blames other people for how he feels"), *interpersonal* ("Peter is like a victim"; "He's too dependent"; "Lynn is able to set clear boundaries in a complicated multidimensional relationship, but Peter is not, and seems run by his relationships to people at work who are his friends"), and *intrapersonal* ("Peter doesn't seem very self-reflective"; "He's thinking about what other people are thinking, and she's thinking about her own thinking").

What sort of transformation would it take for Peter to exercise the capabilities people see in Lynn? What capabilities does Peter already possess and what prior transformations in his learning might their presence imply? Why don't his present capabilities serve him in his new circumstances?

Transformational learning and the problem of its success

Some academic writing – that which is most frequently parodied and ridiculed – uses obscure language to hide the fact that nothing terribly original is being expressed. Some unappealingly obscure academic language is in the service of genuinely new ideas; the thinkers are just better at creating new thinking than at devising the language required to express it. And on occasion a richly heuristic set of novel ideas finds an appealing language for its expression and the field takes off. In psychology, Erikson's concepts of identity and identity crisis are examples. Gardner's multiple intelligences is a more recent one. And surely transformational learning is another. Jack Mezirow's genius and our good fortune derive from this double-header ability to provide accessible new language in service of valuable new ideas. But as Mezirow well knows, this kind of success spawns its own problems. The language can become so

appealing it begins to be used for myriad purposes; its meaning can be distorted, its distinct ideas lost. It can take on quasi-religious qualities, in this case of dramatic "conversion." Transformation begins to refer to any kind of change or process at all. Piaget (1954) distinguished between assimilative processes, in which new experience is shaped to conform to existing knowledge structures, and accommodative processes, in which the structures themselves change in response to new experience. Ironically, as the language of transformation is more widely assimilated, it risks losing its genuinely transformative potential!

In this chapter I try to protect the genuinely landscape-altering potential in the concept of transformational learning by suggesting several of its distinct features that I believe need to be more explicit:

- Transformational kinds of learning need to be more clearly distinguished from informational kinds of learning, and each needs to be recognized as valuable in any learning activity, discipline, or field.
- The *form* that is undergoing transformation needs to be better understood; if there is no form, there is no transformation.
- At the heart of a form is a way of knowing (what Mezirow calls a "frame of reference"); thus genuinely transformational learning is always to some extent an epistemological change rather than merely a change in behavioral repertoire or an increase in the quantity or fund of knowledge.
- Even as the concept of transformational learning needs to be *narrowed* by focusing more explicitly on the epistemological, it needs to be *broadened* to include the whole lifespan; transformational learning is not the province of adulthood or adult education alone.
- Adult educators with an interest in transformational learning may need a better understanding of their students' current epistemologies so as not to create learning designs that unwittingly presuppose the very capacities in the students their designs might seek to promote.
- Adult educators may better discern the nature of learners' particular needs for transformational learning by better understanding not only their students' present epistemologies but also the epistemological complexity of the present learning challenges they face in their lives.

The remainder of this chapter addresses each of these points in the context of the predicaments of Peter and Lynn.

Informational learning and transformational learning

Learning aimed at increasing our fund of knowledge, at increasing our repertoire of skills, at extending already established cognitive structures all deepen the resources available to an existing frame of reference. Such learning is literally

in-form-ative because it seeks to bring valuable new contents into the existing form of our way of knowing.

No learning activity, discipline, or field is well nourished without continuous opportunities to engage in this kind of learning. Certainly no passenger wants an airline pilot whose professional training was long on collaborative reflective dialogue leading to ever more complex apprehensions of the phenomena of flight but short on the technique of landing a plane in a crosswind; no patient wants a doctor well trained in such dialogue but unable to tell a benign lump from a cancerous tumor.

However, learning aimed at changes not only in *what* we know but changes in *how* we know has an almost opposite rhythm about it and comes closer to the etymological meaning of *education* ("leading out"). "Informative" learning involves a kind of leading in, or filling of the form (see Figure 3.1). Trans-*form*-ative learning puts the form itself at risk of change (and not just change but increased capacity). If one is bound by concrete thinking in the study of, say, history, then yes, further learning of the informative sort might involve the mastery of more historical facts, events, characters, and outcomes. But further learning of a transformative sort might also involve the development of a capacity for abstract thinking so that one can ask more general, thematic questions *about* the facts, or consider the perspectives and biases of those who wrote the historical account *creating* the facts. Both kinds of learning are expansive and valuable, one within a preexisting frame of mind and the other reconstructing the very frame.

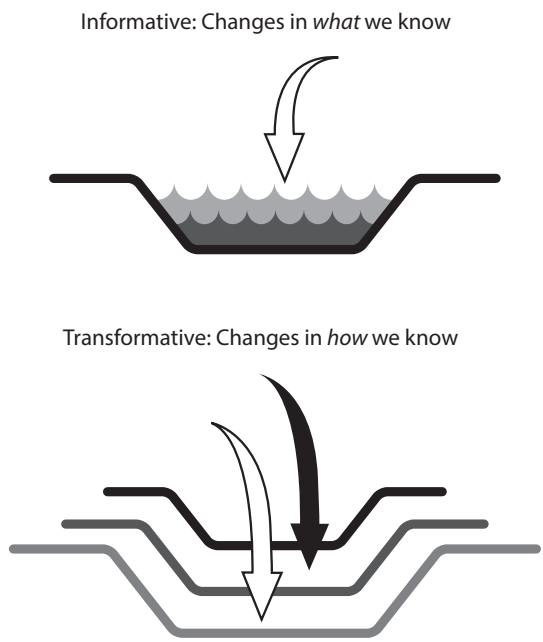


Figure 3.1 Two kinds of learning: informative and transformative

But only the latter would I call transformative or transformational. Transformation should not refer to just any kind of change, even to any kind of dramatic, consequential change. I know a 10-year-old who decided to read the entire encyclopedia, A through Z, for a summer project. His appetite and his recall were certainly impressive. His ability even to sustain his interest in a series of very short-term exposures was commendable. But I see nothing transformational about his learning.

Changes in one's fund of knowledge, one's confidence as a learner, one's self-perception as a learner, one's motives in learning, one's self-esteem – these are all potentially important kinds of changes, all desirable, all worthy of teachers thinking about how to facilitate them. But it is possible for any or all of these changes to take place without any transformation because they could all occur within the existing form or frame of reference.

And much of the time there would be no problem whatever in this being exactly what occurs. Lynn, for example, already demonstrates the complex capacity to set boundaries, to keep separate her simultaneous relationship to Carolyn as friend and as colleague so that the claims from one sphere are not inappropriately honored in another. She demonstrates the capacity to generate an internal vision that guides her purposes and allows her to sort through and make judgments about the choices, expectations, and proposals of others. Although it would certainly be possible for the underlying form of her way of knowing to undergo further transformation, it may not be necessary at the moment. She may be in greater need of learning additional skills at detecting more readily circumstances that are likely to risk such boundary violations, or how one more effectively gathers a consensus to bring to life the vision she is able intellectually to create. Such learnings could be extremely valuable, make her even more effective, and increase her enjoyment of work and her circumstances – and none of that learning need be transformational.

Peter, on the other hand, would be ill-served by a kind of learning that was only informative. He is overreliant on the opinion of others, too dependent on signals from others to direct his own choices and behaviors. He could experience a kind of learning that might dramatically enhance his signal-detecting capabilities in twelve different ways. But dramatic as such changes might be, I would not call them transformational because they do not give Peter the opportunity to reconstruct the very role of such signals in his life. Given his current work circumstances, if he cannot effect this change he is going to continue to have a difficult time.

Informational and transformational kinds of learning are each honorable, valuable, meritable, dignifiable activities. Each can be enhancing, necessary, and challenging for the teacher to facilitate. In given moments or contexts, a heavier weighting of one or the other may be called for.

What form transforms? The centrality of epistemology

As the foregoing suggests, the saving specificity of a concept like transformational learning may lie in a more explicit understanding of the form we believe is

undergoing some change. If there is no form, there is no transformation. But what really constitutes a form?

Mezirow's term *frame of reference* is a useful way to engage this question. Its province is necessarily epistemological. Our frame of reference may be passionately clung to or casually held, so it clearly has an emotional or affective coloring. Our frame of reference may be an expression of our familial loyalties or tribal identifications, so it clearly has a social or interpersonal coloring. Our frame of reference may have an implicit or explicit ethical dimension, so it clearly has a moral coloring. But what is the phenomenon itself that takes on all these colorings? Mezirow says a frame of reference involves both a habit of mind and a point of view. Both of these suggest that, at its root, a frame of reference is a way of knowing.

"Epistemology" refers to precisely this: not *what* we know but our way of knowing. Attending to the epistemological inevitably involves attending to two kinds of processes, both at the heart of a concept like transformational learning. The first is what we might call *meaning-forming*, the activity by which we shape a coherent meaning out of the raw material of our outer and inner experiencing. Constructivism recognizes that reality does not happen preformed and waiting for us merely to copy a picture of it. Our perceiving is simultaneously an act of conceiving, of interpreting. "Percept without concept is blind," Kant said. "Our experience," Huxley said, "is less what happens to us, and more what we make of what happens to us."

The second process inherent in the epistemological is what we might call *reforming our meaning-forming*. This is a metaprocess that affects the very terms of our meaning-constructing. We do not only form meaning, and we do not only change our meanings; we change the very form by which we are making our meanings. We change our epistemologies.

These two processes inherent in epistemology are actually at the heart of two lines of social-scientific thought that should be in much closer conversations with each other: the educational line of thought is transformational learning, and the psychological line of thought is constructive developmentalism. Constructive developmental psychology (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Piaget, 1954; Kohlberg, 1984; Belenky et al., 1986) attends to the natural evolution of the forms of our meaning-constructing (hence "constructive-developmental"). A more explicit rendering of transformational learning, I suggest, attends to the deliberate efforts and designs that support changes in the learner's form of knowing. Adult educators with an interest in supporting transformational learning can look to constructive-developmental theory as a source of ideas about (1) the dynamic architecture of "that form which transforms," that is, a form of knowing; and (2) the dynamic architecture of "reforming our forms of knowing," that is, the psychological process of transformations in our knowing.

Constructive-developmental theory invites those with an interest in transformational learning to consider that a form of knowing always consists of a relationship or temporary equilibrium between the subject and the object in one's knowing. The subject–object relationship forms the cognate or core of an epistemology. That which is "object" we can look at, take responsibility for, reflect upon, exercise control over, integrate with some other way of knowing. That

which is "subject" we are run by, identified with, fused with, at the effect of. We cannot be responsible for that to which we are subject. What is "object" in our knowing describes the thoughts and feelings we say we have; what is "subject" describes the thinking and feeling that has us. We "have" object; we "are" subject.

Constructive-developmental theory looks at the process it calls development as the gradual process by which what was "subject" in our knowing becomes "object." When a way of knowing moves from a place where we are "had by it" (captive of it) to a place where we "have it," and can be in relationship to it, the form of our knowing has become more complex, more expansive. This somewhat formal, explicitly epistemological rendering of development comes closest, in my view, to the real meaning of transformation in transformational learning theory.

Transformational learning as a lifelong phenomenon

As all good teachers know, every student comes with a "learning past" that is an important part of his or her present and future learning. Important features of this past – for adult learners especially, and their teachers – include the history of their relationship to the subject at hand and the history of their personal disposition toward the enterprise of learning itself. But for the adult educator with an interest in supporting transformative learning, an important and often overlooked feature of their students' learning pasts is their history of prior transformations.

Although the more explicitly epistemological definition of transformative learning this chapter advances is intended to limit our definition of transformation (so that not every kind of change, even important change, constitutes transformation), it also expands our exploration of the phenomenon to the entire lifespan. Much of the literature on transformational learning really constitutes an exploration of what constructive-developmental theory and research identifies as but one of several gradual, epochal transformations in knowing of which persons are shown to be capable throughout life. This particular transformation, reflected in the contrast between Peter's and Lynn's constructions of their similar predicaments at work, is empirically the most widespread gradual transformation we find in adulthood, so it is not surprising that adult educators have come to focus on it. But constructive-developmental theory suggests that (a) it is not the only transformation in the form of our knowing possible in adulthood; (b) even this transformation will be better understood and facilitated if its history is better honored and its future better appreciated; and (c) we will better discern the nature of learners' particular needs for transformational learning by better understanding not only their present epistemologies but the epistemological complexity of the present learning challenges they face in their lives.

The transformation that Peter would undergo were he to construct experience more like Lynn is a shift away from being "made up by" the values and expectations of one's "surround" (family, friends, community, culture) that get uncritically internalized and with which one becomes identified, toward developing an internal authority that makes choices about these external values and expectations according to one's own self-authored belief system. One goes from being psychologically

"written by" the socializing press to "writing upon" it, a shift from a socialized to a self-authoring epistemology, in the lingo of constructive-developmental theory.

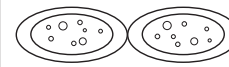
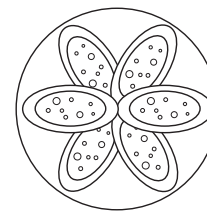
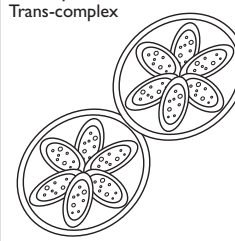
As pervasive and powerful as this gradual transformation may be, it is only one of several shifts in the deep underlying epistemology (the form that transforms) we use to organize meaning. Longitudinal and cross-sectorial research, using a reliable interview instrument to discern what epistemologies an individual has access to (Lahey and others, 1988), identifies five distinctly different epistemologies (Kegan, 1994). As Figure 3.2 suggests, each of these can be described with respect to what is subject and what is object, and each shift entails the movement of what had been subject in the old epistemology to what is object in the new epistemology. Thus the basic principle of complexification of mind here is not the mere addition of new capacities (an aggregation model), nor the substitution of a new capacity for an old one (a replacement model), but the subordination of once-ruling capacities to the dominion of more complex capacities, an evolutionary model that again distinguishes transformation from other kinds of change.

An array of increasingly complex epistemologies, such as those described in Figure 3.2, works against the unhelpful tendency to see a person like Peter, who orders experience predominantly from the socialized epistemology, only in terms of what he cannot do, and to see a person like Lynn, who predominantly orders experience from the self-authoring epistemology, only in terms of what she can.

Surely any educator who wished to be helpful to Peter, especially one wishing to facilitate transformational learning, would do well to know and respect where Peter is coming from, not just where it may be valuable for him to go. A constructive-developmental perspective on transformational learning creates an image of this kind of learning over a lifetime as the gradual traversing of a succession of increasingly elaborate bridges. Three injunctions follow from this image. First, we need to know which bridge we are on. Second, we need to know how far along the learner is in traversing that particular bridge. Third, we need to know that, if it is to be a bridge that is safe to walk across, it must be well anchored on both sides, not just the culminating side. We cannot overattend to where we want the student to be – the far side of the bridge – and ignore where the student is. If Peter is at the very beginning – the near side – of the bridge that traverses the socialized and the self-authoring epistemologies, it may be important to consider that this also means he is at the far side of a prior bridge. Only by respecting what he has already gained and what he would have to lose were he to venture forth is it likely we could help him continue his journey.

Although it is easy and tempting to define Peter by what he does not or cannot do (especially in comparison to Lynn), it is also true that his socialized epistemology permits him all the following capacities: he can think abstractly, construct values and ideals, introspect, subordinate his short-term interests to the welfare of a relationship, and orient to and identify with the expectations of those social groups and interpersonal relationships of which he wishes to feel himself a part.

From the vantage point of empirical research, we know that it ordinarily takes the first two decades of living to develop these complex capacities, and some people have not developed them even by then (Kegan, 1982, 1994). Many parents, for example,

		SUBJECT	OBJECT	UNDERLYING STRUCTURE
		PERCEPTIONS Fantasy SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS/ IMPULSES	Movement Sensation	Single point/immediate/atomistic
		CONCRETE Actuality Data, cause-and-effect POINT OF VIEW Role-concept Simple reciprocity (tit-for-tat) ENDURING DISPOSITIONS Needs, preferences Self-concept	Perceptions Social perception Impulses	Durable category 
The socialized mind	TRADITIONALISM	ABSTRACTIONS Ideality Inference, generalization Hypothesis, proposition Ideals, values **MUTUALITY/INTERPERSONALISM** **Role consciousness** **Mutual reciprocity** *INNER STATES* *Subjectivity, self-consciousness*	Concrete Point of view Enduring dispositions Needs, preferences	Cross-categorical Trans-categorical 
The self-authoring mind	MODERNISM	ABSTRACT SYSTEMS Ideology Formulation, authorization Relations between abstractions **INSTITUTION** **Relationship-regulating forms** **Multiple-role consciousness** *SELF-AUTHORSHIP* *Self-regulation, self-formation* *Identity, autonomy, individuation*	Abstractions Mutuality Interpersonalism Inner states Subjectivity Self-consciousness	System/complex 
The self-transforming mind	POST-MODERNISM	DIALECTICAL Trans-ideological/post-ideological Testing formulation, paradox Contradiction, oppositeness **INTER-INSTITUTIONAL** **Relationship between forms** **Interpenetration of self and other** *SELF-TRANSFORMATION* *Interpenetration of selves* *Inter-individuation*	Abstract system ideology Institution relationship- regulating forms Self-authorship Self-regulation Self formation	Trans-system Trans-complex 

LINES OF DEVELOPMENT	
K	COGNITIVE
E	**INTERPERSONAL**
Y	*INTRAPERSONAL*

Figure 3.2 Five increasingly complex epistemologies

would be overjoyed were their teenagers to have these capacities. Consider as an example parents' wish that their children be trustworthy and hold up their end of family agreements, such as abiding by a curfew on Saturday night. What appears to be a call for a specific behavior ("Be home by midnight or phone us") or the acquisition of a specific knowledge ("Know that it is important to us that you do what you say you will") actually turns out to be something more epistemological. Parents do not simply want their kids to get themselves home by midnight on Saturday night; they want them to do it for a specific reason. If their kids abide by a curfew only because the parents have an effective enough monitoring system to detect if they do not and a sufficiently noxious set of consequences to impose when they do not, the parents would ultimately be disappointed even though the kids are behaving correctly. Parents of teens want to resign from the role of "parent police." They want their kids to hold up their end of the agreement, not simply because they can frighten them into doing so but because the kids have begun to intrinsically prioritize the importance of being trustworthy. This is not first of all a claim on their kids' behavior; it is a claim on their minds. Nor will the mere acquisition of the knowledge content ("It is important to my parents that I do what I say I will") be sufficient to bring the child home by midnight. Many non-behaving teens know precisely what their parents value. They just do not themselves hold these values! They hold them extrinsically, as landmines they need to take account of, to maneuver around so they do not explode.

What the parents are really hoping for from their teens is a transformation, a shift away from an epistemology oriented to self-interest, the short term, and others-as-supplies-to-the-self. This epistemology they ordinarily develop in late childhood. Rather they need to relativize or subordinate their own immediate interests on behalf of the interests of a social relationship, the continued participation in which they value more highly than the gratification of an immediate need. When they make this epistemological shift, sustaining a mutual bond of trust with their parents becomes more important than partying till dawn.

And when adolescents do make this shift (to the socialized mind in Figure 3.2), interestingly, we consider them to be responsible. For a teen, the very capacity to be "written upon," to be "made up by," constitutes responsibility. It is Peter's misfortune that this perfectly dignifiable and complicated epistemology is a better match with the hidden curriculum of adolescence than that of modern adulthood, which makes demands on us to win some distance from the socializing press and actually regards people who uncritically internalize and identify with the values and expectations of others as insufficiently responsible! Parents who, for example, cannot set limits on their children, who cannot defy them, or who are susceptible to being "made up" by their wishes we regard as irresponsible. To master this new curriculum, Peter needs a new epistemology. But this does not mean that he did not earlier undergo an important transformation (to the socialized epistemology), and it does not mean he did not learn well or did not learn enough. In fact, by all accounts he was a very successful learner. His present difficulties arise because the complexity of the "life curriculum" he faces has gotten qualitatively more challenging. In the words of Ronald Heifetz (1995), what he faces are not technical challenges (the sort that can be addressed by what I call "informational learning"), but

adaptive challenges, the kind that require not merely knowing more but knowing differently. For this reason, he is in need of supports to transformational learning.

The particular epistemological transformation Peter needs help to begin – the transformation to a self-authoring frame of reference – is the particular transformation we often find unwittingly privileged in writings on adult learning. Mezirow (2000) talks about our need to pierce a taken-for-granted relationship to the assumptions that surround us. "We must become critically reflective of the assumptions of the person communicating" with us, he says.

"We need to know whether the person who gives us a diagnosis about our health is a trained medical worker, or that one who gives us direction at work is authorized to do so." In essence, Mezirow says, we need to "take as object ... what is taken for granted, like conventional wisdom; [or] a particular religious worldview," rather than being subject to it. This is not only a call for an epistemological shift; it is a call for a *particular* epistemological shift, the move from the socialized to the self-authoring mind. This is a call that makes nothing but good sense provided the adult learner is not too far from the entrance to this particular epistemological bridge (nor has already traversed it).

And even when it does make good curricular sense, we must be careful not to create learning designs that get out too far ahead of the learner. For example, when Mezirow says transformational educators want to support the learner's ability "to negotiate his or her own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than simply to act on those of others," he again sounds the call for the move toward self-authoring, and he quite understandably invokes a model of education that will support this shift: "The generally accepted model of adult education involves a transfer of authority from the educator to the learners." But even when this particular shift is the appropriate transformational bridge for our student, all of us, as adult educators, need help in discerning how rapidly or gradually this shift in authority will optimally take place for that student, which is a function of how far he or she is along this particular bridge.

The shift in authority to which Mezirow refers reflects the familiar call in the adult education literature for us to regard and respect all our adult students as self-directed learners, almost by virtue of their adult status alone. Gerald Grow (1991) defines self-directed learners as those who are able to:

> examine themselves, their culture and their milieu in order to understand how to separate what they feel from what they should feel, what they value from what they should value, and what they want from what they should want. They develop critical thinking, individual initiative, and a sense of themselves as co-creators of the culture that shapes them.

But when the adult education experts tell us they want students to "understand how to separate what they feel from what they should feel, what they value from what they should value, and what they want from what they should want," do they take seriously enough the possibility that when the socialized mind dominates our meaning-making, what we should feel is what we do feel, what we should value is

what we do value, and what we should want is what we do want? Their goal therefore may not be a matter of getting students merely to identify and value a distinction between two parts that already exist, but of fostering a qualitative evolution of mind that actually creates the distinction. Their goal may involve something more than the cognitive act of "distinction," a bloodless word that fails to capture the human wrenching of the self from its cultural surround. Although this goal is perfectly suited to assisting adults in meeting the bigger culture-wide "curriculum" of the modern world, educators may need a better understanding of how ambitious their aspiration is and how costly the project may seem to their students.

Adult students are not all automatically self-directing merely by virtue of being adults, or even easily trained to become so. Educators seeking self-direction from their adult students are not merely asking them to take on new skills, modify their learning style, or increase their self-confidence. They are asking many of them to change the whole way they understand themselves, their world, and the relationship between the two. They are asking many of them to put at risk the loyalties and devotions that have made up the very foundation of their lives. We acquire personal authority, after all, only by relativizing – that is, only by fundamentally altering – our relationship to public authority. This is a long, often painful voyage, and one that, much of the time, may feel more like mutiny than a merely exhilarating (and less self-conflicted) expedition to discover new lands.

Note how lost at sea Peter becomes when his long-time mentor unwittingly assumes his capacity for self-directed learning. Anderson no doubt sees himself as an emancipatory, empowering employer-as-adult-educator who scrupulously and consistently stands by his transfer of authority, taking care not to undermine Peter by taking on business that should properly be referred to him and refusing even Peter's veiled requests to step in and once again provide a map and a destination. What Anderson sees as his testimony to Peter's capacity for self-direction, Peter sees as a bewildering vacuum of externally supplied expectation and an indirect message from his boss that he no longer cares that much what happens to Peter. I have heard countless complaints about Anderson's ineffectiveness as a good leader, that he has asked too much of Peter all at once; and yet when we have the opportunity to examine our own leadership as adult educators, few of us can escape the conclusion that we have ourselves – on many occasions with the most emancipatory of intentions – been Andersons in our own classrooms.

Finally, an array of epistemologies such as that depicted in Figure 3.2 reminds us that even as our designs can get too far ahead of where some of our students are, so they can also fall too far behind; even as we can fail to do Peter justice by seeing him only in terms of what he cannot do, we can fail to do justice to Lynn's learning opportunities by seeing her only in terms of those capacities she has already developed. The move toward the self-authoring mind – valorized though it may unwittingly be in the subtexts of our aspirations for transformational learning – is not the only fundamental epistemological shift in adulthood. Nor are the learning challenges that call for the self-authoring mind the only challenges adults of this new century will face.

The self-authoring mind is equipped, essentially, to meet the challenges of modernism. Unlike traditionalism, in which a fairly homogeneous set of definitions of

how one should live is consistently promulgated by the cohesive arrangements, models, and codes of the community or tribe, modernism is characterized by ever-proliferating pluralism, multiplicity, and competition for our loyalty to a given way of living. Modernism requires that we be more than well socialized; we must also develop the internal authority to look at and make judgments about the expectations and claims that bombard us from all directions. Yet adult learners today and tomorrow encounter not only the challenges of modernism but of post-modernism as well. Postmodernism calls on us to win some distance even from our own internal authorities so that we are not completely captive of our own theories, so that we can recognize their incompleteness, so that we can even embrace contradictory systems simultaneously. These challenges – a whole different "curriculum" – show up in as private a context as our conflicted relationships, where we may or may not be able to hold the embattled sides internally rather than projecting one side onto our adversary, and in as public a context as higher education itself, where we may or may not be able to see that our intellectual disciplines are inevitably, to some extent, ideological procedures for creating and validating what counts as real knowledge. Lynn too, it seems, has further bridges to cross. She has her own particular needs for transformational learning, however different from Peter's these may be. She challenges educators to create yet another set of learning designs should they seek to support her own bigger becoming.

"The spirit," Hegel wrote in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, "is never at rest but always engaged in ever progressive motion, in giving itself a new form." How might we understand transformational learning differently – and our opportunities as educators – were we better to understand the restless, creative processes of development itself, in which all our students partake before, during, and after their participation in our classrooms?

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Chapter 4

Expansive learning

Towards an activity-theoretical reconceptualization

Yrjö Engeström

Yrjö Engeström is the founder and leader of the Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research at the University of Helsinki in Finland and Professor Emeritus at the University of California, San Diego. He fundamentally builds his theoretical work on the so-called cultural-historical or activity-theoretical approach to learning and mental development, which was first launched in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s by Lev Vygotsky. However, in his dissertation on "expansive learning" in 1987, he combined this approach with the system theoretical work of British Gregory Bateson on double-bind situations and learning levels and thereby introduced the notion of conflicts which were absent in Vygotsky's framework. In the following slightly abridged version of an article from 2001, Engeström sums up the historical development and status of activity theory and illustrates its potential with a case study from his Boundary Crossing Laboratory in Helsinki.

Introduction

Any theory of learning must answer at least four central questions: (1) Who are the subjects of learning – how are they defined and located? (2) Why do they learn – what makes them make the effort? (3) What do they learn – what are the contents and outcomes of learning? (4) How do they learn – what are the key actions of processes of learning? In this chapter, I will use these four questions to examine the theory of expansive learning (Engeström, 1987) developed within the framework of cultural-historical activity theory.

Before going into expansive learning, I will briefly introduce the evolution and five central ideas of activity theory. The four questions and the five principles form a matrix which I will use to systematize my discussion of expansive learning.

I will concretize the theoretical ideas of this chapter with the help of examples and findings from an ongoing intervention study we are conducting in the multi-organizational field of medical care for children in the Helsinki area in Finland. After presenting the setting and the learning challenge it was facing, I will discuss each of the four questions in turn, using selected materials from the project to highlight the answers offered by the theory of expansive learning.

I will conclude by discussing the implications of the theory of expansive learning for our understanding of directionality in learning and development.

Generations and principles of activity theory

Cultural-historical activity theory was initiated by Lev Vygotsky (1978) in the 1920s and early 1930s. It was further developed by Vygotsky's colleague and disciple Alexei Leont'ev (1978, 1981). In my reading, activity theory has evolved through three generations of research (Engeström, 1996). The first generation, centered around Vygotsky, created the idea of *mediation*. This idea was crystallized in Vygotsky's (1978, p. 40) famous triangular model in which the conditioned direct connection between stimulus (S) and response (R) was transcended by "a complex, mediated act" (Figure 4.1A). Vygotsky's idea of cultural mediation of actions is commonly expressed as the triad of subject, object, and mediating artifact (Figure 4.1B).

The insertion of cultural artifacts into human actions was revolutionary in that the basic unit of analysis now overcame the split between the Cartesian individual and the untouchable societal structure. The individual could no longer be understood without his or her cultural means; and the society could no longer be understood without the agency of individuals who use and produce artifacts. This meant that objects ceased to be just raw material for the formation of logical operations in the subject as they were for Piaget. Objects became cultural entities and the object-orientedness of action became the key to understanding human psyche.

The limitation of the first generation was that the unit of analysis remained individually focused. This was overcome by the second generation, centered around Leont'ev. In his famous example of "primeval collective hunt" (Leont'ev, 1981, pp. 210–213), Leont'ev explicated the crucial difference between an individual action and a collective activity. However, Leont'ev never graphically expanded Vygotsky's original model into a model of a collective activity system. Such a modeling is depicted in Figure 4.2.

The uppermost sub-triangle of Figure 4.2 may be seen as the "tip of the iceberg" representing individual and group actions embedded in a collective activity system. The object is depicted with the help of an oval indicating that object-oriented actions are always, explicitly or implicitly, characterized by ambiguity, surprise, interpretation, sense-making, and potential for change.

The concept of activity took the paradigm a huge step forward in that it turned the focus on complex interrelations between the individual subject

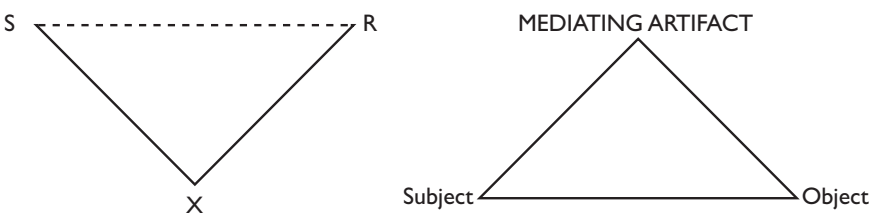

Figure 4.1 (A) Vygotsky's model of mediated act and (B) its common reformulation.

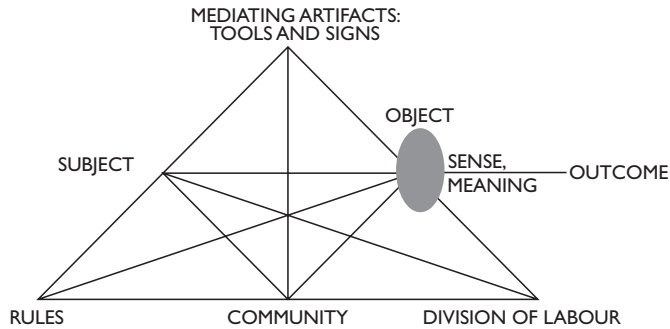

Figure 4.2 The structure of a human activity system (Engeström, 1987, p. 78).

and his or her community. In the Soviet Union, the societal activity systems studied concretely by activity theorists were largely limited to play and learning among children, and contradictions of activity remained an extremely touchy issue. Since the 1970s, the tradition was taken up and recontextualized by radical researchers in the West. New domains of activity, including work, were opened up for concrete research. A tremendous diversity of applications of activity theory began to emerge, as manifested in recent collections (e.g. Chaiklin et al., 1999; Engelsted et al., 1993; Engeström et al., 1999). The idea of internal contradictions as the driving force of change and development in activity systems, so powerfully conceptualized by Il'enkov (1977), began to gain its due status as a guiding principle of empirical research.

Ever since Vygotsky's foundational work, the cultural-historical approach was very much a discourse of vertical development toward "higher psychological functions." Luria's (1976) cross-cultural research remained an isolated attempt. Michael Cole (1988) was one of the first to clearly point out the deep-seated insensitivity of the second-generation activity theory toward cultural diversity. When activity theory went international, questions of diversity and dialogue between different traditions or perspectives became increasingly serious challenges. It is these challenges that the third generation of activity theory must deal with.

The third generation of activity theory needs to develop conceptual tools to understand dialogue, multiple perspectives, and networks of interacting activity systems. Wertsch (1991) introduced Bakhtin's (1981) ideas on dialogicality as a way to expand the Vygotskian framework. Ritva Engeström (1995) went a step further by pulling together Bakhtin's ideas and Leont'ev's concept of activity, and others have developed notions of activity networks, discussed Latour's actor-network theory, and elaborated the concept of boundary crossing within activity theory.

These developments indicate that the door is open for the formation of the third generation of activity theory. In this mode of research, the basic model is expanded to include minimally two interacting activity systems (Figure 4.3).

In Figure 4.3, the object moves from an initial state of unreflected, situationally given "raw material" (object 1; e.g. a specific patient entering a physician's office) to a collectively meaningful object constructed by the activity system (object 2; e.g. the patient constructed as a specimen of a biomedical disease category and thus as an instantiation of the general object of illness/health), and to a potentially shared or jointly constructed object (object 3; e.g. a collaboratively constructed understanding of the patient's life situation and care plan). The object of activity is a moving target, not reducible to conscious short-term goals.

In its current shape, activity theory may be summarized with the help of five principles (for earlier summaries, see Engeström, 1993, 1995, 1999a).

The first principle is that a collective, artifact-mediated and object-oriented activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems, is taken as the prime unit of analysis. Goal-directed individual and group actions, as well as automatic operations, are relatively independent but subordinate units of analysis, eventually understandable only when interpreted against the background of entire activity systems. Activity systems realize and reproduce themselves by generating actions and operations.

The second principle is the multi-voicedness of activity systems. An activity system is always a community of multiple points of view, traditions, and interests. The division of labor in an activity creates different positions for the participants, the participants carry their own diverse histories, and the activity system itself carries multiple layers and strands of history engraved in its artifacts, rules, and conventions. The multi-voicedness is multiplied in networks of interacting activity systems. It is a source of trouble and a source of innovation, demanding actions of translation and negotiation.

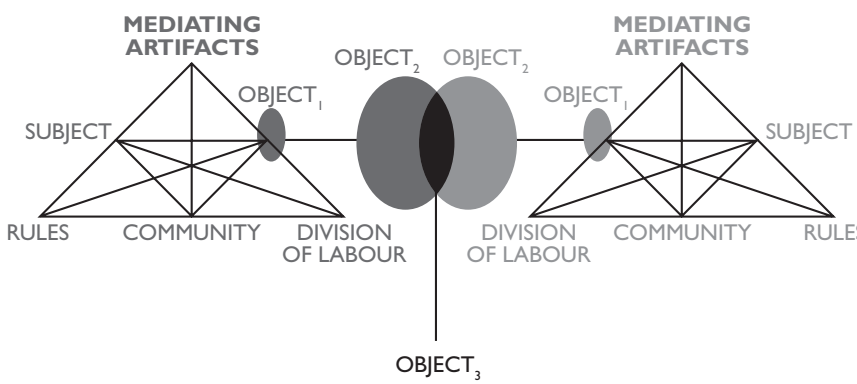

Figure 4.3 Two interacting activity systems as minimal model for the third generation of activity theory.

The third principle is historicity. Activity systems take shape and get transformed over lengthy periods of time. Their problems and potentials can only be understood against their own history. History itself needs to be studied as local history of the activity and its objects, and as history of the theoretical ideas and tools that have shaped the activity. Thus, medical work needs to be analyzed against the history of its local organization and against the more global history of the medical concepts, procedures, and tools employed and accumulated in the local activity.

The fourth principle is the central role of contradictions as sources of change and development. Contradictions are not the same as problems or conflicts. Contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems. The primary contradiction of activities in capitalism is between the use value and exchange value of commodities. This primary contradiction pervades all elements of our activity systems. Activities are open systems. When an activity system adopts a new element from the outside (for example, a new technology or a new object), it often leads to an aggravated secondary contradiction where some old element (for example, the rules or the division of labor) collides with the new one. Such contradictions generate disturbances and conflicts, but also innovative attempts to change the activity.

The fifth principle proclaims the possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems. Activity systems move through relatively long cycles of qualitative transformations. As the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants begin to question and deviate from its established norms. In some cases, this escalates into collaborative envisioning and a deliberate collective change effort. An expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualized to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity. A full cycle of expansive transformation may be understood as a collective journey through the *zone of proximal development* of the activity:

> It is the distance between the present everyday actions of the individuals and the historically new form of the societal activity that can be collectively generated as a solution to the double bind potentially embedded in the everyday actions.
>
> (Engeström, 1987, p. 174)

Expansive learning – a new approach

Standard theories of learning are focused on processes where a subject (traditionally an individual, more recently possibly also an organization) acquires some identifiable knowledge or skills in such a way that a corresponding, relatively lasting change in the behavior of the subject may be observed. It is a self-evident presupposition that the knowledge or skill to be acquired is itself stable and reasonably well defined. There is a competent "teacher" who knows what is to be learned.

The problem is that much of the most intriguing kinds of learning in work organizations violates this presupposition. People and organizations are all the time learning something that is not stable, not even defined or understood ahead of time. In important transformations of our personal lives and organizational practices, we must learn new forms of activity which are not yet there. They are literally learned as they are being created. There is no competent teacher. Standard learning theories have little to offer if one wants to understand these processes.

Gregory Bateson's (1972) theory of learning is one of the few approaches helpful for tackling this challenge. Bateson distinguished between three levels of learning. Learning I refers to conditioning, acquisition of the responses deemed correct in the given context – for instance, the learning of correct answers in a classroom. Bateson points out that wherever we observe Learning I, Learning II is also going on: people acquire the deep-seated rules and patterns of behavior characteristic to the context itself. Thus, in classrooms, students learn the "hidden curriculum" of what it means to be a student: how to please the teachers, how to pass exams, how to belong to groups, etc. Sometimes the context bombards participants with contradictory demands: Learning II creates a double bind. Such pressures can lead to Learning III, where a person or a group begins to radically question the sense and meaning of the context and to construct a wider alternative context. Learning III is essentially a collective endeavor. As Bateson points out, processes of Learning III are rare and dangerous:

> Even the attempt at Level III can be dangerous, and some fall by the wayside. These are often labeled by psychiatry as psychotic, and many of them find themselves inhibited from using the first person pronoun.
>
> (Bateson, 1972, pp. 305–306)

Bateson's conceptualization of Learning III was a provocative proposal, not an elaborated theory. The theory of expansive learning develops Bateson's idea into a systematic framework. Learning III is seen as learning activity which has its own typical actions and tools (these will be discussed later in this chapter). The object of expansive learning activity is the entire activity system in which the learners are engaged. Expansive learning activity produces culturally new patterns of activity.

The learning challenge in children's health care in Helsinki

In Finland, public health care services are principally funded by taxation, and the patient typically pays a nominal fee for a visit. A critical structural issue in the Helsinki area is the excessive use of high-end hospital services, historically caused by a concentration of hospitals in this area. In children's medical care, the high-end of medicine is represented by the Children's Hospital, which has a

reputation of monopolizing its patients and not actively encouraging them to use primary care health center services. Due to rising costs, there is now much political pressure to change this division of labor in favor of increased use of primary care services.

The problem is most acute among children with long-term illnesses, especially those with multiple or unclear diagnoses. Children with asthma and severe allergies are a typical and rapidly growing group. Such children often drift between caregiver organizations without anyone having overview and overall responsibility of the child's care trajectory. This puts a heavy burden on the families and on the society.

The Children's Hospital decided to respond to the pressures by initiating and hosting a collaborative redesign effort, facilitated by our research group using a method called *Boundary Crossing Laboratory*. Approximately 60 invited representatives of physicians, nurses, other staff, and management from primary care health centers and hospitals responsible for children's health care in the Helsinki area met in ten three-hour sessions, the last one of which was held in mid-February 1998. The participants viewed and discussed a series of patient cases videotaped by the researchers. The cases demonstrated in various ways troubles caused by lack of coordination and communication between the different care providers in the area. The troubles took the form of excessive numbers of visits, unclear *loci* of responsibility, and failure to inform other involved care providers (including the patient's family) of the practitioner's diagnoses, actions, and plans.

The *learning challenge* in this setting was to acquire a new way of working in which parents and practitioners from different caregiver organizations will collaboratively plan and monitor the child's trajectory of care, taking joint responsibility for its overall progress. There was no readily available model that would fix the problems; no wise teacher had the correct answer.

Who and where are the subjects of learning?

This learning challenge could not be met by training individual practitioners and parents to adopt some new skills and knowledge. The issue at stake was organizational, not resolvable by a sum total of separate individuals.

On the other hand, there was no mythical collective subject that we could approach and push to take charge of the transformation. Top-down commands and guidelines are of little value when the management does not know what the content of such directives should be. The management of the Children's Hospital – as competent and experienced as it was – was conscious of its own limitations in the situation and asked us to help.

Recent theories of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1995) tell us to look for well-bounded *communities of practice* or *functional systems*, such as task-oriented teams or work units, to become collaborative subjects of learning. But in the multi-organizational field of children's medical care in Helsinki, there is no well-bounded work unit that

could conceivably be the center of coordination. In each individual patient case, the combination of institutions, specialties, and practitioners involved in the delivery of care is different, and it is seldom possible to name a stable *locus* of control.

Latour's (1987) *actor-network theory* recommends that we locate learning in a heterogeneous network of human and non-human actors. This is fine, but Latour's principle of generalized symmetry turns all the actors (or actants, as he prefers to call them) into black boxes without identifiable internal systemic properties and contradictions. If we want to successfully confront the various actors involved in the care, we must be able to touch and trigger some internal tensions and dynamics in their respective institutional contexts, dynamics that can energize a serious learning effort on their part.

In our case, learning needs to occur in a changing mosaic of *interconnected activity systems* which are energized by their own inner contradictions. A minimal constellation of activity systems includes the activity system of the Children's Hospital, the activity system of the primary care health center, and the activity system of the child's family. In each particular patient case, the specific instantiation of the three activity systems is different. Yet, the general structural characteristics and network positions of each one of them remain sufficiently stable to allow analysis and redesign.

In the Boundary Crossing Laboratory, the basic constellation of the three activity systems was implemented so that hospital practitioners sat on one side of the room and primary care health center practitioners sat on another side of the room. The voices of patients' families came from the front of the room, from videotapes made by following patients through their hospital and health center visits and also from actual parents we invited to join in the sessions.

In the first session of the Boundary Crossing Laboratory, we presented the case of a prematurely born boy who was suffering from asthma symptoms and repeated respiratory infections. His care had been initiated at the Children's Hospital in August. By mid-November, his personal physician at the health center had not received any information on the initiation of hospital care or on plans for continued care. As the health center personal physician was unable to attend the Laboratory session in person, we showed her videotaped interview to the participants. The personal physician's use of reported speech – borrowing the voice of an imagined hospital physician – made her statement particularly poignant:

Excerpt 1 (Boundary Crossing Laboratory, session 1)

INTERVIEWER I'm thinking to myself, would there be any room for negotiation, I mean, is it always so that one-sidedly one party, the hospital, decides that OK, now this is at such a stage that we can send him to primary care ... Is there any discussion on this?

PERSONAL PHYSICIAN Nobody has ever asked me, "Would you take this patient for follow-up?" But then again, I am not specialized in pediatrics.

In the Laboratory session, practitioners from the Children's Hospital by and large denied that patient information is not sent to the health centers and maintained that the papers must have gotten lost at the health center. Health center practitioners on the other hand claimed that it was in fact common that the Children's Hospital would not send patient papers to the health center. In other words, at this point the multi-voicedness of the interaction took the shape of interlocking defensive positions. Toward the end of the first session, the head physician of the Children's Hospital opened a first crack in the defensive deadlock:

Excerpt 2 (Boundary Crossing Laboratory, session 1)

HEAD PHYSICIAN OF THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL And here I think we now have a pretty obvious issue, we just have to ask whether the patient record is actually sent to the primary care.

While expansive learning was firmly distributed within and between the three key activity systems, actions like the one taken by the head physician demonstrate that individual agency is also involved. However, different individuals speaking in different voices take the leading subject position in the activity at different moments. The leading subject role and agency is not fixed, it keeps shifting.

Why do they learn – what makes them make the effort?

For situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991), motivation to learn stems from participation in culturally valued collaborative practices in which something useful is produced. This seems a satisfactory starting point when we look at novices gradually gaining competence in relatively stable practices. However, motivation for risky expansive learning processes associated with major transformations in activity systems are not well explained by mere participation and gradual acquisition of mastery.

As I pointed out earlier, Bateson (1972) suggested that expansive Learning III is triggered by double binds generated by contradictory demands imposed on the participants by the context. In the Boundary Crossing Laboratory, we made the participants face and articulate the contradictory demands inherent in their work activity by presenting a series of troublesome patient cases captured on videotape. In several of these cases, the patient's mother was also present. This made it virtually impossible for the participants to blame the clients for the problems and added greatly to the urgency of the double bind.

Despite overwhelming evidence, the acknowledgment and articulation of the contradictions was very difficult for the practitioners. The first statements to that effect began to emerge in the third session of the Boundary Crossing Laboratory:

Excerpt 3 (Boundary Crossing Laboratory, session 3)

HOSPITAL NURSE A chronically ill child who has several illnesses does not necessarily have a clearly defined physician in charge. The care is fragmented. The information is terribly fragmented in the patient's medical record. It is not necessarily easy to draw conclusions as to what has happened to this child in the previous visit, not to speak of finding information about visits to another hospital, for example what shared guidance and counseling practices the family would need. And one doesn't necessarily even find information on the current medications. They are merely in the parents' memory or written on some piece of paper. So the information on the care of the illness compared to the clinical situation and urgent care situation can be detective work ...

To make analytical sense of the situation, we need to look at the recent *history* of the activity systems involved. Since the late 1980s, in municipal primary care health centers, the personal doctor principle and multi-professional teams have effectively increased the continuity of care, replacing the isolated *visit* with the long-term *care relationship* as the object of the practitioners' work activity. The notion of care relationship has gradually become the key conceptual tool for planning and recording work in health centers.

A parallel development has taken place in Finnish hospitals. Hospitals grew bigger and more complicated in the postwar decades. Fragmentation by specialties led to complaints and was seen to be partially responsible for the rapidly rising costs of hospital care. In the late 1980s, hospitals began to design and implement *critical paths* or *pathways* for designated diseases or diagnostic groups. At the beginning of the Boundary Crossing Laboratory work, the head physician of the Children's Hospital made it clear to the participants that he saw critical pathways as the solution to the problems:

Excerpt 4 (Boundary Crossing Laboratory, session 1)

HEAD PHYSICIAN OF THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL Why critical pathways, that has surely been explained sufficiently, and now I'll only tell you that in the spring we started this activity. That is, the planning of critical pathways for children and adolescents in Uusimaa county. And we have a basic working group which has representatives from both the health center level and the central hospital level and from here and from all parties, that is, representatives of both nursing and physicians.

With these reforms spreading and taking root, shouldn't the problems with coordination and collaboration be under control? Evidence presented and discussed in Boundary Crossing Laboratory sessions led to the conclusion that this is not the case. Care relationships and critical paths were solutions created in response to particular historical sets of contradictions. These contradictions are rapidly being superseded by a new, more encompassing configuration of contradictions.

Care relationships and critical paths respond to contradictions *internal* to the respective institutions. Care relationships are seen as a way to conceptualize, document, and plan long-term interactions with a patient inside primary health care. Their virtue is that the patient can be seen as having multiple interacting problems and diagnoses that evolve over time; their limitation is that responsibility for the patient is practically suspended when the patient enters a hospital. Correspondingly, critical paths are constructed to give a normative sequence of procedures for dealing with a given disease or diagnosis. They do not help in dealing with patients with unclear and multiple diagnoses, and they tend to impose their disease-centered worldview even on primary care practitioners. Fundamentally, both care relationships and critical paths are *linear* and *temporal* constructions of the object. They have great difficulties in representing and guiding *horizontal* and *socio-spatial* relations and interactions between care providers located in different institutions, including the patient and his/her family as the most important actors in care.

Asthmatic and allergic children with repeated respiratory problems are a clear case in point. Such a child may have more than a dozen hospital visits, including some stays of a few days in a ward, and even more numerous visits to a primary care health center in one year. Some of these visits are serious emergencies, some of them are milder but urgent infections, some are for tests, control, and follow-ups.

One of the cases we presented in the Boundary Crossing Laboratory was Simon, age 3. In 1997, he had three visits to the district hospital of his municipality, 11 visits to the Helsinki University Central Hospital (HUCH) ear clinic, 14 visits to his personal physician at the local health center, and one visit to the outpatient clinic of the HUCH Children's Hospital. Another case we presented, Andrew, age 4, had in 1997 four visits to the HUCH hospital for skin and allergic diseases, nine visits to his local district hospital, and 14 visits to his primary care health center.

After we presented yet another such case in the Boundary Crossing Laboratory, the head physician of the Children's Hospital turned to the hospital physician who was in charge of designing the critical pathway for allergic children and asked her to explain how the implementation of the critical pathway will solve this child's problem. The response was something of a turning point for the head physician:

Excerpt 5 (Boundary Crossing Laboratory, session 7)

HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN 1 Here is first of all ... the care for asthma and then there is the care for food allergy. So in the case of one child, this cannot really be presented on one overhead, how this goes.

HEAD PHYSICIAN (IN AGGRAVATED TONE) But isn't it quite common that children with allergies have these other problems? So surely they, surely you will plan some sort of a process which guarantees that these children do not belong to many critical pathways but?

HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN 2 Well, unfortunately these children will indeed belong to multiple critical pathways.

The constellation of contradictions in this field of activity systems is schematically depicted in Figure 4.4. In both the hospital and the health center, a contradiction emerges between the increasingly important *object* of patients moving between primary care and hospital care, and the *rule* of cost-efficiency implemented in both activity systems. In Helsinki, the per capita expenditure on health care is clearly above national averages, largely due to the excessive use and high cost of services provided by the central university hospital of which the Children's Hospital is a part. Thus, there is an aggravated tension between the primary care health center and the university hospital. Health centers in the Helsinki area are blaming the university hospital for high costs, while the university hospital criticizes health centers for excessive referrals and for not being able to take care of patients who do not necessarily need hospital care.

A contradiction also emerges between the new *object* (patients moving between primary care and hospital care) and the recently established *tools*, namely care relationships in primary care and critical paths in hospital work. Being linear-temporal and mainly focused on care inside the institution, these tools are inadequate for dealing with patients who have multiple simultaneous problems and parallel contacts to different institutions of care. In the activity system of the

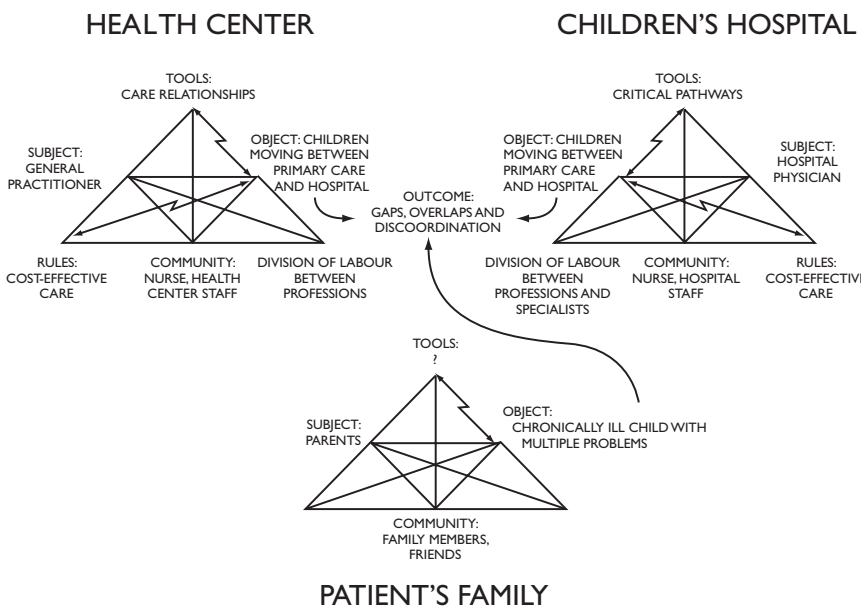

Figure 4.4 Contradictions in children's health care in the Helsinki area.

patient's family, the contradiction is also between the complex object of multiple illnesses and the largely unavailable or unknown tools for mastering the object.

As different aspects of these contradictions were articulated in the Boundary Crossing Laboratory, we observed a shift among the participants from initial defensive postures toward a growing determination to do something about the situation. The determination was initially fuzzy, as if a need state looking for an identifiable object and corresponding concept at which the energy could be directed:

Excerpt 6 (Boundary Crossing Laboratory, session 5)

HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN I kind of woke up when I was writing the minutes [of the preceding session]. ... What dawned on me concerning B [name of the patient in the case discussed] is, I mean, a central thing ... for the mastery of the entire care. How will it be realized and what systems does it require? I think it was pretty good, when I went back through our discussion, I think one finds clear attempts at solving this. It is sort of a foundation, which we must erect for every patient.

RESEARCHER That seems to be a proposal for formulating the problem. What is ... or how do we want to solve it in B's case? I mean, is it your idea that what we want to solve is the mastery of the entire care?

HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN I think it's just that. I mean that we should have ... or specifically concerning these responsibilities and sharing of responsibility and of practical plans, and tying knots, well, we should have some kind of arrangement in place. Something that makes everyone aware of his or her place around this sick child and the family.

What are they learning?

Above in excerpt 6, a physician from the Children's Hospital used the expression "tying of knots." He referred to a preceding discussion in the same Boundary Crossing Laboratory session in which the researcher suggested the term "knotworking" to capture the idea of the new pattern of activity needed to achieve collaborative care of children with multiple illnesses across institutional boundaries. The practitioners should be able to connect and coordinate with one another and with the parents quickly "on the spot" when needed, but also on the basis of a shared and mutually monitored long-term plan. The notion of knotworking served as one link in an emerging configuration of concepts that was to define the expanded pattern of activity.

Later in session 4, a task force of four practitioners, led by a hospital head nurse, presented their proposal for the improvement of feedback between the Children's Hospital and the health centers:

Excerpt 7 (Boundary Crossing Laboratory, session 4)

HOSPITAL HEAD NURSE Well, this is the title– Proposal for a trial period for the month of January, and a trial must always be evaluated, whether it succeeds or not, and what

needs to be improved. And I say already at this point that this trial requires additional work, it brings more work. For the outpatient clinic, we propose a procedure in which the outpatient clinic during the entire month sends written feedback on every patient visit regardless of the continuation. To whom, to the home, to the personal primary care physician, to the physician who wrote the referral.

