Introduction

THE MEANING AND CONTEXTS OF INFORMAL LEARNING

There is a large literature on informal learning which continues to grow. A cursory look might make one think that this is indicative of the importance of informal learning in our lives, ordinarily, and in scholarship generally. Yet, as this book shows, given what the contributors show is the centrality and ubiquity of informal learning in life, in and out of formal and nonformal situations, attention to it among scholars, relative to the dominance of formal learning in all situations, does not match this reality. A book like this will be welcome in any period but the present time is a particularly fecund period to examine informal learning, its meaning, its contexts, and its place, especially in the sphere of adult education. The reason is not far to seek. One of the characteristics of the digital age that we live in is access to information and to tools for the acquisition of knowledge that are not filtered through the processes of formal learning. What is more, although much of what follows deals with adults and their education, the easy access to information and the widespread availability of diverse knowledge in a networked world mean that informal learning cannot much longer remain the object of mention but not of serious engagement. Additionally, the vastly expanded contexts in which informal learning takes place impose on us a responsibility to cast our nets wider and offer tools with which more interested scholars might be able to study and make sense of informal learning beyond what is at present available.

In this chapter, we explore the meaning of formal, non-formal, and informal learning, and their interconnectedness as components of the education system. We examine the informal learning component of the education system in further detail by probing the unconscious and deliberate dimension of it, and tracking the processes of its unconscious dimension. We posit that more than any other reason, and linked to other reasons, the attempt to impose order on the unconscious dimension of learning processes, is responsible for the domination of formal learning of the education system and hence scholarly writing. We establish the link between informal learning and adult education, and explore adult education as a context of informal learning. Finally, we introduce the chapters in this volume.

The Education System: Formal, Non-Formal, and Informal Learning

Formal, non-formal, and informal learning can be recognized through the space where they take place or occur, the beneficiaries, the goals and objectives of teaching-learning, the degree of flexibility of subject-matter in focus, the period of learning and the timing, who learns from who (and the types of resources required), who controls the teaching-learning interaction (learning), the processes involved and the assumptions that are implicit in the goals/objectives, the processes and the control of the teaching
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learning interactions. Although these criteria for recognizing the different components of the education system are important because of their practical and scholarship implications, the formal, non-formal and informal components of education have something in common; they are processes of acquiring, constructing and co-constructing knowledge, skills, and attitudes and of gaining insights.

An education system can be viewed as a network comprising broadly, formal and non-formal education and informal learning. Recently, some authors (Schugurensky, in Chapter 3 of this volume; Livingstone, 2001) have identified informal education as an important component of the education network. Informal education occurs when an agency/institution or group deliberately sets the stage, environment, interaction, or a program for learning without communicating this explicitly to the prospective learners. Different forms of informal education are recognizable in the formal, non-formal education and informal learning sub-systems. The important point here is the necessity to view all the components of the education system from a systems perspective; this being the education system that the UNESCO Edgar Faure Commission Report envisaged as a lifelong learning process (Faure, et al., 1972).

Formal education is age graded, hierarchically structured, sequential teaching learning processes which take place in spaces designated for the purpose, usually physical spaces, often built for the purpose (but now includes cyber spaces), and are usually regulated by the state (and communities or interest groups). Degrees, diplomas or some other form of credit are the end-product of formal education processes. Merriam, Cafarella, and Baumgartner (2007) wrote that formal education is “institutionalized, bureaucratic, curriculum driven, and recognized with grades, diplomas, or certificates” (p. 29). Traditionally, formal education has mostly served young people (in elementary and secondary schools) and young adults in higher education. More recently, greater numbers of adult learners participate in formal education within the frame of higher education. The increasing importance of continuing professional education for credit also contributes to the rise in adult learners in formal contexts.

Non-formal education is any planned and structured or organized educational activity that takes place outside the curricula of the formal school system, and/or within or out of the four walls of the formal school system. It targets specific needs of selected persons or groups, so the curriculum is flexible, and does not have certification as a goal. It does not involve extended interaction of learners and instructors, as it is the case in formal schooling, and so it can take place in community settings, workplaces, formal school settings, homes, religious places, and other cultural institutions. For example, workshops held in a community setting on a variety of topics, such as home renovations, cooking, or photography are examples of non-formal education.

The distinction between non-formal and formal education is not always clear. Non-formal education includes, but is not limited to: literacy education provisions for adults and out-of-school youths; vocational education and training (outside the curricula of formal institutions, including through the apprenticeship system); in-service training for civil-servants; continuing professional education/development activities for different professions—medical personnel, social workers and teachers/education officers; training and development/human resource development; labor education/trade union education; civic-political education and consciousness raising activities; remedial education for special groups; education that targets groups of persons with special needs—women, first nations/indigenous people, nomads, persons with disabilities, persons living with specific kinds of ailments, e.g., HIV/AIDS, diabetes, hypertension, and sickle cell anemia; military education and education for other security personnel; extension education (remedial, health, technology); community education; correctional education; and peace education. Many of these endeavors involve some form of certification, though it may be unofficial and not include formal credits, so there the line between non-formal and formal education blurs.
Informal Learning

Informal learning is thought of as experiential, incidental and or unstructured, non-institutional learning. It is the construction, co-construction, or acquisition of new knowledge, understanding, skills or attitudes, which people undertake whether consciously or unconsciously (Hrimech 2005; Livingstone, 2000; Marsick & Volpe, 1999). When it is a conscious process, the control of what, how, where, and when to learn rests with the learner. When it is an unconscious process, the locus of control is diffused and the process, usually does not involve teaching by persons specially designated as facilitators, instructors or teachers. Today, in Africa and Asia, in the indigenous and First Nations communities in the economic north, and also within formal networks and communities in the economic north, indeed all around the world, informal learning is pervasive. If we go back in time, in Africa for instance, before the formalization of societal institutions and structures and the introduction of formal Western education, traditional African education was synonymous with life (Avoseh, 2001, 2008 & 2011), such that, Avoseh (2001) observed, “it was the duty of everyone to ‘teach’ at some point and to ‘learn’ at other times” (p. 485).

In his reflections on lifelong learning in traditional African and Native American indigenous education, Avoseh (2008) posited that education is a synonym for life and living in those communities, and it was not just about skills and knowledge acquisition, it was also about shaping the character of individuals, especially in relation to their communities. We shall return to these issues, and explore them further when we track the processes of the unconscious dimension of informal learning.

