

Chapter 2

Conceptualising Lifelong Learning in Contemporary Times

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2.1 Learning Across Working Lives

Concerns about sustaining individuals' employability across their working lives have emerged in recent years as a priority for governments, industry, workplaces and professional groups. Much of this concern is premised upon the emerging consequences of the changing demands for occupations (e.g. skills currency), requirements for sustaining the capacities for performance within those occupations, transforming needs of workplaces, licensing authorities and those brought about by emerging technologies and workplace practices. All of these changing requirements for work emphasise that initial occupational preparation will be insufficient for sustaining employability and occupational competence across lengthening working lives. Instead, the ongoing development of workers' capacities – learning across working lives – is now required. Concomitantly, there is also a growing governmental emphasis on educational provisions that can support this ongoing learning. The need for what is referred to as 'lifelong learning' has become widely used in everyday and governmental discourses to describe this requirements for ongoing development (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2010). This term is now accepted within the educational discourse, yet often with a lack of precision and much ambiguity (Billett 2010).

For instance, there is often confusion between, on the one hand, the ongoing human process of learning and development (i.e. lifelong learning) and, on the other, the provision of educational programmes and experiences to meet needs across lives (i.e. lifelong education). This confusion is exemplified prominently in a recent government-funded report on lifelong learning that was intended to shape the policies in practice in the United Kingdom for the foreseeable future (Schuller and Watson 2009). A fundamental category error was made within this report. It confuses lifelong learning with lifelong education and suggests they are one and

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the same. The outcome is that this report and its recommendations offered narrow prescriptions of how lifelong learning might be considered, supported and the range of provisions supporting it (i.e. through lifelong education). This erroneous categorisation distorts understandings about and means by which ongoing learning across life and the recognition of that learning is considered and supported. For instance, not only in the above-mentioned report, but elsewhere, the term 'lifelong learning' has quite commonly associated with continuing education courses or professional development programmes. That is, lifelong learning has become associated with individuals' participation in educational provisions, when these are just one set of experiences through which individuals learn across their adult lives. Moreover, these educational provisions are quite procedurally and conceptually distinct from individuals' acts of learning and development across their lives that occur through everyday activities and interactions, including their workplaces. The former (i.e. educational programmes and workplace provisions) are institutional or societal facts (i.e. they arise through social forms, norms and structures). However, learning through these experiences and others are personal facts (i.e. they arise through personal processes and means, albeit shaped by social and physical world) (Billett 2009a). Hence, categorical errors are made, which restrict considerations of lifelong learning (i.e. something that largely happens through courses). Also, it suggests that the learning occurring through these programmes is privileged over other kinds of experiences and is usually accompanied by the certification of what has been learnt, whereas other experiences are not. All of this has implications for the standing and recognition of learning arising from experiences outside of those programmes. Indeed, ultimately lifelong education is a subcategory of lifelong learning.

When lifelong learning is considered in this way as an ongoing process of learning and development across people's lives, it can only really be seen as something arising in person-particular ways from the particular sets of experiences individuals encounter and their engagement with those experiences. Hence, when conceptualising lifelong learning, there is a need to place centre stage the entire range of individuals' experiences and their responses to them. This conception necessitates accounting for the combination of individual attributes, particular experiences and the ongoing legacies arising through those experiences (i.e. micro-genesis or moment-by-moment learning) across individuals' lives. This consideration also need to include these legacies in terms of their being shaped by but also contributing to individuals' development across their personal histories (i.e. ontogenesis – development across life histories). This learning and development, therefore, can only be fully understood through considering individuals' personal histories and their bases for construing and constructing (i.e. learning) from what they experience. As much of this learning across life courses inevitably arises through experiences outside of institutional arrangements (e.g. educational institutions), both micro-genesis and ontogenetic development are not confined to those kinds of experiences. Likely, the vast majority of learning and development across adults' life course occurs outside of experiences comprising intentionally organised and implemented education programmes aiming to secure learning outcomes that have

been pre-specified for those programmes. It is, therefore, necessary to be both clear and inclusive about what constitutes and contributes to individuals' lifelong learning and on what basis it can be promoted.

