
Globalisation, Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society

Sociological perspectives

Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society, Volume 2

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 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2007
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group,
an informa business*

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Typeset in Goudy by RefineCatch Ltd, Bungay, Suffolk
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Antony Rowe Ltd, Chippenham, Wiltshire

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Jarvis, Peter, 1937–
Globalisation, lifelong learning & the learning society :
sociological perspectives / Peter Jarvis.
p. cm.—(Lifelong learning and the learning society ; v. 2)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Continuing education—Social aspects. 2. Education and
globalization. 3. Educational sociology. I. Title. II. Title:
Globalisation, lifelong learning, and the learning society.
LC5225.S64J373 2007
374—dc22
2006027003

ISBN10: 0-415-35542-7 (hbk)
ISBN10: 0-415-35543-5 (pbk)
ISBN10: 0-203-96440-3 (ebk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-35542-1 (hbk)
ISBN13: 978-0-415-35543-8 (pbk)
ISBN13: 978-0-203-96440-8 (ebk)

The learning society

Thus far we have documented the way in which globalisation has resulted in both ideas of information and knowledge societies. We have illustrated how the control of knowledge and information and the means of transmitting information lies at the core of global society and how power operates in instrumental ways to further the ends of capital, even to suggesting that this power operates on occasions contrary to international agreements and certainly not always to the common good, although those people who have been enabled to embrace a Western lifestyle and have become knowledge workers have benefited considerably as a result of it. Yet if knowledge changes rapidly, driven by the needs of capital to produce new marketable commodities and to do so efficiently and cheaply, then new knowledge has both to be discovered and learned. We have noted how the universities have a significant place to play in the knowledge economy even though the changes are not always favoured by those who work in them. We have also noted that this new knowledge has to be learned, as the new workforce is prepared and many members of the existing workforce need to be updated. This has led to the ideas of the learning society, the learning organisation, the learning city and learning networks and these are the subjects of this chapter, while the next one is on lifelong learning itself. In order to discuss these concepts, we are first confronted with a problem with the word 'learning', which is also implicit in 'knowledge' and 'information', and so it needs to be dealt with here. It will form the basis of the first section of this chapter and, thereafter, we will examine the other ideas.

The concept of learning

We are confronted with a conceptual problem when we look at the concept of the 'learning society' which is different in grammatical form from both the information society and the knowledge society: both information and knowledge are nouns that can easily act as an adjective to describe the type of society. 'Learning', however, is a verb and as such cannot become an adjective describing society – it can, however, become a gerund which is a

noun formed from a verb denoting an action or a state (*Collins English Dictionary*). But our definition of learning in the first chapter is of a process, i.e. a verb, and not a noun. It would be easy to suggest that we could just restructure the sentence as, 'a society that learns' but we cannot do this because we have defined learning as a personal action and society is not a person, or a thing, although there is a tendency to reify society in discussions of the learning society. In the same way, we cannot actually turn around 'the knowledge society' to 'a society that knows' or the 'information society' to 'a society that informs'. However, with these latter two concepts, it is easy to document that there is a great deal of information transmitted between people and that more people's work depends on the use of scientific or technological knowledge. It is also possible to say that a great many people now attend educational courses – an educative society – but we cannot logically do the same for learning. We can say that many people attend educational courses in order to learn – but it is the people who attend courses who actually undertake the learning, not the society, and we cannot guarantee that attendance is synonymous with learning. Societies cannot inform, know or learn – only people can do that! Societal culture can encourage it but cannot force or control it. Neither can we document the amount of learning that takes place because learning is personal and almost synonymous with life itself. We have also pointed to the fact that in the knowledge society only certain forms of knowledge predominate and that other forms get relegated to folklore, superstition and irrelevancy, but it is not the learning that gets relegated, only the subject learned!

Consequently, we see two different approaches to lifelong learning emerging. Field and Leicester (2000a: xvi–xix) raise this issue quite nicely in the introduction to their edited collection when they ask whether we are dealing with the question of lifelong learning or permanent schooling, although the idea of recurrent schooling might be a more accurate description of the current situation. They do not develop this ambiguity, but it lays the foundation for their book and in the following chapter Edwards (2000) rightly points to recurrent education as the other factor in lifelong learning. Indeed, it was in 1973 that the OECD published a policy paper *Recurrent Education: A Strategy for Lifelong Learning* that combined the two. But because the boundaries between education and learning beyond school are no longer recognised and formal education is being forced to accredit learning that occurs beyond the educational system, lifelong learning may now be regarded as a combination of human learning and recurrent education. It is a question hidden from the debate by the traditional definition of the concept, such as the one given by the European Commission (EC 2001b: 9) that it is: 'all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective'. This is an individualistic definition which is open to question on its instrumental perspective; it suggests that lifelong

learning must have an aim. But it allows for a personal interpretation of learning itself. However, as we noted above, learning is an existential phenomenon which is coterminous with conscious living, i.e. learning is lifelong because it occurs whenever we are conscious and it needs have no end in itself, although it frequently does have a purpose. In a sense it is neither incidental to living nor instrumental in itself, it is an intrinsic part of the process of living. I have defined lifelong learning (see also Chapter 1) as:

the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person.

(Jarvis 2006: 134)

Since we all live within time in society, there are times when we can take our life-world for granted and act almost unthinkingly for so long as we respond to the familiar, but once we are confronted with novel situations we can no longer take that world for granted. It is a state of disjuncture, when we become conscious of the situation and are forced to think about it or adapt to it in some way – that is learning. Disjuncture, itself, is a complicated phenomenon as we have demonstrated previously, but briefly it is the gap that occurs between our experience of a situation and our biography which provides us with the knowledge and skill that enable us to act meaningfully. When this gap occurs, we are not able to cope with the experience we have without learning something new. Consequently, in a rapidly changing world we can take less for granted and so disjuncture becomes a more common phenomenon and so throughout our lifetime we are forced to keep on learning – lifelong learning – and it is only when we disengage from social living that the rate at which we learn may slow down.

Learning is also individualistic since it is existential; there is no way that it can be anything other than individual because it is about an individual's life. But when we read much of the literature on lifelong learning, we are certainly not confronted with an existential phenomenon but a social one, so that we have to recognise that the term is used in a totally different manner. This is the point implicit in Fields' and Leicester's question – just how is it related to lifelong education, or even to education itself. While Field and Leicester recognise that lifelong learning transcends schooling, Edwards points to the fact that what we have is recurrent education. In this sense, the intermittent attendance at educational institutions throughout the lifetime – which in policy documents usually means the duration of the work life – indicates that the term is used in a different manner to the learning process but that it

also includes that process. In this sense, the non-existential approach to lifelong learning also embodies a form of recurrent education – a concept that was popular with the OECD and other institutions in the 1970s, but it also goes beyond it by including initial education.

It might well be asked why the boundaries between education and individual learning disappeared during this period. It was certainly not just a triumph of those adult educators who had been arguing for years that adults learned a great deal more after their initial education which should be recognised by the educational awards system, and Martin (1981: 25) points to an answer: 'The most salient feature of the counter-culture of the 1960s was the symbolism of anti-structure.' This was a period of expressive revolution in which structural boundaries of society were lowered and personal experience increasingly recognised, and so the experience of learning was recognised. This is also true of the boundary between education and work, which was also in accord with the needs of the emerging knowledge economy. Significantly, it also became easier to think of education as lifelong, since the social structures between different stages in the life cycle were lowered and education was no longer limited to certain stages of life. Thereafter, ways had to be found to recognise it, and so the accreditation of prior and experiential learning found its way into the system, as did the uniting of the ideas of education and learning. Since learning was the common feature, it was quite easy to see how lifelong learning took precedence over lifelong education as a term. When the expressive revolution drew to a close and the boundaries were recreated, both the concept and the processes of accreditation were encapsulated within the new structures and have gradually increased in popularity. Lifelong learning, therefore, includes formal and non-formal, as well as informal learning. In addition, third-age learning should be included, although it is frequently omitted in policy documents. Consequently, we need to recognise this combination of learning and recurrent schooling in another way of understanding lifelong learning which can be defined as:

Every opportunity made available by any social institution for, and every process by which, an individual can acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses within global society.

Both of my definitions refer to different approaches to lifelong learning. Learning is always personal but some of the opportunities to learn are provided by social institutions, such as the State and employers. It is, therefore, a definition relevant to the private sphere of life, whereas the second definition, more relevant to the public sphere, might be indicative of the learning society, or the institutionalisation of the learning process. We are faced with not one term but two, of not totally different, but overlapping phenomena – one human and individual and the other both individual and social – or at least institutional; one more likely to be studied by the philosopher and

psychologist (although not entirely as Jarvis and Parker 2005 show) and the other to be studied by both of these and also by the economist, the policy theorist and the sociologist. Certainly the study of lifelong learning requires a multidisciplinary approach.

The fact that they are overlapping is important since the person still learns *qua* individual in the vocational setting and in the non-vocational one the individual can learn knowledge and skills that are useful in the vocational. Perhaps they can best be depicted by Figure 6.1. The overlap between vocational and non-vocational lifelong learning illustrates that one type of learning may have functional utility in the other. For instance, non-vocational learning may have beneficial results in the work situation and learning in the workplace may also serve a non-vocational learning function as well. A great deal of vocational education is provided for young adults while traditional non-vocational adult education remains underfunded and much non-vocational learning may occur in non-formal and informal situations.

Consequently, the concept of the learning society is a metaphor to describe the fact that people are encouraged to learn, usually in specific situations and for vocational purposes; when we discuss the learning society, we need to see learning as something other than the learning process – it is about the opportunity to learn specific knowledge and skills. We suggest that it is the provision of learning opportunities that should underlie the idea of the learning society, and in this sense we want to define the learning society as one in which the majority of social institutions make provision for individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses within global society. In other words, it is a society in which people are enabled, even encouraged, to learn, but they have to take responsibility for that learning; it is the individuals who learn and not the society, and that society may be changed, even transformed, as a result of the learning of members of its

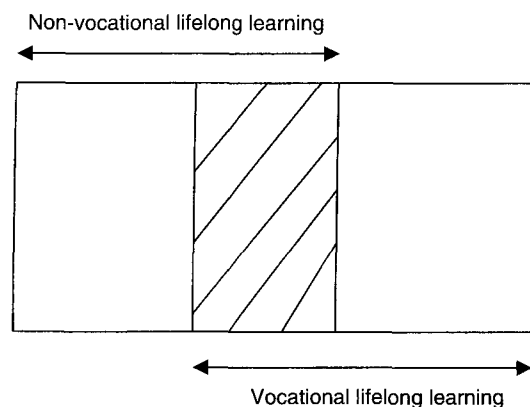


Figure 6.1 Categories of lifelong learning.

population. This definition puts learning but not education at the centre. Perhaps, even more significantly, the degree of change may correlate in some way with the degree of power or influence that the learners may have and those with little or no power or influence, e.g. indigenous peoples and people from non-knowledge-based jobs, have little influence on the societies in which they find themselves – they are in the lower layers of their society. The learning society, like every other society, is defined by those who have the power to define it; it is an unequal society in which opportunities to learn certain things depend upon people's positions in the social structures even though these structures are more fluid than ever before.

The learning society

The concept of the 'learning society' emerged with two authors in the 1960s and 1970s, the period when so much of what we are discussing here found a major impetus. Hutchins (1968) saw it as a society when everybody would have the opportunity to learn and develop themselves through part-time education, as society was organised to facilitate such opportunities. Husén (1974) thought that such a society was possible as the computer revolution would make it possible for everyone to receive information and learn. Two other authors had similar visions but did not use the term in this way: Illich (1971) postulated a time when society could be deschooled and Schön (1971) recognised the significance of individual learning in adaptable learning systems. In their different ways they foresaw some of the opportunities: the liberal educational philosophy that has undergirded a great deal of the thinking of UNESCO and the technology that led to the information society. Naturally, their visions were slightly different, but they all looked forward to a society in which learning was placed at the centre. But Illich was more suspicious of what was happening and so he warned us against being imprisoned in a global classroom (Illich and Verne 1976) by learning demanded by employing organisations. One of the only other writers to use the 'learning society' concept during this early period was Boshier (1980), although he did so from the perspective of adult education becoming more prevalent in New Zealand. Although this is a far-sighted book in many ways, Boshier (1980: 2–3) was trying to do little more than to catch the spirit of the times when he suggested that:

The notion of a learning society stems from third force psychology, widespread disenchantment with traditional education, the writings of educational radicals such as Illich, Reimer, Goodman and Freire, and the unprecedented transformation wrought by economic and social changes associated with evolving technology.

He tried to show the direction that he thought that adult education was

moving rather than documenting the emergence of the learning society, as such. By contrast, van der Zee (1991) sought to expound his idea of the learning society by starting with an examination of existing forms of learning, he then showed how learning can be developed and, finally, argued for the unique contribution different agencies could make. For him, learning per se is at the heart of the learning society, although no real attempt to locate this discussion in the wider social context occurred.

Two quite distinct approaches to the learning society, the one private and the other public, as the two definitions imply, are to be found: one which is embodied by UNESCO documents and the other that relates much more to the socio-economic demands of contemporary society. Delors (1996) opens his UNESCO report with a chapter entitled 'Education: the necessary utopia'.¹ The focus of this is on personal and social development – the enriching of people through the learning process and the recognition that:

The truth is that all-out economic growth can no longer be viewed as the ideal way of reconciling material progress with equity, respect for the human condition and respect for the natural assets that we have a duty to hand on in good condition to future generations.

(Delors 1996: 15)

The word 'utopian' (see Appendix) might sound a strange adjective to describe education, especially coming from such an international statesman as Jacques Delors, but it is also the word that Freire (1972a: 40) used:

When education is no longer utopian, that is, when it no longer embodies the dramatic unity of denunciation and annunciation, it is either because the future has no more meaning for men, or because men are afraid to risk the future as creative overcoming the present, which has become old.

Freire suggests that the latter is a distinct possibility. But utopianism is not something unrealistic as Horton, in conversation with Freire, makes clear when he says that he looked at all the utopian communities but 'it just became clear that I would never find what I was looking for. The thing to do was just find a place, move in and start, and let it grow' (Bell *et al.* 1990: 53). And so Highlander was born – the place where Rosa Parks was educated and many of those who were influential in the peaceful protest movement that was the catalyst in the desegregation movement in the southern states of the USA. Utopia is not just something that drops from heaven, but it is a dream, something to be worked for, helping people learn so that they can grow and develop and help change the world.