As we had earlier observed, the literature on informal learning is big and growing and the discourse is expanding. The types of informal learning that have been identified in the literature include tacit and explicit informal learning, self-directed learning, auto-didactic learning, and the informal learning that occurs within formal and non-formal teaching-learning interactions, but is not a part of the curriculum, usually called the ‘hidden curriculum.’ Informal learning also takes place within the context of formal and non-formal educational interactions when the learning is outside of the actual course or workshop. For example, students may engage in discussion outside of a formal course where they exchange tips on their practice, and learn a great deal from such exchanges. The settings where informal learning takes place, and the activities that result in informal learning include income generating activities or work; household, leisure, voluntary and community activities; social movement; reading, travelling, exposure to the mass media; socialization; and reflection on everyday experience. The role of technology in people’s everyday lives has exponentially increased informal learning activities.

From the informal learning literature, different forms of informal learning have been described, as we had earlier indicated, and we observe that certain forms appear to interface other forms, while some are about the degree of a particular form. Let us take the example of tacit and incidental learning. Hrimech (2005), described tacit informal learning as learning “which is mostly experiential, unconscious, and unplanned learning acquired in everyday life in interactions with others and the environment” (p.311). He cites the examples of socialization and learning one’s language as the most widespread aspects of tacit informal learning. In an attempt to apprehend incidental learning as a form of tacit learning, he makes the point that incidental learning occurs when the conditions for tacit learning is set by others. However, we observe that incidental learning does not often occur because the condition ‘for tacit learning was set by others’; incidental learning often occurs because that kind of learning is incidental to other activities, and the individual or group can learn, as Larsson (1997) wrote, by “simply participating in an action. It can also be a question of noticing, and developing our awareness about different aspects, for example, a carpenter’s awareness about the structure of wood” (p. 254). Developing an awareness could
also include developing an awareness of issues or contradictions; processes which involve reflection. So whereas incidental learning also occurs during everyday interactions, there is some degree of the participation of the individual, usually unintentionally, in the process of knowledge construction, but definitely an awareness (which could be immediate or delayed) by the individual or group that learning has occurred. Apparently, that was why Schugurensky, in his typology of informal learning (in this volume) used the criteria of intentionality and awareness to classify informal learning, separating tacit learning from incidental learning. What this means, however, is that if, in the process of reflection, an individual recognizes tacit learning, that is, ‘notices’ it and becomes aware of it, this learning moves to the realm of incidental learning. If, the individual becomes so aware of the tacit learning and chooses to read about it, it moves to the realm of explicit learning or self-directed learning.

Knowles (1975), defined self-directed learning, as “a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes” (p. 18). Within the context of informal learning, Candy (1991) identified self-directed learning as autodidaxy, that is, individual, non-institutional pursuit of learning in natural social settings. From the conceptions of self-directed learning that we have just examined, and within the discussion of informal learning, it is clear that it is the learners who engage in self-directed learning that are clearly deliberate about and aware of their learning. However, given the reports of the research documented in this volume, especially those by Helen Yeh, Chad Hoggan, Rebecca McGill, Leah Poirier and Patrick Walden among others, we want to propose that self-directed learning is the most deliberate form of informal learning, because learners who engage in it exhibit a high degree of intentionality in the pursuit of learning.

The processes and strategies of informal learning presented in many of the chapters in this book, point to the fact that there is another deliberate form of informal learning, and we choose to describe this as explicit learning; the one in which learners are deliberate and aware, but the degree of intentionality is low, relative to the degree of intentionality in self-directed learning. Although Livingstone (2000) used the term “explicit informal learning,” to describe incidental learning, or retrospective recognition of learning, here, we use the term to describe the deliberate attempts made by persons and groups to learn, attempts which are however, not as deliberate, consistent, and extensive as those of persons who engage in self-directed learning.

In this book, one chapter that throws up the necessity of this distinction is Helen Yeh’s study of two language learners, and the different attempts made by the learners to improve their language skills. Let us consider the following illustration. There is a television channel devoted to food, and it comes on air between 5p.m. and 10p.m., every day. Mr. A, a husband and father of two children of between ages seven and nine, watches the program at least twice a week for one hour to learn how to cook new dishes. So he sits in front of the television watching the chefs, while occasionally playing games on his mobile phone. On his part, Mr. B., also a husband and father of a nineteen-year-old who has left home for college, is also able to watch the program for about an hour twice a week to improve his culinary skills. However, he goes in front of the television with a pen and notepad, noting the recipes and the processes. He writes down the titles of books that the chefs have written or that they have recommended. Occasionally, he goes to view the YouTube video of other chefs on the internet, and even buys a few of the books the chefs on the food channel had recommended from on-line bookstores.

Surely, these two men are self-directed learners because they have both made deliberate efforts to learn; they both have a purpose for learning, to learn how to cook new dishes and to improve their culinary
skills, and they have both chosen how to learn. We must add that we do not know why they want to learn and the resources at the disposal of each of them for achieving the stated purpose. What is clear to us from the illustration is that Mr. B. is more deliberate and extensive in his search for culinary knowledge and skills than Mr. A. We recall that whenever Mr. A. was in front of the television to learn how to cook new dishes, his attention sometimes shifted to the games on his mobile phone. Allen Tough (1971, 1979) who first proposed a comprehensive description of self-directed learning through a study of the learning projects planned by learners themselves, described a learning project as “a highly deliberate effort to gain and retain certain definite knowledge and skill, or to change in some way...” (Tough, 1971, p. 35). The phrase ‘highly deliberate’ is important.

The preceding observations about the types of informal learning and the movement that individuals or groups could make from one form of learning to another, led us into thinking about two broad categories of informal learning, the unintentional (tacit and incidental) learning and the intentional (explicit and self-directed learning); and have also led us into thinking of the four identified types as occurring on a continuum, ranging from the tacit, to the most explicit form, which is self-directed learning. Figure 1 shows how one can move from tacit learning to self-directed learning on the continuum we just described.

Although the continuum has been shaded to show the lightest, the most diffuse, almost unrecognizable form of informal learning, to the darkest, the most recognizable forms of informal learning, there are no real dividing lines between them. They are different shades of the same phenomenon, and as we indicated, movement is possible, usually to the right, between the types. One of the chapters in this volume that helps us to appreciate the nuance of showing the forms of informal learning on a continuum is Chapter 6, where Chad Hoggan reported his study of breast cancer survivors who became aware of tacit assumptions that were influencing how they were interpreting and experiencing the world and who then engaged in self-directed learning.

As we think of informal learning as occurring on a continuum, it is possible to begin to identify the focus of scholarship, especially adult education scholarship. A lot of research had focused on the explicit and self-directed forms of informal learning, and as Schugurensky (in Chapter 3 of this volume) observes, more work is required in the areas of tacit and incidental learning; those types of informal learning that appear difficult to track and study. Apparently because of this difficulty, the tendency has been to focus on those types of informal learning that appear easy to track, and that exhibit characteristics that are somewhat similar to the processes that scholars are used to; the formal teaching-learning processes.

