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Lifelong learning - Lifelong education

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Summary

What constitutes of adults' lifelong learning and how it can be supported and guided are the focuses of this contribution as advanced through an elaborative and corrective account. It focuses on both distinguishing and acknowledging the relationship between the concepts of lifelong learning and lifelong education. A corrective is required as the public and governmental discourses often mention lifelong learning when referring to lifelong education and there is also the frequent conflation of these distinct concepts. It is important, therefore, to make clear delineations between them as they are not consonant, but distinct and interdependent. Lifelong learning is advanced as being a personal fact (i.e., learning and development that arises from and is secured by individuals through their experiencing) in diverse ways and through activities and interactions in distinct settings (e.g., workplaces, community and educational) across their lives. Lifelong education is an institutional fact (i.e., its goals, concepts and experiences arise from and are projected by the social world). In schooled societies, experiences in educational institutions and programs are privileged and sometimes seen as encompassing all the worthwhile learning that can occur. However, what shapes and directs that learning is premised upon individuals' readiness (i.e., what they already know, can do and value) and their mediation of what they experience. Also, what constitutes lifelong education needs extending beyond the provision of taught courses offered through educational institutions, to include educative experiences far more broadly. That is, being inclusive of the educative experiences afforded by the communities and work practices in which adults participate and engage in the activities and interactions through which they learn. These include experiences in which adults engage interpersonally and those that are more distant and indirect, such as through engaging with text, social media and other sources of information. So, both concepts are important, as is the interdependence between them. However, without clarity about their distinctiveness and elaborating these two concepts, they may well remain misunderstood and limited in their explanatory power and, their interdependencies not fully elaborated. Identifying these can enhance the utility in guiding the provisions of educative experiences required to support effective learning. Given the range of circumstances and means through which learning and development occurs across adults' working lives, accounting for the range of educative experiences and how they can support and sustain that learning is important. In making this case, emphasis is placed on the learning required for working age adults and how it is supported and mediated within and beyond educational programs.

Keywords: lifelong learning; lifelong education; intentionality, educative experiences, work life learning; employability; occupational purposes; curriculum; social suggestion, interdependencies

Delineating lifelong learning

Across many countries, a growing emphasis is being placed on promoting 'lifelong learning', usually because of economic imperatives. A key event explicitly driving this emphasis globally was the 1996 OECD Year of Lifelong Learning. It emphasized the need for ongoing educational engagement across individuals' working lives for them to remain currently occupationally-competent and employable (Organisation of Economic and Cultural Development (OECD), 1996). Included were expectations that working age adults would actively contribute through their learning to national economic well-being and be prepared to partially sponsor their ongoing development. The imperative for this ongoing learning is usually associated with responding to changing occupational requirements and with workplace competence becoming more dynamic and differentiated (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006). That imperative also includes addressing changes in demographic factors, such as ageing (working) populations. Beyond being promoted by supra-governmental agencies, governments of a nation state often promote these imperatives to become or remain globally competitive in their production of goods and services. This change of emphasis and the policy initiatives flowing from them, transformed views about adults' ongoing learning and educational provisions supporting (Edwards, 2002) and educational provisions primarily about personal enrichment and cultural betterment (Coffield, 2000). In the United Kingdom, for instance, centres and programs in higher education institutions offering non-credit bearing lifelong education were closed, and in Australia the adult education courses offered through the technical and further education colleges were abolished with those institutions' operational mandate to only offer programs leading directly to employable outcomes. These imperatives continue to be exercised across nation states.

However, quite diverse policy responses have emerged across nation states in their response to domestic challenges and exhortations from global agencies. Reports produced by countries on the decade of progress after the 1996 event identified diversity in the goals for lifelong education and approaches taken across nation states. Singapore with its third most aged population globally and an economy largely based upon its citizens' skills made the ongoing work-related learning of its adult population the first priority for sustaining its economic performance (Economic Strategies Committee, 2010). This has led to a series of national initiatives and incentives promoting ongoing development. Elsewhere, countries established and/or built more systematic approaches to continuing education and training (e.g., Germany), whereas other linked educational programs with occupational and workplace innovation (e.g., Switzerland, Scandinavian countries).

