Chapter 10 - Participation and learning in turbulent times: Negotiations between the community and the personal

Stephen Billett
Griffith University, Australia

The collection of studies that comprises this volume extends existing boundaries and sets new parameters for the scholarly consideration of adults' lifelong learning. This is achieved through capturing the experiences of individuals and communities who can be seen to be 'on the margin' in some ways, and through re-conceptualising the scope for, purposes of and spaces where lifelong learning occurs and, importantly, in ways that are worthwhile for individuals and their communities. Also, the collected contributions presented here do not sit comfortably with some orthodoxies of the lifelong learning literature. Here, there is also a particular freshness and cogency in some chapters, and a sensitive, but scholarly, treatment of topics that would often be seen as marginal, out of bounds or just too difficult for much mainstream academic work about lifelong learning. Moreover, rather than treading lightly, much of the contributions here sharply draw the readers' attention to issues not yet effectively addressed. In doing so, the contributions represent experiences that reflect the contemporary era of turbulent social and economic change and articulate their impact upon communities and groups of individuals who are marginalised or in peril of being so. Indeed, the sections identifying and discussing the particular purposes of individuals' engagement in and learning through their communities that highlight the complexity and sometimes contradictory nature of that participation stands as instances of salient, helpful and fresh scholarly work.

Indeed, well-rehearsed concerns about inequities based on gender, social class or occupation seem almost comfortable positions against considerations of the participation and lifelong learning of sex workers, disenfranchised migrants, psychiatric survivors and retirees, to name some. Moreover, accounts of the negotiations comprising participation and learning through engagement in research projects, community partnerships and organisation, and working lives of different kinds tempt the reader into setting these aside as unnecessary detail and too difficult to do anything about, and prompt a desire to move on (or back to more comfortable terrain). Yet, such an act rightly generates dissatisfaction and a sense of incompleteness. Understanding the theoretical and practical premises and processes of lifelong learning remain incomplete unless consideration is given to how those on-the-margins and their communities are accounted for in these conceptions. While attention has been given elsewhere to more mainstream adult cohorts, those represented here remind that other lifelong needs, purposes and process exist beyond the mainstream. Hence, the contributions here illuminate some of the compelling realities of the messy and complex process of engagement in and learning through social practices.

Consequently, the chapters in this volume engage and test comfortable and already well-rehearsed concerns and, perhaps, the personal biases of readers. In this way they achieve their goal: to consider something of the scope of participation and learning through engaging in communities of different kinds and through different means. This includes illuminating and elaborating the needs of individuals who are categorised in particular ways, yet with these categories failing to adequately account

for their personal stories, needs and aspirations and approaches to learning. In these ways, the contributions here offer relief from texts about lifelong learning which have become increasingly associated with a one dimensional view of lifelong learning as securing optimal economic goals for individuals and those enterprises that employ them. The contributions here remind the reader about the broader project for adult lifelong learning and how it proceeds in different ways in different communities. So, against the backdrop of globalised economic agenda for lifelong learning (OECD, 1996) now pragmatically adopted in many Western economies for personal, workplace and national imperatives (Cohn & Addison, 1998), this collection suggests that the boundaries and scope of adult learning cannot be so easily constrained. Nor are they rendered comprehensive by the kinds of instrumental views and policies that currently constitute the goals for and worth of lifelong learning by global agencies and national governments.

However, more than merely capturing and rehearsing the essence of the volume's contributions, the intention here is to engage with them and consolidate their cases within a conception of lifelong learning premised on participation in communities: participatory practices. There are at least two purposes for doing this. Firstly, to overcome the kinds of marginalisation articulated in these contributions, it is necessary to align the experiences of participating in learning through these communities to existing and robust conceptions of learning and development, thereby legitimating these accounts of lifelong learning and placing them in a more mainstream discourse. Also, as the authors suggest the idea of collectively conducted learning needs to be carefully elaborated. Secondly, throughout this volume, the issue of how to describe and capture this process of learning and its outcomes remains contentious and slightly awkward. The moniker of 'informal learning' is used throughout, and in different ways and combinations. Yet, such a moniker is ultimately unhelpful in describing the kind of learning processes that are reported here, it also denies the ways in which the affordances provided by the communities (albeit in ways which are encouraging or resisting) shape the learning process, and de-emphasises the agentic engagement of humans in the learning processes (Billett, 2002a). Moreover, (Stratton & Jackson, 2007) report not directly employing the terms 'formal', 'non-formal' and 'informal', because "The boundaries between non-formal and informal learning, however, seemed problematic and blurred" (pp.). In this way, this concluding chapter takes up the invitation of the editors who suggested that informal learning is a contested concept and attempts a conceptual reconciliation across the chapters.