Here, it is proposed that this clarification can be advanced through discussing how such conceptions of learning and development relate to important goals for personal, professional, workplace and societal purposes, such as learning across individuals' working life. This work-lifelong project comprises individuals securing and sustaining employability and advancement across lengthening working lives. It, therefore, needs to consider and account for the kinds of support assisting that ongoing process of learning. This assistance needs to be exercised in ways that are accessible, helpful and enduring for individuals who now need to continue to learn for work longer than their predecessors, as retirement ages and pension entitlements in many countries move into the late 60s and possibly 70 years.

Consequently, this chapter aims to set out what constitutes 'lifelong learning' and how it might best be promoted across working lives, with the key focus on individuals' employability. The central case made here is that, ultimately, individuals' learning constitutes personal facts. That is, they are shaped by and arise through individuals' history of activities and interactions engaged in across their lives (Goodnow and Warton 1991; Rogoff 2003). These activities and interactions are shaped by both institutional (i.e. those of society) (Searle 1995) and brute (i.e. those of nature) facts both as attributes within individuals and also as contributions and reactants beyond individuals. Their contributions comprise the suggestions projected by both the brute and social world. Yet, ultimately, individuals mediate what they experience and from which they subsequently construe and construct knowledge (Billett 2009b). Indeed, it is the intersection between the personal facts and those representing and projected by the social and brute worlds that occurs constantly (i.e. microgenetically) as individuals engage in everyday activities (Rogoff and Lave 1984) and interactions that is central to understanding the process of individuals' lifelong learning or ontogenetic development.

It follows then that such an account is not one that distinguishes between individual and social contributions per se. This is not the least, because the personal is inherently social. There is nothing more social than the individual. Social and brute facts both shape and are themselves shaped by a lifetime of experiences, including how individuals come to interact and engage with the world beyond them, but also through maturation (Billett 2009a). As noted, those worlds project what individuals experience comprising both the suggestions of nature and society. Proposed here is a consideration of lifelong learning being ultimately a personal fact that arises through engagement and negotiations with what is experienced and how we mature over time. In making its case, this chapter proposes that lifelong learning is necessarily a personally mediated process (i.e. a personal fact), albeit shaped by brute and institutional facts and conceptions. Consequently, a clear distinction is drawn between the provision of experiences as in educational programmes (e.g. lifelong education) or those in workplaces as institutional facts and individuals' learning and development, which are personal facts. Then, it is proposed that because of these misunderstandings, the purposes of lifelong learning and education have become

distorted. Moreover, to overcome the misrepresentation of lifelong learning as lifelong education that has been embraced by governments, global agencies and employers as well as uninformed academics, it is necessary to discuss the provision of courses (i.e. institutional facts comprising taught processes) in terms of how they can meet the needs of lifelong learning as personal facts, leading to a set of propositions about how lifelong education might be considered and promoted across working lives.

2.2 Lifelong Learning: Personal Facts

There are myriad references to and uses of the term ‘learning’ and all of these do not make easy the task of considering what constitutes lifelong learning and how it best might be promoted. Reference is often made, for instance, to ‘learning organisations’, which is a problematic concept, proposing that organisations learn and those within them are part of that learning. Certainly, organisations such as workplaces have norms and practices that change over time and these are institutional facts. However, the cause or volition for these changes is not derived from the consciousness, neural, sensory and procedural capacities of the ‘organisation’ because it does not have them, but rather from those who work within them. Then, terms such as e-learning are used to refer to a different kind of institutional fact – the provision of learning experiences mediated electronically through text, symbolic and images. Elsewhere, the term ‘informal learning’ is frequently used to describe learning occurring outside of educational programmes (Marsick and Watkins 1990). Yet, when considered this conception from the view that it is people who learn, it implies that a particular mode of learning (i.e. construal, construction) is being engaged with labelled informal or non-formal in these settings. However, there is no evidence to suggest that how individuals deploy the processes of construing and constructing knowledge (i.e. learning) is qualitatively distinct ways across different kinds of social settings. Instead, it is most likely to be the degree by which individuals engage with what is afforded them through their experiences in each of these settings that is central to their learning (Billett 2001) not ascribing a particular modes of thinking and acting occurring across different kinds of setting (i.e. informal or formal). What is probably intended here is a reference to formal and informal educational provisions (i.e. institutional facts).