Yet, Japan, with the highest aged population globally has not wholly embraced the economic focus of promoting and supporting learning associated with work and workplace imperatives. Perhaps by dint of the electoral power of the aged population, the provision of educational experiences is focused on longevity, cultural betterment, further education and reducing the social isolation of older Japanese (Hori, 2016; Sawano, 2012). In Japan, the enactment of the Lifelong Learning Promotion Act and the formation of the Council for Lifelong Education popularized the term lifelong education to describe education for adults. Eventually, the policy orientation of the Ministry of Education was directed toward the construction of a lifelong learning society (Hori, 2010). Thus, the term "social education" combining "society" with "education", has become an established concept for education that is conscious of society, aimed at society, and involved in society (Matsuda, 2014). These initiatives are organised systemically and wholeheartedly government funded and supported. So, understandably given different histories, institutions and stages of economic and demographic development, the responses to the imperatives associated with adults learning and intentional education efforts have been imagined and enacted in distinct ways across nation states. However, this interest has placed adult learning and adult education far more centrally in the public and governmental discourse and, deservedly, and perhaps in ways more prominent than ever before, and, in ways that will be productive and negative by degree. Some argue that by making adult education provisions subservient to economic imperatives that this marginalises the personal and social needs of adults (Nesbit, 2011).

Here, however, the discussion focuses on how such policies and practices are aligned with the goals of supporting working age adults' sustain their employability across lengthening working lives. This is an important consideration for these adults as their occupational roles and ability to contribute is salient to their sense of self (Noon & Blyton, 2007) and their contributions are important for workplaces' viability and, collectively, national economic and social well-being.

Given the centrality of this focus on adult learning and education, and its alignment to important social and economic goals, it is important that conceptions are clear, and policies are well-informed. Yet, in the ensuing policy discourse, the concepts of lifelong learning and lifelong education have often become conflated and erroneously presented as being synonymous, not only in the public and governmental discourse, but also in the scientific one (Schuller & Watson, 2009). Consequences of this error include the conflation of human learning and development (i.e., lifelong learning) with the provision of educational experiences (i.e., lifelong education), and what constitutes lifelong learning/education often referred to in very narrow terms (i.e., the provision of taught courses) (Schuller & Watson, 2009). Yet, much, if not most of learning across adult life arises through means other than taught courses. Certainly much of adults' learning and development in and through their working lives occurs through both their own efforts and the support of others as they engage in work tasks, with the kinds and frequency of engagement in problem-solving tasks and discretion being central to the kinds and qualities of that learning (Billett, 2015; Organisation for Economic Co-operational and Development, 2013). However, structured educative experiences (i.e., lifelong education) are particularly important for these adults during transitions they confront across their working lives (Billett et al., 2020). They provide the kind of structured educational experiences, direct teaching of knowledge that might not be learnt by discovery alone and certification of that learning that is essential in such transitions. Yet, these educative experiences are often, but far from always, organised taught courses that provide certification (Billett et al., 2020). Moreover, they are also likely to be supported and augmented by experiences within the community in which these adults live and engage. Consequently, we need clear understandings about what constitutes processes of lifelong learning and how these can be augmented by educative experiences. That is, to identify what constitutes effective lifelong education. More than being distinct, they are interdependent. Adults' lifelong learning is often supported by different kinds of educative experiences (i.e., lifelong education) and these experiences are themselves rendered helpful for individuals and society by effective lifelong learning processes and outcomes.

This chapter seeks to delineate and elaborate these key concepts and how learning across working life can be supported through lifelong educational provisions and broadly achieving personal, community and workplace outcomes. Without clear understandings, even the most pragmatic policies and practices associated with the lifelong learning, such as the current policy emphasis on working age adults' employability across lengthening working lives, may be illdirected and unsuccessful. This requires pushing back and offering a corrective for the unhelpful and erroneous concepts pervading the current lifelong learning discourse. This contribution commences by proposing why making this distinction between lifelong learning and lifelong education is salient. These two concepts are then briefly delineated, described, and elaborated, and their interrelatedness emphasised before discussing how lifelong learning can be promoted, supported and guided in ways that can meet both personal and institutional goals.