Rather than referring to the learning through engagement in communities represented in the contributing chapters as being 'informal', this learning might be understood best as participatory practices (Billett, 2002b). This conception reflects a duality between the affordances (i.e. what is offered to invite the learner to engage and learn -- e.g. direct support, activities interactions) of these communities and individuals' engagement with those communities' activities and interactions, albeit at different levels and in different ways. This follows a view of learning as a rising through participation in social practices (Sfard, 1998). Quite deliberately here, reference is made to other kinds of settings for learning (i.e. workplaces) to suggest that these processes of learning are central to both individual development and societal continuity and transformation. So, rather than being on-the-margin, less potent or legitimate than other ways of learning, learning through participation in communities stands as making these forms of learning 'legitimate' and purposeful,

and, yet in many ways, not so distinct from that which occurs in other kinds of settings.

The case is advanced as follows. Firstly, a set of propositions about viewing adult learning through their engagement in communities as participatory practices is advanced. Central to this concept is the duality between the affordances of the social world (i.e. the communities in which individuals participate) and how individuals elect to engage in those practices, and therefore learn. This duality is negotiated in ways perhaps best characterised as being between the 'social' and 'personal'. Next, the cases presented in this chapter are considered in terms of both affordances and engagement. Emerging through this analysis are patterns of negotiations between these affordances and the different ways participants engagement in their communities. That is, there are relational elements to these negotiations that render inadequate simple prescriptions such as this learning being 'informal'. Finally some links between what is proposed here are more legitimated approaches to learning are advanced, as are some concluding comments about the contributions of the collected work.

Participatory practices

There is a tendency in much of the educational literature to make a distinction between teaching or instruction and learning, with the latter being shaped by the former. However, most contemporary accounts of learning support the view that individuals learning arises through their active and ongoing construction of meaning from what they experience, particularly from the social world through engagement with social practices. That is, not only is learning not dependent upon teaching, but rather that the presence of intentional arrangements to support learning, as in educational institutions is not a requirement for the promotion and securing of rich and purposeful learning (Scribner, 1984). Instead, it seems that our very conscious engagement with the world comprises a continual process of learning. What makes it rich is the affordances (i.e. support, guidance, access to participation) provided and the bases of individuals' engagement with what is afforded. This ongoing learning is necessary for us to make sense of what we experience, make decisions and evaluate our actions and conceptions. In short, there is no separation between the process of thinking and acting, and learning (Lave, 1993; Pelissier, 1991).

The world we engage with can be seen as shaping learning through its contributions of both brute and institutional fact (Searle, 1995). That is, the brute world with its physicality, its demands and, in particular, for adults the process of ageing shapes how we construe and construct what we experience and how we engage in thinking and acting, and as a consequence learning. Yet, particularly for humans and the heritage of knowledge upon which we derive concepts and actions there is also the institutional facts (the conceptual and procedural knowledge to conduct effective work performance) that have been generated over time in response to cultural demands (Scribner, 1985) and are manifested situationally (Billett, 2001). These facts shape what we experience and what and how we learn. Participation in social practices is necessary for individuals to achieve their purposes for doing and learning. This participation however is a process negotiated between what the social world and the brute contributions afford us, on the one hand, and how we engage with what is afforded us, as in participatory practices. Consequently, it is essential to consider human learning and development in terms of the legacies that arise from participation in socially-derived practices, as well as those shaped by the brute world and how individuals. The concept of participatory practices (Billett, 2002b) is one that

acknowledges the factors which afford participation by the social world and the bases by which individuals engage with what is afforded them.