Perhaps it is unwise to try to describe in detail a utopian vision but this is just what Delors (1996) called it when he and his team concluded that learning – the treasure within – had four pillars: learning to know, learning to

do, learning to live together and learning to be. In a different way Ranson (1994) tried to describe what the learning society should be like. It would involve education for democracy in which there would be many active citizens because educated people would join active debate. He (1994: 105) suggests that:

The creation of a moral and public order that expresses and enables an active citizenship within the public domain is the challenge of the modern era. The task is to generate or constitute more effectively than ever before a public – an educated public – that has the capacity to participate actively in the shaping of a learning society and public. This will require citizens, both as individuals and together, to develop a firmer sense of their agency.

He goes on to look at the components of the learning society and suggests that there are two organising principles: an essential structure of citizenship and practical reason. He then suggests that there are purposes, values and conditions. There are conditions for:

- the learning self – agency, life as discovery, the self in relation to others;
- the social conditions of learning – creating a moral community, widening horizons;
- the polity – justice, participative democracy, public action.

This requires democratic governance at both central and local levels and a reorganised educational system to enable such a society to emerge. More recently, UNESCO (2005: 60) offered the following as a view of the learning society:

Thus, learning, as a phenomenon may generalize at all levels of our societies and offer a model for organizing the time, work and lives of our institutions. Such an evolution illustrates a paradigm shift. On the one hand, education and learning can no longer be confined to a set and settled space-time, but may develop over a lifetime. On the other hand, the human actor must be put at the heart of the continuing process of knowledge acquisition and communication.

Such an approach demands that everybody should have the opportunity for education and that there should be a degree of equality in society and a genuine concern to put people in the heart of policy and practice. But when we look at both we find that this is not always the case. Indeed, Hughes and Tight (1998) actually suggest that the learning society is a myth since nothing like a learning society actually exists and neither is there a prospect of one emerging in the foreseeable future. Certainly, the vision of the learning

society from the perspective of Hutchins, and maybe Delors and Ranson, seems far removed from the reality that we experience, and so what does exist and for what purpose?

Perhaps another attitude towards the learning society and lifelong education is summed up in the title of Ball's chapter in Ranson (1998: 36–41) 'Learning Pays!' Here we see a pragmatic and instrumental approach to learning and the learning society – it pays to learn, although he produces no empirical evidence to support his claims. Walker and Yu Zhu (2003: 149) indicate that 'the returns to education and, in particular, to proceeding from A-levels to a degree are high, but the variation in this across individuals is also high' since it depends on the subject studied, with 'Law, Health, Economics and Business, and Mathematics, considerably higher than Arts, Education and the other Social Sciences'. Consequently, these sweeping claims need to be tempered with evidence. This compares with the approach of the British Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) research project 'The Learning Society: Knowledge and Skills for Employment' (Coffield 2000). While there is a genuine research question raised in the project, there is also an assumption that money was given for research into the learning society since it appears that there might be an economic spin-off – which is the other aspect of the assumption made by Ball. However, the outcome of the 14 different pieces of research conducted within this programme was much less conclusive as to precisely what a learning society is. Coffield (2000, vol. 1: 8–27) indicates that ten different models of the learning society can be found:

- skills growth
- personal development
- social learning
- a learning market
- local learning societies
- social control
- self-evaluation
- centrality of learning
- a reformed system of education
- structural change.

In the second volume of the same research report Coffield (2000, vol. 2: 5–23) notes that seven other themes occur, and then there are lessons to be drawn from elsewhere in Europe. The seven themes are:

- learn from work, if you can;
- participation and non-participation;
- an over-reliance on human capital theory;
- the shifting of responsibility to individuals;

- there's precious little society in the learning society;
- the centrality of learning;
- new inequalities.

We have already noted the problems of shifting the responsibility to individuals, new inequalities and the centrality of learning in the learning society, but they and some of the other themes will also be addressed later in this book. It is clear that no simple conception of the learning society is possible, and Coffield's project does not exhaust the possibilities since it only had fourteen pieces of research in it, and so we can conclude that the characteristics of the learning society, if one actually exists, are not self-evident. Consequently, Coffield (2000, vol. 1: 27) quotes Young (1998: 141): 'the learning society has become a contested concept that "the different meanings given to it not only reflect different interests but imply different visions of the future and different policies for getting there".' It can be assumed, however, that those interests and policies that predominate in the discourse about the learning society reflect the interests and policies of the most powerful and influential groups in society.

Nevertheless, one other approach to the learning society has emerged, albeit under a different name – the reflexive society – another metaphor! Reflexive modernity arises out of the risks that some groups in society impose upon all of us. In order to produce innovations in production and/or bring new commodities to the market, producers take risks which have not been fully evaluated and, in a sense, society becomes their research laboratory – this might appear to be a very extreme statement but often the long-term effects of product innovations are not fully known when they are introduced. Beck (1992: 53) writes:

Risk positions, on the contrary, contain quite a different type of victimization. There is nothing taken for granted about them. They are somehow universal and unspecific. One hears of them or reads of them. The transmission through knowledge means that these groups that tend to be afflicted are *better educated* and *actively inform themselves*. The competition with material need refers to another feature: risk consciousness and activism are more likely to occur where the direct pressure to make a living has been relaxed or broken, that is among the wealthier or more protected groups (or countries).

Basically Beck is arguing that only those who are already educated are conscious of, or able to learn about, the hazards that result from the contemporary production processes. Hence the potentiality for another type of learning society appears – one that is reflexive. For Beck (1994: 5–8) reflexivity implies self-confrontation rather than reflection. He goes on to suggest that this calls for the reinvention of politics since it demands action

from the educated, but there is another sense in which reflexivity implies reflection and, therefore, learning. This is an individualised society, so that there is no real mechanism of social class to be activated against those who put the world at risk, there are only individuals who learn to live in times of uncertainty. Is it any wonder that citizenship education has become a major theme in lifelong learning policy? But, as Bauman (1988: 76–7) points out, with the standard of living that the educated enjoy people do not need rights and, therefore, Who is going to protest against these risks? Educated activism will perhaps be the activity of a small number of educated people who have the will and the moral commitment to be active. By reflexive, Beck is suggesting that this process is built into the very structures of society itself – individuals learn to live with risk and to master it to the best of their ability. The risk society, therefore, creates conditions for individual learning (reflection) and there is a sense in which reflexive modernity is a learning society. This, then, is another model of the learning society to add to the other characteristics that Coffield (2000) isolated.

However, taking this point even further, there is another sense in which society might be regarded as a learning society: the mere pace of change in science and technology is introducing change at every level of society – structural change and social and technological innovations are constantly occurring. People are being forced to learn, informally and almost incidentally, in order to live. This is not just the educated; everybody is confronted with the pace of change. The technological innovations are creating new lifestyles and people are being forced to learn. Structural change caused by globalisation results in culture change. A culture of learning has been created. Incidental learning in order to live in rapidly changing technological society is a sign of the learning society – it is one in which we can no longer take the present for granted, one in which we are frequently confronted with disjunctural situations which cause us to adapt our thinking, change our approach, and so on. The culture of a learning society is one that produces changes in behaviour as well as the need to learn in order to survive. But it is not society which is learning, it is the changing structures and situations within which we live that cause us all to learn, unless we disengage with the wider society as some people appear to do. In a sense there is no other single characteristic that is universal apart from learning itself – all the remainder are different characteristics of a rapidly changing society created by the advanced capitalism of the global substructure.

We can also see a significant difference between the private and the public definitions of learning: the former cannot be legislated for and no policy can be formulated to ensure that it happens. By contrast, the latter is social and can occur as a result of policy decisions. Consequently, policy decisions by governments can lead to the formation of this type of learning society.

The learning organisation

Organisational theory began with the founding fathers of sociology: Max Weber's (1947 edition) work on bureaucracy and Michels's (1966) work on oligarchy were among the first. For Michels (cited in Grusky and Miller 1970: 29): 'It is indisputable that the oligarchic and bureaucratic tendency of party organization is a matter of technical and practical necessity. It is the inevitable product of the very principle of organization.' And so, the iron law of oligarchy in organisations was recognised from very early on and with it the recognition that organisation, by definition, implies both power and structures. For Weber, there are three forms of leadership within organisations: charismatic, traditional and rational-legal. Charismatic leaders are those who can command a following because of their beliefs and message, or because of their success in what they do. Their power rests with their followers and if the followers decide that their leaders have lost their charisma and no longer follow them, then there can be no organisation. Successful leaders, however, can establish their own organisation and in the early days their authority lies in the traditions that emerge. In traditional society, the legitimacy and status of leaders, and therefore their authority, rests solely in the acceptance of the traditions, so that they are frequently legitimated by religion but in existing organisations their authority comes either from rules or laws or by order of the ruling body of an organisation. It is in this type of organisation that bureaucracy emerges and for Weber (1947: 333–4) the following characteristics apply:

- office holders are personally free and subject only to the official obligations of their office;
- offices are in a clearly defined hierarchy;
- each office has a clearly defined sphere of competence;
- each office is filled by free contractual relationship;
- candidates for office are selected on their technical qualifications;
- office holders receive a fixed remuneration;
- the office is the primary occupation of the holder;
- there is a system of career promotion between the levels of the hierarchy;
- the office holder is separated from the means of production;
- the office holder is subject to discipline and control in the conduct of the office.

Thus the structures of the organisation are fixed and dominated by rational procedures; once one has entered the organisation and learned the rules and regulations there is little or nothing more to learn about the organisation's operation and most of the work involves the office holder in administering a set of imposed or agreed procedures – impartially or otherwise. Change is inhibited by the structural procedures and those who want to change things

are often unable to do so, unless they are amongst the oligarchy. In my own research, for instance, I found an inverse relationship between job satisfaction and professional beliefs and ideologies (Jarvis 1977) in bureaucracies.

Organisational change only really occurs when two sets of forces, those acting upon the organisation from outside and those acting within the organisation, operate in the same direction. In a bureaucracy, however, the forces within the organisation are resistant to change and even when the outside forces put pressure on bureaucratic organisations they are still resistant to change. Consequently, not all organisations responded to the forces of globalisation or to the societal forces of global capitalism within their own societies which have been apparent for the past half a century. Gradually, however, the competition in the global market from countries like Japan and the opportunities to increase profits through extending their markets globally meant that leaders of large organisations recognised the need to change. During the 1960s and 1970s there was a gradual increase in continuing professional education, as we documented earlier, but continuing education in itself did not change organisations. This was seen in a number of organisational studies, such as one by Argyris and Schön (1978: 26) who stated quite specifically that

Since World War II, it has gradually become apparent not only to business firms but to all types of organizations that the requirements of organizational learning, especially for double-loop learning, are not one-shot but continuing.

Argyris and Schön (1978) were clear that there were major external forces that were affecting organisations and in the introduction to their book (pp. 1–5) they produced a case study that shows how five workers at one level of a company were convinced that a product was a failure six years before the decision by senior management was taken to stop producing it. At first, the subordinates believed that the errors could be corrected by hard work but as they struggled they realised that this was not sufficient, but senior management was still promoting the product as a winner. Eventually, they composed memos to middle management explaining the problems but management found the memos too forthright, and they also doubted them because previous studies had not predicted this situation. Having taken a ‘reality check’, they then wanted time to see if they could correct the situation. When, finally, they decided that they had to communicate to senior management what they had discovered, they had to compose memos in carefully structured doses so that the bad news could gradually dawn upon senior management, and this actually took a lot of time. The learning of some individuals took nearly six years to permeate to the hierarchy because their learning had to be mediated through the power structures which prevented changes occurring as rapidly as they should have done. Now Argyris and Schön rightly focus

upon the need to change procedures, which they incorporate in the idea of organisational learning, but they actually play down discussion of the power relationships within the organisation which prevented the lower hierarchical orders communicating rapidly to the hierarchy without risking their own position. These power relationships become hidden within their discussion of theories of action and organisational learning – both single-loop and double-loop learning which they combine into Bateson’s (1972) concept of deuterio-learning. Their focus became the need for the organisation to change which they then incorporated into the metaphor of organisational learning (p. 28):

Organizational learning occurs when members of the organization act as learning agents for the organization, responding to the internal and external environments of the organization by detecting and correcting errors in organizational theory-in-use, and embedding the results of their inquiry in private images and shared maps of organization.

Significantly, the fact that there are hierarchies in organisations and people who exercise power has now disappeared in their writing and nowhere in their summary of the chapter on organisational learning does the idea of a hierarchical power occur. The idea that power is exercised in the learning organisation is also omitted from Watkins and Marsick’s study (1993). The question needs to be posed, therefore, as to whether organisations – even facilitative ones – can actually exist without hierarchies of power, or whether these formulations of teams and networks without the recognition that power (even covert power) is exercised in and through the organisation are realistic. Naturally, it is quite possible to discuss organisations in this way when the discussion is between power holders – managers – and then the power is taken for granted, assumed and therefore not a problem to them, but their own leadership may be! Facilitation, however, demands that the facilitator is supported by the organisational structures and as most books on learning organisations are written for managers, the issue of power is not significant, but it is a major omission. Indeed, as we can see, there are a number of assumptions about the nature of the learning organisation already appearing.

However, it is generally accepted within organisations that flatter hierarchies are occurring, structures that facilitate easier and quicker communication between top and bottom and vice versa. However, a flat hierarchy does not preclude power – quite the opposite, as Green (1997: 14) reminds us:

Flattened hierarchies can often mean the curtailing of middle management leading to increasingly centralized decision-making and the intensification of work among lower grade staff who lack any real autonomy and see their career paths cut off.

Power is a dimension which cannot be omitted from any analyses of organisations, whether or not they are learning organisations. The characteristics of this type of organisation – the learning organisation as it has come to be called – are summarised by Clarke (2001: 3):

- team working and learning;
- a culture of cross-organisational working;
- a system of shared beliefs, goals and objectives;
- individuals, teams and an organisation that learns from experience;
- individual, team and organisational learning are valued;
- development of new ideas, methods and processes are encouraged;
- risk-taking is encouraged;
- responsibility and authority are delegated;
- everybody is encouraged and expected to perform to their maximum ability.

But these characteristics are not the same as those suggested by other theorists. Pedlar *et al.* (1997: 15) suggest the following:

- a learning approach to strategy;
- participative policy-making;
- informing;
- formative accounting and control;
- internal exchange;
- reward flexibility;
- enabling structures;
- boundary workers as environmental scanners;
- inter-company learning;
- a learning climate;
- self-development opportunities for all.