Lifelong learning versus lifelong education

As noted, a corrective is now required to respond to erroneous and unhelpful references to and statements about 'lifelong learning' being made in the governmental, popular and scientific discourses (Billett, 2010). Those references often conflate the process of learning across adult life (i.e., lifelong learning) and lifelong education – the provision of experiences to promote specific learning outcomes, and usually with the latter subsuming the former. One way to clearly distinguish these two concepts is to emphasize that one is shaped by personal factors (Billett 2009) and the other by societal or institutional factors (Searle 1995). Lifelong learning is a personal process. It is something that is person-particular and mediated through the process of individuals' experiencing – how they make sense of and respond to what they experience. That process of construal and construction is premised upon what individual adults know, can do and value, that has arisen from their earlier experiences. That is, they arise from the outcomes of personally unique set of pre-mediate experiences that individuals have across the life course (Billett, 2003), referred to as their ontogenetic development that arises across individuals' life course (Cole, 2007). Conversely, lifelong education is an institutional fact (Searle, 1995) arising from and projected by the social world, usually in the form of the intentional provisions of particular kinds of experiences. Lifelong learning occurs continually - micro genetically - as individuals engage in actions and interactions with others and social sources everyday and across their lives (Rogoff, 1990). These include intentional educational experiences organized and labelled as continuing education and training, further education, professional development etc. However, lifelong education is not constrained to these kinds of educative experiences. Activities and interactions that are highly educative arise for working age adults in and through their work, seemingly very frequently (Organisation for Economic Co-operational and Development, 2013). Unlike for children and adolescents for whom engagement with educational institutions is compulsory and ubiquitous, this is not the case for working age adults. So, in the current social and economic context, we need to know how adults' learning can be best supported and augmented for remaining employable until they are at least into their seventh decade. This includes emphasizing that lifelong learning cannot be defined by, accounted for or is captive to the programs and practices of and actors within educational institutions (i.e. lifelong education). Across human history and also individuals' personal histories, most of that learning will occur outside of those institutions and direct teaching by others (Billett, 2014).

Distinguishing between these two concepts is important for at least three reasons. As noted, firstly, much of the learning to realize and sustain employability does not arise through participation in educational programs and being taught. So, there is a need to be inclusive of the educative experiences that promote, support and augment their learning. Secondly, individuals' learning is not wholly dependent upon the contributions of others, such as those who guide and teach. Much, and likely the majority and perhaps all of individuals' learning other than sensory responses arises from their mediation of what they experience (Donald, 1991; Tomasello, 2014) both individually, or through engagement with others within and outside of intentional educational experiences. Put simply, what is projected by the social world is variously accepted, ignored or even rebuffed by individuals depending upon their priorities, capacities and interests (Valsiner, 1998), and how they elect to engage with what is suggested to them (J. V. Wertsch, 1998). This engagement emphasizes the centrality of relations between lifelong learning and lifelong education, including their interdependence. Thirdly, it is important to know what kinds of experiences contribute to the kinds of learning needed by these individuals, communities in which they live, and their workplaces. These understandings can only arise from appreciation of their duality: on the one hand, the kinds of experiences that need to be afforded by individuals, and, on the other, the basis by which individuals are likely to engage with them. For instance, workplaces that afford the opportunities for individuals to engage in non-routine problem-solving, discretion in their work and are open to involving them in innovations are more likely to develop deeper understandings, strategic procedural knowledge and occupationally aligned dispositions in and through their work life than those that do not.

Delineating lifelong learning and lifelong education

This section seeks to delineate lifelong learning from lifelong education. Those working in education have long recognized the distinctions between provision of educational experiences and individuals taking up of those experiences. Hence, educational goals, aims and objectives are described as being intentions: that the educational experience intends to secure, but with no certainty those intended legacies will arise. So, one way to distinguish these two concepts is to delineate them on bases of key educational precepts: goals, experiences, legacies, mediation and worklife focus. Table 1 presents these distinctions in overview, which are subsequently elaborated. In its left-hand column the key precepts (i.e., factors and their goals, experiences, legacies, mediation, conceptions of work) are presented as are precis statements about their manifestation in the central column (i.e., Lifelong learning) and right-hand column (i.e., Lifelong education). The first of these comprises categories of factors and their goals; the second is what constitutes experiences from those two perspectives then the outcomes or legacies to be achieved through those experiences, qualities of mediation; and, finally, considerations of learning for working life are conceptions of its objects. The case made here is that these are important distinctions conceptually, yet also inform and attempt to achieve the kinds of processes and outcomes that are important for adults, their workplaces and nation states.

