

the theory
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PETER JARVIS,
JOHN HOLFORD &
COLIN GRIFFIN

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The emergence of lifelong learning

Like every other social institution, education has undergone many changes over the past few years: globalization, the emergence of the knowledge economy and lifelong learning have been among them. Significantly, people often now talk about lifelong learning rather than lifelong education, or continuing education, and so on. Understanding these changes and some of the forces that have generated them is important to everyone involved in education and human resource development. So in this first chapter we show what changes have occurred, while Chapter 2 provides an introductory analysis illustrating what forces in society have produced them.

We shall discuss 13 shifts in emphasis that have occurred in education in the past few years, all of which will be familiar to most providers of learning opportunities. These are not, of course, all the changes which have occurred, and readers may well be able to list others. As we progress through this chapter, we shall also see that there is considerable overlap between them. Each of these 13 listed below takes the form of continuum along which the change has taken place, so that it does not mean that those on the left-hand side of the continuum have ceased to exist, merely that education has spread along each of them with the new developments being placed on the right-hand side. They are listed below in the order that they are going to be discussed, and readers will recognize that while there is a certain logic in this order it does not indicate any causal connotations. The changes are from:

- childhood to adult to lifelong;

- the few to the many;
- education and training to learning;
- learning as a process to learning as an institutional phenomenon;
- teacher-centred to student-centred;
- liberal to vocational and human resource development;
- theoretical to practical;
- single discipline knowledge to multidisciplinary knowledge to integrated knowledge;
- knowledge as truth to knowledge as relative/information/narrative/discourse;
- rote learning to reflective learning;
- welfare provision (needs) to market demand (wants);
- classical curriculum to romantic curriculum to programme;
- face-to-face to distance to e-learning.

Few of these will come as a surprise to experienced educators, who will be familiar with all of them. Even so, we will discuss each briefly in the remainder of this chapter, which lays the foundations for the remainder of this book.

From childhood to adult to lifelong

In a strange way education has never really been exclusively a childhood phenomenon, although it has been much more widely recognized in this form. In the United Kingdom, compulsory schooling really only began in 1870 and yet the history of adult education stretches back long before this period (Kelly, 1970). Nevertheless, after 1870, school education grew by virtue of its compulsory nature and education came to be seen by many people as preparing children for adulthood. The history of adult education in the United States reveals many similarities, as Kett (1994) has shown.

Even so, during the 20th century considerable efforts were made in Britain to emphasize the place of adult education (see, for example, the 1919 Ministry of Reconstruction Report). By the 1960s, adult education had become accepted in the United Kingdom, and in that decade there was considerable expansion. The 1944 Education Act had placed various responsibilities on local Education Authorities to ensure the provision of further education within their areas.

Yeaxlee wrote about lifelong education as early as 1929, even though adult education was not then really firmly established in the United Kingdom. But only after the Second World War did signs of adult

education's demise as a form of provision appear on the horizon, when UNESCO adopted the idea of lifelong education (Lengrand, 1975).

However, there was not a simple transition from adult education to lifelong education in the United Kingdom. Two other concepts intervened. In the 1960s an idea became popular that people should have an educational entitlement after they left school – this gained ground as recurrent education. Adding to the confusion, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) subtitled some of its publications in this period (OECD, 1973) as recurrent education – a strategy for lifelong education. The other term that gained popularity was continuing education, that is, education which continued after schooling. This concept carried no implications of educational entitlements and, not surprisingly, it gained ground in the United Kingdom in the 1980s. Continuing education has no end point and so the transition to lifelong education was a simple move which happened in the late 1980s and early 1990s. With the ageing of society, we are now beginning to see an increase in education for the elderly, through the growth of Universities of the Third Age, Institutions for Learning in Retirement, Elderhostel and other such organizations. By the middle 1990s, it was generally accepted that education is a lifelong process and the European Commission started publishing policy documents arguing about the need to have lifelong learning throughout the Community (European Commission, 1995).

From the few to the many

Unlike the American system of mass education, the British system of education has traditionally been rather elitist, training the few to assume responsible positions in government, the professions and the Church. Hence, the school curriculum was narrow and selective. A great proportion of children were condemned to non-white-collar occupations early in their educational careers. Comprehensive reforms tried to overcome this, but they have not succeeded.

By the 1980s, there was still only a small percentage of young people going on to higher education, which was regarded as a waste of the remainder's potential and insufficient to fill all the knowledge-based jobs in society. Reich (1991), for instance, suggested that about 30 per cent of the United States' workforce would be working in knowledge-based industries by the end of the 20th century. Consequently, the education reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s in the United Kingdom expanded higher education in the 1990s to a mass system,

with the hope that 50 per cent of young people would eventually be able to attend higher education. In Korea, this figure is already 70 per cent. Significantly, however, Livingstone (1999) suggests that there is considerable underemployment in North America which politicians are not taking into account.