Moreover, there can be no guarantee that what is intended through such provisions will be learnt. Hence, claiming specific kinds of learning arising from particular experience is overly ambitious. Educational provisions are nothing more or less than invitations to change. As such, these provisions are dependent upon how students themselves elect to take up the invitation which is afforded to them (i.e. activities and interactions). So, it needs to be remembered that learning is something that humans do albeit mediated by personal, social and brute facts. This is because learning requires consciousness, a sensory system and cognition including the capacity to construe experiences and construct knowledge (Barsalou 2008, 2009; Reber

1989) from them, thereby utilising what we know and change both what we know and how we know. Yet, these processes are person-particular and outcomes cannot be guaranteed.

Indeed, this learning is a necessary imperative for humans so they can make sense of what is experienced and be reflexive about it. Sharing what we know with others and across generations reflexively is central to our existence and continuity as a species (Taylor 1985). Moreover, if humans were able to simply appropriate what is suggested to them by the social and brute worlds, there would be little need for communication for sense-making (Cronick 2002). In these circumstances, interpersonal interaction would largely be unnecessary because the suggestion from the world beyond us would be unequivocal and unambiguous. However, this is not the case and these suggestions are often ambiguous and unclear (Newman et al. 1989). As noted, social institutions, such as workplaces, have norms and practices that change overtime and in response to changing demands. Humans need to comprehend and understand these changes premised on the processes of perception, cognition and action. Hence, for both individual development and societal progression, we need to learn both new knowledge and develop further what we know (Billett 2009a). Moreover, learning is something that humans inevitably do continuously and across our lives (microgenetically and ontogenetically) (Billett 2003) to make sense of what we experience. So, we are all and have to be lifelong learners. As processes such as maintaining equilibrium (Piaget 1971), ontological security (Giddens 1991) and viability (Van Lehn 1989) suggest, we have no option than to attempt to make sense of what we experience. The necessity for this continuous learning includes completing the tasks we require, simply, to live connected, effective and worthwhile lives. So, this learning is an inherent feature of our working lives as directed by our individual needs and intentionalities and as mediated by our capacities and interests and shaped by imperatives and contributions that are external to us.

In these ways, learning is held to be very much a personal process directed by our capacities, interests, circumstances and personal histories as engaged with by our minds, bodies and consciousness. It is a lifelong occurrence as we engage in activities and interactions in our homes, with our families, with our friends and acquaintances, not to mention our work or our workplaces, in our community engagements and in the everyday tasks in which we engage. Also, through participation in them, learning also arises through participation in educational programmes (e.g. courses). Yet, far from being dependent upon these kinds of experiences, learning arises in all social settings, not just those settings of which activities are directed to particular kinds of intentions (i.e. lifelong education). Moreover, the learning of rich (i.e. adaptable) knowledge is not privileged by experiences in these kinds of settings and through these kinds of programmes, as it also arises through practice experiences, for example, as well as through educational experiences (Ericsson and Lehmann 1996; Raizen 1989; Scribner 1984). Hence, learning is not 'determined' by what is suggested through interactions with external sources. Instead, we learn inevitably across our lives when engaging in the range of circumstances that comprise of what we encounter across our lives and that learning progresses in ways which are inherently person specific.

There is another dimension to this ongoing process of learning that is significant for societies and institutions. As individuals engage in this ongoing learning, they are also participating in the process of remaking the social and cultural practices in which they engage (Billett et al. 2005; Giddens 1991). That is, the norms and practices that are central to institutions such as workplaces, families, schools, colleges and universities are remade and sometimes transforming through individuals enacting them. As this learning involves engaging in societally derived activities and interactions at particular points in time and for particular purposes, it is central to the process of remaking and transforming these practices. At any moment in time, individuals engaged in occupations such as caring for others, teaching, legal work, construction and manufacturing are doing so as directed towards particular goals and purposes in particular circumstances and at particular points in time using an array of resources that are available and responding with what they know and can do. As Braudel (1981) claims, this societal advancement occurs through significant innovations, but also:

The slow improvements in processes and tools, and those innumerable actions may have no immediate innovating circumstance, but which are the fruits of the accumulated knowledge: the sailor rigging his boat, the miner digging a gallery, the peasant behind the plough or the smith at the anvil (sic) (1981: 334)

Through this process of everyday and ongoing learning, these societal norms and forms are made and transformed iteratively and continuously by individuals within and across their working lives, for instance. So, societal continuity and transformation co-occurs with individuals' lifelong learning. All of this suggests that occupations, occupational practice and workplace norms are remade and transformed concurrently with individuals learning across their working lives.