However, beyond this dualistic basis of human learning and development there is another legacy of these negotiations between the personal and social. That is, societal or cultural practices, such as those communities and practices featured in this volume are being constantly remade through the same process of negotiation between the personal and social and brute world. Individuals do not simply reproduce existing social practices, they remake, revised and transform those practices through the same processes of negotiation. Hence, the parallel processes of ontogenetic development (i.e. across the lifespan) and societal contributions are enacted through participatory practices. Importantly, there are dualities between the social and personal relational. What constitutes an invitation to participate in a social practice for one individual might be seen as restricting, inappropriate or unhelpful for another. So, more than considering affordances (i.e. the degree by which the individual is invited to participate in the social practice) and individuals' bases for engagement in that practice, it is necessary to understand the relations between the two of them (Billett, 2006b). It is a consideration of how these negotiations between affordances and engagements play out in the studies contributing to this volume which provide a means to understand the processes of participation and learning through the selection of communities represented here. Indeed, this sentiment is elaborated by (Church, Bascia, & Shragge, 2007) in the first chapter when they remind us that groups and communities are not "simple aggregates of individuals" (P21).

So these propositions are intended to be consistent with those exercised throughout this collection, yet offers a way of capturing their accounts of learning through participation in communities, as participatory practices. For instance, the first chapter critically appraises the orthodox focus of adult learning and concept of 'informal' learning and seeks a more satisfactory conceptual platform, that is able to account for the gamut of practices and communities where individuals participate and learn. The subsequent chapters do much to expand the parameters of what is taken as adult learning, yet the phrase of 'informal' learning persists throughout, in some cases in ways that are both redundant and awkward. Given the way the activities and learning of community participants, senior citizens sex workers, and female migrants etc are shaped by their circumstances, institutional facts of different sorts, not the least being different kinds of collectives that are represented, to describe them as being 'informal' is an unnecessary and not always helpful label.

Affordances and engagements

In order to characterise, an elaborate and in some ways 'legitimate' the learning reported in the accounts of participation in communities of different kinds, in this section instances of affordances, and engagements and the relationships between the two are provided.

Affordances

The concept of affordances or invitational qualities refers to the degree by which individuals are invited to participate by the social practices in which they participate and how that participation is supported, and as a consequence so is their learning. Importantly, the invitational qualities can be positive or negative, and also selective. These affordances can be seen as what comprises the invitational qualities of the social experience (Valsiner, 2000). So whereas a social experience comprises what is expressed by the social world in terms of societal and situational norms and practices,

the invitational qualities are how these norms and practices serve the needs and interests of individuals and cohorts. This invitational qualities or affordances are expressed at a cultural, societal and situational level. For instance, Stratton and Jackson (2007) refer to the way that the affordances associated with family and work life are often distributed in distinct and uneven ways across genders, and issues of class provide instances of the distribution of societal affordances. Others referred to participants and societal status in shaping the invitation to participate in the particular community. These instances reflect the distribution of affordances on societal and cultural bases. Moreover, a range of instances are provided about how these invitational qualities are enacted and distributed in ways that particularly reflect how these contributions to learning are constitutes at the situational level.

Take for example, the description of the development of a research group, in Chapter 1 provides an account of the changing affordances and bases of engagement within a collective endeavour (Church et al 2007a). Overall, it seems that the process of forming a community through which the 'Group Five' projects represented purposeful affordances to what otherwise might have been a wholly marginalising experience within a larger project enacted using a research paradigm and disciplinary bases that alienated the five projects. The affordances provided support for the members and permitted level of engagement ultimately resulted in this publication. To maximise those affordances, the group moved its meeting site from the university setting which was seen as being un-inviting, to an environment that was more invitational and prompted more open participation, it was claimed. However, the invitational qualities in this new space were transformed again through different levels of participation and also by the occasional presence of the manager of the research project.

Similarly, Meaghan's (Meaghan, 2007) account of learning safe work practices among Canadian prostitutes presents a complex instance of the enactment of these affordances. This work is seen as being variously deviant, undesirable and illegal by those outside the sex work community, and sees these workers erroneously portrayed as a health threat. Hence, the kind of societal support or affordances to learn about conducting this work safely is restricted to that which can be afforded within the sex work community. Moreover, this societal sentiment about sex workers leaves open the invitation for others to victimise, take advantage of or otherwise abuse sex workers, and may cause them difficulty in protecting themselves against physical and sexual violence. Such is the exercise of this sentiment, which these workers cannot always rely upon the protection of police, who might be unsympathetic or even exploit these workers. So the societal affordances for these workers are low and represent threats to their safety. Yet, Meaghan (2007) proposes that within the community of sex workers, particularly those engaged in collective practices there is significant support from more experienced co-workers. This extends from techniques associated with sexual practices through to a range of practices and behaviours which make the work less risky. These affordances are characterised as mentoring, apprenticeship and peer education provided by more experienced workers, such as is found in other, yet more societally-sanctioned forms of work.