**Figure 1. Forms of informal learning on a continuum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tacit Learning</th>
<th>Incidental Learning</th>
<th>Explicit Learning</th>
<th>Self-directed Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Learning is unintentional</td>
<td>Characterized by some degree of intentionality</td>
<td>Characterized by a high degree of intentionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of everyday experience</td>
<td>Retrospective recognition of learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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They probably know the content even if it is not (rigidly) structured, the possible source, and who could go and source for it. Concerning the outcomes of informal learning, in their reflections and research on how tacit learning (experiential learning and socialization) and incidental learning interact with formal and non-formal education in the construction of women’s identities, Fashina (2001) and Mejiuni (2012) reported that the interactions constructed women’s identities in ways that sometimes limited and at other times, enhanced women’s capabilities; but often, they limited women’s capabilities, with respect to their participation in civic-political activities and their abilities to resist violence. Within the context of the formal school system, which was the focus of Mejiuni’s study, informal learning was the ‘hidden curriculum.’ Byrne cited in Garret (1987) apprehended the ‘hidden curriculum’ as values, attitudes, and behaviors that are not part of the official curriculum, but which are nevertheless communicated to pupils and students in educational institutions in classrooms. Schugurensky (in Chapter 3 of this volume) points out the positive and negative influences of informal learning within the school system and classrooms, while Peter Sawchuk (in Chapter 2 of this volume) is unhappy about the negative portrayal of informal learning, by scholars who presume or maintain the concept of informal learning as a distinctive type or species of learning.

In the next sub-section, we explore the unconscious dimensions of informal learning, which are yet to receive the attention they deserve in the scholarship of informal learning.

Tracking the Unconscious Informal Learning

We begin our exploration of unconscious informal learning by considering the following illustrations excerpted from routine life situations one of which, an anecdote, comes from the experience of one us, Táiwò, another from the cultural inheritance of two of us, Mejiuni and Táiwò and, the third, a characterization that is intercultural.

First, the anecdote. The incident took place in a class of what would be the equivalent of grade 9 students. It took place in Nigeria. I asked the class whether anyone of them had ever seen an elephant. One of them enthusiastically raised her hand, and I called on her to share her answer with the class. “Yes,” she said. And I quickly followed up, “Where?” Again, she enthusiastically blurted out, “In my book.” It was one of those occasions when a teacher, even a very experienced one, would go through a rash of emotions as to how to handle the situation. I was practically a greenhorn with only one year of teaching behind me post-college. I could have thought that she was trying to pull a fast one on me or simply concluded that she just did not understand the question. I was neither miffed nor did I think that she did not understand the question. It quickly dawned on me that I could have done a better job of stating exactly the kind of elephant encounter I had in mind, which I did not. So, an elephant in her book was as good an instance in reply to my question as a live elephant. I recovered and sheepishly informed the class that I had in mind a live elephant. Meekly, she said no. I recount the story because it is noteworthy in the literature of informal learning, how little we who are teachers, who mostly track learning in others, display limited awareness of informal learning in our own practice. In hindsight, it looks like a teachable moment. Even then, it is not obviously so given that seldom are such moments about the teacher; they are often about the students.

Thinking back on the experience with my high school student, I interpret the process, however quickly it occurred, of my realizing that I was not completely blameless in the mishearing, if that, of my question by my student and taking a lesson from it that has stayed with me ever since to be an instance of informal learning by the teacher in the classroom. I do not think that we attend to this enough, if at all,
in our reflections on and analyses of informal learning. We will be coming back to it presently. But, for
now, let us mark this as an instance of incidental learning: a teacher’s incidental learning in a classroom.

Here is a different illustration from Yorùbá culture. In the socialization process, a distinction is usu-
ally made among types of children. There are, at least, three types: ọmọgì, ọmọẹnu, and ọmọjo. Where
a child falls in these categories speaks to the child’s capacity to learn and what method of instruction
best fits the child concerned. The instructions concerned have to do with how to conduct oneself as a
functioning member of the relevant community, as a Yorùbá person with its behavioral attributes and
appropriate to social cues within the context of living among others. The first is one that, supposedly,
learns more by being spanked; hence, the reference to a paddle [ịgi: wood]. The second is one that one
has to continue to impress with verbal cues in order to get her to internalize the necessary responses
for social interactions; hence, the reference to the mouth [emw: mouth]. The third is one that only needs
the movement of an adult’s eyes to gather that a form of behavior is inappropriate or welcome; hence,
the reference to the eyes [ọju: eye(s)]. The first type is usually regarded as quite thick and the last is
the most sophisticated, capable of apprehending the fleeting movement of eyes and draw appropriate
conclusions from them. How does a child know to differentiate the several cues at work in the complex
world of social interaction, especially for one so young and not quite adept at decoding the tea leaves
of cultural usages? As far as we know, no parent sits a child down to instruct her on the typologies. Nor
is there a course of instruction offering the child the choice among the three types. Parents draw their
conclusions from the same process in which a child also discloses what type, in the main, he fits under.
We would like to suggest that this is a product of informal learning on both sides, usually styled in the
literature as tacit learning, socialization, and/or experiential learning.

Finally, we all speak of body language. And there are as many body languages as there are cultures
in which they have purchase. We all exhibit varying degrees of proficiency in decoding our indigenous
body language and it is one of the most difficult acquisitions to make in learning a new language. But
who teaches ‘body language’? To take a simple example: I know that there are courses that are offered
in what are designated ‘flirting schools.’ However, like many other skills that we need and use to go
through life every day, flirting and learning to do it is a singular instance of the phenomenon of informal
learning; yet another instance of tacit learning.

What is the relevance of the preceding to our subject matter? We routinely deploy judgment regarding
the outcomes of the three scenarios iterated above but we hardly ever pay much attention to the processes
that yield them. We assume that people know how to do the various performances iterated, we judge how
well or ill they perform them but we never advert our minds to the ways in which this learning unfolds
beyond the fact that we know that someone has learnt something. That is, an individual displays in her
conduct some skill or ability that in a previous situation she did not have, in a later situation. What has
transpired in the interim, the time-lag, between the two situations is what we ordinarily call learning.