2.3 Purposes and Processes of Lifelong Learning

There are a range of purposes to which individuals will direct that learning and with varying degrees of interest, engagement, intentionality and effort (Malle et al. 2001). These purposes include learning to communicate with others, engaging with social partners and developing the capacities to engage in socially valued activities, one of which is work. It also includes continuing to develop those capacities across working life including learning how to engage in new occupational activities across working life. Yet, in addition, there is also learning associated with roles that emerge across our lives, to be a son or daughter, brother, sister, twin, partner, parent and carer for parents, etc. (Billett 1998a). Both the processes of and outcomes of this learning are deemed by individuals themselves or others as being either effective or less than effective for these roles, because these processes can include effortful engagement. This personal appraisal is particularly the case for learning that is personally transformative (Allan 2005; Perkins et al. 1993; Tobias 1994). Likely, when learning new knowledge, as well as being effortful, it also involves monitoring and self-regulation (Cavanagh 2008; Rohrkemper 1989). Indeed, it is difficult to find an

informed account of human learning that does not position the individual centrally in directing the process of their learning. Behaviouralist and socio-determinant (Ratner 2000) accounts may be the exception here. Even theories explicitly advancing the social contribution to knowledge acknowledge the role of the personal in these processes (Berger and Luckman 1967; Valsiner and van der Veer 2000). However, most contemporary accounts of learning and development, particularly constructivist ones, in different ways and by degree emphasise the importance of humans as active meaning makers who shape the direction and intensity of learning processes. The key difference amongst various accounts of human learning is the degree by which that learning is also shaped by the world beyond the individual, but in which they engage.

So, beyond individuals' contributions to their learning, much of the effectiveness of human learning can be attributed to the kinds of guidance and support we are able to secure with which we engage. Much of this guidance and support arises from engaging with other people either directly (Rogoff 1995) or, perhaps more commonly, indirectly through observing them, listening to them (Billett 2001), undertaking the activities they suggest (Pelissier 1991), reading what they have written or engaging with what they have produced. These kinds of engagements and activities are important because much of the knowledge needed to fulfil our roles and direct our energies towards the tasks we need to undertake are derived from the social world (Billett 1998b; Rogoff 1990; Scribner 1985). So, across individuals' lives, their learning is supported and mediated by parents, siblings, friends, family members, interlocutors at school, work, in community activities as well as those whose role is to help us learn (e.g. teachers, trainers, mentors). Consequently, all lifelong learning is a socio-personal process as individuals negotiate their thinking, acting and doing across a lifetime of engaging in activities and interactions.

However, in 'schooled societies', with their universal compulsory education and extensive provision of tertiary education and where the discourse of schooling is strong, it is often assumed that the learning arising from activities and interactions in educational institutions is privileged or is more legitimate and worthwhile than these experiences constitute the major contribution to our learning. Yet, there is little evidence to support the first assertion and the latter most likely applies to those whose experiences are dominated by school settings (i.e. school-age children in boarding schools). Indeed, the era of schooled societies is relatively recent and represents only a small fraction of human history. Before the era of schooling and schooled societies, what we refer to as teaching, seemingly, was rarely practised (Billett 2011a). Instead, more likely, for the vast majority of individuals, securing the knowledge required for that work and across their lives was premised upon their active learning processes, rather than being taught. Exemplifying this process of learning was a set of occupational practices that learners needed to understand and engage in to appropriate the kinds of knowledge required for them to practice their occupations and then go on to learn more about them. Much of this learning appears premised upon individuals' personal epistemologies and sets of pedagogic practices which were largely vested in the actions of learners whilst engaged in the circumstances of practice.

