

Chapter 44

The Economic Context of Lifelong Learning

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Introduction

The chapter is critical of the arguments that there is an increasingly homogenous global economy and that policies towards lifelong learning should primarily be responses to such an economy. Certain opportunities to learn are more expensive to provide than others, however, and the ability to take up any opportunity requires some degree of economic success. Hence, the economic context of lifelong learning is important but not determinate. The chapter updates the author's chapter in the first edition of the *International Handbook* to take account of the so-called global economic crisis of 2008/2009. It attempts to offer a stronger argument against a dominant economic instrumentalism within lifelong learning and against the idea that the particularities of life, work and learning can be considered in isolation from one another.

Despite the undoubted changes brought about by information and communications technologies, much about the labour market and life in general remains stable. It is argued that it is a mistake for governments to place too much faith in the policy idea that centrally prescribed formal learning is the best way to bring about or cope with changes in life or work. While it may appear to be something of a gamble to provide opportunities for informal learning that is not necessarily structured or accredited, it is argued that such provision may be the best way of supporting lifelong learning. The precise opportunities to be provided and supported are best determined at a local level. A move away from the formal lifelong learning has economic in addition to other benefits.

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Programmes of lifelong learning seem to offer the possibility that social exclusion can be countered when multiple chances to become educated are available (Aspin and Chapman 1997, p. 24). The possibility depends, however, on lifelong learning being seen, not as a compensatory device to deal with failure at school, but as the norm for everyone. The idea that globalisation produces such rapid changes in the world of work that learning must be ongoing to cope with it offers a way of normalising programmes of lifelong learning.

I challenge such an instrumentalist conception of lifelong learning that seems to form the basis of many national and international programmes (Commission of the European Communities 2009; World Bank 2003). People can learn many worthwhile things at work, at home and elsewhere in informal associations. Moreover, there are some things that can only be learnt informally, precisely because the learning outcomes include acceptance of uncertainty and contingency. Economic productivity may well be encouraged by such learning that may also be intrinsically worthwhile. It is a mistake to design policies for lifelong learning as if uncertainty and contingency could be removed from learning. However attractive it might be to imagine that learning could guarantee certain desirable and measurable economic outcomes, it is argued that the attraction should be resisted.

An analysis of the limits of globalisation forms a central part in this chapter. The analysis serves as a warning against overstating the effects of globalisation and the accompanying idea that lifelong learning should be conceived primarily as a response to it. It is also a warning against the idea that nation states or international bodies such as the European Union can somehow, through planned programmes of lifelong learning, ensure full employment or re-engage a sense of collective identity in an increasingly fractured and networked society. That does not mean that nation states or international bodies can do nothing, however, and in the final section I outline what might be done. I conclude that businesses, formal educational, voluntary and other organisations should collaborate with the support of governments to encourage informal learning that would not be possible without such support.

Some time ago, I analysed the origins of vocationalism in the curriculum that was so fashionable within neo-liberalism in Britain, the United States and elsewhere. It is possible to show that the type of liberal education propounded by Hirst, Peters and others working in the analytic tradition of philosophy of education paved the way for the vocationalism of the 1970s and beyond (Halliday 1990). From there, it is easy to show how the 'skills talk' (Johnson 1998) of the 1990s tended to suggest that education was a kind of investment that is subject to immediate cost benefit analysis in a similar way to any other kind of short-term investment. This suggestion coheres with the discourse of globalisation because that discourse depends upon the rapid transmission of digitised capital and information producing instant market responses. So, there is a mutually reinforcing set of discourses trading on the idea that programmes of learning enable the development of skills which form investments for a prosperous but ever-changing future.