The proposal met with a range of objections, largely centering on the excessive amount of work the feedback system was expected to cause. The head physician of the Children's Hospital joined in the chorus of objections, employing the available concept of critical pathways as a warrant in his argument:

Excerpt 8 (Boundary Crossing Laboratory, session 4)

HOSPITAL HEAD PHYSICIAN We have these task force groups for the critical pathways in place, and they have also discussed this matter, and without exception, they have the opinion that definitely not for every visit – I, too, would be afraid that if there is feedback for every visit, there will be so many pieces of paper that the essential information gets easily lost, so surely it would be better that the sender, that is those who are in charge of the care of the patient, should themselves assess when feedback needs to be sent.

The proposal was rejected. In the fifth session of the Boundary Crossing Laboratory, the task force came back with a new proposal. In the discussion, the new proposal was mainly referred to as "care responsibility negotiation." The term "care agreement" was also mentioned. The proposal emphasized communication and negotiation between the parents and the different practitioners involved in a child's care.

This proposal had a favorable response. It was elaborated further in the sixth session. In this session, the "care agreement" emerged as the central new concept. The older concept of critical pathways was still used side by side with the new idea of the care agreement:

Excerpt 9 (Boundary Crossing Laboratory, session 6)

HOSPITAL HEAD NURSE Then an important thing in this is the division of care responsibility which we have discussed, which is difficult to chew on. Now this also takes a stand with regard to the division of care responsibility, and at the end there is the important point that parents have accepted the plan, and the concept of feedback refers simply to a copy of the medical record text which contains necessary contact information. And in our opinion, this would mean additional work but this would be simple enough, flexible and possible to realize if we embark on this, and the goal is to develop dialogue.

DATA SECURITY SPECIALIST Well, if I may comment on this. This would in my opinion be exactly building the critical pathway model, finding ways to improve the critical pathway and the work within it.

HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN 1 An agreement is made only if the hospital care exceeds two visits or goes beyond a standard protocol, so in fact we imagine that the majority of visits will fall into those not exceeding two visits or the protocol.

HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN 2 What may be new in this is that in the second visit, or the visit when the outpatient clinic physician makes the care agreement proposal, which is a kind of a vision for continuation of care, so he or she kind of presents this vision also to the parents sitting there, who become committed this way to this continuation of care and to the distribution of care responsibility, however the distribution is defined, something that probably has not been talked about so clearly to the parents. That's what makes this excellent.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS SPECIALIST In my opinion, this is a great system, and as an outsider, I say, implement this as soon as possible so that after a sufficient trial period we can duplicate this system elsewhere. This is a great system.

Under the umbrella of care agreement, four interconnected solutions were created. First, the patient's personal physician – a general practitioner in the local health center – is designated as the *coordinator* in charge of the patient's network and trajectory of care across institutional boundaries. Secondly, whenever a child becomes a patient of the Children's Hospital for more than a single visit, the hospital physician and nurse in charge of the child draft a *care agreement* which includes a plan for the patient's care and the division of labor between the different care providers contributing to the care of the child. The draft agreement is given to the child's family and sent to the child's personal health center physician (and when appropriate, to the physicians in charge of the child in other hospitals) for their scrutiny. Thirdly, if one or more of the parties find it necessary, they will have a *care negotiation* (by e-mail, by telephone, or face-to-face) to formulate a mutually acceptable care agreement. Fourthly, *care feedback,* in the form of a copy of the patient's medical record, is automatically and without delay given or sent to the other parties of the care agreement after the patient's unplanned visit or changes in diagnoses or care plans. Figure 4.5 depicts a simplified model of the care agreement, produced and used by the practitioners in the Boundary Crossing Laboratory.

The care agreement practice aims at resolving the contradictions depicted in Figure 4.4 by creating a new instrumentality. This instrumentality, when shared by parents and practitioners across institutional boundaries, is supposed to expand the object of their work by opening up the dimension of horizontal, socio-spatial interactions in the patient's evolving network of care, making the parties conceptually aware of and practically responsible for the coordination of multiple parallel medical needs and services in the patient's life. This does not replace but complements and extends the linear and temporal dimension of care. The solution also aims at relieving the pressure coming from the rule of cost-efficiency and the tension between the Children's Hospital and health centers by eliminating uncoordinated excessive visits and tests and by getting the health center general practitioners involved in making joint care decisions that are acceptable to all parties.

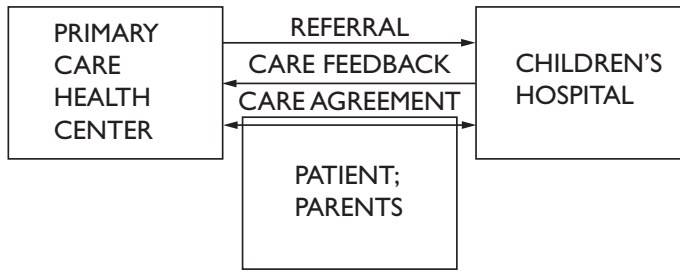

Figure 4.5 Conceptual model of the care agreement practice.

The new instrumentality is supposed to become a germ cell for a new kind of collaborative care, "knotworking," in which no single party has a permanent dominating position and in which no party can evade taking responsibility over the entire care trajectory. The model implies a radical expansion of the object of activity for all parties: from singular illness episodes or care visits to a long-term trajectory (temporal expansion), and from relationships between the patient and a singular practitioner to the joint monitoring of the entire network of care involved with the patient (socio-spatial expansion).

How do they learn – what are the key actions?

Theories of organizational learning are typically weak in spelling out the specific processes or actions that make the learning process. One of the more interesting attempts to open up this issue is Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) framework of cyclic knowledge creation based on conversions between tacit and explicit knowledge. Their model posits four basic moves in knowledge creation: socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization.

A central problem with Nonaka and Takeuchi's model, and with many other models of organizational learning, is the assumption that the assignment for knowledge creation is unproblematically given from above. In other words, what is to be created and learned is depicted as a management decision that is outside the bounds of the local process (see Engeström, 1999b). This assumption leads to a model in which the first step consists of smooth, conflict-free socializing, the creation of "sympathized knowledge" as Nonaka and Takeuchi call it.

In contrast, a crucial triggering action in the expansive learning process discussed in this chapter, as in other analogous processes we have analyzed, is the conflictual *questioning* of the existing standard practice. In the Boundary Crossing Laboratory, this questioning was invoked by the troublesome patient cases, to be defensively rejected time and again. The practitioners did also begin to produce questioning actions in their own voices; a small example of this was shown in excerpt 2. The analysis of contradictions culminated much later as the conflict

between critical pathways (available tool) and patients with multiple illnesses (new object) was articulated in excerpt 5. Actions of questioning and analysis are aimed at finding and defining problems and contradictions behind them. If the management tries to give a fixed learning assignment from above in this type of process, it is typically rejected (Engeström, 1999b). Out of these debates, a new direction begins to emerge, as seen in excerpt 6.

The third strategic action in expansive learning is *modeling*. Modeling is already involved in the formulation of the framework and the results of the analysis of contradictions, and it reaches its fruition in the modeling of the new solution, the new instrumentality, the new pattern of activity. In the Boundary Crossing Laboratory, the first proposal of the project group in session 4 was the first attempt at such modeling (see excerpt 7). The critical discussion and rejection of this proposal (excerpt 8) is an example of the action of *examining the new model*. The second, successful proposal, presented in session 5, is again an example of modeling, and the ensuing elaboration in session 6 (excerpt 9) again represents examining the new model.

The care agreement model has been implemented in practice since May 1998. The manifold *implementation* opens up a whole different story of tensions and disturbances between the old and the new practice, a story too large and complex to be entered in this paper. The cycle of expansion (Figure 4.6) is not completed yet. Our research group continues to follow and document the implementation and to feed intermediate findings back to the practitioners.

Conclusion: directionality in learning development

We habitually tend to depict learning and development as vertical processes, aimed at elevating humans upward, to higher levels of competence. Rather than simply denounce this view as an outdated relic of enlightenment, I suggest that we construct a complementary perspective, namely that of horizontal or sideways learning and development. The case discussed in this paper provides rich indications of such a complementary dimension.

In particular, the construction of the concept of care agreement (with the related concepts of care responsibility negotiation and knotworking) by the participants of the Boundary Crossing Laboratory is a useful example of developmentally significant sideways learning. In his classic work on concept formation, Vygotsky (1987) basically presented the process as a creative meeting between everyday concepts growing upward and scientific concepts growing downward. While this view opened up a tremendously fertile field of inquiry into the interplay between different types of concepts in learning, it did retain and reproduce the basic singular directionality of vertical movement. Later works by such Western scholars as Nelson (1985, 1995) and also by the greatest Russian analyst of learning, V. V. Davydov (1990), enriched and expanded Vygotsky's ideas, but the issue of directionality remained intact.

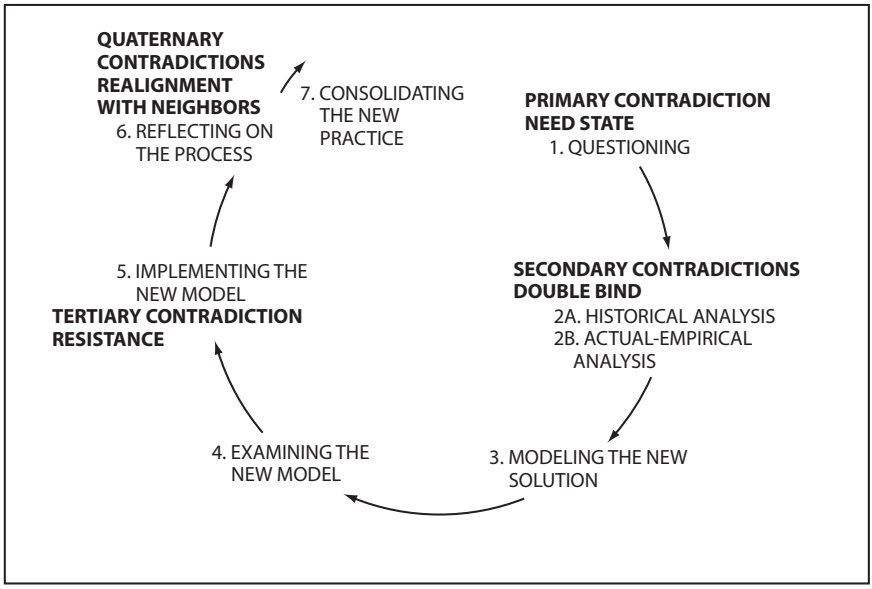

Figure 4.6 Strategic learning actions and corresponding contradictions in the cycle of expansive learning.

How does this image correspond to the data on expansive learning in the Boundary Crossing Laboratory? Concept formation in the laboratory sessions started out with the "scientific concept" proposed by the management: *critical pathways*. Instead of identifiable everyday concepts, it was met and confronted by our videotaped cases and live parents, telling about children with *multiple illnesses* and *fragmented care*. The meeting was uneasy, if not outright conflictual.

What followed was a sideways move. Instead of trying to merge the possibly incompatible worlds of the "scientific concept" of critical pathways and the everyday experience of the patients, a group of practitioners presented a series of alternative conceptualizations. This sideways move started with the poorly articulated idea of *automatic feedback* on every patient visit from the hospital to the primary care health center. This attempt at formulating a new deliberate concept was rejected "from below," using the experiential threat of *excessive paperwork* as the main conceptual argument.

The proponents of the new idea did not give up. They initiated another sideways move and proposed a new concept: *care responsibility negotiation*. This was met more favorably. The practitioners used their experiences of the need for *parent involvement* (see excerpt 9) to elaborate, refine, and concretize the concept. This led to yet another sideways move: the formulation of the concept of care agreement. Since the spring of 1998, through their actions of implementing this

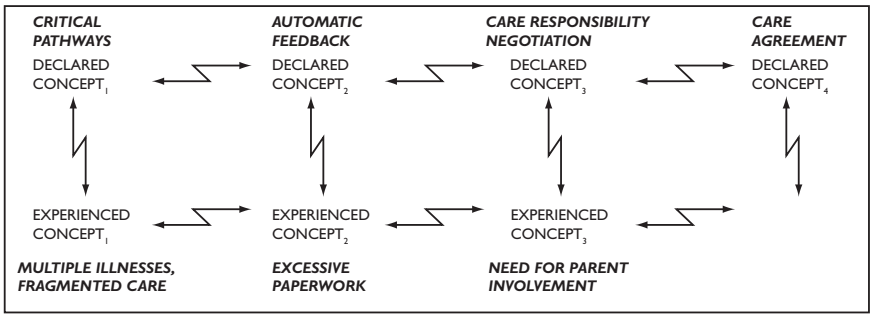

Figure 4.7 Expanded view of directionalities in concept formation.

concept in practice, practitioners and parents have accumulated experiences to challenge and transform this concept again in new sideways moves.

This account leads us to a new, two-dimensional view of concept formation (Figure 4.7).

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Chapter 5

Pragmatism

Learning as creative imagination

Bente Elkjaer

Bente Elkjaer holds a Chair in learning theory at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. She is also Editor-in-Chief of the journal Management Learning. *Her main focus is working life learning, and her theoretical approach is inspired by the works of the American pragmatist philosopher and educator John Dewey. In 2005 she published the book,* When Learning Goes to Work: A Pragmatist Gaze at Working Life Learning *(in Danish). In the following chapter, which is published for the first time here, Elkjaer gives an interpretation of Dewey's understanding of learning grounded in his particular notion of the concept of experience. She discusses how a pragmatic perspective on learning can elaborate contemporary learning theory by being linked to the notion of practice-based learning as introduced by the works of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger.*

Introduction

In this chapter, I propose to look towards pragmatism to re-inspire us to work with a theory of learning, which is explicitly oriented to deal with the 'problems of men' in visionary ways (Dewey, 1917 [1980]: 46). In other words, to maintain relevance and imagination as reference points for working with education and learning be it in schools or enterprises – the latter is more my foundation than the former. I believe that we need guidance for teaching and consulting that prepares for a response in thoughtful and creative ways, because we live in 'an era in which we are beginning to see that there is not one rationality but that there are many' (Biesta, 2005: 55). We need imagination to jointly cope in complex societies and enterprises rather than individual emancipation.

It is particularly the John Dewey version of pragmatism with his coining of pragmatism as both experimental and instrumental that is my inspiration for 'doing learning' (as well as research) (Dewey, 1925 [1984]). This means for example not to impose one model covering 'everything', but rather to ask questions and to see that ways of looking may be very different dependent upon your outlook. It is not that I think that pragmatist philosophy or any other philosophy can save the world from its current chaos; neither did Dewey about 100 years ago:

> But in a complicated and perverse world, action which is not informed with vision, imagination and reflection, is more likely to increase confusion and

> conflict than to straighten things out. (…) Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a *method*, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men.
>
> (Dewey, 1917 [1980]: 46, my emphasis)

Dewey's pragmatism is indeed a method to deal with problems but a method that rests solidly upon an understanding of human nature and knowledge. Thus, Dewey's pragmatism connects our being in the world with our knowledge of the world in a non-dualist way. Dewey's pragmatism connects our actions in the world with our thinking, and he sees the role of education as a way to cultivate the latter in order to act still more 'intelligently'. Dewey's pragmatism is occupied with change, anticipation and consequences rather than recollection of the past – other than to understand the present and inform the future. 'A pragmatic intelligence is a creative intelligence, not a routine mechanic' (Dewey, 1917 [1980]: 45).

An empirical 'notion of experience' is the most central term in understanding Dewey's pragmatism (Bernstein, 1966 [1967]; Dewey, 1917 [1980]; Hahn, 1980). This notion is, however, not an easy one to deal with. It was not easy for Dewey at the beginning of the 20th century to make his argument around the notion of experience explicit, because it was embedded in the 'orthodox' views of experience (Dewey, 1917 [1980]: 6). And it is not an easy task today at the beginning of the 21st century because of the many current translations of the notion of experience (see e.g. Brandi & Elkjaer, 2016; Kolb, 1984; Miettinen, 2000). The latter is, however, what I intend to do in this chapter.

Apart from having mostly my reference in learning related to work and organisations (e.g. Elkjaer & Wahlgren, 2006), my interest in pragmatism was originally triggered by an interest in what some scholars later have termed a 'practice-based' theory of learning (e.g. Corradi, Gherardi & Verzelloni, 2010). A learning theory that has practice at its heart is described in the works of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger and their understanding of learning as 'legitimate, peripheral participation in communities of practice' (Lave, 1993 [1996]; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The understanding of learning as participation in communities of practice took learning out of the clutches of individualism. Instead, Lave and Wenger's notion of learning is anchored in access to participate in communities of practice with the purpose of becoming competent practitioners. The social structure of a practice, its power relations and its conditions for legitimacy, define the possibilities for learning (Gherardi, Nicolini & Odella, 1998), and a key issue is the relation between the institutional order and the participants' experience (Holland & Lave, 2001).

I have in my research on learning queried the meaning of concepts and thinking as well as the significance of the commitment or passion in the understanding of learning as participation (e.g. Elkjaer, 2000). Also, I have been engaged in how to differentiate learning from participation, and socialisation from innovation. In other words, where is the newness to come from when learning is participation?

(See also Fenwick, 2008.) And it is to answer these queries that Dewey's pragmatism enters the picture, because his thinking rests upon advocating an ability to act imaginatively in situations of uncertainties and to make use of language, ideas, theories and concepts as visionary 'tools to think with'. Further, Dewey understands human nature as formed by the continuous transactions of persons, 'things' and environments in experimental and playful ways. It is the explicit combination of an understanding of knowledge and human nature, which both can be traced to the notion of experience, that makes Dewey's pragmatism such a powerful candidate for a learning theory that addresses the complexities of everyday living and working – also in the 21st century.

In the following, I shall argue that it is in a more complex notion of experience that we find the crux of Dewey's pragmatist philosophy, which may help us to point to sources of inspiration for contemporary teachers and counsellors as well as consultants. I first make a brief introduction to pragmatism in its everyday and philosophical meaning. Then I introduce an important inspiration within education and organisational studies, the work by David A. Kolb in which the notion of experience has been applied as what Dewey would have called a 'knowledge-affair' and not as the way we as living beings interact with our natural and social environments. Third, I introduce Dewey's notion of experience as based on transaction between persons and worlds as well as in the relation between action and thinking. Fourth is a section on the differences between a Deweyan and an 'orthodox' understanding of experience. Dewey was (late in life) well aware that the use of experience as a theoretical term created a lot of confusion, and he would have used the term 'culture' had he known (Dewey, 1949 [1981]). This would not have been of any help today, as culture is also a term of many definitions. The term 'practice' may be a candidate for a contemporary theoretical term for what Dewey wanted to say with his 'experience' (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow, 2003). This term, however, comes with the problem of making both human nature and knowledge implicit in the overall term of practice, which is why I prefer experience. I return to this issue in my conclusion and discussion.

In a final section, I return to the relationship between action and thinking, and how a theory of learning that deals with 'the problems of men' is Dewey's contribution. I show that inquiry into uncertain situations in experience can result in both resolution of the situation and in new possible avenues for solving future problems by way of conceptual development. In the conclusion and discussion, I sum up how Dewey may inspire us today in both education and in those parts of organisational studies that deal with learning and education related to work. I discuss the need for creative imagination in order to deal with the complex problems of the world and enterprises.

The emergence of pragmatism

American pragmatism emerged as a philosophical movement near the end of the nineteenth century, at a time when the US was still a 'new world' filled with

adventure and the promise of new ways of life (Menand, 2002). The immigrants were looking to the future and its possibilities, and not towards the past they had left behind. The class-divided society of Europe was based upon traditions and family relations, but in the new world, at least in a rhetorical sense, one had to prove one's worth through values and actions rather than any privileges bestowed by birth. The US was a country in which the boundaries towards the West were still open and fascinating, but also a country in which industrialisation and mass production was rapidly influencing the development of society. Philosophically, this period was characterised by a range of contradictions that set science against religion, positivism against romanticism, intuition against empiricism and the democratic ideals of the Age of Enlightenment against aristocracy. In this context, pragmatism served as a mediating or consensual method of philosophy that sought to unite these various contradictions (Scheffler, 1974 [1986]).

One important contributor to the development of pragmatism was John Dewey (1859–1952), whose philosophical interests spanned many areas including psychology, education, ethics, logic and politics. He insisted that philosophy must be practically useful in people's lives rather than a purely intellectual endeavour. In his view, the promise of a better world rests upon people's ability to respond 'in an intelligent way' to difficult situations that need to be resolved. Dewey argued that inquiry is a method in which working hypotheses are generated through anticipatory imagination of consequences, which may be tested in action. This experimental way of dealing with change does not merely happen through trial and error because anticipatory imagination guides the process (Dewey, 1933 [1986], 1938 [1986]). In Dewey's version, pragmatism is a method to think and act in a visionary and creative as well as future-oriented (i.e. consequences) manner (Dewey, 1925 [1981]).

Where the pragmatist in the everyday meaning of the term cares little for the ideological foundations for the results, Dewey's pragmatism examines how the use of different ideas and hypotheses, concepts and theories affects the result and quality of inquiry. Inquiry makes use of concepts and theories to define a problem and as such concepts and theories are also part of the solution. Thinking, i.e. critical anticipation of and reflection on the relationship between defining and solving a problem, is part of pragmatism in the philosophical definition of the term. The pragmatist philosophical view of thinking is to help define the uncertainties that occur in experience. A pragmatist researcher cannot resort to general theoretical rules and maxims from the Grand Theories (Marxism, psychoanalysis, etc.) when s/he wants to understand a phenomenon. The situation determines which concepts and theories are useful for an analysis of a given problem. One can often use various theories and concepts as tools ('instruments') in an experimental process, the aim of which it is to transform an uncertain situation into one that is manageable and comfortable for the person.

I have stressed the differences between an everyday understanding of a pragmatist and philosophical pragmatism, because in educational thinking, the latter is often associated with insufficient (theoretical) background. One

example of this is when educationalists associate pragmatism with 'learning by doing' or as mere 'trial and error'. This view separates action from thinking, which for Dewey prevents learning in an informed (or 'intelligent') way. In order for learning to be still more informed, the use of concepts and theories are needed because they allow us to think, anticipate and reflect in and on action as well as upon ourselves as acting. In the philosophical interpretation of pragmatism, cognition is closely related to action and is not to be understood by means of abstract and general theories. The understanding of learning as imaginative is grounded in this open-ended and creative relation between thinking and action as both anticipatory and reflective. This does not mean that learning cannot be habitual (or 'reproductive'). This will indeed often be the case as most actions are habitual and only involve incremental adjustments. The philosophical pragmatism, however, provides a way to understand learning as an experimental responsiveness to change and, as such, it facilitates creative action and thinking. The key to this understanding of learning is Dewey's notion of experience, which is closely connected to his notion of inquiry and knowledge. Before embarking on further elaboration of these notions, I introduce a common use of the notion of experience in which experience is understood in motivational terms ('take a point of departure in students' experiences') rather than in its both constitutive and dynamic version that it was for Dewey.

The notion of experience as a 'knowledge-affair'

David A. Kolb's notion of 'experiential learning' explicitly refers to Dewey's concept of experience. It is, however, in his own translation and understanding hereof that Kolb takes his point of departure. Kolb's definition of experience is grounded in his definition of learning: "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984: 38). Thus, for Kolb, experience is mainly a foundation for the creation of knowledge whereas Dewey's notion of experience is both a way of being in the world and experiencing the world, and knowledge is just one part of experience alongside emotion, aesthetics and ethics.

Kolb's model of experiential learning is often represented as a circle with four boxes held together by arrows (Kolb, 1984: 21). The four boxes consist of 'concrete experience' followed by the box 'observations and reflections', which is again followed by a third box 'formation of abstract concepts and generalizations', leading up to the fourth box 'testing implications of concepts in new situations'. Kolb stressed two aspects of his experiential learning cycle, first that concrete experiences are valuable for creating meaning in learning as well as for validating the learning process:

> Immediate personal experience is the focal point for learning, giving life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the

> same time providing a concrete, publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process.
> (Kolb, 1984: 21)

So, for Kolb to coin experiential learning is to add 'subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts' and to have a 'shared reference point' during the learning processes. I understand this as pointing towards including students' experiences as a way to motivate for learning rather than the foundations for life as it is for Dewey (see also McDermott, 1973 [1981]). Second, Kolb understands each stage in his model as fitting into different forms of individual adaptation to reality, which in turn reflects different individual learning styles, which has been Kolb's foundation for the development of his 'Learning Style Inventory' (LSI).

Kolb's experiential theory of learning has been extremely influential and Kolb's theories have been read, reread, discussed and criticised as well as empirically tested by different means. It is particularly Kolb's emphasis on students' learning styles as a fundamental 'tool-kit' for understanding and improving learning processes, which have been targeted in these testings, i.e. that students exhibit different learning styles (see also Brandi & Elkjaer, 2016). Kolb's notion of experiential learning is also explicitly criticised by other scholars. These include Conklin (2012) who argues for a more encompassing inclusion of students' experiences but from the perspective of andragogy and the autonomous learner that comes with this concept (Knowles, 1973 [1990]). The critical voices also include Reynolds (2009) who discusses experiential learning in light of post-heroic conceptions of leadership and defines these kind of leaderships as relational practices, as social and political processes with the focus as much on the interactions of the people involved as on the characteristics of the individual or management role. Also, Kolb is criticised for his whole compartmentalisation of stages in a cycle (Miettinen, 2000) and his exclusion of emotions and aesthetics has been questioned (Vince, 1998).

When Kolb has won such a prominent position in many educational and organisational researchers' practice and research, I think it is because he says something that feels intuitively correct, namely that it is important to base teaching on learners' own 'subjective' experiences. The idea being that it is by appealing to the learners' less articulated experiences that motivation for understanding the more abstract and general theories can be found. Dewey would, naturally, have criticised Kolb' model of experiential learning for focusing solely on individuals and their minds just like he criticised Kurt Lewin for being 'mentalistically fashioned' (Dewey & Bentley, 1949 [1991]: 125, note 23).

While Dewey's notion of 'experience' connects person and worlds, action and thinking, experience for Kolb remains locked in a separation of the actions and thinking of individuals. Kolb wants to show that different learning styles are needed, and in order to do so he depicts learning as separate sequences in a closed circle. This happens at the expense of the integration of not only action and thinking, but also the mutual relation between person and worlds. To Kolb,

experience is a matter of knowledge and not one of persons at work with their environment, which is reflected in Kolb's coining of generic learning styles. In the following, I introduce Dewey's encompassing and foundational notion of experience in order to make the proposal that if we see experiences as not solely a question of knowledge, we will also be able to see that learning is a much more encompassing term.

The notion of experience as lives and living

William James, Dewey writes:

> We begin by noting that 'experience' is what James called a double-barrelled word. Like its congeners, life and history, it includes *what* men do and suffer, *what* they strive for, love, believe and endure, and also *how* men act and are acted upon, the ways in which they do and suffer, desire and enjoy, see, believe, imagine – in short, processes of *experiencing*.
>
> (Dewey, 1925 [1981]: 18, emphasis in original)

Experience is, according to Dewey, not primarily associated with knowledge but with human beings' lives and living. In Dewey's terms, living is the continuous interaction (later: 'transaction') between persons and their natural and social environments – or 'worlds'. These are experienced as situations in which knowledge, emotions, aesthetics and ethics are all vividly present, and to become knowledgeable is only a part of experience.

Experience is the relation between person and worlds as well as what makes experience possible. Experience is both the process of experiencing and the result of the process. It is *in* experience that difficulties arise, and it is *with* experience problems are resolved by inquiry. Inquiry (or critical and reflective thinking) is an experimental method by which new experience may be had not only through action but also by using ideas and concepts, hypotheses and theories as 'tools to think with' in a playful and instrumental way. Inquiry is concerned with consequences and pragmatism views persons as future-oriented rather than oriented towards the past. This is evident from persons' exercising playful anticipatory imagination ('what-if') rather than causal thinking based upon *a priori* propositions ('if-then'). What follows from this orientation towards the future is that knowledge (in Dewey's terms: 'warranted assertibilities') is provisional, transient and subject to change ('fallible') because future experience acts as a corrective to existing knowledge.

The view of experience as encompassing the relation between person and worlds, inquiry as experimental and instrumental as well as knowledge being fallible is why I see pragmatism as a learning theory in which creative imagination acts as guidelines for education and teaching as well as counselling and consultancy. This means a learning theory that helps educators and learners develop a responsiveness towards challenges through the method of inquiry and an

open-ended understanding of knowledge. I believe, in other words, that taking a closer look at the Deweyan notion of experience may be helpful for the creation of a learning theory that answers the cry for creativity and innovation that, at least rhetorically, is in demand in contemporary enterprises and societies.

The foundation is a critique of the reflex arc

Dewey laid the foundation for his concept of experience in 1896 with his groundbreaking article, in which he criticised how the concept 'reflex arc' was used to interpret the relation between action and thinking – being and knowing (Dewey, 1896 [1972]). In his article, Dewey argued against the notion that it is possible to analyze human action as a mechanical sequence, a 'reflex arc', consisting of three separate events in the following order: sensory stimulus, idea and action. Dewey called the reflex arc a patchwork of separate parts, a mechanical juxtaposition without connection instead of seeing action and thinking as parts of an integrated organic whole (see also Elkjaer, 2000). The 'organic' refers to the fact that persons always are part of social and natural worlds, and it is as participants of these worlds that acting and knowing takes place. Action and thinking are not separate and clearly defined processes, but integrated and connected. This integration of knowing and acting is mirrored in concrete action, both bodily and verbal. Thus, Dewey argued that stimulus, idea and action are functional elements in a division of labour, which together make up a contextual whole, a situation. Action and thinking are in other words elements in an 'organic coordination' rather than a reflex arc. One example of the situatedness of stimulus is hearing a sound:

> If one is reading a book, if one is hunting, if one is watching in a dark place on a lonely night, if one is performing a chemical experiment, in each case, the noise has a very different psychical value; it is a different experience. In any case, what precedes the 'stimulus' is a whole act, a sensori-motor co-ordination. What is more to the point, the 'stimulus' emerges out of this co-ordination; it is born from it as its matrix; it represents as it were an escape from it.
>
> (Dewey, 1896 [1972]: 100)

So, a sound is not an independent stimulus, which enters into the mind out of nowhere and being decisive for the following act. Rather, the meaning of a stimulus depends upon the situation of which it is a part. From this follows that the response is also not an independent event that merely follows from a stimulus, because the response is part of defining the stimulus. A sound for example has to be classified as a specific kind of sound (from an animal or a violent assault?) in order to be followed by a relevant response. Further, this classification has to be sufficiently exact to hold throughout the response in order to maintain it. You cannot both aim for shooting an animal and run away from an assault at the

same time. At least neither of the acts would be very efficient, and you may end up being killed. Thus, the response is a re-action *within* the sound and not *to* the sound. Both are part of a situation, and the solution is embedded in the definition of the problem. This is why Dewey prefers the term 'organic circle' rather than 'reflex arc' as a metaphor for the relation between acting and thinking – being and knowing. Dewey's notion of the organic circle contains the outline of his work with defining his notion of experience and of his concept of 'situation'. Experience is a series of connected organic circles, it is transaction, and it is the continuous relation between person and worlds. Experience is an understanding of the person as part of a situation. It is not possible for anybody to be outside and to look into the world from the position of a spectator; you are always a participant and see the world from this position. Although, naturally, you are also able to imagine other ways of seeing things and to look upon yourself as doing so (see e.g. Follett, 1926 [2012]).

Dewey's elaborated notion of experience

About 20 years after Dewey wrote his article on the reflex arc, he made a comparison between his conception of experience and what he termed the 'orthodox' understanding of experience (Dewey, 1917 [1980]). Here he both criticised the sense-empiricists and the rationalists. The first mentioned because we experience things, not qualities (e.g. colours or texture, a red *chair*, a soft *cushion*), the latter mentioned because reason is part of experience, not over and above (see also Dewey, 1939 [1988]). This led Dewey to the following five differences between a commonplace interpretation of experience and his concept of experience (Dewey, 1917 [1980]). First, experience is traditionally understood as a 'knowledge affair' in which the purpose is production and acquisition of knowledge for example through reflection on action. In contrast to this, Dewey's concept of experience is based upon the relation between person and worlds. The orientation of experience towards knowledge means that it is possible to overlook situations in which knowledge is not the primary content or purpose, and not be able to see that experience is also emotional, aesthetic and ethical. There is a difference between enjoying a painting because of its aesthetic value and studying the painting as an art reviewer (see also Bernstein, 1966 [1967]). There are no experiences without some form of knowing but the meaning of the concept of experience is distorted if the paradigm for all experience becomes an issue of conscious thinking. Most human lives consist of non-cognitive experiences as persons continuously act, enjoy and suffer, and this is experience.

It is not possible to understand the meaning of Dewey's concept of inquiry if the value of the aesthetic and emotional experiences in Dewey's concept of experience is not recognised, because inquiry is an answer to a felt ('emotional') encounter with uncertainty in experience. Inquiry begins with an emotionally felt difficulty, an uncertain situation, and inquiry is a method to resolve this conflict. When something is experienced with the 'stomach' or an emotional

response is exhibited in a situation, inquiry is a way to help define experience in a cognitive sense and to re-create meaning. To do so, it may be necessary to activate former similar experiences by experimenting with different possible ways of attributing meaning to the situation at hand and, through that, transform the emotional experience into something that can be comprehended as a cognitive and communicative experience. This is how an emotional experience becomes a reflective one; it becomes a learning experience, and may become knowledge, which in turn can be part of informing experience in the next similar experience of an emotional uncertainty.

Secondly, experience is traditionally understood as an inner mental and subjective relation rather than a part of the objective conditions for human action that undergoes changes through human response. When experience is interpreted as subjective, then experience is trapped in the privacy of persons' action and thinking. There is no experience without a person experiencing but it does not mean that experiencing is solely 'subjective' and private. Experience is a genuine objective world that enters into persons' experiences and undergoes modification through the response. I elaborate this in the section on inquiry. Suffice to say here is that Dewey stresses experience as both empirical and processual, experience and experiencing.

Third, experience is traditionally viewed in the past tense, the given rather than the experimental and future oriented. Dewey's concept of experience, on the contrary, is characterised by being experimental and reaching forward towards the unknown. In Dewey's understanding of experience, experience is connected to the future because 'we live forward'. Anticipatory and forward thinking is more important for action and cognition than recollection. We are as human beings not passive beings who wait and see what happens, but powerful and future-oriented participants in natural and social worlds.

Fourth, experience is traditionally viewed as isolated and specific rather than as continuous and connected. For Dewey, however, experience is a series of connected situations (organic circles) and even if all situations are connected to other situations, every situation has its own unique character. Experience, nevertheless, is so connected that it is possible to use experience as a foundation for knowledge and to guide future actions.

Finally, experience has traditionally been viewed as beyond reason. Dewey argues, however, that there is no conscious experience without reasoning. Anticipatory thinking and reflection is always present in conscious experience by way of theories and concepts, ideas and hypotheses. This latter is the most important contrast to the traditional interpretation of experience. By on the one hand stressing that experience is not primarily a knowledge-affair, and on the other hand claiming that the systematic process of interpretation and reasoning is one form of experience, Dewey wants to show how inquiry is the only method for having an experience. Inquiry is triggered by uncertainty, and inquiry is the means through which it is possible to transform uncertainty through the mediation of thinking and action. Further, experience and inquiry are not limited to

Table 5.1 Comparison between an 'orthodox' concept of experience and Dewey's concept of experience (Dewey, 1917 [1980]: 6)

'Orthodox' concept of experience	**Dewey's concept of experience**
Experience as a matter of knowledge	Experience as interaction (later: transaction) between a living being with its physical and social environment
Experience as psychical and 'subjective'	Experience is a genuine objective world that enters into the actions and sufferings of persons and undergoes modification through their responses
Experience as the 'here-and-now' and oriented towards the past	Experience as experimental, an effort to change the given; experience is projection through reaching forward into the unknown – connection with the future is a salient trait in experience
Experience as imprinted by particularism and of dubious validity	Experience as defined above is full of connections with past as well as future
Experience as opposed to thinking other than revival of the givens of the bygone past, a springboard to a world of stable things and other selves	Experience as full of interpretations, there is no conscious experience without reasoning, thinking is continuous and constant

what is mental and private; the 'objective' world is always entering the personal world and is being changed from the response through inquiry. Persons are living, acting and reacting in objective worlds, but these transactions are not automatic or blind. Experience is experimental and oriented towards the future, and concepts and theories are in use as instruments to guide the process. Dewey viewed education and teaching as a means to support, through inquiry, the direction of experience. Table 5.1 shows the two definitions of experience.

In the following, I compare Dewey's concept of experience with the notion of practice as it is reflected in a practice-based theory of learning in order to show how Dewey's notion of experience remedies particularly the critique of the notion of practice as being not able to deal with creativity and innovation.

Practice versus experience

Clearly, there are quite a few overlaps between the notion of practice and the Deweyan notion of experience particularly regarding the foundational understanding of the relation between persons and worlds, and on how to become knowledgeable. None of these proponents begins in a 'knowledge-affair' but in interaction or participation; it is a matter of an embodied 'whole' person moving around rather than a thinking brain. Also, a stepping stone for the two concepts is their situatedness, the distrust in the world as one big reality with a capital 'R', both practice and

experience work within an understanding of the world as concrete. I, however, believe that pragmatism and the notion of experience is clearer when it comes to the ability for experience to mold the environment, and disbelief in the possibility for solving all problems through the same means. "The only way in which the term reality can ever become more than a blanket denotative term is though recourse to specific events in all the diversity and thatness" (Dewey, 1917 [1980]).

I believe that the other elements in Dewey's concept of experience may be seen as an elaboration of the notion of practice. The idea that pragmatism denotes a method for becoming experienced and knowledgeable is not explicit in a practice-based theory of learning. The experimental idea, the 'what-if' game brings us beyond the given and to see that different solutions are possible. Also, the connectivity between the past, present and future is inherent in the movement from peripheral to less peripheral, but the anticipatory, the visions of a future are downplayed in a practice-based understanding of learning. Finally, I believe the stress on interpretations and reasoning speaks to pragmatism as advantaged from a practice-based version of learning, which is what the process of inquiry may help us to do. The whole prescriptive idea in pragmatism we do not find in a practice-based version of learning. It is to this latter that I now turn by elaborating on the pragmatist notion of inquiry.

Inquiry as a pathway to knowledge

The notion of interaction, and (later) the notion of transaction, refers to the mutual creation and formation of persons at work with their worlds. The worlds, however, live their own lives and are subject to their own relations, which are what we as human beings experience:

> experience is *of* as well as *in* nature. It is not experience which is experienced, but nature – stones, plants, animals, diseases, health, temperature, electricity, and so on. Things interacting in certain ways *are* experience; they are what *is* experienced. Linked in certain other ways with another natural object – the human organism – they are *how* things are experienced as well.
>
> (Dewey, 1925 [1981]: 12–13, emphasis in original)

It is possible to learn from experience, because experience can be used to create connections to the past and the future. Dewey writes the following about experience that points to the past and the future:

> To 'learn from experience' is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instruction – discovery of the connection of things. Two conclusions important for education follow. (1) Experience is primarily an active-passive affair; it is:

> not primarily cognitive. But (2) the measure of the value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up. It includes cognition in the degree in which it is cumulative or amounts to something, or has meaning.
>
> (Dewey, 1916 [1980]: 147)

The above quote also illustrates the process of inquiry through which persons become knowledgeable. It is through inquiry that experience is had and knowledge may be created. In this process, ideas and hypotheses, concepts and theories are a part. Different hypotheses can be formulated and a mixture of ideas and thoughts from former experiences activated. Concepts and theories are used instrumentally and experimentally both in thought actions ('imagination') and in bodily actions in which they can be tested. When a problem is resolved, a feeling of control may replace uncertainty for a period. Below is a schematic list illustrating Dewey's notion of inquiry ('How we think', Dewey, 1933 [1986], 1938 [1986]).

1. An indeterminate situation in which a difficulty is felt – *'something's wrong …'*
2. The institution of a problem; its location and definition – *'the problem seems to be …'*
3. Hypothesis of a possible solution – *'maybe what I should do is …'*
4. Reasoning out the bearings of the suggestion – *'doing that would mean …'*
5. Active experimental or observational testing of the hypothesis – *'let's try this and see what happens …'* (Hildebrand, 2008: 53–56)

Development of experience happens when habitual actions and values are disrupted by encounters with uncertainties. This disruption can be a trigger to a closer examination of the situation, to inquiry, and thus new experience can be had and new knowledge may be created. Not all experience, however, leads to knowledge. Some experiences never enter consciousness and communication but remain emotional and subconscious. Dewey talks about the aesthetic and emotional experience, and about happiness and sorrow as also being experience. To become knowledgeable is just one way of having experience; there are many other kinds of experience.

The mutual formation of persons and worlds reaches beyond the given worlds, because persons are capable of inquiring and looking at themselves as well as the situation and to change both 'what' and 'how' is experienced through re-interpretations and re-actions. To live is to be engaged in the transactions that comprise experience, and experience is a process of life that changes continuously and in which new uncertain situations are an invitation to respond, an incentive to inquire, and to critically and reflectively think and have new experiences. Education, in the scholastic definition of the term, is a specific form of experience. In education, the purpose is to guide the process of experience and to make it more rewarding than if the person was left to herself.

Conclusion and discussion

I began this chapter by saying that contemporary societies as well as enterprises need a learning theory that can respond in a relevant and creative way to current and future problems. I introduced Dewey's definition of experience, which is grounded in transaction between person and worlds as well as in the relation between thinking and action – being and knowing. Experience occurs when habitual action and thinking are disturbed and calls for inquiry. Inquiry begins with emotion, but may develop into new experience and knowledge when language (ideas, concepts and theories) is used to define and resolve the disruption. This process may be supported by education and teaching. The process of inquiry concerns the consequences of different ways to define and resolve uncertainties. Inquiry is an experimental process in which ideas, hypotheses, concepts and theories are used instrumentally as 'tools to think with', and are as such a playful, creative and potentially innovative process. The result of inquiry, the new experience or 'warranted assertibilities' (knowledge), is therefore open-ended (fallible) and can be re-interpreted in light of new experiences.

The problem with using the term experience is that it has several different connotations in educational research as illustrated by Kolb. Dewey knew that, and suggested the term 'culture' to connote his more comprehensive understanding and use of experience. The term 'practice' may be a contemporary candidate to connote the content of Dewey's definition of experience. This is not without problems, because it is difficult to see learning as participation as more than induction to a community, i.e. as adaptation and socialisation. This means that it is difficult to understand renewal of practice, i.e. to understand creativity and innovation. An understanding of learning as legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice tends, in other words, to overlook the conservatism, protectionism and the tendency to recycle knowledge rather than critically challenge and extend it. Furthermore, underlying contradictions and inequities that prevent growth may be hidden (Fenwick, 2001) rather than be lifted forward as turning points for inquiry and learning. The potentially constructive ambivalences and resistances in learning may not be captured when the concept of community is strongly emphasised (Wenger, 1998).

It is also difficult to see how thinking, concepts and theories can be part of learning in a practice-based understanding of learning. Action is central in Dewey's concept of learning, not just actions understood as bodily actions, but ideas about action (imagination, thought experiments) and 'speech acts' (language and communication) are also important actions in Dewey's definition of learning. Concepts and theories have an important pedagogical function, because they may guide the formation of new experience and new knowledge through a rigorous exploration of the past. This experience, in turn, can be used to creatively inform the future. To paraphrase Dewey, a scientific mindset is, and should be, part of peoples' lives according to Dewey. This mindset is demonstrated by exerting still more informed inquiry, and critical and reflective thinking. Learning is,

however, not the same as transformation and change of conduct, because learning may result in a better understanding of a phenomenon, which cannot necessarily be observed as changed conduct.

Summing up, what makes pragmatist philosophy a learning theory that will also help persons working with learning today and in the future? First, pragmatism rests upon an understanding of human nature and a theory of knowledge in which both are grounded in experience. Persons are results of experience and become experienced (knowledgeable) through experiencing. Knowledge includes more than cognition, namely aesthetics and ethics, passions and emotion as well as creativity. Learning always means something to the learner, work, life, here-and-now, anticipating future, which is different from asking 'what can this be used for'?

Secondly, pragmatism rests upon a non-dualist understanding of persons and worlds, action and thinking, means and ends, descriptive and prescriptive. Thus, if we want creativity as an outcome, we need to include this in education or workplace consultancy. In addition, pragmatism helps teachers, counsellors and consultants to act – also in a post-factual society and to know that education is never only for a market, it is also for life. Thirdly, the concrete is always part of a contextual whole (a situation), which is not a given, but has to be defined unlike an *a priori* defined system. Thus, it is the situation which is the unit of analysis. It is experimental, playful, what-if rather than if-then, explore rather than impose. Teachers and others need to work towards curiosity (speak to the forward-looking person), use concepts as tools. There is always more than one solution, most issues are not a 'necessity', apply 'what-if' thinking, creative means, etc. This is why a pragmatist inspiration for learning cannot be reduced to, for example, William H. Kilpatrick inspired project-work (Childs, 1956). Rather, a pragmatist inspired learning theory requires a much more active and powerful role of the teacher, counsellor or consultant as a guide to support imaginative learning processes and outcomes.

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Chapter 6

Adult learning theory

Evolution and future directions

Sharan B. Merriam

Sharan B. Merriam is Professor Emerita of Adult Education and Qualitative Research at The University of Georgia in Athens, GA, USA. Merriam's research and writing activities have focused on adult and lifelong learning and qualitative research methods. For five years she was coeditor of Adult Education Quarterly, *the major research and theory journal in adult education. She has published 33 books, over 100 journal articles and book chapters, and she is a four-time winner of the prestigious Cyril O. Houle World Award for Literature in Adult Education. Her most recent books are* Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice *(2014) with Laura L. Bierema, and* Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation *(2016) with Elizabeth J. Tisdell. The following article from the* PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, *Vol. 26, 2017 represents her analysis of the evolution of adult learning theory.*

Introduction

While everyone knows at some level that adults learn throughout their lives, learning has become so associated with formal classes and "school," that adults often don't recognize or acknowledge that they are continually learning. Learning is, as Jarvis writes, "the essence of everyday living and of conscious experience; it is the process of transforming that experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and beliefs" (1992, p. 11). It wasn't until the early twentieth century that learning in adulthood was systematically studied, and then it was by behavioral and cognitive scientists who were most interested in memory, intelligence, and information processing, and in particular, how age impacted these processes. These early studies spawned different theoretical approaches to learning and adult learning, approaches which still frame research about adult learning today.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, adult educators themselves began studying adult learners which generated several models, theories, and frameworks explaining how adult learners could be distinguished from children. These contributions gave rise to adult education achieving its own identity as a field of practice separate from childhood education. We now know quite a bit about

adult learners, how context shapes adult learning, and how noncognitive factors play a role in adult learning. This article begins with a review of what I call the three foundational adult learning theories: andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning. Each of these theories focuses on the individual adult learner. A second section discusses the shift to attending to the context of adult learning that took place in the later decades of the twentieth century and remains central to understanding adult learning today. The third section reviews the most recent work in theory building in adult learning – that of considering the important place of emotions, the body, and the spirit in learning. Also discussed in this final section is the growing influence of non-Western perspectives in learning.

Foundational theories of adult learning

While there's always been at least an implicit understanding that adults can and do learn, it wasn't until the twentieth century that research attention was paid to learning in adulthood. The earliest research on adult learning was conducted by behavioral psychologists in the early decades of the century. These early studies were most often conducted in laboratory settings with an interest on how age affected the learning process. Based in behavioral psychology, learning was seen as a change in observable behavior, principles of which are still present in training programs in business and industry, the military, instructional technology, self-help programs, and "evidence-based practice" in health and medical arenas.

However, by the mid-twentieth century, interest in adult learners from a humanistic psychology perspective focused more on how adulthood could be distinguished from childhood learning. A humanistic perspective on learning emphasizes personal growth and development rather than the more mechanistic change in behavior. And it was this research and writing on adult learning that resulted in adult education becoming a recognized field of practice with its own professional associations, journals, and conferences. The three major "foundational" theories of adult learning that emerged during this time – andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning – are firmly lodged in humanistic learning theory. Each theory or framework is associated with an adult educator who wanted to define what is characteristic of the learning of *adults* versus that of children. Each theory has a robust research base and has, for the most part, withstood the test of time.

Andragogy

Andragogy is a European concept (indeed, even today there are academic departments of andragogy in several Central and Eastern European countries) imported to the U.S. by Malcolm Knowles in the late 1960s. He introduced it as "a new label and a new technology" distinguishing adult learning from children's learning

or pedagogy (1968, p. 351). Knowles proposed the following set of *assumptions* about adult learners:

1. As a person matures, his or her self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of a self-directing human being.
2. An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience, which is a rich resource for learning.
3. The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.
4. There is a change in time perspective as people mature – from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Thus, an adult is more problem centered than subject centered in learning (Knowles, 1980; pp. 44–45).
5. Adults are mostly driven by internal motivation, rather than external motivators.
6. Adults need to know the reason for learning something (Knowles, 1984).

These principles or assumptions actually tell us more about the characteristics of adult learners than about the nature of learning itself. Eventually shying away from calling andragogy a "theory" of adult learning, Knowles came to believe there was a continuum ranging from teacher-directed pedagogy on the one end, to student-directed learning (andragogy) on the other end, and both approaches are appropriate with adults and children depending on the situation. Using these assumptions about adult learners, Knowles's (1980) program planning model attends to, for example, making the adult classroom a place suitable for adults both physically and psychologically. Further, since adults direct their lives in family, work, and civic arenas, they can also (and often want to) direct their own learning.

Self-directed learning

Appearing about the same time that Knowles introduced andragogy, self-directed learning (SDL), a second major adult learning theory, further helped to distinguish adult learners from children. The first assumption of andragogy above, that as a person matures they become more independent and self-directing, in fact speaks to the self-directed nature of adult learners. The impetus for SDL becoming a major theory of its own came from Tough's (1971) research into the self-planned learning projects of Canadian adult learners. He found that 90% of his participants had engaged in an average of 100 hours of self-planned learning projects the previous year, and that this learning was deeply embedded in their everyday lives. Over 45 years of research in North America and Europe has substantiated that most adults are engaged in self-directed learning projects, that this learning occurs as part of everyday life, is undertaken in a systematic way, yet is not dependent upon an instructor or a classroom.

The key to understanding SDL is to recognize that SDL does not mean sitting in a room alone, learning something; rather SDL is all about the learner *taking control* of her or his own learning. A self-directed learner wanting to learn something could decide, for example, that she wants to take a class, find a mentor, or join an online discussion group. SDL can be found throughout the contexts of adult life, including the workplace, continuing professional education, health and medical fields, higher education, and in online contexts where research suggests that the more successful online learners are also more self-directed (Merriam and Bierema, 2014). SDL is often incorporated into formal instructional situations such as in higher education or continuing professional education, that is, a component of instruction might be to undertake a SDL project. The voluminous literature on SDL contains numerous models of the process, sample learner contracts, and assessment tools that measure the extent of a learner's self-directedness. There is an annual self-directed learning conference, now in its 30th year, and an international journal devoted to SDL (see www.sdlglobal.com for information on both the conference and the journal).

Transformative learning

Of the three foundational theories of adult learning, transformative learning is the most recent and most written about. Instead of focusing on the adult learner's characteristics, as andragogy and to a large extent self-directed learning do, transformative learning focuses on the cognitive process of meaning making. This type of learning is considered an adult learning theory because transformative learning is dependent on adult life experiences and a more mature level of cognitive functioning than found in childhood. Mezirow, who studied the experiences of women returning to college, is considered the main architect of this theory (1978) though since his early contribution many frameworks, definitions, and theories have been proposed. Learning in adulthood is often more than just adding information. It is also making sense of our experience and can result in a change in a belief, attitude, or perspective. A perspective transformation is central to this type of learning.

Mezirow's (2000) ten-step transformational learning process still frames much of today's research. The process is usually initiated through a sudden or dramatic experience (a "disorienting dilemma" in Mezirow's term) wherein adults are challenged to examine their assumptions and beliefs that have guided meaning making in the past, but now are no longer adequate. From an examination of current beliefs, the learner moves to exploring new ways of dealing with the dilemma which may lead to a change in a belief, attitude, or an entire perspective. The new perspective is more inclusive and accommodating of a wider range of experiences than the previously held perspective. While Mezirow focused on personal, individual transformation, he readily acknowledged the influence of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. Freire (1970) wrote of the need for transformational learning to address oppression and bring about social change.

Currently, transformative learning is probably the most researched and studied area in adult learning theory:

> There are hundreds of articles and chapters and dozens of books, the most recent being the 600-page *The Handbook of Transformative Learning* (2012), a journal devoted to this type of learning (*Journal of Transformative Education*), and biannual international conferences on transformative learning.
>
> (Merriam and Bierema, 2014, p. 83)

For a recent discussion of the development of transformative learning theory and a proposal to consider transformative learning as a metatheory "incorporating diverse perspectives into an overall understanding of transformational phenomena" see Hoggan (2016, p. 72).

Context-based models of adult learning

Andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning all focus on how *individual* adults learn. While each of these theories has contributed to our understanding of adult learning, each has also been critiqued for its lack of attention to the social and political context in which learning takes place. How self-directing can one be in their learning in an oppressive social context? Can transformative learning take place if one is not exposed to alternative ways of thinking about an issue or problem? In the latter decades of the twentieth century, attention to the role of context in shaping adult learning became prominent and remains an important component in understanding adult learning today. There are at least two strands of research and writing that attend to the context of adult learning: critical perspectives and situated cognition or "contextual learning."

Critical social science perspectives

At the heart of a critical social science perspective is shifting attention from the individual learner to the social context where learning takes place. Drawing from Marxism, critical theory, critical race theory, queer theory, feminist theory, and multiculturalism, this perspective asks questions about how race, class, and gender impact the structures in society, who holds power, and how the powerful shape society to reinforce their status.

Brookfield and Holst (2014) point out that from a critical perspective, there are three problems with the individual orientation of andragogy, self-directed learning, and much of transformative learning. First, "the self cannot stand outside the social, cultural and political streams within which it swims." Second, "self-direction as a form of learning emphasizing separateness leads us to equate it with selfishness, with the narcissistic pursuit of private ends, regardless of the consequences of this pursuit for others." Third, "a view of learning that regards

people as self-contained, volitional beings scurrying around in individual projects is also one that works against collective and cooperative impulses" (p. 7).

