Chapter 1
Towards a Philosophy of Lifelong Learning

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Introduction

In the thinking and activities of those working in educating institutions these days, there is always so much to do connected with the realities of the financing, staffing, delivering and evaluating educational programmes that there seems little time to concentrate on anything else. It is not surprising therefore to find that questions of a more profound kind are generally put to one side, either to await those rare opportunities when there will be an opportunity for more serious reflection or to consign such matters to the advice of 'experts' or 'theorists' whose time can be given over to such matters, separate and aside from the 'real' problems. This is particularly so with philosophical questions. In this chapter, we hope to show that attention to the philosophical questions that are part and parcel of thinking about lifelong learning is not only a crucial and indispensable element of the framework within which lifelong learning programmes and activities are conceived and articulated, but also that the conclusions that are reached as a result of philosophical enquiries have *practical* implications for developing programmes, curricula and activities of a lifelong learning character.

Philosophy is often thought of as 'urbane and cultivated sermonising' (O'Connor 1963) about the nature of reality and the place of human beings in it, much in the sense that people speak of their 'philosophy of life'. This implies a set of beliefs, values and attitudes to what are seen as the weighty questions of life and death and/or the principles to be followed in our relations with other people. A similar sense

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of 'philosophy' is found in use where people talk of ideologies such as Marxism or economic rationalism, codes for living such as Bushido or religious systems such as those of Islam, Judaism or Christianity. Such approaches to philosophy are widely known and much practised, but we think they have little to offer us here. However, neither do we feel that we ought to fly to the other extreme and apotheosise the model of philosophy associated with exponents of it such as Ayer (1936) and Austin (1962), involving a highly technical and rigorous exercise in the analysis and clarification of the meanings of words.

As we see it, the adoption of an appropriate philosophical approach to enquiries about lifelong learning will depend, as much as anything else, upon the nature of the problems being looked into; the intellectual histories and interests of those tackling it; the outcomes at which they are aiming; the considerations that make their selection of particular categories, concepts, criteria and procedures significant or determinative in the framing of questions, the conduct of enquiries and the judgment of what shall count as valid answers or good theories; and the reflections that make certain moves in their arguments and theorising decisive.

Thus, in attempting to put into play our own version of philosophy, we need to be clear about the questions that we believe will loom large in our consideration of lifelong learning and the things that we hope will emerge from philosophical enquiries into it. Our work in this area leads us to think that there is a number of topics, issues and problems that ought to be looked into and that these are concerned, amongst other things, with the planning, provision and assessment of activities in educating institutions of all kinds, both formal and post-formal, concerned to promote and expand opportunities for learning experiences and activities for all across and through the whole of their lifespan.

The first of these questions concerns the ways in which lifelong learning might be defined, characterised and understood; the second concerns how lifelong learning might be brought about; the third concerns the kinds of knowledge, understanding and skill that people might want or need to acquire and what the status of their claims to have acquired such knowledge might amount to; the fourth draws attention to the ways in which people will be able to learn, understand and make progress in their lifelong learning endeavours; and the fifth concerns the grounds on which lifelong learning programmes can be justified and adopted. Any or all of these will also therefore probably make some demands on a wider framework of philosophical, methodological, epistemological, pedagogical and ethical concerns within which lifelong learning undertakings are more generally to be understood and the ways in which substantive theories about them may be appraised, compared, criticised and, if necessary, improved.

In attempting to show how one might go about framing answers to such questions, we shall need to draw upon the insights offered by a range of philosophical approaches. For example, the deeply held beliefs, values and attitudes, to which everyone is committed, are often hidden and only become explicit or 'public' through the expression of our preferences, ambitions, political, economic or moral decisions, and through our observable involvement in a particular pattern or certain 'form of life'. It is, however, those hidden, underlying assumptions and preconceptions that are crucial in determining the influence of our theories not only upon our

undertakings in promoting lifelong learning but also upon the aims and content of the kinds of programmes and activities we believe should be offered under the heading, in the name and for the purpose of preparing, promoting and providing opportunities for learning across the lifespan.

One element in our approach, therefore, will be some attempt to identify and throw light on some of the presuppositions that underpin and serve to define the 'form of life' within which we believe that lifelong learning enterprises are most appropriately located and take place. Such analysis is not undertaken simply for its own sake, however, but for particular reasons. It is undertaken, for one thing, in an attempt to promote clarity and soundness in our theoretical understanding. This is a task that we regard as being of vital importance: one cannot promote clarity of thought, soundness of argument and rational decision-making in policies of and amongst participants in lifelong learning programmes if, as policy-makers and educators, we ourselves are unaware of or unclear about those elements, principles and criteria that lay the basis for decision-making about our own work, especially when these may not be self-evident but require public expression and justification.

Such analysis is also undertaken in the attempt to provide us with the second element in this study, which is devoted to the endeavour of developing a theory or set of theories and constructing a theoretical framework against which present day programmes and activities of lifelong learning could be tested to see whether the practice matches the principles. In this way, we should be able to discover where there are weaknesses, deficiencies, omissions or errors and thus be able to determine what amendments, refinements or even wholesale restructuring might be needed in order to bring about a close 'fit'. The purpose of this kind of investigation, then, is to consider the theories with which we or other people active in the field are working and to engage in the crucial task of theory examination, theory comparison and theory criticism, correction or even replacement. Philosophy viewed in this way becomes not merely an exercise of analysis for the purposes of clarification, but an undertaking of theory criticism and construction in order that the undertakings themselves shall be based upon sound principles, such as those of economy, simplicity, coherence, consistency, fecundity and capacity for successful prediction (see Lycan 1988).

We see, then, two main characteristics in the version of philosophy with which we shall be working in this chapter. First, we see a need for a rigorous analysis and elucidation of those concepts, criteria and categories that are embedded and embodied in any lifelong learning undertaking, together with an examination of the presuppositions underlying them [the kind of activity described by Strawson (1959) as 'descriptive metaphysics'; see also Trigg (1973)]. Second, however, we are inclined to believe that there is a practical 'pay-off' or creative element, which is concerned to point to the implications of such analysis – to settle what ought logically to follow from it with respect to putting on programmes of lifelong learning. And this will mean ensuring that the theory/ies embodied in those programmes will be the temporary best theory that fits the phenomena and helps us to answer the problems at the time when we look at them. In this respect, our approach has much in common with the notion of philosophy as a process of tackling and attempting to solve problems (Popper 1972).

A Note of Caution

It is important to be clear about the nature and purposes of such a philosophical examination and indeed of the various approaches to these questions that follow. None of them purports to provide *the* answer to any of the questions raised therein; indeed, this would not be a philosophical enterprise if that were to be the outcome aimed at. The analyses we engage in and offer, the elucidations of presuppositions, the comparison and criticism of competing theories presuppose canons of intelligibility and corrigibility that are not themselves immune from further criticism. Our willingness to put up hypotheses and conjectures that criticise or claim to refute the views of others is based upon the expectation that these will themselves be subjected in turn to rational criticism put forward by others. Any conclusions that we draw can only stand until such time as they in turn are subjected to and refined or refuted by further rational and relevant argument. Such is the nature of this kind of activity.

However, just because such an activity is regarded therefore as only provisional in nature will not mean that it is pointless or unimportant. Any policy, undertaking or enterprise that attempts to influence the lives of other people for the better count, potentially at any rate, as an intrusion into and an interference with these lives. As such, it needs to be justified publicly if it is to be accorded any weight or acceptance, whilst the presuppositions on which such a policy is based ought also to be laid bare and rendered subject to scrutiny, rather than left hidden or unexamined. It is this public examination of such policies and the rigorous scrutiny of their implicit principles or explicit recommendations for action that we see as the prime responsibility of the philosopher.

In the language we have been employing, therefore, the questions about lifelong learning that we believe need to be tackled and, it is to be hoped, answered (even if only provisionally), may be categorised, at least initially, into the following:

- Questions of meaning and definition
- Questions of methodology
- Questions of epistemology
- Questions of the philosophical psychology of pedagogy/learning
- Questions of ethics

In the rest of this chapter, we shall try to deal with the various issues arising in these areas of enquiry and to come to some tentative conclusions that might form a useful basis for theories of lifelong learning.

The Problem of Meaning and Definition

It is with the question of meaning that the problems of developing a philosophy of lifelong learning begin, for if we cannot easily understand or agree upon the terms being employed in our discourse in and about the topic, then we cannot proceed

further to an examination of the validity of arguments employing or theories embodying them. Thus, the analysis and clarification of terms become a prior stage in the conceptualisation of lifelong learning matters, for it is upon them that all else that follows will depend.