Some argue that the unpredictability of postmodernity has increasingly rendered conventional programmes of compulsory schooling less important, founded as such schooling often is on the so-called Enlightenment meta-narrative (Usher and

Edwards 1994, p. 159). Postmodernism suggests that the world of work is changing so rapidly that individual prosperity and enhanced national economic performance can only be secured if the rate and frequency at which people learn changes rapidly too. The rewards of such performance might be supposed to enable further and more widespread learning. This in turn encourages further improvements in economic performance and so on into a virtuous circle of investment in learning (Giddens 1998, p. 108) leading to increases in real, human and social capital (Bourdieu 1986).

Typical accounts of the argument can be found in many places (Commission of the European Communities 1994, 1997; OECD 1973; Delors 1996; Department for Education and Employment 1998; World Bank 1996; International Monetary Fund 2009). One such is given in the Green Paper *Opportunity Scotland* (Scottish Office 1998) and this paper is quoted as an exemplar of the genre:

Lifelong Learning is a feature of modern life and will continue to be so. Change is everywhere and we need to learn to cope with it in different aspects of our lives. Jobs are changing with continually developing technology and pressures to keep up with foreign competitors. Daily life is changing with faster communications and more technology in our homes. ... (Scottish Office 1998, p. 4)

Here, interest in lifelong learning is coupled with the belief that, in the midst of change, there is a need to:

update continually the skills of the workforce and better equip people to manage their own future. ... people at all levels need to use learning opportunities to keep pace in the jobs market and to ensure that Scotland is equipped to compete in the global economy. (ibid.)

But how do people at all levels use learning opportunities to keep pace in the jobs market? Only, it seems, by investing in their own skill development. The paper goes on:

People who update their skills and learn new ones will get better paid jobs and achieve more success in their chosen fields of work. (op. cit., p. 28)

But of course they do not choose their fields of work in this presumed rapidly changing jobs market, their fields of work are chosen for them by economic considerations beyond their control. The discourse of investment in skills is retained, however, through the idea that there are core and transferable skills:

It is clear that Scotland needs a workforce which is highly proficient in both core transferable skills and specialised sector based skills. (op. cit., p. 28)

This is not the place to rehearse the by-now familiar arguments against the idea that there are core transferable skills and that industrial sector-based skills are any less transferable than any other sort (Jonathan 1987; Johnson 1998). Suffice to say that 'skills talk' supports the idea that individuals should invest in their own development to realise a prosperous future in a globalised economy. It seems, however, that some Scots are not convinced by this idea:

Involving adults in lifelong learning is our greatest challenge. ... Some people perceive difficulties and barriers relating to their personal circumstances or previous low attainment at school. Others simply never think about learning at all. (op. cit., p. 8)

Are these people ignorant and/or misguided or is there something wrong with the conception of lifelong learning presented in the Green Paper? In Britain, at any rate, there is a degree of uncritical acceptance of this conception. Although as Coffield notes:

Behind the high flown rhetoric, lifelong learning the learning society and the learning organisation are all being propounded to induce individuals to become more or less willing participants in learning for life and to bear an increasing proportion of the costs of such learning. (Coffield 1998, p. 11)

He goes on to argue that lifelong learning can be seen as the latest form of social control. If he is right, then it is hardly surprising that Scots resist such control even though they might be induced to learn in approved ways through schemes such as Inn tuition, cybercentres and electronic villages (Further Education Funding Council 1997; Chisholm 1997, p. 45).

Braverman (1976) argues that one of the main purposes of formal education is to provide many thousands of jobs for generally middle class people supposedly training the working-class people for jobs for which training, as an activity distinct from the job itself, is not really required. It is not necessary to concur entirely with Braverman to question whether money is well spent on schemes such as the above. It is, however, necessary to question whether much current rhetoric of lifelong learning serves to reinforce an instrumentalist conception of education in which learning is seen as the acquisition of qualities of dubious value, which are then supposed to serve as the means to fulfil some notion of a globalised prosperous future.