Table 1. *Differing premises of lifelong learning and lifelong education*

	Lifelong learning	**Lifelong education**
Factors and goals	Personal fact & goals	Institutional/social factors & goals
Experiences	Process of experiencing	Provision of experiences
Legacies	Learning & development	Societal continuity &/or change
Mediation	Knowing -what individuals know, can do, & value	Projection of the social world
Worklife focus	Vocations	Occupations

These delineations between the two concepts are now described in greater detail.

Facts, factors and goals: Personal and institutional

There are clear ontological delineations between lifelong learning and lifelong education with the former being a personal fact (Billett, 2009) and the latter being an institutional fact (Searle, 1995). Lifelong learning is founded in personal experiences and epistemologies, lifelong education is founded and projected within the social world. So, they cannot simply be conflated. The former comprises what individuals know, can do and value as manifested in their personal epistemologies (Baldwin, 1894; Billett, 2009) and directed by their intentionalities (Malle, Moses, & Baldwin, 2001) as they initiate, engage and construe meaning (i.e. learn) from the physical and social world they inhabit. The latter comprises norms, forms and practices that have societal and social geneses (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Ratner, 2000; J. V. Wertsch & Addison-Stone, 1985). There are also clear delineations in the purposes of goals that are seeking to be achieved. Individuals' lifelong learning is likely directed towards goals that are personally significant to them and constructed by them. These are likely to change across their lives as their personal imperatives transform. Immediately and situationally, that learning might be directed towards overcoming problems, dissonances or perturbations, such as those they regularly encounter in their work (OECD, 2013). So, strategic intentions, and the effort and agency directed towards achieving them as well as the capacities and interests to do so are constructs that individuals possess. The processes of securing goals are also likely dependent upon what individuals' capacities (i.e. what they know, can do and value) and alignments with and gaps between them and as directed by their intentionalities (Malle et al., 2001). All of these arise in person-specific ways across individuals' ontogenies and are shaped by their earlier or premediate experiences (Valsiner & van der Veer, 2000) shaping how individuals make meaning from subsequent experiences. Distinct from this, lifelong educative provisions either in the workplace or in hybrid institutions (i.e., schools, colleges, universities) focused on educational programs have goals aligned and associated with social and situational imperatives. Educational programs are mostly products of institutional imperatives and shaped accordingly (e.g., what schools want to achieve, education authorities want realized) whereas those in workplaces are directed to their goals and shaped by workplace norms, forms and practices (Gherardi, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Consequently, institutional goals can comprise a general level of continuity and effective response to change leading to sustainability at a national level, through to specific level of the achievement of specific kinds of outcomes such as enterprise profitability, employee continuity, level of certification and completion of educational courses etc.

Put plainly, there are two ontologically distinct, yet interdependent, kinds of goals: individuals' learning and development, on the one hand, and continuity and/or development of the social institutions, on the other. Hence, the goals and process of lifelong learning will always be person-dependent; and changes within social institutions will impact interdependently on the norms, forms and practices such as the kinds and quality of educative experiences and for what purposes they are made available.

Experiences

What constitutes experiences across these two concepts are also ontologically distinct. Learning arises through the process of individuals' experiencing. Their engagement with what they experience (i.e., construing and constructing) is what leads to change (i.e., learning), as these experiences are categorized, propositions generated, procedures enacted and honed or contested, and values appraised through the process of experiencing. For individuals, that process comprises microgenetic development, the moment by moment learning that occurs through having experiences (Rogoff, 1990). Here, the distinction between learning and development is also evident. This incremental learning through experiencing is both shaped by and shapes micro genetically the development that comprises individuals' ontogenies that comprise what individuals know, can do and value. It is these qualities that shape how they engage with what they encounter (i.e., experiences) and construct meaning through that process. That is, earlier experiences in their personal lives shape how they make sense of what they subsequently experience (Valsiner 1998). In this way, individuals' experiences and experiencing that shapes their learning are a product of person-specific earlier processes of experiencing.