Moreover, and in consideration of transforming a social practice, Meaghan reports the power of collective action by sex workers has afforded a level of legitimacy, legal standing and societal tolerance in New Zealand which affords support for sex workers. In this way, the sex-worker community is engaged in transforming the societal sentiment about sex workers. However, those workers who operate on the streets are denied some of the affordances of the worker community

that can be found in brothels. The concerns for safe work and affordances to assist people to work safely in this occupation are serious. Meaghan (2007) claims the mortality rate for female prostitutes is 40 times higher than that for the general population. This rate would be the subject of a range of concerns if it pertained to employment that is more socially sanctioned. Consider the occupational health and safety regimes which are enacted to protect miners, fishing boat operatives and forest workers in countries such as Canada. The point here is that societal affordances is central to the kinds of risks that sex workers face and it is the affordances of the community which stand to protect these workers against this risk.

Curiously, analogous here is Bascia's (Bascia, 2007) and Dehli and Fumia (Dehli & Fumia, 2007) accounts of the societal portrayal of teachers, which also renders them open to public criticism and lower levels of support within the community. Portrayals of these workers as being militant, unprofessional and lazy leaves them open to public criticism and constraints how they can act (Dehli & Fumia 2007). So, again the societal sentiment acts as an affordance that constrains teachers' capacity to engage with the community and inhibits the activities of those representing their interests.

Within the Healthy Cities project (Schugurensky & Myers, 2007), there was a range of affordance for senior citizens to engage with local government to advise about generating a better environment for older residents. Many had been invited to participate in this project through their community organisations or affiliations. Processes, spaces and mechanisms for taking up positions were established to make it possible for participants' contributions to be accepted. However, equally, those affordances were not equally distributed. It was noted that the majority of participants were Anglo, and had levels of education which did not represent the senior population of Toronto. Others felt excluded from a process that seems to be more invitational to these particular kinds of individuals, banned themselves. Importantly, as one individual reported, the very views which were not represented were the ones which were most dire and required to be a priority for improving the health and welfare of Toronto citizens.

Conversely, other communities afforded opportunities for those on the margin. The example of the community-based courier service provided by psychiatric survivors afforded them not only with employment, but a capacity to engage in organisational and decision-making roles (Church, Shragge, Fontan, & Ng, 2007). So, more than a scheme that afforded employment, this community-based scheme offered community support and engagement to these survivors of psychiatric care. Through their work, they learnt about providing a service, a capacity to organise and also to assist others. In a similar way, this chapter also reports the activity of a community organisation which supports the learning of English for migrant women, but also indirectly provides them with garment making skills, through an engaging and observing others employed in the garment making industry. But beyond these English language and skill development opportunities, one of the important affordances offered to women who might otherwise be isolated in conducting work which is often home-based. Again, the learning arising here was more than technical; it also secured shared understanding and subjectivity through the development of a collective identity for these women. These examples are noteworthy for the way they highlight the salience, necessity and approach by community organisations to provide affordances to those who are marginalised by societal sentiments and, accordingly, experience little in the way of a welcoming invitation to participate. So, here these communities afford bulwarks against weak societal affordances.

Yet, as if to emphasise the turbulent nature of contemporary times, and potential for shifting relations between communities and their participants, Church et al (2007b) note how perceptions of being positively invitational can quickly change and inhibit participation. For instance, Resto Pop despite a long history of serving the needs of the marginalised in the provision of food and training to prepare food, was perceived as being less invitational to some community groups when it engaged with a government department to secure continuity of its funding. As Church et al (2007b) note, from being, seen as reflecting particular community needs, the restaurant became seen as a pariah by certain affinity groups, who felt it had violated their interests through engaging with government to secure these funds. Hence, perceptions of its affordances, and bases for participation were rapidly changed. In these ways the degree by which individuals were invited to participate and learn in their communities stands as consistent theme across the studies. It is central to their engagement, thereby shaping how and what they learn.