The most prominent adult education writer from a critical theory perspective is Brookfield (2005). He has proposed a theory of adult learning that has "at its core an understanding of how adults learn to recognize the predominance of ideology in their everyday thoughts and actions and in the institutions of civil society (2001, p. 21). There are seven "learning tasks" embedded in a critical learning theory: (1) Challenging ideology. This is "the basic tool for helping adults learn to penetrate the givens of everyday reality to reveal the inequity and oppression that lurk beneath" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 42); (2) Contesting hegemony. Hegemony is the notion that "people learn to accept as natural and in their best interest an unjust social order" (p. 43); (3) Unmasking power. "Part of becoming adult is learning to recognize the play of power in our lives and ways it is used and abused" (p. 47); (4) Overcoming alienation. "The removal of alienation allows for the possibility of freedom, for the unmanipulated exercise of one's creative powers" (p. 50); Learning liberation. Adults need to learn to liberate themselves, individually and collectively, from the dominant ideology; (6) Reclaiming reason. "A major concern of critical theory is to reclaim reason as something to be applied in all spheres of life" (p. 56); (7) Practicing democracy. Adults must learn to live with the contradictions of democracy, "learning to accept that democracy is always a partially functioning ideal" (p. 65).

While Brookfield is the major theorist with regard to a critical theory perspective on adult learning, a critical social science perspective is very much embraced by many researchers and writers in adult education and human resource development today. While there are numerous theoretical perspectives couched in complex language and concepts, the theme underlying these perspectives is that the context where learning takes place matters, and it is important to relentlessly challenge the inequities of the learning context.

Situated cognition/contextual learning

A second arena of theory-building related to the context where learning takes place is called situated cognition or contextual learning. Coming from educational psychology rather than social science philosophy, this theory posits that the particular learning that takes place is a function of three factors in the context where it occurs: the people in the context, the tools at hand (tools can be objects like a whiteboard, language, or symbols), and the particular activity itself. Probably the most famous example of situated cognition comes from research by Lave who is considered the major architect of this theory. She asked adults to determine which of two products in a grocery store was a "best buy." Those who actually went to a grocery store, talked with people in their group, and physically handled various items to compare sizes and shapes, got 98% of the math problems correct. Those who were given the same math problems in a paper and pencil test got 59% correct (Lave, 1988). Many of us who visit other countries

or even unfamiliar places in our own country, learn within the context how to negotiate the transportation system, shop for groceries and other items, and so on. We ask people who know, make use of signs and symbols, and engage in the activity itself. In another example, Kim and Merriam (2010) investigated how older Koreans learned to use computers. The physical setting of the classroom, the "tools" of computer terminals, whiteboards, and the teacher's notes, and the culturally defined interactions between teacher and students and among students themselves shaped the learning that took place.

Because a major component of understanding learning as a function of the context in which it occurs nearly always involves other people, the notion of learning communities or communities of practice is a direct outgrowth of this perspective on learning. Communities of practice are groups of people who share a common interest and who learn within that sphere of common interest. We all belong to several communities of practice whether it is our family, our co-workers, a professional association, a neighborhood group, or a social website such as Facebook. In some communities we might have quite a bit of knowledge and thus be more "core" members; in others we may be more on the periphery. Wenger (1998), who is most often associated with communities of practice, makes the point that learning is central to these communities, whether it happens serendipitously, or whether it is designed into the "social infrastructures" (p. 225). In his theory, a community of practice becomes a learning community when learning is "not only a matter of course in the history of its practice, but at the very core of its enterprise" (pp. 214–215).

There is an ever-growing body of literature on communities of practice and learning communities, including a journal, *Learning Communities Journal*. While communities of practice are most often implemented in organizational settings, and learning communities in educational settings, online environments, and community organizations, the terms are being used somewhat interchangeably. Precise terminology is less important than understanding that the emphasis of both situated or contextual learning and critical social science perspectives is that the *context* of adult learning is as important as identifying characteristics of adult learners and the cognitive processes involved in learning.

Recent theory building in adult learning

Learning is more than a cognitive process, but because for centuries the West has viewed the mind as separate from the body, and because learning has been so connected with formal schooling, the activity is almost always framed from a rational, cognitive perspective. However, recent work in the West and growing knowledge of how other cultures think of learning have revealed that learning can be through pathways other than those dominated by our brain. Our body, our emotions, and our spirit (what is often referred to as holistic learning), are also important avenues for learning or knowledge construction. Work in holistic learning is coming from educators, psychologists, and neuroscientists.

Embodied or somatic knowing

Embodied or somatic learning is learning through the body. Whether or not we acknowledge the body as a site of learning matters little because we have all experienced embodied knowing. The brain itself is a physical organ, a part of our body, thus separating the brain from the body makes little sense. Indeed, it is the brain that processes signals coming through our body. These signals include our emotions which we "feel" as well as intuitive or tacit knowing. In writing about the link between the rational mind and the emotional body, Mulvihill (2003, p. 322) says:

> there is no such thing as a behavior or thought, which is not impacted in some way by emotions. There are no neurotransmitters for "objectivity" … during both the initial processing and the linking with information from the different senses, it becomes clear that there is no thought, memory, or knowledge which is "objective," or "detached" from the personal experience of knowing.

Embodied learning is highly intuitive. Intuitive or tacit knowledge is knowledge we have all felt but rarely articulate: "It is knowing that we experience rather than think about" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 130). Embodied or somatic knowing involves our senses (think of times when our body reacts in a "knowing" way to something in our environment – like feeling threatened or nervous or excited before we know the cause of these feelings). It is also intuitive. This is the emotional component to embodied learning that Dirkx (2008) writes about with reference to adult learning. "Learning itself is an imaginative, emotional act and that really significant learning, learning that involves 'big words or concepts, such as Truth, Power, Justice, and Love'" (Dirkx, 2001, p. 69) is inconceivable without emotion and feelings.

The body is an instrument for learning, whether beneath our conscious awareness as in tacit or intuitive knowing, or manifested in our emotional connections to the learning. Embodied learning has been explored in a variety of adult education settings including literacy programs, the workplace, community settings, higher education, and even online environments (Dirkx, 2008; Lawrence, 2012). Embodied learning has received quite a bit of attention in social work, psychotherapy, and nursing. The body is central to healthcare of course, and as Wright and Brajtman (2011) write, "recognition of every person as an embodied being-in-the-world is fundamental to ethical nursing practice" (p. 25).

Fortunately, the false dichotomy between the mind and the body which can be traced back to the seventeenth century philosopher Descartes' famous dictum, "I think, therefore I am" is being challenged by researchers in the social sciences as well as neuroscientists who study brain functioning (Johnson and Taylor, 2006). Understanding how the brain, body, and emotions are interconnected is contributing significantly to our knowledge of how learning occurs.

Spirituality and learning

A holistic approach to learning also includes acknowledging the spiritual dimension of human beings. While spirituality is not the same as religion, it is often associated with religious beliefs and practices, which is probably why there has been some reluctance to accept the role spirituality can have in learning. However, for many, spirituality is "an awareness of something greater than ourselves" (English, 2005, p. 1171) and is about *connection* to something outside of ourselves, whether it be to others, to the earth, or to a life force. Spirituality relates to adult learning through meaning-making:

> Spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge and meaning. It works in consort with the affective, the rational or cognitive, and the unconscious and symbolic domains. To ignore it, particularly in how it relates to teaching for personal and social transformation, is to ignore an important aspect of human experience and avenue of learning and meaning-making.
>
> (Tisdell, 2001, p. 3)

Thus the key to understanding the role of spirituality in learning is through the notion of meaning-making. Tisdell (1999) explains how spirituality, meaning-making, and adult learning are interrelated. First, it is important as adult educators to recognize and acknowledge that our learners have a spiritual dimension to their lives which "is connected to how we create meaning in our relationships with others. It is in our living and loving" (p. 93). Second, adults come into a learning context with a meaning-making agenda even if it is not articulated in quite this way. Third, meaning-making is the process of knowledge construction, a process that uses images and symbols (language is made up of symbols for example), "which often emanate from the deepest core of our being and can be accessed and manifested through art, music, or other creative work" (p. 93).

Studies from primary school through higher and adult education can be found in the growing literature on spirituality. With regard to adult learners, studies on spirituality have been conducted in reference to adult developmental processes, especially identity development (Tisdell, 2008), social justice and social action initiatives (English, 2005), and the workplace. Somewhat surprisingly, the majority of research on spirituality and learning seems to be based in the workplace. Adults spend a great portion of their lives at work, and we bring our whole self to work–body, brain, and spirit:

> There have been literally dozens of popular books and articles and upwards of two hundred studies on this topic in the last twenty years. There is an online resource center, The Association for Spirit at Work (www.spiritatwork.com), and a journal published by Routledge, *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*. Karakas (2010) speculates that this burgeoning interest may be due to a paradigm shift from seeing the workplace as a controlled environment

> with a solely economic focus "to a balance of profits, quality of life, spirituality, and social responsibility" (p. 89).
>
> (Merriam and Bierema, 2014, p. 140)

Non-Western perspectives on learning

Never before has the world been so interconnected. Globalization, the movement of goods, services, people, and information across local and national boundaries, combined with communications technology and the Internet have resulted in a growing awareness of other cultures, other ways of thinking, and other ways of learning. And there is no longer any doubt that learning is indeed a lifelong necessity. Another byproduct of this interconnectedness is the growing awareness that how and what people learn is shaped by one's history and culture. Acknowledging and understanding other systems of knowing and learning expands our repertoire and hopefully effectiveness as adult educators.

In this section on recent contributions to adult learning theory, the influence of non-Western perspectives is briefly reviewed. The use of the terms "Western" and "non-Western" is of course problematic (setting up dichotomies is itself a very Western activity). However, these terms are commonly used due to lack of better categories, as well as the fact that the adult learning theories and models reviewed above have evolved in the West and dominate the thinking, research, and writing on adult learning theory. Historically, the formalization and institutionalization of Western knowledge systems has ignored even indigenous knowledge systems in the West. However, this is changing due to the forces mentioned above. And as part of our increasing interconnectedness through travel, study, and living outside our home cultures, we are much more aware of other ways of thinking and learning.

Non-Western perspectives on knowledge and learning can be presented through several lenses including looking at indigenous knowledge systems (local or community knowledge embracing spiritual values, traditions, and practices passed down through generations), and religious, philosophical, and spiritual systems different from ones predominantly found in the West. However, most of these systems have the following themes in common: learning is a communal activity, it is lifelong and predominantly informal, and learning is holistic in nature (Merriam and Kim, 2011).

The first theme – that learning is communal – positions the benefit to the community over individual development and gain. Focusing on learning for individual development is considered immature, and as Nah (2000) found in a study of self-directed learning in Korea, "a person becoming independent of his or her parents, teachers or other people, tends to be considered threatening to the stability of a community he or she belongs to" (p. 18). One's identity is seen as a communal one as illustrated by the African proverb, "There Is No Me Without You," or the Native American saying, "*We are, therefore I am*" (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007). Learning is the responsibility of all members of the community for the benefit of the community.

Non-Western systems value learning that is lifelong and informal, that is learning is embedded in everyday life, throughout life. As Fasokun, Katahoire, and Oduaran (2005) point out, lifelong learning in African cultures focuses on informal learning through life experiences rather than learning in formal educational settings. While formal learning is valued in non-Western societies, and we know that the vast majority of adult learning in the West takes place informally, the perception of how learning takes place and what is acknowledged and rewarded favors informal learning in non-Western societies and formal, institutionally based learning in the West.

Finally, a third theme that characterizes non-Western perspectives on learning and knowing is that learning is holistic. While the West continues to see learning as primarily a cognitive process residing in the brain:

> if there's anything that non-Western systems of learning and knowing have in common, it's the notion that learning involves not only the mind but the body, the spirit, and the emotions. There is no separation of the mind from the rest of our being.
>
> (Merriam and Kim 2011, p. 384)

While the holistic nature of learning is receiving more attention in the West (see above), such a perspective is firmly embedded in non-Western traditions where equally important to developing the mind "is developing a moral person, a good person, a spiritual person, who by being part of the community uplifts the whole" (p. 384).

In summary, globalization and communications technology have exposed and influenced all cultures to different worldviews about the nature of learning and knowledge construction. With regard to adult learning theory, exposure to non-Western perspectives on learning and knowing has contributed to expanding our understanding of learning in adulthood, as well as how to maximize the effectiveness of instruction with adults.

Implications for future theory-building and practice in adult learning

It is clear from this review of theory building in adult learning that there is no one theory or set of principles that can capture the full range of what we know about adult learning. Rather what we have is an expanding mosaic of theories, models, principles, and insights that together make up what we know about adult learning at any one point in time. Systematic investigations into adult learning began in the West in the early decades of the twentieth century and were dominated by a behavioral and cognitive framing of learning. Much interest in this period centered on how increasing age impacted performance on learning tasks and intelligence scores.

However, by the mid decades of the twentieth century, attention shifted to studying adult learning as a way of differentiating the field of adult education

from childhood education. Three major streams of adult learning theory emerged in this period: andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning. These three "foundational" theories reflect a more humanistic psychological perspective that focuses on individual growth and development. Such a perspective is congruent with the field of adult education itself, particularly in the West where individualism, competency, and self-development are highly valued. This focus on the individual began to be questioned and critiqued as attention turned to the context where adult learning takes place. In particular, critical theory and all of its variations (Marxist theory, feminist theory, critical race theory, etc.) questioned how much autonomy an individual really had to learn and develop. Writers from this perspective pointed out that society's structures and who held the power to make decisions about what learning consisted of and who had access to this learning greatly impacted an individual's ability and access to learning. This perspective on adult learning is still an important framework for research and theory-building in adult learning.

Also with regard to the shift in attention to the context of adult learning, but coming from a much different perspective, is the work of cognitive and educational psychologists on what is called situated cognition or context-based learning. The idea behind this strain of research is that learning is a function of the context in which it takes place. The richness of the context, the "tools" and the people in the context, and the particular learning activity itself all come together to structure the learning. Communities of practice and learning communities are an outgrowth of this perspective.

The most recent work in adult learning theory has been centered in more holistic conceptions of learning; that is, learning is viewed as more than just the cognitive processing of information. Learning also involves our emotions, body, and spirit. These holistic conceptions merge well with our increasing understanding of non-Western perspectives on learning and knowing. Non-Western views of learning emphasize the communal nature of learning, its lifelong and informal nature, and the fact that learning is also more than just a cognitive process – it involves the body, spirit, and emotions.

The more we know about how adults learn, the better we can design learning activities that facilitate learning and the better we can prepare adults to live full and engaging lives in today's world. For example, given our fast-changing world in which information overload is a fact of everyday life, we need to be promoting self-directed lifelong learners. From work in situated learning, we also know that learning is maximized in contexts that are as "authentic" as possible such as through internships, simulations, and so on. We also need to be developing critical thinking skills to foster examinations of inequities and how interlocking systems of power structure what learning opportunities are available and for whom they are available. Finally, what we are learning about holistic and non-Western perspectives on learning and knowing broadens our repertoire for structuring and facilitating adult learning in a myriad of ways.

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Chapter 7

A model of learning

Optimizing the effectiveness of learning strategies

John A. T. Hattie and Gregory M. Donoghue

Since the publication of his well-known books Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-analyses Relating to Achievement *(2008) and* Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning *(2011), John Hattie has held a central position in current learning and educational research and theory. Since 2011 he has been a Professor of Education and Director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne in Australia. Gregory Donoghue is a researcher and lecturer at the same institute. The following chapter is a shorter version of their joint article 'Learning strategies: A synthesis and conceptual model' in* Nature: Science and Learning *(No. 1, 2016).*

Introduction

There is a current focus on the development and measurement of twenty-first century skills. This search has been conducted for millennia – at least since Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. We still use Socratic questioning, probing questions, seeking evidence, closely examining reasoning and assumptions, tracing implications, searching for unintended consequences, and appealing to logical consistency. In these days of 'false news', Socrates would have been exemplary in carefully distinguishing those beliefs that are reasonable and logical from those that lack evidence and rational foundation to warrant our belief. Plato wanted his students to distinguish between what 'appears to be' from what they 'really are' beneath the surface, to come out of the cave and be responsive to objections. Such critical thinking, resilience, and problem solving that many are claiming to be the defining attributes of the 21st century should instead be called 5th century BC skills.

Similarly, there are many schools running critical, creative, and learning strategy classes; countries that require collaborative problem solving courses to be built into their curricula, and numerous web sites claiming to 'train the brain'. There are many myths about the implications of neuroscience into learning, and in many cases these are akin to sowing a thousand weeds. It is an empirical question whether learning strategies can be effectively taught separately from content,

and which of these strategies is more effective in transforming a student's learning and achievement outcomes. The current industry of apps, web sites, and interactive games often ignores the eons of research on learning, as illustrated by the chapters in this book.

It is also our observation that the teaching of 'learning' has diminished to near extinction in many teacher education programs. At best, there are passing references to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development; the use of constructivism (but this is normally presented as method of teaching rather than a theory of learning; (see Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2014); the development of learning progressions (in which adults generally prescribe a scope and sequence to be pursued, despite this often being independent of how students actually progress); and an over dominance on how to teach content and less focus on the methods of learning this content. When we ask teachers to name at least two theories of learning, the most common default response is Piaget or constructivism. Worse, those methods known to be failures are often referenced: learning styles, training the brain as a muscle, giving students control over learning (rather than teaching them how to have this control, and understanding what 'control' means). We reviewed over 1,000 hours of transcripts of teaching lessons for example to illustrate how some teachers teach students how to learn but, other than some questioning the student about how they got to that answer, we failed to find any.

In our workshops, we ask teachers and their students 'how do you think' and most struggle. The point is that we do not have a rich language of thinking despite the twenty-first century claims, and despite the rich knowledge and theories of learning. Often, the comment is 'I learn this way' whereas, as will be seen in this chapter, the attribute of successful learners is their flexibility to apply the optimal strategies at the optimal time. Other defining attributes include adaptiveness – knowing multiple ways to learn; knowing when to use a strategy and when to not use this strategy; knowing what to do when we do not know what do. A return to understanding 'learning' is needed, and the recent development of the 'Science of Learning' and the excitement about relating neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and education promises a worthwhile future. Knowing what learning strategies do and do not work is the science of learning; knowing when, where, and in what combination to use them for any individual learner is the art of teaching.

There is indeed a rich literature in learning strategies and our search located over 400; some were relabeled versions of others, some were minor modifications of others. Indeed creating taxonomies have been a valuable contribution by various researchers. Boekaerts (1997), for example, argued for three types of learning strategies: (1) cognitive strategies such as elaboration, to deepen the understanding of the domain studied; (2) metacognitive strategies such as planning, to regulate the learning process; and (3) motivational strategies such as self-efficacy, to motivate oneself to engage in learning. Dignath, Buettner, and Langfeldt (2008) added a fourth category – management strategies such as finding, navigating, and evaluating resources. Our aim was to locate evidence on the effectiveness of these strategies, to evaluate which moderators were most critical, and to make relative

comparisons of the learning strategies. Perhaps there is a top ten of learning strategies (see Dunlosky et al., 2013), but identifying the moderators and mediators as important, in our view, as identifying the strategies themselves: consequently, this was an underlying theme in our search.

There was the usual iterative consideration of the empirical and theoretical tensions, and in the process of our meta-synthesis, we built a model that helped serve as the coat hanger for understanding the empirical claims. Like all models, it provides a set of conjectures; it aims to provide explanatory power; it helps explain the empirical findings, and to generate future research questions. The model contains a proposed set of explanations, relations, and causal directions, all of which are subject to testing, the evaluation of the degree of corroboration, the investigation of implications and conjectures, and ultimately to the usual rigors of tests of empirical and logical falsifiability. As Popper (1968, p. 280) claimed:

> Bold ideas, unjustified anticipations, and speculative thought, are our only means for interpreting nature … and we must hazard them to win our prize. Those among us who are unwilling to expose their ideas to the hazard of refutation do not take part in the scientific game.'

Hence to our model.

A model of learning

The model comprises the following three components: learner inputs, learning agents, and learning outcomes, and these are depicted in Figure 7.1. The student arrives at a given learning experience with a pre-existing set of personal qualities, abilities, knowledge, and histories, all of which may impact their subsequent learning. We name these inputs and categorize them into either skill (knowledge and ability), will (the student's dispositions that affect learning), and thrill (motivations, emotions, and enjoyment of learning). These three categories also describe the outcomes of the learning process, and mediating inputs and outcomes are the learning agents – those phenomena that facilitate learning, be they direct, pedagogical, intentional, or otherwise: these include success criteria, the environment, and learning strategies. In our model, we propose that these learning agents can impact learning at either a factual-content (surface) level, an integrated and relational (deep) level, and when learning is extended to new situations (transfer). Finally, learning at each of these levels can be distinguished further, depending on whether the student is first encountering or acquiring into new learning, and whether the student is consolidating the learning at the surface and deep stages.

The model proposes that various learning strategies are differentially effective depending on the students' prior knowledge, disposition to learn, motivation to learn (which includes) the degree to which the students are aware of the criteria

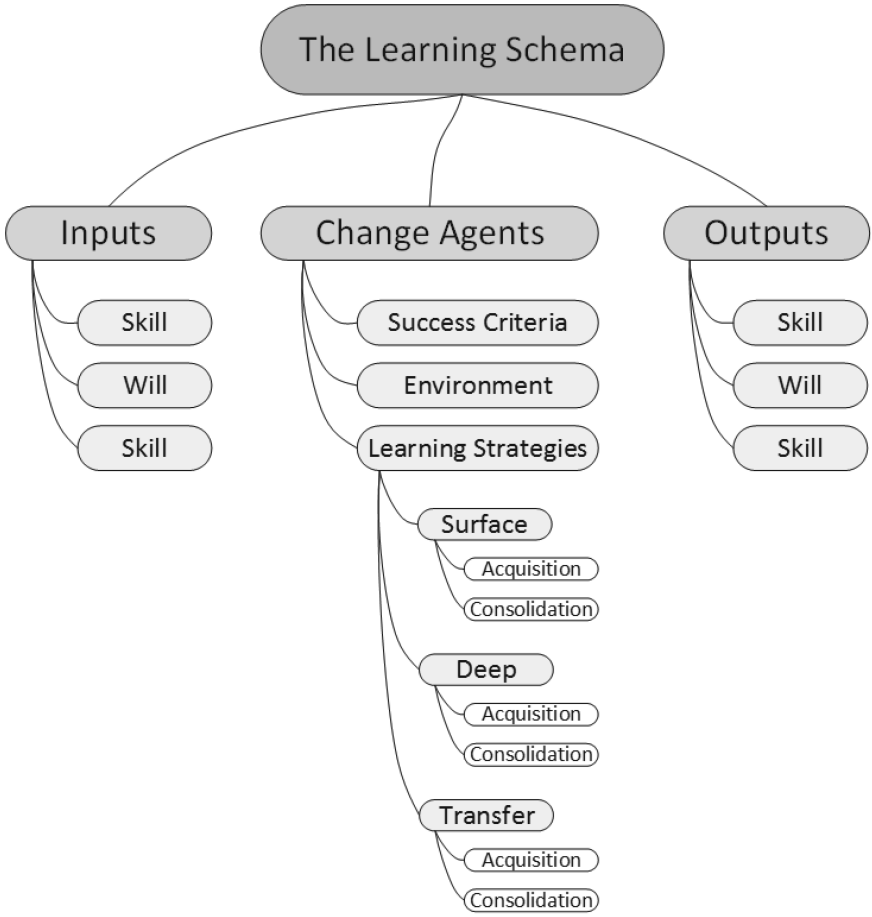

Figure 7.1 The learning schema.

of success. The strategies are differentially effective depending on whether the learning relates to ideas and surface level knowledge, to relations and deeper understanding, and to the strategies relating to transferring their knowing and understanding to near and far transfer tasks. Finally, within the surface and deeper phases, the strategies are differentially effecting depending on whether the student is acquiring or consolidating their understanding.

Evidence related to this model is provided via a meta-synthesis based on 18,956 studies from 228 meta-analyses. Only 125 of these meta-analyses reported sample size (N =11,006,839), but if the average (excluding the outlier 7 million from one meta-analysis) is used for the missing sample sizes, the best

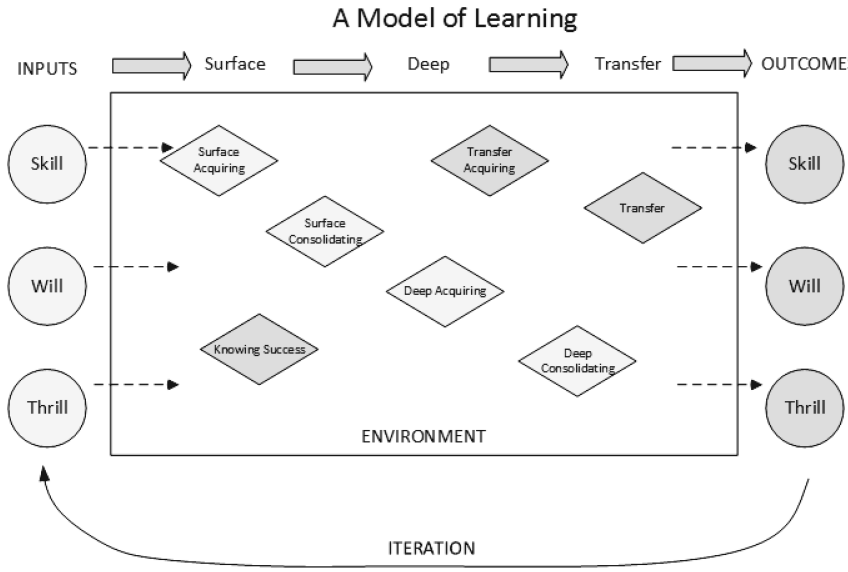

Figure 7.2 A model of learning.

estimate of sample size is between 13 and 20 million students. The average effect is 0.53 but there is considerable variance. The details of all phases of the model and results are presented in Hattie and Donoghue (2016; see also Donoghue & Hattie, in review).

Input and outcomes

Figure 7.2 shows the proposed model, including the types and phases of learning described above, depicted with a proposed sequence. Notwithstanding, it should be noted that this sequence is not unidirectional, as in reality learning will occur iteratively, non-linearly, and with much overlap between the phases.

The model starts with three major sources of inputs: the skill, the will, and the thrill. The 'skill' is the student's prior or subsequent achievement, the 'will' relates to the student's various dispositions towards learning, and the 'thrill' refers to the motivations held by the student. In our model, these inputs are also the major outcomes of learning. That is, developing outcomes in achievement (skill) is as valuable as enhancing the dispositions towards learning (will) and as valuable as inviting students to reinvest more into their mastery of learning (thrill or motivations). Each of these inputs, and more obviously the outputs, are desirable learning outcomes – in and of themselves – and are open to being influenced by teaching, both directly and indirectly, both intentionally and unintentionally.

The skill

The first component describes the prior achievement the student brings to the learning task (d=.77). Illeris (2007) claimed that 'the outcome of the individual acquisition process is always dependent on what has already been acquired' (p. 1). Other influences related to the skills students bring to learning include their working memory, beliefs, encouragement, and expectations from the student's cultural background and home.

The will

The will, in contrast, are dispositions, habits of mind, or tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways, and here is where many of the so-called 21st century skills can be placed. The popular dispositions of grit, mindfulness, and growth versus fixed mindsets have low effects (d=.19). This shows how difficult it is to change to growth mindsets, which should not be surprising as many students work in a world of schools dominated by fixed notions – high achievement, ability groups, and peer comparison. Moreover, Dweck (2012) has been careful to note that having a growth mindset is optimal in situations of adversity, helplessness, error, and where failure is a risk. She has also repeatedly noted that there is not necessarily a generic state of 'growth mindset' but one more specific to situations. Indeed, a growth mindset can be a fixed notion! Schwartz, Cheng, Salehi, and Wieman (2016) also noted that these dispositions may be worthwhile for students most at risk for poor academic achievement, and Yaeger et al.'s (2016) intervention only had impact on students in the bottom fifth of achievement. Credé et al. (2016) showed that the core concept in 'grit', often considered a core of growth mindset, is conscientiousness, and it is well documented how hard it is to change this personality disposition.

The thrill

There can be a thrill in learning but for many students, learning in some domains can be dull, uninviting, and boring. There is a huge literature on various motivational aspects of learning, and a smaller literature on how the more effective motivational aspects can be taught. A typical demarcation is between mastery and performance orientations. Mastery goals are seen as being associated with intellectual development, the acquisition of knowledge and new skills, investment of greater effort, and higher-order cognitive strategies and learning outcomes. Performance goals, on the other hand, have a competitive focus: outperforming others or completing tasks to please others. The correlations of mastery and performance goals with achievement, however, are not as high as many have claimed (Carpenter, 2007; Hulleman et al., 2010).

Most modern theories of motivation assume a student needs to be 'pulled or pushed' such as *wanting* to master or *competing* with one's peers. An alternative

and more defensible basis of motivation is the notion of *striving*: recognizing that life does not stand still, and the learner will be 'moving forward' in any event, the important motivation question becomes 'will I do *this* or *that*' (Hoddis, Hattie, & Hoddis, 2016; Peters, 1958). These striving theories of motivation have a higher chance of explaining why students engage in one activity or an alternative (e.g. on or off task). Higgins (2011), for example, argued that we strive for value, control and truth effectiveness, and we do this through promotion or preventive striving; that is we seek evidence for confirming current beliefs in ourselves ('I am a competent or a failure student') or seek evidence disconfirming their current beliefs to thence have self-evidence of the truth effectiveness of their beliefs about themselves as learners (I worked hard and passed this assignment so I am an OK student; see also Swann, 2011). In many senses this is akin to the distinction Popper (1968) makes between confirmation and disconfirmation and helps explain why we continue to do one thing rather than another.

To enact these strivings, Biggs (1993) combined the motivation strivings (why the student wants to study a task) and their related strategies (how the student approaches the task). He outlined three common approaches to learning: deep, surface, and achieving. When students are taking a deep strategy, they aim to develop understanding and make sense of what they are learning, create meaning, and make ideas their own. This means they focus on the meaning of what they are learning, aim to develop their own understanding, relate ideas together and make connections with previous experiences, ask themselves questions about what they are learning, discuss their ideas with others, and compare different perspectives. When students are taking a surface strategy, they aim to reproduce information and learn the facts and ideas – with little recourse to seeing relations or connections between those facts and ideas. When students are using an achieving strategy, they use a 'minimax' notion – minimum amount of effort for maximum return in terms of passing tests, complying with instructions, and operating strategically to meet a desired grade. It is this achieving strategy that seems most related to school outcomes.

The learning agents

Success criteria

As important as the exploration of learning strategies themselves is the study of the mediators of those strategies. A major mediator is the degree to which the learner is aware of the criteria of success of the learning, along with the value they place on attaining these success criteria. Some students will engage in most activities regardless; indeed teachers value such compliant students. But many, particularly as they move to senior elementary schools, start to question the purpose, authenticity, and value of investing energies into attaining undesirable or unknown outcomes. The time for compliance is over; students value control, knowing, and understanding more than they value externally defined success

criteria. Students' behaviors become more goal-directed when they are aware of what it means to be successful before undertaking the task. Students who can articulate or are taught these success criteria are more likely to be strategic in their choice of learning strategies, more likely to enjoy the thrill of success in learning, and more likely to reinvest in attaining the criteria of success.

The evidence from the meta-synthesis is that the key component of *Thrill* is having the cognitive flexibility to know when to be deep and surface (d=.70), provided the student does have deep strategies (d=.63) and motivations (d=.75). Having mastery (d=.19) or performance (d=.11) goals have little import. The thrill is increased when students are exposed or invited to co-construct success criteria early in a sequence of instruction (d=1.13). This could be accomplished through teaching students how to develop concept maps (d=.62), develop standards for self-judgment of their work relative to the success criteria (d=.62), and using the Goldilocks principle of 'not too hard, not too boring' (d=.57; see Lomas et al., 2017).

Environment

Underlying all components in the model is the environment in which the student is studying. Many books and internet sites on study skills claim that it is important to attend to various features of the environment such as a quiet room, no music or television, high levels of social support, giving students control over their learning, allowing students to study at preferred times of the day, and ensuring sufficient sleep and exercise.

Despite the inordinate attention, particularly from parents, on structuring the environment as a precondition for effective study, such effects are generally relatively small. It seems to make no difference whether there is background music (d=-.04), whether students have control over learning (d=.02), the time of day to study (d=.12), the degree of social support (d=.12), or the use of exercise (d=.26). Given that most students receive sufficient sleep and exercise, it is perhaps not surprising that these are low effects – of course, extreme sleep or food deprivation are likely to have marked effects on learning. Finally, it is important to note that these data are silent on the question of whether things like music, exercise, and autonomy are desirable learning phenomena in their own right.

The learning strategies

The three phases of learning: surface, deep and transfer

The model highlights the importance of both surface and deep learning and does not privilege one over the other, but rather insists that both are critical. Although the model does seem to imply an order, it must be noted that these are fuzzy distinctions (surface and deep learning can be accomplished simultaneously), but it is useful to separate them to identify the most effective learning

strategies. More often than not, a student must have sufficient surface knowledge before moving to deep learning and then to the transfer of these understandings. As Entwistle (1976) noted, 'The verb "to learn" takes the accusative'; that is, it only makes sense to analyze learning in relation to the subject or content area and the particular piece of work towards which the learning is directed, and also the context within which the learning takes place. The key debate, therefore, is whether the learning is directed content that is meaningful to the student, as this will directly affect student dispositions, in particular a student's motivation to learn and willingness to reinvest in their learning.

Acquiring surface learning

Surface learning includes subject matter vocabulary, the content of the lesson, and knowing much more. Successful strategies include integrating the new ideas with prior knowledge (d=.93), outlining and transforming (d=.85), and summarization and organizing (d=.63). Note, at this phase, memorization has a very low effect (d=.06). It is the skill to learn how to sift out the wheat from the chaff, to develop a coat hanger on which to frame the various bits of information that matter the most at the phase. Note, what matters is teaching students these skills of outlining and summarizing, and not merely giving them a teacher-prepared outline or summary.

Consolidating surface learning

Once a student has begun to develop surface knowledge, it is then important to encode it in a manner such that it can retrieved at later appropriate moments. This encoding involves two groups of learning strategies: the first develops storage strength (the degree to which a memory is durably established or 'well learned'), and the second develops strategies that develop retrieval strength (the degree to which a memory is accessible at a given point in time; Bjork & Bjork, 1992). Encoding strategies are aimed to develop both, but with a particular emphasis on developing retrieval strength. Both groups of strategies invoke an investment in learning, and this involves 'the tendency to seek out, engage in, enjoy, and continuously pursue opportunities for effortful cognitive activity (von Stumm et al., 2011). Although some may not 'enjoy' this phase, it does involve a willingness to practice, to be curious, and to explore again, and a willingness to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty during this investment phase. In turn, this requires sufficient metacognition and a calibrated sense of progress towards the desired learning outcomes. Strategies include deliberate practice testing (d=.77), the skill to receive and use feedback (d=.71), spaced versus mass practice (d=.60), and rehearsal and memorization (d=.73). Incidentally, it is worth noting that the effect of memorization in this consolidation phase (0.73) is starkly higher than in the Acquiring Surface phase (d=.06) – demonstrating the differential effectiveness of learning strategies depending on the phase and type of learning as depicted in the model.

Acquiring deep learning

Students who have high levels of awareness, control, or strategic choice of multiple strategies are often referred to as 'self-regulated' or having high levels of metacognition. Hattie (2009) described these self-regulated students as 'becoming like teachers', as they had a repertoire of strategies to apply when their current strategy was not working, and they had clear conceptions of what success looks like. Pintrich (2000, p. 547) described self-regulation as 'an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment'. These students know the what, where, who, when, and why to use which learning strategies: they know what to do when they do not know what to do. Successful self-regulation strategies include elaboration and organization (d=.75), strategy monitoring (d=.71), and elaborative interrogation (asking 'why' questions, d=.42).

Consolidating deep learning

Once a student has acquired surface and deep learning to the extent that it becomes part of their repertoire of skills and strategies, then there is evidence of 'automatization'. In many senses this automatism becomes an 'idea', and so the cycle continues from surface idea to deeper knowing that then becomes a surface idea, and so on. At this consolidating phase, the power of working with others is most apparent, and high levels of trust are needed so that students can 'think aloud'. It is through such listening and speaking about their learning that students and teachers realize what they do deeply know, what they do not know, and where they are struggling to find relations and extensions. The successful strategies include seeking help from peers (d=.83), classroom discussion (d=.82), evaluation and reflection (d=.75), talking to others about self-consequences (d=.70), problem-based learning with others (d=.68), self-verbalization and self-questioning (d=.64), being a peer tutor and learning to teach others (d=.54), self-explanation (d=.50), self-monitoring (d=.45), and self-verbalizing the steps in problems (d=.41).

Transfer

There are skills involved in transferring knowledge and understanding from one situation to a new situation. Indeed some have considered that successful transfer could be thought as synonymous with learning (Perkins & Salomon, 2012). There are many distinctions relating to transfer: near and far transfer, low and high transfer, transfer to new situations and problem solving transfer, and positive and negative transfer (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2014). Marton (2006) argued that transfer occurs when the learner learns strategies that

apply in a certain situation such that they are enabled to do the same thing in another situation when they realize that the second situation resembles (or is perceived to resemble) the first situation. He claimed that not only sameness, similarity, or identity might connect situations to each other, but also small differences might connect them as well. Learning how to detect such differences is critical for the transfer of learning. As Heraclitus claimed, no two experiences are identical; you do not step into the same river twice. Indeed, the effect of detecting similarity and differences between the current and new problem is high (d=1.32), as is seeing patterns between old and new situations (d=1.14).

Rather than solving one problem then rushing to solve the next one, a student is well advised to pause, then compare and contrast each problem: indeed this seems key to the transfer process. The model (see Figure 7.2) proposes that Transfer is a skill that, like other skills, can be taught. Consequently, it depicts the falsifiable hypothesis that the learning of transfer may have Acquisition and Consolidation phases, and that strategies for learning transfer may be differentially effective depending on which of these phases is applicable. Despite an absence of evidence for or against this notion, it is worth noting that this idea arose directly from the process of explicating the original model (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016), demonstrating one important utility of conceptual models: the generation of falsifiable hypotheses worthy of investigation.

Discussion and conclusions

There is much debate about the optimal strategies of learning, and indeed we identified over 400 terms used to describe these strategies. Our initial aim was to rank the various strategies in terms of their effectiveness but this soon was abandoned. There was too much variability in the effectiveness of most strategies depending on when they were used during the learning process, and thus we developed a model of learning to explain and generate predictions about optimal learning strategies and their moderators. Later work investigates methods to assess the various strategies, and to identify the optimal teaching methods related to improving students' knowledge and adaptive use of the strategies. Like all models, Figure 7.2 is a conjecture, it aims to say much, and it is falsifiable. There are ten major implications.

First, the model posits that learning must be embedded in some content (something worth knowing) and thus the current claims about developing 21st century skills sui generis are most misleading. These skills often are promoted as content free that can be developed in separate courses (e.g. critical thinking, study skills, resilience, growth mindsets). Our model, however, suggests that such skills are likely to be best developed relative to some content. There is no need to develop learning strategy courses, or teach the various strategies outside the context of the content. Instead, the strategies should be an integral part of the teaching and learning process, and can be taught within this process.

Second, the model includes three major inputs and outcomes. These relate to what the students bring to the learning encounter (skill), their dispositions about learning (will), and their motivations towards the task (thrill). Connecting with prior knowledge, enabling confidence and reducing anxiety, and exposing the criteria of success early in the learning make the most difference. The optimal is when students are aware of a transparent progression from what they currently know, are able to do, and what they care about to the criteria of success. There needs to be thrill in learning, and hence the drill and skill models, the dominant 'tell and practice' model of teaching, and the over-saturation of 'knowing lots' prescribed by so many curricula documents may mitigate against the presence of this thrill of learning. Like playing many video games, it is the thrill of learning and not the completion of tasks that excite most students – it is not gaining the golden ticket, completing and handing in the work, or getting to the final level that matters; it is the thrill of learning how to play the game. Students will engage in very challenging tasks if the learning requirements are seen to be attainable (with practice and feedback) and not boring; hence the Goldilocks principle of 'Not too hard but not too boring' (Lomas et al., 2017).

Third, the model proposes that effective learning strategies will be different depending on the phase of the learning – the strategies will be different when a student is first acquiring the matters to be learnt compared with when the student is embedding or consolidating this learning. That is, the strategies are differentially effective depending on whether the learning intention is surface learning (the content), deep learning (the relations between content), or the transfer of the skills to new situations or tasks. In many ways this demarcation is arbitrary (but not capricious) and more experimental research is needed to explore these conjectures. Although the model is presented as linear it is noted that there can be much overlap in the various phases. For example, to learn subject matter (surface) deeply (i.e. to encode in memory) is helped by exploring and understanding its meaning; success criteria can have a mix of surface and deep, and even demonstrate the transfer to other (real world) situations; and often deep learning necessitates returning to acquire specific surface level vocabulary and understanding. In some cases, there can be multiple overlapping processes: learning is iterative and non-linear.

Fourth, the essence of successful use of learning strategies relates to the timing and adaptive choice of strategy. While it is possible to nominate the top 10 learning strategies, the more critical conclusion is that the optimal strategies depend on where in the learning cycle the student is located. This strategic skill in using the strategies at the right moment is akin to the message in the Kenny Rogers song – you need to 'know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em'. For example, when starting a teaching sequence, it is most important to be concerned that students have confidence that they have a reasonable chance to attain the success criteria, see value in the lessons and can relate it to prior learning and future desired skills, and are not overly anxious about the skills to be mastered. Providing them early on with an overview of what successful learning in the lessons

will look like (knowing the success criteria) will help them reduce their anxiety, increase their motivation, and build both surface and deeper understanding.

To acquire surface learning, it is worth knowing how to summarize, outline, and relate the learning to prior achievement; and then to consolidate this learning by engaging in deliberate practice, rehearsing over time and learning how to seek and receive feedback to modify this effort. To acquire deep understanding requires the strategies of planning and evaluation, and learning to monitor the use of one's learning strategies; and then to consolidate deep understanding calls on the strategy of self-talk, self-evaluation, and self-questioning, and seeking help from peers. Such consolidation requires the learner to think aloud, learn the 'language of thinking', know how to seek help, self-question, and work through the consequences of the next steps in learning. The transfer of learning to new situations involves knowing how to detect similarities and differences between the old and the new problem or situations. There is much less support for standalone learning strategy developing generic working memory skills, critical or creative thinking classes. These classes can have an impact, but there is little evidence that they improve a student's transfer to new content domains. The claim, for example, is that working memory is strongly related to a person's ability to reason with novel information – and needs therefore to be developed within the context of that information.

Fifth, strategies are differentially effective depending on the phase of learning – early exposure (Acquisition) or strengthening and reinforcing (Consolidation). This distinction is far from novel. Shuell (1990), for example, distinguished between initial, intermediate, and final phases of learning. In the initial phase, the students can encounter a 'large array of facts and pieces of information that are more-or-less isolated conceptually ... there appears to be little more than a wasteland with few landmarks to guide the traveler on his or her journey towards understanding and mastery'. Students can use existing schema to make sense of this new information, or can be guided to have more appropriate schema (and thus experience early stages of concept learning and relation between ideas – that is, deep learning) otherwise the information may remain as isolated facts, or be linked erroneously to previous understandings. At the intermediate phase, the learner begins to see similarities and relationships among these seemingly conceptually isolated pieces of information. The fog continues to lift but still has not yet burnt off completely. During the final phase, the knowledge structure becomes well integrated and functions more autonomously, unconsciously, and automatically, and the emphasis is more on performance or exhibiting the outcome of learning.

The sixth set of claims relate to the distinction between surface, deep, and transfer of learning. Critically the model does not assume 'surface is bad' and 'deep is good', nor does it privilege one over the other. Instead it presumes both are critical: surface feeds into deep, and deep can then feed into transfer, or even back to surface – it is a matter of emphasis, when and for what purpose. As Illeris (2007) noted, all learning includes three dimensions: 'the content dimensions of knowledge, understandings,

skills, abilities, working methods, values, and the like; the incentive dimension of emotion, feelings, motivation, and volition; and the social dimension of interaction, communication, and cooperation' (p. 1). Certainly the strategies found to be most effective relate to emotional, social, and the cultural dimensions as much as to knowing and understanding. Building proficiency of 'capacity change' – not merely due to aging or development processes – is a main responsibility of our educational institutions, and the increasing need to improve surface, deep, transfer along with competencies to respect oneself and others, along with working in teams and interpreting to others what one knows is now all the more critical. It is the proportion, at the right time, for the right gains, for the right reasons of surface and deep that matter much more than one or the other. The model proposes a direction as to 'what is learning?' – it is the outcome from moving from surface to deep to transfer. Only then will students be able to go beyond the information given to 'figure things out', which is one of the few untarnished joys of life (Bruner, 1996). One of the greatest triumphs of learning is what Perkins (2014) calls 'knowing one's way around' a particular topic or 'playing the whole game' of history, mathematics, science, or whatever. This is a function of knowing much and then using this knowledge in the exploration of relations and to make extensions to other ideas, and being able to know what to do when one does not know what to do (the act of transfer).

Seventh, strategies for transfer are known and can be taught. It is so important to teach students to pause and detect the similarities and differences between previous tasks and the new one, compare and contrast the similarities in the previous and new problem before attempting to answer a new problem. Too many (particularly struggling) students over-rehearse a few learning strategies (e.g. copying and highlighting) and apply them in situations regardless of the demands of new tasks. Certainly, the fundamental skill for positive transfer is stopping before addressing the problem and asking about the differences and similarities between the old and new task. This ability to notice similarities and differences over content is quite different for novices and experts, and we do not simply learn from experience but we also learn to experience (Marton, Wen, & Wong, 2005; Bransford et al., 1999). Preparation for future learning involves opportunities to try our hunches in different contexts, receive feedback, engage in productive failure, and learn to revise our knowing based on feedback. The aim is to solve problems more efficiently, and also to 'let go' of previously acquired knowledge in light of more sophisticated understandings – and this can have emotional consequences: 'Failure to change strategies in new situations has been described as the tyranny of successes' (Robinson, Stern, & Stern, 1997, p. 84). It is not always productive for students to try the same thing that worked last time. Hence there may need to be an emphasis on knowledge-building rather than knowledge-telling, and systematic inquiry based on theory-building and disconfirmation rather than simply following processes for how to find some result.

Eighth, the model can help explain why some popular teaching methods, such as most programs based on 'deep learning' have low rates of success. For example, there have been 11 meta-analyses relating to problem-based learning based on 509 studies, leading to, on average, a small effect (d=.15). It hardly seems

necessary to run another problem-based program (particularly in first-year medicine, where four of the meta-analyses were completed) to know that the effects of problem-based learning on outcomes are small. The current model helps explain this seemingly anomalous finding. Problem-based learning is too often introduced before the students have sufficient surface knowledge to thence problem solve. When problem-based learning is introduced after developing sufficient surface knowing, (e.g. in later medical years), the effects increase (Albanese & Mitchell, 1993; Walker & Leary, 2009).

Ninth, it may be worthwhile to map various teaching strategies to the phases of the model. We reviewed the 300+ teaching strategies outlined in Marzano (2016) and determined those which most related to each phase of the model. For surface acquisition the most optimal teaching strategies include notebook review, pictorial notes, summarizing; for surface consolidation use assignment revision, frequent structured practice, think logs, two-column notes, revising knowledge using the five basic processes; for deep acquisition use elaborative interrogation, examining support for claims, generating qualifiers, identifying errors of attack, identifying errors of faulty logic, presenting the formal structure of claims and support, providing backing, and worked examples; for deep consolidation use grouping for active processing, inside outside circle, peer feedback, peer response groups, peer tutoring, student tournaments, think-pair-share, and cumulative review; and for transfer use classification charts, dichotomous keys, sorting, matching, categorizing, and student-generated classification patterns. The only strategy that appears to cross the various phases is the Jigsaw method, which has very high overall effect sizes (Batdi, 2014, d=1.20).

Tenth, and as much a summary, if a success criterion is the retention of accurate detail (surface learning) then lower-level learning strategies will be more effective than higher-level strategies. However, if the intention is to help students understand context (deeper learning) with a view to applying it in a new context (transfer), then higher-level strategies are also needed. An explicit assumption is that higher-level thinking requires a sufficient corpus of lower level surface knowledge to be effective – one cannot move straight to higher level thinking (e.g. problem solving and creative thought) without sufficient level of content knowledge. There are learning strategies that maximize the various parts of the learning cycle: students need to create their own set of known learning strategies, be able to meta-cognitively choose a strategy for a given learning experience, be able to evaluate the effectiveness of that strategy, and finally to have the cognitive flexibility to change strategies if one proves ineffective. This fundamental skillset that recognizes learning as a complex, non-linear and time-sensitive phenomenon can and should be taught.

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Chapter 8

Transformative learning theory

Jack Mezirow

The concept of 'transformative learning' was launched in 1978 by Jack Mezirow, Professor of Adult Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. For many years he had been an adult education consultant in various developing countries, inspired by Brazilian Paulo Freire and German Jürgen Habermas, among others. But it was in connection with women's adult education in the US that he discovered a wide-ranging kind of learning, reaching right into changes of the identity. Later, Mezirow elaborated on the concept of transformative learning in several writings and worked with it in practice, not least in the reputed Adult Education Guided Independent Study (AEGIS) doctoral programme. Mezirow remained professionally active almost until his death in 2014. In the following chapter, which is one of his last contributions published in 2006 in Peter Sutherland and Jim Crowther (eds) Lifelong Learning: Concepts and Contexts, *Mezirow recapitulates the history and main features of the concept of transformative learning and discusses various points of critique and suggestions for extension that have been put forward over the years.*

Introduction

The concept of transformative learning was introduced in the field of adult education in 1978 in an article that I entitled 'Perspective Transformation', published in the American journal *Adult Education Quarterly*. The article urged the recognition of a critical dimension of learning in adulthood that enables us to recognise and reassess the structure of assumptions and expectations which frame our thinking, feeling and acting. These structures of meaning constitute a 'meaning perspective' or frame of reference.

Influences in the development of this concept included Freire's 'conscientization'; Kuhn's 'paradigms'; the concept of 'consciousness raising' in the women's movement; the writings and practice of psychiatrist Roger Gould; philosophers Jurgen Habermas, Harvey Siegal and Herbert Fingerette; and my observation of the transformative experience of my wife, Edee, as an adult returning to complete her undergraduate degree at Sarah Lawrence College in New York.

The research base for the concept evolved out of a comprehensive national study of women returning to community colleges in the United States (Mezirow 1978). The study used grounded theory methodology to conduct intensive field study of students in 12 diverse college programmes, comprehensive analytical

descriptions of an additional 24 programmes and responses to a mail inquiry by another 314.

A transformative learning movement subsequently developed in North American adult education, involving five international conferences, featuring over 300 paper presentations, the publication of many journal articles, over a dozen books and an estimated 150 doctoral dissertations on transformative learning in the fields of adult education, health and social welfare.

Foundations

Habermas (1981) makes a critically important distinction between instrumental and communicative learning. Instrumental learning pertains to learning involved in controlling or manipulating the environment, in improving performance or prediction. We validate by empirically testing contested beliefs regarding the truth of an assertion – that something is as it is purported to be. Instrumental learning is involved in learning to design automobiles, build bridges, diagnose diseases, fill teeth, forecast the weather, do accounting, and in scientific and mathematical inquiry. The developmental logic of instrumental learning is hypothetical-deductive.

Communicative learning pertains to understanding what someone means when they communicate with you – in conversation, or through a book, a poem, an artwork or a dance performance. To validate an understanding in communicative learning, one must assess not only the accuracy or truth of what is being communicated, but also the intent, qualifications, truthfulness and authenticity of the one communicating. Telling someone that you love them can have many meanings. We feel safer when a person prescribing medicine for us has training as a physician or pharmacist.

The purpose of communicative discourse is to arrive at the best judgement, not to assess a truth claim, as in instrumental learning. To do so one must access and understand, intellectually and empathetically, the frame of reference of the other and seek common ground with the widest range of relevant experience and points of view possible. Our effort must be directed at seeking a consensus among informed adults communicating, when this is possible, but, at least, to clearly understand the context of the assumptions of those disagreeing. The developmental logic of communicative learning is analogical-abductive.

For Habermas, discourse leading to a consensus can establish the validity of a belief. This is why our conclusions are always tentative: we may always encounter others with new evidence, arguments or perspectives. Thus diversity of experience and inclusion are essential to our understanding. It is important to recognise that the only alternatives to this dialectical method of inquiry for understanding the meaning of our experience is to rely on tradition, an authority or force.

In suggesting specific ideal conditions for human discourse, Habermas has provided us with an epistemological foundation defining optimal conditions for adult learning and education. The conditions also provide a foundation for a

social commitment by adult educators to work toward a society that fosters these ideals. To freely and fully participate in discourse, learners must:

- have accurate and complete information;
- be free from coercion, distorting self-deception or immobilising anxiety;
- be open to alternative points of view – empathic, caring about how others think and feel, withholding judgement;
- be able to understand, to weigh evidence and to assess arguments objectively;
- be able to become aware of the context of ideas and critically reflect on assumptions, including their own;
- have equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse;
- have a test of validity until new perspectives, evidence or arguments are encountered and validated through discourse as yielding a better judgement.

Transformative learning theory

Transformative learning is defined as the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change. Such frames are better because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.

Frames of reference are the structures of culture and language through which we construe meaning by attributing coherence and significance to our experience. They selectively shape and delimit our perception, cognition and feelings by predisposing our intentions, beliefs, expectations and purposes. These preconceptions set our 'line of action'. Once set or programmed, we automatically move from one specific mental or behavioural activity to another, and we have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our pre-conceptions.

A frame of reference encompasses cognitive, conative and affective components, may operate within or outside awareness and is composed of two dimensions: a habit of mind and resulting points of view. Habits of mind are broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting, influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes. These codes or canon may be cultural, social, linguistic, educational, economic, political, psychological, religious, aesthetic and others. Habits of mind become articulated in a specific point of view – the constellation of belief, memory, value judgement, attitude and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation. Points of view are more accessible to awareness, to feedback from others. An example of a habit of mind is ethnocentrism, the predisposition to regard others outside one's own group as inferior, untrustworthy or otherwise less acceptable. A resulting point of view is the complex of negative feelings, beliefs, judgements and attitudes we may have regarding specific individuals or groups with characteristics different than our own. Having a positive experience with one of these groups

may change an ethnocentric point of view but not necessarily one's ethnocentric habit of mind regarding other groups.

Transformative learning may occur in instrumental learning. This usually involves task-oriented learning. In communicative learning, as in the ethnocentric example, transformative learning usually involves critical self-reflection. However, elements of both task-oriented learning and critical self-reflection may be found in either type of learning. Habits of mind involve how one categorises experience, beliefs, people, events and oneself. They may involve the structures, rules, criteria, codes, schemata, standards, values, personality traits and dispositions upon which our thoughts, feelings and action are based.