Gelpi, one of the early writers on the topic of lifelong education (Gelpi 1984), argued that there was a need for a clear definition of the term 'lifelong education'. The problem, he maintained, was that, whilst one could be reasonably clear about the meaning and applicability of such terms as 'vocational education', 'technical education' and 'nurse education', no such clarity could be found in the case of terms with much less specific points of application, such as 'lifelong education', particularly when a range of other apparently similar terms – *education permanente*, 'further education', 'continuing education' and so on – were often used interchangeably with it and with each other.

Other writers on the topic have maintained that there is no point in trying to apply the term 'lifelong education'. They claim that such a term seeks to generalise the reference of the notion of 'education' to such a wide set of parameters as virtually to empty it of all meaning. Still others have acted as though the term 'lifelong education' were simply another way of alluding to those educational endeavours and opportunities that were offered after the end of formal schooling and thus was interchangeable and synonymous with terms that had wider currency, such as 'adult education', 'careers education' or 'recurrent education' (Stock 1979). Yet another group have commented that, whilst there may have been enough examples around in the history of educational philosophy of such key ideas as 'liberal education' or 'moral education' to offer discussants a reasonably firm point of purchase, there is so little said about 'lifelong education' that there is almost nothing on which we can get a grip in our attempts to give a clear account of those elements that we may discern as being cardinal to or indicative of its meaning and application.

There is an important point to be made when one is considering the positions that have been taken in the past in respect to the concept of lifelong education and the arguments that have been put forward by various proponents of these positions. For it seems to us that differences in and between various versions of 'lifelong education' are functions, not only of particular educational, moral or political commitments, but also of particular meta-theories at work in the philosophy of lifelong education/learning.

In some versions of the term, and in various attempts to produce a clear account of it, we may discern the presence and operation of a particular preconception. In many writers' work on lifelong education, for example, there is an implicit acceptance of the idea that (a) it is possible to arrive at some uniform descriptive account of the term 'lifelong education', which all could then accept and take as a kind of *primum datum*, and that (b) if there were not such a definition already available, then there ought to be. The common postulate shared by many writers – particularly the earlier ones – seems to be that unambiguous agreement on the meaning and applicability of the term 'lifelong education' or 'lifelong learning' is conceivable, possible and attainable. In our reading of the various books, chapters and papers on this topic, we find plenty of evidence that many writers seem to share this assumption

and operate according to the logic and dictates of an empiricist approach to concepts and meaning (see Dave 1975; Cropley 1979; Gelpi 1985; Lengrand 1975, 1979; and Richmond 1979 and Stock 1979).

The main feature observable in the work of such writers is their holding of preconceptions about definition that may be described as 'essentialist'. This is the notion that it is possible, and indeed philosophically proper, for participants in discussion about any term in educational discourse to employ the methods of etymological derivation, dictionary definition or the sharp-cutting tools of conceptual analysis (looking for those cases that all can agree to be 'central' or 'peripheral' to allowable utterance employing the terms in question), in the endeavour to arrive at some kind of agreement about the separately 'necessary' and conjointly 'sufficient' conditions that will underpin and define the direction of discourse employing this term.

The notion that the quest for 'essential' definitions was legitimate was held in an earlier era where students of education accepted the academic tenability and conformed to the dictates of the empiricist paradigm, tending only to engage in activities of conceptual analysis, pursuing philosophical enquiries and developing and applying research designs and instruments exclusively based upon it. This view – also known as 'positivism' – is still to be found at work in many departments and faculties of social sciences and education in many parts of the world. However, it has been subjected to the formidable *elenchus* of the criticisms advanced against it by such antilocutors as Popper (1943, 1949, 1960 and 1972), Wittgenstein (1953), Lakatos (1976, 1978) and Quine (1951, 1953, 1974, etc.) to say nothing of more modern writers such as Rorty (1979) or Bernstein (1983). That this presumption and *modus operandi* may be taken to encapsulate a mistaken view of meaning and intelligibility has been common coinage for some time now (see references in Aspin 1996a, b).

As a result of this *critique*, we may now accept that the older positivist/empiricist approach of seeking to achieve clarity about or understanding of the 'essential', 'basic' or 'central' meaning of such terms as 'lifelong education' and 'lifelong learning' rested upon and embodied a fallacy. This was the fallacy described by Quine (1951) as resting on two dogmas of empiricism. These dogmas amounted to the prescription of the uncontested acceptance of the following claims: that (a) distinctions may be found and coercively employed between domains that were *sui generis* disciplinarily different (such as fact and value, science and religion, and so on) and that (b) in all modes of intellectual enquiry, there are some absolute foundations of belief, fact, concept or category beyond, which it was impossible to go and from which all further enquiry in that field must proceed (for the origin of this view, see Plato *Phaedo* 101 D 5 ff. and *Republic* 510 D and 511 B ff).

For Quine, Popper and many others, by contrast, all language and all enquiries are inescapably and *ab initio* theory-laden, far from value-free, and a mixture of elements, such as description and evaluation, fact and theory, that had been previously regarded by empiricist thinkers as absolutely distinct. Such arguments were used powerfully by such post-empiricist thinkers in education as Evers and Lakomski (1991) to develop a new approach to the elucidation of problems in educational discourse and policy. On this view, our talk on these matters does not consist of an analysis of discourse and terms into separate categories of facts and values, meaning

and meaninglessness, subjective and objective and the like. Rather, it has to be conceived of as being in itself a 'theory' or set of theories. This, our overall 'theory of the world', embodies a complex 'web of belief' (see Quine and Ullian 1970), shot through differentially with descriptive and evaluative elements, according to the contexts and purposes of which our theories and discourses are brought to bear and applied in our world. This is what happens when we apply our thinking to the world of education, policy and administration, teaching and learning.

For such reasons, it is now widely believed that there is a need, in philosophical activities devoted to a thorough-going and intellectually responsible enquiry into such matters as lifelong learning, to fuse description-evaluation, fact-value and quantitative-qualitative methods in new forms of enquiry, that are valuable both for the researcher and the policy-maker in educational matters. Such an approach would involve both groups in a common enterprise – what Lakatos (1976, 1978) might have called a 'progressive research programme' – of seeking to gain understanding and promote policy generation about lifelong learning. On this account, future work in the philosophy of education would be well advised to consider the adoption of approaches of this kind (see, e.g., Wain 1985a).

In this enterprise, we do not attempt to reduce everything to some absolute foundations of 'fact' and 'value', 'theory' and 'practice', or 'policy' and 'implementation', in the (vain) attempt to reduce some 'analyses' of concepts and theories that can be completely 'correct' or 'true'; or to produce some fundamental matters of indisputable research 'findings' about the objectivity and existence of which there can be no dispute. Against this notion, we tentatively contend that a different approach is to be preferred. What is important, when we endeavour to identify the nature, aims and purposes of all kinds of educating institutions, activities and processes – formal and informal, fixed-term and lifelong – and to promote excellence, effectiveness and quality in them, particularly when we wish to get clear about the contribution of such activities to programmes of lifelong learning, is, we believe, to adopt some such pragmatic method as the following:

- To seek to understand the questions, the problems, the categories and criteria with which researchers, policy makers and practitioners in the field of lifelong learning are currently concerned and are working
- To identify the theories with which researchers, policy makers and practitioners in the field are operating
- To seek to understand the causes of success or failure in the conception and application of such theories, policies and practices, as a necessary prelude to attenuating or eliminating dysfunctions and establishing or ameliorating structures and procedures that would conduce towards improvement

It is by examining various attempts that have been made to give form, content and direction to the idea of 'lifelong learning' that we may begin to develop and articulate a theory that will bear application to the problems that those who have been placing so strong an emphasis upon this idea are seeking to address and to solve. Of course, we cannot assume that all these problems are the same or even similar: different countries, different educational systems and different agencies of

learning will be pre-occupied with some similar but many different concerns. Such differences will not only be those of degree of complexity or difficulty; the problems they address will also be different in kind. This is something of which anyone attempting to give some account of 'lifelong learning' will rapidly become uncomfortably aware.

The reason for this is not far to seek. Like 'Art', 'Religion' and 'Democracy', 'Education' (and *a fortiori* 'lifelong education' and 'lifelong learning') is an example of what Gallie (1956, 1964) called an 'essentially contested concept' (see Hartnett and Naish 1976). To think that one can find an 'essential', 'basic' or uncontestable definition of 'lifelong education' is to embark upon a search for a chimaera. Thus, rather than engaging in a futile search for the real meaning or an uncontested definition of lifelong education and lifelong learning, we would suggest that the best one can do is to follow Wittgenstein's advice (Wittgenstein 1953, 1958) and 'look at the use' of these terms in the discourse of those who employ it and the purposes for which they employ them.