Engagement

Beyond what the community or society affords individuals, are the bases by which individuals elect to participate in socially derived practices, such as work activities or community-organised activities. While these practices and communities afford different levels of invitational qualities, including direct guidance and support for learning, ultimately the bases of individuals' engagement with these practices will be salient in shaping their learning, and how they conduct those practices. For instance, individual researchers within the Group Five research project exercised different bases for engagement in the project, which included the frequency and level of their participation in meetings and interactions associated with this group (Church et al 2007a). Hence, the kind of engagement and for learning was not uniformly experienced across this group of researchers, which have consequences for the continuity of the community of researchers and also opportunities to share their interests with others. The important point here is that tagging a group of individuals as teachers, psychiatric survivors, migrants, older residents etc is not sufficient to understand their participation and lifelong learning. Instead, it seems that individual's perceptions about and ways of participating in communities and socially-derived practices are shaped by personal factors as much as collective attributes.

For instance, garment workers were reported as being agentic in their participation and learning (Church et al 2007b). These socially-isolated workers engaged with others in their community, observed practices and were able to develop shared understanding through participating in activities which otherwise might not have been available to them as isolated and often home-based workers. However, importantly, it is the quality of their engagement of observing, being active participants engaging with and learning about the collective discourse that was being enacted in the restaurant, the community-based courier company. In a similar way, the practices of sex workers require them to be agentic in participating in their work (Meaghan 2007). This includes the negotiation of sexual acts to avoid disease and unwanted pregnancies, but also to protect themselves against physical and sexual assault. Yet, the bases for participating in sex work were quite distinct, thereby exposing these workers to greater or lower levels of risk. Yet, it was suggested that those workers who worked solo, who were usually young or desperate because of an addiction, were less likely to engage in the kinds of safe work practices that were being promoted by more experienced and, perhaps 'in control', sex workers. So here, elements of social and brute fact played out in particular ways which shaped the ways

in which these women engaged in their paid work. Consequently, the bases by which they engage with other workers is premised on important imperatives for them which include distinct bases of being able to be in control of the situation and negotiate their potentially perilous work. The brute fact of addiction and social sentiments about sex work afford little comfort to these individuals.

Similarly, in the Healthy Cities project it was important for older Toronto residents to engage in order to shape local government policy (Schugurensky & Myers 2007). The project offered a basis for individuals to engage and express the concerns and needs about their communities. Yet, again the bases for individuals' engagement were quite diverse. A number of participants in the task force had previously been involved in local government, some earlier had been aldermen. Some of these claimed or feigned some reluctance to be involved, but claimed offered that they became involved because it was in their duty to do so. Yet, others struggled to engage and participate so fully and viewed their engagement was being compromised by their activities and capacities of others. They resented the character of some participants, from higher social and economic status, suggesting that the perspectives they brought were distinct from those that reflected the reality for the most disadvantaged senior citizens in Toronto who were unable to provide themselves with adequate food and pharmaceuticals. A few individuals had sponsored themselves to participate in the project and were keen and agentic to do so (Schugurensky & Myers 2007). In this way, both the need agency as a participant, but the direction and intent of the exercise of that agency can be seen as being distinct.

So the bases of individuals' engagement with what is afforded them as directed by their agency, personal histories and circumstances shaped how they participated and learnt in these communities. That learning is likely shaped by the direction, intensity and focus of their engagement with their capacities to shape their construal and construction of what they experience (Billett, Smith, & Barker, 2005). Yet individuals' capacity to negotiate is shaped by both brute and social facts of the kinds outlined above. Hence, participation and learning through these practices is not uniform. Instead, it is shaped by relations between what is afforded individuals and how they take up what is afforded them.

Relational participation

The sections above emphasise the duality of two contributing elements of the personal (i.e. engagement) and the social (i.e. affordances). The concept of dualities refers to two concepts which are interlinked, in distinction to dualisms, which are held to be concepts which are separate and irreconcilable. So, beyond a consideration of the elements of the duality between the social and personal, the relations between them are central in understanding how individuals engage and learn through their participation. What has been argued elsewhere is that this relationship is relational: that is shaped in different ways by the degree of press that the social world can enact and also the degree by which individuals construe, engage with and can negotiate what they experience (Billett, 2006b). The important point here is that the negotiation between the personal and social is not uniform, even within the same circumstance: it is relational. Hence, the kinds of learning referred to within these contributions is subject to the negotiation between the press of the social world, including the community which individuals participate, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the degree by which individuals recognize this, engage and appropriate what they encounter.