For Longworth (1999: 215) the learning organisation has the following indicators, it is an organisation that:

- needs to improve its performance through learning;
- invests in its future through education and training of its own staff;
- encourages its staff to fulfil their human potential;
- shares its vision of tomorrow with its people and stimulates them to respond to the challenge;
- integrates work and learning and inspires its people to seek excellence;
- mobilises its human talent;
- empowers all its staff to broaden their horizons;
- applies up-to-date delivery technologies to create more learning opportunities;

- responds proactively to the needs of the environment;
- continues to learn and relearn.

While there are similarities between these three lists, there are also profound differences, but in none is power a major issue and, therefore, for these and other reasons, the analyses are open to question. Now it could be argued that Pedlar *et al.* have a different audience but they could also be describing different types of organisation under the same title, so that these differences call into question the concept of learning, as it is used here, and we will return to this below. However, we can also see that different writers on learning organisations certainly produce different lists of characteristics, so that the very least we can say is that there is not only one type of organisation to which the term ‘learning’ might be applied. In addition, a learning organisation, if such a phenomenon actually exists, need not only be a work-based one – churches, for instance, might be learning organisations, as might other non-governmental organisations.

The theorists of these organisations also appear to wish the same types of utopian characteristics as the learning society upon them although it is to be doubted whether any major organisational research, rather than management research, has been conducted into the feasibility of these characteristics being realised within an organisation. Yet it is to be noted that the four types of learning described by Pedlar *et al.* (1997: 59) – learning about things (knowledge), to do things (skills), to become ourselves (personal development) and to achieve things together (collaborative enquiry) – are the same as the four pillars of learning in the Delors Report. Indeed, the utopian idea again points us to the fact that there are more ideal arrangements for human collaboration than those that are generally practised. But even if we concentrate just on ‘organisational learning’, we note the definitional problem of learning itself is the same one as we have already highlighted. Hence, this idea of organisational learning itself needs a little further examination before we proceed.

Argyris and Schön (1978) make the point that their approach to learning is related to action, but then they state quite specifically that not all of the changes qualify as organisational learning (pp. 17–18) since some changes in organisational procedure can be regarded as organisational entropy because they result in a deterioration in the way that the organisation functions. But learning can result in organisational entropy, although according to this definition, this form of learning is not organisational learning. Hence organisational learning, according to their understanding, is something that only has positive results, i.e. that it is instrumental, in that it can be seen to correct situations and allow organisations to respond to both internal and external pressures usually in the way that the managers want. But learning per se need not have positive results and this is now being recognised as managers are

taught to accept that innovators are bound to have failures as well as successes and that they still need support.

While Argyris and Schön rightly recognise that learning is personal, so that it appears that this type of organisation is person-centred, they are actually suggesting that when organisational procedures are changed positively as a result of social pressures, then it is what they call organisational learning, so that once more we can conclude that organisational learning, as a concept, is not actually learning per se nor necessarily people-centred – but it is change in the right direction. It is the successful introduction of new procedures into an organisation that enables it to function more efficiently and to respond more effectively to the external social pressures. But who actually introduces the changes and who has the authority so to do is not discussed within their definition. Clearly, only those who occupy hierarchical positions have the power to introduce changes in the procedures and expect others to follow them, even if the suggestions for change come from other levels of the hierarchy. What they appear to be suggesting is that the more permeable the layers of the company, the more the managers can learn from within the organisation, from change agents or entrepreneurs, and the more they can create a change situation either because of what they have learned from within or because of what the socio-economic pressures from the global or local market are demanding. They are equating organisational learning with change and action, which is not human learning, as we defined it in the opening chapter, although it reflects the behaviouristic approach to learning – that is, that it is a process that can be measured by its outcomes. However, behaviourism, as such, is not actually learning, as we argued in the previous volume (Jarvis 2006). It is not actually learning at all but it is changes in organisational procedures and efficiency, as a result of either one or a group of people's learning in the workplace, responding to either internal or external pressures, and implementing new procedures as a result that seem to be the characteristics of the learning organisation. This is similar to the idea suggested by Senge (1990: 14) that learning organisations are 'continually expanding [their] capacity to create [their] future'. He goes on to say that they have not just to survive but to adapt to the changing conditions – or, as I would argue, to the social forces generated by global capitalism or to compete with others who are generating those forces on the wider society. This is also the position implicit in the definition of Pedlar *et al.* (1997: 3) that: 'A Learning Company is an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members and consciously transforms itself and its context' (emphasis in original).

What is clear in all the three lists of characteristics cited above is that the power to introduce change in procedures is assumed and not discussed. In precisely the same way the ideas of concord and agreement are assumed and the processes by which individuals learn to change to fit into new procedures are not highlighted, and so we need to recall that one of Coffield's (2000,

vol. 1: 8) characteristics was social control. Coffield cites Hewison's (Coffield 2000, vol. 1: 167–97) research, and summarises (Coffield 2000, vol. 1: 16) that: "'opportunities for lifelong learning" were viewed by many of the participants in their study as a threat or an obligation imposed by employers rather than a promise'.

A similar sentiment is echoed by Field (1999, cited in Coffield 2000, vol. 1: 18):

Without anyone much noticing it, a great deal of professional development and skills updating is carried out not because anyone wants to learn, but because they are required to learn. Contract compliance, regulatory frameworks and statutory requirements are the three main culprits.

It is this dimension of power and control that is missing from much of the discussion of the learning organisation, as it is from many of the other evocations for lifelong learning to which we refer throughout this study. While Hewison's study is of the health service, there is no reason to assume that in other organisations embracing lifelong learning similar patterns do not occur, as Field's comment indicates.

It is also the relationship between personal learning and the organisation that Senge (1990) addressed in *The Fifth Discipline*: his first four disciplines are personal – how we think, what we want, how we interact and how we learn from one another (Senge 1990: 11). His fifth discipline is systems thinking, which is social, when through integration of thought and practice a shared vision across the whole organisation can stimulate change and efficiency in an organisation. For Senge (1990: 13) a learning organisation is a place where individuals are 'continually discovering how they can create their reality' – it is a place of discovery, growth and development that results in more dynamic and creative solutions. In this sense, once again the organisational hierarchy has gone, as has the power inherent in it. There is an openness that not only encourages sharing of ideas but of a genuine dialogue that can be really creative, but in order to create such procedures Senge concludes that what is required is a new type of management practitioner, more a leader than a traditional manager, and here Senge clearly recognises the dimension of power. As he (1990: 139) recognises 'Organisations learn only through individuals who learn (but) individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning', and implementing this learning ultimately rests with management which has the requisite authority and leadership expertise to implement and carry through successfully the changes that it feels are necessary. Basically, then, learning in the learning organisation is personal and private and more open, but what is important are the social outcomes of learning that have been implemented in the company in order to make it more competitive in the global market.

Senge's use of systems theory is important since it is a recognised sociological theory that has been discussed by many scholars over the years. It is an organisational theory that has not commanded universal acclaim amongst organisation theorists, the way that Senge's book has acquired fame amongst managers. Systems theory is open to critical discussion on at least seven counts according to Abercrombie *et al.* (2000: 354–5):

- it cannot deal adequately with conflict or change;
- its assumptions about equilibrium in society are based on a conservative ideology;
- it is so abstract that its empirical references are hard to detect;
- its assumptions about value consensus are not well grounded;
- it is difficult to reconcile assumptions about structural procedures with a theory of action;
- the teleological assumptions cannot explain underdevelopment or underutilisation;
- it is tautologous and vacuous.

We have already highlighted some of these in the foregoing discussion and we could proceed to argue that the persons within the organisation, and their learning, are not really considered within the framework of power. Indeed, change only happens when power is exerted within the organisation itself – by managers! Hence the learning organisation appears to be a management theory for managers but it is weak conceptually, sociologically and educationally.

It is necessary, therefore, to recognise that power is not the only issue that needs to be understood within the learning organisation – it is also necessary to understand who the trendsetters are and how innovations spread through the company. People are important in the process and it is people, as actors – change agents, who are played down in these discussions and so it is important to return to re-examine the relationship between structure and action and learning.

What many writers on learning organisations do not focus upon is the idea of human capital (Schutz 1961) since they emphasise the way that individuals might grow, not the way that they can be used. But those who control organisations control workers and if the workforce is to be regarded as capital, then they control both the financial and the human capital of the organisation. Consequently, for organisations to become Investors in People makes good sense in the knowledge economy, since it is through ensuring that workers continue to learn that the organisation becomes more effective. But the reason for investing in the workforce is not necessarily for the benefit of the worker – but for the gain of the organisation. The recipients of the investment are not the reason for the investment – the profits are – although the individuals might well benefit themselves through the organised learning

that they have undertaken. Some non-governmental organisations, however, which are investors in people, may – but need not – have made their investment mainly for the benefit of their workforce. Clearly, the workers may gain a lot from their learning, but if they are human capital, then they are not ends in themselves but means to other ends – something contrary to Kant's argument that people are ends and not means! Human capital, as a concept, implies power and suggests that workers' learning is a means to another end. Having a flexible workforce, able to respond to the demands of the management and of the external forces is essential to organisations that have to keep adapting to the pressures that global capitalism exercises.

The learning organisation is different from bureaucracy, not because it does not have a hierarchy, but because those in the hierarchy have learned to create more open procedures for information processing so that they can facilitate or implement directly the outcomes that they and others in the organisation have learned. The learning organisation is the antithesis of the bureaucratic organisation in the sense of having a more responsive management in implementing new procedures and, maybe, in creating a slightly flatter organisation so that information can flow from bottom to top, and vice versa, more quickly. But it is not different in the oligarchic sense; the changes have been forced upon those who occupy places in the hierarchy by the forces of global capitalism that demand that productive organisations become more competitive or else they do not survive. It is the hierarchy that has then to implement new procedures and persuade the workers to adopt them, even to go to additional education and training so that they are better equipped to do so. But as most of the literature about learning organisations is written by management theorists for practising managers, the issues of power and control are not as significant since these can be assumed; their concern is in producing results, so that the greater part of most of these studies concentrates on generating the procedures that will enable the organisation to become more profitable – ultimately for their shareholders' benefit. Consequently, the emphasis now transfers to leadership! Nevertheless, we note a fundamental weakness in these as academic studies of organisations. An interesting paradox emerges from this – that in order to be effective and efficient in a competitive world those within the organisation need to be open and share with each other – perhaps it is a lesson that global capitalism needs to take unto itself as we contemplate the world that global capitalism is helping to create!

Having discussed all of these aspects of the learning organisation, it would be false to assume that learning organisations, or at least those that claim to be learning organisations, are necessarily successful in this global capital world. For instance, in the European Foreword of *Lifelong Learning* by Longworth and Davies (1996: ix), John Towers, the chief executive of Rover cars, wrote, 'We at the Rover Group Ltd are proud to be among the world's foremost "Learning Organizations"'. If that sounds strange coming

from a manufacturing company, let me explain' and he went on to outline all the ways in which Rover had changed its bureaucratic structures and how it emphasised the strengths of its workers. Perhaps a decade later, with Rover having been taken over twice and returned to British ownership once, and with there now only being a chance for car manufacturing if the new Chinese owners put in cash, it casts some doubts on the validity of the claims about Rover, or the wisdom of using Rover as an example, especially when Towers actually claims that Rover 'has invested heavily in learning, and knows that that investment pays off' (p. ix). Not all organisations claiming to be learning organisations succeed and, clearly, more research is required into management-speak from the academic world of learning – amongst other research needed into the claims of both management and their gurus.

The learning city/region

One of the outcomes of globalisation has been that we have become more aware of the local – a form of glocalisation. Robertson (1995: 31) makes the point that 'there is an increasingly globe-wide discourse of locality, community, home, and the like' and so it is not surprising that there should be a focus on the local. The information society and its network counterpart have also assisted in this development as the ideas of the learning region and the learning city have arisen, in which local information networks have been established. In fact, we might see the learning region and learning city as new forms of community education and, consequently, we will discuss both of these together since they are very similar in structure.

In the same way as we noted that the concepts of society and organisation are reified in the above discussions, so we see the same process happening with the learning city.

A learning city is one which strives to learn how to renew itself in a period of extraordinary social change. The rapid spread of new technologies presents considerable opportunities for countries and regions to benefit from the transfer of new knowledge and ideas across national boundaries. At the same time global shifts in capital flows and production are creating uncertainties and risk in managing national and local economies.

(Department for Education and Employment – DfEE 1998: 1)

The DfEE definition of the learning city actually goes on to explain something of the origins of the idea – both global and local use of capital and technology. While many of the initiatives for learning cities and learning regions have come from adult educators, support is necessary from local government and local business and commerce. In fact, Longworth (1999: 114) suggests that the network consists of:

- primary and secondary education;
- universities and tertiary education;
- industry, business and commerce;
- professional bodies and special interest groups;
- adult and vocational education;
- social services and voluntary organisations;
- local government.

In my own experience, one learning region's committee was chaired by the local mayor and in another the idea did not take off apparently because the local mayor could not find sufficient support from educators. It is the partnership that makes it happen because learning cities are fundamentally top-down in as much as they are supported by local and regional governments and organisational leaders. More recently, Partnerships Online is seeking to establish similar online communities in towns and villages.

The learning city idea also comes from the same period as many other concepts discussed in this book – the early 1970s. But the first international meeting about the learning city did not happen until 1990, when one was organised in Barcelona. Thereafter the idea grew and it was one adopted and supported by the British government from the mid-1990s when the first local governments committed their towns and cities to become a learning city. Thereafter a learning city network evolved and the European Commission supported the development of networks to promote and support lifelong learning locally and regionally (EC 2003). Basically this movement towards learning cities and learning regions might be described as a new social movement or, better, as part of a wider new social movement which is lifelong learning itself – and we will discuss lifelong learning as a new social movement in subsequent chapters. But we will analyse learning cities under the same four sub-headings – aims, social base, means of action, organisations – as we will for lifelong learning as a new social movement in Chapter 7. It would probably be true to say that initiators of learning cities and regions are educators although support for the movement locally needs to come from a wider spread of sources. It is significant that while those advocating the learning or ganisation are futuristic, the world of work is more restrictive and less visionary, so that it is not surprising that it is educators who have adopted a more visionary approach and generated a new social movement – which might also be seen as a new way of looking at community learning.