In the current educational climate, this will make it impossible for us to avoid noting the increasing frequency and growing importance with which idea of 'lifelong learning' has, over recent years, been appearing in international discussions, proposals and schemes of educational policy, planning and administration, as did 'lifelong education' in a slightly earlier age. This movement for the adoption and institution of the idea of 'lifelong learning' is still being proposed as a major and necessary element in the educational policies and plans of countries widely across the international arena – even though what such countries might mean or intend by it is far from being widely agreed. But of its importance, there is still little doubt.

A Note on the Use of the Terms 'Lifelong Education' and 'Lifelong Learning'

In order to avoid confusion, it may be worthwhile to try to chart some of the causes of and explanations that might be advanced to account for the gradual replacement of the former concept 'lifelong education' by the latter 'lifelong learning' in public discourse in this whole area. For it may be that from this change some confusion may have arisen.

There is some history to be commented upon here. By a number of authors and in the discussions of several international bodies concerned with these matters, it began to be noted that the emphasis on the idea of 'lifelong education' placed great weight – perhaps too great – on teaching and learning transactions within the norms, conventions and boundaries of an institutional environment and within education seen in institutional terms. It was realised and argued that people interested in learning could and should be able to make cognitive progress in a number of environments, not all of which were institutional, and not all of which exemplified a didactic model and a 'transmission' approach towards a student's acquisition of knowledge and understanding typically found in institutional education settings. Educational

institutions, it was pointed out, were only one source amongst an array of milieux, sites and locations to which people seeking growth and advancement in their own knowledge, understanding and skills could turn. Increasingly, individual people wanting further training or personal development could plan and make learning gains in areas of their own interests with a much greater degree of access, freedom and flexibility if they were to tailor their own learning needs to the resources offered by teaching and learning programmes of all kinds and found in all kinds of places – traditional and novel, formal and informal, conventional and alternative.

Not least of such sources providing impetus towards personal learning in the recent years has been the almost exponential growth of opportunities for individualised learning afforded by developments in the world of information technology and communication. The IT revolution offered individual learners almost unlimited untold potential for the acquisition of new information, knowledge and insights by novel means, the running of thought experiments, the framing of hypotheses, the exploration of a myriad possibilities and the probing of connections and alternative pathways, many of which were not available in more traditional conceptions of the 'appropriate' environment for learning. Nowadays, learning through multi-media technology is not like that found in the more traditional school setting: in these days, learning, acquiring knowledge and probing understanding through this technology can be regarded as play. No wonder that a growing number of students of all ages prefer to go about their learning with the aid of such assistance as is made accessible to them by PCs rather than having to be subjected to the constraints of the typical environment of many educational institutions and the stress they very often lay upon particular styles, modes and patterns of student learning and pupil progress. Learning with these new instruments of multi-media technology enables students to work and achieve positive learning gains according to their own pace and preferred styles for learning.

Concentrating on individual learning styles and targets of interest in this way also laid to one side many of the problems associated with the idea of acquiring learning in educating institutions. Either the term 'education' used there was vacuous – so wide that it could cover any kind of use involving the notions of upbringing, training or change – or it was heavily loaded with a particular kind of curriculum and content value. 'Science, mathematics, history, art, cooking and carpentry, feature on the curriculum [sc. of educating institutions], not bingo, bridge and billiards' was the view of Richard Peters (1966: 144), one of the world's leaders in the philosophy of education at the time and that was a view widely shared amongst those planning, funding and putting on the programmes of educating institutions in those days. Although there is much to be said for acquiring knowledge and skill in such subjects, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that people might also want to learn how to be better at activities and to know more about subjects that would be rather more similar to the latter class of activities than the former. 'Learning' how to be good at bridge, for example, could be a *desideratum* for many older people freed from the tyranny of the workplace, whilst billiards, snooker or even darts could be a source of many good things for young and older people. In that respect, the concept of 'learning' is to be preferred over that of 'education': it is not only neutral with respect to questions of value but also in the matter of the construction of a programme of preferred activities it has

much to commend it for individuals. It also emphasises processes – the ongoing nature of the activities – rather than products; learning is what Ryle called a 'task' rather than an 'achievement' word (Ryle 1949).

It is for these kinds of reasons that the term 'lifelong learning' has now come into much greater prominence and use than 'lifelong education', which has been increasingly laid aside. In what follows, therefore, except where sense and intelligibility requires the use of both or one or the other, we shall also adopt this approach. For it is now becoming increasingly clear that policy-makers in countries, agencies and institutions widely throughout the developed and developing worlds are devoting increasing attention to the notion that 'lifelong learning' is a central idea to be promoted in education policies for the future. It is regarded as offering a necessary and a strong foundation to underpin education and training provision, for ends that have to do with matters of an economic, social and individual kind, upon which countries, systems and individuals wish to lay ethical importance and to base their education and training policies for the future.

Questions of Methodology

A 'Maximalist' Approach

The post-empiricist approach to attempting to understand and elucidate the various types and shades of meaning given to 'lifelong education and 'lifelong learning' in educationalists' talk appears to sit well, on the surface at least, with the view taken of lifelong education by Kenneth Wain, one of the most prolific writers on the philosophy of lifelong education in recent times (see Wain 1984, 1985a, b, 1987, 1993a, b, and 2004). Wain's preferred 'progressive research programme' of lifelong education is the 'maximalist notion' incorporated in the UNESCO 'Programme', as various proponents of this idea (see Dave, Cropley, Gelpi, Lengrand and Suchodolski) have delivered it. As Wain (1987) comments:

> 'lifelong education' stands for a program to reconceptualise education totally according to the principle that education is a lifelong process.… for a complete overhaul of our way of thinking about learning, for a new philosophy of education and… for a *program of action* (Fauré et al. 1972; Lengrand 1975; Dave 1975; Cropley 1979)… as the "master concept" for all educational planning, policy-making, and practice… Their ambition was that the word education would eventually become synonymous with lifelong education in people's minds… (today's) world… requires a lifelong education which is a "constant reorganizing or reconstructing of experience"… (Dewey 1966: 76)

The emphasis of Dewey upon education as 'a continuous process of 'reorganisation and readjustment' of experience and the pragmatic concerns of lifelong education' may be claimed as the principal intellectual forebear of the maximalist position. The notions of *deliberate direction* and *conscious ordering* are crucial in the conception of education as consisting in working on the reconstruction and

re-organisation of experience. These are manifestations of a concern on the part of proponents of the maximalist position to show that educators are leaders of the 'learning society'. The proponents of the maximalists' position argue that lifelong education '… should be institutionalised in a "learning society"; this clearly shows that… it wants to make education more central to society, not deprive people of the right to it'. (Wain 1993b: 67). This gives us a Deweyan reason and support for encouraging the development of lifelong learning approaches, as one of the necessary features of a democratic society (see also Hickman 2008).

A 'maximalist' conception of this (Deweyan) version of a 'learning society' might thus be stated as Wain sets it out, both below and, though with some reservations, in his recent 2004 publication on *The Learning Society*:

> There is no 'model' learning society, there are different forms a learning society could take, just as there are different forms the lifelong education program could take. What distinguishes one learning society from the other is precisely the kind of program it institutionalizes within its particular socio-cultural and political context. The political characteristics of the movement's 'learning society' are… democratic… a shared, pluralistic and participatory 'form of life' in Dewey's sense…
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> This means reassessing the role of the school and of childhood education… and prioritizing adult education on the same level. A fundamental strategy with regard to the latter is to sensitize social institutions, the family, the church, political party, trade union, place of employment, etc., to their educational potential… with respect to their members. To encourage these institutions to regard themselves as potential educative agencies for their members and for the wider society (Wain 1993a: 68)
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> [T]he learning society is one that is exceedingly self-conscious about education in its total sense; that is conscious of the educational relevance and potential of its own institutions and of the general social environment that is its way of life, and is determined to maximize its resources in these respects, to the maximum' (Wain 1987: 202–3)

A Different View

Richard Bagnall (1990) attacks this version of 'lifelong education' as 'regressive' and 'illiberal' He restates the four semantic interpretations of 'lifelong education'. The first – 'education as a preparation *for* the rest of a person's life' – he says

> may be identified with the traditional view of schooling… as comprising… an educational foundation for adult life (e.g., Peters 1966; White 1982: 132)… such a view of education is inadequate for adult participation in modern, technologically sophisticated, liberal democratic societies… (see Evans 1985; Long 1983; Wedermeyer 1981)…

The second – 'lifelong education as education to be distributed *throughout* the whole of the lifespan' – remarks Bagnall,

> accords… with the… conception of lifelong education as 'recurrent education' (Davis et al. 1986; Kallen 1979) and with the principles of 'continuing education' (Titmus 1989 and Za'rour 1984)… While further development of educational systems along the lines of 'recurrent' education would clearly entail major changes in educational provision and participation, these changes at least would appear to be a constructive development of present educational provision and understanding

The third – 'lifelong education as education *from* the whole of life's experiences' – reduces, in Bagnall's view, to the fourth version of 'lifelong education' – that

> All events in which one is consciously involved throughout one's lifespan constitute education (as process) and contribute to and are part of one's education (as outcome). Education is the process and the on-going education product of living.