From learning as process to learning as an institutional phenomenon

The process of learning has generally been understood to be the process through which individuals go in acquiring their knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, emotions and senses. Either learning has been regarded as the process of transforming these experiences into human attributes, or – as behaviourists have suggested – learning is seen as the behaviour exhibited as a result of the learning. Both ideas still prevail.

However, more recently, there has been another change in emphasis. Learning has acquired a social institutional meaning in terms such as the *learning society*, the *learning organization* and even in lifelong learning itself. This has resulted in considerable confusion since the human process tends to get subsumed into the institutional phenomenon. It is becoming increasingly difficult, for instance, to distinguish between lifelong learning as a human process of learning throughout the whole of an individual's life and lifelong learning as a governmental strategy achievable mainly through institutional processes.

From education and training to learning

It will be seen throughout this chapter that there has been a gradual move away from the traditional views of education as the means through which the older generation passes on to the next generation the knowledge which it regards as worthwhile and valuable. That previous function of education has not disappeared in initial education, although education has become more geared to labour market needs.

Traditionally, however, educationalists (Peters, 1967 *inter alia*) argued that education is fundamentally cognitive whilst training is skills based. Such arguments, which were convincing to many at the time, failed to recognize the integrated nature of knowledge and action. Now, perhaps, the pendulum has swung a little too much away from the cognitive.

Even so, as it became necessary to combine these phenomena, a new term had to be discovered – and this became learning. This has, however, produced an ambiguous position since learning has traditionally been viewed as an individual process and education and training were both institutional ones. Consequently, we now see a separation being made between formal, non-formal and informal situations within which learning occurs, as later chapters in this book will show.

We have also seen different providers emerging which can provide learning materials for potential learners in the market. Education, therefore, is now but one provider among many potential sources of learning material. No longer does it have unique functions highly regarded by society. Now the focus is upon learning – and providers of learning materials no longer have to be educators, or even know about ways of facilitating learning effectively.

From teacher-centred to student-centred education

In the 1960s some of the more progressive ideas of the American philosopher, John Dewey (1916, 1938), were incorporated in school education. Amongst these was his concentration on the child and the way that the child developed. During this period, work by cognitive psychologists, such as Piaget, became quite central to theories about the nature of teaching and learning, and ideas about the developmental stages of growth became central to a great deal of thinking about how children learn.

Significantly, it was during the same period that Malcolm Knowles (1980, *inter alia*), in the United States, popularized his idea of andragogy, which was a student-centred approach to adult education. Some adult educators rightly claimed that this was no new discovery, since adult education had always been student centred. Be that as it may, Knowles' ideas became extremely popular and his own intellectual pedigree can be traced back to John Dewey through Eduard Lindeman – Knowles' first educational employer and a person who had a great influence on his work. In addition, Knowles' work was published in the 1960s, and was in many ways characteristic of that period.

When the expressive period ended in the mid-1970s, the values of student-centred learning had become much more widely recognized, and were often taken for granted in education, as a whole. However, the

extent to which this approach was practised, rather than being merely rhetoric, is open to question. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of learner-centred education is still very strong, not only in adult education, but also in human resource development and school education.

Additionally, as it is becoming increasingly recognized that more learning occurs outside of the formal educational institution, and also that there is now a learning market, the learner is being seen as central to the process and the nature of teaching is changing considerably, as we have discussed elsewhere (Jarvis, 2001).

Liberal to vocational and human resource development

The knowledge economy in Western Europe demanded that people became employable and continued to be employable throughout their working lives. Lifelong learning was regarded as the instrument through which this would be achieved. The way that the emphasis in education changed during this period can be seen in the changes in the British Open University, which began as a 'liberal arts university' but which has subsequently become much more vocationally oriented. This actually reflected a great deal of the debate which had gone on in school education in the 1960s and early 1970s. Peters (1977), for instance, had argued that the aims of education were to produce a rounded person (an 'educated man') rather than one who was orientated just to work. A similar change has actually occurred in European policy about lifelong learning. The Memorandum of Lifelong Learning (EC, 2000) regarded employability as one of the two aims of lifelong learning, the other being citizenship. But by the new policy document in 2001 (EC, 2001), employability was seen as only one of four aims, the others being citizenship, social inclusion and fulfilment of human potential.

However, as institutionalized education has become more market orientated, so more of its courses have become more vocationally orientated, especially the new degree courses, including postgraduate degree work, which can be regarded as vocational and even as human resource development.

What has become of liberal education? This has become increasingly categorized as a leisure pursuit. One new trend is toward a new emphasis on Third Age education, in the rapidly growing force of non-formal adult educational institutions known in the United Kingdom and elsewhere as Universities of the Third Age.