Globalisation

One way of challenging such an instrumentalist conception is to question the economic argument based on globalisation that is often put in support of it. It seems obvious that transnational corporations will seek to increase their profitability by relocating to those parts of the world where the rate of return on their investment is maximum. The production and consumption of goods and services is becoming increasingly globalised. Capital now flows around the world almost instantaneously, in digital form without regard for national boundaries. Information too flows around the world via the Internet. Even though there is a reaction against it, there is an increasing homogeneity in global culture towards such institutions as fast food outlets, supermarkets and shopping malls. As a result of these trends, there is a tendency to discuss globalisation as if it were something new and all embracing. Yet, all of these trends, except for the digitalisation of information and capital, were features of colonial expansion in the late nineteenth century too.

Certainly, it is now easier and cheaper to move materials, people and information around the globe than ever it was. This means that there is no longer such a competitive advantage to being near human, physical or economic resources of any kind. Therefore, it is easy to appreciate the argument that the key to economic advantage must be the value that can be added to these resources and the assumption that more

skilled people are best able to add value. Hence, increasing investment in education and training are seen as the only hope for economically advantaged nations to maintain that advantage and for less advantaged nations to improve (Field 1998, p. 10).

One problem with such a strategy is obvious. If every nation, group of nations or individuals adopt it, then there will be no competitive advantage, merely better-educated or trained people engaged in an ever-increasing spiral of ingenious schemes to manufacture demand and then satisfy it. A further problem is that it neglects the importance of traditional though perhaps unglamorous forms of work to many areas of economic life. Yet another problem with this strategy is that it assumes that those possessing most knowledge or skills should be paid to educate those having less knowledge and skills (Macrae et al. 1997, p. 500). Within the discourse of rapid change through globalisation, however, such skills and knowledge must be obsolescent.

What is going wrong with this strategy is something to which Hartley (1998), among others, has drawn attention. There is a constant tension between government attempts to control learning and cultural forces that make such control counterproductive. For example, at a time in which post-fordist modes of organising industrial and commercial activity suggest that there is a need for flexible working practice, some governments prescribe through national curricula what individuals should be able to do long before those individuals ever have to perform in the way specified.

There is an increasing body of literature often based on Foucault's (1977) work that suggests that formal education easily becomes a normalising induction into procedures of surveillance and control (Falk 1998; Hager and Halliday 2006). Students are compelled to go through this induction in order to have a chance of earning a living and securing an identity in an increasingly fragmented society. If they fail at school, then the increasing formalisation of what was previously informal through schemes such as the accreditation of prior learning and those listed above maintains the normalising process into a form of lifelong social control (Edwards 1997; Hargreaves 1997; Usher and Edwards 1994).

The mistake that I think is often made in talk of globalisation is one to which Wittgenstein drew our attention and which he called a 'craving for generality' or 'the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case' (Wittgenstein 1958, p. 18). As one of the sources of this mistake, Wittgenstein points to 'our preoccupation with the method of science... the method of reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest possible number of primitive natural laws' (ibid.) There are two features of Wittgenstein's remarks that are relevant to my argument. First, the preoccupation with science arises in part out of the powerful utility of its applications, such as in the computer (Hesse 1980). Second, the success of reducing some natural phenomena to binary code that can then be manipulated and transmitted with supreme efficiency gives rise in an age of performativity (Lyotard 1984) to the illusion that all phenomena can and should be usefully reduced in this way. Arguably the most easily globalised commodities are information and finance. But just because these commodities can be rapidly transmitted across the globe, it does not mean that everything can or should be replicated or transmitted across the globe.

It might appear, for example, as if the flows of information, power and centres of influence are increasingly homogeneous but, as Castells (1996, 1997, 1998) argues, this appearance is mistaken.

While it may have suited certain politicians in countries that suffered the worst of the economic crisis of 2008/2009 to claim that the crisis was global and homogeneous, this claim is misleading (World Bank 2010; OECD 2010). It is commonly accepted that Iceland and Greece suffered rather more than Canada and Brazil, for example, and the International Monetary Fund (2010) has provided robust data to support the view that the public finances of some countries are in better shape than others. Some countries managed to conserve public resources to enable the possibility of investing more in programmes to further the public good, including those to encourage lifelong learning.