This view Bagnall rejects as failing to accord any intelligibility to the notion of formal and active engagement in educating activities as opposed to informal and unintentional education. For him *education proper* consists in making distinctions between knowledge and ideology, between educative learning and the simple accumulation of experience, between offering a contingent plurality of programmes and simply following one undifferentiated path of cognitive growth, between activities that conduce to worthwhile ends and experiences that are just simply 'had', between ends that may be cognitively difficult and challenging, but are morally defensible, laudable, and commendatory for all people, and outcomes which just simply come about after undifferentiated and unselected experiences and not as a result of informed and clearly differentiated choices of various kinds. Bagnall argues that: 'There is a desperate need for concrete educational expression to be given to many of the liberal and humanitarian ideals of lifelong education theorists such as Gelpi (Ireland 1978)'.

Charles Bailey would be in strong sympathy with such an approach. He stresses the importance of developing, maintaining and applying the powers of rational autonomy throughout the whole of people's lives (Bailey 1988), citing the work of Kant (1964), Hirst (1965) and Peters (1966) in support:

> If… Hirst claims that a genuinely liberal education must involve the development of rational mind… then it is difficult to see why this should be a process that terminates at 16 or 18… Hirst's well-known transcendental justificatory argument… does bear on individuals asking questions like: How should I live? How ought I to develop myself? Persons asking these kinds of questions would clearly be adults rather than children…
>
> Similarly… Peters'… conception of education as involving worthwhile developments in knowledge and understanding is clearly not something that is in any essential way limited to schooling… there is the clear implication that the rational person will have a duty, or at least might reasonably want, to continue their liberal education throughout life…

Education should be seen on this account as a series of deliberate undertakings to introduce students to some activities rather than others and to make them available as programmes in educational settings. These undertakings will introduce students to a range of activities and experiences that will enable them to make informed judgments and judicious choices about the options open to them, to choose rationally between them and consciously to accept the consequences and obligations that may arise from them. It is not the case that the undifferentiated flow of life itself will guide us to make such judgments and choices; the presuppositions of human autonomy and community render it a matter of necessity for the enterprise of education to be a conscious, deliberate and discriminating series of distinctions, values and decisions.

These considerations require that any form of *education proper* must be based on some more deliberate, objective and inter-personal ground than those accretions of

experience that come about as mere increments of growth. That ground is provided, on these arguments, by the presupposition of individual autonomy and the moral obligations towards other autonomous agents constituting the human community and their welfare and progress that arise from and in it (see Smith 1997).

Some Criticisms: The Need for a 'Third Way'

The consequences of adopting such arguments of Wain or Bagnall and Bailey bear substantially on the approaches and strategies employed to bring about lifelong education/learning and of the role of educators as leaders of a learning community. The implicative conclusions of those arguments require educators to commit themselves to the correlative educational imperative of planning and seeking educational opportunities, activities and experiences and making them available to ourselves and others throughout our lives. It would be a pity if we were distracted from taking the moral implications of such arguments for our educative endeavours (see Daveney 1973), by attaching excessive importance to such differences between protagonists of lifelong education. There are faults and virtues on both sides.

There is much that is noteworthy and commendable in the maximalist position. Wain's proposal for making 'lifelong education' a 'progressive research programme', as Lakatos conceived it, is worthy of serious consideration. The centrality in this notion of the principle of inclusion and removal of barriers to participation in educational provision gives point and direction to the idea of a 'learning society' (see Ransom 1994 and Wain 2004). The view that lifelong learning subsumes both formal and informal models of learning and places the main burden of the control and direction of learning on the learners themselves accords well with recent developments and advances in both pedagogy and 'andragogy' arising from research into meta-cognition and student-centred learning (Knowles et al. 1984 and see below).

There are some problems with this position, of course: the notion of internal coherence as the sole criterion of progressiveness in a research programme is open to all the criticisms, which anti-relativists have deployed against it, whilst at the same time the appeal to 'touchstone' as enabling inter-paradigm comparisons to be made suggests that such an account of theory competition presupposes the applicability of extra- or supra-paradigm criteria of intelligibility and corrigibility. One cannot have it both ways. Finally, one might have some reservations about the almost totalitarian character of the position envisaged by advocates of the maximalist programme. Not only might some criticism be raised concerning the unitary character and personification of 'society' found in the summary above – how can a learning society be 'conscious of' and sensitive to the educational potential of all its institutions and individuals? – but one might also be justified in sensing in the views of the proponents of that idea a vision and a sense of mission that detractors might describe as utopian and Popperian critics might characterise as millenarian. These considerations should caution us against a too ready acceptance of maximalist rubrics for the idea of lifelong learning.

On the other side, it is right to note that education, however we conceive it, is not something to which artificial barriers can be drawn and that, properly conceived, it is an enterprise that lasts over the whole of a lifetime. Of course, such a view gives undue prominence to place of active discrimination in a formal institutional sense and too little to the idea and functioning of informal education. It tends to stress unduly a particular conception of liberal education in debates about the meaning and content of lifelong learning programmes. A great deal of criticism of that view and its justification has already been written (see Young 1971; Langford 1973; Harris 1979, and Evers and Walker 1983). The possibility of such criticisms being deployed against a similar view of the concept of lifelong learning should perhaps caution us against too ready an acceptance of the rejection of arguments based on 'relevance' and 'coherence' and of any plea for lifelong learning to be seen as a species of liberal education generally. There is much more to it than that.

An Alternative Approach: The Focus on Problems

For these reasons, we think that there is much to be said for trying a different expedient. There is, we believe, little point in attempting to achieve some resolution between the different accounts of the term, especially when there can be as many different conceptions of the concept of lifelong leaning as there are philosophers to put them forward and communities willing to put their own versions of lifelong learning programmes into effect. It might, in our view, be better to look, not so much at the various interpretations and accounts of lifelong learning, but rather more at the circumstances in which various theories and policies of lifelong learning have been articulated, developed and applied.

In other words, we are suggesting an objective referent that may be found in the *problems* to the settlement of which lifelong learning programmes are addressed. There is, we believe, more to be gained by looking at the difficulties, issues and predicaments, the attempted solution of which different policies of lifelong learning have been conceived to tackle. In that way, we might attempt to see how, why and in response to what pressures and quandaries the various versions or theories of lifelong learning have been developed or are in play and can be seen to be at work in the attention education policy-makers devote to them, before attempting to assess how far those policies and practices have succeeded in finding answers for the problems that policy-makers are attempting to tackle.

One resolution that might be suggested, then, is to take a pragmatic look at the problems that policy-makers are addressing when urging that learning be lifelong and open to and engaged in by all people. This will help us accept that, just as there is a myriad of such problems, some of them unique to particular countries, education systems or institutions, some much more general and widespread, and so there will be a large difference, not only in kind but also in degree of complexity and sophistication, in the type and scale of the solutions proffered to them. There will be

small- and large-scale differences too in the particular terms of significance in those solutions, the tests for efficacy, the standards of success and the criteria and arguments that make certain approaches more fruitful than others, for the particular times and circumstances in which they are brought to bear and applied.

Examples of such problems may be readily found, though our examination of them is likely to start closer to home than further away. Perhaps, we may begin to make ground by examining some of the accounts of the needs of different people, different communities or different countries for undertaking education and learning across the lifespan, currently under consideration by governments and policy-makers around the world. These days the different versions of lifelong learning occurring widely across the international arena are associated with attempts to respond by educational means to problems of a very large scale and widespread international prominence. The recent policies of such international agencies as UNESCO, OECD, the European Union and APEC as well the policy developments taking place in many national government departments and ministries of education [see here the work of Beycioglu and Konan (2008), and Tuschling and Christoph (2006)] relate to the following concerns, amongst others:

- The need for countries to have an economy sufficiently flexible, adaptable and forward-looking to enable it to feed its citizens and give them a reasonable quality of life
- The need for people to be made aware of the rights and duties open to them in the most widely preferred modern form of government – that of participative democracy, to be shown how to act in accordance with those rights and duties and to become committed to the preservation and promotion of that particular form of political arrangement and its constitutive or associated set of political, social and community institutions
- The desirability of individuals having an informed awareness of a range of options of activities and choices from which they can construct and continually re-construct satisfying and personally uplifting patterns of life for themselves.