Meaning perspectives or habits of mind include the:

- *sociolinguistic* – involving cultural canon, social norms, customs, ideologies, paradigms, linguistic frames, language games, political orientations and secondary socialisation (thinking like a teacher, doctor, policeman or an administrator), occupational or organisational cultures' habits of mind;
- *moral-ethical* – involving conscience, moral norms and values;
- *learning styles* – sensory preferences, focus on wholes or parts or on the concrete or abstract, working alone or together;
- *religious* – commitment to doctrine, spiritual or transcendental world views;
- *psychological* – theories, schema, scripts, self-concept, personality traits or types, repressed parental prohibitions, emotional response patterns, dispositions;
- *health* – ways of interpreting health problems, rehabilitation, near-death experience;
- *aesthetic* – values, taste, attitude, standards, judgements about beauty and the insight and authenticity of aesthetic expressions, such as the sublime, the ugly, the tragic, the humorous, the drab.

Transformative learning theory, as I have interpreted it, is a metacognitive epistemology of evidential (instrumental) and dialogical (communicative) reasoning. Reasoning is understood as the process of advancing and assessing a belief. Transformative learning is an adult dimension of reason assessment involving the validation and reformulation of meaning structures.

The process of transformative learning involves:

- reflecting critically on the source, nature and consequences of relevant assumptions – our own and those of others;
- in instrumental learning, determining that something is true (is as it is purported to be) by using empirical research methods;
- in communicative learning, arriving at more justified beliefs by participating freely and fully in an informed continuing discourse;
- taking action on our transformed perspective – we make a decision and live what we have come to believe until we encounter new evidence, argument

or a perspective that renders this orientation problematic and requires reassessment;
- acquiring a disposition – to become more critically reflective of our own assumptions and those of others, to seek validation of our transformative insights through more freely and fully participating in discourse and to follow through on our decision to act upon a transformed insight.

Transformations may be *epochal* – sudden major reorientations in habit of mind, often associated with significant life crises – or *cumulative*, a progressive sequence of insights resulting in changes in point of view and leading to a transformation in habit of mind. Most transformative learning takes place outside of awareness; intuition substitutes for critical reflection of assumptions. Educators assist learners to bring this process into awareness and to improve the learner's ability and inclination to engage in transformative learning.

In our study of women returning to college, transformations often follow the following phases of meaning, becoming clarified:

- a disorienting dilemma;
- self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame;
- a critical assessment of assumptions;
- recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared;
- exploration of options for new roles, relationships and action;
- planning a course of action;
- acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;
- provisional trying of new roles;
- building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
- a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

The two major elements of transformative learning are first, critical reflection or critical self-reflection on assumptions – critical assessment of the sources, nature and consequences of our habits of mind – and second, participating fully and freely in dialectical discourse to validate a best reflective judgement – what King and Kitchener define as that judgement involving 'the process an individual evokes to monitor the epistemic nature of problems and the truth value of alternative solutions' (1994: 12).

Issues

Emotion, intuition, imagination

Important questions have been raised by adult educators concerning transformation theory. One has to do with the need for more clarification and emphasis on

the role played by emotions, intuition and imagination in the process of transformation. This criticism of the theory is justified. The process by which we tacitly construe our beliefs may involve taken-for-granted values, stereotyping, highly selective attention, limited comprehension, projection, rationalisation, minimising or denial. That is why we need to be able to critically assess and validate assumptions supporting our own beliefs and expectations and those of others.

Our experiences of persons, things and events become realities as we typify them. This process has much to do with how we come to associate them with our personal need for justification, validity and a convincing, real sense of self. Expectations may be of events or of beliefs pertaining to one's own involuntary reactions to events – how one subjectively expects to be able to cope. Our expectations powerfully affect how we construe experience; they tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies. We have a proclivity for categorical judgement.

Imagination of how things could be otherwise is central to the initiation of the transformative process. As the process of transformation is often a difficult, highly emotional passage, a great deal of additional insight into the role of imagination is needed and overdue. As many transformative experiences occur outside of awareness, I have suggested that, in these situations, intuition substitutes for critical self-reflection. This is another judgement that needs further conceptual development.

I have attempted to differentiate between the adult educator's role in working with learners who are attempting to cope with transformations and that of the psychotherapist by suggesting that the difference in function pertains to the degree of anxiety generated by the transformative experience. More insight into the process of transformative learning that takes place outside of awareness is also in need of development.

Decontextualised learning

Another major criticism cites my emphasis on a concept of rationality that is considered an ahistorical and universal model leading to a 'decontextualised' view of learning – one that fails to deal directly with considerations and questions of context – ideology, culture, power and race-class-gender differences.

An epistemology of evidential and discursive rationality involves reasoning – advancing and assessing reasons for making a judgement. Central to this process is critical self-reflection on assumptions and critical-dialectical discourse. Of course, influences like power, ideology, race, class and gender differences and other interests often pertain and are important factors. However, these influences may be rationally assessed and social action taken appropriately when warranted.

Siegal (1988) explains that rationality is embodied in evolving traditions. As the tradition evolves, so do principles that define and assess reasons. Principles that define reasons and determine their force may change, but rationality remains the same: judgement and action in accord with reason. A critical thinker is one who is appropriately moved by reasons. Admittedly, this is an unfamiliar

orientation. There are those who have always argued with great conviction that education – and indeed the very nature of learning and rationality itself – is and must be the handmaiden of a particular ideology, religion, psychological theory, system of power and influence, social action, culture, a form of government or economic system.

This familiar habit of mind dictates that learning, adult education and rationality must, by definition, be servants to these masters. A rational epistemology of adult learning holds the promise of saving adult education from becoming, like religion, prejudice and politics, the rationalisation of a vested interest to give it the appearance of cause. Transformative learning is essentially a metacognitive process of *reassessing reasons* supporting our problematic meaning perspectives.

Social action

A major emphasis of critics of transformation theory, as I have conceptualised it, has been its de-emphasis of social action. Adult education holds that an important goal is to effect social change. Transformation theory also contends that adult education must be dedicated to effecting social change, to modifying oppressive practices, norms, institutions and socio-economic structures to allow everyone to participate more fully and freely in reflective discourse and to acquiring a critical disposition and reflective judgement. Transformative learning focuses on creating the foundation in insight and understanding essential for learning how to take effective social action in a democracy.

As Dana Villa notes in *Socratic Citizenship* (2001), one of our habitual frames of reference is to be disposed to view anything that is either cause-based, group-related or service-oriented as the core of 'good citizenship' and anything which simply dissents or says 'no' as of little value. Socrates' original contribution was the introduction of critical self-reflection and individualism as essential standards of justice and civic obligation in a democracy. Socrates undermined fellow citizens' taken-for-granted habits of mind pertaining to what justice and virtue require. He sought to distance thinking and moral reflection from the restraints of arbitrary political judgement and action – to move to a disposition of critical reflection on assumptions and the citizen's own moral self-formation as a condition of public life.

Habermas (1981) suggests that critical reflection on assumptions and critical discourse based on reflective judgement – the key dimensions of transformative learning – are characteristics of the highest level of adult morality.

Ideology critique

Adult educator Stephen Brookfield (1991) has challenged the breadth of transformative learning as I have conceptualised it. He writes:

> For something to count as an example of critical learning, critical analysis or critical reflection, I believe that the persons concerned must engage in

> some sort of power analysis of the situation or context in which the learning is happening. They must also try to identify assumptions they hold dear that are actually destroying their sense of well-being and serving the interests of others: that is, hegemonic assumptions.
>
> (1991: 126)

For Brookfield, ideologies are pejorative 'sets of values, beliefs, myths, explanations and justifications that appear self-evidently true and are morally desirable' (1991: 129).

Brookfield is not suggesting a critique of all relevant ideologies, the point of view of transformation theory in adult education. He is quite specific that critical reflection as ideology critique 'focuses on helping people come to an awareness of how capitalism shapes belief systems and assumptions (i.e. ideologies) that justify and maintain economic and political inequity' (1991: 341). Issues raised here are echoed in critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy, and its current form of popular education in Latin America, is an adult education programme evolving from the village-based literacy work of Paulo Freire that assigns priority to a guided analysis of how ideology, power and influence specifically impact upon and disadvantage the immediate lives of illiterate learners. The educator assists them to learn to read in the process of planning and taking an active role in collective social action to effect change. There is a praxis of transformative study and action.

For critical pedagogy, the critical learner, prototypically an illiterate rural peasant, not only comes to recognise injustice but, upon this recognition, is expected to actively participate in the specific political or social action required to change it. The process and problems involved in taking informed, collective, political action in a functioning democracy are seldom addressed in the literature of critical pedagogy.

Burbules and Burk (1999) note that in critical pedagogy, everything is open to critical reflection except the premises and categories of critical pedagogy itself and comment that 'there is a givenness of what a "critical" understanding should look like that threatens to become its own kind of constraint' (1999: 54). 'From the perspective of critical thinking, critical pedagogy crosses a threshold between teaching critically and indoctrinating' (1999: 55). Transformation theory in adult education, on the other hand, involves how to think critically about one's assumptions supporting perspectives and to develop reflective judgement in discourse regarding beliefs, values, feelings and self-concept. It is not primarily to think politically; for ideology critique and critical pedagogy, this is a false assumption.

Cosmology

Cosmology is the study of the universe as a rational and orderly system. In the book *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning* (2002), Edmund

O'Sullivan and his colleagues at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto move far beyond critical pedagogy's sole concern with the political and social dimensions of capitalism to include environmental, spiritual and self-concept issues in what they call 'integral transformative learning':

> Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feeling and action. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and the natural world; our understanding of the relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awareness; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of the possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.
>
> (2002: 11)

'Transformative criticism', as conceptualised from this perspective, posits a critique of the dominant culture's 'formative appropriateness' and provides a vision of an alternative form of culture and concrete indications of how to abandon inappropriate elements and to create more appropriate new cultural forms. They suggest that these elements should form a new type of integral education.

O'Sullivan et al.'s identification of transformative learning with movement toward the realisation of a bold conception of a new cosmology moves well beyond the political focus of critical pedagogy. However, it shares the same limitation of not presenting or inviting a critical assessment of its core assumptions and categories. Such an assessment should consider the definition and validity of each of the five components designated in their definition of transformation, the assumptions regarding the role of education and adult education as the principal vehicle for effecting the broad multidimensional transformation they envision and how we are to understand the epistemology of transformative learning in adulthood, particularly the role of rationality, critical reflection on epistemic assumptions, and of discourse in the context of this theory.

Perspectives on transformative learning

Constructivist development

Constructivist developmental psychologists believe that development involves movement through a predictable sequence of 'forms' (frames of reference or meaning systems) culminating in the development of the adult capacity, and in some adult learners, the ability and disposition to engage in the transformative processes of critical self-reflection and reflective judgement through discourse.

Robert Kegan (2000) identifies five forms of meaning-making through the lifespan. These forms of mind are the perceptual/impulsive, the concrete/opinionated, the socialised, the self-authoring and the self-transforming mind that

includes the capacity for self-reflection. He delineates the capabilities of adulthood: able to think abstractly, construct values and ideals, introspect, subordinate short-term interests to the welfare of a relationship and orient to and identify with expectations of groups and individual relationships of which one wishes to feel a part. It ordinarily takes two decades to develop these capacities and longer for some.

Mary Belenky and her associates (1986) identified six forms of knowing: silenced, received, subjective, separate, connected and constructed. The connected knower enters into the perspective of another and tries to see the world through his/her eyes. This is an essential dimension of transformative learning.

King and Kitchener (1994) have considerable evidence to support the assertion that it is only in adulthood that epistemic assumptions allow for true reflective thinking in a seven-stage movement. Stage seven involves understanding abstract concepts of knowledge as a system; knowledge is the outcome of the process of reasonable inquiry for constructing an informed understanding. This stage is comparable to the adult capacity to effectively participate in discourse in transformation theory.

Psychic distortion

Psychiatrist Roger Gould's 'epigenetic' theory of adult development (1978) holds that traumatic events in childhood may produce prohibitions that, though submerged from consciousness in adulthood, continue to generate anxiety feelings that inhibit adult action when there is a risk of violating them. This dynamic results in a lost function – the ability to take risks, feel sexual, finish a job – that must be regained if one is to become a fully functioning adult. The most significant adult learning occurs in connection with life transitions. As adulthood is a time for regaining lost functions, the learner should be assisted to identify the specific blocked action and the source and nature of stress in deciding to take action. The learner is helped to differentiate between the anxiety that is a function of the childhood trauma and the anxiety warranted by his or her immediate adult life situation.

Gould feels that learning to cope with ordinary existential psychological distortions can be facilitated by knowledgeable adult educators and adult counsellors as well as by therapists. He has developed an interactive, computerised programme of guided self-study for adult learners coping with life transitions. Educators and counsellors provide emotional support and help the learner think through the choices posed by the programme.

Schema therapy

As described by Bennett-Goleman (2001), schema therapy is an adaptation of cognitive psychotherapy that focuses on repairing emotional frames of reference, like maladaptive emotional habits, relentless perfectionism or the sense of emotional deprivation. Mindfulness, a Buddhist concept, defined here as a refined,

meditative awareness, is combined by Bennett-Goleman with insights from cognitive neuroscience. Mindfulness may be applied by individuals to understand their patterns of emotional reactivity in workshops. Major schemas include:

> ... unloveability, the fear that people would reject us if they truly knew us; mistrust, the constant suspicion that those close to us will betray us; social exclusion, the feeling we don't belong; failure, the sense that we cannot succeed at what we do; subjugation, always giving in to other people's wants and demands; and entitlement, the sense that one is somehow special and so beyond ordinary rules and limits.
>
> (2001: 11)

> Mindfulness allows one to separate specific experience from the overlay of mental and emotional reaction to it. In that space there is room to examine whether we harbour distorted assumptions, ungrounded beliefs, or warped perceptions. We can see the ways our thoughts and feelings define us as they come and go – we can see our habitual lenses themselves
>
> (2001: 53)

As frames of reference, schemas are the way the mind organises, retains and acts on a particular task, but they also selectively determine to what we will attend and what they deem irrelevant. When emotions intervene, schemas can determine what is admitted to awareness and can provide a plan of action in response. Schemas are mental models of experience.

Bennett-Goleman (2001) describes the process involved in challenging and changing schema thoughts:

- Become mindful of the feeling or typical thoughts associated with the schema. Focus on your thoughts, emotions and body sensations – all due to which the schema has become activated. Test whether you are overreacting.
- Become aware of your schema thoughts as such and recognise they may be distortions.
- Challenge those thoughts. Recognise how you have learned through critical self-reflection that they embody false assumptions. Validate your transformative insights by getting involved in a discourse with another who has a more realistic understanding of the subject.
- Use empathic reframing to acknowledge the schema reality while you put into words a more accurate picture of things.

Individuation – Jungian psychology

Patricia Cranton (1994) interprets Jung's theory of psychological type to integrate his concepts with those of transformative learning theory in adult education.

Learners' psychological predispositions form one kind of habit of mind. This involves two interrelated processes: to become more aware and to understand our own nature while, at the same time, individuating ourselves from the rest of humanity as we learn who we are.

Jung describes a continuum on which one may differentiate two ways of relating to the world and of making judgements: introverted and extraverted. We make judgements either logically or analytically – to assess a problem, weigh alternatives and make a decision – or rely upon deep-seated reactions of acceptance or rejection in which logic plays no part. This differentiation between perception and judgement is close to transformation theory's differentiation between learning outside awareness through intuition and learning within awareness through critical reflection on assumptions. Psychological preferences (thinking and feeling or sensing and intuition) are habits of mind.

John Dirkx (1997) also identifies the goal of Jung's concept of individuation as the development of an individual's personality. This development involves a dialogue between ego consciousness and the content of the unconscious. Transformation involves participating in dialogue with the unconscious aspects of the psyche. This frees one from obsessions, compulsions and complexes that can shape and distort our frame of reference. The symbolic process of individuation is expressed in the form of images. Through a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious, mediated through symbols and images, learners gain insight into aspects of themselves that are outside conscious awareness but influence their sense of self as well as their interpretations and actions. These symbols and images express emotions and feelings that arise in the learning process. 'Behind every emotion there is an image' (Dirkx 1997: 249).

The content or process of formal learning evokes images realised through dialogue. In the course of this interaction, 'both content and ourselves are potentially transformed. Individuation is an ongoing psychic process. When entered into consciously and imaginatively, it provides for a deepening of awareness of the self, an expansion of one's consciousness, and engendering of soul. We become more fully who we are and we are more fully able to enter into a community of humans. In Jungian terms, this is transformation – emergence of the self' (Dirkx 1997: 251).

Dean Elias (1997) has expanded the definition of transformative learning to explicitly include the unconscious: transformative learning is the expansion of consciousness through the transformation of basic world views and specific capacities of the self; transformative learning is facilitated through consciously directed processes such as appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic contents of the unconscious and critically analyzing underlying premises.

For additional insight into Jungian interpretations of transformative learning in the context of adult learning, see Robert Boyd (1991).

Facilitating transformation learning in graduate adult education

The first graduate programme in adult education designed to foster and facilitate the concept of transformative learning was established two decades ago at Teachers College, Columbia University, in New York. A highly selective doctoral programme, Adult Education Guided Independent Study, was designed for professionals with at least five years of experience in this field of practice. Students came on campus one weekend a month and attended intensive three-week summer sessions to satisfy course requirements in two years. Dialogue continued through the Internet. To practice and analyze the process of discourse, students collaborated on most problems with colleagues around tables of six. A major emphasis was placed on the creation of effective learning communities for collaborative inquiry.

Applicants were required to write a paper that described an issue in the field, present arguments on both sides, describe the point of view each represented and describe their own point of view and analyze their own assumptions. Faculty members, who placed emphasis on identifying additional missing assumptions, carefully reviewed the papers. Extensive revisions were requested. Revisions were often returned to the applicant with a faculty analysis of additional missed assumptions, and second and often third revisions were required. These exchanges were designed to force the applicants to critically examine their own habits of taken-for-granted ways of thinking and introduce the students to assumption analysis. Grading was limited to pass or incomplete. Academic standards were high. Three incompletes required that a student leave the programme.

Courses included assumption analysis, involving articles authored by adult educators, and life histories, involving comparative assessment of key turning points in the lives of students meeting in groups of three, designed to encourage them to recognise that there are alternative ways of interpreting common experience, as well as courses in ideologies, media analysis, the work of Paulo Freire and transformations through art and literature. Other courses, added over the years, focused on adult learning, research methods, adult literacy, community development and organisational development.

Methods found useful in fostering critical self-reflection of assumptions and discourse include using critical incidents, life histories, journal writing, media analysis, repertory grids, metaphor analysis, conceptual mapping, action learning, collaborative learning and John Peters' 'Action-Reason-Thematic Technique' – all described in Mezirow and Associates (1990).

Universal dimensions of adult knowing

There is a current debate over whether a learning theory must be dictated exclusively by contextual interests, as suggested by Brookfield, followers of critical pedagogy, other post-Marxist theorists and many postmodern critics.

Transformative learning theory, as I have conceptualised it, holds that cultures enable or inhibit the realisation of common human interests – the ways adults realise common learning capabilities. Who learns what and the when, where and how of education are clearly functions of the culture. Transformative learning is a rational, metacognitive process of reassessing reasons that support problematic meaning perspectives or frames of reference, including those representing such contextual cultural factors as ideology, religion, politics, class, race, gender and others. It is the process by which adults learn how to think critically for themselves rather than take assumptions supporting a point of view for granted.

Universal dimensions of rationality and adult understanding upon which cultural or contextual influences impact – and may distort – include the following:

Adults

- seek the meaning of their experience – both mundane and transcendent;
- have a sense of self and others as agents capable of thoughtful and responsible action;
- engage in mindful efforts to learn;
- learn to become rational by advancing and assessing reasons;
- make meaning of their experience – both within and outside awareness – through acquired frames of reference – sets of orienting assumptions and expectations with cognitive, affective and conative dimensions that shape, delimit and sometimes distort their understanding;
- accept some others as agents with interpretations of their experience that may prove true or justified;
- rely upon beliefs and understandings that produce interpretations and opinions that will prove more true or justified than those based upon other beliefs and understandings;
- engage in reflective discourse to assess the reasons and assumptions supporting a belief to be able to arrive at a tentative best judgement – as a sometime alternative or supplement to resorting to traditional authority or force to validate a judgement;
- understand the meaning of what is communicated to them by taking into account the assumptions (intent, truthfulness, qualifications) of the person communicating as well as the truth, justification, appropriateness and authenticity of what is being communicated;
- imagine how things could be different;
- learn to transform their frames of reference through critical reflection on assumptions, self-reflection on assumptions and dialogic reasoning when the beliefs and understandings they generate become problematic.

These are generic dimensions of adult understanding that may be deliberately or unconsciously enhanced or discouraged through the process of adult education. Limiting the development of these qualitative dimensions of adult learning

by exclusively focusing adult education on immediate contextual issues is self-defeating. It brings to mind the old Chinese saying, 'Give a man a fish and he can eat for a day; teach him to fish and he can eat for his lifetime'.

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Chapter 9

Multiple approaches to understanding

Howard Gardner

Harvard professor Howard Gardner is known worldwide for his influential theory of 'multiple intelligences', which was first put forward in 1983 and was later elaborated and expanded in several writings. As intelligence may be understood as the capacity or potential to learn in various connections, Gardner's work has also been an important contribution to learning theory and is therefore taken up in this volume – though Gardner is not primarily regarded as a learning theorist. The following text is the second half of a chapter which was originally published in C.M. *Reigeluth (ed.)* Instructional Design Theories and Models: A New Paradigm of Instructional Theory, *Volume 2 (1999, pp. 69–89) and is here printed with the permission from Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Gardner has himself chosen this text for the present book because it deals with his view and understanding on learning and education in extension of his work on multiple intelligences.*

Introduction

Let me introduce the core ideas of the educational approach that I embrace. I believe that every person ought to master a central body of curricular materials and approaches, though I am not thereby wedded to a specific canon. For this essay I have selected the examples of evolution and the Holocaust – though they are not without controversy – because I think that they lie comfortably within the ensemble of ideas that every educated person should have encountered, grappled with, and mastered. (In my book, *The Disciplined Mind* (1999), I have added to the true [evolution] and the evil [the Holocaust] an example of the beautiful [the music of Mozart].) I depart from traditional educators – and from their allies in psychology – in the assumption that such topics need to be taught or assessed in a single way.

Because of their biological and cultural backgrounds, personal histories, and idiosyncratic experiences, students do not arrive in school as blank slates, nor as individuals who can be aligned unidimensionally along a single axis of intellectual accomplishment. They possess different kinds of minds, with different strengths, interests, and modes of processing information. While this variation (a product of evolution!) initially complicates the job of the teacher, it can actually

become an ally in effective teaching. For if the teacher is able to use different pedagogical approaches, there exists the possibility of reaching more students in more effective ways.

Differences among students can be described in innumerable ways and it is a simplification to prioritize any. For my purposes, I will speak of students as highlighting different intelligences. However, to follow this argument, one need not endorse my particular theory of intelligences. Any approach that recognizes and can somehow label or identify differences in intellectual proclivity or potential will suffice.

Assume that our educational goals include an enhanced understanding of the theory of evolution and the events called the Holocaust – topics drawn respectively from biology and from history. Specifically, we want students to appreciate that evolution, a process of random mutation in the genotype, is the driving force behind the variety of species that have existed historically and contemporaneously. The diverse phenotypes yielded by genetic variation result in organisms that are differentially able to survive in specific ecological contexts. Those that survive to reproduce in abundance have a competitive advantage over those that, for whatever reason, are less prone to adjust adequately to a given ecological niche. If these trends continue over the long run, the survivors prevail, while those that cannot compete successfully are doomed to extinction. The fossil record documents the course and fate of different species historically; one sees the gradual increase in variety of species, as well as the increasing complexity of certain lines of descent. It is possible to study the same processes contemporaneously, with relevant research ranging from the breeding of *Drosophila* of various strains to experimental investigations of the origin of genes.

Turning to the Holocaust, we want students to appreciate what happened to the Jewish people, and to certain other condemned minorities and political dissidents, during the Nazi Third Reich, from 1933 to 1945. Efforts to castigate and isolate the Jewish people began with simple verbal attacks and laws of exclusion, gradually evolved to more violent forms of abuse, and ultimately culminated in the devising of camps whose explicit goal was the extinction of European Jewry. The contours of anti-Semitism were laid out in Hitler's early speeches and writings; but the historical course from plans to actualities took several years and involved hundreds of thousands of individuals in various capacities. Genocide – the effort to eliminate a people in its entirety – is hardly a new phenomenon; it dates back to biblical times. Yet, the systematic way in which an allegedly civilized, modern nation proceeded to eradicate six million Jews is without precedent.

In brief form, these understandings would constitute a reasonable goal for a course or unit. Sheer memorization or faithful paraphrase of these paragraphs, of course, does not count for understanding. Rather, as noted above, students exhibit understanding to the extent that they can invoke these sets of ideas flexibly and appropriately to carry out specific analyses, interpretations, comparisons, and critiques. An "acid test" of such understanding is the student's ability to perform his understandings with respect to material that is new – perhaps as new as today's newspaper.

How to approach these formidable topics? From the vantage point of multiple intelligences, I propose three increasingly focused lines of attack.

A. *Entry points* One begins by finding a way to engage the student and to place her centrally within the topic. I have identified at least six discrete entry points that can be roughly aligned with specific intelligences. In each case, I define the entry point and illustrate it with respect to our two topics:

1 *Narrative* The narrative entry point addresses students who enjoy learning about topics through stories. Such vehicles – linguistic or filmic – feature protagonists, conflict, problems to be solved, goals to be achieved, tensions aroused and, often, allayed. Evolution invites treatment in terms of the story of Darwin's voyages (as it contrasts with the story of origins told in the Bible) or of the "course" of a particular species. The Holocaust can be introduced through a narrative account of a particular person or through a year-by-year chronicle of events in the Third Reich.
2 *Quantitative/numerical* The quantitative entry point speaks to students who are intrigued by numbers, the patterns that they make, the various operations that can be performed, the insights into size, ratio, and change. From an evolutionary perspective, one can look at the incidence of different individuals or species in different ecological niches and how those aggregates change over time. With respect to the Holocaust, one can look at the movement of individuals to various camps, the survival rates at each, the comparisons of the fates of Jews and other victim groups in different cities and nations.
3 *Foundational/existential* This entry point appeals to students who are attracted to fundamental "bottom line" kinds of questions. Nearly all youngsters raise such questions, usually through myths or art: the more philosophically oriented come to pose and argue about issues verbally. Evolution addresses the question of who we are and where we come from – and whence all living matter emanates. The Holocaust addresses the questions of what kinds of beings humans are, and what are the virtues and vices of which they/we are capable.
4 *Aesthetic* Some individuals are inspired by works of art or by materials arranged in ways that feature balance, harmony, a carefully designed composition. The tree of evolution, with its many branches and interstices, may attract such individuals; Darwin himself was intrigued by the metaphor of the "tangled bank" of nature. Many efforts have been undertaken to portray the Holocaust in works of art, literature, film, and music, both by those who were killed and by those survivors and observers who have tried to capture its horror.
5 *Hands-on* Many individuals, particularly young persons, find it easiest to approach a topic through an activity in which they become actively engaged – one where they can build something, manipulate materials, carry out experiments. The chance to breed generations of fruit flies *(Drosophila)*

gives one the opportunity to observe the incidence and fate of genetic mutations. Holocaust displays can provide a harrowing introduction to this event. When students receive an alternative "identity" upon their entrance to a Holocaust exhibit and later ascertain what happened to this person in the course of the Holocaust, the personal identification can be very powerful. Being a subject in a psychological experiment that documents the human proclivity to follow orders can be a jarring experience as well.

6 *Social* The entry points described thus far address the individual as a single person. Many individuals learn more effectively, however, in a group setting, where they have the opportunity to assume different roles, to observe others' perspectives, to interact regularly, to complement one another. A group of students can be given a problem to solve – for example, what happens to various species in a given environment following a dramatic change in climate; or how would the Germans have reacted had the Allies blown up the train tracks that led to a concentration camp. Or they can be asked to role-play different species in a shifting ecology, or different participants in a rebellion in a ghetto that is under siege.

B. *Telling analogies* An "entry point" perspective places students directly in the center of a disciplinary topic, arousing their interests and securing cognitive commitment for further exploration. The entry point, however, does not necessarily inculcate specific forms or modes of understanding.

Here the teacher (or the student) is challenged to come up with instructive analogies, drawn from material that is already understood, that can convey important aspects of the less familiar topic. In the case of evolution, for example, analogies can be drawn from history or from the arts. Societies change over time, sometimes gradually, sometimes apocalyptically. The processes of human social change can be compared with those of biological change within and between species. Evolution can also be observed in works of art. Characters change within the course of a book, and sometimes over a series of books. Themes in a fugue evolve and develop in certain ways, and not (ordinarily) in others.

One may search for analogies to the Holocaust. The effort to annihilate a people can be analogized to the eradication of traces of an event or even of an entire civilization. Sometimes these efforts at eradication are deliberate, as when the criminal seeks to hide all evidence of a crime. Sometimes these efforts occur as a result of the passage of time, as happens when the traces of an ancient city are virtually destroyed (absent relevant historical records, we do not know, of course, about those cities whose vestiges have altogether disappeared as the result of natural disaster or a vengeful enemy).

Analogies can be powerful, but they can also mislead. Analogies are an excellent way to convey important facets of a topic to individuals who have little familiarity with it. However, each analogy can also suggest parallels that do not hold – for example, the informing intelligence that constructs the theme of a fugue differs from the random nature of biological evolution; a murderer working

in isolation differs from a large sector of society working secretly but in concert. The teacher is obligated to qualify each analogy as appropriate and to make sure that the misleading parts of the analogy are not allowed to distort or cripple the students' ultimate understanding.

C. *Approaching the core* Entry points open up the conversation; telling analogies convey revealing parts of the concept-in-question. Yet, the challenge to convey the central understandings still remains.

We come to the most vexing part of our analysis. Traditionally, educators have relied on two seemingly opposite approaches. Either they have provided quite explicit instructions – usually didactic – and assessed understanding in terms of linguistic mastery of materials ("Evolution is ... " or "The five central points about the Holocaust are ... "). Or they have supplied copious information to the student and hoped that, somehow, the student would forge his own synthesis ("On the basis of your reading, our trip to the museum, and various classroom exercises, what would you do if ... "). Some teachers have pursued both approaches, either simultaneously or successively.

Here we encounter the crucial educational question: Can one use knowledge about individual differences in strengths and modes of representations to create educational approaches that can convey the most important, the "core notions" of a topic in a reliable and thorough manner?

First off, one must acknowledge that there cannot be a formulaic approach. Every topic is different – just as every classroom context is different – and so each topic must be considered in terms of its own specific concepts, network of concepts, issues, problems, and susceptibilities to misconception.

A second step recognizes that topics do not exist in isolation – they come from and are, to some extent, defined by the ensemble of existing and emerging disciplines. Thus, a study of evolution occurs within the domain of biology and, more generally, within the realm of scientific explanation. As such, it involves the search for general principles and for models that will apply to all organisms under all kinds of circumstances (though some idiographically oriented scientists seek to explicate specific events like the disappearance of dinosaurs). In contrast, a study of the Holocaust occurs within history – and, sometimes, within literary or artistic efforts to render this historical event. Parts of the Holocaust may resemble other historical events, but a foundational notion about history is that it offers an account of specific events occurring in specific contexts. One can neither expect general principles to emerge nor build models that can be tested (though some scientifically oriented historians have attempted to construct and test such models).

The third step acknowledges commonly used ways of describing and explaining a concept. Thus evolution is typically described using certain examples (e.g. the disappearance of Neanderthal man, the branching tree of evolution), while the Holocaust is typically presented in terms of certain key events and documents (e.g. Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, the formulation of the Final Solution at the

January 1942 Wannsee Conference, the records kept at Auschwitz, the reports by the first Allied soldiers to liberate the camps, the chilling photographs of the survivors). These familiar examples are not randomly chosen; rather, they have helped scholars to define these topics in the past, and they have proved effective pedagogically with at least a reasonable percentage of students.

But while these examples have their reasons, one must not infer that such examples are uniquely or permanently privileged. One can certainly feature these examples without ensuring understanding; and, by the same token, it is surely possible to enhance understanding of evolution or the Holocaust by using other examples, other materials, or differently formulated causal accounts. We know that this ensemble changes because there are new historical or scientific discoveries, as well as novel pedagogical approaches that proved effective. (Thus, for example, the opportunity to simulate evolutionary processes in a computer program, or to create virtual realities, spawns educational opportunities that could not have been anticipated a generation or two ago.)

The key step to approaching the core is the recognition that a concept can only be well understood – and can only give rise to convincing performances of understanding – if an individual is capable of representing that core in more than one way, indeed, in several ways. Moreover, it is desirable if the multiple modes of representing draw on a number of symbol systems, intelligences, schemas, and frames. Going beyond analogies – indeed proceeding in the opposite direction – representations seek to be as accurate and comprehensive as possible.

Several implications follow from this assertion. First of all, it is necessary to spend significant time on a topic. Second, it is necessary to portray the topic in a number of ways – both to illustrate its intricacies and to reach an ensemble of necessarily diverse students. Third, it is highly desirable if the multiple approaches explicitly call upon a range of intelligences, skills, and interests.

It may seem that I am simply calling for the "smorgasbord" approach to education – throw enough of the proverbial matter at students and some of it will hit the mind/brain and stick. Nor do I think that such an approach is without merit. However, the theory of multiple intelligences provides an opportunity, so to speak, to transcend mere variation and selection. It is possible to examine a topic in detail to determine *which* intelligences, *which* analogies, *which* examples are most likely *both* to capture important aspects of the topic *and* to reach a significant number of students. We must acknowledge here the cottage industry aspect of pedagogy – a craft that cannot now and may never be susceptible to an algorithmic approach. It may also constitute the enjoyable part of teaching – the opportunity continually to revisit one's topic and to consider fresh ways in which to convey its crucial components.

Educators and scholars may continue to believe that there is still an optimal mode for representing the core of a topic. I respond as follows. The history of disciplinary progress makes it inevitable that experts will think about a topic in terms of privileged considerations – perhaps genetic mutations and ecological niches in biology, perhaps human intentions and worldwide demographic and

ecological forces in the case of history. Such consensual portrayal is reasonable. However, one should never lose sight of the fact that evolution did not occur in biology, and the Holocaust did not occur in history: they are processes and events that happened and became available for observers and scholars to describe, interpret, and explicate as best they could. New discoveries, as well as new disciplinary trends, gradually undermine today's orthodoxy; tomorrow's scholar might remake our understandings. Just as Darwin rewrote Lamarck's view of evolution, the believers in punctuated equilibrium aim to overthrow Darwinian gradualism (Gould, 1993). By the same token, Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996) gives a far more "ordinary Germanic" cast to the Holocaust than had historians of earlier decades.

Generalizing the approach

Even if I have achieved some success in suggesting how best to approach two gritty topics of education, I evidently have left untouched the vast majority of the curriculum. My focus has been on a high school – perhaps a college – pair of topics; I have drawn from biology and European history, rather than from mathematics, music, or meteorology; and I have focused on topics or issues, rather than, say, specific chemical reactions, or metrical analyses, or geometric proofs.

I would be remiss were I to imply that the approach sketched here could be applied equivalently to every topic of the syllabus. Indeed, I deliberately selected two topics that are relatively rich and multifaceted, and that readily allow consideration from several perspectives. I suspect that no pedagogical approach is going to prove equally effective for the full range of topics and skills that need to be conveyed; teaching French verbs or the techniques of Impressionism is simply not commensurate with covering the Russian Revolution or explicating Newton's laws of mechanics.

Still, the approach sketched here can have wide utility. First of all, it raises the question of *why* one is teaching certain topics and what one hopes that students will retain at some time in the future. Much of what we teach recurs through habit; it makes sense to teach fewer topics and to treat them in greater depth. Such an approach allows one to relate materials to a few central themes – like evolution in biology, or the Holocaust in history (or energy in physics, or character in literature) – and to eliminate topics if they cannot be reasonably connected to some powerful themes or throughlines. After all, we cannot conceivably cover everything; we may as well strive to be coherent and comprehensive in what we do cover.

Having determined which topics require sustained attention, one can then exploit an ensemble of pedagogical approaches. To recapitulate: one begins by considering which entry points might succeed in attracting the interest and attention of diverse students. One then considers which kinds of examples, analogies, and metaphors might convey important parts of the topic in ways that are powerful and not misleading. Finally, one seeks to find a small family of literally

appropriate representations that, taken together, provide a rich and differentiated set of representations of the topic under consideration. Such an ensemble conveys to students what it is like to be an expert. And to the extent that the family of representations involves a range of symbols and an array of schemes, it will prove far more robust and useful to students.

Presenting materials and fostering multiple representations is one component of effective teaching; the complementary component entails the provision of many opportunities for performance, which can reveal to the student and to interested observers the extent to which the material has been mastered. In stimulating revealing performances of understanding, teachers need to be imaginative and pluralistic. While it is easy to fall back on the tried-and-true – the short-answer test, the essay question – there is no imperative to do so. Performances can be as varied as the different facets of the topic and the diverse sets of skills of students. A variety of sanctioned performances not only provides more students with an opportunity to show what they have understood, but it also ensures that no single "take" on a topic exerts an inappropriate hegemony on students' (or test-makers'!) understandings of that topic.

With respect to our present examples, then, I encourage teachers to have students engage with one another in debates on the causes of the Holocaust or on the merits of Lamarckianism; carry out experiments that probe different aspects of the evolutionary process; interview individuals who have survived the Holocaust or various other global conflicts of our time; create works of art that commemorate heroes of the Resistance; or design a creature that can survive in an environment that has become highly toxic. Perhaps most challengingly, they might need to be asked to discuss the factors that permitted the Holocaust in terms of what we know about the evolution of behavior in that line called *Homo sapiens*. Hence, at last our two topics would be joined. Consultation of curricular guides and conversations with other teachers should stimulate the imagination with respect to other kinds of performances for other specimen curricula.

Just another call for projects, the sins of the Progressive Movement, as castigated by E. D. Hirsch (1996)? Quite the contrary. Student projects need to be considered critically in two respects: (1) adequacy as an example of a genre (Is it a coherent essay? Is it an effective monument? Does it qualify as a causal explanation?); and (2) adequacy as an occasion for performing one's understandings (Does the debater stick to the consensual facts or does she distort what is known? Does the newly designed species have a lifespan that allows reproduction and rearing of offspring?). Far from being a superficial measure of understanding, such projects and performances hold the students to high standards – the key features of the concept should be performed in vehicles that meet the test of cultural viability.

I have restricted myself until now almost entirely to the simplest forms of technology – books, pencils, and papers, perhaps a few art supplies, or a simple biochemical laboratory. This is appropriate – fundamental discussions of educational goals and means should not be dependent upon the latest technological advances.

Yet, the approach outlined here promises to be enhanced significantly by current and future technologies. It is no easy matter for teachers to provide individualized curricula and pedagogy for a class of thirty elementary school students, let alone several high school classes totaling more than one hundred students. Similarly, it is challenging to have students provide a variety of performances and then provide meaningful feedback on this potpourri.

Happily, we have in our grasp today technology that will allow a quantum leap in the delivery of individualized services for both students and teachers. It is already possible to create software that addresses the different intelligences; that provides a range of entry points; that allows students to exhibit their own understandings in symbol systems (linguistic, numerical, musical, and graphic, just for starters); and that begins to allow teachers to examine student work flexibly and rapidly. Student work can even be examined from a distance, thanks to e-mail, video conferencing, and the like. The development of "intelligent computer systems" that will be able to evaluate student work and provide relevant feedback is no longer simply a chapter from science fiction.

In the past, it might have been possible to argue that individualized instruction – while desirable – was simply not possible. That argument is no longer tenable. Future reluctance will have to be justified on other grounds. My strong hunch is that such resistance is not likely to persuade students and parents who are not experiencing success "in the usual way" and who might benefit from alternative forms of delivery; neither will such resistance satisfy scholars who have arrived at new ways of conceptualizing materials, nor teachers who are themselves dedicated to a variety of pedagogies and assessments.

Educators have always tinkered with promising technologies, and much of the history of education chronicles the varying fates of paper, books, lecture halls, filmstrips, television, computers, and other human artifacts. Current technologies seem tailor-made to help bring into reality the kind of "MI approach" that I have endorsed here. Still, there are no guarantees. Many technologies have faded, and many others have been used superficially and unproductively. And we cannot forget that some of the horrible events of human history – such as the Holocaust – featured a perversion of existing technology.

That is why any consideration of education cannot remain merely instrumental. Not merely computers, we must ask – but computers for what? More broadly, education for what? I have taken here a strong position – that education must ultimately justify itself in terms of enhancing human understanding. But that understanding itself is up for grabs. After all, one can use knowledge of physics to build bridges or bombs; one can use knowledge of human beings to help or to enslave them.

I want my children to understand the world, but not just because the world is fascinating and the human mind is curious. I want them to understand it so that they will be positioned to make it a better place. Knowledge is not the same as morality, but we need to understand if we are to avoid past mistakes and move in productive directions.

An important part of that understanding is knowing who we are and what we can do. Part of that answer lies in biology – the roots and constraints of our species – and part of it lies in our history – what people have done in the past and what they are capable of doing. Many topics are important but I would argue that evolution and the Holocaust are especially important. They bear on the possibilities of our species – for good and for evil. A student needs to know about these topics not primarily because they may appear on an examination but rather because they help us to chart human possibilities. Ultimately, we must synthesize our understandings for ourselves. The performances of understanding that truly matter are the ones that we carry out as human beings in a world that is imperfect but one that we can affect – for good or for ill.

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Chapter 10

Affective dimensions of learning

Carolyn Jackson

Carolyn Jackson is Professor of Gender and Education at Lancaster University, UK. Her research focuses predominantly on gender and education, with particular interests in fears of failure, constructions and performances of 'laddish' masculinities and femininities, 'effortless' achievement, and single-sex and mixed-sex learning environments. Her work in these areas has led to a general interest in the affective dimensions of learning, and during recent years she has become one of the few learning researchers who has taken a special interest in this sphere. Affect has often been neglected or seen as a peripheral in educational research, yet it is an integral and crucial aspect of all learning processes. In the following chapter, which was first published in The SAGE Handbook of Learning *in 2015, Carolyn Jackson explores this very important topic.*

Introduction

> In the classroom there sits an emotional elephant that many try to ignore.
> (Newton, 2014: x)

Affect and emotion play key roles in education, indeed, Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia (2014: ix) argue that '[e]motions have emerged as one of the most salient topics in current educational research'. At one level, this is not surprising. Anyone who has experienced schooling will know that emotions – fear, embarrassment, hope, pride, shame, boredom, enjoyment, disappointment – abound in schools; even in adulthood, thinking back to schooldays tends to prompt strong emotions. Schools are undoubtedly emotional places. Indeed, as Hascher (2010: 13) reminds us, 'there is rarely any learning process without emotions'. Given that, it is perhaps surprising that the field of educational emotion research is a nascent one that has developed mainly over the last 10–15 years in what has been termed an 'affective turn' (Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014). And the education field has lagged behind others – for example, psychology, biology, sociology and anthropology – where the study of 'affective life' has a longer history (Greco and Stenner, 2008). Before the 1990s most educational researchers focused largely on the cognitive outcomes of schooling and neglected emotions

(Hascher, 2010). Today the dominance of the standards discourse in education means that policy concerns are focused on attainment rather than experiences of schooling (Jackson et al., 2010). Yet affect influences the way students approach (or avoid) learning; levels of engagement; interactions with peers and teachers; performances on tests; interpretations of and reactions to feedback; the list could go on. Affect is a central yet neglected dimension of learning.

In this chapter, I argue that educational researchers and teachers ought to pay more attention to the affective dimensions of learning and schooling. Furthermore, I suggest that researchers need to build upon but go beyond the limited work that has already been undertaken in this sphere, which is overwhelmingly dominated by quantitative, psychologically-informed research. In order to understand more fully affective practices in education, we need to consider the ways in which they are constructed and sustained at different levels (for example, individual, classroom, school and nation), how they intersect and the effects of them. I start by providing a brief overview of how affect and emotion are conceptualised in general, and then in educational research more specifically, and flag the difficulties of navigating a field in which there is a profusion of contested terms. In an attempt to illustrate some of the reasons to research affect, I then focus on fear and schooling before ending with a brief conclusion.

Conceptualising affect and emotion

Conceptualising and defining affect, emotion and other related terms are far from straightforward; conceptualisations vary between and within disciplines, as do the theoretical and methodological lenses through which they are examined (Linnenbrink, 2006). Some writers and researchers use the terms *affect* and *emotion* interchangeably, while others regard such use as deeply problematic (Greco and Stenner, 2008). When distinctions are made, they are not always consistent and, as Greco and Stenner (2008: 11) point out, the 'theoretical resources' informing them differ; affect may be linked to psychoanalytic theory or Deleuzian philosophy, for example. Greco and Stenner's (2008: 12) position is that insisting on a terminological distinction is not inherently helpful, they argue that 'terminology serves first as a marker of difference for groups of intellectuals, keen to distinguish their own approach from that of specific others ... however, shared terminology need not imply a shared theoretical position'.

In general, *emotion* is associated particularly with biological, psychological or neuroscientific research. As Wetherell (2012: 2) suggests, 'affective scientists' from such disciplines:

> investigate emotional states and the distinctive perturbations they cause in the body and mind. Sometimes 'affect' includes every aspect of emotion and sometimes it refers just to physical disturbance and bodily activity (blushes, sobs, snarls, guffaws, levels of arousal and associated patterns of neural activity), as opposed to 'feelings' or more elaborated subjective experiences.

Wetherell (2014) conceptualises *emotions* as 'the conventional cultural packets or prototypes for affect, e.g. anger, joy, sadness, disgust, shame, surprise' that 'register evaluations of events, standpoints on what is happening, and investments'. *Affect*, she suggests, is a 'broader, more generic term. It includes reactions that may be difficult to categorize and which may not be organised into conventional categories'. She argues that both affect and emotion are usually action oriented, that is, they 'push us to do something' (Wetherell, 2014).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, in educational research, definitions and conceptualisations are also contested. For example, Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia (2014: 2–3) note that in the broader educational literature, affect is often used to denote a wide variety of non-cognitive constructs including emotion, but also to denote self-concept, beliefs and motivation. In contrast, in emotion research, affect refers to emotions and moods more specifically. Shuman and Scherer (2014: 16) note that 'the words affect and emotion are sometimes used synonymously with the feeling component; more commonly though, affect is seen as a larger category that includes, among others, emotions and moods, and emotion is viewed as multi-componential and includes, among others, a feeling component'. Other contested concepts also enter the fray, for example, mood. Some educational researchers regard mood and emotion as distinct, while others consider them to be on a continuum (Linnenbrink, 2006). While there is no consensus about this, generally emotions are seen to be specific and moods more diffuse and lacking a specific referent. Moods are also generally regarded as lasting longer than emotions (Shuman and Scherer, 2014), as Fiedler and Beier (2014: 37) explain:

> Emotions are bound to specific eliciting stimuli and characterized by situation-specific appraisal functions. For instance, embarrassment is an emotion elicited by failure experience or revelation of intimate secrets but does not fit a frustrating or provocative situation. As a consequence, emotions are bound to a specific stimulus context and therefore unlikely to carry over to many other stimulus contexts. Moods, in contrast, are unspecific, typically quite enduring affective states, with often indeterminate origins. When people are in an elated or melancholic mood state, the origin or eliciting experience is often unknown, and maybe attributed to a wrong cause.

In her overview of research about learning and emotion (which includes affect), Tina Hascher (2010: 14) argues that emotions are generally thought to include physiological, psychological and behavioural aspects. She suggests that commonly emotion is seen to have five components. First, the *affective* component is the subjective experience, for example, feeling nervous before an exam. Second, the *cognitive* component represents thoughts in relation to that emotion, for example, thinking about the causes and implications of failing an exam. Third, the *expressive* component involves the expression of emotion, for example, a look of fear or joy. Fourth, the *motivational* component relates to the impulses for action stimulated or inhibited by the emotion, for example, working hard on a task because

it is enjoyable. Fifth is the *physiological* component, for example, increased heart beat and sweating caused by anxiety during an exam. Hascher (2010: 14) lists eight indicators commonly used to analyse the quality of an emotion:

1 Valence (pleasant = positive, unpleasant = negative, and ambivalent);
2 Arousal level (deactivating–activating);
3 Intensity (low–intense);
4 Duration (short–long);
5 Frequency (seldom–frequent)
6 Time dimension (retrospective such as relief, actual such as enjoyment, prospective such as hope);
7 Point of reference (self-related such as pride, oriented towards another person such as sympathy, referring to an activity such as boredom);
8 Context (during learning, in achievement situations, during instruction, in social interactions and so on).

Another distinction made is between traits and states. Trait-like affect is regarded as a general way of responding which varies between people but is relatively stable over time. State-like affect is less stable over time, as it reflects a response to changing environments (Linnenbrink, 2006).

Hascher's overview of research on learning and emotion presents a landscape that is overwhelmingly dominated by psychological research. It is this type of work that Wetherell (2012) argues is too narrow. Wetherell suggests that the basic emotion terms used in this sphere – for example, sadness, anger, fear, happiness – do not reflect the range of possible affective performances, scenes and events. She argues that affect could relate to much more general modes of influence, movement and change:

> We could talk, for instance, about 'being affected' by an event, even if it is not quite clear what the impact is. Affect in this sense need not be confined to humans or even animate life – the sun affects the moon, a magnet affects iron filings, and the movement of waves affects the shape of the coastline ... Affect now means something like a force or an active relation. The term loses its moorings in studies of human emotion and expands to signify disturbance and influence in their most global senses.
>
> (Wetherell, 2012: 2)

Wetherell (2014) incites us to research such 'affective practices', yet how we do this is far from straightforward, and Wetherell offers very few pointers in this regard. To illustrate some of the reasons to consider affective practices, I turn to focus on fear and anxiety in schooling, with a particular focus on fears around exams and tests. This is only one very small and focused aspect of what Wetherell (2014) is calling for, yet even this research is challenging in a host of ways.

Fear, anxiety and schooling

Even with what might be considered a 'single emotion' such as fear/anxiety, we face many of the issues that we encountered with bigger related concepts such as emotion, affect, mood, etc. Namely, variations in the way fear and anxiety are defined and conceptualised lead to differences in how they are understood and explored. For example, fear and anxiety are used interchangeably by some writers (for example, Bourke, 2005; Bauman, 2006; Gill, 2007) but not others (for example, Ahmed, 2004; Salecl, 2004). Rachman (1998: 25–6) attempts to draw the following, and perhaps most common, distinction between fear and anxiety:

> Anxiety is one of the most prominent and pervasive emotions. It is a feeling of uneasy suspense, the tense anticipation of a threatening but vague event. Fear and anxiety share some common features, but fears tend to have a specific, usually identifiable focus, and to be more intense and episodic.

In other words, as Ahmed (2004: 64) points out, in this model 'fear *has* an object' (original emphasis) whereas anxiety does not. By contrast, Bauman (2006: 2) argues that fear is most intense when it has no object:

> Fear is at its most fearsome when it is diffuse, scattered, unclear, unattached, unanchored, free floating, with no clear address or cause, when the menace we should be afraid of can be glimpsed everywhere but is nowhere to be seen. 'Fear' is the name we give to our *uncertainty:* to our *ignorance* of the threat and of what is to be done,
>
> (original emphasis)

So conceptualisations of fear vary considerably, and even many researchers who attempt to distinguish between fear and anxiety (e.g. Rachman, 1998) recognise that the distinction is blurred, and as a result the two terms are frequently used interchangeably. In this chapter I use the terms fear and anxiety interchangeably for two main reasons. First, although conceptually fear and anxiety may be regarded by some (but not all) as distinct, it is difficult to disentangle them empirically. Second, the frequency with which the two terms are used interchangeably in the literature makes attempting to separate them very difficult, and somewhat arbitrary.

Research on fear/anxiety in education

In general, research suggests that fear and anxiety are pervasive in schools. Indeed, anxiety is the most frequently reported emotion in education. For example, in a series of interview and questionnaire studies with high school and university students, anxiety was the emotion reported most often, constituting 27% of all emotional episodes experienced in various academic situations such as attending

class, studying, and taking tests and exams (Pekrun and Perry, 2014: 122). It is also the emotion that has been most researched in educational contexts. As with research on learning and affect in general, the vast majority of work on fear in education has been conducted by psychologists who usually attempt to measure fear levels using self-report measures and explore the bio-psychological effects on individuals and their performances (Gower, 2005; Putwain, 2007). Most attention has been afforded to test or examination anxiety; psychologists generally regard test anxiety as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of three facets: cognition (e.g. worry, test-irrelevant thoughts); affect (e.g. emotionality, physiological reactions); and behaviour (e.g. study avoidance) (Soysa and Weiss, 2014: 2). In general, findings suggest that test anxiety 'is associated with impaired test performance and knowledge acquisition in academic skill areas', also that students report more test anxiety in relation to high-stakes tests (Segool et al., 2013:495), and pressure is inversely associated with attainment (Samdall et al., 2004). Thus, contrary to many common-sense beliefs that fear helps to motivate pupils, a pretty robust pattern in the literature is that high levels of examination-related anxiety generally have a debilitating effect on attainment (Zeidner, 2007) and can lead to disengagement.

Even though most attention has been afforded to test anxiety there is not an extensive literature, especially outside of the USA. Indeed, Putwain (2007) points out that in the UK, test anxiety was largely ignored until relatively recently. Furthermore, despite the value of the work by psychologists this is limited in that it almost entirely uses quantitative approaches and focuses on individuals. Thus, it tends not to explore in-depth the experiences of students in terms of: the sources of their fears; how fears are reproduced and sustained; or the effects of fears. Nor does it address questions about the different scales of fear and how they intersect – for example, fears at the level of the individual, the school, the local community, the nation and beyond – nor about the politics of fear, for example, what fears are generated at particular times and by whom, and who benefit and who lose most (see Jackson, 2010).

While these are the types of questions that might typically be tackled by sociologists of education and those interested in the politics and philosophy of education, fear and anxiety in educational contexts have been neglected by such scholars and educational researchers in general (Zembylas, 2009; Jackson, 2013; Hargreaves, 2015). I am not suggesting that fear has received no attention by sociologists of education, it has *emerged* in numerous studies; but in most cases it is a by-product rather than a focus (e.g. Reay et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2008). The relatively small amount of sociologically-informed qualitative work that has focused on anxieties in education (e.g. Denscombe, 2000; Hargreaves, 2015; Jackson, 2006, 2010, 2013) inevitably raises more questions than it answers. Nevertheless, it begins to shed light on some of the complex ways that fears work and intersect, and highlights the need for more research in this sphere. It also emphasises the need for teachers to be more attuned to the effects of fears and other affective practices in educational settings, and the ways teachers influence them

as well as the ways they are themselves influenced by them (see also Newton, 2014). There is space here to provide only a few illustrations. I draw these mainly from my own qualitative work, which I outline briefly.