The situation is complicated by certain essential elements of informal learning that various contribu-
tors to this volume highlight. There is no designated, only presumptive, teacher; there is no set course of
instruction, only unconscious direction except for those situations marked by explicit and self-directed
learning. But, in all, all of these instances of informal learning share in common the basic features we
just iterated. Many contributors to this book present discussions of all variations on the theme of informal
learning. Whether or not there is a clearly delineated mode of delivery of content depends on whether
we are dealing with explicit and self-directed learning. There usually is regular interaction; there are
no set criteria for testing the learning, only the undeniable fact that, as already remarked, somebody’s
intellectual—cognitive and affective—standing has been augmented.
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One consequence of the situation just described is that in informal learning the teacher-student dialectic is broken because unlike formal and non-formal learning, the position of the learner is one that is indispensable; that of the teacher is much less so. In other words, informal learning can and does take place without the presence of a teacher, whereas formal and non-formal learning take place under the guidance of a teacher. Furthermore, as in the live elephant example, the teacher becomes a student—learning how not to ask a question—but it is not clear that the student’s answer alone led to the teachable moment cited above. The teacher has to pay attention to her craft enough to know that the fault in the answer is not solely in the student but, partly, in the way that the question itself was framed. It may then be the case that informal learning is learner-driven, learner-centered in ways that are more radical than we permit ourselves to think.

The problem is how we establish that learning has taken place. How do we do quality control in informal learning situations? How do we measure the quality of the learning? Or can we? How do we establish a failure to learn when there is no clearly stated intent to learn or teach in the first place? Given that the learner either deliberately or by accident judges who or what she would be taught by and what she would learn—remember the Yorùbá typologies and the latitude children have to indicate where they fit, consciously but, mostly, unconsciously—there really is no room for the assessment of “the or a teacher” when the latter is typically understood as an individual or group of individuals, named or designated “instructors”.

What this means is that the ubiquity of informal learning turns life situations, ordinary encounters, social interactions, common accidents, and so on, into one vast network of teachers from which we all take our cues that enable us to wend our way through life in endlessly varying situations. There is a suggestion here that we can now make explicit: informal learning seems to be the scaffolding that we build over time that explains, without really explaining, how we, ordinary and schooled people alike, go through life and handle everyday chores and challenges, especially in unfamiliar circumstances, when we are newly introduced to a different set of circumstances from those that we are used to, including new cultures. It appears that informal learning is the key to these otherwise unexplained but profoundly challenging situations. It does not matter how much orientation instruction a new student receives prior to registering to study in a culture/country other than her own, much of the navigation through the paths of the new culture will have to come from informal learning, watching, asking questions, making extrapolations, and with enough foot-in-mouth, misapprehensions, unintended meanings, thrown in for good measure.

It is also how children learn bad habits, including racist, sexist, and other bad attitudes. Of course, we are not discounting the motivated selling and inculcation of hatred by hate groups or parents who turn their homes into schools for indoctrination for their progeny. At such levels, much more than informal learning is involved. Outside of such formal attempts at indoctrination, the process we have described is pretty much how we learn from model adults in our vicinity, pick up political preferences in family settings, acquire the syntax of the body language that we referred to earlier, and the like. The instance of picking up prejudices against others shows that what is learnt in informal ways and the outcomes of those interactions could be either positive or negative. Or, to use the language of transformative learning, it informs the uncritical assimilation of values and beliefs from family, community, and culture. These values and beliefs can be prejudicial, racist, sexist, and homophobic.

There is a serious implication here for the learner. The fact is that informal learning makes all human beings into learners and it may indeed be the ultimate basis for all other learning and, in appropriate
cases, unlearning, as often occurs in transformative learning—of racist behavior, for instance. This might be an indication of an essential ingredient of our nature as human beings. We are learning beings and the preponderant mode of our learning is informal. Living, then, is learning!

Domination of the Education System by Formal Learning

If informal learning is as widespread and basic as we have claimed, it is meet to ask why formal learning and its vicissitudes dominate the educational sphere, its organization and its institutions. No doubt, there is unease among formal educators regarding informal learning. Let us think, again, about informal learning and its amorphousness and ubiquity. The modern age is characterized by a dread of anything that seems to mimic the spontaneity and lack of organization that we associate with nature. There is an overarching need to impose order and supply structure. Formal learning gives a handle to work with of the sort that we noted above is difficult to find in informal learning.

Perhaps also, the unpredictability of the outcomes of learning processes that are as amorphous as we have described gives impetus to the institutionalization and control of learning by the state, churches (and other institutionalized religions), and to some extent, by sectors of society such as industry and commerce (Jarvis, Holford & Griffin, 2003). As earlier indicated, the role of technology in people’s lives has exponentially increased informal learning activities. While this is good news, for it brings new knowledge, insight and skills directly into workplaces, homes, communities and formal teaching learning settings, the dread of a lack of order that was the suspect in the institutionalization and control of learning has returned. And discussions about the omnipresence of ‘wanted’ and ‘unwanted’ information on the internet (that could lead to knowledge, and certain kinds of outcomes), is going on among state and non-state actors, and interest groups. We speculate, and this is not to diminish the best intentions that informed the idea of MOOCs, that perhaps, the reason the Ivy League universities have chosen to ‘democratize’ the courses/subjects they teach through MOOCs is so that potential learners could engage in acquiring knowledge of subject matters that have been organized and structured. The thinking could be that persons who are involved in learning provided through the MOOCs would not be attracted to those subject matters that may be posing real and/or imagined threats on the internet.

Informal Learning Remains Hard to Order

If we were to take as plausible what we have said of the widespread distribution of informal learning, we may have to concede that many of the themes that form the subject matter of the empirical research reported in this book originated in informal learning on the part of the researchers; not in formal study, not in formal instruction, not in formal exchanges but in hunches about an unapprehended pattern that rivets the attention of the researcher, practices in networks where it is not obvious what exactly is going on in them, extrapolating from cultural practices to how behavioral patterns are inculcated in hierarchical social relations, whether in professions or in cultural settings, and so on. They all bespeak our nature as learning animals. Perhaps we can better meet the challenge posed by what many would regard as the indistinctness of informal learning by working out more clearly defined criteria for measuring and assessing it and circumscribing a bit more strictly the boundaries of informal learning without transforming it into formal learning.
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It may be that unlike the results of formal learning that are immediately testable and often susceptible of measuring closer to its acquisition, informal learning’s outcomes, quite often, manifest after long intervals after they were acquired thereby making it impossible for the learner to recall where the original learning took place but absolutely certain that the skill or insight involved had not come from instruction or deliberately sought after. This is without prejudice to those instances that are the product of explicit and self-directed learning. That informal learning is not easily captured should be no obstacle to acknowledging its occurrence or its importance in myriad life situations.