If we examine this list of needs, we shall find no shortage of problems, issues and questions, which particular countries, systems, communities, institutions and individuals are currently addressing. Their concern in such undertakings involves the attempt to work out what will best conduce to the individual, communal and national welfare of their people. This entails getting people in turn to take on some study for themselves. People need to look into such matters as how they should act towards themselves and their fellows; what choices they need to make in order to enjoy a satisfying and enriching life; in what directions they may try to shape their futures; for what roles and responsibilities as members of their various communities and the national polity should they prepare themselves. For all citizens in the modern democratic state, these will be matters calling upon continuing educational endeavour and self-conscious, self-directed and deliberate concern. The need for them to face the kinds of problems instanced earlier will require them consciously and purposefully to undertake and engage in a set of learning activities, acquiring the knowledge and skills that will enable them to work out ways in which they may bring about an

improvement in their own lives and that of all members of their community and hand it on to their successors in coming generations. And that, in the eyes of Mary Warnock (1979), is the end of all education.

Epistemological Concerns: Knowledge for Lifelong Learning

Here, we wish to raise two questions. The first concerns those things that people will need to know and to learn, in order to live out their lives as well-functioning and productive individuals in present and future economic conditions; to understand, grasp and seek to expand the opportunities offered them by the right of participating in the political institutions of the modern democratic state; and to judge intelligently and make well-informed choices from amongst a range of activities that will increase their independence, confirm their autonomy and extend their cultural horizons. This is the question of substance.

The second is perhaps philosophically more important: it concerns the nature and status of the knowledge that people will acquire in lifelong learning undertakings. In answering this question, we are helped by recent work on the concept of knowledge and on theories about the ways in which people learn.

More modern conceptions and accounts of the nature of knowledge require us to move away from ideas that were once held regarding the nature of knowledge, and the truth and objectivity of the knowledge claims that one could make. Previously knowledge was held to be certain or at least highly probable, truths were absolute and data were based on facts that were regarded as 'hard' and objective. The sense perceptions, from which allowable knowledge claims were held to spring and were warranted, were uncontentious, theory- and value-free. Instead of this position, there is now widespread acceptance of the view that, insofar as it is possible to speak of knowledge and truth at all, it is something that is highly provisional, constantly changing and problematic (see Rorty 1979).

Thus, thinking that we are acquiring new knowledge or making a claim to have knowledge or understanding rests these days on no secure foundations. Rather, when we lay claim to or talk now about knowledge, truth and belief, we are aware that what we say is perennially open to challenge and critical review. The knowledge claims that we make are corrigible and open to criticism. These days to claim to know or understand something is much less like standing on the building blocks of solid granite provided for us by teachers who were the authorities on it and is much more like the experience of having to learn ourselves to get used to riding on wet slippery logs. The notion of secure foundations and unshakeable building blocks for knowledge has gone.

Further, we have to cope now with the additional realisation that knowledge, instead of being regarded as strictly divided into disciplines constituting the world of knowledge, and partitioned for curriculum purposes into diverse subjects or areas such as English and Mathematics and History and Geography and Science, is to be seen from a more integrative perspective. Our world of apprehension, cognition and

comprehension is much more like a shifting set of webs of discourse that embody the declensions, alterations, and expansions in the theories with which we try to make sense of the reality we share and make it amenable to our understand and control. For this reason, knowledge has now become much more problem orientated. We address our cognitive efforts onto the study and tentative solution of the problems that beset us.

All this has immediate concerns for those educators concerned with leading the learning community and helping its members get started on learning throughout life. These are amongst the key questions that we are called to face: what counts as knowledge and how may knowledge be secured, transmitted and developed in a society where knowledge is constantly changing throughout people's lives? If we are to have new conceptions of knowledge in our society, what kind of policies and programmes shall we provide both inside our society's educating institutions and in more informal environments outside and beyond their walls? Most importantly, what implications do new conceptions of knowledge hold for the education of lifelong learners and the programmes of activities and experiences they may choose or be required to undergo? (We may find the work of MFD Young in his well-known discourse in the 'new' sociology of education *Knowledge and Control* especially useful and thought-provoking in helping us tackle such questions as these).

On the accounts with which our teachers and learners will be operating today, the knowledge they work at imparting or acquiring may not have the status of certainty or even a high degree of probability. It must, however, be public, objective and testable. What matters now is much less the authority to be given to anyone's claim to knowledge but much more the kinds of evidence and of theoretic perspective and interests we have, in which we are willing to research, frame and plan our future thinking and acting. It is our inter-subjective agreements as to what shall count as evidence and the way in which it may be rendered objective that give us a warrant for the public acceptability of our claims to knowledge. Just as we are entitled to take it amiss if some-one promises but subsequently fails to fulfil that promise, so we are entitled to be deeply disappointed, even disillusioned, if some-one confers a right to know upon us, on grounds that we find subsequently to have been at worst mistaken, at best uncertain, shifting or illusory. For letting some one down in that way is actually to upset the whole set of presuppositions and legitimate expectations of which our inter-personal world of cognition and shared understanding is constituted. Just as, when some-one tells a lie, the whole structure of linguistic interchange is called into question; so, when some-one turns out to have been less than secure in his/her claim to know something, our confidence in our own perception of reality is shaken.

So strong is the presupposition in favour of our acceptance of our own and other people's shared experience in matters of claims upon a common framework of veridical perception, cognition and understanding, that it is generally only in the presence of the possibility of uncertainty, misunderstanding or mistake that we strongly assert our claim to know something – as Wittgenstein (1953) pointed out. We know we have to objectify our knowledge claims: public communication and

the claims of intelligibility require it. But we also have to make it clear that our claims are liable to error, contestation or correction, and that is why, paradoxically, when we claim 'to know' something, we are also thereby tacitly inviting our interlocutors to share *but yet to critically scrutinise and check what we say for possible error*. Knowledge is therefore public, yet also automatically open to checking, criticism and possible falsification. A claim to knowledge on our part necessarily involves rendering ourselves subject to challenge, to being candidates for examination, possibly even targets of contestation or conflict.

The claims we make to having acquired rational beliefs, knowledge or understanding, therefore, are, whilst acceptable as objective because of their intersubjectivity, highly uncertain, highly unstable and liable to refutation. Any learning gain that we make, any knowledge claim we advance, however tentatively, wherever we came by it, in howsoever formal or informal the learning environment, has to be seen from a particular perspective. This refers *not* to facts, mathematical certainties and empirical verifiabilities; rather, it issues from, exposes and indeed draws attention to the theoretical frameworks within which our learning gains and knowledge-claims are framed and articulated. The climate in which our cognitive community operates subjects them to critical scrutiny, error elimination and every possible attempt at disconfirmation (see Popper 1949, 1972). It is only when such claims have successfully resisted all attempts at overthrow that they may be *provisionally* accepted for the time being as having 'warranted assertability' (Dewey 1966: 162), and the theories within which they figure and from which they operate as being, *pro tempore*, the 'best' theories for application to theoretical or practical problems that we face and the knowledge and skills we need to acquire and put into play in our attempts to solve them (see also Hickman 2008).

Given the changing conditions of that cognitive world, the notion of knowledge being put forward here is one that is particularly suited to the character and activities of lifelong learning, The nature of lifelong learning, as we shall contend below, is that people approach and undertake the mastery of new knowledge, skills, very much on an individual 'need or wish to know' basis. Indeed, this enables us to signal our awareness of the distinction between Popper's view of the permanent corrigibility of the world (which seems to imply a realist epistemology, in that it presumes the existence of some sort of reality out there, to which our theories make successive problem-solving approaches) and more radical rejections (such as that of Rorty 1979) of the notions of external reality or any sort of objective truth (and therefore any notion of comparability) altogether. It seems important that we note the force of the critique of Rorty and others as offering an alternative view of the vast 'moorland' of possibilities for lifelong learners to explore their own needs and possible avenues of personal advancement, though we believe that the way in which this thesis is sometimes presented seems to leave the individual learner, at any level of education, adrift without an anchor in a sea of conflicting ideologies. For us, the metaphor proposed by Quine following Neurath offers a more plausible account of the ways in which individuals, travelling amongst a loose flotilla of fellow-learners, can choose to chart the ways that will best advance their vessels of theory construction, expansion and correction.