My project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), explored, among other issues, fears about failure in secondary schools (academic and social 'failure'). Data generated during this project include questionnaire data from approximately 800 pupils and interview data from 153 pupils in Year 9 (aged 13–14 years) and 30 teachers. Six secondary schools located in the north of England were involved: four co-educational (Beechwood, Elmwood, Firtrees, Oakfield), one girls' (Hollydale) and one boys' (Ashgrove). Based initially on data from Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) reports, and supplemented by information from schools, schools were selected to ensure a mix of pupils in terms of social class and ethnicity, and a mix of schools in terms of overall examination results and gender of intake (single-sex and co-educational). For more details see Jackson (2006). Through this work, I have begun to demonstrate how fears circulate and intersect in classroom contexts, and some of the factors that create, exacerbate and reduce them (Jackson, 2006, 2010, 2013; see also Hargreaves, 2015).

My research suggests that the vast majority of pupils – girls and boys – are anxious about academic 'failure' (amongst other things), and these fears are particularly pronounced around tests and exams, especially those that are used to rank schools publicly, for example, Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs).[1] Overall, 68% of interviewees reported being anxious about SATs. Many of these explained their anxieties in terms of fears about failing, and some conveyed them vividly:

CJ:	Were you worried about them [SATs] beforehand?
Jenny (Firtrees):	Yes I was scared to death! I thought oh no I'm not going to be able to do them, I'll get stuck half way through and I won't be able to answer any of the questions.
CJ:	Were you nervous about your SATS?
Steph (Hollydale):	I was, yes. Going in I was shaking because there was so much pressure almost like put on you before them. You almost like, you know people were willing you to do well and inside you were thinking I don't know if I can do it, but yes I was quite nervous.

As flagged earlier, educational psychologists have demonstrated that high levels of examination anxiety can have negative impacts on student performances for a variety of reasons. For some students, fears of academic failure prompt a range of defensive strategies that are likely to lead to failure or disengagement from learning (Martin and Marsh, 2003). Such defensive strategies are prompted largely by the convergence of two sets of factors. First, in societies where academic credentials are heralded as key indicators of ability and worth, demonstrations of academic 'inability' are very problematic. Second, schools are places where ability

is frequently tested and exposed. In such contexts, there are two key ways to avoid being regarded as lacking ability and, therefore, worth. One is to avoid failure, which is not always possible as schooling operates as a competitive system in which not everyone can be a 'winner'. The second is to avoid the negative implications of failure (i.e. lack of ability). Defensive strategies are linked to the latter; they enable students to create generally false but plausible explanations to justify or excuse (potential or actual) poor academic performance (Covington, 1998). In general, such excuses allow individuals to blame factors other than lack of ability for academic 'failure', and so act to protect them from the damning implication that they lack ability and, therefore, worth. Defensive strategies are varied; one example is disruptive behaviour, as it blurs the relationship between 'failure' and lack of ability.

Where pupils exhibit disruptive behaviours, failures may be attributed to being inattentive in class rather than to a lack of ability per se, and the behaviour may act to deflect attention away from poor academic performance and onto their behaviour instead (Khoo and Oakes, 2003). However, while defensive strategies may feel like friends in the short term, in the long term they are likely to increase the chances of failure. Thus, individuals' fears may prompt them to respond in ways that enhance the chances that their fears turn into reality. This is summed up neatly by McGregor and Elliot (2005: 229):

> it is not surprising that individuals high in fear of failure orient to and seek to avoid failure in achievement situations. Indeed, when possible, such individuals seek to select themselves out of achievement situations in the first place. Ironically, and poignantly, in so doing, those high in fear of failure keep themselves from the mistakes and failures that many achievement motivation theorists view as the grist for the mill of competence development ... In essence, the avoidance of mistakes and failures stunts the growth and maturation of persons high in fear of failure, which, over time, merely leads to more mistakes and failures. As such, the avoidance of failure is likely to be a self-perpetuating process in that the very process of avoiding failure is likely to serve a role in maintaining and exacerbating the tendency to avoid failure.

So fear as a motivator is unlikely to be successful long term; yet many teachers do attempt to motivate through fear and, relatedly, embarrassment and shame. There were numerous examples of this in my research, and such tactics tended to exacerbate pupils' fears about academic failure. Teachers incited fears in a variety of ways, including emphasising the direct consequences of academic 'failure' for pupils' future careers and life chances, as well as spelling out the negative implications for the school if results were not 'up to standard'.

There is space here to illustrate and discuss only one example of the ways in which teachers attempted to motivate through fear or shame. As such, I have chosen to focus on a relatively common tactic, namely, making pupils' marks

known to the whole class by, for example, reading them out. In all schools in my research there were instances of this practice, although it was more prevalent in some than others. It was a practice identified by pupils across the schools to be a significant pressure that provoked anxiety and potentially embarrassment. Clare at Firtrees, for example, suggested that the public reporting of scores made tests much more stressful for fear of being embarrassed publically.

Clare: It doesn't bother me doing tests, but it's just that she shouts them out – your score. If she just like gave them to you then that would be alright. But your mind's like, when you're doing a test, that she's going to shout it out – the score that you've got – and then you just try and do your best to get a higher mark.

CJ: So why is it particularly important that she calls them out, is it about being so public, can you say a bit more about why it matters so much?

Clare: 'Cos if she shouts them out and you've got a low mark everyone looks at you and your friends are like 'are you alright, you've got a low mark but you'll be better next time' and you're a bit embarrassed.

Richard at Elmwood also disliked the public announcement of results. He, like Clare, was anxious not to appear 'stupid' and felt embarrassed if he got a low mark.

CJ: Some people have told me that teachers actually read out the results in some classes.

Richard: Yeah, I don't really like it 'cos if you get a rubbish score ... some people laugh at you sometimes.

CJ: So do they [teachers] do that very often?

Richard: Yeah, they do it near enough all the time. Some teachers don't [read out the scores] 'cos they know some people get embarrassed and get upset when they read the answers out.

CJ: Why do you think teachers do that?

Richard: To see if, you know, that if you do get embarrassed, you know you have to try harder so that you won't get embarrassed.

There were even more remarkable examples in my research of the ways teachers would attempt to highlight and shame (relatively) low attainers. For example, Lawrence (Ashgrove) explained that in his top set maths class, pupils are seated according to relative ability: 'clever ones' at the back of the class, 'not as clever' ones at the front.

Lawrence: There's a bit of rivalry in the classroom ... 'cos part of the system is if you're not as clever then you sit at the front in

the middle, which is better because it's easier to hear. Then the clever ones sit towards the back ...

CJ: So it's quite an explicit way of ranking people in the class then?

Lawrence: Well, in my first lesson in maths I was sat right at the front after a bit, which I wasn't too worried about because it was the first time I'd been in set one. But it helped me because the very next test I was sat quite a bit further back and it wasn't, well it wasn't because of the extra pressure, it was more because I was at the front and I could see everything she was doing and I couldn't miss a word and you don't lose your attention as easily when you're sat towards the front. And I think that was the main aim of it rather than just to embarrass us.

The teacher's method of seating pupils according to ability is striking for its emphasis on making performance visible; it is difficult to imagine a more overt and visual way of ranking a class according to individual (grade) performance. Lawrence attempts to find positive aspects of this method of spatial organisation: 'less clever' ones can see and hear the teacher and are less likely to get distracted. However, underlying his response is also recognition that some students are explicitly positioned as bottom of the class, and that this is embarrassing (see Wilkins (2011) for a similar example). Such strategies strongly emphasise relative ability comparisons and promote classroom climates that emphasise performance (*demonstrating* competence) rather than learning (*developing* competence), and are likely to foster fears of academic failure, embarrassment and shame.

Richard's analysis of why teachers announce test results to the class is insightful; it is likely that these teachers do believe that such practices will motivate pupils, that they will shame them into working harder so that they are not bottom of the class. However, such tactics, as previously discussed, are likely to be counterproductive; for many students they prompt defensive behaviours that hinder rather than help learning. Teachers need, therefore, to understand affective practices and processes much more fully and to consider the ways in which their own practices impact their students (see also Newton, 2014). However, in saying this I am not adopting a simplistic 'blame the teacher' approach. Teachers themselves are also under pressure to perform, and for many fear plays a big part in their day-to-day lives. For example, teachers too are under considerable pressure to deliver good results, and many fear the consequences of their pupils' 'failure' as much as the pupils themselves (see also Denscombe, 2000; Hall et al., 2004). This is understandable, as the consequences of 'failure' for teachers can be considerable:

> If we don't get 20% [A*-C grades at GCSE] the Government will close us. So that's what we've been told that by the Head. And so obviously all the departments are now thinking, you know, come August we're all going to

> be a nervous wreck, but nobody will sleep the night before the results come out. And if your results aren't at 20% how are you going to feel? You know, could you have done any more? ... And yet I think, you know, we've done everything we possibly can to get it. So this is the government dangling this in front of us, saying, not looking at the children, not looking at the children that come in, because value added, we're well above. ... No, this is the magic figure, 20%. So, whether we get it or not I don't know. ... So we've been working on that really hard to do it this time. So all the staff are under the pressure of failing and if your department doesn't do well, there's like what happens next?
>
> (Ms Brian, Beechwood)

The naming and shaming that some teachers do in their classes is mirrored and reproduced at different scales: at the levels of the school, the local community, the nation and beyond. For example, fears about the UK performing relatively poorly on the international education stage have led to a growing emphasis on standards, and to increasing pressures from the government for schools in the UK to be performing as well as, and ideally better than, their international competitors.

Thus, over the last two decades or so we have witnessed increasing pressure on schools to raise standards, coupled with the introduction of various mechanisms to monitor, publicise and, in many cases, 'shame' their performance. In England, the most notable of these mechanisms are: SATs; inspections by Ofsted; publication of school league tables; and the public 'naming and shaming' of 'failing' schools. While 'naming and shaming' of schools is no doubt driven by motives to improve schools' performances (much like the naming and shaming of pupils may be driven by teachers' motives to improve pupils' performances), fears of 'failing' and being shamed often prompt strategies at school level – for example teaching to the test – that are counterproductive to high-quality learning experiences for pupils.

So educational researchers need to explore not only how fear is created and exacerbated at the individual level, the classroom level and the school level, but how it is created nationally and internationally. As Shirlow and Pain (2003) argue, we need to consider different scales of fear and how they operate. We also need to ask questions about who constructs these fears – because they are socially constructed – and who benefits and who loses most as a result of them. In other words, we should think more about the politics of fear in relation to education. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss this, but for more discussion see Jackson (2010).

Conclusion

The prevalence and importance of affective dimensions of learning mean they deserve much more attention from educational researchers than they have received to date. Furthermore, we need to extend considerably the types of

research conducted in this sphere in order to understand further the complex ways that affective practices work and intersect. Importantly, we need to consider affect at different levels, and engage with questions around the politics of affect in relation to education. However, this process will not be an easy one. Research in this sphere is complicated by several factors, including difficulties regarding conceptualisation and methods for research. There has not been space in this chapter to consider the methodological difficulties of researching affect, but there are many. However, despite the challenges it is time we stopped ignoring the emotional elephant in the classroom.

Note

1 SATs are assessments of pupils in England at ages 7 and 11 (and age 14 until 2008). At age 7 assessment is principally by teacher assessment (sometimes using informal tests); at age 11 assessment is by national tests and teacher assessment in English, maths and science. Attainment is indicated in terms of levels, and there are expected levels of attainment set by the Government's Department for Education.

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Chapter 11

Biographical learning – within the lifelong learning discourse

Peter Alheit

Biographical research is about how people's life courses develop through interaction between the individual subjectivity and the societal conditions. Learning is an important part of this interaction, and therefore biographical research of necessity includes a conception of learning. Conversely, important learning can only be understood concretely in relation to the biography of the learner. The German sociologist Peter Alheit, Professor at the University of Göttingen, has for many years been a core player in the development of European biographical research and theory, and later also in East Asian and South American countries as his concept of 'Biographicity' seems to be interesting particularly for societies in transition. In the following chapter, which is a further elaboration of earlier articles, he provides an overview of the theoretical understanding of learning in a biographical perspective.

Introduction

In the educational debate of the past 30 years – and especially during the most recent decade – the concept of lifelong learning has been sharpened strategically and functionally. In a certain sense, it stands for a new way of specifying the educational tasks in the societies of late modernity. In its programmatic and highly influential document on educational policy, the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, the European Commission stated that '[l]ifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training; it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts' (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p. 3). Two decisive reasons are given for this assessment:

1 Europe has moved towards a knowledge-based society and economy. More than ever before, access to up-to-date information and knowledge, together with the motivation and skills to use these resources intelligently on behalf of oneself and the community as a whole, are becoming the key to strengthening Europe's competitiveness and improving the employability and adaptability of the workforce;

2 Today's Europeans live in a complex social and political world. More than ever before, individuals want to plan their own lives, are expected to contribute actively to society, and must learn to live positively with cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Education, in its broadest sense, is the key to learning and understanding how to meet these challenges. (Commission, 2000, p. 5)

This double rationale has narrowed the scope of the concept in a functionalistic manner, on the one hand, but on the other hand it also adds precision to its definition. The *Memorandum* explicitly states that lifelong learning relates to all meaningful learning activities:

- to the *formal* learning processes that take place in the classical education and training institutions and which usually lead to recognised diplomas and qualifications,
- to the *non-formal* learning processes that usually take place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training – at the workplace, in clubs and associations, in civil society initiatives and activities, in the pursuit of sports or musical interests – and
- to *informal* learning processes that are not necessarily intentional and which are a natural accompaniment to everyday life (Commission, 2000, p. 8).

The purpose behind this new understanding of the term 'learning' is the option of networking these different forms of learning in a synergistic way – learning should not only be systematically extended to cover the entire *lifespan*, but should also take place *'lifewide'*, i.e. learning environments should be engendered in which the various types of learning can complement each other organically. 'The "lifewide" dimension brings the complementarity of formal, non-formal and informal learning into sharper focus' (Commission, 2000, p. 9).

Lifelong, 'networked' learning thus seems to become an economic and social imperative of the first degree. The 'new' concept of lifelong learning betrays an ambition that John Field has termed *'the new educational order'* (Field, 2000, pp. 133ff.). Learning acquires a new meaning – for society as a whole, for education and training institutions and for individuals. The shift in connotation exposes an inner contradiction, however, in that this new learning is initially 'framed' by political and economic precepts. The goals are competitiveness, employment and adaptive competence on the part of the workforce. The intention is also, however, to strengthen freedom of biographical planning and the social involvement of individuals. Lifelong learning 'instrumentalises' and 'emancipates' at one and the same time.

The following analysis will focus on the curious tensions between these two perspectives. The first part looks at the social framework for lifelong learning – the *macro-perspective*, so to speak. In the second part, a particular theoretical view on 'education in the lifespan' will be put forward, namely the concept of *biographical learning* – the *micro-perspective*, if one wishes. A brief final section

concentrates the findings in terms of relevant research questions, which will strengthen a development of the humanities *in relation to these issues*.

The macro-perspective: lifelong learning as reorganisation of the education system

To begin with, however, we must explain the astonishing fact that, at the end of the twentieth century, a global political consensus was generated on the concept of lifelong learning (Field, 2000, pp. 3ff.). The factors triggering this paradigm shift on an international scale in programmes for education and training are four trends in the post-industrial societies of the Western hemisphere, trends that mutually overlap and which led – in the words of John Field (2000, pp. 35ff.) – to a 'silent explosion' at the close of the twentieth century: the changing meaning of 'work', the new and totally transformed function of knowledge, the experience of increasing dysfunctionality on the part of mainstream education and training institutions and, in particular, challenges facing the social actors themselves that are characterised only roughly with labels such as 'individualisation' and 'reflexive modernisation' (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991).

The changing nature of 'work' in the societies of late modernity

The twentieth century has drastically modified the meaning and significance of employment. Most people spend much less of their lifetime in work than their great-grandparents ever did. As recently as 1906, an average working year in the UK comprised approximately 2,900 hours; in 1946, the figure had fallen to 2,440; and in 1988, to a mere 1,800 hours (see Hall, 1999, p. 427). Changes have also occurred to the 'inner structure' of work. The large-scale shift of jobs from the industrial sector to the services sector is merely a superficial symptom of the changes taking place. The more crucial aspect is that the notion of a consistent 'working life' is finally a thing of the past, even granting that women were traditionally excluded anyway. Average employment no longer means practising one and the same occupation over a substantial span of one's life, but now involves alternating phases of work and further training, voluntary and involuntary discontinuities of occupation, innovative career switching strategies and even self-chosen alternation between employment and family-centred phases (see Alheit, 1992).

This trend has not only *challenged* people's expectations regarding the classical life-course regime (Kohli, 1985) and made individual life planning a much riskier enterprise, but it also poses new problems for the institutions involved, in their capacity as 'structuring agents of the life course' – namely the agencies of the employment system and the labour market, the social and pension insurance institutions, but above all, the institutions of the education system. It is they who must compensate for the consequences of deregulation and flexibility

in the labour market, provide support for unanticipated and risk-laden status passages and transitions to 'modernised' life courses and strike a new balance between the options held by individual actors, on the one hand, and the functional imperatives of the institutional 'meso-level', on the other. As an innovative instrument for managing essential 'life politics', lifelong learning is the obvious answer.

The new function of knowledge

This idea of managing life politics seems all the more necessary the more diffuse its subject matter starts to become. The trivial, overriding consensus that, in the wake of the technological innovations engendered by the postindustrial information society, *knowledge* has become the key resource of the future conceals the perplexity over the actual function and character of this knowledge. The core issue, quite obviously, is not simply to disseminate and distribute a definable stock of knowledge as efficiently as possible, nor is it the fact that all areas of life are subjected to increasing scientification (Stehr, 2002), but rather it is a phenomenon that expands successively by virtue of the specific uses to which it is put, and which devalues itself again to a certain degree. Knowledge is no longer that 'cultural capital' that, according to Bourdieu, determines social structures and guarantees its astonishing persistence through ever-recurring reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984). Knowledge is a kind of 'grey capital' (Field, 2000, p. 1) that generates new, virtual economies. The stock market crash of the *New Economy* in 2000 is merely one dark side of the almost intangible quality of 'new knowledge'.

The communication and interaction networks of the IT age, which have long since permeated, extended and modified the realms of conventional industrial production and the character of classical services and administrations, remain dependent – more so than traditional forms of knowledge in the past – on the individual user. The latter's personal options in respect to the new, virtual markets – his/her contacts, productive inputs and consumer habits in the Internet – are what create the future forms of knowledge. The knowledge of the information society is *doing knowledge*, a kind of lifestyle that determines the structures of society far beyond the purely occupational domain and lends them a dynamic of ever-shorter cycles.

This very quality of 'new knowledge' now necessitates flexible feedback procedures, complex self-management checks and permanent quality management. In the process, the nature of education and learning is dramatically changed (Stehr, 2002). They no longer entail the communication and dissemination of fixed bodies of knowledge, values or skills, but rather a kind of 'knowledge osmosis' for ensuring what must now be a permanent and continuous exchange between individual knowledge production and organised knowledge management. The idea of lifelong learning, and especially self-managed learning, seems highly predestined for this process – as a framework concept at least.

The dysfunctionality of the established educational institutions

The conditions thus generated by a knowledge society in the making render classical teaching-learning settings problematic – above all, the idea that accompanied the 'first career' of the lifelong learning label in the early 1970s – the *human capital theory*. The latter concept measures, as it were, the capital invested in education and training according to the length of full-time schooling and assumes that extending its duration will have positive impacts on willingness to engage in lifelong learning (for a critique, see Schuller, 1998; Field, 2000, p. 135). A number of recent empirical studies, particularly in Great Britain (e.g. Tavistock Institute, 1999; Schuller and Field, 1999), provide evidence that the very opposite is the case – simply extending primary schooling, without drastic changes to the conditional framework and the quality of the learning process, led in the majority of those affected to a loss of motivation and to an instrumental attitude to learning that is in no way conducive to continued, self-managed learning in later phases of life, but which tends rather to suppress such learning (Schuller and Field, 1999).

Lifelong learning as it is now conceived requires a kind of *paradigm shift* in the organisation of learning – not in adulthood, but in the very first forms of schooling. The goals for orientation are no longer efficient learning, effective didactic strategies and consistent formal curricula, but rather the emphasis on the situation and the prerequisites on the part of *learners* (Bentley, 1998). This also means addressing non-formal and informal options for learning. The key educational question is no longer how certain material can be taught as successfully as possible, but which learning environments can best stimulate self-determined learning – in other words, how learning itself can be learned (Simons, 1992; Smith, 1992).

Of course, this perspective must also include the conveying of basic qualifications such as reading, writing, arithmetic or computer literacy, but even these *basic skills* must be linked to practical experience; the owners of cognitively acquired skills must be able to combine these with social and emotional competencies. Enabling such options demands a high degree of institutional 'self-reflexivity' on the part of education and training institutions in their classical form. They must accept that they, too, must become 'learning organisations'. The necessity of preparing their clientele for lifelong, self-determined learning implies a concept of lifewide learning, or 'holistic learning'.

Schools must network with the community to which they relate, with companies, associations, churches and organisations that are active in that district, and with the families of the schoolchildren in their care. They have to discover new locations for learning and invent other learning environments. Recent school development concepts, particularly those in which the separate institutions are granted substantial autonomy, are certainly providing for greater scope. What is valid for schools is equally valid, of course, for universities, adult education

facilities and public administration academies. As John Field correctly points out, lifelong learning necessitates a '*new educational order*' (Field, 2000, pp. 133ff.) – a 'silent revolution' in education.

Individualisation and reflexive modernisation

This demand is neither absurd nor utopian when one looks at the situation faced by a growing group of society's members. The demands levelled at individuals in the second half of the twentieth century changed considerably. Economic factors are by no means the only ones responsible – social and cultural changes also play a critical role. Despite the continuation of social inequalities, the bonds to social milieus and classical mentalities have become looser (Beck, 1992). Patterns of orientation have become more localised and tend to relate more now to generational or gender-based experience, to the perception of one's own ethnicity or even to preferences for certain lifestyles (Alheit, 1999). Inflationary changes in the range of information and consumer products on offer have dramatically increased the number of options open to the members of society (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Life courses are therefore much less predictable than in the past. What is more, the compulsion to make decisions on a continual basis and to perform incessant changes of orientation *is* being devolved to the individuals themselves to an increasingly clear extent.

This visible trend towards individualisation of the life-course regime and the concomitant pressure to engage in continuous 'reflexivity' on one's own actions has led – as expressed in the prominent theses of Ulrich Beck or Anthony Giddens – to a different, *reflexive modernity*. Yet to be able to handle this different modernity (Beck, 1992), individuals need completely new and flexible structures of competence that can only be established and developed within lifelong learning processes (see Field, 2000, pp. 58ff.). And it demands fundamental changes in the entire educational system.

Contours of a new educational economy?

The astonishing consensus that appears to reign on these doubtlessly plausible and complementary analyses of the age we live in extends from representatives of the traditional business community, to protagonists of the New Economy, to education experts in the modernised left-wing parties. What makes that consensus problematic is its indifference to the social consequences that would be unleashed if such educational policies were implemented without a measure of distance. The delusion of a *lifelong learning society* does nothing whatsoever to eradicate the selection and exclusion mechanisms of the 'old' educational system. Indeed, it may conceal and exacerbate those mechanisms instead (see Field, 2000, pp. 103ff.).

It can already be shown with present empirical evidence that labour market segments requiring low skill levels are in chronic decline (OECD, 1997a). In

other words, the expectations of the 'knowledge society' are raising the pressure on individuals to meet certain standards of skills and knowledge before they can be employed. The risks of exclusion for those who fail to meet those standards are more draconian than was ever the case in bygone industrial societies. Of course, the *logic* of exclusion is by no means new – class and gender remain the decisive indicators (Field, 2000, pp. 115ff.). As would be expected, age plays an increasingly significant role (Tuckett and Sargant, 1999). Anyone who never had the chance to learn how to learn will not make any effort to acquire new skills late in the life course.

The crude mechanisms of economic valuation prompt a sceptical view of any future scenario for the learning society – a small majority of 'winners', but with a 'life sentence' to learn, may close its borders to a growing minority of 'losers' who never had a chance, or who voluntarily liberated themselves from the straitjacket of having to perpetually acquire and market new knowledge. The OECD forecast, in any case, comes close enough to the scenario just painted:

> For those who have successful experience of education, and who see themselves as capable learners, continuing learning is an enriching experience, which increases their sense of control over their own lives and their society. For those who are excluded from this process, however, or who choose not to participate, the generalisation of lifelong learning may only have the effect of increasing their isolation from the world of the 'knowledge-rich'. The consequences are economic, in under-used human capacity and increased welfare expenditure, and social, in terms of alienation and decaying social infrastructure.
>
> (OECD, 1997b, p. 1)

Alternatives are therefore needed.

A reasonable consequence would be to realise that lifelong learning cannot be reduced to investment in short-lived, exploitable economic capital, but that it must also be an investment – of equal value – in social capital, in the way we treat those next to us: the family, the neighbour, the co-worker, the other club members, the people we meet in citizen's action groups or at the bar counter (see Field, 2000, pp. 145ff.). In this field of life, we are all lifelong learners. Nobody is excluded from the outset. Everyone is an expert. Shrinkage of this type of capital – declining trust, the moratorium on solidarity that Robert D. Putnam identified years ago not just in US society (Putnam, 1995) – is also economically counterproductive in the medium term. A balance between these two intractable types of capital, on the other hand, could lead to a new kind of 'educational economy' or, more correctly perhaps, to a *social ecology of learning* in modern, modernised societies. However, the precondition for such balance is that learning individuals be taken more seriously – which would also involve a *shift in analytic perspective*.

The micro-perspective: aspects of a phenomenology of biographical learning

So far we have talked about societal changes affecting the modern biography from a specific perspective, namely the *structural perspective*. And for good reason, since our lives are embedded in structures and cannot be extracted arbitrarily. Nevertheless, it would be theoretical foolishness to describe life and learning from this one perspective alone. If we view the problems that we typically encounter from the perspective of the subject, then 'structure' obtains an extraordinarily plastic character.

The 'hidden capacity' to lead our own lives

As biographical subjects, we do indeed have the feeling of being the 'organisers' of our life course. Even when things do not run the way we hoped or expected they would, we perform corrections to our life plans under the impression that we do so with personal autonomy. In other words, the conscious disposition towards our biography can be understood as an *intentional action scheme*. The dominant attitude that we have to our own biography is one of planning. We are referring here to more than the 'big plans' that we cultivate for our lives – the dream job, the political career, house-building, finding a 'good match' – but also our plans for the weekend or the following afternoon, or what programmes we want to watch on TV. We decide, for example, to lose 10 pounds or to give up smoking, and even succeed in doing so. All of this conveys to us the impression that we hold our own lives in our own hands and that we are the subjects of our biography. But this impression could be exceptionally problematic, and not only because fate could deal us a blow at any time, making us irrecoverably ill or unemployed, or making us lose a loved one or all that we possess. The point is rather that our supposed autonomy of action and autonomous planning is subordinated to 'processual structures' in our biography that we can influence to only a very marginal extent: institutional procedures like schooling or vocational training, trajectories like unemployment or a drug career, unconscious needs like a late coming-out as homosexual.

What is important is the finding that our basic feeling – that we can act relatively independently over our own biographies – does not necessarily conflict with the fact that the greater part of our biographical activities are either fixed to a large degree or require various 'supporters' to initiate them. It therefore appears plausible that the feeling is not actually an intentional action scheme at all, or a consciously desired biographical plan, but is instead a kind of hidden 'meaning' behind the alternating processual structures of our life course: the no-doubt ubiquitous, but strategically not always available intuition that for all the contradiction, we are still dealing with *our* lives. We entertain this unique 'background idea' of ourselves not in spite of, but precisely because of the structural limitations imposed by our social and ethnic origins, our gender and the era in which we are

living. Structure and subjectivity form an important combination here, the dissolution of which can lead to crisis. Such crises obviously affect more than ourselves and our capacities. They also depend on structures. 'Life constructions' are generated between the twin poles of structure and subjectivity, and constructions only contain elements of reality if they also have a retroactive effect on underlying structures. This leads us to the final and most important idea relating to the consequences that the idea of biographical learning has for educational theory in the wider sense.

Learning processes within transition

Life constructions extend beyond what we narrate about our lives. They are hidden references to the structural conditions that are imposed on us. Bourdieu (1984) has provided convincing evidence of this fact, using his concept of habitus: the hidden way we express ourselves, the way we talk, think and eat, walk and dress. Our habitus shows us the limits of our social origins. But there is another side to life constructions: in the course of our lives we produce more meaning relating to ourselves and our social framework that we can actually have from the perspective of our reflexive biographical concern with self. We dispose of a biographical background knowledge with which we are able to fill out and utilise to the full the social space in which we move. None of us have all conceivable possibilities open to us. But within the framework of a restricted modification potential, we have more opportunities than we will ever put into practice. Our biography therefore contains a sizeable potential of '*unlived life*' (Weizsäcker, 1956). Intuitive knowledge about it is part of our 'practical consciousness' (Giddens, 1984). It is not accessible on a simple reflexive basis, but in a double sense it represents a very unusual resource for educational processes:

- Our prescriptive knowledge about life constructions which accompany us but which we have not implemented, or at least not yet, keeps the reflexively available reference to self fundamentally open and creates the preconditions for us to take a different attitude towards ourselves without having to revise this 'hidden' meaning. The processual structures of our life course, the dynamics of their emergence at the surface, suggest an extension or a restriction of autonomous biographical action. Conscious 'ratification' of them is our own responsibility as the subject of our own biography. We are, in a certain sense, 'autopoietic systems', to use an irritating and yet stimulating concept from Luhmann's systems theory. We possess the chance to identify the surplus meanings in our experience of life and to appropriate them for a conscious change in our self- and world-referentiality.
- Biographical background knowledge is at the same time, however, an emergent potential for changing structures. The modification of individual self- and world-referents – even in the limited context of specific life constructions – contains opportunities for the transformation of the institutional framework

> conditions of social existence. Substantial elements of these 'structures' are the unquestioned certainties functioning in the background to which social individuals relate intuitively when they act on the everyday plane, but also when they act biographically. As soon as such prescripts – or only parts of them – enter our awareness and become available, then structures begin to change. Unlived life does indeed possess socially explosive force.

The dynamics of this 'double educational resource' awaken associations with the enlightening option in classical psychoanalysis: '*Where Id was, Ego shall be*'. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the important issue is not only the self-assured, strong ego dealing with a basic dynamic that is otherwise unchangeable, but is also the transition to a new quality of self- and world-referentiality – a process that leaves neither the learning subject nor the surrounding structural context unchanged. In other words, we are dealing here with learning processes within transitions (Alheit, 1993). Transitional learning processes are in a certain sense 'abductive'. They implement what is described in early American pragmatism, particularly by Charles Sanders Peirce, as the ability to network something that 'we would never previously have dreamed could be combined' (Peirce, 1991 [1903], p. 181).

This ability requires, of course, a social actor. Knowledge can only be genuinely transitional if it is *biographical knowledge*. Solely when specific individuals relate to their lifeworld in such a way that their self-reflexive activities begin to shape social contexts is contact established with that key qualification of modernity, what I have termed elsewhere '*biographicity*' (Alheit, 1992). Biographicity means that we can redesign again and again, from scratch, the contours of our life within the specific contexts in which we (have to) spend it, and that we experience these contexts as shapeable and designable. In our biographies, we do not possess all conceivable opportunities, but within the framework of the limits we are structurally set, we still have considerable scope open to us. The main issue is to decipher the 'surplus meanings' of our biographical knowledge, and that in turn means perceiving the potentiality of our unlived lives.

However, reflexive learning processes do not take place exclusively inside the individual, but depend on communication and interaction with others and relations to a social context. Biographical learning is embedded in lifeworlds that can be analysed under certain conditions as 'learning environments' or 'learning milieus' (see Lave and Wenger, 1991). Learning within and through one's life history is therefore interactive and socially structured, on the one hand, but it also follows its own individual logic that is generated by the specific, biographically layered structure of experience. The biographical structure does not determine the learning process, because it is an open structure that has to integrate the new experience it gains through interacting with the world, with others and with itself. On the other hand, it significantly affects the way in which new experience is formed and built into a biographical learning process. Biographical learning is both a *constructionist achievement* of the individual integrating new experiences

into the self-referential 'architectonic' of particular personal past experiences and a *social process* which makes subjects competent and able to actively shape and change their social world (Alheit and Dausien, 2000).

New research questions on an international lifelong learning agenda

It seems, indeed, that any serious, analytical involvement with the complex phenomenon of lifelong learning will be contingent on a *paradigm shift* among educationalists:

- at the social *macro*-level, in respect of a new policy for education and training that aims at striking a different balance between economic, cultural and social capital;
- at the institutional *meso*-level, also in respect of a new self-reflexivity of organisations that should conceive of themselves as 'environments' and 'agencies' of complex learning and knowledge resources, and no longer as the administrators and conveyors of codified, dominant knowledge (Field, 2000);
- at the individual micro-level, with regard to the increasingly complicated linkages and processing accomplished by the specific actors in the face of the social and media-related challenges of late modernity, which call for a new quality in the individual and collective construction of meanings (Alheit, 1999).

We still know too little, in fact, about the systemic balances between economic and social capital. We hardly know anything yet about that 'grey capital' of new knowledge (Field, 2000, p. 1) and its impacts on long-term learning processes. Of course, the comparison of different types of post-industrial society – e.g. the distinct differences between Danish or British or German strategies for arriving at a *learning society* – makes it worthwhile to carry out systematic international comparisons of educational economics.

Yet we have only scraps of information about the institutional prerequisites for the paradigm shift required:

> What pressures to change are operating on education and training institutions? What concepts and measures are applied and accepted as best practice in the fields of quality management, organisational development and personnel development? What theoretical and empirical conditions justify speaking of educational establishments as 'learning organisations'?
>
> (Forschungsmemorandum, 2000, p. 13)

We are discovering more and more new, more complex and riskier status passages and transitions in modern life courses. We observe astonishing and creative (re-) constructions in individual biographies (Alheit, 1993; Dausien, 1996). However, we are still missing a systematically elaborated theory of *biographical and situated*

learning: 'In which learning cultures and dependencies of supra-individual patterns, mentalities and milieus does individual learning develop? What implicit learning potentials and learning processes are shown in social milieus and groups (e.g. within families and between generations)?' (Forschungsmemorandum, 2000, p. 5)

These open research questions are raised by the 'new concept' of lifelong learning. They include the idea that social learning is obviously – more than ever before in history – an achievement of the *subjects* concerned. The *biographicity of learning* affects institutional and even societal macro-structures. Jacque Delors, in his famous UNESCO report (1996), called it '*The treasure within*'. We may add: it should be understood as an important social and cultural capital for the future development of civil societies.

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Chapter 12

The life history of the self

Mark Tennant

Mark Tennant is Professor Emeritus of Adult Education at the University of Technology in Sydney. He is particularly known internationally for his book Psychology and Adult Learning*, which was published for the first time in 1988 and later in new editions in 1997 and 2005. In the later parts of his career, Tennant developed a special interest in the development of personal identity and the self, especially in adult education and relations to postmodern and social constructivist approaches, and in 2012 he published* The Learning Self*, in which this topic was fully worked through. This chapter is largely made up by material from Chapter 1 of this book combined with elements from earlier articles, and in this way presents the essence of Tennant's understanding of the development of the self.*

Introduction

The interest in biography, narrative and life history is well entrenched in academic research and teaching, and in popular culture. People, it seems, have an insatiable appetite to both express themselves through biographical narratives and to explore others' narratives as a comparison with their own. A common explanation for this is that in the contemporary world we are expected to manage ourselves as never before. We are now accustomed to serving ourselves in the retail, travel, entertainment, banking, government and education sectors. As employees we are, more than ever, expected to be flexible and innovative, to self-regulate, monitor ourselves, self-reflect and change where necessary. It is only a small step from here to consider the whole of life as a project of one's 'self' – to know oneself, manage oneself, take care of oneself and to continually recreate oneself. For most of us, in Western cultures at least, there are no longer the comforts of having strong anchoring points for our identity. And there is uncertainty and fragmentation in our life trajectories. Thus the lifecourse, far from developing in an orderly sequence, is fragmented and discontinuous in a manner poetically captured by Marguerite Yourcenar in her fictional autobiography of Hadrian:

> The landscape of my days appears to be composed, like mountainous regions, of varied materials heaped up pell-mell. There I see my nature, itself

> composite, made up of equal parts of instinct and training. Here and there protrude the granite peaks of the inevitable, but all about is rubble from the landslips of chance. I strive to retrace my life to find in it some plan, following a vein of lead, or of gold or the course of some subterranean stream … but too many paths lead nowhere at all, and too many sums add up to nothing. To be sure, I perceive in this diversity and disorder the presence of a person; but his form seems nearly always to be shaped by the pressure of circumstance; his features are blurred, like a figure reflected in water.
>
> (Yourcenar, 1959, p. 26)

I should say here that although this fictional autobiography is set in the time of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, the writer is adopting a contemporary world sensibility. The question is 'How can this very contemporary problem be addressed?' This is where the biographical narrative comes to the fore, which can be seen as a means of crafting our own lives in a way which provides a degree of continuity and coherence. But it can be more than that – it is also a way of coping with change if used reflexively, that is, thinking about how our life history narratives intersect with our emotional state, interpersonal relationships and the social world in which we live. Reflexive life history narratives can awaken a capacity for agency and for self-determination – as a way of challenging and resisting dominant stories that are told about us.

Education can play a major role in this regard. As Hoggan et al. (2017) point out, even though the turn to biography has its detractors, 'as educators we need to respond to this demand' (p. 59). Certainly marginalised groups, often supported through formal and informal education, have asserted and inserted new selves and new life stories into the mix of narratives circulating in the world. From a research point of view, life history narratives are not so much about individual lives, but about how subjective experiences and unique life histories are linked to broader historical, social and political circumstances. It is also a means of inserting concrete lived experiences into various theoretical constructions of how we come to be formed as selves. Life history also offers a technique and a method of coding, indexing and analysing lives, of linking up individual life stories to something more general – a holistic method which integrates life stories, the social structure, narrative and theory (see Plummer, 2001). As a technique for self-examination and research, it can be considered alongside those techniques, processes and practices which are referred to by Foucault as 'technologies of the self' (see Fejes and Nicoll, 2015; Foucault, 1988; Tennant, 1998).

I am particularly interested in the various techniques, processes and practices (and I include here various educational practices) used to promote 'self work' across the lifespan, and their embedded assumptions about self and identity, how we are formed, and our capacity for change. As Foucault reminds us 'The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning' (Michel Foucault, cited in Gauntlett, 2002).

My interest in this is both academic and professional. My academic interest has been forged through my grounding in psychology, supplemented by my exposure to various critiques of psychology, especially the charge that it is a discipline and practice that functions to normalise people in a way that serves the interests of contemporary social and economic circumstances. My professional interest comes from a career in teaching in which I have formed the view that success as a teacher depends squarely on one's sense of self and professional identity. I agree with Palmer (1998, p. 10) when he says:

> my ability to connect with my students, and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood – and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning.

No doubt this applies generally across the helping professions, but also to those who have management or leadership roles in their workplace. But of course selfhood is a highly contested concept, and assumptions about selfhood cannot be entirely separated from the methods we use as teachers, advisors, counsellors or managers – indeed such assumptions are arguably embedded in our everyday practices.

In the contemporary world, a singular, unchanging 'self' is unlikely to lead to a satisfying and successful life. Instead, we are told, we need to be able to change in response to the changing circumstances in which we find our 'selves'.

Accepting the idea that we need to undertake significant personal change over our lifetime raises the question of how such change may come about. Can we be the sole agents of our own change? If so, what do we need to think, do, say or feel, in order to effect this change? If not, to what extent are we dependent on others to effect self-change? What shared activities promote self-change? Is our self-change dependent on change in others? What kinds of relationships with others are necessary for self-change? By changing ourselves, are we thereby able to change our circumstances and those of others? What is the role of the educator or manager in the process of change? (see Tennant, 1998).

Such questions are invariably framed within an explicit or implicit theoretical framework for understanding the self, subjectivity or identity. The aim of this paper is to explore different ways of conceptualising the self, subjectivity and/or identity.

The self

The dominant image of the self in everyday life and in psychology in particular has been that of a 'ghost in the machine' (see Koestler, 1967) which refers to the locus of our experience, thoughts, intentions, actions and beliefs; it is the inner psychological entity that owns our unique individual biography and our sense of coherence and continuity over time. While it is probably fair to say that this

image underlies much of the theory, research and practice of psychology (see Allport, 1961; Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1967), it has certainly not gone unchallenged both within psychology and from without. And psychology certainly cannot lay claim to a monopoly on the topic of the self. Danziger (1997), for example, makes the point that psychologists were relative latecomers to the topic of the self, with the term being in vogue initially in neighbouring disciplinary areas such as sociology, philosophy, literary studies and history. Indeed he points out that the self was a taboo topic in psychology for many decades, especially with the dominance of behaviourism which rejected, on epistemological grounds, any attempt to uncover inner mental states (see for example Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, 1973). Moreover, well before the advent of psychology as a discipline, there had emerged, in western societies at least, specifically psychological ways of thinking about humans and their everyday world. In this connection Danziger draws upon Richards' (1989) distinction here between small 'p' psychology and Psychology with a capital 'P'.

> Before there could be anything for the discipline of psychology to study, people had to develop a psychological way of understanding themselves, their conduct, and their experiences. They had to develop specifically psychological concepts and categories for making themselves intelligible to themselves. Only then did aspects of people's lives present themselves as potential objects of psychological study, rather than, say, objects for religious meditation or moral disputation. The history of small-p psychology, therefore, is not the history of primitive 'anticipations' of later scientific formulations but the history of the emergence of those discursive objects without which the science of psychology would have had nothing to study.
>
> (Danziger, 1997, p. 139)

This is a significant claim because it implies that the self is not a natural entity that can be objectively studied. It has a historical rather than a natural status. That is, unlike objects in the physical world, the self is not something which is independent of the way we think, theorise and talk about it. This claim of course runs counter to much of the early work in the social sciences which assumed that the self was an object of knowledge which could be known empirically like any other natural phenomenon. Danziger is at pains to emphasise the radical nature of this view when it was first put forward in the philosophical writings of John Locke (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 1694/1959). By considering the self to be an object of knowledge and the source of the unity of the human individual, Locke challenged the hitherto prevailing view that the immortal soul was the key to the unity of the human individual. He was replacing a religious view with a secular view and this stirred up a sustained controversy (Danziger, 1997, p. 141). It opened up the possibility of seeing the self, not as sinful and evil, but as something positive which can be sustained and nurtured through self-reflection, self-monitoring and even 'self love'. Deviance took on a new angle, it

was no longer seen in terms of sinners falling short of divine goodness; instead it was seen as a failure in the monitoring mechanism of the self. This view of the self as having an executive function dominated early twentieth century thinking about the self. It is the basis of the idea that the self is comprised of the 'I' who is the knower, and the 'me' or 'object' which can be known by both myself and others as a cluster of attributes and actions. This distinction between 'I' and 'Me' is typically attributed to William James' chapter *Consciousness of Self* which appeared in his seminal work *Principles of Psychology* from 1890. Importantly self-evaluation takes on a moral value:

> The objectified self that persons now harbor within them is above all an object of approval and disapproval, both by others and the person herself. The self is always conceived as an object of variable worth, and therefore the desire to raise or maintain its worth comes to be regarded as an identifiable human motive.
>
> (Danziger, 1997, p. 145)

In therapy and everyday life, self-improvement is now a core cultural value, and there exist across the spectrum of human activities numerous practices and procedures that guide individuals to reflect upon and evaluate themselves and their thoughts, feelings and conduct. In this connection, the vocabulary of self-related constructs and processes has expanded. Leary and Tangney (2003) have tabulated 66 self terms employed in over 150,000 PsycInfo abstracts up to June 2001. The most frequent were *self-concept, self-esteem, self-control, self-disclosure, self-actualisation, self-monitoring, self-confidence* and *self-awareness*. For each of these terms, there exist practices aimed at achieving a normative ideal – it is good to have a stable or realistic concept of one's self, it is good to be self-aware, self-disclosure is a good thing, and so on. Despite the variety of practices a common normative ideal is the unified, coherent, integrated self. Thus the healthy self is unified rather than split, conscious rather than hidden, and continuous rather than discontinuous with the past.

Identity

Gleason (1983), in documenting the semantic history of identity, observes its ubiquity, elusiveness and ambiguity. For example, it refers to both *sameness*, as in one's identification with say, an ethnic group; and *uniqueness*, in the sense that we use the term to describe our particular individual identity. Identity is also used to refer to the continuity and unity of the individual over time, but it is also used to refer to multiple and sometimes divided, or at least conflicted, individuals. Gleason (1983) distinguishes between the way identity is conceptualised by psychologists such as Erikson (1982), where it is seen as an internal psychological state and a source of continuity in the person; and sociologists from Cooley (1922) to Mead (1972), and later Goffman (1971)

and Berger (1966), who see identity as socially produced and subject to change with changing circumstances.

> In the case of identity, Erikson insists that an inner continuity of personality endures through all the changes the individual undergoes in passing through the stages of the life cycle, while the interactionists envision a flickering succession of identities adopted and shed according to the requirements of different social situations.
>
> (Gleason, 1983, p. 919)

Of particular note is the way the 'symbolic interactionists' (Cooley and Mead) shifted from an initial use of the term 'self' to the term 'identity', perhaps for the reason that it seemed a more promising category with which to explore the relationship between the individual and society. Its use in everyday language also seemed to capture the emerging concerns faced by citizens of western liberal democracies – at first the concern with how to establish personal identity in an impersonal mass society dominated by the consumption of mass goods, then the concern with how marginalised groups can have their identities recognised and respected in a society dominated by an identity coded as male, white, able-bodied and heterosexual; and finally the concern with establishing and maintaining an identity in a diverse and ever changing society. The adoption of 'identity' rather than 'self ' as an explanatory category is thus associated with a growing critique of western liberal democracy with its mass produced goods and its norms of conduct. The move to 'identity' thus entails a politicisation of the previously 'neutral' psychological term 'the self'. It is also symptomatic of a shift from the private realm of internal states to the public realm of performances in the social world, as depicted by Gee (2000):

> When any human being acts and interacts in a given context, others recognize that person as acting and interacting as a certain 'kind of person' or even as several different 'kinds' at once … A person might be recognized as being a certain kind of radical feminist, homeless person, overly macho male, 'yuppie,' street gang member, community activist, academic, kindergarten teacher, 'at risk' student, and so on and so forth, through countless possibilities. The 'kind of person' one is recognized as 'being,' at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable. Being recognized as a certain 'kind of person,' in a given context, is what I mean here by 'identity.' In this sense of the term, all people have multiple identities connected not to their 'internal states' but to their performances in society.
>
> (Gee, 2000, p. 99)

Gee goes on to list four ways to view identity: as a state of nature (e.g. being an identical twin), as an institutional position (e.g. being a bank manager), as a

discursive position (e.g. being recognised and talked about by others as being a charismatic person) and finally as affiliation with a group or community with its distinctive social practices (e.g. a surfer, a yoga devotee, a bird watcher). Gee is at pains to point out that these four views are not separate from each other. For example, being an older person may be a state of nature (living to say 85 years of age), an institutional position (e.g. living in an aged-care facility), a discursive position (being recognised and talked about by others as old) and an affiliation (e.g. participating in activities for older people). Despite their overlap, these categories help us to ask questions about how identities are formed and sustained. To continue the example of older persons, I recall a debate about a catchphrase used to promote Senior Citizens week. The catchphrase originally proposed was 'You are as young as you feel'. The objection to this is that it valorises youth – and it leaves no space for people who actually feel their age to thereby feel good about themselves. The catchphrase was eventually replace by 'Age adds value' – which focuses on the positive aspects of ageing without the 'youth' tagline. This is a good example of a discursive identity being resisted, and it points to the way in which discourses compete in fleshing out what is means to be 'a certain kind of person'. It also points to the role of discourse in forming and sustaining identities.

Although historical usage reveals a significant overlap between the terms identity and self, the use of identity signals a shift towards the social side of the individual-social dichotomy. From the point of view of individual psychology, identity and its correlate 'identification' is a term that can be harnessed to explain how the social becomes a constituent part of individual psychology. From a social perspective, it is clear that identities can be resisted, contested and negotiated by challenging the interpretive systems underlying identities such as traditions, rules of institutions, social norms, ways of talking about people and views of what is natural. This is of course recognisable as the terrain of identity politics in which marginalised groups seek to have their identities recognised – not tolerated or included – but recognised *as* say women, indigenous people, African Americans, migrants or lesbians. But the language and practices of identity politics, at least for some, contains remnants of an inner, almost essentialist self that directs actions and makes choices. The attempt to transform social practices through group and individual 'consciousness raising', and the call for 'authenticity' and 'self-determination' are testimony to this. The shift to 'subjectivity' can be seen, partly, as a response to this criticism.

Subjectivity

Blackman et al. (2008) provide an excellent account of the emergence of the term 'subjectivity', with all its dense theoretical twists and turns. But rather than recount Blackman et al.'s analysis, it is more productive to ask 'what problem is being addressed by the shift to "subjectivity"?' It appears that the problem is the way in which psychological understandings of the self have dominated academe, professional psychology and everyday life for much of the 20th century.

Critics have variously portrayed psychology as promoting a version the self as a normative, unitary, coherent, ahistorical entity (see for example Rose, 1998). The political problem with this is that such a conception leads to the portrayal of 'acceptable selves' in normative or essentialist terms, thus disallowing and delegitimising alternative and minority ways of being. As Bell (2010) points out, such a conceptualisation of the self was unacceptable to many of the intellectual, social and political movements of the 20th century, such as Marxism, Feminism, anti-psychiatry, post-colonialism and cultural studies:

> The postwar expansion of university education had seen huge numbers of hapless humanities students respectably schooled in Psychology, albeit an innocently empirical, eclectically humanistic psychology. The new critics saw in this 'science', conformism and intellectual timidity, positivism and political conservatism ... conventional psychiatry and psychology, aimed at 'adjusting' people to 'reality', were increasingly derided. Thomas Szasz, RD Laing, Gregory Bateson, and others agreed with the French critics of psychiatric models of 'normality' and opposed the psychiatrically sanctioned control of 'patients'. Mental illness was a 'myth', said Szasz; 'asylums' were merely prisons reinforcing the deadening conformity of other institutions like the school and family.
>
> (Bell, 2010, p. 58)

In so far as psychology promotes a 'normative' self, it is seen as an instrument of regulation and control, exercising its influence across all spheres of human activity such as workplaces, schools, prisons, child rearing, sport, health, aged care, urban living and the military. It does so by deploying its various techniques to these spheres of activity: most notably psychological tests, questionnaires or surveys designed to measure stable, normative psychological characteristics such as intelligence, aptitude, personality, attitudes and values. In this way, the discipline and practice of psychology, together with the adoption of psychological ways of thinking in the general population, can be read as providing the basis for people to actively participate in their own subjection. It is worth noting in this respect the highly emotive nature of the critique of psychology and its demonisation as the source and primary agent of the 'scourges of essentialism, reductionism and dualism' (Blackman et al. 2008, p. 17).

As a normalising and essentialising practice psychology was resisted. Politically this resistance took the form of a new celebration of difference and diversity, with the purpose of opening up spaces for previously marginalised and less powerful groups, so that 'difference' no longer equated with 'deviance' from an established norm. From a scholarly point of view it took the form of a new understanding of the self as *solely* a social and cultural phenomenon – signalled by the use of the term 'subjectivity'.

Those who have adopted the term 'subjectivity' have in common 'the turn to language, signs and discourse as the site through which subjects are formed'

(Blackman et al., 2008, p. 3). This represents a shift from analysing the psychological interior of persons to analysing the exterior realm of language, signs and discourses. For example, as Bell (2010) explains, a key approach of cultural studies is to consider cultural phenomena as texts and to deconstruct various texts to unveil the kind of work they do. Texts in this sense can be considered as any cultural phenomenon that conveys meaning, so that movies, literature, advertising, cooking, music and of course disciplines such as psychology can all be analysed as texts. The 'self' too is seen as a text – there is no sovereign 'self' as such, there are only 'subjects' created through discourse. For example, a person can be said to occupy a gendered 'subject position', which is sociological/discursive as opposed to psychobiological (see Bell, 2010). On this view the subject is not to be understood as some kind of entity which stands opposed to the powerful effects of culture, rather it is already one of its effects. While the term 'identity' emphasises the social side of the individual-social dichotomy, the term 'subjectivity' dissolves the dichotomy, largely because the individual as such vanishes. The self is pure fiction, and those who attempt to enumerate its qualities are duped into promoting a version of the 'truth' which controls and regulates both themselves and others. Given that the claim to truth is abandoned, it is clear at this point that the key driver behind the analysis of 'subjectivity' is political in nature.

This radical theorisation of subjectivity in solely social and cultural terms leads to some significant logical difficulties – not the least of which is the problem of how we come to identify with one socially produced representation and not another (see Bell, 2010, for a more detailed analysis; also Blackman et al., 2008, p. 8). Also there is the difficulty of accounting for the agency of the subject in resisting control and regulation if the subject is completely constituted in socio-cultural terms. For this reason, writers working within this socio-cultural tradition now acknowledge the limitations of a purely socio-cultural analysis. For example Blackman et al. (2008), with reference to the work of Foucault, ask 'Might we not accept the full significance of Foucault's important arguments concerning the differentiation and production of individuals and not still suggest that the "subjectivity" of such individuals is not wholly accounted for by power, discourse and historical circumstance?' (p. 9). They answer in the affirmative, arguing that we need to take into account actual bodies and how they modulate and augment subjectivity. They state their case in a rather timid appeal to their would-be critics:

> We are thus emphatically not calling for a return to a naïve individualizing humanism, to de-socialized, a-historical categories of explanation, or to an essentialist inner mechanics of psychological functioning. However, notwithstanding this aversion to de-politicized modes of explanation, to the multiple problems associated with reductive psychological individualism, we remain nevertheless interested in an exploration of those ostensibly psychological frameworks and vernaculars – contingent as they may be – that may enable even a temporary hold on the unique density and complexity of

> subjectivity which is always more than a derivative formation. There is far more work to be done, for example, in linking the current recourse to affect, central to much contemporary sociological and cultural studies work, with models of psychical or neurological functioning that do not bring in psychological individualism through the back door.
>
> (Blackman et al., 2008, p. 10)

Elizabeth Grosz, in an interview in the *Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* is more forthright in her disavowal of purely cultural and discursive analysis:

> Nature or materiality have no identity in the sense that they are continually changing, continually emerging as new. Once we have a dynamic notion of nature, then culture cannot be seen as that which animates nature. Nature is already animated, and culture borrows its energy from nature. So it is not as if culture is the transformation of nature: culture is the fruition, the culmination of nature. Culture is no longer understood as uniquely human or as a thoroughly linguistic creation.
>
> (Kontturi and Tiainen, 2007, p. 248)

The extracts above, from 'insiders' so to speak, illustrate that the extreme view of subjectivity as solely a discursive phenomenon has had its day (see also Damasio, 2000). But there is no doubt that the use of the term has done its work and left its mark, particularly in the way those psychologists who continue to use the term 'self' have taken up its historical and discursive dimensions in their theoretical work.