Lifelong education comprises the provision of experiences that are usually intentionally organized to variously achieve the goals of education institutions, programs, workplaces or communities and are associated with their viability and continuity. From this perspective, experiences provided and projected by these social institutions are shaped by their imperatives. Those experiences are also shaped by situational manifestations and requirements, such as availability of resources and qualities of actors and interlocutors (e.g., teachers and experienced co-workers), rehearsing these socia institutions norms, forms and practices of these social institutions and are distinct from how individuals come to experience them. In these ways, lifelong learning comprises the process of experiencing from which change arises in reinforcing, refining or transforming what individuals know, can do and value, whereas experiences from social institutions (i.e., lifelong education) are a product of their norms, forms and practices. In these ways, experiences are quite distinct across these two concepts.

Legacies

Legacies are the consequences of something happening or being enacted. As foreshadowed, the legacies between lifelong learning and lifelong education are quite distinct. Through experiences, learning and development arise in the form of changes in what individuals know, can do and value through micro genetic development. This process, iteratively and reciprocally, contributes to individuals' ontogenetic development (Cole, 2007). So, the legacies of lifelong learning are about changes in what individuals know, can do and value (i.e., their conceptual, procedural and dispositional capacities) that incrementally contribute to their ontogenetic development.

Quite distinct from this, lifelong education efforts and initiatives seek to bring about changes that are often predetermined in the content to be learnt, forms of knowledge to be assessed, and the kinds of outcomes aimed to be achieved. These can include from educational institutions, workplaces or communities realizing the kinds of continuity and change they wish to achieve. How the legacies of intentional education provisions are evaluated is in the degree by which they achieve what they intend to realize. This can overlook or not capture the range of important unintended outcomes that arise from their design, enactment and process of experiencing. Hence, these distinct kinds of legacies are again used to differentiate between what constitutes lifelong learning and lifelong education, but also emphasize their relations with one another.

Mediation: Personal and social

Mediation refers to the process of intervening to make something happen. Two forms of mediation are evident in the distinctions between lifelong learning and lifelong education. The first is the personal: how individuals mediate what they experience, as referred to here is the process of experiencing (Billett, 2018). That is, how individuals' sensory and cognitive systems respond to what they experience. At one level, those responses are beyond individuals' conscious control as they include sensory and neural responses that sit beyond conscious mediation (e.g., exposure to pain, heat, smell). However, much conscious mediation occurs as individuals elect how to and subsequently engage with what is being suggested to them in the social world. There is a need to be selective in what they respond to as the active engagement of our personal epistemologies. Beyond the process of making sense of what is being projected, when engaging in social interactions, tasks or in everyday thinking and acting, individuals can deliberately ignore or avoid much of this social suggestion to focus on the task or goals they want to achieve. Valsiner (1998) suggests that we continually need to actively rebuff much of the social suggestion we encounter to avoid being distracted or overwhelmed by what is being projected, through processes such as averting gaze (Glenberg, Schroeder, & Robertson, 1998).

Then, there is the mediational means through which social institutions project their suggestions (Berger & Luckman, 1967). These include language (Boden & Zimmerman, 1991), symbols and symbolic forms (Downey, 2010) that comprise cultural means through which the social suggestion is projected (J. V. Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992). Included here are the kinds of conceptual, procedural and dispositional knowledge required to practice occupations. These are projected through the actions of individuals, workplace norms and practices, and as captured and presented in documents, statements of work roles and work requirements against which performance is appraised. These forms of mediation are also projected through intentional educational programs, teachers' actions and the educational institutions and workplaces' priorities, practices and artefacts. Importantly, as the knowledge required for work and occupations arises through the social world, this projection and its ability to be engaged with and mediated by individuals is central to the ongoing development of individuals and their learning and it is also central to the viability and continuity of their workplaces. In this way, although distinct, there is an interdependence between these mediational means. The knowledge required across working life needs to be accessed through engagement with the social world and, the social world needs to project that knowledge in ways that individuals can engage with it and mediated in ways that lead to effective learning.