In our view, lifelong learners acquire their beliefs, knowledge and understanding that they need, beyond the ones they already have, in all the highways and byways of the cognitive world. Just as claiming knowledge, on Popper's view, involves subjecting one's tentative solutions to problems to the test of criticism from wherever it may come, so learners gather together the resources they need in the attempt to put together those hypotheses and frame tentative solutions *from whatever quarter they can find them*, whether this should be from traditional or non-traditional, from authoritative or iconoclastic sources. For all of these, both within and well outside of conventional educating institutions constitute Popper's 'Third World' of knowledge.

The 'Third World' of objective knowledge is not only stored in libraries and presided over by those regarded as 'authorities' in formal institutional surroundings such as schools, colleges and universities. It is also to be found in all those places and on all those public occasions where people are thinking creatively and developing imaginative answers to questions and solutions to problems that will then be proposed as hypotheses ready to be submitted to falsification in public discourse. This is not the world of institutional confines to learning but the world that offers opportunities for learning and tentatively putting up hypotheses, from a 1,000 different sources, in a 1,000 different places and a myriad different ways. That is, the character of knowledge as we now regard it and it is one that is remarkably congruent with the cognitive operation that is lifelong learning.

The Philosophical Psychology of Pedagogy/Learning

New conceptions of knowledge are of major importance in setting the scene for advances in the philosophical psychology of pedagogy and 'andragogy'. New approaches to the concept of learning will inevitably play an important part in assisting educational policy-makers and planners to develop and articulate policies and programmes of activities and experiences appropriate to each of the phases and the various different goals of lifelong learning. Equally important in such planning, however, will be reference to new modes and styles of learning, that have been developed as a result of work in learning theory, cognitive development theory and meta-cognition that has been making ground and advancing in recent years.

The former adherence to a uniform mode of knowledge transmission, in which a 'generic' student was simply viewed as a receptacle, somewhat like a jug, into which teachers didactically poured knowledge, contents and facts until the jug's allocated portion was filled [a similar idea may also be found in Freire's account (2006) of what he described as the 'Banking' view of education], has now been long rendered inoperable by recent advances in cognitive psychology and meta-cognition in more up-to-date thinking about learning (cf. Smith 1983, 1990). Now it is widely accepted that, in order for learning to be effectively secured and integrated into the pattern of the understandings that we already have, learning must be self-directed, self-internalised and self monitored. Instead of more traditional conceptions of

teaching–learning, in which learning progress was largely teacher-centred, instructive in mode, linear in progression and didactic in character, there is now a realisation that the progress of learning is *not roughly the same* for all learners in a particular age group and certainly not for learners in different age groups; nor does learning necessarily proceed in a linear fashion.

It is now coming to be widely accepted that the best and the most secure learning occurs when students are centrally involved in controlling, directing and monitoring their own learning progress, in ways and according to particular modes of proceeding that they have worked out and can select for themselves, in accordance with their own characteristic mode of cognitive operation and their awareness of how best they can proceed in mastering now concepts, information and skills. On this hypothesis, learning is not teacher-given but student-centred; and to promote effective student learning now, teachers need to be aware, not merely of the different stages of cognitive development of which Piaget told us, but also of the existence of many different forms of intelligence identified by cognitive psychology (see Gardner 1985), and the very many different styles of cognitive operation with which people of all ages and at different stages operate when they have some new concept, piece of information or skill to master.

This means, for the individual, that learning has much less to do with the mere acquisition of bodies of content for replication later, and much more to do with their becoming active in acquiring and then operating the skilled techniques, rules and procedures by means of which knowledge can be acquired and one's own circle of understanding expanded. From this, it follows that amongst the prime prerequisites in any approach to learning for individual students will be the skills of research, enquiry, and self-starting curiosity that are constantly in play and seeking answers to questions posed to them by others or by their own situations in life, their problems and predicaments. These skills will enable students to expand the concepts and categories they already have, linking them together, so that they become *meaningful* (i.e., that they make sense for the individual *from the inside*) and then exercising, applying, monitoring, checking, correcting and extending them further, in the actual situations in which the various skills and learnings are called for. The motto we may most appropriately employ for this endeavour is that of 'learning to learn'. Here, the work and thinking of Smith (1983, 1990) is central to this idea and helpful in developing it.

Now, therefore, instead of being a passive recipient of recipe knowledge, the student stands at the centre of the learning situation. Whenever and wherever they are engaged, learners are their own best initiators, arrangers and guarantors of the successful integration of new knowledge and understandings into their existing structures and patterns of understandings. Learners now look for personal relevance and applicability in what they are required to assimilate or in what they realise they lack. They tackle the tasks of the acquisition and mastery of new material or skills in ways that give each of them the greatest sense of fit with the contexts in which they will want, need or be required to deploy and apply it. Students now know they learn best when they monitor their own learning progress and learning gains, constantly checking and evaluating, criticising, correcting and

extending as they go along. They can put things to one side for a while and come back later; they can go over the same point again and again; they can try to make progress by a different route, with different instruments, in different surroundings – even if these be in the workplace, the home, the club, the church or the community centre in the evenings. The work of learning can be activated and engaged in at any time, on this thesis – the thesis that underpins the whole notion of lifelong learning. On this model the learnings and understandings that we newly acquire are hooked onto our existing pattern of understandings and built into extended networks of concepts and categories and criteria that we already possess for their intelligibility, utility and significance to us and to those with whom we have to communicate about it.

We may but very often we do not do this on our own. For, on this account, coming to know things is a social activity and common growth process. It is people's intersubjective agreements that constitute the tenability, reality and objectivity of the knowledge claims that we advance. We expand and extend our knowledge and understanding of the world on a collaborative basis. It is now coming to be widely appreciated that a co-operative, rather than a competitive approach to learning is of immense help to groups of students in facilitating rapid gains in the acquisition of their learning and mastering difficult, complex and heterogeneous forms of knowledge and skill (OECD 1991).

Thus, our learning is social and collaborative: as learners we work best in teams, not fighting to work against each other but the more easily acquiring our learning, because we do it best in the company of our peers, cooperating with each other in a collaboration that is positive, supportive and in an environment where the principal motive for progress is *not* that of the threat of 'defeat' or the thrill of 'victory' in some kind of 'competition' for ascendancy over other learners, but that of mutual benefit.

Indeed, we have now begun to appreciate that the competitive approach to knowledge is not merely educationally and ethically dubious: it is also psychologically grossly inefficient and can be socially gravely disharmonious and even disruptive. It is also, for good Popperian reasons, epistemically misconceived: we can make best learning gains and cognitive progress with our problem-solving when we do it in the company and with the assistance of all those who can join in a common enterprise of theory construction, criticism and correction. Research now tells us that the best way of doing this is in company with other people of like minds, at about similar kinds of cognitive development and capable of similar rates of progress – but not necessarily of similar chronological ages – forming a self-conscious critical mass of a group involved in problem-solving work in a research enterprise in which there are no subordinates or super-ordinates and to which all can make equally critical or creative contributions.

There is the final point that this kind of learning is best and most effective if it is addresses problems that are relevant to the students themselves, whenever and wherever they encounter them during their lives and in the pursuit of their own interests and all their main concerns, whether as private individuals or members of the community.

New Technologies of Learning

The possibilities of this kind of learning are enhanced by the revolutionary changes that have taken place in the storing, retrieval and communication of information. As a result of the globalisation of information and knowledge advance brought about by the information technology revolution, the concept of learning and a learning institution has been transformed. Educationally speaking, we now inhabit a public realm constituted by all the libraries, archives, data banks, information stores and records, to which, with the appropriate technical devices, many learners may now have access any time they need to from anywhere they want. But, we must also be painfully aware that, in making our policies and establishing our avenues of access and communication, we shall need to do everything we can to 'reach the unreached learner' and endeavour to ensure that they too can enjoy similar access. One example may be found in the domain of adult education, where the whole range and pattern of social inequalities in enjoying access to resources and information across the planet indicate that there are many people without such access – and who need to be reached and provided for – if lifelong learning is indeed to become a reality for all. An extended and critical discussion of this topic can be found in Chapman et al. (2006).