While there is considerable overlap in the way self, identity and subjectivity have been used, it is fair to say that the adoption of one term over another tends to signal a particular position on a range of theoretical issues. One issue that is central to the debate is how to conceive of the relationship between the 'outside' and the 'inside' so to speak: that is, the relationship between society and the person. An important dimension of this debate is the assumptions that are made about the relative depth and thickness of 'human material'. du Gay et al. (2000) cite psychoanalysis as having a relatively 'thick' view of human material in that it has an elaborate conception of the dynamic 'inner' history of the individual that is set against his or her 'external' experience of the world. In contrast theories of subjectivity 'presuppose only a minimal or "thin" conception of the human material on which history operates … where the representation of human beings as interiorizied [sic] and psychologised entities is treated as an historical instance and not as a given' (2000, p. 4). One's position on this dimension thus serves to demarcate vastly different theoretical positions with vastly different implications for education, therapy, management and other 'interventions in the name of subjectivity' (to borrow a phrase from Rose, 1998).

How best can educators and researchers navigate through these different theoretical perspectives? Firstly, it is important not to see the debate solely in terms of

an 'essential self' in opposition to a totally 'socialised self'. This is no longer the terrain on which the debate is conducted. Secondly, it is important to recognise the power of each position – the importance of language, of emotion and cognition, of the body, of the self in its relationships with others, and of understanding the self in its social, cultural and political context (see Hunt, 2013; and Hunt and West, 2009, for a similar analysis). Finally it is important to adopt a reflexive approach to one's own practice as it relates to different theoretical insights.

This last point is well illustrated by what has been termed the 'integrative approach' in family therapy – such an approach uses a range of techniques combined with a 'respect for the multiplicity of truths' (Nichols and Schwartz, 2004, p. 348) whereby no one theory or model is applied in its entirety to the exclusion of others. This is more than mere eclecticism, which just focuses in a pragmatic way on the techniques that seem to work. It is the use of multiple theories and multiple practices in combination. Larner (2010) illustrates this in his treatment of Tom, an adolescent boy who is depressed and suicidal.

> Tom is trapped within a self-constructed wall of silence feeling all the more desperate for it. From this psychodynamic stance of the counter transference I take in and think of Tom's emotional pain and his struggle with depression and secrecy. This reverie inspired me to talk in a psychoeducational way about the incidence of depression, suicidal thinking and self-harm in the adolescent population. I attempt to normalize his experience and reassure him suicidal thinking in young people is not uncommon and nothing to be ashamed about. In a cognitive therapy way I then explore and challenge Tom's beliefs and reasons for remaining secretive about his suicidality. Next from a narrative therapy perspective I refer to the importance of exposing suicidal thinking, explaining like a virus it traps you into keeping its secret, which increases its power. I suggest the best disarming strategy is to confide in others and with my colleague stress the importance of doing this, right now, with his Dad in a systemic family interview, which explores their relational bonding.
>
> (Larner, 2010, p. 309)

Larner moves freely between different therapeutic languages, integrating his training in psychoanalysis, cognitive and family therapy; his clinical intuition and experience; his bureaucratic responsibilities to implement protocols for managing suicidal risk; and his acquaintance with the evidence-based literature for adolescent depression. Concurrently he works from a position of *not knowing* – maintaining an openness through being curious, open, flexible and responsive in the therapeutic relationship. This requires what he describes as a combination of an ethic of hospitality *and* an irreverent stance towards different therapeutic languages (Larner, 2010).

The version of the self underlying this integrative approach is both autonomous and heteronomous, multiple and singular, independent and dependent,

coherent and fragmented, stable and volatile. These may appear to be mutually exclusive qualities, but only if we see the self as somehow *complete*. But the self can never be known in any complete sense, partly because our reflexivity (our ability to think about our self and our thoughts about our self) leads in principle to an infinite regression, and partly because we are always changing, partial and fragmented. Given this, how is it possible to fashion one's self? The answer surely lies in our *engaged agency* – although we cannot completely stand outside our culture, we do have the capacity to question its assumptions and premises. While it is certainly the case that our selves are forged and sustained within a culture, we all have unique biographies and unique predispositions and potentials.

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Chapter 13

Culture, mind and education

Jerome Bruner

Jerome Bruner, born 1915, was for many decades before his death in 2016 'the grand old man' of American learning and cognitive research and theory, and for a long time he could claim to be the only researcher in the field who had personally known both Vygotsky and Piaget. In the 1940s and 1950s, he made detailed studies on perception, thinking and cognition, and after the so-called 'Sputnik-shock' in 1957, Bruner was appointed chairman of the commission that was set up to fundamentally reconstruct the American school system. Later he laid the groundwork for the concept of the science-centred curriculum. His last important book in the educational area, The Culture of Education*, from 1996, can certainly still be viewed as a relevant and contemporary contribution, and the following chapter is made up of the two first programmatic sections of that book, which probably will stand as the most durable work of his vast production.*

Computationalism and culturalism

The essays in [The *Culture of Education*] are all products of the 1990s, expressions of the fundamental changes that have been altering conceptions about the nature of the human mind in the decades since the cognitive revolution. These changes, it now seems clear in retrospect, grew out of two strikingly divergent conceptions about how mind works. The first of these was the hypothesis that mind could be conceived as a computational device. This was not a new idea, but it had been powerfully reconceived in the newly advanced computational sciences. The other was the proposal that mind is both constituted by and realized in the use of human culture. The two views led to very different conceptions of the nature of mind itself and of how mind should be cultivated. Each led its adherents to follow distinctively different strategies of inquiry about how mind functions and about how it might be improved through "education." The first or *computational* view is concerned with *information processing:* how finite, coded, unambiguous information about the world is inscribed, sorted, stored, collated, retrieved, and generally managed by a computational device. It takes information as its given, as something already settled in relation to some preexisting, rule-bound code that maps onto states of the world. This so-called "well-formedness" is both its strength and

its shortcoming, as we shall see. For the process of knowing is often messier and more fraught with ambiguity than such a view allows.

Computational science makes interesting general claims about the conduct of education (Segal et al. 1985, Bruer 1993, Chi et al. 1988), though it is still unclear what specific lessons it has to teach the educator. There is a widespread and not unreasonable belief that we *should* be able to discover something about how to teach human beings more effectively from knowing how to program computers effectively. One can scarcely doubt, for example, that computers provide a learner with powerful aids in mastering bodies of knowledge, particularly if the knowledge in question is well defined. A well-programed computer is especially useful for taking over tasks that, at last, can be declared "unfit for human production." For computers are faster, more orderly, less fitful in remembering, and do not get bored. And of course, it is revealing of our own minds and our human situation to ask what things we do better or worse than our servant computer.

It is considerably more uncertain whether, in any deep sense, the tasks of a teacher can be "handed over" to a computer, even the most "responsive" one that can be theoretically envisioned. Which is not to say that a suitably programmed computer cannot lighten a teacher's load by taking over some of the routines that clutter the process of instruction. But that is not the issue. After all, books came to serve such a function after Gutenberg's discovery made them widely available (Ong 1991, Olson 1994).

The issue, rather, is whether the computational view of mind itself offers an adequate enough view about how mind works to guide our efforts in trying to "educate" it. It is a subtle question. For in certain respects, "how the mind works" is itself dependent on the tools at its disposal. "How the *hand* works," for example, cannot be fully appreciated unless one also takes into account whether it is equipped with a screwdriver, a pair of scissors, or a laser-beam gun. And by the same token, the systematic historian's "mind" works differently from the mind of the classic "teller of tales" with his stock of combinable myth-like modules. So, in a sense, the mere existence of computational devices (and a theory of computation about their mode of operating) can (and doubtless will) change our minds about how "mind" works, just as the book did (Olson 1994).

This brings us directly to the second approach to the nature of mind – call it *culturalism*. It takes its inspiration from the evolutionary fact that mind could not exist save for culture. For the evolution of the hominid mind is linked to the development of a way of life where "reality" is represented by a symbolism shared by members of a cultural community in which a technical-social way of life is both organized and construed in terms of that symbolism. This symbolic mode is not only shared by a community, but conserved, elaborated, and passed on to succeeding generations who, by virtue of this transmission, continue to maintain the culture's identity and way of life.

Culture in this sense is *superorganic* (Kroeber 1917). But it shapes the minds of individuals as well. Its individual expression inheres in *meaning making*, assigning meanings to things in different settings on particular occasions. Meaning making

involves situating encounters with the world in their appropriate cultural contexts in order to know "what they are about." Although meanings are "in the mind," they have their origins and their significance in the culture in which they are created. It is this cultural situatedness of meanings that assures their negotiability and, ultimately, their communicability. Whether "private meanings" exist is not the point; what is important is that meanings provide a basis for cultural exchange. On this view, knowing and communicating are in their nature highly interdependent, indeed virtually inseparable: however much the individual may seem to operate on his or her own in carrying out the quest for meanings, nobody can do it unaided by the culture's symbolic systems. It is culture that provides the tools for organizing and understanding our worlds in communicable ways. The distinctive feature of human evolution is that mind evolved in a fashion that enables human beings to utilize the tools of culture. Without those tools, whether symbolic or material, man is not a "naked ape" but an empty abstraction.

Culture, then, though itself man-made, both forms and makes possible the workings of a distinctively human mind. On this view, learning and thinking are always *situated* in a cultural setting and always dependent upon the utilization of cultural resources (see e.g. Bruner 1990). Even individual variation in the nature and use of mind can be attributed to the varied opportunities that different cultural settings provide, though these are not the only source of variation in mental functioning.

Like its computational cousin, culturalism seeks to bring together insights from psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and the human sciences generally, in order to reformulate a model of mind. But the two do so for radically different purposes. Computationalism, to its great credit, is interested in any and all ways in which information is organized and used – information in the well-formed and finite sense mentioned earlier, regardless of the guise in which information processing is realized. In this broad sense, it recognizes no disciplinary boundaries, not even the boundary between human and non-human functioning. Culturalism, on the other hand, concentrates exclusively on how human beings in cultural communities create and transform meanings.

I want to set forth in this chapter some principal motifs of the cultural approach and explore how these relate to education. But before turning to that formidable task, I need first to dispel the shibboleth of a necessary contradiction between culturalism and computationalism. For I think the apparent contradiction is based on a misunderstanding, one that leads to gross and needless overdramatization. Obviously the approaches are very different, and their ideological overspill may indeed overwhelm us if we do not take care to distinguish them clearly. For it surely matters ideologically what kind of "model" of the human mind one embraces (Brinton 1965). Indeed, the model of mind to which one adheres even shapes the "folk pedagogy" of schoolroom practice. Mind as equated to the power of association and habit formation privileges "drill" as the true pedagogy, while mind taken as the capacity for reflection and discourse on the nature of necessary truths favors the Socratic dialogue. And each of these is linked to our conception of the ideal society and the ideal citizen.

Yet in fact, neither computationalism nor culturalism is so linked to particular models of mind as to be shackled in particular pedagogies. Their difference is of quite a different kind. Let me try to sketch it.

The objective of computationalism is to devise a formal redescription of *any* and *all* functioning systems that manage the flow of well-formed information. It seeks to do so in a way that produces foreseeable, systematic outcomes. One such system is the human mind. But thoughtful computationalism does *not* propose that mind is like some particular "computer" that needs to be "programmed" in a particular way in order to operate systematically or "efficiently." What it argues, rather, is that any and all systems that process information must be governed by specifiable "rules" or procedures that govern what to do with inputs. It matters not whether it is a nervous system, or the genetic apparatus that takes instruction from DNA and then reproduces later generations, or whatever. This is the ideal of artificial intelligence (AI), so-called. "Real minds" are describable in terms of the same AI generalization – systems governed by specifiable rules for managing the flow of coded information.

But, as already noted, the rules common to all information systems do not cover the messy, ambiguous, and context-sensitive processes of meaning making, a form of activity in which the construction of highly "fuzzy" and metaphoric category systems is just as notable as the use of specifiable categories for sorting inputs in a way to yield comprehensible outputs. Some computationalists, convinced a priori that even meaning making can be reduced to AI specifications, are perpetually at work trying to prove that the messiness of meaning making is not beyond their reach (McClelland 1990, Schank 1990). The complex "universal models" they propose are sometimes half-jokingly referred to by them as "TOEs," an acronym for "theories of everything" (Mitchell 1995). But though they have not even come near to succeeding and, as many believe, will probably never in principle succeed, their efforts nonetheless are interesting for the light they shed on the divide between meaning making and information processing.

The difficulty these computationalists encounter inheres in the kinds of "rules" or operations that are possible in computation. All of them, as we know, must be specifiable in advance, must be free of ambiguity, and so on. They must, in their ensemble, also be computationally consistent, which means that while operations may alter with feedback from prior results, the alterations must also adhere to a consistent, prearranged systematicity. Computational rules may be contingent, but they cannot encompass unforeseeable contingencies. Thus Hamlet cannot (in AI) tease Polonius with ambiguous banter about "yonder cloud shaped like a camel, nay 'tis backed like a weasel," in the hope that his banter might evoke guilt and some telltale knowledge about the death of Hamlet's father.

It is precisely this clarity, this prefixedness of categories, that imposes the most severe limit on computationalism as a medium in which to frame a model of mind. But once this limitation is recognized, the alleged death struggle between culturalism and computationalism evaporates. For the meaning making of the culturalist, unlike the information processing of the computationalist, is in

principle interpretive, fraught with ambiguity, sensitive to the occasion, and often after the fact. Its "ill-formed procedures" are like "maxims" rather than like fully specifiable rules (Sperber and Wilson 1986, Grice 1989). But they are hardly unprincipled. Rather, they are the stuff of *hermeneutics*, an intellectual pursuit no less disciplined for its failure to produce the click-clear outputs of a computational exercise. Its model case is text interpretation. In interpreting a text, the meaning of a part depends upon a hypothesis about the meanings of the whole, whose meaning in turn is based upon one's judgment of meanings of the parts that compose it. But a wide swath of the human cultural enterprise depends upon it. Nor is it clear that the infamous "hermeneutic circle" deserves the knocks it gets from those in search of clarity and certainty. After all, it lies at the heart of meaning making.

Hermeneutic meaning making and well-formed information processing are incommensurate. Their incommensurability can be made evident even in a simple example. Any input to a computational system must, of course, be encoded in a specifiable way that leaves no room for ambiguity. What happens, then, if (as in human meaning making) an input needs to be encoded according to the context in which it is encountered? Let me give a homely example involving language, since so much of meaning making involves language. Say the input into the system is the word *cloud*. Shall it be taken in its "meteorological" sense, its "mental condition" sense, or in some other way? Now, it is easy (indeed necessary) to provide a computational device with a "look-up" lexicon that provides alternative senses of *cloud*. Any dictionary can do it. But to determine *which* sense is appropriate for a particular context, the computational device would also need a way of encoding and interpreting all contexts in which the word *cloud* might appear. That would then require the computer to have a look-up list for all possible contexts, a "contexticon." But while there are a finite number of words, there are an infinite number of contexts in which particular words might appear. Encoding the context of Hamlet's little riddle about "yonder cloud" would almost certainly escape the powers of the best "contexticon" one could imagine!

There is no decision procedure known that could resolve the question whether the incommensurability between culturalism's meaning making and computationalism's information processing could ever be overcome. Yet, for all that, the two have a kinship that is difficult to ignore. For once meanings are established, it is their formalization into a well-formed category system that *can* be managed by computational rules. Obviously one loses the subtlety of context dependency and metaphor in doing so: *clouds* would have to pass tests of truth functionality to get into the play. But then again, "formalization" in science consists of just such maneuvers: treating an array of formalized and operationalized meanings as if they were fit for computation. Eventually we come to believe that scientific terms actually were born and grew that way: decontextualized, disambiguated, totally "look-uppable."

There is equally puzzling commerce in the other direction. For we are often forced to interpret the output of a computation in order to "make some sense"

of it – that is, to figure out what it "means." This "search for the meaning" of final outputs has always been customary in statistical procedures such as factor analysis where the association between different "variables," discovered by statistical manipulation, needed to be interpreted hermeneutically in order to "make sense." The same problem is encountered when investigators use the computational option of parallel processing to discover the association between a set of coded inputs. The final output of such parallel processing similarly needs interpretation to be rendered meaningful. So there is plainly some complementary relationship between what the computationalist is trying to explain and what the culturalist is trying to interpret, a relationship that has long puzzled students of epistemology (von Wright 1971, Bruner 1985).

In an undertaking as inherently reflexive and complicated as characterizing "how our minds work" or how they might be made to work better, there is surely room for two perspectives on the nature of knowing (von Wright 1971). Nor is there any demonstrable reason to suppose that without a single and legitimately "true" way of knowing the world, we could only slide helplessly down the slippery slope that leads to relativism. It is surely as "true" to say that Euclid's theorems are computable as to say, with the poet, that "Euclid alone has looked on beauty bare."

A theory of mind

To begin with, if a theory of mind is to be interesting educationally, it should contain some specifications for (or at least implications bearing on) how its functioning can be improved or altered in some significant way. All-or-none and once-for-all theories of mind are not educationally interesting. More specifically, educationally interesting theories of mind contain specifications of some kind about the "resources" required for a mind to operate effectively. These include not only instrumental resources (like mental "tools"), but also settings or conditions required for effective operations – anything from feedback within certain time limits to, say, freedom from stress or from excessive uniformity. Without specification of resources and settings required, a theory of mind is all "inside-out" and of limited applicability to education. It becomes interesting only when it becomes more "outside-in," indicating the kind of world needed to make it possible to use mind (or heart!) effectively – what kinds of symbol systems, what kinds of accounts of the past, what arts and sciences, and so on. The approach of computationalism to education tends to be inside-out – though it smuggles the world into the mind by inscribing bits of it in memory, as with our earlier dictionary example, and then relies on "lookup" routines. Culturalism is much more outside-in, and although it may contain specifications about mental operations *eo ipso*, as it were, they are not as binding as, say, the formal requirement of computability. For the approach of the computationalist to education is indeed bound by the constraint of computability – that is, whatever aids are offered to mind must be operable by a computational device.

When one actually examines how computationalism has approached educational issues, there seem to be three different styles. The first of these consists in "restating" classical theories of teaching or learning in a computable form. But while some clarity is gained in so doing (for example, in locating ambiguities), not much is gained by way of power. Old wine does not improve much for being poured into differently shaped bottles, even if the glass is clearer. The classic reply, of course, is that a computable reformulation yields "surplus insight." Yet "association theory," for example, has gone through successive translations from Aristotle to Locke to Pavlov to Clark Hull without much surplus yield. So one is justifiably impatient with new claims for veiled versions of the same as with many so-called parallel distributed processing (PDP) "learning models" (Rumelhart and McClelland 1986).

But in fact, computationalism can and does do better than that. Its second approach begins with a rich description or protocol of what actually transpires when somebody sets out to solve a particular problem or master a particular body of knowledge. It then seeks to redescribe what has been observed in strict computational terms. In what order, for example, does a subject ask for information, what confuses him, what kinds of hypotheses does he entertain? This approach then asks what might be going on computationally in devices that operate that way, for instance, like the subject's "mind." From this it seeks to reformulate a plan about how a learner of this kind might be helped – again within the limits of computability. John Bruer's interesting book *Schools for Thought* (1993) is a nice example of what can be gained from this fresh approach.

But there is an even more interesting third route that computationalists sometimes follow. The work of Annette Karmiloff-Smith (1979, 1992) provides an example if taken in conjunction with some abstract computational ideas. All complex "adaptive" computational programs involve redescribing the output of prior operations in order both to reduce their complexity and to improve their "fit" to an adaptation criterion. That is what "adaptive" means: reducing prior complexities to achieve greater "fitness" to a criterion (Mitchell 1995, Crutchfield and Mitchell 1994). An example will help. Karmiloff-Smith notes that when we go about solving particular problems, say language acquisition, we characteristically "turn around" on the results of a procedure that has worked locally and try to redescribe it in more general, simplified terms. We say, for example, "I've put an s at the end of that noun to pluralize it; how about doing the same for *all* nouns?" When the new rule fails to pluralize *woman*, the learner may generate some additional ones. Eventually, he ends up with a more or less adequate rule for pluralizing, with only a few odd "exceptions" left over to be handled by rote. Note that in each step of this process that Karmiloff-Smith calls "redescription," the learner "goes meta," considering how he is thinking as well as what he is thinking about. This is the hallmark of "metacognition," a topic of passionate interest among psychologists – but also among computational scientists.

That is to say, the rule of redescription is a feature of *all* complex "adaptive" computation, but in the present instance, it is also a genuinely interesting

psychological phenomenon. This is the rare music of an overlap between different fields of inquiry – if the overlap turns out to be fertile. So, REDESCRIBE, a TOE-like rule for adaptive computational systems that also happens to be a good rule in human problem solving, may turn out to be a "new frontier." And the new frontier may turn out to be next-door to educational practice.

So the computationalist's approach to education seems to take three forms as noted. The first reformulates old theories of learning (or teaching, or whatever) in computable form in the hope that the reformulation will yield surplus power. The second analyzes rich protocols and applies the apparatus of computational theory to them to better discern what might be going on computationally. Then it tries to figure out how the process can be helped. This, in effect, is what Newell, Shaw, and Simon did in their work on the General Problem Solver, and what is currently being done in studies of how "novices" become "experts" (Chipman and Meyrowitz 1993). Finally there is the happy fortuity where a central computational idea, like "redescription," seems to map directly onto a central idea in cognitive theory, like "metacognition."

The culturalist approaches education in a very different way. Culturalism takes as its first premise that education is not an island, but part of the continent of culture. It asks first what function "education" serves in the culture and what role it plays in the lives of those who operate within it. Its next question might be why education is situated in the culture as it is and how this placement reflects the distribution of power, status, and other benefits. Inevitably, and virtually from the start, culturalism also asks about the enabling resources made available to people to cope and what portion of those resources is made available through "education," institutionally conceived. And it will constantly be concerned with constraints imposed on the process of education – external ones like the organization of schools and classrooms or the recruitment of teachers and internal ones like the natural or imposed distribution of native endowment, for native endowment may be as much affected by the accessibility of symbolic systems as by the distribution of genes.

Culturalism's task is a double one. On the "macro" side, it looks at the culture as a system of values, rights, exchanges, obligations, opportunities, and power. On the "micro" side, it examines how the demands of a cultural system affect those who must operate within it. In that latter spirit, it concentrates on how individual human beings construct "realities" and meanings that adapt them to the system, at what personal cost, with what expected outcomes. While culturalism implies no particular view concerning inherent psycho-biological constraints that affect human functioning, particularly meaning making, it usually takes such constraints for granted and considers how they are managed by the culture and its instituted educational system.

Although culturalism is far from computationalism and its constraints, it has no difficulty incorporating its insights – with one exception. It obviously cannot rule out processes relating to human meaning making, however much they do not meet the test of computability. As a corollary, it cannot and does not rule

out subjectivity and its role in culture. Indeed, as we shall see, it is much concerned with intersubjectivity – how humans come to know "each other's minds." In both these senses, culturalism is to be counted among the "sciences of the subjective." And, in consequence, I shall often refer to it as the "cultural psychological" approach, or simply as "cultural psychology." For all that it embraces the subjective in its purview and refers often to the "construction of reality," cultural psychology surely does not rule out "reality" in any ontological sense. It argues (on epistemological grounds) that "external" or "objective" reality can only be known by the properties of mind and the symbol systems on which mind relies (Goodman 1978).

A final point relates to the place of emotion and feeling. It is often said that all "cognitive psychology," even its cultural version, neglects or even ignores the place of these in the life of mind. But it is neither necessary that this be so nor, at least in my view, is it so. Why should an interest in cognition preclude feeling and emotion (see e.g. Oatley 1992)? Surely emotions and feelings are represented in the processes of meaning making and in our constructions of reality. Whether one adopts the Zajonc view that emotion is a direct and unmediated response to the world with subsequent cognitive consequences or the Lazarus view that emotion requires prior cognitive inference, it is still "there," still to be reckoned with (Zajonc 1980, 1984, Lazarus 1981, 1982, 1984). And as we shall see, particularly in dealing with the role of schools in "self-construction," it is very much a part of education.

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Chapter 14

Experience, pedagogy and social practices

Robin Usher

In international learning and educational theory, British-Australian philosopher and educator Robin Usher had a clear position as the first spokesman of the postmodern approach, strongly inspired by Michel Foucault and other French postmodernists. Until the late 1990s, Usher was a Reader at the University of Southampton in England, but then he moved to Australia and became the Research Director of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, where he was employed until his death in 2013. The following chapter is taken from the book Adult Education and the Modern Challenge: Learning Beyond the Limits, *which Usher published together with his colleagues Ian Bryant and Rennie Johnston in 1997, dealing with what they understood as the four postmodern modes of learning and practice as seen in relation to adult education. The text is an abridged version of the last part of Chapter 5, which was written by Usher and is a very central example of his approach.*

Experience, pedagogy and social practices

In adult education discourse, experience has mainly signified freedom from regulation in the service of personal autonomy and/or social empowerment. Autonomy, empowerment, self-expression and self-realisation are key signifiers. Other hitherto more submerged signifiers such as 'application' and 'adaptation' now also have a key significance. The meaning of experience will vary according to different discursive practices, as too will the particular significance given to learning derived from experience. Although experiential learning has become central to the theory and practice of education in the postmodern moment, as a pedagogy it is inherently ambivalent and capable of many significations. There is a need to stop seeing experiential learning in purely logocentric terms, as a natural characteristic of the individual learner or as a pedagogical technique, and more in terms of the contexts – socio-cultural and institutional – in which it functions and from which it derives its significations. In itself, therefore, it has no unequivocal or 'given' meaning – it is inherently neither emancipatory nor oppressive, neither domesticating nor transformative. Rather, its meaning is constantly shifting between and across these polarities. It is perhaps most usefully seen as having a potential for emancipation and oppression, domestication and transformation,

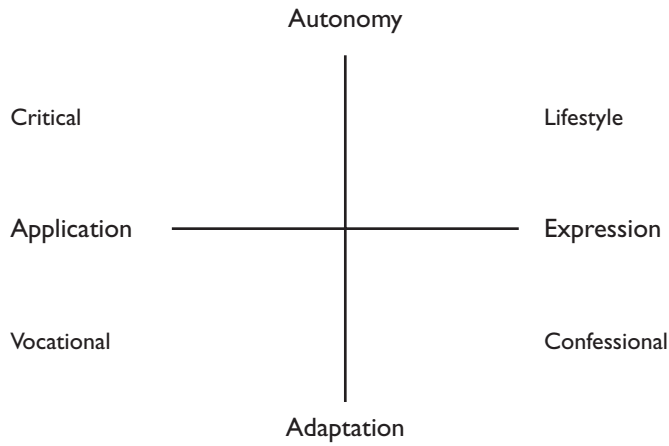

Figure 14.1 A 'map' of experiential learning in the social practices of postmodernity.

where at any one time and according to context, both tendencies can be present and in conflict with one another. Accordingly, it offers a contestable and ambiguous terrain where different socio-economic and cultural assumptions and strategies can be differentially articulated. As a field of tension, it can be exploited by different groups, each emphasising certain dimensions over others.

Experiential learning can, for example, be deployed as a pedagogical strategy both in a disciplines-based curriculum and within a competences-based curriculum. Equally, it can be deployed as part of a continued questioning of and resistance to the forms of power that situate us as subjects. But at the same time, even here, experiential teaming can function as both a more effective means of disciplining the 'whole' subject rather than simply the reasoning part and as a strategy to subvert the dominance of an oppressive universalistic reason by giving 'voice' to difference. What this implies, then, is that experience is always a site of struggle, a terrain where the meaning and significance of the experience to be cultivated in learning contexts is fought over. Central to this struggle is the reconfiguration of emancipation and oppression in the postmodern moment. The schema or 'map' of experiential learning shown in Figure 14.1 attempts to depict the various possibilities. It is structured around two continua: Autonomy–Adaptation and Expression–Application. The resulting four quadrants represent four discursive/material practices, here referred to as Lifestyle, Confessional, Vocational and Critical. In effect, what is being depicted here is that application/expression/autonomy/adaptation are the continua around which the pedagogy of experiential learning is differentially structured within different discursive/material practices. What these signify will differ relatively to the different discursive practices and the pedagogic and epistemological relationships within each practice. The schema enables an exploration of the contexts and meanings of

experience, and hence the location of learning from experience, both between and within the quadrants.

Lifestyle practices

Today lifestyle practices have significant implications for a reconfiguring of the theory and practice of adult education. In the postmodern, the educational is recast as the cultivation of desire through experience, both conditional upon and responsive to contemporary socio-economic and cultural fragmentation. Learning does not simplistically derive from experience; rather, experience and learning are mutually positioned in an interactive dynamic. Learning becomes the experience gained through consumption and novelty, which then produces new experience. Consequently, the boundaries defining 'acceptable' learning break down – in lifestyle practices learning can be found anywhere in a multiplicity of sites of learning. The predominant concern is with an ever-changing identity through the consumption of experience and of a learning stance towards life as a means of expressing identity. Pedagogically, experiential learning, sitting comfortably within the postmodern, gains an increasingly privileged place as the means by which desire is cultivated and identity formed.

Lifestyle practices centre on the achievement of autonomy through individuality and self-expression, particularly in taste and sense of style. Within a general stylisation of life, the mark of autonomy is a stylistic self-consciousness inscribed in the body, in clothes, in ways of speaking, in leisure pursuits, in holidays and the like. A lifestyle is adopted and cultivated but in a reflexive and self-referential way – lifestyle is never practised 'blindly' and un-self-consciously.

Lifestyle practices are firmly located within the play of difference that is characteristic of consumer culture. Unlike the mass consumption of modernity, consumption in the postmodern is based on choice as difference and difference as choice. In the postmodern, a lifestyle revolves around difference, the acquisition of the distinctive and the different within a signifying culture (Featherstone 1991) that summons up dreams, desires and fantasies in developing a life-project of self and where there is a continual construction (and reconstruction) of identity and a trying-on of relationships.

Empowerment through autonomy and self-actualisation (self-expression) becomes important but assumes a range of very different meanings, from the crumbling of hierarchy in new post-Fordist management to social and cultural empowerment in new social movements, e.g. the women's movement and movements for ethnic and sexual awareness. One effect of this is that intellectuals, and indeed educators, are forced to assume the role of commentators and interpreters rather than legislators and 'enlightened' pedagogues. Educational practitioners, rather than being the source/producers of knowledge/taste, become facilitators helping to interpret everybody's knowledge and helping to open up possibilities for further experience. They become part of the 'culture' industry, vendors in the educational hypermarket. In a reversal of modernist education, the consumer

(the learner) rather than the producer (educator) is articulated as having greater significance and power.

On the other hand, consumerism knows no boundaries nor does it respect existing markers. Image, style and design take over from modernist metanarratives in conferring meaning. The 'culture' industry, advertising and the media both 'educate' the consumer and, through the bombardment of images with which people must experientially identify and interpret, make consumption necessary and compulsive.

It is the promotion of lifestyle practices – the obligation to shape a life through choices in a world of self-referenced objects and images – that influences the self in postmodernity. Autonomy becomes a matter of expressing identity through the consumption of signifying choices. The project of self, rather than being unidirectional and governed by instrumental rationality, becomes one of the possession of desired goods and the pursuit of a lifestyle governed by the incitement of desire. Pleasure, once the enemy, is now considered indispensable. Rather than life being seen as a search for coherent and lasting meaning, it is construed as the pleasure of experiencing – from the immersion in images, from the flow of images in consumption and leisure and their combination in postmodern pursuits such as shopping. Here, experiences are valued as experiences – for example, one does not shop for the sake of satisfying 'real' needs (since needs are defined by the demands of lifestyle practices, there are no 'real' or 'underlying' needs), let alone for the utility of the goods purchased. When consumption is a matter of consuming signs, it is the experience itself that counts, i.e. that signifies and defines.

Selves become constructed through 'media-ted' experience. Consumption requires each individual to choose from a variety of products in response to a repertoire of wants that may be shaped and legitimised by advertising but must be experienced and justified as personal desires. However constrained by external or internal factors, economic or psychological, the postmodern self is required to construct a life through the exercise of choice amongst alternatives. Every aspect of life, like every commodity, is imbued with a self-referential meaning; every choice we make is an emblem of our identity, a mark of our individuality; each is a message to ourselves and others as to the sort of person we are; each casts back a glow illuminating the self who consumes.

Lifestyle is not confined to any one particular social or age group, nor is it purely a matter of economic determination. Economic capital is important but so too is cultural capital – both play a part in influencing the capacity of individuals to be more or less active in their exercise of lifestyle choices. The social group that is most readily associated with lifestyle practices, the so-called new middle class, demonstrates this. Their involvement in lifestyle practices cannot be explained simply as a function of income or ideology. I will argue rather that the key to their postmodern sensibility is the adoption of a learning mode towards life. Their habitus – their unconscious dispositions, classificatory schemes, taken-for-granted preferences – is evident in their sense of the appropriateness and validity of their taste for cultural goods and practices. They are the bearers of explicit notions of

lifelong learning which are integral to their sensibility, values, assumptions and the aspirations of their cultural stance. They adopt a learning mode towards life – the conscious and reflexive education of self in the field of taste and style. They express their opposition to the established order by giving priority to experience as the mediator through which meaning is constructed, and to the demand for new experiences and new meanings. Thus, an emphasis is given to experiential learning which, for them, is invested with the significance of autonomy and self-expression in the pursuit of lifestyle practices. Coupled with this is a general tendency towards the relativisation of knowledge with knowledges generated from a number of local sources, including everyday life. Here, experience is not pre-given but constantly reconstructed. Meaning is constructed through experience rather than simply being conveyed by it. Experiential learning is established as a legitimate ground for education but with contestation over its meaning and significance.

Within lifestyle practices, the relationship between experience, knowledge and pedagogy is articulated in a particular way. Experience is something to get immersed in, valued as a means of defining a lifestyle rather than something whose value lies in its potential for knowledge. It is consumed because it signifies in relation to a lifestyle. Knowledge is multiple, based on multiple realities and the multiplicity of experience. It is neither canonical nor hierarchical. There is no notion of intrinsically 'worthwhile' knowledge other than in terms of taste and style. Pedagogy does not seek to transmit a canon of knowledge or a single ordered view of the world. It is not concerned with Enlightenment 'messages'. Given this, therefore, the learner is positioned within a multiplicity of experience whose meanings are located within a consumerist market-led culture. Experience is the means by which a lifestyle is created and 're-created'.

In one sense, therefore, learners are positioned by lifestyle practices as active subjects, creating themselves, free from constraining traditions and ideologies. But they are also positioned as passive subjects, since lifestyle is socially defined, culturally legitimised, economically influenced and prey to consumerism and media-generated images. Flexible accumulation and the techno-scientific revolution have changed processes of production and reduced the need for manual work (hence creating active 'power-ful' subjects) but at the same time have invaded people's lives with a flood of commodities, seductive images and signifying rivalries. All of this can be seen as liberating but also as a seduction that constitutes a new form of social control and which, in the process, creates 'subjectified' power-less subjects. Furthermore, seduction goes hand-in-hand with repression (Bauman 1992), as those who are excluded from the realms of choice yet who are nonetheless affected by the global reach of consumer society find themselves increasingly subjected to the repression of poverty and marginalisation.

Vocational practices

Postmodernity is a global condition where both dispersal and fragmentation coexist. Flexible accumulation and post-Fordism bring more volatile labour

markets, faster switches from one product to another, niche marketing and a greater consumer orientation. Post-Fordism involves changes in production and consumption – from mass-production, mass-market, machine-paced systems to the production of specialist, niche and luxury goods, and to production systems based on the application of information technology (IT). These fundamental changes in production – 'flexible specialisation' – have reduced the need for manual work and led to the development of a new form of social labour. At the same time, contemporary education is characterised by its increasing transformation into a market form, a transformation which is best understood as a postmodern phenomenon. Education appears to gain increasing autonomy from central and local government control but also loses autonomy through the emphasis on privatisation, marketisation and vocationalism. As nonmarket relations are redefined according to the logic of the market, education, unable to insulate itself from these developments, assumes a market/consumer orientation.

Vocational practices are constructed through the market form where multiskilling and personal motivation are privileged. Here, learning signifies 'application', with pedagogy structured around problem solving and project-based activities. The learner is required to be highly motivated in the direction of a personal change linked to 'reading' the market and continually adapting to the needs of the socio-economic environment. This reflects the post-Fordist organisation of work, marked by informal and networked social relations and flat/lateral hierarchies. Vocationalist discourse, therefore, personalises economic competitiveness by stressing the need for motivation and for becoming skilled. At the same time, it offers a formula for economic recovery, based on a reconfiguration of human capital theory, and a metonymic of blame ('If only you were trained and motivated, we wouldn't be where we are today!' – Ball 1993: 74). Education is cast as turning out the product which industry consumes. Changes in industry and changes in the processes of schooling go hand in hand, with educational institutions being expected to produce enterprising, consumption-oriented individuals with the attitudes and competencies, the flexibility and predisposition to change appropriate to the post-Fordist economy and ready to take their place in the market.

Vocationalism then is designed to produce flexible competencies and a predisposition to change. This is allied to a critique of the dominant liberal-humanist academic curriculum and draws upon some aspects of progressivist theories of motivation and learning (process-orientation, cooperation, problem solving, open-ended investigation). It argues, first, that the 'real' world (by which is meant the world of post-Fordism and flexible specialisation) is not subsumable under academic subject divisions, and hence the academic curriculum provides an 'irrelevant' education and preparation for this world, and second, that the didacticism and teacher-centredness of this curriculum does not provide the appropriate attitudes and capabilities. These curricular changes, intended to enhance learning experiences and increase motivation, are implicated with the technological changes affecting the labour process and modes of production.

New attitudes and competences are required from employees, and hence the relationship between pedagogy, knowledge and the labour process changes. What is foregrounded is the need for flexibility and continuous learning, social skills and flexible competences, rather than subject-based knowledge.

As a pedagogy, experiential learning has the capacity to unsettle the established order and hence has a transformative potential. In vocational practices, experiential learning holds out the promise of breaking the strangle-hold of a selective and elitist higher education. It challenges the notion that knowledge is only to be found within educational institutions and through a subject-based curriculum. It challenges also the prerogative of self-selecting and unaccountable academic professionals in controlling and defining what is to count as knowledge. Experiential learning, therefore, becomes the key to broadening access to higher education and to 'democratising' the curriculum.

At the same time, however, vocationalist pedagogy creates a context where learning means proceeding to the correct answer in the most efficient way. Here, adaptation and application have no room for experimentation, open-endedness or unforeseen outcomes. Hence, the experience and knowledge of learners and knowledge arising from it becomes a mere device, a means for best achieving a pre-defined end. Learners are manipulated pedagogically to access already-existing forms of knowledge either in the form of disciplines or, more usually, in the form of sets of behavioural objectives. Learner experience appears to be valued, but its use is instrumental, selective and at best illustrative. It is only accorded significance if it contributes to the learning of the pre-defined knowledge or skills; if not, it is discounted. This is then a 'technicised' pedagogy, where experience has no inherent value but functions merely as a tool for enhancing motivation. Experience becomes assimilated to behavioural competences.

Experiential learning is itself a pedagogy constructed through vocational practices; thus, it is both socially constructed and contested. Different social groups give it their own meanings, represent it in different ways. Thus, as we have seen, the new middle class invest it with a signification of autonomy and expression. For those groups associated with the New Right, it means adaptation to a pre-defined world and learning applicable and relevant to that world. Experience represents relevance, usefulness, self-discipline and market effectiveness. Paradoxically, however, and this is where there are resonances with contemporary lifestyle practices, experiential learning is the means by which the cultural and educational establishment can be resisted and subverted – for example, through challenging the power of the academy to define 'worthwhile' knowledge and by presenting alternatives to curricula based on disciplinary knowledge. Of course, this challenge has to be related to rapid economic and social change – flexible capital accumulation, specialisation, the rise of core and periphery workforces coupled with the growth of an underclass, fear of inflation and the loss of confidence in government's ability to manage the economy. The resulting uncertainty and breakdown of established patterns of work and life lead to the possibility of deviance, delinquency and disorder.

For government, instability must be managed either directly through the law and order system or indirectly through education. One way of managing instability through education is by normalising discipline and, more importantly, self-discipline. In the post-compulsory sector, this poses some difficulty since students are there by choice. Yet the need for self-discipline is not diminished nor is self-discipline easily attained. Rather than taking control of what happens in the post-school arena, government divests itself of control – directly by giving more power to employers, indirectly by encouraging opportunities for people to learn outside educational institutions and to have it accredited outside of the educational system. Hence, young adults are 'educated' into and by the self-discipline of labour. The focus is on an employability that somehow reinvents and captures the work ethic yet does not necessarily lead to paid work. Here then, we see experiential learning circumscribed by employers' needs for particular kinds of labour and particular kinds of consumers and by government's need for a means of social control through self-discipline.

Thus, a pedagogy of experiential learning can also have a domesticating potential. In vocational practices, experiential learning can be the means to control change – at the same time that it unsettles the established order, it also functions to ensure that the unsettling remains within established parameters of social order. Thus, for example, assessment and accreditation procedures ensure that only certain forms of experience are valued. Furthermore, the regulation of experience is taken out of the control of educational practitioners and placed instead in centrally formulated anticipated outcomes. Within vocational practices, what we see happening is the commodification of experiences – experience becomes a commodity to be exchanged in the marketplace of educational credit.

In vocational practices the relationship between experience, knowledge and pedagogy is articulated in such a way that experience functions to provide a personal motivation and a feet-on-the-ground pragmatism. Learning becomes a matter of applying knowledge where knowledge itself is narrowly defined, a heuristic, 'factual' knowledge which enables the learner to adapt to a taken-for-granted, pre-defined 'real world'. Pedagogy is the link between personal motivation and the learning of pre-defined outcomes in the form of adaptive skills. In this context, the learner is positioned as a subject in need of skills in the post-Fordist marketplace. Skills are empowering – through them one becomes more competent and 'employable'. Learning is a matter of applying what is learnt so that one can become better adapted and adaptable to the perceived needs of the economy. Experiential learning is open and closed in the same moment.

Confessional practices

'Selves' are not natural givens in the world and to have knowledge of them is not simply a matter of discovering or uncovering their reality. Conceptions of the self have significatory power, and selves are constructed through these conceptions and their associated discursive practices. A pastoral power which works by

enabling people to actively and committedly participate in disciplinary regimes seems to have a contemporary significance. In effect, people are educated to govern themselves through bringing their inner lives into the domain of power. Pastoral power works, not through imposition or coercion but through people investing their identity, subjectivity and desires with those ascribed to them through certain 'knowledgeable' or expert discourses.

In this process, people's self-regulating capacities become allied with social and economic objectives. To know one's inner self is for that inner self to be known, and being known becomes the condition for a more effective regulation in the service of contemporary political rationalities which foreground the individual and the market. The private, in effect, becomes public and becomes a support for enterprise culture and the market. In other words, to realise oneself, to find out the truth about oneself, to accept responsibility for oneself, becomes both personally desirable and economically functional.

Contemporary governmentality works in terms of the affective and effective governing of persons where positioning and investment in a subject position is a crucial factor. What is involved here is a 'bringing forth of one's self' as an object of knowledge through a pedagogy which functions to open up for intervention those aspects of a person which have hitherto remained unspoken. The self is constituted as an object of knowledge through discovering the 'truth' about itself. However, in confessing, subjects have already accepted the legitimacy and truth of confessional practices and the particular meanings and investments that these invoke. Adults, for example, accept themselves as 'learners' in need of 'learning' provided by professional adult educators for their future development. In doing so, they align their subjectivities with these educational discourses and meanings they invoke. They become enfolded within a discursive matrix of practices which constitute their felt needs and paths of self-development.

In contemporary society externally imposed discipline gives way to the self-discipline of an autonomous subjectivity. With confession, the emphasis is on self-improvement, self-development and self-regulation. It displaces canonical knowledge by valorising individual experience but, at the same time, rather than displacing power as such, it extends the range of pastoral power embedded in the confessional regime of truth and self-knowledge. Confessional practices therefore create productive and empowered subjects who are, however, already governed (by themselves). Thus, externally imposed discipline and regulation is not required. There is regulation through self-regulation, discipline through self-discipline, a process which is pleasurable and even empowering, but only within a matrix from which power is never absent (Usher and Edwards 1995).

In confessional practices, psychotherapeutic expertise in a variety of forms from the academic to the 'popular' plays a key role in presenting a morality of freedom, fulfilment and empowerment. It offers the means by which the regulation of selves by others and by the self is made consonant with the current situation. Thus, in confessional practices, autonomy becomes adaptation, an autonomy enhanced through the application of expertise. Empowerment is

psychological and individualistic. Political, social and institutional goals are realigned with individual pleasures and desires, with self-expression, the happiness and fulfilment of the self. Pedagogic practices, such as assertiveness training and educational guidance, illustrate this very clearly. They emphasise the 'liberation' of the self but only within the confines and limitations of understood and unchallenged contexts and systems.

Knowledge/expertise of the self stimulates subjectivity, promotes self-knowledge and seeks to maximise capacities. Persons are cast as active citizens, ardent consumers, enthusiastic employees and loving parents – and all of this as if they were seeking to realise their own most fundamental desires and innermost needs. At the same time, however, by enhancing subjectivity (creating active subjects), subjectivity is connected to power by means of new languages (psychotherapeutic expertise) for speaking about subjectivity. However, confessional practices are not recognised as powerful because they are cloaked in an esoteric yet seemingly objective expertise and a humanistic discourse of helping and empowerment. Thus, an active, autonomous and productive subjectivity is brought forth in confessional practices even as it remains subject to the power/knowledge formations which bring forth this form of subjectivity and invest it with significance.

In confessional practices, the relationship between experience, knowledge and pedagogy is articulated in terms of a representation of experience as enabling access to knowledge and the innermost truths of self. Pedagogy involves the deployment of psychodynamic expertise to facilitate this process. Given this relationship, the learner is positioned to discover the meaning of his/her experience by becoming an active subject within a network of confession. The meaning of experience is bound up with finding the truth about self in order to enhance capacities and become adapted and well adjusted, but this active subject in control of self is at the same time subjectified within a network of pastoral power. Experiential learning becomes a matter of self-expression in the interests of adaptation.

Critical practices

Critical practices work through particular meanings given to autonomy and application. Autonomy in critical practices has a different signification to the autonomy of lifestyle practices. In the latter, it is oriented towards expression through the cultivation of desire and the display of difference through consumption. In the former, it is oriented towards application, which again is not the same as the 'application' of vocational practices. It is not the application of learning in the service of adaptation to the existing techno-social order but rather an application of learning in the cause of self and social transformation. It is in changing particular contexts rather than adapting to them that autonomy is ultimately to be found.

In critical practices, there is more of a recognition that meaning is discursively produced and that experience, therefore, is never simply an 'innocent' or basic

given. Experience and the way it is represented are the stakes in the struggle to find 'voice', to exercise control and power. The key question, then, becomes how representations of experience are discursively produced and how subjects both position themselves and are positioned discursively. This opens up issues of power, given that discourses serve the interests of particular groups. Thus a pedagogy that assumes experience is innocent is challenged because it must inevitably be uncritically supportive of the status quo. The refusal to accept that the representation of experience is political means that the power relations embedded in discourses and the interests of particular groups served by particular discourses remain unseen and unquestioned.

In critical practices, therefore, pedagogy becomes a political practice. Allied to this is an emphasis on the cultural, a recognition that culture is a lived ongoing process as important as the material and the economic and as much a terrain of struggle. Pedagogy is not seen as a technical matter directed to imparting a canon of knowledge but as vitally implicated in a politics of representation (how people present and understand or are presented and understood) in the cultural processes that shape the meanings and understanding of experience and the formation of identity.

The relationship between experience, knowledge and pedagogy is articulated in terms of a self-conscious questioning of the representation(s) of experience. There is an explicit recognition that experience 'signifies' and that the significations of experience are imbued with power and are influential in the shaping of identity. The relationship between experience and knowledge is not taken as either given or unproblematic, nor is it seen as purely a matter of deploying methodical will or eradicating false consciousness. There is an acknowledging of the place of desire in how people are positioning vis-à-vis their experience, the investments that tie people to particular positions and identities, and the multiple and ambiguous positioning that people find themselves in.

Critical practices have a clear and explicit transformative potential, but this resides in localised contexts and operates through the deployment of specific knowledge. In their pedagogical aspects (and in a sense they are almost exclusively pedagogic), they reject the conventional domesticating effects of pedagogy. Experiential learning becomes a strategy designed to privilege 'voice' in the service of self and social empowerment and transformation. At the same time, however, it is this very emphasis which can give critical practices a regulatory dimension. The 'critical' easily becomes a norm, a final truth which is just as heavy in its regulation as any openly oppressive discourse – as, for example, in the worst excesses of political correctness. Indeed, in some ways this regulation may be even more difficult to resist, speaking as it does in the name of empowerment and transformation. As Gore (1993) argues, critical pedagogy, whilst rhetorically opposing 'regimes of truth', can itself easily become one. She refers to this as the difference between the pedagogy argued for and the pedagogy of the argument – in the case of critical pedagogy, the former liberatory and transformative, the latter totalising and regulative.

New forms of critical practice have been associated with what some commentators have referred to as 'postmodern' social movements. They are characterised by a cultural activism and an emphasis on experience as an intense 'here and now'. Whilst seeking personal and social transformation, they do so in a non-totalising and non-teleological way and outside the comforting rationales of the grand narratives of modernity. Although pedagogic, they deploy a pedagogy of performance, often transgressive and sometimes 'outrageous' to bourgeois sensibilities. In critical practices, experience is not regarded as something that leads to knowledge but as knowledge. Knowledge, however, is in the service of action, an activity, a practice which does things.

Rethinking experience in the context of contemporary adult learning

At this point it might be useful to relate these quadrants and the practices they represent to the well-known 'villages' of experiential learning as identified originally by Weil and McGill (1989a). To some extent they are representative of the mainstream discourse of experiential learning within adult education. These 'villages' have served a useful purpose as a heuristic device for conceptualising and categorising the various forms of experiential learning and for examining the assumptions, influences and purposes within and between these forms. Indeed, the very concept of 'village' was formulated in order to avoid creating exclusive distinctions and divisions between various forms and practices of experiential learning and as a means of encouraging dialogue between them.

The exploration and development of the quadrants may help to complement and expand upon the impact of the villages. Indeed, meaningful distinctions and connections can be made between these categorisations in terms of their emphases, their dynamics and their complexity. Within the quadrants as they have been formulated here, the emphasis is as much on problematising and understanding experience in relation to different contexts and discourses as it is on focusing on the learning process contingent on experience. This wider emphasis may serve to avoid the danger of 'locking onto' a particular village because of its association with a specific ideological tradition or institutionalised educational practice. Equally, it may make it less likely that existing social relations are left unquestioned within a preoccupation with experiential techniques and methods.

The significance of the interrelationship of application/expression/autonomy/adaptation within and between the different quadrants is that it allows greater fluidity in representing the dynamic interconnections between experience, knowledge and pedagogy in relation to different and changing discursive practices. By this means, it is possible to move away from the tendency of the villages concept to be overdescriptive and overschematic and to counter the very real possibility of reifying the different villages. It also allows a more complex and flexible understanding of experience and experiential learning, which can take account of context, theory and practice, enabling a move from what

Wildemeersch (1992: 25) calls an essentially 'narrative type of conversation' to a more challenging 'discursive type of conversation' about education and learning. This can help show the way towards the paradigm shift aspired to by Weil and McGill which looks to 'push the boundaries of our visions and our villages to acknowledge the inter-connectedness of the whole' (Weil and McGill 1989b: 269). In this wider context, we can better understand the potential within the various discursive practices for experiential learning to be both domesticating and transformative.

I have argued that experience is not unproblematic, that it needs to be understood and interpreted in relation to differing contexts and the influence of a variety of discourses. It can function both to empower and control, to create both powerful and powerless selves. What, then, are the implications for educational practice?

In focusing on student experience, I suggest that educators need to help students to problematise and interrogate experience as much as to access and validate it. Complementary to the acknowledgement that experiential learning is a holistic process, that it is socially and culturally constructed and that it is influenced by the socio-emotional context in which it occurs (Boud et al. 1993) must be a similar understanding about the nature, construction and context of experience itself. First, educators need to be wary of basing their practice on the proposition that experiential learning involves a 'direct encounter' with experience (Weil and McGill 1989b: 248). Whereas experience can provide new and useful insights into a wide range of issues and problems and can clearly be used to access, supplement, complement, critique and challenge understandings of the world derived from disciplinary knowledge, I agree with Wildemeersch (1992: 22) that the creation of a specific 'opposition between experiential and theoretical knowledge is unfruitful and even false'.

A learning focus on experience certainly has the potential to be 'liberating' in its concern for the 'neglected learner' and its opposition to 'banking' education, in that it highlights and confers meaning on knowledge, skills and attitudes previously undervalued and motivates students to extend their learning and pursuit of knowledge. Yet it can also be domesticating, in that learners can become unreflexive prisoners of their experience or have their experiences colonised and reduced, on the one hand, by oppressive educational institutions and, on the other hand, by totalising 'radical' discourses. Such approaches run the risk of selling learners short on culturally valued knowledge and, at worst, lock them into second-best knowledge and, through uncritical and unrigorous approaches to recognising and accrediting prior learning from experience, even into second-best qualifications. At the same time, by continuing to see experience as the 'raw material' of knowledge, we are unable to create situations where we can examine how, as selves, we move back and forth between our own particular stories through which we construct our identities and the social production that is knowledge. In the process, we fail to challenge dominant knowledge taxonomies and the relations of power in which they are implicated.

Educators need to move beyond practice based on overly simplistic observations that 'you can always learn from experience' etc. and look more carefully at the necessary preconditions for experiential learning. Part of this might involve, rather than an unsophisticated, untheorised and potentially threatening delving into student experience, working towards building the necessary psychological climate and infrastructure from which experience can both be explored and problematised. This might mean creating sufficient student security and self-confidence, 'the right emotional tone under which authentic discourse can occur' (Brookfield 1993: 27), and at least an outline theoretical framework from which to examine and understand student experience. It might mean acknowledging more explicitly, honestly and sensitively the possibility of limiting or oppressive experience – for example, the experience of personal unemployment, bereavement or loss – as well as the difficulties involved in transferring learning from one experiential and cultural context to another – for example, the problematic connection between domestic management skills and knowledge and those in a more regulated, hierarchical and gendered workplace (Butler 1993).