New social movements differ from traditional social movements in that they are not class-based and from interest groups in as much as they are not small groups. Traditionally, a social movement was one which began with the people of working or lower classes, although often inspired and led by middle-class intellectuals and well-wishers, seeking to pressurise the government to act. In the new movements, which are not class-based, the

aim is social transformation through the political process and in this case the leaders have emerged from education, often from traditional adult education. As Abercrombie *et al.* (2000) point out, new social movements can be distinguished by four features: aims, social base, means of action and organisation.

Aims

The aims of this movement are to create a culture of learning, of intended learning. Learning *per se* occurs naturally in the process of living but intended learning is basically vocational, although in learning cities and regions there is a greater emphasis on the non-vocational than there is in learning organisations. The second purpose of learning cities and regions, according to the DfEE (1998: 1) document, are 'to support lifelong learning' and 'to promote social and economic regeneration' through partnerships, participation and performance.

Social base

Unlike traditional social movements, the social base of new social movements is not social class, and in this case it appears to be professional educators, often from an adult education background, who have embraced lifelong learning, and the leadership can stem from one organisation – not necessarily an educational one. For instance, in Hull 'City Vision Ltd is the public/private partnership charged with taking this ambition forward' (DfEE 1998: 15).

Means of action

Those who propagate the ideas of learning cities do not need action in the forms of social protest so much as lobbying those who are influential in their communities, such as local government, using advertising and other ways of spreading the 'good news' of learning and also seeking sponsorship, often from local business and industry.

Organisation

Usually the learning city is a partnership of educational and other service providers which includes business and industry and which has its own co-ordinating committee and, maybe, part-time or full-time staff. Unlike the learning organisation, the learning city sees itself as a partnership which seeks to provide learning opportunities for its citizens, thereby enriching the life of the people and contributing to the richness of the city. However, it would certainly be true to claim that the initiative has come from lifelong

learning as such and that this was stimulated by the perceived need to create a knowledge economy.

Learning cities and learning regions have now become a feature of contemporary society. In the UK literature, nearly every large city seems to be a learning city. As early as 1998, there were 18 learning towns and cities cited by Yarnit (1998). But the same concept has emerged throughout the world, with European Union projects (EC 2003), local government White Papers, in the Basque country and elsewhere in the world, such as Australia. While the learning city need not focus primarily on the economy, it is natural that it should play a significant role and the OECD (2001), for instance, locates the learning city/region within the knowledge-based economy. Now an international network exists for learning towns and cities which illustrates something of the success of this aspect of the new social movement. However, learning cities frequently incorporate a slightly broader perspective. Consequently, it could be argued that learning cities, unlike learning organisations, seek to build the social capital of the region.

Social capital

One of the first writers to discuss social capital was Coleman (1990: 302), although Putnam (2000) points out that it was used as early as 1916, who claims, wrongly in my opinion, that it is a concept that is defined by its function since, as he points out elsewhere, what is functional to one person might be dysfunctional to another. It is, however, a form of social organisation in which personal relationships are significant and which Hanifan (1916) claimed as 'those tangible social relationships [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among individuals and families who make up the social unit' (cited by Putnam 2000: 19). In other words it reflects some of the ideas of community discussed by Toennies (1957). Hanifan, however, was self-conscious about using the concept and even then he felt that there had been a decline in rural communities in America (cited Putnam 2000: 445–6). Putnam's (2000) work is perhaps the most impressive study of the decline in social capital in America over the past few decades, a decline that reflects the decline in active citizenship. Social capital is the potentiality for social action that resides in groups through their shared norms and values, but it must be noted immediately that groups which do not work for the good of society but for their own ends, e.g. racist groups and fundamentalist religious sects, also possess social capital, so that all social capital is not necessarily socially good. Consequently, Putnam's work is not without its critics and there are, for instance, major problems with measurement of social capital. At the same time, there is widespread agreement that there has been a decline in civic participation over these past few decades, for whatever reasons, and this

has allowed the forces of the substructure even more freedom. It is the lack of community that caused Putnam to write his book *Bowling Alone*, which emphasises the individualism of contemporary society.

Social capital and community spirit may be seen to have many similarities, if not be synonymous. It was, according to Durkheim (1915), the division of labour that changed these social structures. Putnam, however, examines a far wider set of data, looking at: civic and religious participation, the workplace, informal relationships, altruism and volunteering. He reaches the conclusion that there is a decline in community in America. Coleman, however, recognises that the term capital means that people can draw upon it in times of need. He goes on to ask why rational actors create social obligations and he claims that people can invest in order to create it but he recognises that it occurs as a by-product of other human actions. Nevertheless, Coleman's perspective is individualistic and instrumentally rationalistic and in many ways is the antithesis of what he is discussing. Coleman also suggests that by creating relevant social structures social capital might be created and in this reflects some of the ideas that were prevalent in city design in the same period. A question remains about the relationship of social capital to the learning city.

The idea of social capital has certainly been used as a yardstick in evaluating local communities. However, Baron *et al.* (2000: 243) suggest that social capital offers 'one way of apprehending and analysing the embeddedness of education in social networks'. But they go on to say that 'it also challenges the dominant human capital approaches . . . which concentrate on narrowly defined, short-term results or tidy analytical devices'. The outset of their argument is that social capital actually provides many opportunities for informal learning but that it is inherently narrowing – which is precisely the same type of argument that has existed for years about the advantages and disadvantages of living in small communities – but they produce considerable evidence.

In a sense, then, part of the research into social capital has taken us back to the ideas of the community and the community spirit, phenomena that have apparently declined tremendously as a result of the division of labour, although the same concern about the decline existed nearly a century ago. It might well be that this reflects the social process of constructing ideal communities, that we either see them as utopian and in the future or locate them in a dim and distant past! In both cases their function is to illustrate that we do not live in a perfect society – but then we may never ever do so! What these studies have shown, however, is that there are community resources that can enrich human living, although they might have their drawbacks; these resources might aid informal learning but through planning and learning we can create conditions and structures through which human living may be enriched but we cannot dictate that the community spirit will be created or learned. We will return to this issue when we examine the

functions of lifelong learning which have been researched as unintended benefits of lifelong learning.

The question remains then, why should the term social capital have come to the fore at this particular time, especially as Hanifan (1916) was self-conscious about using the term to refer to social assets. But this is precisely the same point Schutz (1961) raised about using the term human capital: human beings are more than capital; it is just that instrumental rationality in its capitalist form relegates everything to its use-value for capital itself and as capitalism is the dominant ideology in contemporary society it has colonised not only our language but our thinking.

Conclusion

Throughout this study we have pointed to the dominance of advanced capitalism in contemporary society and we have argued that social change occurs as a result of the social pressures exerted by the capitalist system upon the wider society. We have seen how in the learning society and the learning organisation this perspective dominates; we have also seen how when we look at learning towns and regions the economic perspective is still a major player but the social as well as the economic elements have a greater part to play, even though the concepts employed are dominated by the same capitalist vocabulary. However, we have until this point not examined the idea of lifelong learning itself and for the remainder of this book we will analyse lifelong learning from a variety of perspectives.

Lifelong learning

Thus far in this study we have shown how learning of all forms is affected by the structures of society, so that a sociology of human learning is not only a possible way of understanding learning, but a significant one. We have also argued that globalisation has exerted pressures on the structures of almost every society for change and one of the directions in which societies are being moved is towards the knowledge economy which, in its turn, is having effects on the educational systems of society and also on the lifestyles of members of the population. The social situation of competition, innovation and rapid change generated by globalisation in a knowledge economy have led to the emergence of lifelong learning. In the last chapter we explored the two meanings of the concept, both private and public, and concluded that there was a sense in which it referred to an interrelationship of personal learning and recurrent education. However, that interrelationship is not as simple as it appears on the surface since, as we pointed out, a result of the lowering of barriers between different sectors of society is that there are now many sites for learning and they intermesh. Learning is not only lifelong, it is life-wide. For heuristic purposes only, we are going to separate lifelong and life-wide into two chapters, dealing with lifelong learning here and life-wide learning in the following chapter. In this chapter we will, first, discuss the idea that lifelong learning has become a new social movement, then we will look at lifelong learning as a commodity; third, we will look at recurrent education and its relationship to practice; fourth, relevant types of personal learning as a response to the social forces of globalisation will be examined; fifth the value of lifelong learning is assessed; finally, lifelong learning has a demographic aspect and so we will look at learning and ageing. In the following chapter we will examine learning in relation to the life-world in which life-wide learning features much more prominently than it does in this chapter.

A new social movement

In our contemporary society people are frequently urged to return to learning, to get qualifications, and so on. It has become a new social movement

aimed at human development and yet some of the institutions which are urging us to return to learning seem to have totally different motives, such as to try to sell their wares. In some ways this relates back to the two definitions that we have already discussed. It is the first way of viewing lifelong learning that lends itself to being regarded as a new social movement while the second approach allows for it to be seen as a marketable commodity trading on the claims of the former approach.

The private, existential definition of lifelong learning is about the process of transforming experience into knowledge and skills, etc. and resulting in a changed person, one who has grown and developed as a result of the learning. In this sense, learning is essential – indeed, like food and water are essential to the growth and development of the body, learning is an essential ingredient to the growth and development of the human person; it is one of the driving forces of human becoming and enriches human living. In this sense, learning assumes value – it is something self-evidently good, something that human beings must engage in if they are going to grow and develop and, as a result, be useful members of society. Learning, then, is a valuable human process and the more that we learn, the richer we will be as human beings, and the recognition of this has led to many campaigns to encourage learning. Although the main motivator of these campaigns has not always only been a concern to enrich the human person so much as to ensure that society's needs are met. Learning is necessary to ensure that individuals are employable, and it was claimed would enable European societies to achieve the Lisbon goals of making Europe a global leader by 2010 – now acknowledged it will not be achieved (Kok 2004). But some who have espoused this more humanistic and individualistic approach to learning have also embedded it in the social context of the knowledge economy, especially those who are responsive to the European Union's aspirations embodied in the Lisbon Declaration. 'Learning pays!' claims Ball (1998: 36–41): here we see a pragmatic and instrumental approach to learning and the learning society – it pays to learn. Ball actually produces no empirical evidence to support his claims, although there is clear evidence to show a correlation between the level of education and the amount of money earned, as we pointed out in the previous chapter (see also McGivney 2006: 40).

This rather evangelistic approach to lifelong learning, echoed by the writings of Longworth and Davies (1996) which reflects more than an academic approach to analysing the process, has become an ideology and a vision for the future. There are a variety of groups in the UK that fervently encourage learning, such as the Royal Society of Arts' project on Learning, the British Institute of Learning, the European Lifelong Learning Institute, and so on, and their existence suggests that lifelong learning has become a new social movement. This is a different approach to that adopted by Crowther (2006) who asks how lifelong learning should be associated with social movements rather than seeing it as a social movement. As we noted in the previous

chapter, the same enthusiasm for lifelong learning occurs in the learning city network which has its own aims, means of action and organisation (Department for Education and Employment 1998). In addition, there are frequent media advertisements to persuade people to return to learning and many slogans like 'Learning is Fun' are publicised. New social movements differ from traditional social movements since they are not class-based interest groups agitating for political change. They tend to be broad movements seeking to change society through the political processes. As we noted in the previous chapter, Abercrombie *et al.* (2000) suggest that new social movements have four main features: aims, social base, means of action and organisation.

Aims

The aims of the lifelong learning movement are to create a culture of learning, or intended learning. Learning per se occurs naturally in the process of living but intended learning is basically vocational, although in learning cities and regions there is a greater emphasis on the non-vocational than there is in learning organisations.

Social base

Unlike traditional social movements, the social base of new social movements is not social class, and in this case it appears to be professional educators, often from an adult education background, who have embraced lifelong learning, and the leadership can stem from one organisation – not necessarily an educational one. For instance, in Hull 'City Vision Ltd is the public/private partnership charged with taking this ambition forward' (DfEE 1998: 15).

Means of action

Those who propagate the ideas of lifelong learning do not need action in the forms of social protest that adult educators were forced to take in the past. Since it has become institutionalised it is easier to lobby those who are influential in the various layers of society, and to spread the 'good news' through international and national conferences, publications and public lectures, and so on. In addition, we find advertising and other ways of spreading its message.

Organisation

Lifelong learning per se has a variety of organisations, as we have already noted and, in addition, there are learning city partnerships of educational

and other service providers, which includes business and industry. These organisations are trying to create a greater awareness of the advantages of learning and to get educational establishments to provide more opportunities for adults to learn, so that the social movement has social aims which, in an interesting manner, actually coincide with those of the educational organisations and the government, but not always for precisely the same reasons. Consequently, one major difference between this new social movement and many other social movements is that it is pushing against an already opened door, whereas most traditional social movements seem to push against closed, and even locked, doors because they oppose the dominant sectors of society, as was the experience of many adult educators until the early 1970s.

However, lifelong learning, as we have pointed out, does not cover all academic disciplines and is not really about human learning, so much as a social institution that has also become a commodity on the learning market.

Lifelong learning as a commodity

As governmental funding for education has increased, even though it by no means covers the cost of the education institution, so it has become important that educational institutions continue to recruit fee-paying students and this has changed the ethos of many of these institutions. They now have to market their courses in order to recruit customers rather than students – an employer can pay for an employee to attend a course and then the employer rather than the student is actually the customer. However, this changing ethos is one that many academics do not like and it has been attacked in many publications: in higher education, for example, we get such titles from the USA as *The Knowledge Factory* (Aronowitz 2000), *Universities in the Market Place* (Bok 2003), *Academic Capitalism* (Slaughter and Leslie 1997); and in adult and continuing education (Tuckett 2005, amongst others). Each of these titles reflects precisely the same thing – universities are being forced to market their courses, through a variety of means, in order to gain financial income. In other words, lifelong learning has become a process of consumption in the learning market.

Once we see lifelong learning as a process of consumption we have to recognise the power of the consumers: they will only purchase what they want or what they need, and the more lifelong learning becomes vocational, the more likely it is that only specific teaching and learning commodities will be purchased. Stehr (1994) makes the point very clearly when he shows that the learning society utilises only scientific knowledge. Therefore we can also say that this approach to lifelong learning is generally not about learning a very broad range of knowledge – it tends to be instrumental and narrow, which is an impression that the concept of lifelong learning does not in any manner convey. Once it is recognised that lifelong learning tends to be about

vocation, then the question must be raised about those who want or need to learn other forms of knowledge that are not emphasised. Government grants to further and higher education ensure that the vocational subjects are supported but the remainder are open to market forces and so there is a decline in non-vocational and leisure time education. In addition, this raises an issue about social inclusion: social inclusion is only about being included in what already exists and about conforming to the dictates of government and, ultimately, to the dominant forces of globalisation.