Yet such investment could be misplaced. Ironically, one of the consequences of this crisis in some countries is to move policy away from even greater provision of formal education, supposedly guaranteeing certain outcomes. Such policy direction is no longer an economic possibility. One area of public spending that is most suitable for expenditure cuts is lifelong learning, conceived as an addition to but less important than schooling. In the UK, for example, the coalition government of 2010 seemed to be prepared to handover some control of lifelong learning away from government to the voluntary sector (Cabinet Office 2010). Under the banner 'big society', the idea was to roll back the influence of the state as much as possible, so that people would take control of things that matter to them, including what they learn:

We want to give citizens, communities and local government the power and information they need to come together, solve the problems they face and build the Britain they want. ... Only when people and communities are given more power and take more responsibility can we achieve fairness and opportunity for all. ... We need to draw on the skills and expertise of people across the country as we respond to the social, political and economic challenges Britain faces. (Cabinet Office 2010)

It has been suggested (Hasan and MacIntyre 2010) that this new policy direction is nothing more than an unavoidable response to the fact that policy control is no longer economically possible. The necessary public resource is not available. Less cynically, and in the case of lifelong learning, it is possible to argue that such a reversal of policy control is overdue. To move from a position where no learning outcomes were valued unless they were centrally set and measurable to an acceptance of the opposite does not mean chaotic acceptance of a series of unevaluated programmes. It does, however, mean trusting the judgement of those who are enabled to learn informally that they know best what their learning interests are and that, given modest support, they can follow those interests through.

The economic changes the crisis brought about were not predictable or uniform. Few predicted, for example, the exposure to which Greek public finances became involved and the subsequent pressure on the very idea of a European single currency and even the European Union itself (Traynor 2010). Few predicted that resulting political instability would lead to a collapse of a tourist industry in one country and a boom in its neighbour, as tourists fled to what they perceived to be less troublesome

interactions with native inhabitants. The use of information and communications technologies meant that reactions to events were felt more quickly, but it did not lead to globalised uniformity.

A ‘craving for generality’ also leads to the conflation of formal learning with most worthwhile learning. Just because some skills and knowledge can usefully be learnt in formal educational institutions, such as schools, does not mean that all skills and knowledge can or should be learnt there. It is clear, for example, that contextually specific practical knowledge cannot be conflated with theoretical knowledge in the form of a series of propositions, however detailed those propositions are. Similarly, just because the nature and availability of some jobs are changing rapidly as a result of the impact of information technology does not mean that all jobs are also changing.

Indeed, as I showed through a variety of jobs studies (Halliday 2001) in my chapter in the first edition, the nature and availability of jobs is much more stable than the discourse of rapid change through globalisation might lead us to believe. I also argued there that it is only those concepts that can be economically digitised that potentially take on a global appearance and it is only places where there is a communications infrastructure in place that could realise this potential. Even so, there is a gap between digitised information and the reality of the lives of those who access it, as the above example from Europe was intended to illustrate. Hence, many values, places and economic and political systems are excluded from the direct influence of globalisation. I summarise my earlier discussion below, before drawing some implications for policy.

Values

As MacIntyre (1981) argues, there are values internal to all practices – values that are embedded within the practical knowledge that gives some people their prime sense of identity, as a joiner or nurse for example. But practical knowledge is not digitisable. However, many propositions or pictures are composed to try to illustrate the values that are internal to a practice; those pictures and propositions can never be equivalent to the practical knowledge that is acquired through working with others in contextually specific ways. There is always a gap between prescriptions for and illustrations of action and the action itself. There is always room for asking the question ‘show me how to do it’ of someone with superior insight and ability who can be trusted to care about my learning. The very notion of teaching depends upon there being a shared sense of trust and caring that cannot be exchanged as external values.