It would also be quite incorrect to assume that the kinds of conceptual and symbolic knowledge required in contemporary times are wholly dependent upon teaching processes. Certainly, many of the forms of knowledge that are now required to be learnt may need assistance of some kind to be learnt. However, it would be erroneous to assume that before the era of schooling, such forms of knowledge were not required to be learnt and that, in the absence of teaching processes and educational institutions, this learning did not progress. So it is not helpful to view individuals' learning as something that is held wholly captive to physical and social circumstances in which individuals engage. Instead, it is necessary to view physical and social settings as providing contributions and mediational means (i.e. ways of making that knowledge accessible) for individuals' learning and development.

Importantly, this set of propositions is not to deny or downgrade the contributions of experiences in educational institutions or the efforts and activities of teachers, trainers and mentors, which are often invaluable and sometimes indispensable. Moreover, they are often needed to assist, prepare and support individuals as independent and agentic learners. However, it is particularly important to be reminded in an era of schooling that there are a range of experiences and activities that can be accessed outside of those provided by educational programmes and that many of our requirements for lifelong learning cannot be realised through educational provisions or even direct teaching. There are some kinds of experiences that have to be engaged with authentically, albeit forming partnerships, and negotiating the end of relationships, becoming a parent, developing occupational capacities, etc. That is, there are many things that have to be learnt and not taught. Moreover, it is not possible or desirable that lifelong learning becomes dependent on access to educational provisions, because learning of necessity, both in the form of new learning and refining what is known, typically arises through everyday experience as people engage in every aspect of their lives: during work, leisure, domestic activities, cultural pursuits, when travelling, etc. (Billett 2009a).

In sum, processes of ongoing learning across individuals' lifespans (i.e. lifelong learning) are worthy of the kinds of considerations advanced above because it is of salience to individuals, their families, communities, work and workplaces. When we learn, we not only develop capacities to fulfil our societal and economic roles, but we also have an important role in the remaking and transforming those social and economic activities (Billett et al. 2005). Consequently, lifelong learning is essential not only to ourselves and those close to us, but also through the remaking and transformation of the society in which we live (Giddens 1991).

2.4 Interests in Lifelong Learning and Their Reconciliation

Given the importance of this learning and processes of remaking and transforming societal and cultural practices, it is not surprising that others become interested in seeking to organise, direct and realise these outcomes, and in particular ways. Principally, national governments have long sought to direct and support learning

for particular purposes (Greinert 2002). The advent of mass compulsory education and the provision of vocational education were largely focused on attempts by nation states to direct the interests and energies of its citizens as to achieve its social and economic goals which arise from a more broadly and specifically educated population (Gonon 2009). Hence, powerful social institutions and societal agencies have been developed for these purposes (i.e. bureaucracies, educational sectors, national and international agencies) with their own norms and practices and discourses that seek to direct, promote, support, capture and secure particular kinds of learning across individuals' lives. Historically, there are very few educational institutions that were established and directed by individual teachers or individuals with particular educational philosophies and purposes in mind (Skilbeck 1984). Instead, it has been the state, social and religious institutions that have largely founded and sustained educational institutions and ordered the kinds of intended educational outcomes to be achieved and the kinds of experiences that are selected to secure these outcomes. For instance, many definitions of curriculum emphasise achieving the goals of the school (Glatthorn 1987; Marsh and Willis 1995). In more recent times, global agencies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2006; Organisation of Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) 1996) as well as national governments (Department of Education Science and Training 2002; Department of Innovation Universities and Skills 2008; Working Group on 14–19 Reform 2004) have come to emphasise and attempt to capture or mobilise (Edwards 2002) lifelong learning, principally for achieving economic purposes, enterprise, industry or national competitiveness. This shift has led to the appropriation of the term lifelong learning not only for economic purposes (Edwards 2002; Field 2000), but also to be seen as something equated with an educational provision and, usually, through taught courses (i.e. lifelong education). This change in emphasis from a personal process of learning (i.e. personal fact) to one in which institutional imperatives and goals are strongly promoted can be seen as a means of largely about securing institutional imperatives.

Of course, individuals need to engage in learning particular kinds of knowledge to secure the capacities they need to sustain their employability across working lives. This need necessitates them engaging with social institutions and norms, forms and practices. So, there is nothing particularly novel here. What is perhaps insidious in seeking to understand and discuss learning across working lives is that within schooled societies – where the educational discourse is powerful and extends to the administration and sponsorship of support for learning that educational provisions become overly privileged – conceptions of personal learning and development occurring outside of educational provisions are viewed as inherently inferior. Part of this repositioning is achieved through the labelling, ordering and conceptualising of educational arrangements and developmental goals which are shaped and defined more in terms of institutional facts than those associated with individuals.