There are implications here for some of the philosophical debates regarding human nature and how we acquire knowledge. At bottom, it is immaterial what stance one takes regarding whether we are hardwired with certain information at birth or our minds started out blank. However one resolves that issue, what is clear is that we are equipped to absorb lots of external stimuli and, deploying the resources of our minds, sort through them and create knowledges out of them. A lot of this is done via formal instruction and guidance by superior others. But informal learning, much more than trial and error—largely denominated by tacit and incidental learning—is the primary way in which we build our basic knowledge. None of us took formal instruction to acquire our primary languages. It is the same capacity that we summon in doing this as children that is at the heart of adult education. The process of soaking in information and sorting it to distilling usable knowledge is what enables us to use what adult learners know to get them formally to engage what they are in our classrooms or workshops to learn. We do the best we can to get them to make more explicit and, as a consequence, more formal, the informal technique that have made them promising candidates for formal instruction.

The adults that present themselves for adult education are, without exception, seasoned graduates of the living-as-learning school that we just described. Many chapters in the book show how these candidates acquired their learning and our authors, in their different ways, attempt to offer systematic treatments of the acquisition in different contexts.

The Connection to Adult Education

Adult education straddles the formal and non-formal education and informal learning. Adult education is education of persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong. Adulthood can be defined according to chronological age, constitutional provisions/age of majority, physical and or psychological maturity, and social roles. Adult educators adopt a variety of learning formats and strategies and encourage the use of conferences, workshops, seminars, small working groups, old and new media, individualized instructions, distance learning, demonstration, each-one-teach-one, mentoring, role play, dialogue, and conscientization.

Whether adult educators focus on formal education or non-formal education, and/or informal learning would depend on: the setting of the work of the adult educator, her perspectives and ideological leanings, and the part of the world she comes from. For instance, adult educators who are concerned with indigenous knowledge (systems) would have the tendency to look to non-formal education provisioning and informal learning strategies. Whereas those who are interested in adults’ further education after the completion of compulsory schooling and the professional training of adult educators are likely to focus on higher education and at times, non-formal education. These are tendencies, and so they are not to be taken as given. Often, adult education programs of universities, and those of for-profit and not-for-profit agencies/institutions are given nomenclatures such as: department of adult education; the name
of the form of non-formal education an agency provides, for instance ‘The Labour Institute/Institute of Labour Studies’; department of continuing education; and the department of lifelong learning/education. However, departments of adult education, and those other agencies and institutions that provide adult and non-formal education do not refer to their programs as an informal learning program.

**Adult Education Philosophies and Theories as a Context for Informal Learning**

Adult education has its roots in social change and social reform (for example, the Antigonish Movement in Canada and the Highlander Folk School in the United States). In the 1960s and 1970s, adult education was influenced by humanism and individual learning was highlighted over social change. It is in this context that self-directed learning and, later, transformative learning theory flourished. But in recent years, there has been a return to the goals of social change primarily as a response to critical theory through the writings of Stephen Brookfield and others who called on Michel Foucault’s work on power and emphasized ideology critique as a goal of adult education.

**Self-Directed Learning**

Malcolm Knowles introduced self-directed learning to the adult education literature in 1975. He was a student of Carl Rogers, a psychologist and humanist, who emphasized the individual’s learning process in his client-centered therapy, and advocated a similar approach in education. Knowles (1975) described self-directed learning based on an instructional design model; that is, he described self-directed learning as a process where learners set their own objectives, determined how to learn those objectives, found resources, and evaluated their own learning. This model could fit well into a formal learning setting, if educators were willing to give up their usual control over learning, or it could describe non-formal and informal learning.

In his classic book on self-directed learning, Candy (1991) conducted a comprehensive review of the literature to that date. He suggested that self-directed learning could fall into the following categories: self-management (in which students determined their progression through formal learning experiences), learner-control (in which students had control over their learning within a formal learning course), personal autonomy (a characteristic of learners that led them to engage in self-directed learning, and autodidaxy (engaging in personal learning projects outside of formal education). It is autodidaxy that is congruent with informal learning. In this form of adult learning, students enter into independent learning projects, seek out their own resources, and, essentially, learn on their own. Allen Tough (1978), a Canadian adult educator, focused his early research on adults’ independent learning projects where he discovered that a large number of adults (70%) planned and conducted their own learning. Today, in the digital age, it is likely that Tough’s research would yield quite different results, with most adult learners accessing information on the internet, using Google, and taking Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs, as described in Chapter 8).

Interest in self-directed learning fell off in the 1990s, when transformative learning moved into the adult education scene as a major theoretical perspective. Mezirow, who advanced transformative learning theory into the field, also created a transition from self-directed learning to transformative learning when he wrote that the key to self-directedness was “becoming critically aware of what has been taken for granted about one’s own learning” (Mezirow, 1985, p. 17). This transition seems to be largely forgotten.
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Transformative Learning

Although Mezirow and Knowles never referenced each other’s work, in spite of their being contemporaries in the 1970s and 1980s, their theories were closely intertwined. Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning had its roots in his study of women returning to school, a study that was motivated by the experience of his wife Edie’s return to school. Transformative learning can occur when adults encounter an event or a perspective that is contrary to their assumptions and beliefs and are led to critically question their previously uncritically assimilated assumptions. When this questioning and critical self-reflection leads to a revised perspective, one that is more open, permeable, better justified, and discriminating, transformative learning has occurred (Mezirow, 2000). The process can be quite dramatic (Mezirow calls this an epochal transformation) or, more likely, it can be gradual and cumulative.

Following Mezirow’s (1991) comprehensive description of his theory, he was criticized for being “too cognitive,” neglecting the social context of learning, and overlooking the emotional components of learning. Those scholars who provided these critiques overlooked Mezirow’s careful placement of transformative learning theory in the social context of the women’s movement (in his early writings), and his argument that he was an educator, not a politician, and therefore interested in educating others who might take on the role of promoting social change rather than being a social activist himself. However, the same critiques are listed in almost every description of Mezirow’s work, to this day.

Other scholars developed alternative perspectives on transformative learning theory. For example, Dirksen (2012) proposed an approach that relied on Jungian psychology including individuation, an approach which was labelled extrarational in the literature. Other scholars focused on the role of spirituality (Tisdell, 2003), relational learning (Belenky & Stanton, 2000), ideology critique (Brookfield, 2000), and a planetary or ecological perspective (O’Sullivan, 2012). Transformative learning theory became increasingly fragmented, with Taylor (2008), for example, citing eight different theoretical perspectives. Newman (2014), among others, came to the conclusion that transformative learning meant so many things that it was essentially meaningless, and he suggested that we abandon the term. Cranton and Taylor (2012) have responded to this debate by suggesting that we work toward an integrated or unified theory of transformative learning.

For our purposes here, transformative learning is primarily about informal learning. In both adult and higher education, it is rare that transformative learning is an explicit part of a formal curriculum. Some of the research focuses on formal education settings, primarily in adult education courses, where the researcher is also a scholar of transformative learning. But even here, transformative learning is not an objective of the students’ studies. This may sound odd, but the reasoning is that transformative learning cannot be directly taught, nor can educators expect students to engage in transformative learning (there are ethical issues involved in asking students to question and revise their beliefs and assumptions). What educators can do is to create an environment where transformative learning is possible, should students choose to engage in that process (Cranton, 2006).