It should be acknowledged that huge efforts have been and are being directed into the production of machines that can perform types of manual work in ways that attempt to take account of the values embedded within practical knowledge. While the success of those machines that are currently available is not impressive, it is not argued that such production is pointless or unlikely to continue to make a difference

to the way that certain practical tasks are performed. The arguments are that such differences should not be overstated and that the human capacity to choose to do things in certain ways should not be undermined (Weizenbaum 1976).

Lave and Wenger (1991) and others working in the area known as situated cognition have supported the view that there are parts of all practices that are contextually specific and not amenable to the homogenisation of information flows that characterise the discourse of globalisation. The characteristic gesture, piece of advice, command and so on that form part of particular jobs can only be understood in context by those already in some way attuned to the job in question. Moreover, the same job performed in different places needs to be learnt afresh in a kind of way. In short, there remains an essential indeterminacy within human interactions at work and elsewhere that is not captured in the flows of digitised information. Moreover, there remains a solid core of manual work within all occupations that cannot be replaced by mental work.

Commodities too are not as amenable to a complete description of their properties as some imagine. While it might be thought that the exchange of commodities can be governed by the exchange of digitised information about their properties, there is always a gap between such description and the value of the commodity itself, which goes beyond the numerical value achieved in a market. There are environmental and human considerations that affect the ways commodities are described at particular times, and these are inevitably value laden according to culture, religion and habit. Religious values are necessarily resistant to globalising influences and it is hard to envisage a time in which cultural values and habits will not be central in determining the things people want to learn throughout their lives.

Places

Globalisation may well be tending to suggest that the nation in which people live is irrelevant to their economic well-being. Yet, according to Ashton and Green (1996, p. 71), in most countries, the largest part of economic life is still served by national companies. Moreover, there is no uniform pattern of economic growth across the globe. Even though the gap in growth between the 'North' and 'South' remains large, there are parts of both that have narrowed the gap. For example, many Asian economies have grown rapidly, while the opposite is true of some Eastern European countries. Moreover, it would be misleading to suggest that there are uniform patterns of growth within countries or even within towns. And the same is true for wages, prices, rates of unemployment and so on.

Castells (1996) explains this lack of homogeneity through the idea of a network society in a way that is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's notion of a family resemblance. The picture that emerges from this explanation is of society in its widest international sense comprising an overlapping series of networks, sharing some things in common but not all things in common. Castells gives a number of examples to illustrate this idea. Why, he asks, 'were discoveries of new information technologies

clustered in the 1970s and mostly in California?’ (Castells 1996, p. 50). At this time, he argues, a number of important technological advances such as communications switching, processing and genetic technology began mutually to enhance one another to become a source of powerful new ideas and metaphors. For example, the idea of neural networks seemed to parallel the idea of networked microcomputers, made possible through the laying of optical fibre cables, digital switching and the project to map the human genome. The reason was not because of any emphasis on applied research by government. Nor was it a response of capitalism to new internal contradictions. Rather, Castells notes a number of fortuitous events: the hiring of particularly talented and visionary individuals to key posts; and the flexibility engendered by a number of emerging structures within international companies, rather than rigid and moribund thinking in parts of the USA. There was:

a milieu of innovation when discoveries and applications would interact and be tested in a recurrent process of trial and error of learning by doing; these milieu required and still do in the 1990s, (in spite of on-line networking) spatial concentration of research centres, higher education institutions, advanced technology companies, a network of ancillary suppliers of goods and services and business networks of venture capital. (Castells 1996, p. 56)

From this example it is clear that networks do not exist apart from the large markets developed by the state, but that such markets do not create them either. The location of basic services and products such as transport, food and restaurants is important to the existence of networks, but it is also clear that there can be no blueprint for the generation of innovative networks in the future. That is because networks exclude as well as include. They also exclude by default. Markets in many commodities are far from being fully integrated or open. Capital flows are not totally fluid. Labour is far from being mobile because people have attachments to each other and to places at particular times that will transcend a perceived economic advantage. Multinational corporations keep most of their assets and strategic command centres in home countries. The nation state persists and forms the legislative centres and controls spending, taxes and natural resources that influence the structure and dynamics of a network society. As a result of all these considerations, it will remain the case that:

Space and time are the fundamental variables of human life. The standards of their coordinates allow events to be quantified, rules to be made and case law established. All of these facilitate the regulation and control of societies around spatially determined groupings. They facilitate the formation of national laws and policies. (Castells 1996, p. 376)

To be sure, standardised methods of coding and decoding languages, and of translating languages, provide the means globally of publicising what was previously national or local without delay. Advanced services, including finance, legal, insurance, marketing and others, can plausibly be reduced to information generation and flows. Were flow to be in one direction, then it might be expected that there would be an increasing homogeneity in work and culture through communications in virtual space. Yet, heterogeneity is the norm, partly because many people now have the means not only to listen to others but also, most importantly, to publish themselves.

While it might be expected that information processing power will continue to increase, it is not likely that it will ever increase to such an extent that the particularities of places and events will be irrelevant considerations in the phenomenology of politics, work or learning. Indeed, the recent economic crisis led rapidly to the potential for distinct political interventions that were very much dependent upon particular circumstances in particular places, as argued above. Even when use of social networking web sites has played a major part in helping to organise political protest and action, it is the particularities of the action itself that have been crucial, not their traces on the Internet. Social networking sites enable people to mobilise themselves in informal voluntary associations that are highly transitory and context specific (Weston 1997).

Economic Systems

It is widely believed that the paradigm shifts in economic systems that took place during the post-agricultural and post-industrial periods are similar to economic changes that are now taking place as a result of the impact of information technology. Yet, as Singleman (1978) shows, the overall effect of these shifts has been a decline in agricultural jobs and a rise in service-sector jobs, although there are big differences between the rates of decline and increase in different parts of the world. The idea that the so-called information revolution has resulted in a further paradigm shift in economic systems is not supported by empirical studies. Castells concludes that there is no systematic structural relationship between the diffusion of information technologies and the evolution of employment levels in the economy as a whole:

The March toward information employment is proceeding at a significantly slower pace and reaching much lower levels than the trend toward service employment. (Castells 1996, p. 211)

According to my (Halliday 2001) earlier analysis of the OECD's (1994) jobs study, there is considerable stability in the percentages of people employed in the various occupational sectors. The OECD's recent reflections on the jobs study (OECD 2006) indicate that the analysis remains up to date. Of course, the very framing of these employment categories decontextualises the work that is actually done and may conceal similarities between the types of work and learning to work that cuts across categories. A more detailed look at types of work reveals why it is unlikely that percentages employed in each employment sector will change dramatically. Under personal services, for example, it is likely that there will be a continuing need to employ a similar percentage of the population as hairdressers, domestic workers, cooks, entertainers and cleaners. In the case of the social services, there will continue to be a need professionally to care for the elderly and the very young, for example. It is not plausible to imagine robots doing such work. While it is possible to envisage a large growth in the use of information technology for commerce, there will still be a need for distributors to lift goods from one place to the other.

The transformative industries may be regarded as a kind of movement of goods and are unlikely to change rapidly. People still need houses, for example.

The building industry provides a good example of an industry that has resisted the impact of new technology for good reason. People like familiar things such as traditional handles on doors. There is an air of reliability and familiarity about them. There will be a continuing need for people to make and install such objects. The need for shelter and food is universal, and this demands a physical and not a virtual response. The sheer number of people having such needs suggests that many people will continue to be employed to move materials from one place to another, to build houses, set tables, cook food, cut hair, produce materials and so on. Moreover, there remains a great deal of similarity between all forms of work, in that most people still travel to work. Work involves a mixture of talking and doing. It is regulated by time and space. It is managed in some way and remains distinct from their main interests for many.