There may be tensions arising between the kinds of provisions that aimed to intentionally promote and support particular kinds of learning and the interests and intentionalities of those who learn (e.g. Hodges 1998). The focus on the content of highly regulated courses do not always meet the needs of those who

they are intended to assist, sometimes because nobody has bothered to ask them (Billett 2000). Instead, privileged others who are remote from those who are to participate in such programmes usually make decisions about what they should comprise and how they should progress. Often, in contemporary times, it is the voices and opinions of employers who are canvassed for their advice which are privileged in such processes. There is habitually a lack of consensus across the requests of those who employ and the preferences of those who are employed. In a recent study, for instance, it was found that managers and employers' view of continuing education and training (CET) were premised upon educational provisions (e.g. attendance in courses), whereas workers' emphasis was on processes of learning occurring in and through their work practices and how that learning can be supported (Billett et al. 2012a). Hence, whereas managers referred to the importance of educational programmes, workers referred to the importance of learning processes. Similarly, it is often reported that those who own or work in small businesses claim that their needs and concerns are not met within national curriculum provisions that reflect the form and interests of large enterprises (Coopers and Lybrand 1995). In these ways, efforts by government and key agencies in seeking to control and regulate what individuals learn, may not always be successful and may even be counter to the very goals they wish to realise.

Further, the imperatives of key central government agencies can do much to change the language, or the discourse of how this learning is conceptualised, and should be progressed and for what purposes. Many governments have adopted a particular view of what constitutes competency, usually in highly measurable and behavioural forms. These forms then come to constitute what passes as the requirements for vocational education to prepare individuals for and sustain their competence as workers, regardless of whether such measures capture the intentions (i.e. goals, aims, objectives) for the organisation, teaching and assessment of learning for occupations. Moreover, the espoused purposes of learning throughout our lives can be reshaped and re-privileged in particular ways by such key agencies. For instance, as a result of the OECD's year of lifelong learning in 1996, the key focus for this learning is now seen as being primarily about achieving economic purposes, and in which, individuals have to take a key role (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development 2000). So, there are, on the one hand, individual and personal purposes and processes (i.e. personal facts) that constitute lifelong learning which are as necessary as they are important for individuals, their communities, countries and humankind. Then, on the other hand, there are the important and necessary purposes for and contributions to that learning from the activities and interactions (i.e. institutional facts) in which they engage. As noted, these educational provisions and their purposes have often and over time reflected the interests of privileged others rather than those who are positioned as learners (Billett 2011b). Yet, it is the balance and reconciliation amongst the needs and the imperatives of individuals, their communities, workplaces and country and individuals themselves that is central to considerations of what constitutes the purposes, assesses and outcomes of individuals' lifelong learning and how this might be supported through lifelong education.

So, contemporary accounts of lifelong learning deserve to be informed by inquiry and clear consideration to the processes that underpin them and avoid the imposition of concepts and propositions that are erroneous and unhelpful. The importance of these considerations is that, outside of wartime, there has probably never been a time in human history when the requirements for work are changing at such an intense pace and with such scope. Consequently, if we are to assist individuals to maintain their occupational competence and secure their advancement across working lives and their further development as adults, clear understandings about the process of human learning and development are essential for informed policy and directed practice for promoting individuals' lengthening working lives. Certainly, the available literature is extensive and considerations within it are not constrained by institutional imperatives, such as those that seek to primarily understand learning as arising through participation in schools, vocational education and higher education.