Transformative learning occurs most often when individuals have experiences that lead them to question their perspectives; these may be traumatic events such as illness, the death of a loved one, loss of a job, divorce or separation, living outside their country or culture, immigration, and love and marriage, as reported by Stuckey, Taylor and Cranton (2014) based on a survey of 136 adults. It is possible, of course, that individuals who have these experiences may turn to workshops or courses to help them un-
understand what is happening, but it seems more likely that they learn from their experiences on their own and through dialogue with friends, colleagues, and family members—in other words, informal learning. Kroth and Cranton’s (2014) *Stories of Transformative Learning*, which includes ten stories, illustrates this.

**Critical Theory**

In recent years, adult education has moved toward returning to its roots in critical theory and social change. Brookfield (2005) has been influential in making critical theory accessible to adult education practitioners and researchers. He describes critical theory as identifying, challenging, and changing the way in which dominant ideologies manipulate people into not seeing oppression or accepting oppression. Brookfield identifies seven interrelated learning tasks in critical theory.

The first of these learning tasks is **challenging ideologies** embedded in language, social habits and cultural forms. Ideology is a “broadly accepted set of values, beliefs, myths, explanations, and justifications that appears self-evidently true, empirically accurate, personally relevant, and morally desirable to a majority of the populace” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 41). As such, ideologies are hard to detect (they appear to serve the interests of everyone), but they are what prevents us from realizing our true interests. The second learning task is that of **contesting hegemony**. Hegemony occurs when people embrace conditions and see them as normal even though they work against their own interests (for example, in higher education, larger classes and the ever-increasing use of technology). The third learning task is **unmasking power**, which involves recognizing how power is exercised in our own lives and in everyday actions. **Overcoming alienation** is the fourth learning task of critical theory. People are alienated when they are unable to be themselves and unable to be authentic in the contexts within which they live and work. The fifth task is **learning liberation**, which means escaping one-dimensional thought through imagination and the arts. The sixth task is **reclaiming reason**; that is applying reason not only to technical decisions but also to moral issues, values, and interpersonal relations. And finally, the seventh task in a critical theory approach to learning is **practicing democracy** through rational discourse, paying attention to ideal speech conditions, and paying attention to power structures related to diversity (for example, race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation).

In the previous section, we described transformative learning as not being a part of curricula in formal or non-formal education settings. This is clearly also the case for objectives related to critical theory in formal education settings unless the courses are in a program on critical studies, which are becoming more common in both adult education and education in general. Even so, in a formal curriculum, the studies are likely to be about critical theory (with a goal to understanding critical theory as an academic discipline) rather than about engaging in critical theory on a personal level or in relation to one’s professional practice. However, students who encounter and study critical theory are often drawn into informal learning (independent reading, discussion with peers and friends, and seeking out further resources) when they encounter critical theory.

In non-formal education programs designed to challenge oppressive structures and hegemonies and so contribute to social change processes, usually, some or all of the seven interrelated learning tasks that Brookfield identified in critical theory would be found in the contents and or processes of such programs. Authors such as Mejuri and Obilade (2004), Govender (2007), and Hansman and Wright (2009) recorded that either critical theory or theories that have roots in critical theory (Freirean technique, feminist perspective, popular education) informed the non-formal education programs that they designed or women or that they studied.
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In Canada, critical theory has a strong place in adult education in non-formal settings. MacKeracher (2009), for example, describes non-formal programs that evolved from social movements. Beginning in 1900, Frontier College was developed in response to the conditions under which unskilled manual laborers worked in remote lumber, mining, and railroad camps. The mission was to bring literacy skills and the gospel to marginalized workers. The founder of Frontier College, Alfred Fitzpatrick, a pastor from Nova Scotia, dedicated the next 20 years to garnering support from governments and educational institutions for his program. Frontier College still exists today, but with a shift in vision to marginalized and disfranchised adults in urban centers.

The Antigonish Movement is Canada’s most well-known non-formal program that rests within a social movement (MacKeracher, 2009). It was a response to the oppressive social and economic conditions experienced by farmers, miners, and fishers in Nova Scotia. Father Jimmy Tompkins and Father Moses Coady initiated a program that focused on study groups, cooperatives, credit unions, and housing projects in the early 1920’s. In the next twenty years, the program expanded to include350 clubs for women and 2000 mixed clubs for men and women. The Coady Institute exists today with a focus on international development.

Quite often, the learning tasks that Brookfield identified are executed in informal ways by persons and groups who attempt to meet their needs, serve their interests and navigate oppressive circumstances. For example, Kucukaydin (2010) describes the informal learning, which he labels “counter learning” since the learning occurred under extreme oppression, of a Kurdish woman living in Turkey. Using a case study narrative approach to his research, Kucukaydin described the “participant’s engagement in oppositional activities” (p. 218). He describes the culture of oppression as having “invisible parts” (p. 222), including the culture of creating a caretaker, the culture of virtue, the culture of silence, and the objectification of women. His research tells the story of Zelo, his participant, who “found the joy of her life and happiness through engaging in counter-learning, which led her to get involved in a struggle to demand her own humanity, gender, and ethnic identity” (p. 230).

Informal Learning: Foundations, Settings, and 
Interface with Organized Teaching-Learning

Informal learning helps researchers and policy makers to render alternative conceptualizations of learning. Therefore, informal learning is a concept that must be built upon, although there is also a need to transcend the concept of informal learning. Sawchuk offers a rationale for, and an explanation of the use of an expansive material dialectics; the theory of activity and “the Vygotskian project” in the study of informal learning. His goal is to establish a set of tools supportive of analyses that allows informal learning to be more deeply understood, conceptualized, and eventually synthesized as a broader reformulation of socio-cultural practice (see Chapter 2).

There have been numerous challenges to the theory and practice of informal learning. The first is the conceptual challenge, which refers to both the need to go beyond a ‘residual’ definition of informal learning and to unpack the “black box” of informal learning. Next is the research challenge which relates to the need to develop creative methodological strategies to overcome the difficulties in eliciting informal learning and tacit knowledge. Third is the recognition challenge which refers to the societal need to acknowledge and certify informal learning, and finally, there is the pedagogical challenge relating to the
design and implementation of meaningful opportunities for relevant learning without the presence of a teacher or a curriculum. Schugurensky refers to this as ‘informal education.’ He also proposes strategies to address the challenges (see Chapter 3).