The argument that people need to become skilled in high technology in order to secure jobs in the global market place is easily countered by the fact that high technology manufacturing is not likely ever to employ more than a very small proportion of the labour force. Indeed, there has been recent acceptance that new business growth comes not so much from new ideas to satisfy the need for new goods and services made possible by new technology. Rather, in the UK, for example, growth comes more from the creation of small businesses, often replacing work that was once the preserve of the public sector (Webb 2010). I argued that there are many adults who are not fully literate but perform a variety of jobs perfectly adequately and that many people can be trained on the job as it were (Halliday 2001). Moreover, in many places, people are overqualified for the jobs they are expected to do (Blandon et al. 2010).

These arguments, concerned as they are with values, commodities, places, jobs and economic systems, serve to undermine the claim that there is a universal link between economic performance and lifelong learning conceived as an ongoing form of skill acquisition in preparation for a global economy. Globalisation and the associated networking within it will proceed in ways that no government can predict. That is despite attempts by governments acting together to regulate global capitalism and, in particular, financial markets. While it will never be clear precisely what set of policies will best encourage lifelong learning, the direction that they should take is clear, as is the kind of considerations that are not relevant or unhelpful. Knowing some ways not to proceed does narrow the options for knowing ways that are worth pursuing.

Implications for Policy

Wain (1993) drew attention some time ago to what he called the minimalist and maximalist positions on lifelong learning. Within the minimalist position, lifelong learning is seen as an adult 'add on' to schooling which aims for qualities associated

with ‘educatedness’ through investment in learning detached from work and life. Theorists of a Deweyan persuasion such as Wain and the author reject this position in favour of the maximalist position that education is a lifelong process in which familiar dualisms between life and work, liberal and vocational are dissolved. That is not to reject the idea that a period of compulsory schooling might be the best means of ensuring that people do grow in desirable ways. Rather, schooling is re-conceived as a stage in a process of lifelong learning.

It is worth recalling that people learn to do all kinds of things by working under the decreasing supervision of an expert and that, as Dewey (1916, p. 310) remarks, ‘the only adequate training for occupations is training through occupations’. This is an example of apprenticeship, formal or otherwise, and is not confined to businesses. Yet, when a business closes, the loss is not just in jobs, products and services, but in the potential for others to learn to do in ways that respect the contribution of generations in developing the occupations that formed the business. There is a case, therefore, for governments supporting businesses on the basis of their educational contribution both to their own workforce and others with an interest in those occupations. In this way, the business respects its responsibilities to those it employs and those it serves. It makes little sense to simulate such businesses within educational institutions as if participation in such a simulation were economically worthwhile or a realistic means of learning. Moreover, it is incorrect to argue that businesses are necessarily anti-democratic (Semler 1994). It is worth noting, with Tiles, that there is no incompatibility between democracy and the recognition of authority:

It is both rational and in no way undemocratic for a community to give greater credence to some of the voices that speak within it when it considers decisions to be taken. (Tiles 1995, p. 266)

For Dewey, the educational imperative provides the workers the motivation that respects their humanity:

The realisation of a form of social life in which interests are mutually interpenetrating, and where progress or readjustment is an important consideration makes a democratic community more interested than other communities. ... Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest: these can be created only by education. (Dewey 1916, p. 87)

All this is not to suggest that a maximalist conception of lifelong learning could be satisfied through democratising business alone and supporting apprenticeships. Other arguments can be advanced to support the view that governments ought to provide opportunities to learn practices that cannot be learnt through business. Pring (1995) is correct to argue that a community of educated persons would be diminished if it included only those practices that are most obviously amenable to economic considerations. There are good reasons to provide opportunities for people to learn those practices that enable the transmission of a cultural inheritance that has withstood the test of time, including those periods when it appears as if a paradigm shift in the rate of change is taking place (Pring 1995, p. 180). Such a transmission enables people to maintain a critical perspective on their lives and to consider those fundamental questions of value that characterise an educational ideal. The apprenticeship model is relevant to this transmission too.