2.5 Lifelong Education

Given global concerns about lifelong employability, the lengthening of working lives and the need for ongoing learning across working lives as necessitated by the changing nature of work requirements, the promotion and support for adults' learning across their lifespans is now essential for achieving key economic and social goals. Indeed, ageing populations in most countries with advanced and developing economies make this focus on adults' development a global concern. Many groups in the community stand to benefit from enhanced opportunities for supporting that learning, including participation in educational programmes. In particular, these programmes can assist the kinds of learning which would otherwise be unavailable to adults. For instance, although workplace-based experiences may be the most effective for sustaining currency of skills within a particular workplace setting, these environments may well not be the best ones in which to learn the knowledge required for alternative forms of work or assisting new directions for individuals' career paths. So, provisions of continuing education (i.e. lifelong education) are important in their different forms and means and can realise forms of ongoing learning that might not be accessible elsewhere. Those easily identifiable include those individuals seeking to participate more fully in working life because they have been outside of the work force, perhaps caring for their children, the unemployed or those have been unwell. This listing extends to those who want to secure transitions from their current circumstances to other or more productive ones, including those who are currently marginalised or restricted in their current employment (Billett et al. 2012b). So, there are a range of important purposes, focuses and goals for the promotion and support of lifelong education across working lives as directed to promoting ongoing employability. Also, because its provisions extend to forms of learning support outside of educational institutions, in community and workplaces settings, for instance, these forms of learning support

need to be more fully acknowledged, and the learning arising through them recognised and certified through worthwhile and legitimating processes.

Hence, a comprehensive consideration of lifelong education needs to embrace, legitimate and extend the range of activities both within and outside of educational institutions that support individuals' learning and development across their lives. Moreover, coming to understand, identify purposes for, then organise and implement such educational provisions need to be accommodating of the range of intentions individuals have for engaging in such provisions. Therefore, offering a systems approach to meet the needs of learners across the lifespan as do Schuller and Watson (2009) can be an unhelpful return to directive models that have failed in the past. They propose an age-related scheme for organising learning support ignoring criticism of earlier models such as Erickson's account of development across the life he identified in Middle America in the 1950s. As commentators have observed and is reflected in the vignettes' in their own report, contemporary life is not about a linear progression through societally ordered stages. Instead, in contemporary times people often need to change occupations, and forms of employment. They also experience redundancy and periods of unemployment and at different point in their life histories. There are also life-influencing events such as divorce, relocation, as well as caring for wayward parents and children. Consequently, instead of a view of lifelong education system based on categories of age and attempts to characterise learner needs at particular age stages, such commentators might point to the need for educational arrangements focusing on initial preparation for occupational and societal roles, transitions across roles, management of disappointment, processes of revitalisation of self and providing bases for overcoming gender, age or racial discrimination. Hence, an age-based categorisation of learner needs ignores the failings of staged development theories and offers an account of development as a linear progression with predictable needs at particular needs. In its place, a more localised socio-personally centred approach to lifelong education is likely required. Such an approach is outlined in the following five distinct considerations.

2.6 A Framework for Lifelong Learning and Education

Five distinct considerations are advanced here in proposing how a framework for lifelong education might be conceptualised, ordered and best progressed. In preview, these are (1) a central emphasis on individuals' learning, (2) a more inclusive accounting of the circumstances where that learning arises, (3) that this learning arises continuously across (working) lives, (4) that mechanisms for recognising and certifying this learning need to accommodate the diverse circumstances of this learning (i.e. not through educational programmes alone) and (5) that this learning should be promoted in and through the broad array of circumstances in which individuals participate.

Firstly, a provision of lifelong education should be premised upon a consideration of individuals' learning, in all its complexities, contributing factors, individual

differences, etc., including the circumstances associated with how that learning progresses. That is, it should promote lifelong learning. By only focusing on and having a starting point as a provision of courses developed by others, the process of lifelong learning is misinformed, misrepresented and skewed. That is, principally it is a personal fact. For instance, one of the most common elements of something seen as synonymous with the institutionalised concept of lifelong learning is the provision of taught courses. These are easily and greedily embraced by an institutional and educational discourse that wants to organise an ordered individuals' learning, even though founded on limited precepts, and that this can be best achieved through such ordered and pre-specified processes. Institutionally, these arrangements lend themselves to administration based on institutional imperatives (e.g. numbers of participants, length of courses, assessments against intended outcomes) rather than individuals' learning. Often absent here are considerations of the very bases by which lifelong educational provisions should be considered and conceptualised. The premises for an effective lifelong learning pedagogy and curriculum should not be constrained by these kinds of institutional arrangements and should be extended to include those appropriate for and exercised in practice settings (Billett et al. 2012b). Central to these is the importance of learners' personal epistemologies.