From theoretical to practical

Until very recently, education in one form or another had a monopoly in teaching all forms of theory. It was generally thought, for instance, that theory had to be taught before new recruits to a profession could go into practice. The idea that practitioners applied theory to practice was widely accepted. It was also widely thought that research was conducted to build up the body of knowledge – the theory that could be taught to the next generation of recruits. By the 1970s, this view was being questioned in a number of ways. Stenhouse (1975), for instance, suggested that teachers should research their own practice – after all, they were implementing the curriculum. At the same time, Lyotard (1974) was suggesting that all knowledge in the future would be legitimized through its performativity (he later modified the ‘all’).

Practice became a more central situation in teaching and learning and, with the development of experiential learning theories, it is hardly surprising that problem-based education, and then work-based learning, became more significant. Naturally, this was also in accord with industry’s own aims to educate its own workforce. Increasingly, for instance, we see continuing education courses, leading to Masters’ degrees, being totally work-based. Today, we are also beginning to see practitioner doctorates emerge – and with this, there is an increasing emphasis on practical knowledge. Even more significantly, the relationship between theory and practice is changing, and with the decline of the idea of grand theory we are now beginning to see arguments about theory coming from practice rather than the other way around (Jarvis, 1999). However, this creates a number of difficulties in assessment for traditional educational institutions used to assessing cognitive knowledge through the traditional examination system. Now new ways of assessing learning have to be devised, even assessing learning that has occurred outside of the educational institution.

From single discipline to multidisciplinary to integrated knowledge

As a result of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, individual disciplines of study emerged and knowledge about society began to be categorized by discipline (philosophy, sociology, psychology and so forth). Each of the disciplines developed its own array of

sub-disciplines, and these sometimes overlapped with each other – social psychology etc.

By the 1960s, however, this division by disciplines was beginning to be recognized as somewhat artificial and so ideas of multidisciplinary study emerged. Consequently, it was possible to study the social sciences – and look at each of the social sciences and even at their different interpretations of the same phenomenon, so that we could have a philosophy of education, a sociology of education and even a social-philosophy of education. Britain's new universities, especially Keele in the 1960s and the Open University in the 1970s, introduced multidisciplinary foundation courses. The Open University still retained them as compulsory until the mid-1990s, although pressures to drop multidisciplinary foundation courses have been quite strong in some quarters.

However, as the orientation to research and study became more practice based, it was recognized that practice is not multidisciplinary but integrated knowledge. Knowledge is now widely recognized to be a 'seamless robe'. Heller (1984) showed how obvious this is for everyday knowledge and since then the ideas of 'practical knowledge' have emerged. Practical knowledge – such as nursing or teaching knowledge – is integrated and it is knowledge about doing things. It is impossible to divide it into separate elements – since it has never been anything other than an integrated whole. Hence, there is something profoundly different about practical knowledge – it is integrated and subjective. The growth of continuing education vocational courses is to be found in this area of integrated practical knowledge.

From knowledge as truth to knowledge as relative/information/narrative/discourse

As early as 1926, the German sociologist, Max Scheler (Stickers, 1980), began to chronicle the way that different types of knowledge change at different speeds, with technological knowledge changing much more rapidly than religious knowledge, etc. Indeed, as early as then he suggested that knowledge seemed to be changing 'hour by hour'. Now technological knowledge is changing minute by minute and second by second. With this rapid change, it is almost impossible to regard knowledge as a truth statement any longer. We are now talking about something that is relative. It can be changed again as soon as some new discovery is made that forces people to change their thinking. The world is awash with new discoveries – this means that there is a greater need

for the knowledge-based occupations to keep up with the new developments in knowledge. Hence, we have seen the growth in continuing professional education.

Significantly, however, this means that the relationship between knowledge and truth is called into question and, as we noted above, it becomes no longer possible to apply dated knowledge (theory) to practice. Knowledge has become information, which might be useful, or even data.

The way that knowledge is changing has been analysed by Lyotard (1984) as narrative. In this way he has tried to retain something of the value-free nature of the concept. Foucault (1972), on the other hand, regarded knowledge as discourse and, for him, discourse is ideological. In this, he recognized that knowledge that becomes public or popular is rarely value-free and, inherently, its perpetuation furthers the cause of certain powerful groups in society rather than others. We could point, for instance, to the way the market has developed and suggest that these changes in knowledge are themselves a function of the market.

From rote learning to learning as reflection

When knowledge was regarded as something true, something that had been verified either by the force of rational logic or by scientific research, then it was to be learnt, that is, to be memorized as truth. Learners were expected to grasp the truth of the scientific discovery and remember it. However, knowledge has become narrative and even discourse. Experts now proclaim in a discourse of technical rationality and it is harder to believe their assertions. We see this especially when the expert scientists are called up to address the television cameras and state that the latest scare will be of no danger to the general public, etc.