So, whilst these two forms of mediation are distinct, they are also interdependent. Individuals' lifelong learning efforts are supported by what is mediated socially, as much of the learnt knowledge does not come from within us but, instead, need to be secured through access to that knowledge through social means – inter-psychologically (J. W. Wertsch, 1991). Equally, the suggestion of the social world is never clearly projected or can be unequivocal or unambiguous requiring individuals to interpret it in particular ways. Indeed, if the social suggestion could be perceived with the fidelity of its intent, there would be no need to communicate (Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989). That is, the suggestions from the social world would be explicit, easily understood and there would be no need for language or discussion. Instead, individuals construe and construct meaning from what is suggested to them in ways mediated by the personal epistemologies. Indeed, it is this very process that is aligned with the Vygotskian concepts of higher mental function (J. V. Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992). This is a long way from accepting that individuals unquestioningly appropriate what is suggested to them socially, although they may elect to do so.

Worklife focus

Given that much of the current considerations about lifelong learning and lifelong education are about the capacities and sense of self associated with employability in specific occupations, it is worthwhile noting how these concepts are construed as personal and institutional facts. The key distinction is between vocations (i.e., the personal) and occupations (i.e., the institutional). Vocations are personal facts as they comprise how and with what individuals elect to identify and, as a consequence, their sense of self becomes associated with the particular occupation (Noon & Blyton, 2007) and this guides and directs their actions and also their relations with others (Dewey, 1916). It is only they that can assent to their occupation becoming their calling or vocation (Mishler, 2004). These arise through and contribute to individuals' ontogenetic development and extend to their sense of self or subjectivity as working age adults. Conversely, occupations are institutional facts that exist, are transformed, and increase and decline in demand and importance depending on societal needs. Hence, occupations and their transformations are product of institutional factors: history, culture and situation (Barley, Bechky, & Milliken, 2017; Noon, Blyton, & Morrell, 2013). Individuals' worklife learning efforts are, therefore, often associated with achieving personal goals and satisfactions including developing sustaining their sense of self as an occupational practitioner. Certainly, that sense of self in the capacities required arise through social world and are captured as occupations. However, the geneses and legacies of these two concepts are distinct as personal and institutional facts (i.e., vocations versus occupations). So, again these conceptions of key focuses for working life are quite distinct ontologically, yet interdependent. Individuals' vocations are reliant upon the existence of occupations, their worth, ability to learn and engage in them and also being subject to transformation and change. Equally, without individuals wanting to embrace, commit to, sustain and extend their occupational capacities in responding to constant challenges and changes, these occupations would remain moribund, unresponsive and decline.

In the sections above what has been proposed is that there are clear ontological and categorical distinctions between the concepts of lifelong learning and lifelong education delineated in terms of their factual basis (i.e., personal versus institutional), how what constitutes experiences conceptualized, the legacies arising from changes, what constitutes mediation and, of particular importance for worklife learning, how it is conceptualized. Yet also, the interdependence between these distinct concepts is also evident. To understand those interdependencies, requires delineating and elaborating their distinctiveness.

The attempt here is to address and correct conflation of these two terms that has arisen and is being prosecuted within the public, governmental and even scientific discourse. Without that clarification and delineation, their purposes for individuals and communities fully understood and their enactment may be constrained, which includes the interdependence between them.

This leads to the second part of this discussion that seeks to open considerations of lifelong education as a means through which lifelong learning can be guided and supported. Central here is a broader view of educative experiences often currently characterizing what constitutes the lifelong educational discourse and practices. This includes opening the social and physical circumstances in which those educative experiences are afforded, and guidance provided to adults. So, just as the first section aimed to delineate lifelong learning and lifelong education and acknowledge the interdependence between the two, the key purpose here is to unshackle conceptions of lifelong education, its practices and means of engagement from conceptions constrained to taught courses or those that are intentionally facilitated and directed towards educational goals (e.g., professional development).