Significantly, both government and those who espouse lifelong learning as a new social movement want to know who is actually learning and so we get many surveys seeking to show who is enrolling on courses. In the UK, for example, there have been National Learning Surveys (Beinart and Smith 1998; LaValle and Blake 2001) and the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) (Sargant 1991; Sargant *et al.* 1997; Sargant and Aldridge 2002; Aldridge and Tuckett 2004, *inter alia*) has also conducted surveys of the amount of learning undertaken by the population. These surveys provide excellent marketing information for the adherents to the movement but also for the policy makers and those who are marketing learning materials as a commodity, and we will return to these in a later chapter.

Lifelong learning (recurrent education)

The driving force for the introduction of this approach to lifelong learning is that employers demand an educated workforce in order to respond to a market that demands innovation and efficiency. This has resulted in a knowledge economy in which only specific forms of knowledge are being utilised and this, in its turn, has caused changes in the educational curriculum and well as to the system. However, this is a much more complex process of change than a simple direct cause and effect. Clearly, there are the direct forces of globalisation, but universities and colleges are having to enter the learning market and sell their commodities, so that they are also looking for customers. In addition, this has coincided with the professionalisation aspirations of some of the semi-professions, such as nursing, who have sought to gain university recognition for their training courses, so that the semi-professions are a potentially large source of revenue for the universities and the colleges. The growth of the knowledge economy has also assisted them in their quest, and many universities introduced degree courses for some of the semi-professions. Consequently, the first major change that we see is that the higher education system itself has changed, almost beyond recognition; in the UK, the government has set itself a target of getting 50 per cent of school leavers into higher education – a policy of inclusion. Consequently, both the further education and the higher education systems have changed tremendously and the UK has moved closer to the higher education system in the

USA where many of the semi-professions have long had access to the higher education system. It is perhaps significant to note that the knowledge economy demands, even if it does not need, such highly qualified novices when they embark upon their careers. Livingstone (2002), for instance, argues that there is not the employment for such a highly qualified workforce.

As a result of these changes to the higher educational system, at least three things have followed: the functions of higher education have changed; the nature of knowledge underlying university qualifications has changed; there has been a change on the perceived level of teaching. First, it was Lyotard (1984) who recognised that the functions of higher education would be changed as the knowledge economy became more significant and more professions gained access to it. He (1984: 48) wrote:

In the context of delegitimation, universities and institutions of higher learning are called upon to create skills, and no longer ideals – so many doctors, so many teachers in a given discipline, so many engineers, so many administrators, etc. The transmission of knowledge is no longer designed to train an elite capable of guiding the nation towards its emancipation, but to supply the system with players capable of acceptably fulfilling their roles at the pragmatic posts required by its institutions.

But, despite this emphasis, we have not destroyed the need for experts, although we have wrongly downplayed it in recent years. Second, the fact that each of these professional groups being educated in the universities has demanded that part of the curriculum should be practical has meant that practical knowledge has assumed a major place in many courses and that the barriers between universities and the fields of practice have had to be broken down and expert practitioners have played a role in training and assessing for university awards. Coupled with this has been the recognition that the traditional relationship between theory and practice – applying theory to practice – is false in many situations. New advances in learning theory also point us to different relationships between theory and practice, including the recognition that in many instances theory might follow practice (Jarvis 1999). The market demands that new products be produced – it does not demand new theories in the first instance, although in some disciplines this might be the way forward. Third, the increase in the proportion of young people entering further and higher education in order to gain work and, significantly, the increase of those entering who are already working, has resulted in a change in the level of the theoretical knowledge being taught.

Indeed, the increase in the number of young people entering further and higher education has changed dramatically, as Table 7.1 indicates. Not only is the growth tremendous but it is significant that women's opportunities have changed so much during this period. However, while I suggest below that the greater the opportunity, the more chance there is for children from socially

Table 7.1 Young people entering further and higher education, 1970/1 and 2003/4 by sex (000s)

	Male		Female	
	1970/1	2003/4	1970/1	2003/4
Further Education				
Full-time	116	534	95	548
Part-time	891	1,434	630	986
Higher Education (undergraduate)				
Full-time	241	543	173	664
Part-time	127	261	19	445

Source: *Social Trends 2006*: 38.

deprived backgrounds to break into the system, education does still serve as a means of social reproduction.

The socio-economic status of parents can have a significant impact on the GCSE attainments of their children. In England and Wales 76 per cent of pupils whose parents were from higher professional occupations achieved higher grades GCSEs (or the equivalent) in 2004, compared with 33 per cent of those whose parents were in routine operations. Educational attainment of parents can also influence the attainment of their children, 73 per cent of young people who had at least one parent qualified to degree level and 64 per cent who had at least one parent whose highest qualification was a GCE A level achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. This compares with 41 per cent of young people with parents whose higher qualification was below GCE A level.

(*Social Trends 2006*: 41–2)

This is the pattern that sociologists have long reported and that, more recently, has been a constant theme in NIACE's reports (Sargant 1991; Sargant *et al.* 1997; Sargant and Aldridge 2002; Aldridge and Tuckett 2004). As Sargant and Aldridge make the point, it is a 'persistent pattern' and Aldridge and Tuckett call it, 'business as usual'.

The lowering of standards is an almost inevitable result if there has been a widening the entry level, although the above statistics illustrate that to a large extent it is still children from the same type of socio-economic background who have continued their education beyond compulsory school age. However, the lowering of standards might be found not so much in entry level since there was a vast increase in professional and technological employment in the 1960s to 1980s. By 2005, approximately 35 per cent of both males and

females were classified as managerial and professional, and a further 5 per cent of males and 15 per cent females as intermediate and approximately a further 10 per cent of males and 5 per cent of females were self-employed (*Social Trends 2006*: 15)¹ which means that a greater proportion of young people have parents from these occupational categories and are, therefore, more likely to succeed at school. Consequently, the lowering of standards might be found at university level since 58.6 per cent of all students gaining a non-clinical degree in 2003/4 were first class or upper second class honours (McGivney 2006: 87), which is far higher than it has been in the past. Despite government denials, and those of university spokespeople, many academics have claimed that there has been a lowering in the standards of university education and the fact that such a high proportion of students achieve what used to be regarded as a 'good' degree gives credence to this claim.

However, the culture of the era is one in which elitism is apparently frowned upon, so that this cultural change also supports the movement to widen university entrance and to award more good degrees. Nevertheless, as Furedi (2004: 148) writes:

It is difficult to take the wealthy and cultural mandarins seriously when they argue the case for eliminating elitist privilege and extending the agenda for inclusion. Some commentators take the view that the elites do not really mean what they say in relation to culture and education.

He goes on:

Through a variety of devices – lifelong learning, certificates of competence, training and development – people's intellectual and cultural life becomes subject to institutional expectations. These trends stimulate the mood for conformity and passivity.

The imperative of social engineering leads to the colonization of people's informal lives. The accreditation of prior learning is presented as an acknowledgement of the important learning experiences which people have acquired through their encounters in their experiences in their communities and at work. And many people are delighted that their lives are taken seriously by educators.

(Furedi 2004: 154)

The danger of this process as Furedi recognises is that education accredits daily life and this becomes a mechanism of control. However, it is not only accreditation of prior learning but on-the-job training which can lead to qualifications through both part-time attendance of colleges and personal learning. It is, perhaps, at this point that an opportunity for those from underprivileged backgrounds to break into the educational system occurs.

Certainly the level of theory taught during many university courses might have changed and the lessening of the emphasis on theory might well give an impression that standards are lowering – they are certainly different. But much of the lowering of standards may merely reflect the fact that the more practical professions do not emphasise literary abilities in the same way as do the more traditional university courses. Indeed, the culture of equality which prevails at the moment, with its emphasis on competence rather than expertise, does raise questions about the nature of society. Among the factors that Furedi neglects is the fact that lifelong learning occurs in different sites and that there are times when learning in non-formal situations contributes to the understanding of the subject being studied in university. Consequently, there is a place for the accreditation of experiential learning and, therefore, the construction of portfolios illustrating and documenting the learning that has occurred. However, it must be pointed out that there is a singular danger that the accreditation of prior experiential learning might be seen as a sales promotion, a discount in the educational marketplace, offered to attract more customers to the educational supplier.

However, this is also only half the story in another way since entry to undergraduate courses is not the end of the lifelong learning process – even within the institutional framework. There has also been a massive increase in continuing professional development through the higher degree system (see Table 7.2). Over this same period we have seen a mushrooming of higher degree courses being offered. The same picture emerges here as we noted in Table 7.1. However, the major changes in postgraduate work have been the diversity of qualification and the amount of that work which is taught, as opposed to pure research. McGivney (2006: 88) notes that in 2002/3:

- 31.7 per cent were undertaking a taught higher degree;
- 22.3 per cent were undertaking a postgraduate diploma or certificate;
- 15.4 per cent were undertaking a professional qualification;
- 8.4 per cent were undertaking a higher degree by research.

At both Masters and doctoral level, there are now taught and research degrees offered and ones which are a combination of both. As the volume of

Table 7.2 Numbers in postgraduate education, 1970/1 and 2003/4 by sex (000s)

	Male		Female	
	1970/1	2003/4	1970/1	2003/4
Full-time	33	110	10	111
Part-time	15	138	3	170

Source: *Social Trends 2006: 38*.

knowledge increases and more specialisms emerge, so the need to teach as opposed to research beyond the first degree level grows and it is in Masters and professional doctorate postgraduate degree courses that the teaching element has increased. Indeed, a taught Masters degree is almost the entry level, or at least the career grade, for some high-status professions in contemporary society. A great deal of the research is also undertaken in the workplace and there has been a considerable interplay between theory and practice and also between the university and the workplace. Work-based learning is, therefore, an important element in lifelong learning and practical knowledge is a more holistic way of understanding knowledge. Aristotle recognised this:

The cause is that such wisdom is concerned not only with universals but with particulars, which become familiar with experience, but a young man has no experience, for it is length of time that gives experience: indeed, one might ask the question too, why a boy becomes a mathematician, but not a philosopher or a physicist. It is because the objects of mathematics exist by abstraction, while the first principles of these other subjects come from experience.

(Aristotle 1925: 148)

Of course, Aristotle was writing about wisdom, a word that has fallen into some disuse in recent times, as we prefer to talk about knowledge and competence. Perhaps we need to rediscover not only practical knowledge but practical wisdom. Nevertheless, it is in practice that the experience of the practitioner comes to the fore; with it, therefore, must come the learning that has occurred in the practice situation. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that in contemporary society, higher degrees should assume a more practical orientation. Practitioner doctorates are an almost inevitable outcome of this process, especially when the academic qualification is one of the symbols of lifelong learning that is acceptable in the employment market.

Similarly, with an increasing emphasis on practitioners, it is hardly surprising that universities have to change their methods of delivery and also provide opportunities for students to study on a part-time basis. This has also entailed them changing the whole structure of courses; modularisation, for instance, has facilitated both the delivery of courses by distance and part-time face-to-face study. In addition, modular structures are useful since universities can market certain elements of relevant, especially work-based courses rather than the whole degree and give credit for it.

However, as education has been forced to become more practical and expand its brief beyond the realms of theory, the traditional tripartite role of the academic – teaching, research and service (or in some situations, teaching, research and administer) – has changed almost beyond recognition, as we will see in Chapter 8. These changes are also the result of the need for some to

undertake their education at a distance; traditional distance or electronic means of delivery has meant that the role of the teacher has expanded. Significantly, the role of the practitioner/manager has also changed. On the one side, we get teacher practitioners (Jarvis and Gibson 1997) and, on the other, practitioners and managers who become fieldwork teachers, coaches, mentors and assessors (Schön 1987, *inter alia*).

Consequently, we can see that the recurrent aspect of lifelong learning has grown tremendously over this period – indeed, the change has occurred much more rapidly since 1990/1. The number of students in both further and higher education in England and Wales more than doubled between then and 2003/4: there were 2.234 million in 1990/1 and 4.850 million in 2003/4 in further education and 1.175 million in 1990/1 and 2.246 million in 2003/2004 in higher education (*Social Trends 2006*: 38). While we know the number of enrolments in formal education, we know far less about those forms of learning that occur throughout life but which do not entail enrolling in educational courses.

The value of lifelong learning

Learning is a driving force in human living, it is one of the major means by which we become ourselves, it is a stimulus enriching our lives and making us truly human. In this sense lifelong learning is good. It is impossible to conceptualise a human being who does not learn. Hence both theorists of learning and those who espouse the social movement encouraging learning have a very moral foundation to their beliefs and practices. Learning is self-evidently good.

This self-evident goodness of learning has also permeated the recurrent education aspects of lifelong learning, often without a great deal of reformulation, so that the second approach to lifelong learning ‘trades’ on the value intrinsic to the first approach. Nevertheless, this self-evident goodness in learning is less evident in self-directed learning; there are at least two ways in which we might illustrate this: the first is the market and the second is seeing lifelong learning as a means of control. First, the learning market is not driven by concern for the learner but concern for the provider and even the provider’s profit and its own and shareholders’ interests. This is the nature of the market system but profit is not a self-evidently good concept since its flip side is that it is taking from the consumers more than the cost of manufacturing and marketing the product which might be viewed as a form of exploitation. Increasingly, however, we are finding profit and loss accounts of educational providers being presented to governors’ meetings and university courts, although not to the general public, in the way that public corporations have to declare their financial returns publicly.² Second, employers are in a position to expect their employees to learn and to keep abreast with changes as work becomes increasingly knowledge-based and employment-based on

the level of educational achievement. In other words, it has become an instrument of control that employers can exert, and so, in Illich and Verne’s (1976) words, employees can become ‘imprisoned in a global classroom’; employees are expected to attend continuing education courses, often, at their own expense and at times which are detrimental to other aspects of their and their family’s lives. For instance, in the research of Hewison and her colleagues (2000: 186), they record that:

Less than half the sample (42 per cent) said that they thought the course was fitting reasonably well with home and family life. Forty-eight percent (n=43) thought that the course was a strain and 10 per cent of the participants (n=9) thought that the course was causing serious detrimental effect to their home and personal lives.