For all those having such access, the world of learning, via IT or any other means is not now open only for a few hours each day in term time: In the new kinds of provision, learning by means of the sophisticated modern learning technologies is always available – 24 h a day, all days of the year. The instruments of modern learning technologies are unfailingly patient and never get tired, emotional or angry with learners. They are infinitely hardworking and long-suffering and almost infinitely resourceful: they never run out of steam. They will repeat instruction, checking and corrections; they enable us to make repeated attempts at success as often as we wish and can replicate hypotheses and thought-experiments as many times as we like. They encourage great stress on accuracy and precision in a completely non-threatening way. They can deliver their resources of information, knowledge and understanding to the workplace, the home, the youth club, the crèche, the community centre or the Cyber-Café – indeed, to any place that might be convenient to our purposes and not within the artificial constraints of a place up until now specifically set aside and specially programmed and staffed for learning.

The Information Technology revolution and the powers made available by interactive multimedia have had an enormous impact on the ways in which schools and educational institutions of all kinds work. Similarly, various forms of interactive communication have made enormous differences to the world of work and will clearly go on influencing the ways in which work is organised in a very large part of industry, business and commerce in the future. Education programming is central to this type of activity. Technology will enable the development of communities of interest, interactivity and mutual benefit.

This means that learning institutions of all kinds have to re-appraise and reorganise the ways in which worthwhile knowledge is conceived and presented, how curricula are categorised and delivered and how learning is arranged and promoted.

Schools have to find ways in which they can help people – already reached or not yet reached but needing and deserving to secure connection to this range of new opportunities – develop the now vital skills of *learning how to learn*. Once they enjoy access to a rich range of resources, students can work at pushing their cognitive progress forward themselves, directing and controlling their own intellectual growth, learning how to be curious and how to do research, being imaginative and creative, self-monitoring, self-critical, self-correcting and pacing their own learning, as well as ways to provide multiple pathways and openings for people in which they can work at their own pace. Information technology can help them to build, extend and support all such learning opportunities.

The vision of a networked society with equal access to knowledge and information, made up of communities and individuals, themselves in charge of their own learning environments, and governments, educators and the private sector working in partnership, is fundamental to the evolution and achievement of the goal of a democratic, free, economically stable and socially just society in the twenty-first century. But, realisation of this vision will require a close examination of the content, style, structure and organisation of modern methods and technologies of learning, particularly in respect of the new possibilities offered by the emphasis upon student-centred and self-directed modes of progression, together with an examination of the purpose and function of educational institutions and their use and adaptation of electronic technologies to meet new educational needs. In setting the agenda for education in the twenty-first century, policy-makers and educators will clearly need to direct their attention to an exploration of the ways in which the availability of modern information technology devices and new modes of student progress will make possible, effect and shape frameworks for curriculum content and styles of assessment in learning institutions and environments of all kinds, in ways that will both transform learning institutions and environments generally and contribute to the realisation of broader social goals.

At the present time, unfortunately, many schools and centres of learning are either not teaching all members of the community how to live with and exploit the opportunities offered by information technology or are inhibited by constraints of various kinds from doing so as thoroughly and as extensively as they might wish. Clearly, this should change: there is now so much information available and means of handling it that the hardware, software and the other resources need to be made widely available across all social sectors, and the skills involved need to be taught – on a lifelong basis. Schools and other education institutions have an important role in this and a vital part to play in helping people to manage information and to prepare themselves for the immense opportunities it offers, in increasing vocational preparedness, personal growth, social inclusion and democratic participation.

Before showing members of the community how to use modern technologies of learning, therefore, teachers in schools and other learning centres and educators, generally, need themselves to be shown the many advantages offered by them. They need to help students be clear about the purpose and benefits offered by this form of communication. One of the main advantages of modern information technology is that students will be much more empowered to select and travel along learning

pathways that they can construct for themselves and use for their own personal growth. These are amongst the many reasons why in the future students will be logging into learning centres around the world from their schools, their homes, their workplaces and other potential learning venues. The range of information channels and learning pathways available will be immeasurably enhanced. In the future, modern information technology, including audio-visual channels, will facilitate communication between communities of interest.

For this reason, educators will need to re-examine their reliance on linear models of cognitive growth and communication, since one of the essential components of the new technologies is that random access is possible, that navigation through different informational elements is almost boundless and that the linear structures and approaches that some institutions are still applying to their current course and programme design are not necessarily the appropriate ones for learning. Video on demand, for example, allows students to feed their own non-formal, non-traditional and non-linear requests for information and other questions into the system and get responses that suit them. This means that education audiences are no longer passive; this, in turn, raises substantial questions for those providing access to education services through modern technology media. Programme designers in schools and other educating institutions will have to establish how they develop programmes and design messages that cater for the needs of the active individual learner. The challenge for educators and service providers is to design an educational product and process that makes this possible.

Questions of Ethics: The Demand for Justification

The OECD *Jobs Study* (OECD 1994a) highlighted the need for a lifelong learning approach on the following grounds:

- The relationship between skills, competences and aggregate economic performance
- Educational attainment and the labour market performance of individuals:
  - Low earnings for the least qualified
  - High risk of unemployment for the least qualified
  - Growing disadvantage for the less educated
  - The widening of the skills gap: opportunities for overcoming low educational attainment
- Education, skills and competences and their relationship to enterprise performance and improved productivity
- The relationship between national, individual and enterprise performance

As is clear from the above, major analyses of the recent and current climate of change in economic and social matters have provided a powerful rationale and justification for the realisation of the idea of lifelong learning for all. Perhaps, the most powerful of these analyses, the OECD *Jobs Study* concentrates heavily on the link

between the economic policies and performances of countries and the concomitant need for the continuing availability of a high quality, skilled and knowledgeable workforce. This point and the emphasis on such relationships have become even clearer and more pressing in the time of the recent global financial crisis, which has affected so many countries so adversely.

This is, however, only one of the goals of many countries' education policies. The others – democratic engagement and personal fulfilment – are now being seen and coming to be regarded as quite as important as economic goals, if the aims of stability, social inclusiveness and personal development are to be achieved. Although, in 1994, the OECD *Jobs Study* made reference to the importance of these other goals for countries' education policies, they were given nothing like the attention that economic factors and arguments receive. And it must be noted that, for many countries' educational systems and policies, the economic emphases are still seen as the leading educational determinative criteria.

Nevertheless, many governments continue to have concerns for a multi-faceted character to be incorporated into their thinking and policies for lifelong learning and its positive relationship to a broader and more diverse set of goals than are merely consolidated under economist rubrics. We may reasonably suppose that, in the work and thinking of countries setting the agenda for education for the rest of this century, a more comprehensive analysis of all the various dimensions and features of the nature, aims and purposes of policies for 'realising lifelong learning for all' will have to be tackled, and a more wide-ranging set of justifications addressing the differences in those aims and purposes more clearly articulated and provided. In this way, policies pertaining to lifelong learning endeavours are more likely to be developed and articulated, not merely with respect to providing arguments to vindicate a country's concern for its economic self-sufficiency, but also to reinforce its appreciation of the need for a multiplicity of initiatives that will conduce to the other and wider goals of lifelong learning. These may be seen, *inter alia*, as increasing the emancipation of, access to, participation in and benefit or success experienced by all citizens in various political, social and cultural institutions and opening further avenues of personal growth and advancement to them.

We are aware, of course, that such goals are open to criticism from many quarters. Not all will necessarily agree that the ends aimed at by lifelong learning policies are so wide-ranging. It is here where questions of values come in.

One of the most compelling problems in the field of lifelong learning activities and their provision is that of the choice between deliberate intervention or simple *laissez-faire*. And this kind of deliberation raises problems of normative ethics on two levels – the general and the particular.

In the first case, this involves asking whether, as a matter of policy, we ought to attempt to influence or alter people's behaviour and attitudes towards learning beyond the school *at all*, rather than allowing people to make their own choices and cope with the outcomes in their own way. It might be claimed, for instance, that any sort of intrusion into other people's lives and all their main concerns, any set of prescriptions or even an overt encouragement to engage in certain sorts of activities takes away people's autonomy and influences them to follow heteronomously

prescribed choices rather than their own. For to decide to try to get people deliberately engaged in lifelong learning activities presupposes that we think they ought to and that entails being prepared to justify the intervention implicit in such prescriptions or public policies.

Having once decided that, however, we arrive at the second level of problem in the normative realm: what particular policies or strategies of prescription or commendation ought we adopt and adhere to, not only in general but in particular cases too? Is it sufficient, for example, simply to provide the access, the resources, the information and the opportunities and then leave people to make up their own minds and/or work out and press forward things for themselves? Is it justifiable deliberately to try to influence attitudes and behaviour, so that people will start taking up the opportunities and engaging in further learning activities and generally come to act in accordance with what we believe to be 'good' or 'in their interests' on the basis of arguments which *we* accept? And what if the outcome of people's engaging in such activities is different from what we expected or hoped for? In such cases, are our policies or prescriptions to be judged on the basis of the legislators', policy-makers' and providers' good intentions, or on the actual outcomes of those policies? And in the case of the latter, what will count as a success: is it the 'nearly 100% success' that will count or the 'nearly 1% failure' that will give us cause for concern?