For instance, in Stratton and Jackson's (2007) study of practitioners in community economic development, the insights provided by many academics were viewed as being unrealistic and not related to practice. Consequently, there is requirement for those individuals who can understand the needs of both perspectives to bridge the two fields of endeavour: bridge people. These bridge-builders are a particular kind of academic, they claim. So, whereas many, perhaps the majority of academics are drawn to focus within their own field and institutions, some elect to engage with communities outside universities, responding to the press of their social world in ways that are quite distinct from the majority of academics. So, although for these community development practitioners, the academic community is seen as offering a particular kind of affordances, which are generally held to be unhelpful, it requires the activities of academics with a particular orientation to engage with and assist these practitioners.

Indeed, the bases for participation in the NALL project as discussed in Chapter 1 were clearly relational, as they were in the community that comprise the Group Five projects (Church et al 2007a). Those in the mainstream projects appear to experience a different level of affordances and bases for participation in the overall project. Whereas, those in the 'fringe' projects construed what was afforded them as comprising a lower level of invitation. Moreover, even within the Group Five grouping there were distinct bases of participation.

As noted, there are likely to be quite distinct bases for sex workers to negotiate between the personal and social. As Meaghan (2007) reports, some women are particularly well-positioned to work safely and be in control through regular and wealthy clients, a well-protected environment and careful communication with clients. However, through circumstance others are pressed into more risky practices which highlight the relational bases for negotiating work and working life, and lifelong learning. The contrast is perhaps most starkly represented in the comparison between the experienced sex worker's operation that in the Niagara area, with a regular clientele and efforts to tailor her services to meet their needs, is contrasted, with the indigenous woman in Winnipeg who engages in street prostitution to feed a drug habit. This leaves the latter open to physical and sexual violence and, according to Meaghan, even exploitation by law enforcement officers.

Similarly, and as foreshadowed, the participatory processes which underpinned the Healthy Cities project (Schugurensky & Myers 2007) they were quite distinct and relational bases of participation in the process. Some citizens were selected for their participation because of their experience with community groups and participatory processes, such as local government. These individuals have particular forms of social capital which may have made it easier to engage in the process of contributing to this project. Others, however, referred to being distance and marginalised by language and race. So, whereas some learnt that their previous work in local government was valued and they were well-placed to make further contributions, others learnt that because of their language, race or social origins that they were, again, to be treated in a different and inferior way. So, despite the efforts of an effective chairwoman, the sense was that the affordances and opportunities to learn were unequally distributed.

The point here is that, beyond the affordance and bases of engagement are the particular ways in which the enactment of both of these is relational. While this can be seen as complicating and rendering the processes and outcomes of lifelong learning as being personally unique in some ways, and, therefore, difficult to order from government or societal perspectives, it reflects the reality of this learning. Hence,

there is a need to consider both the array of persona, social and brute factors that shape this learning.

Legitimizing learning through community practice

The conception and enactment of the participatory practices as detailed in the contributions of this volume, have pedagogic and curriculum qualities. The pedagogy of practice is evident in these contributions as is the organisation and enactment of practice curriculums. Evident in the activities of sex workers, migrant women learning about garment making, psychiatric survivors were the enactment of curriculums generated by the community-based activities in which individuals engaged. As well as a being specific pedagogic practices that were identifiable here (i.e. apprenticeship, mentoring, support) and afforded by these workplaces were also the agentic engagement of the participants. Observation, engagement in discussion and community activities were enacted by the participants as learners. So, aspects of practice-based pedagogies were referred to throughout with their intentional purposes of developing capacities and also sustaining and remaking the communities in which the subjects within these studies were participating. There was also evidence of learners being agentic, thereby playing active roles not only in developing their own capacities but also actively remaking the practices in which they engaged. Moreover, some of these communities provided structured opportunities for learning. These are analogous to the organisation of curriculum within educational institutions and are consistent with concepts such as the learning curriculum (Lave, 1990). In this way they are helpful in understanding and legitimating learning through participation in social practice. For instance, at A-Way Express there was a learning pathway which engaged psychiatric survivors not only in the task of being a courier, but also in the organisation and administration of the courier service.