Given that programmes to encourage lifelong learning require some resources, it is worth remembering that some learning resources are much cheaper to provide than others. Books, for example, are cheaper than professional teachers. Sometimes it is cheaper to provide the resources for people to learn informally, rather than to learn from professional teachers within formally supported institutions such as colleges. Many things may be learnt through a kind of informal apprenticeship and by simply having access to appropriate resources. It is widely accepted that to teach an interested newcomer to a practice in which the teacher has expertise and interest is one of the most enjoyable and fulfilling things to do. Moreover, to learn together as, for example, on an allotment about how to grow things, or to fish or sail or act or sing or debate or play games seems a natural part of living for many people. There are many examples where people learn to do things that interest them in voluntary association with others. Such examples have economic as well as other benefits. What they share in common is the need for certain basic facilities such as serviced plots of land and buildings. Not all learning takes place on the Internet. There are still many worthwhile things that require tools, equipment, books, team efforts, space and shelter from the wind, sun and rain. These may well be less expensive to provide than professional teachers and classrooms, but provision requires radical changes in the way learning is conceived in relation to economics.

It seems plausible to suggest that different forms of lifelong learning may emerge as a result of the so-called global crises. Instead of attempts to make globally applicable solutions to problems, national and international bodies may form policies supporting informal interests in all their diversity and contingency. Instead of accompanying bureaucracies, targets, learning outcomes, certificates and institutions of formal learning, support may be given for the informal using fewer resources. Support could vary from place to place, depending on what facilities already existed, what cultural interests there were, what the climate allowed, what transport links were available and so on. I accept that it is not clear how resources can be fairly apportioned and that costly bureaucracies can grow as a response to the fear that, when resource allocation is loosened in this way, then the most articulate and able people are liable to benefit most. Moreover, this liability could put still more emphasis on a minimalist conception of lifelong learning, since it is at school where the ability to articulate may best be learnt.

Perhaps, policies to encourage a maximalist concept of lifelong learning do depend primarily upon changes to the school system, so that people get a taste as it were of what might be possible and how best to argue to achieve it. Achievement would need to be informed by economic possibilities and political realities. The curriculum would look quite different, as emphasis would be placed on the opening up of possibilities and thorough exposure to the political realities of competing interests and power bases within a liberal democracy. It is possible to imagine a curriculum of tasters, where some tasters are, however, pursued with sufficient depth so that learners come to see what is involved in mastery and control.

Policies to encourage lifelong learning can be ambivalent in their effects and may serve to undermine some of the economic and political norms that are currently dominant. A move away from the influence of national and international bodies in

determining what is learnt locally may enable greater participatory democracy and widespread demand for unrestricted access to government information, statute and case law, scientific data and so on. People may learn to make a difference to those things that matter to them, and that may mean challenging existing power structures and property rights. I am not thinking here of resources manufactured in formal learning organisations for which there is now a considerable market but learning materials to inform the lives that people are leading and work that they are doing now. I am thinking of such basic things as land, water, tools and unlimited access to decision-making arenas.

Along with several other countries, the UK devotes about five per cent of GDP to school education, which amounted to some £50 billion in 2010. A further 18 billion is allocated to innovation, universities and skills (HM Treasury 2009), which would include lifelong learning as currently conceived in the minimalist sense. According to this chapter, some of these resources should be redirected. A radical shift is now needed away from a personal banking concept of lifelong learning towards a societal improvement concept in which businesses, formal educational, voluntary and other institutions complement each other in providing learning opportunities across a range of practices. Such learning enables people to communicate better with each other in deciding democratically what ought to be done and how best to do it.

In summary, if it is assumed that improvement is best brought about through piecemeal pragmatic change (Popper 1945) and that such change will always be constrained by what is available from public taxation, then some resources should be redirected towards:

- Informal and formal apprenticeships of all kinds
- The support of private business and public organisation to provide worthwhile learning opportunities for their own workers and others
- The provision of books, Internet access, land, buildings and other resources such as communal workshops to enable people to learn through reading about and doing things that matter to them and their communities

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