Educative experiences supporting lifelong learning

What constitutes lifelong education needs to go beyond taught courses and be more inclusive of the kinds and range of educative experiences supporting working age adults' learning. As noted, the majority of learning across working life occurs outside of those taught programs, although they are often essential as adults negotiate transitions from one occupation to another or one form of work, location, country to another. Suggesting other kinds of experiences are required is not to deny importance of these educational provisions, but to be open to the range of educative experiences that should be categorised as lifelong education. Across countries with distinct social and economic histories, these educational programs have been extremely helpful for promoting the interests of adults and meeting their needs as learners (Billett & Dymock 2020). Often this has occurred in the absence of broad societal or governmental interest that has tended to privilege the education of children and adolescents. Curiously, this governmental neglect often led to adult education movements having very grounded origins. Nesbit (2011) has commented that the origins and provision of adult education was often associated with the term 'movement'. That is, they have come to be initiated and sustained within local communities in response to perceived need (Billett & Dymock, 2020). Whilst in some countries, these responses were to create stand-alone education institutions, such as the Scandinavian folk schools or universities, in other countries they arose from associations primarily focused on adults' betterment. For instance, mechanics institutes, schools of the arts, working men's associations were a product of localized responses to perceived or actual disadvantage being experienced by adults. The initiation and organization of these adult education provisions were through sectional, political and sometimes religious affiliations. These were also sometimes supported through local government institutions such as libraries

State engagement with adult education has, however, increased in recent decades as governmental concerns about the ongoing development of working age adults to meet emerging economic challenges have arisen (Coffield, 2000). This process commenced in countries with advanced industrial economies in the final quarter of the 20th-century when it was realised that in an increasingly globalised economy, remaining economically competitive and sustaining life quality was partially premised upon the skilfulness of their workforces. Moreover, that initial occupational preparation taken between schooling and working life was insufficient to maintain that skilfulness across the entirety of their working life. It is no coincidence that OECD's Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996 occurred during this era which led to reforms and restructuring of educational provisions for adults as noted above. Since then, many countries have increased their interest in the ongoing development of adults, albeit often in ways aligned to achieving key economic goals, as also foreshadowed. These efforts have tended to displace the kinds of general education associated with cultural betterment and enrichment that were previously the key goals for adult education provisions and institutions.

Moreover, as noted, adult education is not compulsory and only occasionally mandated. Therefore, it is adults' volition and interests that largely determine their participation. So, whilst these educational provisions have become increasingly important and central to governmental policies to meet economic and social goals, the premises by which individuals engage in them are distinct from those of school-aged children and adolescents needing to engage in tertiary education provisions. Increasingly, however, working age adults are being pressed into participating in the kinds of programs that governments view as being necessary. Mandatory requirements for ongoing professional development have featured in the employment conditions, including licensing to work in many occupations. Moreover, as the need for specific occupations becomes scarcer and the labour market becomes more competitive, these imperatives are leading to adults needing to participate in adult education to secure new occupational skills. However, the kind, extent and level of engagement in these programs are distinct from those for younger people.

However, to achieve the kinds of goals that governments and global agencies want to realise means going beyond their participation in taught courses, organised professional development activities or mandated training. Instead, the significant contributions to adults learning that come from educative experiences outside of these intentional educational arrangements need to be included. For instance, individuals' work provides a range of educative experiences from which working age adults learn. PIAAC data clearly indicates that adults learn frequently in and through their work and that they report this as being a product of their own efforts more than those of interaction with more experienced co-workers (OECD, 2013). Moreover, the same data indictes the frequency by which workers engage in both routine and non-routine problem-solving in and through their work on a very regular basis, and even daily. Participation in routine problem-solving serves to reinforce, refine and hone what individuals know can do and value (Billett, 2015). Non-routine problem-solving leads to the development of new understandings, procedures and transformations in values. All of this is associated with rich learning for working life. These capacities are exercised and extended across all kinds and classifications of workers of all ages and genders. The point here is that much learning occurs in and through adults' working life and these are far more likely to be the source of adult learning across the lifespan than participation in educational programs. Moreover, work-related activities such as engaging in non-routine problem-solving are inherently pedagogically-rich: they have inherent qualities to develop workers' capacities. Also, some workplace activities provide opportunities for discussing and sharing perspectives, engaging in tasks, trialling and evaluating procedures they are implementing and evaluating their effectiveness are providers of rich learning experiences. It is these kinds of experiences that potentially can lead to the development of adaptable knowledge. So, it is important to acknowledge and value the range of educative experiences that adults engage in outside of direct educational programs. That is, to view lifelong education far more broadly than those experiences provided through the kinds of orthodoxies of taught courses and facilitated processes offered through educational institutions.