A more productive approach to knowledge might be to engage in the process of 're-view' (Usher 1992; Brookfield 1993), exploring how and why we theorise experience and critically examining the influence on experience of contexts, cultures and discourses in the past and for the future. Such a procedure avoids the pitfalls of a naïve and even potentially manipulative pedagogical approach to learner experience where educator theories are present but unacknowledged and learner experience is foregrounded but inadequately framed or contextualised.

Equally, it may be necessary to reformulate Weil and McGill's location of experience in individuals who give personal meaning to different ways of knowing so that more account can be taken of selves as meaning-takers as well as meaning-givers. With this in mind, in reconfiguring a pedagogy of experiential learning, it may be insufficient to rely exclusively either on psychologistic models to uncover, diagnose, categorise or sequence individual experience or on the artificial creation of shared experience through gaming, role-play and simulations. An alternative approach to experiential learning might be, rather, to attempt to triangulate experience through an investigation of personal meanings alongside the meanings of engaged others and the presence and influence of different contexts and different discourses. Here, the quadrants could themselves function as a useful heuristic device. This might help learners to see their experience more as 'text' than as 'raw material', thus leaving open the possibility of a variety of interpretations and assessments of experience, including the possibility that experiential learning might be both 'liberating' and 'domesticating', according to its contextual and discursive location.

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Chapter 15

‘Normal learning problems’ in youth

In the context of underlying cultural convictions

Thomas Ziehe

Ever since the publication of his dissertation Puberty and Narcissism *(in German) in 1975, Thomas Ziehe, now Emeritus Professor at Hanover University, has been well known in Germany and Scandinavia for his insights and interpretations of youth psychology, youth culture and youth education. In 1982 he published, together with Herbert Stubenrauch, the important book,* Pleading for Unusual Learning *(in German), which broke with prevailing understandings and introduced a new view on youth and education in modern society. Since then, Ziehe has produced a continuous flow of papers and articles with an almost seismographic empathy following the changes and developments in the thinking, feeling, learning, understandings and behaviour of teenagers and suggesting corresponding changes in teaching and schooling. In the following chapter, which compiles three of his later papers in German, Ziehe explains his understanding of the basic forces which today are directing learning, development and culture in youth.*

Underlying convictions as symbolic context of learning styles in youth

School research and youth research usually work without any integration. This is a bit curious because the everyday professional experiences of most teachers are profoundly influenced by the fact that the behaviour of their students has changed in many ways. The appearances and consequences of the cultural break in school traditions have only gradually been realised, and what is focused on is then usually how the fascination of youth cultures influences the *habitus* of the students.

In my work I choose another approach. My main interest is to reconstruct theoretically the systems of knowledge and rules as the basic symbolic structures that underlie the socialisation of individuals. From the point of view of cultural theory, these basic structures precede any individuation. Most psychological approaches must for methodical reasons omit the level of symbolic-cultural constitution of social reality and relate directly to the internal mental world of the individuals they examine: their motives, attitudes and learning styles. Cultural theory, on the other hand, is occupied with the symbolic conditions of the origin and basic

structures of which the single individual has already prepared and which *have always culturally pre-coded* the most intimate relationship of the individual with him- or herself.

When I try to interpret the appearances and problems of learning and school, I use an analytic procedure with three steps which, according to my approach, proceed as follows:

- The investigated school processes should be contextualised with reference to how they are experienced in light of the meaning horizons of the students. This will be a *subject-oriented contextualisation*.
- However, the meaning structures of the students, their forms of experience, their social and emotional worlds and their self-thematisation cannot just be taken at the words, but must – as any other hermeneutic activity – be interpreted by the social scientist (although most conventional survey inquiry desists from this). A second level of interpretation must therefore be a *meaning structure-oriented contextualisation*, in which latent meaning content, which the involved actors do not command intentionally, is also taken into consideration.
- The third level of contextualisation includes a further investigation of the latent ascriptions of meaning in order to detect if it is possible to reconstruct meaning patterns and knowledge structures which, in a constitutional way, precede the meaning expressions of the individuals. This will be a *meaning system-oriented contextualisation*, which should also include the 'great' semantic changes in supra-subjective meaning patterns, cultural understandings and general social orientations.

I hope that these short references do not sound too boastful. They are intended to indicate the perspectives of my orientation. Whether and to what extent I live up to them is, after all, a question that I am unable to answer myself.

Anyway, *contextualisation in a cultural-analytical sense* is what I am dealing with. I try to connect 'learning style' and 'youth culture' as two items of investigation with special attention to available general cultural knowledge structures and rule systems. I take interest in the cultural-analytical question to the extent that changed symbolic meaning structures can be detected *on an underlying level of investigation*. These meaning structures pre-condition what we at any time consider to be 'normal' or unquestionable matters, of course. Therefore these meaning structures are general and abstract and, from a cultural-analytical point of view, they come before the empirical appearances of various youth cultures. The phenomenology of youth cultures can then be regarded as *derived consequences* of changes in the underlying symbolic structures.

Youth cultures are formed by changes in *general underlying convictions* which include a deeply based kind of 'knowledge' fostering our motives, expectations and actions in ways which we are not conscious of in everyday life.

This understanding of knowledge systems includes certain preassumptions:

- The cultural-analytical concept of knowledge excludes the question of (at least definitive) truth or validity of cultural knowledge. All the symbolic rules and systems are understood as knowledge that precedes and regulates the ways of observing and experiencing human reality. This conception of knowledge also includes what is regarded as real or considered by the construction of cognitive reality independently of the content of objective reality.
- Furthermore, knowledge is then not understood as being of an individual or subjectively internal origin, but as an elaboration of culturally available and intersubjectively shared schemes of interpretation, functioning as a kind of draft for the individually constructed stock of knowledge.
- The cultural knowledge systems form a '*grammatical' pre-structure*, not only of the cognitive epistemology, but also of the valuations, assessments and expressions of world and self-references. Emotions, wishes and motives are also based on cultural patterns concerning what, in a historically situated culture, can be accepted as expected and normal emotions, wishes and motives.
- From the cultural knowledge systems, people build their underlying convictions. They consist of routines, everyday certainties and notions of normality, which are already implied by our experiences of reality. The underlying convictions form a major part of our knowledge. They are accessible to reflection when we convert our life world participant perspectives into observer perspectives, but in 'day-to-day life' the underlying convictions form a nonconscious *implicit context of understanding*. On these nonconscious conditions, our handling of symbols and meanings is then the basis of our conscious, explicit and everyday-life-applicable knowledge.

However, such underlying symbolic structures should not be understood as a rigid and restricting girdle secondarily forced upon a (potentially authentic) individual. The structures are much more ambiguous, in the best meaning of this term. They *restrict* the range of possible symbol elaboration and meaning ascription, but they also have a *disposing* function – in a situation of action they make something topical. They offer the actors world-opening semantics and place, in any context, appropriate interpretations at their disposal.

Thus, the *change of such underlying convictions* is a change of what is typical, a change of what is not striking. If they sometimes may be actualised anyway, the reactions of the actors will be made up of expressions like 'Why, this is really quite simple!' or 'And what then is the problem?' When something is culturally obvious, one does not wonder about it (at least, not as long as one is in a participating position).

The modernisation of underlying convictions

In the social sciences, the fundamental concepts of culture, society and personality have a high value of structuring. I shall here present a change to the

underlying convictions on these three levels: (1) culture, (2) society and (3) the self. I shall do this in a strongly generalising way, i.e. abstracting from differences in environments, life circumstances and life ages and focusing on particular *analytical common features* in the heterogeneous.

The changed underlying convictions which I shall here deal with theoretically are not strongly generation-specific. They shall not immediately be fixed as characteristics of the life age of youth, as the underlying convictions change inside society as a whole. What is *generation-specific, but only in a limited way,* is the intensity and the social conventions of the approach to the changed cultural rule systems. For the young generation, they, from a developmental point of view, constitute the 'first' symbolic frames of socialisation. For the older generations, they are cultural possibilities and risks, which are already carried by biographical pre-impressions, and thus they are elaborated secondarily. Each age group must, therefore, elaborate the cultural changes and new challenges, which potentially concern all groups, by means that are specific to the generational and social groupings.

Eligibility and noneligibility of knowledge content

The kind of everyday culture, and what is regarded as matters of course, into which the young generation of today grows up is not norm-regulated, as was the case for earlier generations. Rather it is preference-related, i.e. it is oriented towards personal preferences and sensitivity. This is caused by a comprehensive detraditionalisation which we have all been through during the last thirty years. For the young that now grow up into this context, it means on the one hand an increase in liberation and more individual scope for interpretation and action, but on the other hand, this detraditionalisation for the individual causes a more demanding strain on orientation.

Individuals are today only weakly normatively directed by a general culture. The earlier fall of prestige between high culture and popular culture is today widely dehierarchirised, i.e. the importance of high culture has to a great extent become relative. Before, the *high culture* was a kind of symbolic roof of society to which people had to relate (or at least to not damage). By this, I do not indicate that a majority of the population earlier had access to the high culture. But the high culture functioned as a stock of symbols to which it was important to relate positively. In Germany, for instance, a principal speech should include a quotation from Goethe – not because most people had read Goethe, but because he could not be omitted as a symbol. This had considerable consequences for all cultural areas. I think here of the gratitude that earlier has been felt and expressed by people who had no immediate biographical access to cultural knowledge and then later through general adult education opened up to participation in such cultural processes. This moved these people to considerable gratitude – a kind of gratitude which we can hardly find today because the situation has changed radically. Now a much broader understanding of culture has broken through, and it is an individual option whether one will embark on high culture or not.

In a sort of counterbalance to this, *popular culture* at the same time changes its way of banalising people's forms of knowledge and social conventions, their habits of observation and their mentalities. Popular culture is restless and practicable, integrated in everyday life and omnipresent. What it subjectively provokes is as imperative as noise irrigation in a capital airport. The consequence is a displacement of measures and scales or a gradual permeation of changed cultural normalities.

This places all forms of production and knowledge which differ from current popular culture under a pressure for justification, especially regarding subjective standards of attraction, pleasure, excitement, exaltation, intensity or fun. Popular cultural standards function today as sharp *competitors* with high culture and educational institutions. However, the current distance to high culture is no longer caused by strong social restrictions, but rather by a question of acceptance: high culture is increasingly avoided due to entirely different habits of attention and enjoyment.

The subjective distance of most young people to the products and practices of high culture has therefore become tremendous. Even the historically strongly expanded youth education is hardly able to compensate for this. When Beethoven is mentioned, 11-year-old children think of a dog in a certain movie and only with surprise do they learn that there has also existed a composer by that name. However, the consequences of this big distance are not immediately the end of Western civilisation as it has often been claimed, but merely a general *marginalisation of high culture*. High culture is pushed back to the level of a subculture among other subcultures. The status of high culture becomes optional: those who want can embark on it, and those who do not can leave it out without any severe loss of reputation. And more and more, young people especially leave it out.

My contrasting of popular culture and high culture should not be understood as a mutually aesthetic theoretical exclusion. I do not share the cultural pessimistic idea of 'arts versus entertainment'. My approach is rather *cultural-sociological:* not a critique of the products of popular culture as such, but a critique of *everyday conventions* turning into 'pop'. This results in *subjective conclusions* about such products and forms of experience which are different from popular culture.

Positively considered, there is in this turning into 'pop' an increased measure of motivational liberty. The mode of optionality, i.e. the possibility and at the same time the necessity of choosing and deciding for one's self, has become part of everyday life, and individuals grow right from childhood into this mode. Optionality includes the possibility of choosing as well as of *not choosing*. It has become easier in everyday culture to say 'no' to any expectations from outside which are experienced as unpleasant or risky. The internal individual space of deviance from what institutions present as knowledge content has clearly expanded. And the *avoidance* of knowledge forms which are subjectively experienced as unpleasant has become a widespread everyday attitude.

Liberation and re-establishment of role patterns

In the social dimension, the symbolic meaning structures are changing the relations between society and the individual. The social integration of the individual in society changes by the process of a social detraditionalisation.

In the past era of the modern industrialised society, the normative idea of the 'individuum' expanded. But this individual had to stick to internalised norms of duty, self-discipline and emotional control. This means that the earlier social normativity enjoined the individual to conform, externally as well as internally, with the common role patterns of the class and position to which he or she belonged. In this way the strict lines of the merger of social role and personal individuality had to be followed. The exposition of individuality must be accommodated within the rules of discipline.

In contrast to this, the current modern symbolic order has much less the nature of fixed behaviour programmes. The modern rule systems are not literally to be executed, but only make a frame which can be filled up by the individual in accordance with the context and situation. This means that a higher degree of personal performance is socially left to – and at the same time enjoined on – the modern individual. Simple rule conformity is no longer enough to ensure social recognition.

In this way, a more extensive change of underlying convictions arises. Today there is room for different possibilities *inside* the scope of social roles. At the same time there are demands of individual performance *behind* the system of social roles. The modern social order has normatively become more abstract, implicit and demanding. Jürgen Habermas has characterised this change as the request of a *non-conventional ego identity*. The conventional forms of identity are breaking down – and this means that the duty-oriented dimension of identity is brought into a tension with the ego-ideal-oriented dimension. The guidance of the individual is no longer primarily directed towards the conventional dichotomy between what is forbidden and what is allowed, but towards the subjective dichotomy between what is acceptable and what is not.

Self-observation and recognition of individuals

This change in the direction of a non-conventional form of identity is the core of the much-discussed individualisation. From the point of view of social theory, individualisation does not mean absolute isolation but rather a change of the *mental self-reference*. The modern social expectations of sanity suggest that the individual, if necessary, is able to give reasons for and discuss his or her social practice. The modern mental self-reference means letting all expectations of and requests from the outside world pass through a 'subjective filter'. It is this type of self-observation which entails the individualising changes.

In this way, the mental has gotten a public space. Self-references and discussions of relations become part of everyday interaction, and these are not so much

based on conformity with the outside social order as on the current awareness of one's own incentives and existential mood.

Consequently the public sphere appears as an extension of the private. The mass media – especially through talk shows, daily soaps and the like – push the semantics of mental self-observation. From a positive point of view, the right to a self-directed private life is in this way consolidated; from a critical point of view, the forms of internal self-conflicts are sharpened. Mass media personify expressions of the outer world and thereby also continue moments of doubt into the area of everyday life.

Thus, the sharpened observation of one's own self does not immediately offer the individual any possibilities of retreat. Rather, the individual comes into a spiral of self-doubt – a diffuse kind of 'identity pain' that makes one more dependent on the recognition of others. A longing for continual recognition of self-confidence also influences the self-reference as well as the social relations to others. Everything must be considered with a view to what it 'does to me'. Identity is then primarily constituted by one's own self-images. The modern underlying conviction includes an implicit rule of action: do it so that it is in accordance with your self-images and so that you *precisely for this reason* are recognised by others.

But at the same time, of course, external compulsion, demands and exclusions are still functioning in individual life connections and limiting the individual possibilities of life management. Thus a perceptible imbalance arises between the demands of self-esteem and self-recognition on the one hand and the sharpened consciousness of lost and withheld life possibilities on the other hand. This may lead to feelings of shame and decreased self-esteem.

The uneasy identity increases action patterns that tend to lead to avoidance. The world is not so much observed through glasses which make visible the increased options. Much more, it is increased objects of avoidance and uneasiness that catch the eye. The symbolic systems of knowledge which are at the disposal of individual preferences will then be applied in ways which make the culturally increased options and spaces for deviance be experienced precisely as possibilities of not choosing and spaces of avoidance. This will typically result in motivational reticence which may sometimes be cautious and sometimes already resistant.

Shortly summarised, the changed underlying convictions lead to the following implicit leitmotifs:

- an increased space for resorting to preferred contents and increased rejection of unpleasant contents;
- a freer management of roles with an increased dependence on an ego-ideal-oriented role administration;
- a sharpened self-observation with an increased dependence on recognition from subjectively important others.

These leitmotifs are, as already stated, only generation-specific in a limited sense. Rather, they are generally distributed independently of age. But I think there

are some taperings of these leitmotifs which are totally youth specific and which cause ever-increasing problems for schools in their endeavours to cultivate learning styles.

Consequences for everyday life in youth

Orientation towards personal affairs

I have already stated that symbolic systems up till now have included normative rules about the kinds of knowledge that were relevant in relation to different social roles. In the case of the symbolic functions of the 'old school', i.e. before the break-up of former traditions, this hardly needs further explanation. The former symbolic system pre-defined the knowledge relations. And this was mirrored in the underlying convictions, cognitively and socially as well as motivationally. These pre-definitions followed on available inherent cultural conditions which both relieved and strained the educational institutions, the teachers and the students. Of course, the well-known critique of the 'old school' could here be drawn in. But the symbolic backing of the school, which existed and did not have to be created and maintained all the time, provided a supply of content horizons, social forms and subjective motives anyway.

The 'old school' as an institution relied on the functions of the existing symbolic systems. These symbolic rules made it easy for students on the cognitive level to refer to a cultural *canon*, which was propagated by the historical tradition of education and, as its core programme, had the meeting and opposition with the cultural artefacts. 'Culture' in this connection implies an acquaintance with the various horizons of life philosophy, especially as they were valued by the differentiated branches of high culture.

However, such a symbolic pre-definition worked not only in the cognitive content dimension but also in the social normative dimension. To access the cultural artefacts also implied to meet the institutionalised *aura* of the school, including the hierarchy of generations and the demand of serious 'adult' knowledge. Of course, the experience of this condensed and socially exacting atmosphere included elements of empathy as well as anxiety. But it also produced intensive identifications, even when there is a demarcation from school itself.

Finally, the former symbolic system also pre-stamped ego-ideal images which imposed a positive attitude towards education. The earlier *ascetic* patterns of self-images included encumbrances of self-discipline as well as the potential experiences of pride, which projectively accompanied the efforts of the personal culturing processes: empathetically, it was part of the content of the ego-ideal to culturally become an adult.

Until now, we have been through a huge neutralisation of and defascination with the symbolic system elements of *canon*, *aura* and *asceticism*. The former prefiguration does not work any more. The knowledge references are hardly culturally pre-defined but – at least from the point of view of students and youth – they

are individually liberated. The idea of education is no more a strain, but at the same time the former railing of orientation, evaluation and motivation has also disappeared.

The everyday world that surrounds young people today has merged with popular culture to an extent which makes it almost impossible to recognise. Pedestrian precincts, H&M stores, cell phones, text-messaging, hip-hop music, body piercing, daily soaps, MTV and MP3 players are all omnipresent as they are integrated in everyday life, and insistently present as they are absolutely customary. The socialising environment consists of a *merger of everyday life and popular culture*. This allows the young people to keep a distance and when they want it, in any situation, to enter into a space which operates parallel to the space of parents and institutions.

Popular culture as an all-embracing environment allows that one can join an almost full-time entertainment programme and constantly investigate and selectively choose from a worldwide supply of picture, music and information flows. In this situation, individuals tend to assume a position of *cultural self-supporters*. They take note of the mix of symbols, signs, interpretation patterns and ways of behaving offered by the popular culture, but merge it into their own everyday life and 'scenarios' according to their subjective preferences. They do not assume the ready-made products of the popular culture, but they apply them. From these symbolic elements, individuals piece together their own mental world.

These mental worlds should not be understood as places – they are not the local social environment. They are not (only) to be understood as reifications, but they function especially through changes in knowledge and convention styles: the personal mental worlds include the self-determination of particular practices, preferences, priorities and life approaches.

Today such personal mental worlds are forming the structures of the psychological equipment of individuals. They are no longer, as for earlier generations of youth, a recess area which with great trouble must be defended against the demands of the outside world. On the contrary, they can now be understood as the mental centre of the personal lifestyle. Thus the personal worlds are not only important as such. They also, so to speak, radiate into all life areas and give them a special colouring. Therefore, they are not simply a generally accepted parallel world, but they have become real '*leit-cultures*'. The measures of the personal worlds become scales of what is reasonable, meaningful and acceptable. And these measures from the personal worlds are practically unfiltered and then transferred to the various life areas, including the schools. By their implicit scales, they exercise a strong normative pressure, which exposes schools and teachers to intensified conflicts from the students about what can be accepted.

A certain positive effect of the *relativation of high culture* may be seen in the fact that the once so-scary content of the educational canon has decreased extremely, and as a consequence, feelings of educational shame hardly occur today. In an episode of a popular TV quiz programme, the following could be observed: a young man in his twenties could repeatedly not answer questions outside the

topics of popular culture and sport. In these cases, he said to the moderator, 'This was before my time'. Meaning that everything 'before his time' did not belong to his world – and that's that.

Informalisation of the social pattern of behaviour

A second consequence of modernisation involves the social conventions in youth. This problem is due to the fundamental informalisation of current everyday life. Strict behavioural and disciplining contexts which rigidly and emphatically formed people's internal life belong more or less to the past. A brief look at a school photo, e.g. from the 1950s, would immediately make it clear just how significant facial expressions, body language, dressing conventions and role symbols were in the details of everyday life. The social life worlds were extensively regulated. Disciplinary and role-related behavioural norms ensured the detailed regulation of human interaction and the internal psychological self-observation. The former rule systems also included a clear discrimination between social territories of validity. This especially meant being able to separate between the private and the public spheres, and not to confuse external symbolic systems with internal imagination. Such distinctions between what is 'internal' and 'external' functioned right down to the micro social details of behavioural styles and self-images.

Today this seems like a long time ago. Now the phenomena of abolition of territories of validity and the repeal of self-withdrawal have become extraordinary to the extent that the classical modern diagnosis of 'nervousness' simply appears as an understatement. It is no longer about a temporary loosening or postponement of the rule systems during puberty, but about changes of the *total social habitus*. The everyday life world is characterised by delimitations, confusions and excesses, which have become the state of affairs. Of course, like before, there are institutional and private territories in which things are different, but rather they have the nature of islands in an ocean of obvious informalisation.

Thus, when children reach the age of puberty, they do not experience their developmentally conditioned desire for excesses in contrast to the social world of adults, but at most as intensified variations of what is already happening. One only needs to accompany thirty 14-year-olds on a school excursion and, for instance, join the common supper at the youth hostel – impulsive, expansive, unconcentrated behaviour and excessive dropping out of any kind of regulation have become the norm. Everyday behaviour has, just to point out two characteristics, become informalised and unstructured. And it expands in two ways: it expands outwards, i.e. it is 'transferred' almost unfiltered from the private into the institutions, and it expands inwards, i.e. the informalisation and lack of structure are also dominating the internal personal conditions.

In the classroom, for instance, the individual 'edginess' in relation to an incalculable interacting mixture of official teaching on the surface and quite different peripheral happenings, which constantly take place, can only be partially settled

even by very experienced teachers and only with extreme difficulty and exertion. As to institution-related behaviour, young people have considerable problems with respect to rules, time structures and agreements. This can also be seen as part of the lack of structure, i.e. as a kind of behaviour which usually in no way is personally directed towards the teacher, but just is 'something that happens' for the students in question.

Likewise, the changed modes of individual attention are touched by informalisation and lack of structure. Particularly, attention takes on quicker and less concentrated forms. This acceleration of attention implies a habituation to fragmentation, segmentation, interruptions, dissolving and huddling together of moments, and at the same time an inclination to sudden reversals into boredom and loathing. Subjectively, the mode of sliding and jumping is preferred, whereas modes of attention of a slower nature or a linear structure are refused.

Subjectivation of motivation

A third phenomenon of the cultural modernisation is about the relation to the self, the personal internal world and its motives. It seems to involve a changed quality of self-observation. The individual cannot avoid a more accurate and isolated observation of him- or herself, as someone also different from and unlike 'society'. The classic questions 'Who am I?' and 'What do I want?' in some ways have become more psychological and part of everyday life. Niklas Luhmann once said about this that the internal lighting has been switched on. Parts of what was earlier professional knowledge of psychology and social science have been included in everyday knowledge. Such knowledge is sometimes even applied for self-description by the participants in afternoon talk shows and simulated therapy programmes. Thus, subjectivation of motivation means that the self-orientation is strongly directed towards very personal standards of valuation. The daily TV soaps are a never-ending demonstration of this urge for subjectivation. There, inside intimate friendship groups, everybody talks about everything, particularly about relational conflicts and self-observations. There is an absolute demand for psychological transparency. Through infinite talking together, everyone must, in the perspective of a pipe dream of self-insight, if possible come to know 'everything' about him- or herself and (relevant) others. This then stands in the way of routine self-delusions – otherwise the soap would lack any kind of dramaturgic tension. Only in ever-repeated loops of talk can an actor finally be convinced that he for a long time has been in love. He has not wanted to recognise it, the others have already known for a long time, and he realises it himself. Until the next internal mystery turns up ...

The pressure for introspection is not without consequences for self-valuation. There is a considerable need for criteria of an authentic, ego-directed self-valuation. At the same time the mainstream popular culture supply of images of grandiosity and perfection is both invading and importunate. Often, for the individual, unfiltered notions of grandiosity stand without any mediation by negative valuations of personal skills. The notions of grandiosity limit the psychological possibilities

of making intermediate aims of efforts and needs attainable and of coping with the lack of grandiosity of such aims. The consequences are internal conflicts of shame, a strong sensitivity to experiences of offence and disregard and permanent occupation with the precarious question of how one is then regarded 'in the eyes of others'.

To protect themselves from such risks of the self-valuation, many individuals develop mechanisms of avoidance, which in a defensive way helps them escape from the conflict. For teachers, these young people typically appear as doped, deprived or drowsing. The consequences of such avoidance strategies for the teachers mean a strong increase in professional demands, because these young students are very difficult to rouse whenever the teachers try to captivate them.

The core problem can then no more be described in the way that the individual wills something, but cannot realise it. Much more these individuals do not know themselves what they could altogether think of realising. This means that the core problem is now a nondetermination which can hardly be understood or a weakness lying right down in the basic conditions of self-direction.

I hope that it is possible in this perspective of interpretation to understand that these young people are not very inclined to 'swallow' liberal pedagogical offers of thematic participation or self-motivation in highly individual learning arrangements. For these individuals, the problem is, first of all, that they have to learn what it is to 'demonstrate a will'. It is about the acquisition of motivational competence itself. The problem is not so much about the usage of volition, but about the procurement of volition.

The need for meaning supporting structuring

I have now specified the three earlier-mentioned leitmotifs of changed underlying convictions in relation to contemporary youth, not relating to a cultural pessimistic diagnosis of decay, but to, I particularly see, the possibilities of a productive learning culture being under a pressure from strong risks:

- the larger space for recourse to preferred content and increased possibilities of not choosing 'unpleasant' content can predispose for a kind of 'self-provincialisation' which limits the horizons of the personal world;
- the more liberal development of role management can result in a problem promoting a cumulative-nervous way of behaving;
- sharpened self-observation with increased dependence on the achievement of recognition from others can, in relation to the 'will', mount into so complex premises that it becomes nearly habit to define one's self by the sum of what one will not.

I repeat: this does not mean the end of Western civilisation, but rather does mean a regrettable drain of symbolic possibilities, which have been nearby because of the liberalisation of everyday life.

An atmosphere of 'post-detraditionalisation'

However, it is possible to maintain a desirable gain of liberation in comparison with the earlier authoritarian everyday culture. But with a growing distance from the strong detraditionalisation of the 1970s, the habitus consequences of this destructuring become an important topic, also in the public discourse. In the meantime, it has become clear that a continued push for the delimiting and destructuring processes can hardly be a contemporary solution.

Also, interestingly, the young people rarely any longer express their crises about themselves in terms of wishes for liberation. Rather, they explain themselves in relation to the consequences of liberation and destructuring. Thus their identity work seems not to be centred around problems with too many strict rules and bans or too much repression. Essential wishes are much more about how to remove orientation diffusions and instability.

By 'post-detraditionalisation', I refer to a context of experience in which counterbalances of the contexts of destructuring are wanted. In this context, rules and structures of the life world are no longer felt as illegitimate constrictions in any way. Quite opposite, it is my impression that 'counterdesires' for liberation and destructuring have arisen, such as:

- counter-desires for stable relations, integration and support and community;
- counter-desires for some kind of shielding in relation to continually being observed by society and authorities, a 'quasi-romantic' secrecy and opaqueness (probably the colossal attraction of Harry Potter or movies like *Lord of the Rings* have to do with this); and
- counter-desires for normative clarity, i.e. distinct rules of orientation, security and barriers, and also for an atmosphere of nonrelativism and fixed boundaries.

Current interest in close structures

A comparison between the current youth generation and the preceding generation could somewhat abstractly be expressed as follows: earlier, an individual, after a (relatively) free childhood, at the commencement of adolescence stepped into a life age in which structures gradually became closer. Or expressed more simply: during youth, almost everything became more serious and strict with increasing age. Today, commencement of adolescence in no way means that the surrounding structures become closer. On the contrary, at the commencement of adolescence, the areas in which one can choose for oneself, make decisions and to a high degree follow one's own partiality increase considerably, i.e. structures become looser. Actually, it can be stated that in the age of adolescence today, we have to do a *double destructuring*. The reorganisation of subjectivity – the big internal psychological 'building site', so to speak – must be managed at the same time as the societal environment also becomes increasingly incalculable and unstable. The biographical timetables are no more unambiguous.

In this connection I must to some degree argue anti-cyclically, i.e. towards a *compensation* of experiences of diffusion, respective of problems due to informalisation and destructuring. I find it eminently important that young people can learn by experiences of structures.

In the much noteworthy movie *Rhythm Is It!*, it is shown how so-called problematic young people participate in an aesthetic-social project. Under the instruction of a professional choreographer, they prepare a collective dance version of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, which is finally to be performed together with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. As the movie shows, this process is both painful and pleasurable. Again and again some of the young actors at the rehearsals over several weeks reject giving up their own habits. At the beginning of each rehearsal, all the participants are requested to assume a certain start position – they must stand motionless in front of the empty wall and concentrate for a while. As could be expected, some of the young thwart this small ritual by talking and fooling around. This leads to repeated clashes and symbolic fights with the choreographer. The self-conceit of the young, according to the obvious interpretation of the choreographer, is so small that they can hardly endure any serious demand. However, he is persistent and sensible, and at the end, he is able to persuade them. After serious crises, the rehearsals finally lead to a magnificent performance.

I refer to this example here to illustrate the importance of the *setting* of learning processes. In therapeutic and social-pedagogical contexts, the setting designates the totality of rules and agreements that define and regulate the standard work conditions of a field of action. The rules of the setting fix the orders and bans and also imply the communal definitions of what is normal, agreements of objectives and meaning contexts. Thus, a setting not only has technically regulating functions, but also a supporting, meaning-generating and expressive impact. A setting can contain supporting rituals of recognition of formal and personal differences between the persons who are involved. A setting can ensure and explain specific regulations in different places (e.g. the difference between what is public and what is private). And it can contain ego-supporting borderlines and in this way promote self-reassurance, rule observance and relief of ambivalences.

In the movie *Rhythm Is It!*, precisely the regular frames are both conflict-generating and productively extensive, because they provide a provisional abolition of everyday habits – even when it is about such a modest rule as standing and concentrating in front of the wall before the start of the rehearsals. A perfect artificiality in the design of the situation 'seduces' the young people to engage in the alien situation. Not an approximation to what is already familiar, not a levelling of the difference in relation to everyday routines, but on the contrary, the experience of a small and fixed deviation from the usual is offered. Of course, teachers are not choreographers and obviously educational situations are usually not a preparation for a dance performance. But still, educational situations also contain a factor of staging. And to introduce special 'rules of the play' in various situations of educational work in order to establish new self-understanding may be both stabilising and stimulating.

A simultaneousness of weakness in decision-making and increased self-observation can lead to the unlucky consequence of connecting to an existing self-fixation. The parole of 'not-wanting' will then, so to speak, be omnipresent. A loosening of such paralysing self-fixations presupposes a distance to the immediate emotions and taking a personal interest in the topic. In this way we can develop ideals of volition or images of how one's volition could be shaped. The way to do so, as already stated, lies in the ability to create an internal distance or an imagination, which encourages one to 'try out internal possibilities'. This is about increasing an internal communication ability which could further be connected to possible abilities of symbol creation – i.e. to learn to find means of articulation in words or images of the valuing determination of our wishes.

Thus, by a loosening of the habitual self-fixations, it is possible to change the ideals of volition – the ideal images about which relations one wants to develop to one's own volition. I suppose that in this connection, an element of narcissism is inevitable. I call this the 'emotional future II'. By this I mean that to be able to realise a long-term wish – e.g. to learn to play a guitar – there must be a force to set up imaginary intermediate aims. This force is in an internal connection with the imaginative ability to make an image of how good it will feel when I 'have learnt' to play the guitar (future II). The anticipation of this condition of pride and self-satisfaction is nothing but the ability to create an intensive expectancy which is resistant to intermediate frustrations. Between the needs of pride, the stable expectancy and the extension of ego-possibilities, in my opinion, there is a narrow connection. But the extension of ego-possibilities is nothing but an extension of one's own horizon of motivation: one becomes more imaginative concerning how and what one is able to will.

Close structures cannot disregard the load of openness, but make it easier to carry. Anyway, an establishment and a valuing attention of settings would be a kind of counter-attention which could be able to completely relieve the diffusing consequences of the destructuring, informalisation and subjectivation.

Chapter 16

A social theory of learning

Etienne Wenger

American Etienne Wenger was born in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. He taught for three years in Hong Kong and then studied computer science and artificial intelligence in Switzerland and the US. As a researcher at the Institute for Research on Learning in Palo Alto, California, he co-authored with Jean Lave the epoch-making book Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, which was published in 1991. This book also launched the concept of "communities of practice" as the environment of important learning, a term that Wenger cemented in 1998 and elaborated further in his book* Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. The following chapter consists of the more programmatic part of the introduction to that book and a note in which Wenger gives an account of his understanding of other important approaches to learning. It should be mentioned that Wenger later also introduced the concept of 'landscapes of practice' as a broader frame for learning capability.*

Introduction

Our institutions, to the extent that they address issues of learning explicitly, are largely based on the assumption that learning is an individual process, that it has a beginning and an end, that it is best separated from the rest of our activities, and that it is the result of teaching. Hence we arrange classrooms where students – free from the distractions of their participation in the outside world – can pay attention to a teacher or focus on exercises. We design computer-based training programs that walk students through individualized sessions covering reams of information and drill practice. To assess learning, we use tests with which students struggle in one-on-one combat, where knowledge must be demonstrated out of context, and where collaborating is considered cheating. As a result, much of our institutionalized teaching and training is perceived by would-be learners as irrelevant, and most of us come out of this treatment feeling that learning is boring and arduous, and that we are not really cut out for it.

So, what if we adopted a different perspective, one that placed learning in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world? What if we assumed that learning is as much a part of our human nature as eating or sleeping, that it is both life-sustaining and inevitable, and that – given a chance – we are quite

good at it? And what if, in addition, we assumed that learning is, in its essence, a fundamentally social phenomenon, reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing? What kind of understanding would such a perspective yield on how learning takes place and on what is required to support it? In this chapter, I will try to develop such a perspective.

A conceptual perspective: theory and practice

There are many different kinds of learning theory. Each emphasizes different aspects of learning, and each is therefore useful for different purposes. To some extent these differences in emphasis reflect a deliberate focus on a slice of the multidimensional problem of learning, and to some extent they reflect more fundamental differences in assumptions about the nature of knowledge, knowing, and knowers, and consequently about what matters in learning. (For those who are interested, a number of such theories with a brief description of their focus are listed in a note at the end of this chapter.)

The kind of social theory of learning I propose is not a replacement for other theories of learning that address different aspects of the problem. But it does have its own set of assumptions and its own focus. Within this context, it does constitute a coherent level of analysis; it does yield a conceptual framework from which to derive a consistent set of general principles and recommendations for understanding and enabling learning.

My assumptions as to what matters about learning and as to the nature of knowledge, knowing, and knowers can be succinctly summarized as follows. I start with four premises:

- We are social beings. Far from being trivially true, this fact is a central aspect of learning.
- Knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises such as singing in tune, discovering scientific facts, fixing machines, writing poetry, being convivial, growing up as a boy or a girl, and so forth.
- Knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprises, that is, of active engagement in the world.
- Meaning – our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful – is ultimately what learning is to produce.

As a reflection of these assumptions, the primary focus of this theory is on learning as social participation. Participation here refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities. Participating in a playground clique or in a work team, for instance, is both a kind of action and a form of belonging. Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do.

Figure 16.1 Components of a social theory of learning: an initial inventory.

A social theory of learning must therefore integrate the components necessary to characterize social participation as a process of learning and of knowing. These components, shown in Figure 16.1, include the following:

- *meaning:* a way of talking about our (changing) ability – individually and collectively – to experience our life and the world as meaningful;
- *practice:* a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action;
- *community:* a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence;
- *identity:* a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities.

Clearly, these elements are deeply interconnected and mutually defining. In fact, looking at Figure 16.1, you could switch any of the four peripheral components with learning, place it in the center as the primary focus, and the figure would still make sense.

Therefore, when I use the concept of "community of practice" in the title of the book, I really use it as a point of entry into a broader conceptual framework of which it is a constitutive element. The analytical power of the concept lies

precisely in that it integrates the components of Figure 16.1 while referring to a familiar experience.

Communities of practice are everywhere

We all belong to communities of practice. At home, at work, at school, in our hobbies – we belong to several communities of practice at any given time. And the communities of practice to which we belong change over the course of our lives. In fact, communities of practice are everywhere.

Families struggle to establish a habitable way of life. They develop their own practices, routines, rituals, artifacts, symbols, conventions, stories, and histories. Family members hate each other and they love each other; they agree and they disagree. They do what it takes to keep going. Even when families fall apart, members create ways of dealing with each other. Surviving together is an important enterprise, whether surviving consists of the search for food and shelter or of the quest for a viable identity.

Workers organize their lives with their immediate colleagues and customers to get their jobs done. In doing so, they develop or preserve a sense of themselves they can live with, have some fun, and fulfill the requirements of their employers and clients. No matter what their official job description may be, they create a practice to do what needs to be done. Although workers may be contractually employed by a large institution, in day-to-day practice they work with – and, in a sense, for – a much smaller set of people and communities.

Students go to school and, as they come together to deal in their own fashion with the agenda of the imposing institution and the unsettling mysteries of youth, communities of practice sprout everywhere – in the classroom as well as on the playground, officially or in the cracks. And in spite of curriculum, discipline, and exhortation, the learning that is most personally transformative turns out to be the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice.

In garages, bands rehearse the same songs for yet another wedding gig. In attics, ham radio enthusiasts become part of worldwide clusters of communicators. In the back rooms of churches, recovering alcoholics go to their weekly meetings to find the courage to remain sober. In laboratories, scientists correspond with colleagues, near and far, in order to advance their inquiries. Across a worldwide web of computers, people congregate in virtual spaces and develop shared ways of pursuing their common interests. In offices, computer users count on each other to cope with the intricacies of obscure systems. In neighborhoods, youths gang together to configure their life on the street and their sense of themselves.

Communities of practice are an integral part of our daily lives. They are so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons they are also quite familiar. Although the term may be new, the experience is not. Most communities of practice do not have a name and do not issue membership cards. Yet, if we care to consider our own life from that

perspective for a moment, we can all construct a fairly good picture of the communities of practice we belong to now, those we belonged to in the past, and those we would like to belong to in the future. We also have a fairly good idea of who belongs to our communities of practice and why, even though membership is rarely made explicit on a roster or a checklist of qualifying criteria. Furthermore, we can probably distinguish a few communities of practice in which we are core members from a larger number of communities in which we have a more peripheral kind of membership.

In all these ways, the concept of community of practice is not unfamiliar. By exploring it more systematically, I mean only to sharpen it, to make it more useful as a thinking tool. Toward this end, its familiarity will serve me well. Articulating a familiar phenomenon is a chance to push our intuitions: to deepen and expand them, to examine and rethink them. The perspective that results is not foreign, yet it can shed new light on our world. In this sense, the concept of community of practice is neither new nor old. It has both the eye-opening character of novelty and the forgotten familiarity of obviousness – but perhaps that is the mark of our most useful insights.

Rethinking learning

Placing the focus on participation has broad implications for what it takes to understand and support learning:

- For *individuals*, it means that learning is an issue of engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities.
- For *communities*, it means that learning is an issue of refining their practice and ensuring new generations of members.
- For *organizations*, it means that learning is an issue of sustaining the interconnected communities of practice through which an organization knows what it knows and thus becomes effective and valuable as an organization.

Learning in this sense is not a separate activity. It is not something we do when we do nothing else or stop doing when we do something else. There are times in our lives when learning is intensified: when situations shake our sense of familiarity, when we are challenged beyond our ability to respond, when we wish to engage in new practices and seek to join new communities. There are also times when society explicitly places us in situations where the issue of learning becomes problematic and requires our focus: we attend classes, memorize, take exams, and receive a diploma. And there are times when learning gels: an infant utters a first word, we have a sudden insight when someone's remark provides a missing link, we are finally recognized as a full member of a community. But situations that bring learning into focus are not necessarily those in which we learn most, or most deeply. The events of learning we can point to are perhaps more like volcanic eruptions whose fiery bursts reveal for

one dramatic moment the ongoing labor of the earth. Learning is something we can assume – whether we see it or not, whether we like the way it goes or not, whether what we are learning is to repeat the past or to shake it off. Even failing to learn what is expected in a given situation usually involves learning something else instead.

For many of us, the concept of learning immediately conjures up images of classrooms, training sessions, teachers, textbooks, homework, and exercises. Yet in our experience, learning is an integral part of our everyday lives. It is part of our participation in our communities and organizations. The problem is not that we do not know this, but rather that we do not have very systematic ways of talking about this familiar experience. Even though the topic of *Communities of Practice* covers mostly things that everybody knows in some ways, having a systematic vocabulary to talk about it does make a difference. An adequate vocabulary is important because the concepts we use to make sense of the world direct both our perception and our actions. We pay attention to what we expect to see, we hear what we can place in our understanding, and we act according to our worldviews.

Although learning can be assumed to take place, modern societies have come to see it as a topic of concern – in all sorts of ways and for a host of different reasons. We develop national curriculums, ambitious corporate training programs, complex schooling systems. We wish to cause learning, to take charge of it, direct it, accelerate it, demand it, or even simply stop getting in the way of it. In any case, we want to do something about it. Therefore, our perspectives on learning matter: what we think about learning influences where we recognize learning, as well as what we do when we decide that we must do something about it – as individuals, as communities, and as organizations.

If we proceed without reflecting on our fundamental assumptions about the nature of learning, we run an increasing risk that our conceptions will have misleading ramifications. In a world that is changing and becoming more complexly interconnected at an accelerating pace, concerns about learning are certainly justified. But perhaps more than learning itself, it is our *conception* of learning that needs urgent attention when we choose to meddle with it on the scale on which we do today. Indeed, the more we concern ourselves with any kind of design, the more profound are the effects of our discourses on the topic we want to address. The farther you aim, the more an initial error matters. As we become more ambitious in attempts to organize our lives and our environment, the implications of our perspectives, theories, and beliefs extend further. As we take more responsibility for our future on larger and larger scales, it becomes more imperative that we reflect on the perspectives that inform our enterprises. A key implication of our attempts to organize learning is that we must become reflective with regard to our own discourses of learning and to their effects on the ways we design for learning. By proposing a framework that considers learning in social terms, I hope to contribute to this urgent need for reflection and rethinking.

The practicality of theory

A perspective is not a recipe; it does not tell you just what to do. Rather, it acts as a guide about what to pay attention to, what difficulties to expect, and how to approach problems.

- If we believe, for instance, that knowledge consists of pieces of information explicitly stored in the brain, then it makes sense to package this information in well-designed units, to assemble prospective recipients of this information in a classroom where they are perfectly still and isolated from any distraction, and to deliver this information to them as succinctly and articulately as possible. From that perspective, what has come to stand for the epitome of a learning event makes sense: a teacher lecturing a class, whether in a school, in a corporate training center, or in the back room of a library. But if we believe that information stored in explicit ways is only a small part of knowing, and that knowing involves primarily active participation in social communities, then the traditional format does not look so productive. What does look promising are inventive ways of engaging students in meaningful practices, of providing access to resources that enhance their participation, of opening their horizons so they can put themselves on learning trajectories they can identify with, and of involving them in actions, discussions, and reflections that make a difference to the communities that they value.
- Similarly, if we believe that productive people in organizations are the diligent implementers of organizational processes and that the key to organizational performance is therefore the definition of increasingly more efficient and detailed processes by which people's actions are prescribed, then it makes sense to engineer and re-engineer these processes in abstract ways and then roll them out for implementation. But if we believe that people in organizations contribute to organizational goals by participating inventively in practices that can never be fully captured by institutionalized processes, then we will minimize prescription, suspecting that too much of it discourages the very inventiveness that makes practices effective. We will have to make sure that our organizations are contexts within which the communities that develop these practices may prosper. We will have to value the work of community building and make sure that participants have access to the resources necessary to learn what they need to learn in order to take actions and make decisions that fully engage their own knowledgeability.

If all this seems like common sense, then we must ask ourselves why our institutions so often seem not merely to fail to bring about these outcomes but to work against them with a relentless zeal. Of course, some of the blame can justifiably be attributed to conflicts of interest, power struggles, and even human wickedness. But that is too simple an answer and unnecessarily pessimistic. We must also remember that our institutions are designs and that our designs

are hostage to our understanding, perspectives, and theories. In this sense, our theories are very practical because they frame not just the ways we act, but also – and perhaps most importantly when design involves social systems – the ways we justify our actions to ourselves and to each other. In an institutional context, it is difficult to act without justifying your actions in the discourse of the institution.

A social theory of learning is therefore not exclusively an academic enterprise. While its perspective can indeed inform our academic investigations, it is also relevant to our daily actions, our policies, and the technical, organizational, and educational systems we design. A new conceptual framework for thinking about learning is thus of value not only to theorists but to all of us – teachers, students, parents, youths, spouses, health practitioners, patients, managers, workers, policy makers, citizens – who in one way or another must take steps to foster learning (our own and that of others) in our relationships, our communities, and our organizations. In this spirit, *Communities of Practice* is written with both the theoretician and the practitioner in mind.

Note

I am not claiming that a social perspective of the sort proposed here says everything there is to say about learning. It takes for granted the biological, neurophysiological, cultural, linguistic, and historical developments that have made our human experience possible. Nor do I make any sweeping claim that the assumptions that underlie my approach are incompatible with those of other theories. There is no room here to go into very much detail, but for contrast it is useful to mention the themes and pedagogical focus of some other theories in order to sketch the landscape in which this perspective is situated.

Learning is a natural concern for students of *neurological* functions.

- Neurophysiological theories focus on the biological mechanisms of learning. They are informative about physiological limits and rhythms and about issues of stimulation and optimization of memory processes (Edelman 1993; Sylwester 1995).

Learning has traditionally been the province of *psychological* theories.

- *Behaviorist* theories focus on behavior modification via stimulus-response pairs and selective reinforcement. Their pedagogical focus is on control and adaptive response. Because they completely ignore issues of meaning, their usefulness lies in cases where addressing issues of social meaning is made impossible or is not relevant, such as automatisms, severe social dysfunctionality, or animal training (Skinner 1974).
- *Cognitive* theories focus on internal cognitive structures and view learning as transformations in these cognitive structures. Their pedagogical focus is

on the processing and transmission of information through communication, explanation, recombination, contrast, inference, and problem solving. They are useful for designing sequences of conceptual material that build upon existing information structures. (Anderson 1983; Wenger 1987; Hutchins 1995).

- *Constructivist* theories focus on the processes by which learners build their own mental structures when interacting with an environment. Their pedagogical focus is task-oriented. They favor hands-on, self-directed activities oriented towards design and discovery. They are useful for structuring learning environments, such as simulated worlds, so as to afford the construction of certain conceptual structures through engagement in self-directed tasks (Piaget 1954; Papert 1980).
- *Social learning* theories take social interactions into account, but still from a primarily psychological perspective. They place the emphasis on interpersonal relations involving imitation and modeling, and thus focus on the study of cognitive processes by which observation can become a source of learning. They are useful for understanding the detailed information-processing mechanisms by which social interactions affect behavior (Bandura 1977).

Some theories are moving away from an exclusively psychological approach, but with a different focus from mine.

- *Activity* theories focus on the structure of activities as historically constituted entities. Their pedagogical focus is on bridging the gap between the historical state of an activity and the developmental stage of a person with respect to that activity – for instance, the gap between the current state of a language and a child's ability to speak that language. The purpose is to define a "zone of proximal development" in which learners who receive help can perform an activity they would not be able to perform by themselves (Vygotsky 1934; Wertsch 1985; Engeström 1987).
- *Socialization* theories focus on the acquisition of membership by newcomers within a functionalist framework where acquiring membership is defined as internalizing the norms of a social group (Parsons 1962). As I argue, there is a subtle difference between imitation or the internalization of norms by individuals and the construction of identities within communities of practice.
- *Organizational* theories concern themselves both with the ways individuals learn in organizational contexts and with the ways in which organizations can be said to learn as organizations. Their pedagogical focus is on organizational systems, structures, and politics and on institutional forms of memory (Argyris and Schön 1978; Senge 1990; Brown 1991; Brown and Duguid 1991; Hock 1995; Leonard-Barton 1995; Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Snyder 1996).

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Chapter 17

Transitional learning and reflexive facilitation

The case of learning for work

Danny Wildemeersch and Veerle Stroobants

Danny Wildemeersch is now an Emeritus Professor of Social and Cultural Pedagogy at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. During his long career in Belgium, the Netherlands and with EU-projects, he has had a special interest in educational and learning activities in grass-root movements, initiatives and organisations dealing with social exclusion, participation, sustainable development, etc. From the late 1990s, he worked closely with the younger researcher Veerle Stroobants, among others, in various projects, including a cross-national EU-project investigating the situations and possibilities of socially vulnerable youth in various European countries. The following chapter is written by Wildemeersch and Stroobants and presents a framework on transitional learning, building on Stroobants' dissertation and findings from the European research. Some of these insights were first presented in an article 'Making sense of learning for work: Towards a framework of transitional learning' by Stroobants, Marc Jans and Wildemeersch in the International Journal of Lifelong Education, *1–2, 2001.*

Introduction

In this contribution, we look back at some ten years of research in which we have tried to interpret the processes of transitional learning taking place in the context of various education, training and guidance practices, mostly in support of people who have difficulty in finding or in keeping a job. One of the outcomes of this research is a framework that helps to interpret the changing conditions of individual learning processes and educational practices against the background of transformations in present-day society. Various observers describe the changes in society today in terms of individualisation. Individuals are said to be at the same time free, obliged and responsible to make adequate choices and decisions regarding their own private and professional lives. Such processes of individualisation increase the need for individual and social reflexivity. Consequently, individualisation processes go together with interrelated developments in the learning of people on the one hand, and with challenges to educational models and practices on the other hand. People are faced with the task of developing self-reflexive biographies to anticipate and cope with changing circumstances (Beck, 1992 [1986];

Giddens, 1991). Meanwhile, educational practitioners need to reflexively reconsider their role as facilitators of this learning for personal and social change.

We do not want to interpret these developments exclusively in terms of individualisation processes. In line with various theories that try to avoid one-sided structural determinism or naïve voluntarism (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1990 [1987]; Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997), we argue that reflexive biographies not only may allow people to adapt to rapidly evolving conditions, but that they possibly create opportunities to develop alternative, singularised answers to the changing conditions and to influence the social context (Alheit, 1995; Fischer-Rosenthal, 1995; Biesta, 2006). In this respect, we believe that educational practices, just like educational research, can and even should play their part. The theory on transitional learning we present here (see also Stroobants et al., 2001) is a descriptive and explanatory framework aimed at making sense of the learning processes of individuals in relation to work and their participation in initiatives of adult and continuing education. We are convinced that this theory of transitional learning will be helpful to support the decision-making process of the reflexive professional whose role is said to be dramatically shifting today from a position of 'legislator' to a position of 'interpreter' (Bauman, 1987). For this reason, a genuine understanding of the way in which learning is related to one's biography is of utmost importance.

Between reflexive and restrictive activation

In 1998 we started the first international research project on the education, training and guidance of unemployed young people (Wildemeersch, 2001). Over the course of this project and later on, when we wrote a book about our observations, we noted significant shifts in social policy discourses (Weil et al., 2005; Wildemeersch and Weil, 2008). The naming and framing of programmes for unemployed young people as 'activation practices' became more and more apparent. During the previous decade, an emphasis on active citizens, active jobseekers, active senior citizens, active communities and the active welfare state has become prominent in social policy discourses all across Europe. In this context, individuals are meant to assume active responsibility for their own learning, employment and community welfare. In line with this, a more 'client-centred' approach towards the unemployed has engendered increased 'humanistic' modes of activation where individual counselling, trajectory guidance and continuous monitoring are important principles. Activation practitioners are nowadays very well aware that their clients – such as unemployed young adults, women and the long-term unemployed – need special rather than standardised treatments and approaches. Most practitioners acknowledge, although to different degrees across the projects we studied, that an approach characterised by open communication and understanding, by consideration of the clients' lifeworld and by an attitude of respect is of great importance. Our research revealed that they favour what we called 'reflexive' forms of activation. Yet, we will notice further on that in these

practices, reflexive activation is sometimes the espoused theory, whereas restrictive activation is the theory-in-use (Argyris and Schön, 1978).

Furthermore, reflexive activation implies the need to balance respect for the singularity of young adults on the one hand with the needs and demands of the labour market on the other hand. Moreover, the ideal balance seems to be different for each particular individual. This tension makes the activation practice a rather delicate and sometimes frustrating experience, requiring careful reflexivity on behalf of the facilitator. This implies that professionals and young adults co-interpret and negotiate possibilities and limitations of particular activation strategies, given the complex nature of labour markets and social policies, but also given the context of ambivalent relationships between young adults and professionals. Respect for the singularity of the young adults inevitably moves the facilitators towards a more biographical approach. They have to construct concrete actions based on insecure interpretations. Problem solving in practice is a reflexive activity of an 'interpretive professional' (Wildemeersch, 2000).

> Interpreting and negotiating in this perspective constitute an open-ended process. Professionals use the information coming out of boundary tensions between their own and their participant's lifeworlds and those of the system, by staying critical and creative about the choices that cannot be seen except through new forms of dialogue, inquiry, and action research in practice
>
> (Weil et al., 2005, p. 159)

Transitional learning

In another research project in our research centre (Stroobants, 2001), we focused on biographical learning processes in which women make sense of work through the construction of their life courses and their life stories. Presupposing an ambiguous relationship between the promise of emancipation through paid labour, women's actual work experiences and the current opportunity structures on the labour market, we researched the way women learn to handle the different and changing meanings of work in their lives and in overall society. We started the research with some scepticism about the emancipatory potential of paid labour for women as well as of lifelong learning and participation in adult and continuing education. However, we were equally fascinated by the way women have to look for adequate ways to connect their own biography to broader social issues and, in one way or another, also seem to succeed in doing so, often via work and/or education, be it with or in spite of the help of education and training professionals.