Moreover, there was evidence of not only intended learning outcomes from participation in these communities, but also unintended outcomes, as with any curriculum. For instance, some participants learnt activism through participating in practice. Others, through participating in communities for social purposes, also learnt more about their paid work (e.g. garment workers). The identification of these curriculum and pedagogic dimensions also serves to reinforce the inadequacy of the use of the term 'informal' to describe how learning experiences are organised and enacted in social practices of the kind featured in this volume. So, just as many of the qualities that characterise and legitimate the intended, enacted and experienced curriculum in educational institutions can be identified in workplace settings (Billett, 2006a), similarly in the instances of community and social practices discussed here the same qualities are identifiable. So, as with workplace setting, it seems that the intentional bases for participation, learning and sustaining the communities referred to here stand as purposeful and legitimate instances of curriculum that are not well characterised by the moniker of being 'informal'.

Participation in learning through engagement in communities in turbulent times

The need for a broader set of purposes for adult learning to be legitimised through, a more nuanced understanding of the processes and practices that comprise adults' lifelong learning, and the requirement to understand how these practices impact upon communities and individuals in these turbulent times, all stand as clear objectives for this volume. These objectives are rehearsed throughout and illuminated powerfully in the cases presented herein.

In summary, the scholarly contributions here are fourfold. Firstly, they identify, elaborate and illuminate processes and circumstances of lifelong learning that go beyond those that have traditionally been given attention (i.e. schools, colleges, universities) and those that have received much recent attention (i.e. in large workplaces). Beyond these highly researched and discussed learning spaces are now added participation in community or collaborative programs for migrants, sex workers, psychiatric survivors, home workers, senior citizens, union workers and teachers' classrooms and staff rooms.

Secondly, the collection of work offers some capture the contested process of learning through the process and project of researching adult learning. From the initial misalignment between the major research project and the work of the Group Five, the processes of the research work are made transparent and presented as informative instances of social action and rehearse themes that occur throughout this volume. The explicitness of the research story, its perceived misalignment with mainstream program goals provides a useful contribution about another kind of work: research. This is effectively elaborated through the rich associations between the researchers and those whom they research and write about, and becomes themes for the volume. There is a sense of engagement that sustains and directs the writing of these chapters that provides helpful insights and promotes empathy. Detachment is not part of understanding the needs of migrant women who have been subjected to violence, sex workers, senior citizens, those who have survived psychiatric experiences, and those marginalised through life experiences. There are also explorations of teachers' struggle with their identities and the public (governmental) portrayal of those identities and community education development practitioners' work which informs premises for their agency and learning. So, collectively, this work presents a compelling case for research into adults' goals and learning to be engaged and embodied, not detached and disembodied. In engaging those on the margins, this volume brings to the table perspectives that urge considerations beyond the current orthodoxy of lifelong learning for boosting individuals' enterprises productivity.

Thirdly, the collective contributions emphasise, elaborate and illuminate the complexity of the practices of the social institutions that serve to support and or regulate individuals' participation and learning. Whether it be senior citizens' involvement in local government, sex workers need for supportive and educative practices, community-run restaurants, perceived by others to be compromising their independence through securing government support, the contradictory discourses that teachers are subject to, home workers negotiating with their support agency, or female migrants addressing issues of immigration law, the studies highlight the fractious, contested, and necessarily contradictory practices that are inherent in these engagements. Easy conceptualisations, such as these being the 'hidden' curriculum, are rendered inadequate by the complexities of the interdependence between individuals and social institutions, and among the social institutions involved as exemplified here. The salient conceptual contribution is to emphasise the interweaving of both social and individual contributions to individuals' learning.

Finally, although these studies focus on marginalised individuals and communities, the lessons they afford have a broader implication. In many ways, these studies represent more amplified accounts of individuals struggle for self, development and stability in changing circumstances and turbulent times characterised by increasing insecurity and a loss of stability. Even at the personal level, the brute fact of ageing and the social facts of participating in working life exposes individuals to the need for learning, often compensatory learning, sometimes

critical learning, sometimes socially critical learning as adults work through their lives.