As noted, this is not to diminish the importance of educational provisions that are essential as working age adults are moving from one occupation to another, engaging with entirely new learning or traversing movement through them. In these circumstances, and that these times, access to structured educational experiences that support the development of significant bodies of conceptual, procedural and dispositional knowledge associated with a domain of activities (i.e., occupation, discipline) is of great importance and also offers certification and institutional endorsement of their learning. The point here though is what occurs in between these transitions, and supports those transitions is also a key and perhaps most of the workers' lifelong learning occurs outside of such programs. Recent work has also indicated that engagement in individuals' communities often provides access, guidance, support and experiences augmenting that learning which often are essential for their transitions and learning (Billett et al., 2020). In a study following the life histories of a cohort of workers in nearly every instance, those transitions were facilitated by support from within the community that variously initiated, enabled or directly supported their learning and those transitions. That support came from family, acquaintances, happen chance events within the community, familiars or circumstances that were facilitated by those communities.

Put simply, lifelong education provisions on their own are insufficient to support the ongoing development across working life. Instead, a broader range of educative experiences needs to be included. For instance, in a study on how small business operators learnt to administer a goods and service tax, it was trusted familiars (e.g., family members, peers, helpful informants) who provided access to the knowledge, and the forums for that learning were often places where these individuals came together for other purposes but provided the opportunity for sharing, comparing and understanding how the administration of the tax was manifested in their particular business (Ehrich & Billett, 2006). So not only is it a question of including educational-like activities else where (e.g., pedagogically-rich activities, close guidance), but also the social circumstances in which these events can occur.

This then returns to the focus on lifelong learning. It is not possible to refer to that learning without acknowledging the importance of engaging with others and as mediated by individuals' capacities, intentionality, agency and subjectivity. As noted, it is working age adults that ultimately mediate how they participate in both formalised lifelong education provisions and the kinds of educative experiences. Consequently, the qualities of educative experiences need to include how these adults come to engage with them. So, the volition to participate in educative experiences to effectively learn is very much mediated by individuals themselves and this is central to their learning. Effective lifelong education provisions need to focus on, be accessible to, meeting adults' needs and ways of engaging with them. The means, provisions and experiences that are aligned with their interests and learning goals are likely to be far more effective than those designed and enacted by agencies that are remote from knowing these individuals' needs and being able to respond to them.

Lifelong learning and lifelong education: an interdependence

In sum, rather than viewing lifelong learning and lifelong education to be consonant, it had been proposed here that they are ontologically, conceptually and procedurally distinct. Moreover, understanding what constitutes lifelong learning and how it best can be supported requires an understanding of the relationships between lifelong learning and lifelong education, broadly cast, which includes the interdependence between them both. Essentially, one is a personal and the other is an institutional fact. As advanced, one reason to make these distinctions is because lifelong learning is not restricted to participation in lifelong learning interludes such as offered through educational institutions and enacted by teachers. Instead, there are firstly, a far broader range of educative experiences that individuals engage in across their lives and support specific learning outcomes such as worklife learning outcomes. These experiences in adult life are far less likely to be provided by participation in formalized lifelong education, but come through other kinds of experiences in community and workplaces. However, there are important roles for these formalised provisions of education.

In particular, it seems that as individuals engage in transitions from one occupation to another, or one locational circumstance to another such programs are likely to be essential, not least to provide certification of the knowledge that has been learnt and the kinds of performances that can be provided by the graduate. It also captures the ongoing learning and need for mediating the suggestions arising through contemporary life with its barrage of news, information that is perpetuated and suggested by electronic media. Added here is the requirements of learning for and through individual agency required for addressing the expectations of individuals having to make decisions about their healthcare, finance and other aspects of life. Faced with choices and discretion, adults are asked to be informed about and make decisions with a widening range of life challenges. All of this is both needing of and generative of learning through every living.

So, as the agendas about continuous learning across working life gain momentum, it becomes important to understand the processes of lifelong learning and the different ways that that learning can be informed and guided by others, augmented through educative experiences in the community and workplaces and through educational programs. However, for all of this to occur there needs to be a strong understanding of the roles that individuals lifelong learning efforts can play, those experiences that can be provided in workplaces and community, and those within educational institutions. Perhaps only through this can the concerns of government and supra-government agencies, the needs of workplaces, and the requirements and aspirations of individuals as lifelong learners be realized.

Further Reading

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