Our awareness of what we are about when we pose such questions of justification clearly rests upon and presupposes a complex network of preconceptions, theories and value judgments about what it is to be a human being, what it is to look forward to and prepare for a full life in which choices are maximised, what it is to live as a member of the community. To draw out what might be the major elements in such theories and judgments is not easy, for they are often unstated or unexamined. Further, to conclude that people's values should be added to, expanded or even altered is a notion that is likely to meet with some resistance, particularly in cases where such refinement, expansion or alteration may be likely to affect a person's whole outlook on their work, their leisure time and even their domestic circumstances. Much of such resistance could be justified on moral grounds.

For some people, to be exposed to the kinds of requirements or recommendations that some employers, educators in institutions or politicians might urge with respect to the importance of people's taking up learning beyond formal settings would be unacceptable. They might see it as being subjected to forms of control, intrusion or even persuasion that they would find going beyond such groups' authority or abhorrent on other grounds. Such differences of opinion issue not only from such people's beliefs about what constitutes a morally acceptable basis for relationships between employers, other institutions or the state, but also, in turn, from the metaphysical basis of such beliefs about the nature of human beings and of the principles obtaining in relations between them.

For example, if, say, some people take the view that human beings only differ from animals in degree of sophistication and that their patterns of behaviour or the products of their work may be exploited or simply seen as commodities in the market place and that talk of freedom, independence and human dignity merely refers

to another form of commodity, then the kind of recipes they put forward for the need to learn throughout people's lives will probably be different from those policies and prescriptions for action that would follow from subscribing to the Kantian principle of not treating persons as means to ends of any kind, whether economic, social or political, but always only as ends in themselves. In the latter view, individual people are seen as autonomous agents, with complete freedom of judgment and choice in working out what they believe they ought to do in making decisions as to how to face the problems they encounter throughout their lives and how best to spend their time and resources in them.

In this way, it seems to us that approaches to the question of putting forward policies and programmes of lifelong learning exemplify the philosophical problems of human nature *and* moral values. For there will be considerable differences between the kinds of programmes and range of activities devised in the attempt to make possible and encourage the development and expansion of the limits of people's autonomy and those in which it is thought to be a matter of simply inculcating the right attitudes in people or of getting people to respond to the right stimuli. There will be considerable difference between the evaluation of those lifelong learning programmes and activities proffered by those who believe absolutely in the right of individuals to make choices (on an informed basis) for themselves and those put forward by such groups which see people simply as economic functionaries, agents of production, customers or consumers, whose needs can be shaped and whose final choices can be predicted, and amongst whom some 'casualties', 'failures' or 'recalcitrants' will merely be regarded as temporary distractions or nuisances to be put up with in pursuit of the greater economic or social interest.

In practice, does this mean that any policy or programme of lifelong learning proposed by or arising from the interests of such different groups can be accepted? For some philosophers, such fundamental disagreements in matters of moral standpoint are to be taken as a matter of course. One described the logic of moral judgments in this way: 'Take any position and its opposite can be maintained without logical error or factual mistake' (Atkinson 1965). Certainly, some would contend (see Hare 1952) that it would be perfectly possible for two different sides in any moral controversy to follow the 'rules' of moral deliberation (say prescriptivity and universalisability) *and* both be right in their judgments, even though they came to mutually contradictory conclusions. Others would quickly reject such a notion:

> How 'X is good' can be a well-founded moral judgment when 'X is bad' can be equally well-founded it is not easy to see… How can questions such as 'What does it matter? 'What harm does it do?' … and 'Why is it important?' be set aside here? (Foot 1958)

On such a view, it is simply not the case that in moral matters, anything goes. In the human situation, we have to accept that there are some incontrovertible 'facts of life' that have to be taken account of in discussions about moral matters (see also Geoffrey Warnock 1967). For example, no one would disagree that to lose a limb would be a horror to be avoided if at all possible; or that we ought to do everything we can to maximise people's welfare and minimise the possibilities of their falling into harm; or that a life of quality, in which human beings could be seen to be

'flourishing' and not suffering, is an end to be desired, promoted and worked for by people individually and collectively over the course of their lives.

It is this last position that underpins the selection of values we set out above as justifying programmes of lifelong learning. It seems to us that human beings' functional efficiency and personal benefit will be promoted by their continually acquiring the resources they need to tackle the problems they face, whether these consist in adopting a regimen of behaviours that will enable them to protract their existence until normal term or working out for themselves a pattern of activities and choosing a range of options that, on reflection, they believe will improve the quality of their lives. This means the need to continue to learn until the ends of their lives. For there will always be circumstances, challenges and changes in those lives that will require a changed attitude, an altered set of beliefs, a different kind of value. Examples of cases which call for such changes are too numerous to mention, though all are important, such as, for example, the movement amongst many Australians for altered constitutional arrangements, or the wish amongst many South Africans for genuine reconciliation in the reconstruction of their society. In such cases, the need for new learning is paramount.

It is for these reasons that we suggest that the pragmatic, problem-based approach will be most suitable to the conception, articulation and elaboration of theories, tentative hypotheses and trial solutions suitable and appropriate to tackle the questions with which national governments, national and international agencies, communities and groups of people are currently pre-occupied and to increase their effectiveness and functional utility. This is our answer to the demand for the justification of lifelong learning.

Conclusion

We believe one may go on from here and identify the problems, topics and issues to which proposals for lifelong learning may be deemed to provide tentative solutions. It is clear that both international education agencies and governments in many countries are concerned to increase their economic growth, to make their political arrangements more equitable, just and inclusive, and to offer a greater range of avenues for self-improvement and personal development to all their citizens. Faced with such needs, aims and endeavours, they see that answers to all these questions may be found in the promotion of lifelong learning as an approach that will further their commitment to the advancement of economic, social and educational ideals. This will animate and direct their policies for emphasising the development, provision and encouragement of lifelong learning programmes and policies as means to their achievement.

We realise, of course, that none of these aims and undertakings for lifelong learning can really be separated from the other: all three elements interact and cross-fertilise each other. A more competent and highly skilled agent in the work-force has more of an interest in and responsibility for contributing to the improvement of

institutions and their point in a set of democratic political arrangements; both are in turn enhanced by the affective satisfaction experienced and achieved by those who have expanded their life-horizons in cognitive content and skills in complex forms of intellectual operation or cultural activity in which, upon reflection, they now prefer to spend their time.

There is a complex inter-play between all three that makes education for a more highly skilled work-force *at the same time* an education for better democracy *and* a more rewarding life. That is why the whole notion and value of 'lifelong learning for all' might be usefully seen as a complex, and multi-faceted process, that begins in pre-school, is carried on through compulsory and post-compulsory periods of formal education and training and is then continued throughout life, through provision of such learning experiences, activities and enjoyment in the home, in the work-place, in universities and colleges, and in other educational, social and cultural agencies, institutions and settings – both formal and informal – within the community.

The central elements in what we have described as the 'triadic' nature of lifelong learning may be restated as follows (see Chapman and Aspin 1997). They are engaged in:

- For economic progress and development
- For personal development and fulfilment
- For social inclusiveness and democratic understanding and activity

These learning interests and requirements are now seen as fundamental to bringing about a more democratic polity and set of social institutions, in which the principles and ideals of social inclusiveness, justice and equity are present, practised and promoted; an economy which is strong, adaptable and competitive; and a richer range of provision of those activities on which individual members of society are able to choose to spend their time and energy, for the personal rewards and satisfactions that they confer.

This approach, however, requires a far greater, more coherent and consistent, better co-ordinated and integrated, more multi-faceted approach to education and to realising a 'lifelong learning' approach *for all* than has hitherto been the case. To bring this about – to move towards the achievement of a 'learning society' (cf. Wain 2004 and Ranson 1994) – will require nothing less than a substantial re-appraisal of the provision, resourcing and goals of education and training, and a major re-orientation of its direction and planning towards the securing and increasing the availability and the value of opportunities and choices for all, to secure access to 'learning throughout life'.

Therein lies the major challenge for governments, policy-makers and educators as they grapple with ways of conceptualising lifelong learning and realising the aim of 'lifelong learning for all'.

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