Yet, and in conclusion, to do justice to this rich body of work requires going beyond unhelpful monikers such as 'informal learning'. Instead, it is necessary to understand the actions of the individuals as participants in social life through engagement with particular kinds of communities, and conversely, the ways in which these communities afford opportunities for learning. Together, these comprise the participatory practices through which lifelong learning progresses. However, such participatory practices not the domain of marginalised individuals and communities. They are sets of practices which are played out in educational institutions, large and small workplaces, in the home, and in research projects, and the other kinds of communities and social practices which are represented within this volume. Clearly, the overall project of adult lifelong learning has progressed from focusing on individuals personal and cultural development, outside the workplace and then through and for working life in mainstream activities which nominated as being central to the maintenance and development of national economies. Here, something of the scope of the adult learning project throughout life is rehearsed, elaborated and extended for communities and individuals who, in different ways, seen as being marginalised. It is through these that this volume extends the boundaries of the current accounts of lifelong learning.

References

- Bascia, N. (2007). How Alberta Teachers' Association maintains an even keel. In K. Church, N. Bascia & E. Shragge (Eds.), *Making Sense of Turbulent Times*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Billett, S. (2001). Knowing in practice: Re-conceptualising vocational expertise. *Learning and Instruction*, 11(6), 431-452.
- Billett, S. (2002a). Critiquing workplace learning discourses: Participation and continuity at work. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 34(1), 56-67.
- Billett, S. (2002b). Workplace pedagogic practices: Co-participation and learning. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 50(4), 457-481.
- Billett, S. (2006a). Constituting the workplace curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 38(1), 31-48.
- Billett, S. (2006b). Relational interdependence between social and individual agency in work and working life. *Mind, Culture and Activity*, 13(1), 53-69.
- Billett, S., Smith, R., & Barker, M. (2005). Understanding work, learning and the remaking of cultural practices. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 27(3), 219-237.
- Church, K., Bascia, N., & Shragge, E. (2007). Informal learning: The turbulence of Academic Collaboration. In K. Church, N. Bascia & E. Shragge (Eds.), *Making Sense of Turbulent Times*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Church, K., Shragge, E., Fontan, J. M., & Ng, R. (2007). While no one is watching: Learning in social action among people who are excluded from the labour market. In K. Church, N. Bascia & E. Shragge (Eds.), *Making Sense of Turbulent Times*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Cohn, E., & Addison. (1998). The Economic Returns to Lifelong Learning in OECD countries. *Education Economics*, 6 (3) 253-307.

- Dehli, K., & Fumia, D. (2007). Teachers' informal learning, identity and contemporary education reform. In K. Church, N. Bascia & E. Shragge (Eds.), *Making Sense of Turbulent Times*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Lave, J. (1990). The culture of acquisition and the practice of understanding. In J. W. Stigler, R. A. Shweder & G. Herdt (Eds.), *Cultural psychology* (pp. 259-286). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lave, J. (1993). The practice of learning. In S. Chaiklin & J. Lave (Eds.), *Understanding practice: Perspectives on activity and context* (pp. 3-32). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Meaghan, D. (2007). Stigma to Sage: learning and teaching safer sex practices among Canadian sex trade workers. In K. Church, N. Bascia & E. Shragge (Eds.), *Making Sense of Turbulent Times*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Organisation of Economic and Cultural Development (OECD). (1996). *Lifelong Learning for All*. Paris: OECD.
- Pelissier, C. (1991). The anthropology of teaching and learning. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 20, 75-95.
- Schugurensky, D., & Myers, J. P. (2007). Informal civic learning through engagement in local democracy: The case of the Seniors' Task Force of Healthy City Project. In K. Church, N. Bascia & E. Shragge (Eds.), *Making Sense of Turbulent Times*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Scribner, S. (1984). Studying working intelligence. In B. Rogoff & J. Lave (Eds.), *Everyday cognition: Its development in social context* (pp. 9-40). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Scribner, S. (1985). Vygotsky's use of history. In J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *Culture, communication and cognition: Vygotskian perspectives* (pp. 119-145). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1995). *The Construction of Social Reality*. London: Penguin.
- Sfard, A. (1998). On Two Metaphors for Learning and the Dangers of Choosing Just One. *Educational Researcher*, March, 4-13.
- Stratton, M., & Jackson, E. T. (2007). Knowledge Collisions: Perspectives from CED Practitioners working with women. In K. Church, N. Bascia & E. Shragge (Eds.), *Making Sense of Turbulent Times*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Valsiner, J. (2000). *Culture and Human Development*. London: Sage Publications.