Informal learning is often tacit learning; that is, it happens in all of life and throughout life, so it is not a process restricted to those institutions created for teaching and learning, and does not privilege the knowledge of the expert. Significant tacit learning is not merely socialization; it is rooted in Eros and an intimate epistemology, a world undivided. Lauzon describes the five characteristics of an intimate epistemology and goes ahead to explore the relationship between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge, making the case that both exist in dialectical tension, each informing the other, combining to create new knowledge, enacted through the body, in the creation of an emerging world (see Chapter 4).

It is clear, both in theory and practice, that self-directed learning outside of structured teaching-learning processes, is a highly deliberate form of informal learning. In Chapter 5, Yeh explores the degree of deliberate informal learning of two English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Hong Kong. The two college ESL learners that Yeh studied were selected on the basis of their performance in a standardized mid-term written test and their proficiency in English Usage. The learner with the highest English proficiency and performance in a class of 96 persons, adopted self directed learning, which is high level conscious and intentional informal learning, while the learner with the lowest English proficiency and performance in the same class engaged in low level conscious and intentional informal learning and preferred formal language instructions.

Informal learning also occurs in the context of individuals responding to and coping with traumatic experiences with a life-threatening illness (see Chapter 6). Chad Hoggan presents the concept of informal transformative learning through an exploration of the learning of 18 women who had survived breast cancer, a life threatening illness, which was obviously also, a traumatic experience for each of the women. Through in-depth, semi-structured interview and a focus group discussion, Hoggan presents the three distinct types of experiences that participants identified as crises, coping and engagement. These experiences either led to self-directed learning, or were themselves processes of tacit learning, or they integrated self-directed and tacit learning, that resulted in profound positive change or transformative learning.

Informal learning is also very much a part of ordinary life experiences, such as breastfeeding and child care (see Chapter 7). Leah Poirier examines women’s learning about positive breastfeeding attitudes in formal and non-formal education, and informal learning contexts, and identifies the contexts that contribute to an enthusiasm for breastfeeding. In this respect, Poirier poses the questions of what learning experiences the participants in her research study garnered, the contexts in which learning took place, and how positive attitudes to breastfeeding were acquired. Through the stories of participants in her study, Poirier shows how formal education, non formal education and informal learning interface; one leading to a better understanding of an experience in another. These include how some non-formal education experiences illuminate some breastfeeding experiences, and how certain tacit, incidental and self-directed learning became useful knowledge in participants’ professional and advocacy roles.

In the digital age, informal learning has taken a strong place as people pursue the internet, social media, and online courses as a way of learning independent of traditional classrooms. The phenomenon of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is one example of this trend (see Chapter 8). By providing the example of a learner in a MOOC, Lin and Cranton show how learners in MOOCs order their own learning of organized, sequential academic topics in informal learning environments; in spaces where
they feel comfortable to access the internet. Lin and Cranton posit that so many benefits accrue to persons who participate in MOOCs and could accrue to workplaces and educational institutions, and they provide highlights of the benefits. They also point out the challenges of learning in MOOCs and posed seven key questions that could guide further research to enhance the understanding of how MOOCs can better serve lifelong learners.

Even within formal contexts, informal learning experiences play a large role. With a focus on early childhood and middle childhood teacher preparation programs, Amy Sedivy-Benton and Katina Leland, in Chapter 9, highlight the informal learning experiences of pre-service candidates and first year teachers. From data gathered through mixed methods, the authors present teachers’ experiences of teaching and the impact of formal education and informal learning on their experience in real life teaching contexts. They make the case that although teacher preparation programs strive to prepare teachers for the classroom as best as they can, teachers’ lifelong learning happens on the job informally, within schools, classrooms, and between peers and mentors.

Continuing with this theme, in practice, hospital-based nurses rely on informal learning to a large extent (see Chapter 10). Ordinarily, nurse managers are responsible for managing nursing staff, but expectations are now that they would take on financial, recruitment and other personnel managerial responsibilities, including participation in hospital committees. Nurse Managers therefore need to acquire the skills and influence needed to take on these roles. Through a grounded theory research methodology, Rebecca McGill describes the experiential and informal learning of nurses in two hospitals as they assume leadership roles as nurse managers. By developing a substantive theory of experiential and informal learning of nurse managers which has four key elements (Hazards, Tranquil waters, Symbiotic forces and Reframing and ongoing growth), McGill shows the merits in a more deliberate and purposeful fostering of informal learning as part of nurse professional development strategies.

Personal relationships are another context in which informal learning plays a role. In China, personal relationships are shaped by a unique mixture of cultural values and practices (see Chapter 11). Using Schugurensky’s taxonomy of informal learning as a model, Kin Si and Giovanni Contreras propose a scheme in which informal learning is categorized either as intentional (self-driven) or unintentional (incidental). They show the differential relationships between insiders (within a circle of trust) and outsiders (or strangers) and the possibilities they hold for informal learning, based on the scheme earlier proposed. Si and Contreras posit that although relationships in China are shaped by values of hierarchy and belief in harmony, leading to instrumental and premeditative relationships, especially with outsiders, these relationships hold the possibilities of both limiting and enhancing informal learning.

The informal learning that comes about through relationships occurs in many contexts. For example, students in a particular class or program form relationships both within and outside of the classes they are attending (see Chapter 12). Adejoke Babalola examines the informal learning incidents that resulted from relationships women formed in the adult literacy classes they attended and the community development projects they participated in. From data drawn from a recent study of the interface of literacy education, social capital and community development in southwest Nigeria, a study that adopted a mixed methods approach, Babalola highlights what women learned, how they learned and the type of learning that resulted from relationships they formed in their homes, neighborhoods, literacy classes and communities. The author noted that women’s learning in the identified relationships met their practical gender needs.

The theme of informal learning related to health and wellness issues can also be applied to creating healthy communities, where attention is paid to health promotion and social determinants of health. This process can be grounded in a critical understanding of learning about health and quality of life issues
(see Chapter 13). Leona English identifies and describes the processes of creating healthy communities as including: informed attention to the global and structural issues implicated in health promotion; awareness of social determinants of health; and the centrality of adult and informal learning principles in the processes. English also examines specific strategies and barriers to informal learning about health in the community, and these include: storytelling and dialogue; community capacity for change and resilience; collective, not individual learning focus; community based research which is learning focused; and being with and in the community.

We have mentioned the importance of informal learning in the digital age in relation to MOOCs, but this is also the case in peer-initiated on-line communities (see Chapter 14). Mary Ziegler, Trena Paulus and Marianne Woodside explore informal learning in peer-initiated on-line communities, in an attempt to expand and enrich the conceptualization of informal learning as a group meaning making process, rather than as an individual cognitive process. The authors used the group meaning making model which they had developed in their previous studies of learning in online communities as guide for exploring learning in conversations of an on line hobby group of long distance hikers. They picked up one conversational thread from the group, and through discourse analysis, illustrate the usefulness of adopting their model of group meaning making for understanding implicit or tacit learning (a form of informal learning) in the context of online conversations. Ziegler, Paulus and Woodside’s model shows how groups make sense of their individual and collective experiences as they construct and share tacit knowledge.