They go on to state:

The rhetoric of the *learning society* is upbeat and positive. It is about ‘opportunities’ and the benefits that learning can bring. Lifelong learning promises that there will be many such opportunities, following one after another, throughout an individual’s career.

To many of the participants in our study, such a prospect would be a threat not a promise. It is not that they lacked the motivation to learn, but rather that learning opportunities were often offered on very disadvantageous terms.

(Hewison *et al.* 2000: 186, italics in original)

Since Hewison’s sample consists of health service employees, many were probably women and this might suggest that in this still male-dominated world, even lifelong learning is not always attractive to everybody and that an element of this value orientation may be male-dominated, which calls for a feminist perspective on lifelong learning to be undertaken. There is clearly an element of social control in the way that lifelong learning opportunities are presented in some work situations and so it can be argued that lifelong learning is no longer self-evidently good. The value of the phenomenon depends on what aspects of lifelong learning are being analysed and the perspective that is being adopted in the analysis. Indeed, the crude claim that ‘learning pays’ does not do justice to the fact that learning is also costly – not only economically but also socially and personally.

Nevertheless, there remains a market value of lifelong learning and this can be seen in three ways. First, we see it in the fact that there is, amongst other things, an economic return on lifelong learning as McGivney (2006) showed and which was mentioned above. Second, there is an educational value given to personal learning through the accreditation of experiential and prior experiential learning. Third, the accreditation is itself proof that a

person has undertaken a course of study or is capable of performing the types of role that are specified in the qualification which, therefore, becomes currency in the labour market. There is, however, one other aspect of accreditation: each qualification is not only currency in the labour market, it is a way by which employers can continue their surveillance and control of employees by requiring it and even rewarding those who continue their studies and are able to report that they have gained another award.

For a wide variety of reasons, such as student mobility in the liquid society, the increasing complexity of society and its knowledge and skills base, the development of education and learning as a commodity on the learning market and the recognition that learning is personal and experiential has meant that the traditional method of attending formal education and sitting examinations to gain an educational qualification has become outmoded. While this traditional approach has still been suitable for full-time students, especially in modularised courses, it was less suitable for students involved in lifelong learning and recurrent education. Recognition had to be given to personal learning outside of the formal education system and so the accreditation of experiential learning (APEL) developed. Significantly, many of the APEL schemes are based upon Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle (Baile and O'Hagan 2000).

In addition, as the idea of competence rather than just knowledge became a basis for qualifications, it became more necessary to recognise the experiential learning that occurred during the practical element, so it became accredited. As accreditation of non-formal education within professional education and training courses began to emerge, education itself was being changed during the latter half of the twentieth century. Clearly, both modularisation and accreditation of experiential learning were beneficial to educational organisations as it enabled them to extend the scope of their clientele and to lifelong learners

Lifelong learning and the life cycle

Throughout recorded history society has changed very slowly until recent times, more slowly than human beings matured so that as individuals aged and moved from one period of their lives to another society had to recognise this in the form of *rites de passage* (van Gennep 1960 [1908]). As individuals grew from children to adults, and so on, they had to learn new roles relating to their newly acquired status and so initiation rituals served as periods of learning (see Chapter 2). There have been several well-known life cycles constructed by scholars, such as Erikson (1963), Levinson *et al.* (1978), Levinson and Levinson (1996). They have constituted an area of study in traditional adult education courses and it would still be true to say that age is a factor in the way we learn. As the West has become an ageing society educational gerontology is becoming a more significant field of study.

However, over the last century or two the pace of change has speeded up and change has become a constant feature of this book. Indeed, we have seen that it has almost become synonymous with learning and many of the rituals of status change have almost disappeared or, at least, assumed less social significance. This is not to deny that some status change rituals still retain a great deal of significance for family and friends, because they are the ones who are immediately affected by the changes. Moreover, the formalised learning attached to these rituals has also become less significant and individuals, if they want to learn more about the new roles and statuses into which they enter, are being left with the responsibility for finding out about them for themselves, although in the work organisation a mentor is sometimes appointed to assist the new employee, or new status holder, to learn their role. Consequently, there is a great emphasis placed on non-formal and informal learning in rapidly changing society, some of which has to be recognised more widely in society.

As we have already argued in this book, the idea of lifelong learning has really reflected society's concern for adult learning, especially working adults, so that lifelong learning has effectively not covered the life cycle at all. Consequently, a whole area of lifelong learning has been emerging in Western society and with it a new educational study – older adults learning and educational gerontology.

Learning and demography

The Western world is, by and large, an ageing world. In the UK in 2004, for instance, 9.6 million people, or 16.05 per cent of the population are over the age of 65 years, which is the statutory age of retirement for men at the present time – the third age; in the USA it is about 13 per cent. However, 4.58 million or 7.7 per cent of the population are 75 years and older, which may be termed the fourth age, although another way of looking at this definition is when the older person ceases to be independent (statistics from *Social Trends 2006*). This picture of an ageing population is true for the whole of the European Union (*Social Trends 2006*: 12). Significantly, there are few institutionalised learning opportunities for older adults apart from the traditional liberal adult education. McGivney (2006: 64) notes that in 1996 there were 2 per cent of the 65–74 years age group and none above this age in full-time education, but by 2005 there were 0 per cent of both age groups in full-time education. However, *Social Trends 2006* (p. 39) reports that there were 7 per cent of the population above 50 years but below 60 years (women) and 65 (men) who were studying for a qualification.³

These statistics can be interpreted in at least two different ways: that older people lose the incentive to carry on studying or that employers no longer give older workers the same opportunities for further training that they give younger ones, and in these instances ageism at work becomes

an issue – one that will increase in the coming years as the age of retirement is increased.

However, as funding is increasingly directed to young adults and vocational education, we have seen a loss of 1.5 million adult learning places (Tuckett 2005) in liberal adult education and so incidentally the elderly are institutionally discriminated against by government policy. Yet there is an increasing number of active elderly people, many of whom want to continue to learn and one of the institutions that has encouraged this is the University of the Third Age (U3A). Started in Toulouse in 1972 by Pierre Vellas, the universities of the third age have spread rapidly throughout the world. Indeed, there were – at the time of writing – 571 universities of the third age in the UK (*U3A News* 2005/6: 8) and some are growing so fast that they are doubling their membership in a single year. When *Learning in Later Life* in 2001 was written, there were only just over 400 (Jarvis 2001b) in the UK. Naturally, older people do not always want to learn vocational subjects and so, as we witness the decline of liberal adult education within the institutional adult education framework, we might see a new and vibrant basis for human studies in later life. Among the most popular subjects are computer studies, music, social sciences, drama and play reading, history, arts and crafts and other leisure time activities, such as educational visits and walking.

Similar organisations began in 1962 in the USA. The Institute for Retired Professionals was founded in New York at that time, thereafter there was a growth of Elderhostel and then the Institutes for Learning in Retirement came into being, which are now called Lifelong Learning Institutes. Perhaps the rapid growth in these organisations throughout the Western world also reflects the fact that as more people are required to work with knowledge, the more they want to continue to learn as they age, which may be one of the unintended benefits of the knowledge economy. Certainly from my own experience people joining the universities of the third age do have a relatively high level of education.

Chene (1994) showed that community-based learning groups fulfil a number of functions other than learning, all of which are true to my own experience of working with this age group: they enable new friendships to be created; generate mutual aid; allow for the sharing of experiences; generate a family spirit; provide a sense of belonging. Clearly, we see that the incidental learning is as significant as the intended learning for those older people who join in these activities. Amongst the other functions of such activities is the retention of mental fitness: Cussack and Thompson (1998) reported on a project initiated in one older people's centre in Vancouver which consisted of a six-week needs assessment programme and an eight-week programme of workshops, etc. These workshops were all about mental activity and the outcome was that the participants increased in their measured scores for creativity, optimism, openness to new ideas, willingness to take risks, mental flexibility, willingness to speak their minds, ability to learn new

things, memory and confidence that they could remember. Other research has demonstrated similar findings, so that we can see that there are hidden benefits of learning in later life and yet we find that nearly all of these activities are organised by non-governmental organisations rather than the State.

Conclusion

Traditionally, it was argued that education should always provide a balanced curriculum, although as lifelong learning grows in popularity, it might be argued that vocational learning will occupy certain periods in the lifespan and learning in the humanity occupy others. For those knowledge workers, used to learning in the workplace, learning is but an extension of work, but on retirement they might feel the need to continue learning and begin to study non-vocational topics. The breadth of the curriculum might be lifespan and not necessarily life-wide; it is to this topic that we now turn.

Life-wide learning

We all live in our own worlds – our life-world – which Schutz and Luckmann (1974: 21) define as ‘that reality the wide-awake, normal, mature person finds given straightforwardly in the natural attitude’. Fundamentally, it is the sense of feeling at home in the world, when our internal sense of reality is in harmony with our perception of the external reality at any given moment in time. Living in harmony, we relate to people in our immediate environment with the assumption that their perceptions of reality are the same as ours: this enables interaction and common speech patterns in such a way as to generate a sense of inter-subjectivity – it is something that we share as a result of our primary socialisation. Our secondary socialisation, however, is the process of becoming members of different groupings that are part of our life-world. Fundamentally there is a shared culture between those with whom interaction occurs in the immediate life-world. It is such that we can take the world for granted and we can do so as a result of our previous learning and memorisation of past events which we have internalised.

Each step of my explication and understanding of the world is based at any given time on a stock of previous experience, my own immediate experiences as well as such experiences as are transmitted to me from my fellow-men and above all from my parents, teachers, and so on.

(Schutz and Luckmann 1974: 7)

What Schutz and Luckmann fail to say in the above quotation is that it is not just the past experiences but what we learn from them and so it might be more accurate to say not ‘stock of previous knowledge’ but ‘previous learning’, so that this includes skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, and so on. Because we can make these assumptions we can act in an almost unthinking manner and, in a sense, we can presume upon our world and we do not need to learn from it. There is a sense, therefore, in that our everyday life is premised upon the fact that reality is static and unchanging and that, therefore, both we and those with whom we interact within our life-world can continue to act in the same way as we have in the past without having to learn anything new. In this

sense, continuity is the order of the day, but one of the features of this new global world is of rapid social change – the forces from the substructure of society and from governments introducing new policies, laws, procedures, and so on – and so, in another sense, discontinuity is also a daily situation. Consequently, trying to keep abreast with the social discontinuities created by the advanced capitalist global core means that we can no longer assume that this reality will continue to be unchanging. The fact that individuals are more globally mobile also means that their life-worlds are subject to massive and continuing changes – discontinuities that create a sense of disjuncture between people’s internalised perception of reality and their present experience of it. Such a sense of disjuncture is not just something one individual experiences – it is something that everybody experiences, so that it is not just forces from outside the life-world, as it were, forcing change, it is also immediate pressures resulting in interaction between close associates sometimes demanding renegotiation of meanings and practices, and so on. These are what Habermas (1987: 125) refers to as ‘problematic situations’ since new definitions are required. Consequently, disjuncture is frequent but intermittent during the course of daily living – this is the individual experience – discontinuity is the social situation that causes it.

Disjuncture, the sense of not feeling at home in the world, occurs in a wide variety of ways at one time or another – individuals do not understand, do not know how to behave, cannot understand other’s attitudes, beliefs, values, and so on. But it also occurs at different levels of intensity and difficulty, which may be seen on a continuum from a sense of feeling at home at one end to feeling isolated, alienated and anomic at the other. It will be recalled from earlier in this volume (Chapter 1), and in the first volume of this series, that disjuncture is a necessary condition for learning to occur, so that there is a relationship between the type of disjuncture and the learning demanded in order to recreate the conditions of harmony; Table 8.1 shows how this may be depicted.

There are many reasons why people do not respond, such as not having sufficient time, interest, motivation, and so on. Elsewhere I have recognised

Table 8.1 The continuum of disjuncture

	Type of disjuncture				
	Harmony (no disjuncture)	Slight disjuncture	Disjuncture	Major disjuncture	Strangerhood (total disjuncture)
Level of learning required to re-establish harmony	Non-learning	Minor adjustments (incidental learning)	New learning (some will not respond)	New learning effort/motivation necessary (many might not respond)	Almost impossible to bridge the gap in short time Alienation Anomie

that non-consideration and rejection are forms of non-learning (Jarvis 1987, 1992, 2006, *inter alia*). In the same way, migrants might be regarded as strangers but also, for instance, a person without advanced scientific or technological knowledge entering a scientific research laboratory would be a stranger in the situation. Consequently, the continuing failure to learn and accept the language and sub-culture of the group, either through non-learning or through not accepting aspects of that sub-culture, might also result in experiencing a sense of strangerhood that might result in individuals leaving the group.

When we are in a state of non-learning, presuming upon the world, time passes in an almost undefined manner, which Bergson (1999 [1965]) called *durée*. But when disjuncture occurs, then we become conscious of time – we are in a situation in which we may have an episodic experience, and it is from this that learning might occur, or the motivation to learn something new in the future might arise.

Individual learning in everyday life

As a result of globalisation and rapid social change, individuals have to keep on learning to feel at home in the world and this occurs in every aspect of daily living. Apart from the formal learning discussed above, therefore, there is also incidental and self-directed learning.

Incidental learning

Much of our daily life functions on the assumption that society does not change and so we can behave in the same way as we have done previously in similar situations. However, in the globalising world society is changing much more rapidly as, indeed, is the world of work. It is not unfamiliar to hear people say, 'I don't know what this world is coming to these days' and even to hear people at work say 'The place is not what it used to be'. This may reflect the idea that some people no longer wish to keep on learning but for others it suggests that they have to respond to the changes in an unplanned manner and that they maybe are finding it difficult. In contrast, in my own research into human learning, I have frequently asked people to describe a learning incident in their lives and my respondents have often had great difficulty in isolating learning, which suggests that incidental learning may be very frequent and often unacknowledged, even unnoticed.

Incidental learning has assumed a more significant place in our understanding of learning since a greater recognition has been given to experiential learning. This has been enhanced by the fact that much learning in the workplace is incidental (Marsick and Watkins 1990) and occurs because of the context. In fact Marsick and Watkins (1990: 16) believe 'that the context is more important to learning from experience when the nature of the task is

interpersonal or social in nature' although they are careful to differentiate it from informal learning. In this sense, it is 'a by-product of some other activity' (p. 127). While this might be true when examining incidental learning in the workplace, it is less likely to be the case when it occurs in non-work situations. The fact that it has assumed a more prominent place in research into learning is clearly because of the rapidity of social change.

Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning is certainly no new phenomenon, even though adult educators were quite surprised to discover how prevalent it was when they began to study it (Johnstone and Rivera 1965; Tough 1979), despite the status of Samuel Smiles's famous book on *Self Help* (1859). Tough discovered that the majority of his respondents were involved in projects – a project was a minimum of seven hours spent in the previous six months. Only 1 per cent of his respondents sought credit from their learning. Candy (1991) rightly regards self-direction as a method of learning in which the learner is in control and he (pp. 32–46) suggests that there are six reasons for the rise in interest in self-directed learning:

- the democratic ideal;
- ideology of individualism;
- egalitarianism;
- subjective or relativist epistemology;
- humanistic education;
- the construct of adulthood and adult education's search for identity.

It is significant that both Tough and Candy were writing at a time before learning in the workplace became popular and none of their reasons are work-based. But in the UK *National Adult Learning Survey* of 1997, Beinart and Smith (1998: 79) used the concept of non-taught learning and they suggested that there are four types, all of which are much more work-oriented:

- studying for qualifications without enrolling on a course;
- supervised training in the workplace;
- time spent keeping up to date about work by reading or attending seminars;
- trying to improve knowledge and skill without taking part in a taught course.

Of their respondents, 57 per cent claimed to have participated in non-taught learning in the three years prior to the survey and 41 per cent said that they had been involved in both taught and untaught learning. By the 2001 national

survey (LaValle and Blake 2001), non-taught learning had become self-directed learning and 60 per cent of the respondents had claimed to have undertaken it in the previous three years. Once again the emphasis is on work-based learning apart from the older respondents, although there is a category of other forms of self-direction in their report.

While self-directed learning is not a new phenomenon, its orientation to work and the fact that it is included in surveys on adult learning are both indicative of the effects of advanced capitalism on society. The extent to which this is the main driving force for self-directed learning is harder to determine, although most respondents (82 per cent) were undertaking their learning in order to improve their knowledge or skills. Significantly, this is one of the implications of the change in terminology from lifelong education to lifelong learning: education is a social institution provided by others, such as the State or the workplace, but learning is individual and so it is the individual learners' responsibility to direct their own learning.

However, our life-world is more than just ourselves and our own individuality; we live and work in families, communities and organisations and so our learning has a social dimension.

Learning in communities of practice

We are all born into families and learn the sub-culture of our immediate environment through interaction with significant and generalised others and, increasingly, through the media and our early years at school. While this is clearly an aspect of lifelong learning, it is one that I do not wish to explore here since we would be looking at the intricacies of primary socialisation, family life and early schooling. For the sake of this study I want to take childhood development as a given and I want to focus on secondary socialisation and learning in adulthood generally.

Most of us live our lives in communities which form part of our life-world. Each community has its own norms, values and language. We are members of families, schools, colleges, universities, clubs, leisure organisations, churches and work communities. During the process of social living, we might join some of these organisations and learn to become members, and as members we might continue to learn in order to remain an active participant in the organisation or, eventually, we may have to, or decide to, leave the organisation and move on. All three processes involve learning and, as yet, only the first two have actually been studied in any depth from a learning perspective (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) and we will examine briefly both of these studies in order to highlight the sociological issues that they raise.

In both of these studies we are introduced to the term 'community of practice' which Wenger (1998: 45) regards as 'the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise'. While Wenger's own research was conducted in a

work-based situation neither he nor Lave restrict the use of the term to work-based organisations. We will discuss these in the next section. Basically, the Lave and Wenger (1991) study is about the process of learning during socialisation and so we will first of all focus upon this and we will show how their understanding of learning is both behaviouristic and functionalistic, and that the process which they examine assumes only certain forms of learning. In addition, we will argue that any sociological approach to learning must be consistent with sociological theory itself.

Lave and Wenger (1991) trace the way in which individuals become members of one of five different groups: four occupations – midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers; one NGO – Alcoholics Anonymous. They (p. 54) claim that there is an absence of theorising about the social world in terms of learning, which is rather sweeping since there had been a great deal of research in both Europe and America that pointed in this direction – from studies of the life-world (Schutz and Luckmann 1974), studies of work (Argyris and Schön 1974, 1978; Schön 1983, 1987) and sociology of learning (Jarvis 1987). Nevertheless, they insightfully trace the learning trajectory of someone moving from the periphery of an organisation centrifugally, although they do not look at any people who are not successfully socialised and seek to understand their learning even though they make reference to such persons (p. 36). They view legitimate peripheral participation as 'a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice' (p. 29) and, while they are conscious of the idea of negotiation here, they do not look at disagreement between the two nor the power inherent in the position of the old-timer.

They are rightly concerned about the whole person and about the way that the learner relates to others within the organisation and how the organisation maintains its own culture and transmits it through learning in different situations within the organisation – hence their study raises important points about the way that we learn in organisations. They (1991: 34) see situated learning as:

a transitory concept, a bridge, between a view according to which cognitive processes (and thus learning) are primary and a view according to which social practice is primary, generative phenomenon, and learning is one of its characteristics.

They (p. 35) go on to claim that 'learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world'. This is a clear statement of lifelong learning within this specific context and one with which it would be difficult to disagree, although their understanding of learning is restricted. They (p. 53), for instance, point out that as 'an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person' and they conclude that learning implies that

learners become different persons (p. 53), but nowhere do they discuss the concept of the person nor discuss how the whole person is affected by the learning, and neither do they include in their own definition of learning anything other than action and knowledge. Indeed, they define learning as 'a dimension of social practice' (p. 47). This, then, is a behaviouristic definition of learning, which is a restricted understanding of human learning (see Jarvis 2006). They go on to narrow their approach even further:

The practice of the community creates the potential 'curriculum' in the broadest sense, that which may be learned by newcomers with legitimate peripheral access. Learning activity seems to have a characteristic pattern. There are strong goals for learning because learners, as peripheral participants, can develop a view of what the whole enterprise is about, and what there is to be learned. Learning itself is an improvised practice. (Lave and Wenger 1991: 92–3)

The socialisation process as they describe it is rather as if the sub-culture of the organisation, internalised by old-timers, is static and that in passing from periphery to centre newcomers pass through a static sub-culture which they internalise. However, since the communities of practice which they describe are themselves recipients of the social forces exerted by globalisation and advanced capitalism, there is not a static sub-culture and even the old-timers are forced to learn new things. This sense of change and the way that the old-timers negotiate global change and the potential of conflict between the old-timers are not discussed. Lave and Wenger could claim that for the purposes of their study they placed parameters around the communities of practice but this artificialises the process that they researched.

Fundamentally, this is an insightful study of successful socialisation processes in which behaviouristic learning and a functionalistic approach to organisations are utilised. It is concerned to show how this learning process contributes to the maintenance of the organisation as a whole, but it does not discuss conflict, change or individual meaning and motivation. Neither does it account for the type of learning that leads some people not to join an organisation or others to leave it – but these are also lifelong learning in the community. Indeed, their conception of learning, limited as it is to behaviour and meaning is very restricted. Herein lie some of its weaknesses. We can also see here the fundamental relationship between behaviouristic approaches to learning and functionalistic interpretations of society or social groups – both of which have severe limitations. This is a point to which we have already referred in Chapters 1 and 6, and one to which we will return below.

Nevertheless, this study laid the foundations for Wenger's (1998) excellent study of *Communities of Practice*. Wenger's approach overcame many of the problems that were raised in the previous paragraphs, but not all of them. He

used a similar approach to the previous book, but this time he used just two case studies rather than five short vignettes and these are based on a claims processing office. He focused upon one person, Ariel, in the first study and one procedure taught in a training class in the second. At the heart of this study is a social theory of learning in which he (1998: 3–17) suggests that in order to devise such a theory it is necessary to look at eight different sets of theory:

- social structure
- power
- identity
- subjectivity
- situated experience
- meaning
- practice
- collectivity.

Wenger illustrates how the office functions, how newcomers enter it and acquire its culture and how they respond to the pressures generated by the changes introduced from above. In this sense, this is a significant study of the way that the office functions. However, he (1998: 14) makes a most important point in understanding his work when he suggests that while the social structure-situated experience axis is an important backdrop of his work he neither concentrates on 'structure in the abstract or the minute choreography of interactions'. While this makes his study manageable, it does raise some questions about learning as specific processes that occur in situated experience. Indeed, he suggests that situated experience is one of the contributory factors to learning in the same way as is the social structure and power, and so on, whereas I would argue that social structure, power and the practice itself are contributory factors of experience which is the start of the learning process. This is because I see experience as the start of the learning process and that the process happens within the person, who is in a social situation. Wenger (1998: 89) would certainly accept that the person is changed as a result of learning but he (p. 86) defines learning as a characteristic of practice. In this sense Wenger has a behaviourist approach to learning and for him it is something that happens as a result of acting in social situations rather than as a result of living itself, and while in many situations they occur simultaneously they are not actually precisely the same phenomenon: I cannot act without being alive but I can be alive and conscious without practising. However, Wenger's work is so insightful because we all live in a number of different communities of practice during the process of daily living; for instance, I am a member of my work organisation, of leisure organisations, of family, and so on. In all of these his approach appears to be perfectly valid but if I undertake self-directed learning to suit my own

interests when I am alone then I learn because I am consciously aware not because I am doing anything. Similarly, isolates learn, partly they learn that they are excluded but they also learn about themselves and about their life-world.

Wenger would claim, I think, that his is an organisational theory of learning but, like other organisational theories, as we pointed out earlier (see also Jarvis 2006), it neglects the person of the learner. Indeed, he has an over-socialised conception of the person (Wrong 1963) – one of the major criticisms of certain forms of functionalist and structuralist theory. From the position adopted here, it is the experience that we have in a social context that is the basis of learning and of the ensuing actions, and the insightful research that Wenger has undertaken here point to an enriched understanding about experiencing social situations from which we learn. Nevertheless, from a management perspective, neither individual persons nor their learning processes might be as significant as the smooth and efficient functioning of the organisation itself, so that Wenger's excellent study has been widely acclaimed in management circles. It certainly raises important issues for a sociological approach to learning.

The alternative to this critique would, I think, be that we would need to redefine learning and move away from the person of the learner to activities or organisational procedures in which the learning occurs – but then we are actually discussing totally different phenomena and if we adopted such an approach to learning we would still be faced with the individual process that we have defined as learning. Consequently, the philosophical-psychological approach adopted in the first volume of the study (Jarvis 2006) still appears to be fundamental to human learning, but we do need to expand our understanding of human experience in the social context so that we can have an even richer understanding of human learning.

The experiences we have will affect not only our learning but perhaps also the way that we learn. For instance, in an authoritarian regime I might learn to learn non-reflectively but in an open and democratic regime I might learn to learn in a critical, creative and reflective manner – this might well depend upon the experience we have, our will power and the biography (how we have been moulded by previous learning) that we bring to the situation. These factors contribute to the experience that we subsequently have and from which we learn. Lippitt and White's (1958) well-known study of different leadership styles producing different behavioural outcomes points the way in this respect.

It is also necessary to study the way that we learn when we leave a community of practice but I do not know of any studies that examine this process apart from those in primitive societies studied by anthropologists as referred to earlier in this volume – see Turner (1969) but it does seem important to look at reference group theory and revisiting the idea of the influence of significant others on our learning. During our lifetime we all go

though the process of joining and leaving organisations, as well as being members of them, so that our life-wide learning does need research.

Learning in the workplace

The workplace is one of the communities of practice, perhaps the most significant in many people's lives, so that it is not surprising that Wenger's (1998) study has become such a popular piece of work. Indeed, when we return to our understanding of globalisation, it is hardly surprising that the workplace features so prominently in contemporary studies of learning, nor is it surprising that employability features most prominently in the European Union policy statements about lifelong learning. More significantly, it is a world within which knowledge is not only changing rapidly, it is the world in which most new knowledge is being produced through research – much of which is conducted in the workplace. We will recall Stehr's (1994) point that the knowledge society only employs certain forms of knowledge and they are the ones that change the most rapidly. In addition, Lyotard (1984) argued performative knowledge – pragmatic knowledge – will be legitimated in this current age – one of advanced capitalism and globalisation. Capitalism is after all an instrumental phenomenon. Consequently, it is not the learning process in the workplace that is important but the learning outcomes. Forms of behaviouristic learning theory dominate, despite their weaknesses (Jarvis 2006), and the accredited learning becomes the currency in the job market. Learning opportunities are commodities to be sold and educational organisations are being forced to adapt to a global capitalist learning market.

Indeed, the first studies of learning in the workplace only really emerged in the same period that we have been tracing the effects of globalisation and most of them came from the USA (e.g. Argyris and Schön 1974, 1978; Schön 1983; Casner-Lotto *et al.* 1988; Willis and Dubin 1990) and an American who published in the UK (Marsick 1987). America has traditionally emphasised pragmatism much more than Western Europe and with it has been a focus on practical knowledge. These ideas have spread from the USA. Indeed, globalisation has spread out from the centre – rather like the ripples of water that occur when a stone is thrown into a pond. The nodal point of globalisation has been the USA, so that the process has been referred to as Americanisation. However, Western Europe became a subsidiary nodal point (Westernisation) and, perhaps, South-east Asia has become a third. Almost certainly South-east Asia is now the most rapidly developing one, with parts of India also changing nearly as rapidly.

In the USA, there was little distinction drawn between workplace learning and other forms of adult education, but in the UK, there was a much more strict separation between education and training, as the work of R. S. Peters (1967: 14–16), amongst others, illustrates. Education was considered to be much more theoretical while training was practical and skills-based, although

this distinction was queried by a number of other philosophers. Consequently, adult education was seen as a continuation of the school-based education about which Peters wrote. Training was rather regarded as being of lower status than education and it was only in the latter part of the twentieth century that considerable effort was placed upon equating the two, reflecting the emphasis on practical knowledge and pragmatism. Taylor (1980: 338), for instance, equated personal growth and professional development and even then prime minister, John Major, frequently reiterated the belief that there was no difference between education and training. Gradually, the distinction was blurred, aided by the fact that the knowledge economy demanded a much more practical orientation to professional development. Consequently, lifelong education had to become lifelong learning in order, amongst other things, to hide the perceived difference between education and training. This was the point at which vocational education colonised liberal adult education conceptually and the distinction that I have drawn between the two ways of viewing lifelong learning reflects this process: we also traced the merging of the two concepts earlier in this study.