Secondly, building upon these concerns, there needs to be a broader consideration of the circumstances of learning and the forms of support which can promote lifelong learning. So, rather than being restricted to a consideration of lifelong learning as being supported by the provision of courses, a consideration of experiences arising in a range of settings and by a range of institutions needs to be accounted for. Moreover, more than being a taught process, greater emphasis needs to be given to learning through the range of imperatives and circumstances that arise across adult life. The processes of negotiating changing work requirements stand as being powerful platforms for individuals' construal and construction of what they experience and their need for guidance and direction in these processes. Moreover, these processes are not restricted to work life, as expectations and demands of becoming a parent, caring for elderly parents, managing financial matters in an era in which individuals are held to be responsible for their own post-retirement income and making informed decisions about health care, purchases and the balance between work and other forms of daily commitments become essential features of adult life. Indeed, looking across these examples, one might conclude that these kinds of learning are unlikely to be effectively realised through taught processes and enrolments in courses. That is, the most common sites and settings for learning that occur throughout everyday thinking and acting largely sit outside experiences provided by taught courses, yet these rarely feature in structured responses from workplaces and governmental agencies, where administrative imperatives are often positioned as being more important than the goals they seek to achieve.

Thirdly, there is a need for a greater acceptance of and use of the outcomes of informed enquiries into learning through and across working life and other forms of everyday practice, when converted into helpful and practical processes. Much research in this field has been funded and undertaken, and although some findings are highly descriptive and not readily applicable, there is much that can be used to

advance adult's learning across working lives. For instance, the constant emphasis on learner agency, sense of self and subjectivity arising across these studies reinforces the importance of emphasising personal facts and not just institutional ones. Also, those researching and informing learning across lives and, in particular, working lives need to focus their efforts on the kinds of curriculum, pedagogies and personal practices which are likely to be effective for supporting this lifelong learning.

Fourthly, there needs to be processes for the recognition and certification of learning outside of educational institutions given that so much learning across working life occurs outside of educational programmes and institutions. There is an increasing demand for credentials and certification of learning that privileges the assessment and recognition of learning. Yet, largely these are only provided as a result of participating in educational programmes and in educational institutions. All of this tends to deny the worth, legitimacy, richness and adaptability of the knowledge that is learnt outside of those circumstances. Hence, there needs to be a broader perspective on and more accessible provisions for the assessment and recognition of learning that embraces the recognition of prior learning and also extends to ongoing learning across working lives. There is nothing particularly difficult about this, except the current vesting of processes of assessment and certification within educational institutions.

Fifthly, there is a need for broader action on the part of workplaces, educational institutions and government agencies to more broadly embrace and support lifelong learning. As has been proposed above, there probably has never been an era in which the requirements for lifelong learning have been so intense. Not only are the requirements for sustaining employability across lengthening work lives intense, but also workplaces are increasingly reliant upon older workers and those with diverse forms and levels of readiness to direct their own intentional learning to secure their employability across working lives. Whether referring to women returning to the work force having been the principal caregiver to their children or individuals who by circumstances of birth or education are not well equipped to engage effectively with the changing requirements of work, considered and specific initiatives are likely to be required for these individuals. Again, there is nothing particularly new here, except that with a consideration of lifelong learning comes a focus upon the individuals themselves, their readiness and capacities and how they might best be provided with experiences which can support their learning and development in ways which will allow them to participate more fully in work and civic life.

It follows from this listing that a framework for lifelong learning needs to be inclusive of the entire scope of purposes and experiences that shape the personal fact of ongoing learning. These intents and these circumstances can then be considered in terms of their effectiveness, completeness and how they might be improved. In particular, consideration might be given to what kinds of experiences can likely achieve particular learning goals and where these experiences might be best located and enacted. Part of this consideration is also how government imperatives associated with inclusivity, continuity of development and the maintenance of lifelong employability can best be realised for individuals. Such a framework might also be premised upon the kinds of goals and transitions that individuals will need to secure

in their lifelong learning project. So, rather than a system of support for learning being premised on categories of age, other kinds of categories might be far more useful. As foreshadowed, these categories might include focusing on initial preparation for occupational and societal roles, transitions across roles, management of disappointment, revitalisation and bases for overcoming gender, ages or racial discrimination. In all and in sum, lifelong education should be shaped by considerations of lifelong learning, not simply confused for and with it.

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