Learning about other cultures and adapting to cultural differences is a rich field for informal learning. In Chapter 15, David Starr-Glass reports on a study in progress, a phenomenological study of the different ways in which transnational students in a Business Administration Program of an American University in Prague learn about national cultures and negotiate their cultural adaptation. He uses the reflective journals of students in a Cross-Cultural Management (CCM) Course as a source of data. Course participants were asked to keep daily journals in which they noted experiences, feelings and thoughts regarding national culture difference and their adaptation to it. This exercise of recognition of informal learning about culture in everyday experience, served as a complement to students’ learning of the recognition and negotiation of national culture in a formal academic setting (in the CCM Course). Following his analysis of how transnational learners had learned cultural difference informally and how they had used that knowledge in their cross-cultural adaptation, Starr-Glass suggests strategies and approaches for using informal learning to complement, advance and enhance the teaching and learning of a standard CCM Course.

Communities of Practice are another rich source of informal learning. In different communities of practice, we find task-based, practice-based, and knowledge-based informal learning as participants strive to understand their community. In Chapter 16, Victoria Marsick, Miren Fernandez-de-Alava and Karen Watkins examine research from Communities of Practice (CoPs) in the Catalan Public Service in Spain, and CoPs in a not-for-profit youth organization and in the United States Army, in their attempt to highlight the tensions that may arise from the formalization of informal learning, within organizational contexts. They distinguished between communities of practice that are organic and voluntary, and those initiated and or encouraged and supported by organizations and institutions. Specifically with respect to assessing and evaluating informal learning in workplace initiated CoPs, although the research studies the authors examined provided some options for evaluating informal learning in the workplace, and participants appeared to prefer less formal work-based assessments, the participants also thought informal learning should be certified because of its impact on personal and organizational level factors.
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Self-reflective practice is one way to capture and integrate informal learning with formal learning processes in order to gain deeper awareness of the meaning of personal and professional experiences in the human services (see Chapter 17). Elizabeth Bishop highlights the results and the implications of a qualitative research that she conducted with a group of mental health practitioners, involving an eight-week educational program designed to help establish and enhance self-reflective practice. Bishop found that informal learning was central to the themes that emerged from her analyses of data derived from a mixed methods approach. She posited that an incorporation of self-reflective practice into formal and non-formal educational provisions for professionals in the human services, would lead to honoring, valuing and integrating informal learning into formal and non-formal education processes and structures.

From the perspective of the theory of implementation science, and the point of view of speech-language pathology, Patrick Walden, in Chapter 18, introduces the reader to the role of informal learning in implementing evidence-based practices in healthcare contexts. Drawing from data collected from 24 certified speech-language pathologists in the United States, Walden describes how speech language pathologists engaged in informal learning so as to meet workplace needs, created by gaps in their knowledge base and clinical experience at some point in their practice. From his results, a healthcare-based model of informal learning in the workplace emerged based on the experiences of the participants. The author writes that although the role of workplace teaching and learning is very clear in implementation frameworks, especially in the Active Implementation Framework, the role of informal learning has not been fully explored. He then suggests integrating informal learning into evidence-based practice and implementation science and shows how the health care-based model of informal learning in the workplace could be a cost effective way to achieve the integration.

The volume is divided into five sections. The first section, including the introductory chapter, addresses the theoretical and philosophical foundations of informal learning. The second section focuses on the contexts in which informal learning occurs, and the third section specifically examines informal learning in cultural and work settings. The fourth section contains chapters related to program development where informal learning is featured. And finally, the fifth section contains the concluding chapter of the volume.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Adult Education: Programs for adults in diverse settings, comprising adult education and adult learning in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. These include adults’ unconscious and deliberate informal learning.

Autodidaxy: Highly deliberate informal learning or self-education that individuals undertake outside the curriculum of formal and non-formal education programs.

Critical Theory: An approach in informal learning scholarship and non-formal education scholarship and practice that challenges learners to adopt a critical stance to their social contexts, seek to know the powers that dominate them, and reclaim their ability to remake their world through their own agency working in concert with others.

Digital Age: A description of the contemporary period in global history where the world is electronically connected through the world-wide web—the Internet, with the combined features of print, broadcast and interactivity—and where the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of information and knowledge are significantly conducted in virtual space.

Explicit Learning: Another form of deliberate learning but not marked by the same level of deliberative intensity as self-directed learning or autodidaxy.

Formal Education: Education that is prepared, delivered, and consumed within purposely designed structure, physical or virtual, hierarchically organized by state and other groups with clearly articulated outcomes.

Hidden Curriculum: This is tacit learning that occurs within formal (and non-formal) teaching-learning interactions but is not part of the curricula.
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**Incidental Learning:** Learning that we are not aware of when it occurs but is acknowledged later on reflection upon incidents, practices, and processes, that we have participated in or witnessed. It is a form of unconscious informal learning.

**Informal Learning:** Any and all learning that takes place outside of formal and non-formal education contexts, and in formal spaces, when the learning involved is not part of the designated curricula.

**Living as Learning:** A view that holds that living itself, with or without structure, requires that we make sense of unfamiliar situations even when we have not had any prior instruction for doing so. These we do either through socialization, incidental learning, deliberate informal learning or organized teaching learning processes. Life requires that we learn every day to get through it on a daily basis.

**MOOC:** Mass access to university-level instruction not geared towards formal qualification: involves learning of structured, sequential materials delivered by Professors in informal learning contexts. Individuals who learn by accessing MOOCs would be regarded as Self-directed learners.

**Self-Directed Learning:** Learning in which individuals make decisions about their own learning; it can take place in formal (where students are asked to participate in decisions within a course, or where they make decisions about which courses to take within a program), non-formal (where students contribute to the decisions), and informal contexts (where individuals initiate and engage in independent learning projects).

**Tacit Learning:** This is the most ubiquitous form of unconscious informal learning. It unfolds mostly through living, socialization, and spontaneous apprehension of knowledge and information as part of everyday living. It is how we pick up much of our outlook on the world both good—kindness to strangers—and bad—racism, homophobia, sexism. It is possible for persons to pass through life, from cradle to grave and not notice, pay attention to, and reflect on their tacit knowledge.

**Transformative Learning:** Learning that results from critical reflection by learner that leads to behavioral changes in the learner; challenges previously held beliefs; cultivating better reasons for acting.