Paradoxically, in more recent years it was scholars in America that led a new division in adult education – now not education and training but adult education and human resource development. This is not a knowledge and skills division but it is one which focuses on the purposes of learning and reflects the advanced capitalist society and the covert power that it exercises over people. Now people are resources: they are means, and not an end in themselves, which is a debatable moral position. They are resources that are to be developed but they are to be developed for the sake of the organisation and ultimately for the sake of capital itself rather than for their own enrichment. Indeed, Hargreaves (Hargreaves and Jarvis 2000) showed that human resource developers spend much of their time communicating management's expectations and designing training needs that respond to their expectations, so that they are themselves important resources in the development of management strategy. While management education has necessarily utilised a lot of the research into learning in the workplace, management is itself being forced to change as managers can no longer be administrators of bureaucratic organisations but they are forced to become leaders in the new and more dynamic workplace (Argyris 1983).

With the neo-liberal emphasis on work there has been considerable research on learning in the workplace and many advances in our understanding of human learning have been highlighted. This is hardly surprising since, for the first time, research on adult learning focused on a site for learning other than the classroom, neither is it surprising that some of the theorists of learning in the social context have failed to take into consideration all the sociological research into organisations, as we demonstrated above with Lave and Wenger's work.

Amongst the advances that have occurred are the emphasis on practice, so that action learning, action research and practitioner researcher have all emerged. From the outset Argyris and Schön, together and separately, developed our understanding of learning in practice. They questioned the traditional relationship between theory and practice, reflecting the pragmatic basis from which their work emanated. For them practitioners did not only have a theory in use, they had an espoused theory and it was the latter that led to action. Much later, I (Jarvis 1987, 1999), amongst others, argued that theory was learned in practice rather than in the classroom. However, Argyris and Schön (1974), recognising the problem of theory and practice, distinguished between two forms of learning stemming from two forms of behaviour – Model 1 and Model 2 and with them single-loop and double-loop learning. Model 1 behaviour is a matter of conforming to established practices without otherwise testing the validity of the learning outcomes. They (1974: 19) define single-loop learning as that form which occurs that designs 'actions that satisfy existing governing variables', whereas double-loop learning is that which questions the taken for granted and enables us 'to change the field of constancy itself'. The focus on learning in practice led Schön (1983) to focus on the reflective practitioner. Since that work there have been many studies that have focused on reflection in the workplace, including Boud whose focus was not initially the workplace but experience and learning (Boud *et al.* 1985) but who also recognised that experiences began with disjuncture – although he did not use the word – rather he called it problem-based learning (Boud 1985; Boud and Feletti 1991) and then he did emphasise learning in the workplace.

At the same time another approach to learning was being developed which also reflected the pragmatism of contemporary society and was to prove useful to management in introducing innovation into the workplace – action learning. Developed by Revans (1980), it has been further elaborated upon by McGill and Beaty (1992), amongst others. Basically, this is a technique which starts from an experiential learning base and uses action as the mode of learning, but each actor is supported by a group – all the members being action learners and all supporting each other. This support is necessary for innovators frequently need support from like-minded individuals as they try to change established procedural patterns. In my own doctoral research (Jarvis 1977) I discovered that professionally oriented practitioners experienced low job satisfaction in bureaucratic organisations.

In a similar fashion, mentoring has been developed in the workplace. Here it is not the group who might all be peers, but one or two senior colleagues who act as teachers, coaches, guides or even counsellors in workplace learning. Some of the early work on mentoring had no specific relationship to the world of work (Daloiz 1986) and even some later work (Herman and Mandell 2004), but many more recent publications have focused on work (Murray with Owen 1991; Glover and Mardle 1995; Megginson and

Clutterbuck 1995). In these instances, the mentor is one who assists the learning process but less frequently one who specifically teaches.

Research is also a form of learning and so in recent years we have seen the development of two similar approaches to research: action research (Carr and Kemmis 1986; McNiff 1992) and practitioner research (Jarvis 1999). In both of these, practice, usually that which occurs in the workplace, is the site for the research, the practitioner is the researcher, the research is practical and the research is usually small scale. In action research, the researchers reflect upon their practice and seek to improve it. In practitioner research, the researchers merely seek to understand the events and processes rather than try to change them.

Since learning is experiential and taking place in the practice site, it both questions the traditional formulation that theory should be applied to practice and that the accreditation for learning should only occur in the educational setting where theory was traditionally taught. In the traditional approach to theory, learning was assumed to happen in the classroom when the theory was taught and little or no important learning occurred in the practice. All that happened was that the practitioners applied their learning to the practice situation and one who had high theoretical qualifications (and therefore often entitled to a higher salary) was almost bound to be the better practitioner. But once it was recognised that learning occurred in the practice setting, the formulation of the relationship between theory and practice was called into question. Had the fact that we had moved into a pragmatic society been recognised, we would have recognised that practical knowledge is based upon experience and that the theory-in-use was one actually learned in practice – that there is no fundamental divide between the theory and the practice and, if there is, then practice precedes theory and through reflective learning we formulate our own theory.

Once this is recognised, then the accreditation of learning in the classroom is insufficient and new means of assessment have to be devised. Consequently, the accreditation of prior and experiential learning has become significant. Nevertheless, as late as 2000, Storan (2000: 13) could rightly claim that prior experiential learning 'still cannot be considered as an integral part of Higher Education sector in the UK'. Indeed, he claims that the development of this process in higher education has actually slowed down, illustrating how the universities had resisted the changes that are occurring. However, it may not only be the universities that resist accreditation of learning in the workplace, some employing organisations might do the same since accreditation gives employees exchange currency in the workplace and additional accreditation makes them more employable elsewhere. Consequently, employing organisations offer a lot of in-service learning opportunities that carry no qualifications and it is the responsibility of the learners to complete their own portfolio of learning in order for it to be accepted in the wider learning market. Indeed, as we will show in the next

chapter, many employees attend further education in order to gain qualifications that make them more employable. Indeed, this is necessary in a mobile society, although Europe is far from the mobile society that many European politicians envisaged, with less than 1 per cent of the workforce being mobile in this way, although this can be partially accounted for by the existence of the different languages of practice throughout the continent.

It could be argued, however, that it is not only globalisation that is the immediate cause of this process of accreditation but the mobility that it engenders. Within Europe, for instance, it is increasingly important for the European job market not only to have accreditation of experiential learning but to have an agreed set of standards that facilitate mobility – hence we have had the development of EUROPASS and more significantly of a European Qualifications Framework. In many ways this framework is similar to the National Vocational Qualifications Framework developed in the UK. The framework seeks to be broad enough to cover the whole range of learning from basic competencies to doctoral research and the European Framework currently has eight levels. Having an educational qualification is, therefore, also a key to social inclusion whereas social exclusion often coincides with the lack of qualifications – work, rather than property, has become the key to the door of citizenship.

However, life is more than work and so the relationship between work-life learning and the remainder of life has also become a subject for study. This idea was reflected in a study of learning in the workplace entitled *Learning, Working and Living* (Antonacopoulou *et al.* 2006) but perhaps even more significantly in Merriam and Clark's (1991) study in which they looked at the patterns of work, love and learning in adult life; they showed the diverse patterns of relationship between the three and recognised that personal identity is to be found within this relationship.

Social and personal identity

When I used to be invited to speak at pre-retirement courses, one of the exercises that I asked the participants to undertake was that well-known psychological one on identity. I would put on the flip chart the question, 'Who am I?' and the response which began 'I am (a) . . .'. Then I asked the participants to complete the answer ten times. We took feedback and on many occasions the respondents placed their occupation high on the list – usually in the top three. I would then ask them a simple question, 'Who will you be when you retire?' The point is that we do identify with our work and the process of identification seems to move from performing a role to a sense of belonging to one of identifying with either the role or the organisation, or both. At the same time, since the respondents were able to put down several answers, if not all ten, indicates that there are a number of other social identities – indicating that they belonged to a number of communities

of practice, some of which were more important than work, such as the nation, the ethnic people, the family, the faith community and even leisure communities

Wenger (1998: 188) suggests that identity formation is a dual process: identification and negotiation. We identify with the job or the organisation and feel part of it, but we have to negotiate with those with whom we interact since we do have some control over the meanings of our identification process. Wenger rightly recognises that at this point the power of the external world operates in the process of negotiation. In this sense, we can understand that when we are faced with retirement we may also be faced with an identity problem, but since not all my respondents placed occupational identity as one of their top three identities, it illustrates that the nature of belonging also affects an individual's identity. Moreover, the fact that Wenger highlights the process of negotiation illustrates a much more fundamental process – that there is an identity behind the identities. There is a personal identity which might be described as: 'I am Me' or 'I am whom I perceive myself to be'. In this sense, our personal identity relates to our own experiences of ourselves and this we learn as we go through our lives, and yet it is a paradoxical phenomenon. From early on in our lives we develop a sense of self and, despite all the experiences of social life, we still regard ourselves as the same person. Each of these different experiences happens to the same person: it is 'I' who have these experiences, so that there is a sense in which personal identity reflects my being and all the other phenomena with which I identify and which provide me with a social identity are subsidiary to it. However, in this rapidly changing and globalising world, many of these phenomena are no longer stable but are transient – changed or destroyed through the ravages of time. The stronger that we identify with these phenomena, the greater the loss – identity crisis – we experience when the changes occur.

This distinction we have drawn between personal and social identity relates to the two processes of primary and secondary socialisation which have been discussed earlier in this study, although it is impossible to draw a clear distinction between them since it is the same person who has all the experiences. Nevertheless, primary socialisation does result, for most young people, in a sense of self. As Mead (Strauss 1964) showed, this is formed in relationship to significant others as a result of social behaviour. The social act is the precondition of consciousness and children develop a sense of awareness through social experience. Communication underlies the emergence of mind, through language children develop the ability to think and through interaction with significant others they gain a sense of self. In the formation of the mind itself lies the basis of personal identity. For the majority of children there are stable relationships with the significant others and within the security of this stability both mind and self emerge.¹ Only when this initial relationship is unstable are there problems with the formation of the self, but in mobile, global society, this stability is sometimes

threatened and individuals grow up 'scared'. There is a sense that with the formation of the self, we develop our personal identity, but the self not only is, it is always becoming, until the day of death, and so the individual self continues to have experiences throughout conscious life – and, therefore, to learn. But the personal identity, the sense of self, does not change a great deal, especially after we have reached maturity. Part of that personal identity, that self, may include our nationality or our ethnicity since these reflect the environment of our initial relationships and our own initial life-world.

Nevertheless, we live in an inter-subjective world. As Jenkins (2004: 49) suggests, as embodied selves:

- We realise ourselves in relationship to others.
- This process continues throughout our lives as our individual identities adapt and change.
- The presentation and elaboration of self-identification draws upon a wide palette of accessories.
- The self is both individual and interactional.

However, as members of a wide variety of communities of practice as we grow and develop, so we learn to play roles within them, identify with them and develop a sense of belonging, so that we have multiple social identities depending on the roles we play and the groups to which we belong – these are, in a sense, secondary identities. Hence, we may identify with our jobs and, like the respondents in the pre-retirement courses that I referred to above, their occupational identity may be the dominant one within the context of the work environment. Nevertheless, these secondary identities tend to be more transient, although related to the primary identity. Certainly, in the many times I have conducted that identity exercise on pre-retirement courses, very few people ever wrote that they were themselves. As individuals move on from communities of practice, so their identity lapses and disappears. The greater their identification with that social identity, the greater the sense of meaning that it gives, the greater the trauma when it is lost.

However, identity is learned during our lifetime – there are the primary and the secondary identities. The primary one is developed early in our life, with the formation of the self – self-identity – and mind. It is maintained, retained and developed through lifelong learning – in the sense of learning throughout our lifespan and through all the stages of our development. Since we live with this identity and through our learning we usually gently develop our personal identity to the situations of our life-world – rarely are there major identity crises from the time that this identity is established. Consequently, we learn to take it for granted. In contrast, the secondary identities relate to our membership of varieties of communities of practice and, therefore, they relate to our life-wide learning. We are more conscious of the activities that relate to these communities of practice and, therefore,

we are perhaps more conscious of our secondary identities. Nevertheless, the primary identity – the self-identity – is still at the heart of our actions and it is this which assists us in the negotiation about which Wenger writes, but he is writing about secondary identities.²

Since we use the term ‘lifelong learning’ to include both lifelong and life-time learning, we lose this important distinction in our discussion of identity. It is the self-identity – the identity of the person, the Me, which is private and fundamental to our being. Self-identity is ontological – it is about our being and becoming. It is for this reason that we emphasise that it is the person who learns and why we regard learning as an existential phenomenon. It is the self, the primary identity, which reflects our being and which is always becoming until the day that we die.

Secondary identities change as we move through life, but primary identity is much more stable. However, in brainwashing it is the primary identity that is attacked since the process often seeks to create a new, often artificial world in which we learn to doubt our self-identity (Lifton 1961) and eventually replace it. In brainwashing, we can see how those who control the external world shape our self-identity, our sense of self. But culture is never value-free, so that our primary identities are always shaped by those who control culture and, clearly, our primary and secondary identities rarely contradict each other – except in times of mental illness. Consequently, we can understand how our identities are always shaped by the external world in which we live and why we seek to live in harmony with it, so that there is always a strong tendency to accept the values and meanings of the world into which we are born and develop – we tend to be conservative and traditional, even when the world in which we live is neo-liberal. We are growing up to accept this world and its values – to identify ourselves with it, both through our primary and our secondary identities – and to take it for granted.

Conclusion

In lifelong learning, we can recognise the ontological basis of learning – it lies in being and becoming, whereas in life-wide learning, this process still continues but has added to it, a secondary process whereby we play and identify with different roles and so we develop secondary identities. Both are influenced by the social world and in both we reflect that world, so that it is not surprising that traditional Marxist scholars in a state-based society, such as Althusser (1972), were able to regard the various social institutions as state ideological apparatuses. Consequently, we can see that lifelong learning is not value-free either – it is occurring in a globalised capitalist world and it is acting as a socialising agent within it. We can see that many of the institutions, communities of practice, in which we learn to play roles and identify with them are in harmony with the global world of advanced capitalism. Even so, there are some few social groups in the West who are anti-globalisation and

they seek to undermine its culture. More significantly, those parts of the world that do not accept the values of advanced capitalism, such as Muslim societies, generate people with different values and different identities – often ones which conflict with the dominant West. Individuals learn to be themselves in whatever society they are born into and identify with it and its values.