Throughout the research process, we began to understand that the real 'job' women perform, during their life, is the (re)construction of the self in relation to society (Fenwick, 1998; Rossiter, 1999; Tennant, 1998). In this process of searching for and developing the self, work does represent a possible and desirable way for women to structure and make sense of their life and to widen their action

space in society. However, finding a job attuned to their own capacities and personal and social aspirations on the one hand, and to the demands and structures of the labour market on the other hand, is not taken for granted. We consider the search for meaningful connections between self and society when engaging with work, as a process of transitional learning.

Transitional learning and meaningful connections

Transitional learning emerges when individuals are faced with unpredictable changes in the dynamics between their life course and the transforming context, and when they are confronted with the need to (learn to) anticipate, handle and reorganise these changing conditions. This situation triggers a continuous process of constructing meaning, making choices, taking up responsibilities and dealing with the changes in the personal and societal context. In line with Alheit (1995) we refer to this lifelong process of shaping one's own biography as a process of transitional learning. It is about creating meaningful connections between one's narrative understanding of the self as an actor in past, present and future on the one side, and one's understanding of the context in which one operates and lives in terms of broader themes and issues on the other. While transitional learning refers to a permanent learning process, meaningful connections are its varying and concrete stakes and possible outcomes at a specific moment. It is important to mention here that this process of creating meaningful connections is not a process that is located 'in' the person. The telling of a story – who one is, where one stands, where one goes to – is always a 'response' to a question coming from someone else. Therefore, the development of a singular life story relates to the act of 'coming into presence' into an intersubjective space that is constituted by the company of others who 'interrupt' the self-evidence of one's biography. 'To ask the question of human subjectivity in this way, as a question about where the subject as a unique singular being – as someone – comes into presence, allows us to get away from the determination of the human subject as a substance or essence' (Biesta, 2006, p. 43).

Adaptation, growth, distinction and resistance: Four basic strategies

Processes of transitional learning are located in the centre of a symbolic space created by two dimensions (see Figure 17.1). The first – horizontal – dimension, relates to action and reflection dealing with tensions between societal demands and personal demands. These demands are needs, values, norms and aspirations that may converge or diverge. Priority may be given to societal criteria or to personal criteria or, what is more real, to a combination of both criteria. The second dimension – the vertical one – is about the actor's perception of the extent to which the fields in which s/he operates (e.g. the field of work, training, leisure, etc.) can be altered in view of individual or social/societal expectations,

plans and projects. In other words, it concerns the subjectively experienced and perceived possibilities and limitations to influence or change arrangements and structures (e.g. a distribution of opportunities) within a particular domain of life and within society at large.

Within this two-dimensional space, four basic strategies or logics of making meaningful connections can be distinguished: adaptation, growth, distinction and resistance.

Adaptation is a strategy which gives priority to societal demands and which takes as a point of departure the alleged unchangeable character of the opportunity structures on the labour market. With respect to this position, the process of connecting the self and the context is mainly directed by the (changing) needs and conditions of the labour market. Adaptation is about trying to acquire the necessary competencies to meet these needs and to come to terms with the social expectations.

Growth is the person-oriented counterpart of adaptation within a societal context that is predominantly perceived as hard to influence. It refers to the holistic development of the individual as an authentic, free and responsible subject, both in the sense of developing all aspects and potentialities of the whole person and in the sense of caring for the well-being and recovery of the self in order to personally cope with the society-in-transformation.

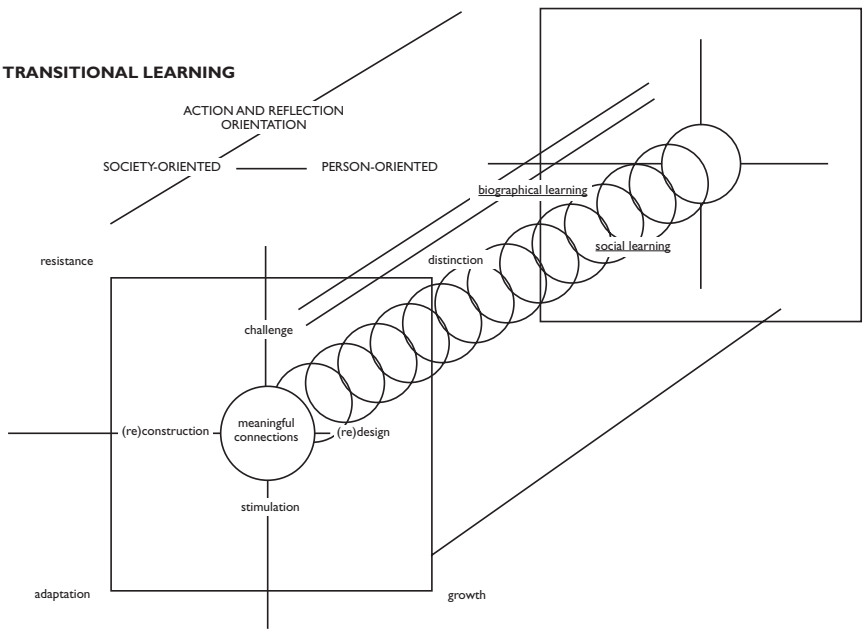

Figure 17.1 Transitional learning.

In both strategies, actors direct and interpret their lives in the best possible way within the given social context. Yet, when the changeability of societal opportunity structures is taken as a starting point, activities of critical reflection and action come into focus, in combination with attempts to shape particular social fields and life contexts, e.g. labour market practices, in a wilful way.

In the strategy of distinction, the development of an alternative, individual lifestyle, in view of finding a personalised way out of societal demands that are experienced as oppressive, is at stake (e.g. the demands of the labour market which are at odds with images of freedom, creativity and authenticity).

Resistance, on the other hand, directs critical reflection and action explicitly towards influencing and maybe transforming the demands of society. It refers to social commitment. In order to demonstrate the relevance of these four strategies, we now present some of the interpretations made by Stroobants (2001) on the basis of biographical interviews with a selective group of women.

Anita's search for a job can be interpreted with reference to the strategies discussed above. She is a young married woman without children, looking for 'the right job' after some frustrating work experiences. She wants to continue a training trajectory preparing her for a 'male' job. Yet, she is not allowed to finish it because the counsellors are convinced that there is no way to get work for her in that sector. Instead, she is guided towards a nursing job. Having no alternative option and because in that sector employment is guaranteed, she goes for it (adaptation). Soon she realises that this job is not what she expected. She cannot attune it to her own aspirations, competencies and dreams. The job is getting her down and undermines her self-esteem. Therapy helps her to gain back her self-respect and to cope with the situation (growth). By attending evening courses in pottery and furniture making, she tries to develop the forgotten creative aspects of her self (growth). In a certain way, she develops a proper lifestyle by doing all sorts of courses and evening classes (distinction). Actually, she wants to be a furniture maker and dreams of starting her own little business, but at the moment, taking into account the limitations of the context in which she has to operate, this is not a realistic option. She decides to become a cab driver, for she wants to prove that she is able to do a man's job (resistance).

The four strategies or logics mentioned above are more-or-less ideal-typical and theoretical constructions and are to be understood as combinations of two extreme poles of the two structuring dimensions. As the tensions with other poles cannot really be ignored in the construction of meaningful connections, these strategies do not often occur in their pure form. When they seem to do so, like in Anita's story, they make sense in view of coping with a concrete situation (e.g. she can only continue with her nursing job because she finds compensation in courses and therapy), but – from a biographical point of view – they are not really connected. At the same time, through acts of resistance, Anita creates space to relate her personal development to her own lifestyle that she wants to develop further. It thus seems more true to assume that most of the time, a combination or a mix of strategies – at the crossroads of the two dimensions – is applied so as to

achieve meaningful connections. It is important to see that the fields of tension either have opportunities to produce dynamic and productive outcomes which can be converted to one's own use, or that they stimulate activities of control within the subject. The combined strategies of stimulation, challenge, (re)design and (re) construction described below explicitly take into account the tension on one of the two dimensions. Thereby, the poles of the dimensions are connected in such a way that and–and combinations do occur rather than or–or combinations.

Stimulation, challenge, (re)design and (re)construction: Four combined strategies

Stimulation is the first combined strategy operating within the given opportunity structures, by attuning societal and personal demands. It tries to meet the changing needs produced by a society in transformation on the one hand (adaptation) and to take individual orientations into consideration (growth) on the other. In view of the importance nowadays attached to integration in the labour market, this combined strategy is frequently applied. However, because the demands of the labour market are considered to be hard to transform, some risks may occur. For example, mechanisms of exclusion remain tangible in the context of practices that cultivate the myth of individual liberty and responsibility, as is the case with the employability discourse that tends to reproduce the 'blaming-the-victim model' (Jansen and Wildemeersch, 1996).

As a second combined strategy, challenge equally relates to the tension between societal and personal demands, yet takes the changeability of the social context as a point of departure. It means that resistance can find an individualized expression in particular lifestyle practices and in reverse order, that distinction is allowed to play a role in activities of resistance. The remaining one-sidedness here is that the possibility to transform the social order may be overestimated, or that existing restrictive mechanisms are not taken into account well enough. This may lead to disappointment, despair and even self-exclusion.

The third combined strategy of (re)design is situated on the borderline of two opposing perceptions concerning the transformability of opportunity structures and is preoccupied exclusively with the meeting of personal demands. It refers to a personal developmental process, not only within (personal growth) or beyond (distinction through lifestyle) existing opportunity structures, but by calculating realistically the opportunities, possibilities and limitations of the self and of the action environment and by actively interacting with these. The (re)design strategy does not address societal demands.

(Re)construction as the fourth combined strategy counterbalances the strategy of designing. It is directed to societal demands rather than to personal demands. It is about the (re)establishment of practices based on a critical (resistance) and yet pragmatic and realistic (adaptation) perception of opportunity structures and their moral and political dimensions. (Re) construction runs the risk of turning a blind eye to the individual perspective of the issues at stake.

Monique is a single mother who eventually, after several moves in and out of the labour market, has found a job that fits her chosen lifestyle. As a vegetarian who lives in accordance with anthroposophic principles, she is a co-owner of a natural health shop. She experiences her work as a continuation of her way of living and being. One could say that she has created ((re)designed) her own life, finding personal development in a particular lifestyle. By extending it to an income-generating activity and attaching her own profile and meaning to work as a self-employed woman, her example represents an alternative way for women to relate to the labour market ((re)construction).

Remarks and nuances

When explaining the combined strategies, we pointed to some risks resulting from the one-sided focus on only one of the two dimensions against which we situate transitional learning. The process of creating meaningful connections tries to take into account the tensions on both dimensions. Taking social agency within dynamic social structures as a point of departure, it is about attuning social and personal demands and realistically integrating acceptance of and change in the surrounding context. To this goal, several of the presented strategies will be followed in a creative and changing order and direction.

Yet, transitional learning is not an intentional linear process towards meaningful connections that can be directed in a systematic and rational way. Nor is it always successful or even possible. Coincidence, luck, differences in opportunity structures, unexpected possibilities and structural limitations, amongst other things, play an important role in the generation of meaningful connections that shape the process of transitional learning. What matters is that one is (or learns to be) able to react in an adequate way to this situation of serendipity or 'happenstance' (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997).

From Denise's story we learn that finding a meaningful connection is not always easy or evident. She tries out different strategies to enter the labour market, none of which have been successful thus far. She is a single woman without children. Although she has a university degree, she doesn't feel able to meet the corresponding social demands. She has worked in several different jobs and sectors but has not yet found the suitable and useful job she is looking for. She has been out of a regular job for a few years now and attends various labour market-oriented training (adaptation) and counselling (growth) activities. Denise is almost desperately looking for a job, trying to develop her own competencies in harmony with the demands on the labour market (stimulation/activation). But at the same time, she is very critical of the current flexible and stressful labour market. She cannot fit in her proper values and principles and she does not actually want to be part of it (resistance). She wants to work on her own terms, while also countering the labour market, but she has not yet found a way to do so.

However, this relative unpredictability on the individual level does not mean that it is not important to create positive opportunity structures and enable

meaningful connections on a societal level. Though our theoretical approach is not meant to offer a normative framework, we do stress that the processes of deliberation and choice with regard to work do not take place in a neutral social context. They are explicitly related to different opinions that exist about the way in which the field of work and labour operates, to the public debate concerning issues of social responsibility and to the obligation to (re)organise this field in view of a (re)distribution of opportunity structures. New balances or relations between individual autonomy and responsibility on the one hand, and collective arrangements and opportunities on the other can bring about and facilitate meaningful connections on the personal and social levels alike.

An educational perspective on transitional learning

Meaningful connections through adult and continuing education

In the lives and life stories of the interviewees of our biographical research, not only work, but also participation in adult and continuing education initiatives, is experienced as a structuring and meaningful activity. In many, often-surprising and changing ways, adult and continuing education initiatives, amongst other media, are often considered helpful for the process of transitional learning that they experienced. The participants in this research on women and work attended several educational and counselling activities, thereby inevitably giving personal meaning to their learning from a biographical and situated perspective. They more or less believe in education as a means of responding to the demands of the labour market and of society in transformation. If education fails to do so, it still retains relevancy for the sake of personal growth and self-development, or as a means of helping to design a proper lifestyle or to construct alternative ways of being employed. The way in which the interviewees at various occasions integrate education and learning experiences into their particular life plan and life story sometimes questions or counters outcomes which have been constructed from an educational framework.

Magda's story illustrates well the way in which the female interviewees give meaning to educational experiences, thereby relating their learning to different strategies of transitional learning. She grows up as the youngest of nine children in a family of merchants. It is her childhood dream to one day have a shop of her own. When she gets married and has children of her own, she stops working as an office assistant. She takes the role of mother and housewife to heart and helps her husband with the bookkeeping of his business. After a few years, Magda looks for ways to break free from the 'patterns' that limit her actions. Eventually, she decides to attend evening classes orienting her towards the bakery business. At that moment, it is not certain what the outcome of that commitment will be. Retrospectively, it is clear from Magda's life story that she succeeded in making

her dream come true. Attending the baker's training, however, must be understood as a multilayered strategy possibly serving several aims, sometimes opposing the predetermined educational objectives. For Magda, it is a way to exercise her hobby (personal growth fitting her role as a mother and housewife), to get qualified in bookkeeping (useful for her 'job' as cooperating spouse – stimulation) and to keep open the possibility of starting her own business (and realise her dream – construct/design/challenge).

Meaningful connections and activation strategies: The case of 'Flexi Job'

The theory of transitional learning can also be of interest from a facilitation point of view, as the entire framework is not limited to the perspective of the learner. It is also applicable to the activities of professionals of education, training, guidance and counselling who try to support individual learning processes. The framework also refers to the ways in which these professionals make sense of their own position and practices as facilitators and to the (mix of) strategies they use. Their actions vis-à-vis the learning individuals can be understood in terms of either facilitating and stimulating or inhibiting each of the strategies we distinguished. The framework of transitional learning can thus be approached from different perspectives. This makes it possible to interpret some of the tensions, conflicts and contradictions in the interactions between professionals and participants. In order to illustrate the relevance of the theory of transitional learning in this respect, we briefly present the case of 'Flexi Job' (Weil et al., 2005, p. 38). The data we present here were collected on the occasion of a case study organised in the context of the 'Balancing Competencies' project about which we report extensively in our book *Unemployed Youth and Social Exclusion in Europe* (Weil et al., 2005). The interpretation of these data also helped us to develop the framework of transitional learning. Simultaneously, this emerging framework gave us a better understanding of some of the tensions and contradictions at stake in this case. The case we present below is indeed an interpretation based on a partial observation. Therefore, this interpretation should not be considered as the ultimate truth about this case. On the contrary, it is an invitation – also for the practitioners involved – to consider this practice with the help of the framework of transitional learning and to experience that this framework may reveal elements which they have not yet taken into consideration.

Flexi Job is a fictitious name for a 'social' employment agency in Belgium. It is purposefully located in an underprivileged area in the bigger cities of Flanders and Antwerp, in contrast with other agencies that are located in the centre of the city. The agency has the ambition to create a connection between the lifeworld of disadvantaged young people and the present-day situation of the labour market. The model which has been developed and which seems promising in the eyes of policy-makers and the Flemish Employment Agency (VDAB) is based on a long and intensive outreach contact of the youth worker involved in the project

with the target group of long-term unemployed young adults. These experiences gave rise to the hypotheses that the envisaged group is not really ready for, or willing to accept, steady jobs and that it is better to look for unconventional ways to create work experience for them. Therefore, Flexi Job wants to support the young unemployed adults in their attempt to alternate periods of leisure and employment. The concept of Flexi Job is based on the principle that short-term jobs (1–30 days) should be offered to this particular group. These jobs are supposed to encourage young adults who want an income but are not motivated to subject themselves to regular labour market discipline. The 'maximum 30 days' slogan is thought to match their relation to labour and therefore is used to attract them. It promises a combination of 'work' and 'freedom', of 'stability' and some sort of 'nomadic lifestyle'. Flexi Job wants to support these young adults in experimenting with 'new ways of life' that reflect their culture of 'resistance'. This culture is considered to reflect their opposition to mainstream society, including the norm of lifelong work, and their ambition to 'distinguish' themselves through alternative lifestyles.

However, the interviews we had with these young people revealed other aspirations. We did not find much evidence of this form of resistance espoused by the group. On the contrary, we encountered many traditional dreams of 'lifelong work'. In the eyes of these young people, temporary employment is either an emergency solution or an intermediate step towards a long-term contract. Let us just consider the group of 'alternative dreamers' to develop our argument. The form of resistance that Flexi Job refers to may eventually not be resistance at all, but rather a new trajectory to adaptation. Three arguments support this viewpoint:

- The resistance can be meaningful for young people who productively succeed in juggling this flexibility as an introductory step in their career development. It is then a resistance strategy or maybe some kind of lifestyle distinction strategy that relates at the same time to a growth strategy.

Take the examples of the highly qualified young graduate who succeeds in building a career, while making use of several short assignments in close connection with his/her personality and individual agenda. The alternation of periods of work and non-work is, for instance, exemplified in the trend of travelling around the world for a couple of months. This perspective makes sense, especially for the highly qualified young adults. Yet, the opportunity structures of low-qualified people are so restricted that this form of resistance or distinction may eventually turn into conditions of mere adaptation and even self-exclusion for those who are in disadvantaged positions in society and on the labour market.

- The labour market is not indifferent to this kind of resistance. The resistance matches the flexibility discourse perfectly well. In that way, the resistance is not resistance in the first place, but rather an invitation to adapt to the

flexibility demands of the labour market. Some young adults experience this shift in the labour market as disturbing. Adaptation is considered a necessity: the best of all unsatisfactory solutions or a survival strategy rather than a new way of life. Temporary employment goes together with a crisis in their lives and helps them to overcome acute financial problems. There seems to be a gap between the new 'values' of the labour market, notably flexibility, and the expectation of low-skilled people in general to find a long-term job.

- Flexi Job seems to create the illusion that there is some kind of experimental moratorium where the young adults can alternate between work and nonwork while simultaneously developing their own plans so as to arrive at a point where they find sustainable employment in harmony with their own plans and agenda. Yet, the real experimental room is restricted by the defective opportunity structures of an unschooled, flexible workforce. The young people in the interviews discussed their dreams, such as becoming a telephone operator, a policeman or a security agent. There is no place to experiment with these plans and dreams within Flexi Job, unless they earn enough money to be able to afford training at a later stage.

In conclusion we would argue that Flexi Job predominantly meets the short-term needs of the young unemployed adults. The young people it addresses indeed want a job, and they want it fast, because they need instant money. Temporary employment perfectly meets this need. However, the difference in aspirations between Flexi Job and some of its participants has to do with the long-term perspective. In some respects, Flexi Job supports a new way of life, in which temporary employment takes a central place, and thus contributes to new understandings of quality of life. Yet, the perspective of the young adults that we interviewed is different. Temporary employment for them has the character of emergency help. What they actually clearly strive for (and prefer as soon as possible) are long-term contracts in sustainable jobs, enabling them to develop traditional lifestyles rather than the unconventional lifestyles that the mentor has in mind. For this reason, we would argue that this case is an example of 'restrictive activation', which we characterised as a strategy that problematises the excluded rather than exclusion, that gives limited responsibilities to the participants to co-direct their trajectory and that does little to create meaningful connections while learning for jobs (Weil et al., 2005, p. 200). With the help of our framework on transitional learning, we were able to reconsider some of the assumptions which directed the actions of Flexi Job. We hope to have convincingly demonstrated that the framework indeed helps to further explore and discuss the relevance of particular activation strategies.

Conclusions

We have argued in this chapter that transitional learning is a process that takes place not only 'in' the person, but also, to an important extent, through the

interaction initiated by external people who ask for a response. That is why in this chapter we have also brought practices of adult and continuing education into the picture. Adult and continuing education today increasingly operate as providers of vocational and market-oriented training activities aimed at activating individuals to fit economic demands. Yet, adult and continuing education initiatives can also play a role in other learning practices. They can stimulate the search for work and the creation of meaningful work in relation to self and society. They can help people to develop an overview of personal and structural possibilities for and limitations to the realisation of alternative ways of living and working. They can help to create new opportunities. They can invite people to develop their life stories and thereby create opportunities for them to come into presence as 'singularised persons'. In such cases, it may be relevant to 'interrupt' the taken-for-granted stories of participants. In doing so, they can also create new significant connections between the initiatives' own aims and missions and the surrounding society by attaching a social significance to the choices and decisions of individuals, by strengthening signals to society and in this way influencing social structures and creating possibilities to design new realities and construct new practices. Such activity today is to a large extent a 'reflexive facilitation practice'. The cases we have presented based on different research experiences in the last decade make clear how such practices can be inspired by emerging theories, both on transitional learning and on reflexive activation. Such theories can be an important basis for reflection, dialogue and decision-making among practitioners and policy-makers and within the organisations that provide education, training and guidance. We hope our considerations in this chapter will help to deepen such processes.

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Chapter 18

Interrupting the politics of learning

Gert Biesta

Since his international breakthrough in 2006 with his book Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future, *Dutch Gert Biesta has been an important critical voice in the international debate on learning and education. He has worked at universities in the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Scotland and England and is now a Professor of Education at Brunel University, London. His approach is fundamentally theoretical, but in a broad, educational and also political way. He has been active as an author, editor and member of committees and has always adopted a humanistic attitude and perspective. In the following chapter, which was published in 2013 in the journal* Power and Education *(Vol. 5, No. 1), Biesta raises some fundamental questions about the notion, language and discourse of 'learning' and argues that there is a need for an interruption in order to reclaim the emancipatory potential of education.*

Introduction: learning, learning, learning

In the preamble to his book *Spectres of Marx*, Jacques Derrida writes that '(t)o live, by definition, is not something one learns' (Derrida, 1994, p. xviii). If this is indeed so, and if it is so *by definition*, then the following lines, taken from the preface of UNESCO's report from the 2010 Shanghai International Forum on Lifelong Learning, may perhaps sound a little 'out of joint'. They read:

> We are now living in a fast-changing and complex social, economic and political world to which we need to adapt by increasingly rapidly acquiring new knowledge, skills and attitudes in a wide range of contexts. An individual will not be able to meet life challenges unless he or she becomes a lifelong learner, and a society will not be sustainable unless it becomes a learning society.
>
> (Yang & Valdés-Cotera, 2011, p. v)

Claims like these – which almost sound like threats (You will not be able to meet life challenges unless you become a lifelong learner! Society will not be sustainable unless it becomes a learning society!) – have become all too familiar in recent times, so that it may well be argued that we now live in a 'learning age'

(which incidentally was the title of a UK government consultation chapter from 1998 that even promised 'a renaissance for a new Britain' – see DfEE, 1998).

In the learning age we are surrounded by claims that learning is something good and desirable, and often by claims that it is *intrinsically* good and desirable. We are also surrounded by claims that learning is something inevitable, something we have to do and cannot *not* do, and therefore as something that should not only take place in schools, colleges and universities, but actually should go on throughout our lives, both extended in time (the idea of life*long* learning) and extended in space (the idea of life-*wide* learning, that is, learning that permeates all aspects of our lives). But is learning indeed 'the treasure within' – as was suggested in the title of the 1996 UNESCO report written by Jacques Delors and colleagues (Delors et al., 1996)? Is learning indeed inevitable? Is it indeed an 'unavoidable biological fact (that) we learn as we breathe, all the time, without giving it any thought' (Field, 2000, p. 35)? Is learning therefore indeed something that *should* permeate our lives, from dusk to dawn, from cradle to grave, from womb to tomb? And is it therefore entirely reasonable to have European Lifelong Learning Indicators that measure in extreme detail how 'well' each and every European country and within each country ultimately every individual is doing in its learning (see ELLI Development Team, 2008; see also Biesta, 2012a)?

In this chapter, I would like to raise a number of critical questions about the 'learning age', that is, about the apparent omnipresence of learning in our times and our lives. These questions partly have to do with *discourse*, that is, with the discourse of learning and its problems. They partly have to do with *power*, that is, with the ways in which, through the discourse of learning, power is being exercised. And they have to do with *resistance*, that is, with the question whether we should resist the 'demand' for learning and, if so, how we might be able to do this.

I come to these questions as an educator and educationalist, as I think that the language of learning has been utterly unhelpful in the double educational task of engagement with and emancipation from the world, both the material and the social world (on this formulation of the 'task' of education see, for example, Meirieu, 2007). The analytical and critical 'device' I will use in my chapter is the idea of the 'politics of learning', through which I will highlight the powerful work that is being done by and at the very same time hidden behind the discourse of 'learning'. The 'field of discussion' is that of lifelong learning, not only because it is here that claims about and demands for learning are most explicitly articulated, but also because this field, through both policy and research, is contributing most strongly to an apparent 'common sense' about learning in contemporary societies.

I will develop my ideas in five steps. I will start with the discourse of learning, indicating, on the one hand, the ongoing 'learnification' of the discourse of education and highlighting, on the other hand, some problems with the very idea of 'learning'. Against this background, I then look at shifts in the 'field' of lifelong learning (and here we should note that to name this 'field' in terms of learning is already part of the problem I wish to address) in order to explore some aspects of a politics of learning that is working through it. I will then make some suggestions

for how we might resist the tendency to naturalise learning – that is to put it on an equal footing with breathing and digestion – both at the level of theory and the level of practice. From there I turn to the question of emancipation in order to explore how we might think of and 'do' emancipation outside of the confines of a politics of learning. What such an emancipation-without-learning might look like is something which, in the fifth step, I illustrate through the work of Foucault. After this I will make some concluding remarks to draw the lines of my argument together.

The problem with 'learning'

Over the past two decades, the word 'learning' has become a popular concept in educational research, policy and practice. Elsewhere (Biesta, 2009; 2010a) I have characterised the rapid increase in the use of the word 'learning' and the rise of a wider 'language of learning' as the *learnification* of educational discourse and practice. This process is visible in a number of discursive shifts, such as the tendency to refer to education as 'teaching and learning', to refer to students as 'learners' and to adults as 'adult learners', to see teachers as 'facilitators of learning', and to conceive of schools as 'learning environments' or 'places for learning' – the latter being the phrase used to designate Watercliffe Meadow, a primary school in Sheffield, allegedly because the word 'school' had such a negative connotation with pupils and parents.[1] The shift from 'adult education' to 'lifelong learning' is another prominent manifestation of the rise of this 'new language of learning' (Biesta, 2006a).

The rise of the 'new language of learning' is the result – and perhaps we should say the partly unintended outcome – of a number of developments. These include (1) the impact of new theories of learning, particularly constructivist theories, that put the focus more strongly on students and their activities than on teachers and their input; (2) the (postmodern) critique of authoritarian forms of teaching; (3) what John Field (2000) has called the 'silent explosion' of learning, that is, the fact that more and more people are engaged in more and more different forms and modes of learning, particularly non-formal and informal ones; and (4) the individualising impact of neo-liberal policies and politics on education, including adult education (a point to which I will return below). The rise of the language of learning has, in some cases, empowered those at the receiving end of the spectrum, particularly where teaching was conceived in narrow, controlling and authoritarian ways. But the rise of a language of learning has also had some less desirable consequences. These consequences have to do with two aspects of the concept of 'learning', one being that 'learning' is a process term, and the other that 'learning', unlike 'education', is an individualistic and individualising term.

To begin with the first point: in the English language 'learning' generally denotes a process or an activity. This means, however, that the word 'learning' is in itself neutral or empty with regard to content, direction and purpose. To suggest that learning is good or desirable – and thus to suggest that it is something that should

go on throughout one's life or that should be promoted in schools – does therefore not really mean anything until it is specified what the *content* of the learning is and, more importantly, until it is specified what the *purpose* of the learning is. This emptiness of the notion of 'learning' has made its rise in educational settings quite problematic, as the point of education – be it school education or the education of adults – is never just that students learn, but that they learn *something* and that they learn this for particular *reasons*. The language of learning has made it far more difficult to engage with the question of purpose to the extent that in many instances this question has virtually disappeared from the discussion (see Biesta, 2010a). The fact that 'learning' is an individualistic and individualising term – learning is, after all, something one can only do for oneself; it is not possible to learn for somebody else – has also shifted attention away from the importance of relationships in educational processes and practices and has thus made it far more difficult to explore what the particular responsibilities and tasks of educational professionals such as teachers and adult educators actually are.

As soon as it is acknowledged that the question of learning always raises further questions about its purposes, we can, on the one hand, begin to ask what desirable purposes of learning might be, while, on the other hand, we can begin to see the particular purposes that are being promoted in policies and practices for lifelong learning. With regard to the first issue, it has been known for a long time in the field of adult education that the learning of adults is not one-dimensional but can serve a range of different purposes. Aspin and Chapman (2001) helpfully make a distinction between three different agendas for lifelong learning: lifelong learning for economic progress and development; lifelong learning for personal development and fulfilment; and lifelong learning for social inclusiveness and democratic understanding and activity (see Aspin and Chapman, 2001, pp. 39–40). Elsewhere (Biesta, 2010a) I have proposed a distinction between three domains of educational purpose: the domain of *qualification*, which has to do with the ways in which, through education, individuals become qualified to do certain things (this is the domain of the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and dispositions); the domain of *socialisation*, which has to do with the ways in which, through education, individuals become part of existing social, political, professional, etc. 'orders'; and the domain of *subjectification*, which, in opposition to socialisation, is not about how individuals become part of existing orders but how they can be independent – or as some would say: autonomous – subjects of action and responsibility. While qualification and socialisation can contribute to the empowerment of individuals in that it gives them the power to operate within existing socio-political configurations and settings, subjectification has an orientation towards emancipation, that is, towards ways of doing and being that do not simply accept the given order but have an orientation towards the change of the existing order so that different ways of doing and being become possible. I return to this below.

The problem with the language of learning, therefore, is that it tends to obscure crucial dimensions of educational processes and practices – that is,

aspects of content, purpose and relationships. This not only means that the language of learning is a very unhelpful language in the field of education (and there is indeed evidence that this is impacting negatively on the ability of teachers to engage with the normative and political dimensions of their work; see, for example, Biesta, 2010a, p. 4) – which is why I have coined the rather awkward word 'learnification' to highlight this – but also that it is obscuring the political 'work' that is done with and through the language of learning. To this issue I will now turn.

The politics of learning

While there are many examples of the learnification of educational discourse in the domain of school, college and university education, the 'field' where this has happened most explicitly and most extremely is that of lifelong learning. As I have already indicated, the very fact that this field is now being called lifelong *learning* already highlights the impact of the language of learning on this domain. While the interest in the 'lifelong' dimension has been around for a long time – for example in the work of Basil Yeaxlee in Britain and Eduard Lindeman in the USA (both in the 1920s) – the idea of 'lifelong' has for a long time been connected to the notion of *education* (the title of Yeaxlee's 1929 book was indeed *Lifelong Education*) and not to that of *learning*. Even in the 1970s the rise of interest in the 'lifelong', so to speak, was always connected to education, such as in the landmark 1972 UNESCO report *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow* (Faure et al., 1972) or even in one of the early OECD contributions to the discussion, the 1973 report *Recurrent Education* (OECD, 1973).

Two decades later UNESCO was still pursuing the education line, for example in the 1996 report *Learning: The Treasure Within* (Delors et al., 1996) – but do note the title – which not only argued for the need 'to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education' so that it not only focuses on adaptation 'to changes in the nature of work' but also constitutes 'a continuous process of forming whole human beings' (ibid., p. 19), but also argued for a shift in attention 'from social cohesion to democratic participation' (ibid., chapter 2) and 'from economic growth to human development' (ibid., chapter 3), paying explicit attention to the political, democratic and global dimensions of lifelong learning. *Learning: The Treasure Within* can, in a sense, be read as a response to a rapidly emerging alternative discourse on lifelong learning, one strongly characterised by an economic rationale and a focus on lifelong learning as the development of human capital.

The idea that lifelong learning is first and foremost about the development of human capital so as to secure competitiveness and economic growth played a central role in an influential document published by the OECD in 1997, with the title *Lifelong Learning for All* (OECD, 1997). *Lifelong Learning for All* put a strong emphasis on the economic rationale for lifelong learning – itself understood in the rather formal sense as learning 'throughout life' (ibid., p. 15). It presented the idea of 'lifelong learning for all' as 'the guiding principle for policy strategies

that will respond directly to the need to improve the capacity of individuals, families, workplaces and communities to continuously adapt and renew' (ibid., p. 13). Such adaptation and renewal are presented as necessary in the face of changes in the global economy and the world of work. Lifelong learning 'from early childhood education to active learning in retirement' is thus presented as 'an important factor in promoting employment and economic development', and, in addition to this, also in promoting 'democracy and social cohesion' (ibid., p. 13). Whereas, as mentioned, the Delors' report made a case for shifting the attention from social cohesion *to* democratic participation and from economic growth to human development, *Lifelong Learning for All* went in the opposite direction where it concerns economic growth, and sees democracy and social cohesion as compatible 'agendas' rather than as agendas that are potentially in tension with each other (on this see also Biesta, 2006b).

The shift from lifelong education to lifelong learning signifies a number of things. It is first of all a shift in orientation from lifelong education having to do with personal and democratic aims towards an economic if not *economistic* rationale,[2] in which lifelong learning becomes a matter of the abstract production of human capital, both at the level of individuals and their skills and competences and at the more macro level where lifelong learning then appears as 'a key strategy to adjust human capital to new requirements' (ELLI Development Team, 2008, p. 8). It is, however, not only the *orientation* of lifelong learning that has changed; there are also important changes with regard to its '*form*'. One significant change is the ongoing *individualisation* of lifelong learning, something which Field (2000) shows empirically – his idea of a silent explosion – but which can also be found ideologically, for example in the emphasis on the need for individuals to adapt and adjust to the demands of the global economy, in the reformulation of lifelong learning as the acquisition of a set of flexible skills and competencies, and also, of course, in the subtle but crucial semantic shift from 'lifelong education' – a *relational* concept – to 'lifelong learning' – an *individualistic* concept.

While this is a matter of 'form', it is also a matter of politics. The most important shift at this level concerns the transformation of lifelong learning as a *right* that individuals can claim into a *duty* that all individuals need to live up to (as a more careful reading of the title of OECD's 1997 *Lifelong Learning for All* can reveal: not lifelong learning as *available to* all but lifelong learning as *demanded from* all). Astrid Messerschmidt (2011) connects this shift – which she characterises as the emergence of a kind of 'Bildungspflicht' (a duty to 'Bildung') (Messerschmidt, 2011, p. 18) – to the Lisbon Strategy and highlights, correctly in my view, that with the rise of the duty to 'Bildung' one of the key characteristics of adult education, viz., the voluntary nature of participation, has disappeared.

Elsewhere (Biesta, 2006b, pp. 175–176) I have argued that we can also see this shift as a *reversal* of rights and duties in that, under the lifelong *education* 'paradigm', individuals had a right to lifelong education and the state a duty to provide resources and opportunities, whereas under the lifelong *learning* 'paradigm', individuals have ended up with the duty to learn throughout life, whereas

the state now seems to be in a position where it can claim the right to demand of all its citizens that they learn throughout their lives. One telling example of this is the rise of the notion of 'hard-to-reach-learners' in lifelong learning policy in the UK and other English speaking countries (see, for example, Brackertz, 2007), suggesting that somewhere in the dark concerns of society, there are still a few individuals who refuse to live up to their learning duty.

It is here that we can begin to see the politics of learning at work. There are a number of aspects to this. One key dimension of the politics of learning is the increasing tendency to turn politic problems into learning problems, thus shifting the responsibility for addressing such problems from the state and the collective to the level of individuals. We can see this clearly in the rise of the economic rationale and the fact that individuals are made responsible for keeping up their employability in rapidly changing global markets, rather than that, the question is raised why such markets should rule over the economy and over social and political life more generally in the first place. The issue is entirely defined as a question of individual *adaptation and adjustment* – as a matter of learning – and not as one about structural issues and collective responsibilities.

The pressure is, however, not only coming from the outside, but also from the inside. This has to do with the very 'construction' of the lifelong learner identity as a process of Foucauldian 'governmentality', where individuals begin to identify with and then internalise the demand for lifelong learning (see particularly Rose, 1999). They thus not simply become 'permanently learning subjects' (Field, 2000, p. 35) as a result of external pressures, but actually feel an internal 'need' to construct and conduct themselves in this way (see, for example, Forneck & Wrana, 2005; Fejes, 2006; Biesta, 2006b). Rather than a 'treasure within', learning thus turns into a 'pressure within', so that the politics of learning is being fed by our apparent will to learn (see Simons & Masschelein, 2009).

The politics of learning is also at work in the shift from a democratic interest in lifelong education and lifelong learning towards an emphasis on social cohesion and integration. Part of the problem here – a simple but crucial one – is that a cohesive society is not necessarily or automatically also a democratic society. Also, notions of social integration and cohesion always raise the question as to who needs to be integrated into what or cohere with whom, and also who is allowed to set the agenda and define the terms of integration and cohesion (see also Biesta, 2010a, chapter 6). And again, lifelong learning is being mobilised to facilitate integration and cohesion through processes of adaptation and adjustment similar to what we have seen with regard to adaptation and adjustment to the 'demands' of the economy.

The fourth aspect of the politics of learning that I wish to highlight has to do with the *naturalisation* of learning, that is, with the tendency to see learning as an entirely natural phenomenon – on the same par as breathing and digestion. To suggest that learning is simply part of our biological and increasingly also our neurological 'make up' and therefore is something we cannot help but do – something we cannot *not* do – leads to a slippery slope where (1) learning

first becomes equated with living; (2) then almost necessarily becomes a lifelong process, which (3) next moves to the claim that any normal human being *can* learn; (4) then easily moves to the suggestion that therefore every normal human being *should* learn, so that, (5) in the end, there must be something wrong with you if you do not want to learn and refuse the learner identity.

To highlight these aspects of the politics of learning – that is the political work that is being achieved through the notion and language and discourse of learning – is not to deny that there may be some good aspects to learning (although I am becoming less and less optimistic about that precisely because of the problems outlined above), but to be aware that the language of learning, which fundamentally is an individualistic and individualising and a process rather than a substantive language, is not an innocent language but actually a language that exerts a powerful influence on what we can be and how we can be, one that tends to domesticate rather than to emancipate. But if this is so, what are the opportunities for resistance, and what might learning still have to do there? Let me now turn to these important questions.

De-naturalising learning is re-politicising learning; re-politicising learning requires de-naturalising learning

If part of the way in which the politics of learning is able to do its work stems from the suggestion that learning is a natural process and phenomenon, then the first step towards exposing the political work being done through learning is by de-naturalising learning, that is, highlighting what we might call the artificial nature of learning. One way to de-naturalise the idea of learning is by acknowledging that 'learning' is an *evaluative* concept, not a descriptive one. If we start from the widely accepted definition of learning as any more or less durable change that is not the result of maturation, we can see that when we use the word 'learning' – for example in such sentences as 'John has learned to ride a bicycle' or 'Mary has learned the first law of thermodynamics' – we are not so much *describing* change as that we are making a *judgement* about change. The point is that when we observe John more carefully we will probably be able to identify numerous things that have changed. The reason for identifying some of these changes as 'learning' and others as 'just changes' is because we *value* these changes – either positively, for example when we are proud that John has learned to ride his bike, or negatively, for example when John has picked up some bad habits in the process – and because we have reason to believe that, at least to a certain extent, these changes are the result of interaction with an environment and not just the outcome of maturation.

This indicates that 'learning' is a term which expresses a *judgement*, which suggests that when we use the word learning we are not so much describing a fact as that we are evaluating an event. (We could say, therefore, that learning is not a noun.) It is this judgement, then, that constitutes change as learning. To see

'learning' as an evaluative term can be an effective way to de-naturalise the idea of learning because it allows us, each time the word 'learning' is being used, not only to ask what kind of judgement is being made – that is, what the reasons are for identifying particular change as learning – but also to ask who is involved in making the judgement; who, in other words, claims the power to define particular change as learning (and other change 'just' as change).

The other way in which the idea of learning can be de-naturalised is by simply refusing the very identity of a learner, thus showing that this identity is not inevitable but *can* actually be refused (see also Simons and Masschelein, 2009). Such a refusal can help to make visible that calling someone a learner is actually a very specific intervention, where the claim is made that the one who is being called a learner lacks something, is not yet complete or competent, and therefore needs to engage in further 'learning activity' (see also Biesta, 2010b). While in some specific cases, it is entirely legitimate to make this assumption – for example if one has an explicit desire to master a particular skill or gain particular knowledge or understanding – it is important to keep the learner identity confined to such cases and see it as a pragmatic, time-bound and situation-bound *choice*, and not as a natural state of affairs. Moreover, in some cases it can actually be politically important to refuse the learner identity, particularly in those cases where, as mentioned above, the learner identity is being used to burden individuals with tasks, demands and duties that should be the responsibility of the collective. To refuse the learner identity, to claim that in some cases there is actually nothing to learn – for example to claim that one can speak as a citizen without first having to learn what it means to speak 'properly' (see below; see also Biesta, 2011) – is not to denounce the importance of learning, but to de-naturalise and hence politicise learning so that choices, politics and power become visible. To refuse the learner identity thus at the very same *exposes* and *opposes* the politics of learning at work.

Emancipation without learning?

If the ideas presented so far make some sense, I would, in the final step of my chapter, like to connect this to the difficult but important issue of emancipation. After all, if it is the case that learning has to a large extent become an instrument of domestication if not, to use the beautiful word for which we have to thank the translator of Rancière, an instrument of stultification, then the important question for (us) educators is whether we can still envisage opportunities for emancipation and, more specifically, for emancipation without learning. There are two authors who in my view have made important contributions to this challenge – one being Michel Foucault, the other being Jacques Rancière. I will confine myself here to presenting Foucault's ideas as an example of an understanding of emancipation-without-learning.[3] Let me, in this section, then say something about the role learning plays in 'modern' understandings of emancipation in order then, in the next section, to see whether, with Foucault, we can envisage emancipation *without* learning.

The idea that emancipation requires learning is one that partly has come to us from the Enlightenment and Immanuel Kant's suggestion that we can escape or overcome our immaturity – our determination by the other – if we have the courage to make use of our rational capacities. But more explicitly, the connection between emancipation and learning can be found in the Marxist idea that in order to liberate ourselves from the oppressive workings of power, we need to expose how power operates. What the Marxist tradition adds to this basic idea – and this has, in turn, strongly influenced critical and emancipatory pedagogies – is the notion of ideology, where the claim is not only that all thought is socially determined but also that ideology is thought which denies this determination. The 'predicament of ideology' lies in the suggestion that it is precisely because of the way in which power works upon our consciousness, that we are unable to see how power works upon our consciousness (see Biesta, 2010c). This not only implies that in order to free ourselves from the workings of power, we need to expose how power works upon our consciousness. It also means that in order for us to achieve emancipation, *someone else*, whose consciousness is not subjected to the workings of power, needs to provide us with an account of our objective condition (on this theme see also Honig, 2003). According to this line of thought, therefore, emancipation is ultimately contingent upon the truth about our objective condition, a truth that can only be generated by someone who is positioned outside of the influence of ideology.

The educational 'translation' of this 'logic' of emancipation basically takes two forms, one which can be characterised as *monological* and one which can be characterised as *dialogical*. The monological approach is the most direct translation of the ideas outlined above. It relies on the assumption that emancipation requires an intervention from the outside; an intervention, moreover, by someone who is not subjected to the power that needs to be overcome. Thus emancipation appears as something that is *done to* somebody and hence relies on a fundamental *inequality* between the emancipator and the one to be emancipated. Equality, on this account, becomes the outcome of emancipation; it becomes something that lies in the future. Moreover, it is this outcome which is used to legitimise the interventions of the emancipator. This is a 'logic' of emancipatory education – a logic that we might also call 'colonial' (for example, Andreotti, 2011) – in which the teacher knows and students do not know *yet*; where it is the task of the teacher to explain the world to the students and where it is the task of the students to ultimately become as knowledgeable as the teacher. In this set-up, there is a clear learning task for the student; a task that is basically *reproductive* in that it is aimed at the acquisition of the insights of the teacher-emancipator.

It is one of the main achievements of Paulo Freire to have provided a dialogical alternative in which emancipation is no longer seen as a process of truth-telling by the teacher-emancipator – Freire's notion of 'banking education' – but where it becomes a process of the collective discovery of oppressive structures, processes and practices, a process in which teacher and students are positioned as 'co-subjects' (Freire, 1972, p. 135). Freire characterises oppression as the situation in

which individuals are disconnected from the world and exist as objects of the oppressor's actions rather than as subjects of their own actions. Oppression is thus understood as a process of 'dehumanisation' that occurs when people's natural ways of 'being-in-praxis' are disrupted or suppressed (ibid.). Emancipation on this account is aimed at restoring the connection between human beings and the world; or, in Freire's vocabulary: restoring *praxis*. The role of the teacher in this process is to re-instigate dialogical and reflective practices which in turn re-initiate praxis and link people back to the world (ibid., p. 30). For Freire, emancipation therefore also involves learning – and more, perhaps, than in the banking model of emancipation, this is an ongoing and in a sense lifelong process. The learning is, however, not reproductive but constructive or generative, albeit that it still has an orientation towards truth. Unlike in the monological model, this is *not* the truth given by the teacher to students about their objective condition on the assumption that students are unable to acquire such insights themselves.

For example: Foucault and the practice of transgression

Although I have shown that truth occupies a different position in the monological and the dialogical approach, both approaches ultimately rely on the possibility of truth and, more specifically, truth uncontaminated by power. In the monological approach, this truth is learned from (and thus given by) the teacher; in the dialogical approach, this truth is discovered through a collective learning process. That both approaches rely on the idea of truth uncontaminated by power has, in the monological approach, to do with the fact that emancipation is seen as a process of overcoming ideological distortions. Here emancipation operates as a process of demystification. In the dialogical approach, emancipation is the process that restores true human existence – or in Freirean language: true human praxis. In both cases, truth is needed to overcome alienation, either the alienation produced by false consciousness or the alienation brought about by oppression. For truth to be able to do this 'work', it must be assumed that there is a fundamental distinction between truth and power – and one could indeed argue that this distinction is foundational for the modern project of Enlightenment (for example, Habermas, 1990), evidence of which we can find in the idea of 'speaking truth to power'.

One author who has challenged this very assumption is Michel Foucault. He has argued that power and knowledge *never* occur separately but always come together, something which is expressed in the idea of 'power/knowledge'. This is why he has suggested that we should abandon 'the whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can only exist where the power relations are suspended' (Foucault, 1975, p. 27) – a tradition that forms the basis for both monological and dialogical approaches to emancipation. Yet to argue that we have to abandon this particular tradition is not to suggest that change is no longer possible. It rather is to highlight that we are always operating *within* power/knowledge

'constellations' – that is, of power/knowledge versus power/knowledge – and not of knowledge versus power or power versus knowledge. There is, therefore, potential for action, change and critique, but we have to understand this in terms that are fundamentally different from the idea that emancipation is an *escape* from power.

Foucault agrees with Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant that criticism 'consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits' (Foucault, 1984, p. 45). But:

> if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge had to renounce transgressing (…) the critical question today has to be turned back into a positive one: in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?'
>
> (Ibid.)

In some of his work, Foucault has referred to this approach as 'eventalization' (Foucault, 1991, p. 76). Eventalization 'means making visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness which imposes itself uniformly on all' (ibid.).[4] Eventalization works 'by constructing around the singular event ... a "polygon" or rather a "polyhedron" of intelligibility, the number of whose faces is not given in advance and can never properly be taken as finite' (ibid., p. 77). Eventalization thus means to complicate and to pluralise our understanding of events, their elements, their relations and their domains of reference.

Eventalization therefore does not result in a deeper understanding, an understanding of underlying structures or causes, and in this respect, it does precisely *not* generate the kind of knowledge that will set us free from the workings of those structures or causes. But Foucault has been adamant that this does not mean that such analysis is without effect. What eventalization does *not* generate, so he has argued, is advice or guidelines or instructions as to what is to be done. But what it can bring about is a situation in which people '"no longer know what they do", so that the acts, gestures, discourses which up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous' – and this effect, so he argues, is entirely *intentional* (ibid., p. 84). Eventalization does therefore not result in a deeper or more true understanding of how power works – it only tries to unsettle what is taken for granted – nor does it aim to produce recipes for action. This kind of analysis is therefore not meant to solve problems; it is not a kind of knowledge meant for 'social workers' or 'reformers' but rather for subjects who act. As Foucault explains:

> Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict

> and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage of programming. It is a challenge directed to what is. (Ibid., p. 84)

Rather than to think of emancipation as an escape from power, Foucault envisages emancipation as '*practical* critique that takes the form of a possible transgression' (Foucault, 1984 p. 45; emphasis added). The critical practice of transgression is not meant to overcome limits (not in the least because limits are not only constraining but always also enabling; see Simmons, 1995, p. 69). Transgression rather is the practical and experimental 'illumination of limits' (Foucault, 1977, pp. 33–38; Boyne, 1990) – such as in the attempt to see how far we can go in denying the very existence of learning or the very suggestion that learning has anything to do with us or that we have anything to do with learning.

Foucault's rejection of the founding distinction of modern Enlightenment, that is the distinction between truth and power, does therefore not imply the end of the possibility of emancipation and the end of the possibility of critique, but makes emancipation from an endeavour based on truth – either the truth to be given by the teacher-emancipator or the truth discovered through collective critical learning – into the practical task of *transgression*. Transgression means doing things differently in order to show – or to prove, as Foucault would say – that things can be different and that the way things are is not the way things necessarily should be, that is, that we can also not be a lifelong learner. Thus the emancipatory potential of transgression lies in the possibility 'of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think' – and in precisely this sense, Foucault suggests, 'it is seeking to give a new impetus … to the undefined work of freedom' (Foucault, 1984, p. 46).

With Foucault we can thus begin to see the contours of a different understanding of and approach to emancipation, one where emancipation is no longer an escape from power through demystification, but becomes a practice of transgression – the practical confrontation of different power/knowledge constellations – in order to show that things do not have to be the way they currently are. There is critical work to be done in relation to this, but this is not a process of demystification, of speaking truth to power, but one of eventalization, that is of the *pluralisation* of truth. This also means, and this is quite important for the discussion, that the role of learning in emancipation becomes a radically different one. In one sense we could say that if we follow Foucault there is no longer anything to learn, at least not if we see learning as the condition *for* emancipation. There is, to be more precise, nothing to learn about our objective condition, because if we follow Foucault, we have to give up the idea that we can make a distinction between our objective condition and our distorted understandings of this condition. Similarly there is nothing to learn about our true human existence because, if we follow Foucault, we have to give up the idea that there is one single true human existence – there are many, which is not to suggest that they are all of equal value or worth, nor that human existence is without limits.

While there is, therefore, no longer the suggestion that a particular kind of learning, a learning that discloses the truth, will result in emancipation, this doesn't mean that there is nothing to pick up *from* transgression and pluralisation, as long as we bear in mind that these processes themselves are not driven by learning. It is the transgression and pluralisation that comes first, and what we pick up from our engagement in such emancipatory experiments comes second (and what we do with that is still another matter). In this regard, Foucault's approach does suggest a different connection between learning and emancipation – and one could also say that given the fact that work of freedom for Foucault is undefined, that the process will never come to an end, and in this regard emancipation is a lifelong challenge (not unlike what Freire had in mind, albeit on different terms), that freedom is not a point or a state we can ever reach.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have tried to raise some critical questions about the notion of 'learning', the language of 'learning' and the discourse of 'learning'. My intention has been to unsettle a little the positive if not warm feelings we, as educators, educationalists and people working for change for the better may have for learning, showing the political 'work' that is being done through this notion, particularly the political work that keeps us in our place and domesticates and stultifies us, rather than that it helps us to act differently and be different. I have done this, first of all, by showing some of the problems with the language of learning in educational settings, highlighting the fact that the language of learning tends to obscure those dimensions that make education educational, so to speak. Here I have particularly highlighted the way in which questions about content, purpose and relation easily disappear from view when we start to talk about education in terms of the individualistic and individualising process-language of learning. I have, through a discussion of transformations in the field of lifelong learning, tried to highlight how through the very idea of 'learning' a lot of political work is done, and that even the very construction of lifelong learning as a 'field' is already an example of the politics of learning that is at work. Against this background I have suggested that there is a need for interrupting the politics of learning.

A starting point for such interrupting is to resist the suggestion that learning is a natural process and thus something that simply 'occurs' – as if beyond our control. In addition I have highlighted the importance of refusing the very identity of a learner – and more specifically of a lifelong learner – a refusal that at the same time can *expose* and *oppose* the workings of the politics of learning. In the final step I have connected this to the discussion on emancipation in order to show that to give up the notion of learning does not mean to give up on the idea of emancipation. I have used Foucault as an example of what emancipation-without-learning – which for Foucault becomes emancipation-as-transgression – might look like, also showing how my critique of the politics of learning can itself be understood as an attempt at transgression. This is not

– or not yet – a wholesale denouncement of the idea of learning, as I still want to be open to the possibility that learning can also work for the good (although, as mentioned, I am becoming increasingly pessimistic about this possibility). The crucial issue here is whether it is up to us to decide whether we learn or not, whether to adopt the learner identity or not, or whether we can only subject ourselves to ongoing demands for learning and ongoing demands to fashion ourselves as lifelong learners – that is whether we can only succumb to the duty to learn. This is why I not only believe that we need to continue to interrupt the politics of learning but that, perhaps as part of this, we also need to change the discourse of education from a discourse that relies on the language of learning to one that can be educational *beyond learning* (Biesta, 2006a; see also Biesta, 2015 and Biesta, in press).

Notes

1 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watercliffe_Meadow (accessed 26 February 2017).
2 I use 'economistic' here as referring to the idea of the economy as an aim and value in itself – similar to the difference between 'scientific' and 'scientistic'.
3 For Rancière and for more details of the idea of emancipation-without-learning, I refer the reader to Bingham & Biesta (2010) and to Biesta (2012b; 2017).
4 What I have tried to do with the notion of 'learning' in the earlier parts of this chapter can precisely be understood in this way. That teaching can also proceed without learning is something I demonstrate in Biesta (2015).

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