Ulrich Beck (1992) has addressed the issue of the rapidly changing knowledge by pointing out that society has now become reflexive – that the whole process of change has produced a risk society and it has become incumbent on society to be reflexive of its own practices. In precisely the same way, learning has changed from remembering ‘facts’ and ‘knowledge’ to seeking to understand and be critically aware of the things to be studied. Reflective learning has become much more prevalent because of the processes of change in contemporary society. No longer should experts’ information be believed as truth, it should be regarded as discourse and critically reflected upon before either accepting it or rejecting it. The same applies to the ‘knowledge’ that teachers teach! Students need to be helped to reflect critically on the

information with which they are presented. The idea that the teachers have the truth to teach is outdated; although they can transmit information and data, they can only act as interpreters of many forms of knowledge now (Bauman, 1987).

From welfare needs to market demands (wants)

With the decline in the Welfare State in which it was the responsibility of the State to provide all forms of social welfare, including education, to its citizens, we have seen the State abdicating some of its welfare responsibilities for education. Now the idea that curricula must meet social needs has become less important, and what the idea of needs means has changed (Jarvis, 1985; Griffin, 1987; *inter alia*). Need no longer refers to a generalized need of potential students, but to various special needs, so that social inclusion has become one of the aims of the European Community's policy on lifelong learning. It would also be hoped that these needs are residual in society and/or that they can be eradicated through good governance.

Once education ceases to be welfare provision, it can only become market provision. This was precisely what Bacon and Eltis (1976) argued – Britain had to transform its welfare provision into wealth production. This was the economics of monetarism, popularized by the American economist Milton Friedman. Education had to be seen to be a money earner – much simpler after the success of the Open University and the realization that its wide choice of modules constituted a market for courses which could be bought 'off the shelf', as it were. Educational needs had turned into a matter of supply and demand – a market.

From classical curriculum to romantic curriculum to programme

The classical curriculum assumes that there is only one truth, or proper interpretation, of the material to be taught – this means there is only one possible way of presenting curriculum knowledge. Such an approach to education has been undermined because it was recognized that there was more than one possible interpretation of knowledge and, indeed, more than one type of history, religion, and so on, to be taught in a multi-cultural society. The 1960s saw the development of romantic-type

curricula (Lawton, 1973; Griffin, 1983) which explored the opposition between these two approaches.

This pluralistic society led to the recognition that it was becoming increasingly difficult to prescribe precisely what should be taught in the school week, despite many efforts by the government in the 1980s to do just this. By the 1990s, it was generally recognized that these efforts had failed and that there is just too much knowledge to get into every curriculum. Increasingly, optional choices have been built into the system. Now these options have become modules and so education has moved to a situation where older children as well as students in higher education are presented with programmes of courses from which to choose. The idea of curriculum is therefore now of limited value.

Moreover, as the educational institutions are receiving a proportionately decreasing income from government with the decline of the Welfare State, they are being forced to sell their products (courses and research expertise) in the learning market. Consequently, they can produce a programme of educational products which they include within their sales literature (prospectus).

From face-to-face to distance to e-learning

Education has traditionally been conducted face-to-face, with scholars going to where the teacher resides or works. Sometimes this involved peripatetic teachers, or even circulating schools, travelling to wherever the students were. However, it was only in extremely large and sparsely populated countries, like the Australian outback or Russia, that face-to-face tuition could not take place regularly. With the advent of new information technology, all of this was to change.

In 1970, the birth of the British Open University was to be a catalyst in the new Information Society in education. Liberal adult education courses could be delivered at a distance, through print, radio and television. Still there was face-to-face contact, but it played a less significant role. Students could choose the modules they wished to study – and as associate students they did not even have to register for a whole degree course. Modules could be bought off the shelf and studied in the students' own time, in their own place and at their own pace.

The British Open University was a harbinger of things to come, and with the rapid development of information technology, distance education has been transformed yet again. Even the Open University, with its 'Fordist' methods of production (Rumble, 1995), is having to find new markets and new modes of production – and other universities with

post-Fordist techniques of production have already been exploiting a global market for education. Education courses are now being delivered electronically and in the United States the electronic university is being pioneered. Other providers are offering opportunities to learn, through the World Wide Web, and through other means.

Now, with the development of electronic forms of communication and the World Wide Web, we are rapidly experiencing the growth of e-learning and virtual universities. New learning spaces are being created. Learning space is an abstract concept which Peters (2002: 72) argues has not yet been adequately defined so that it has not yet entered the educational vocabulary, although it is certainly beginning to do so as e-learning assumes greater significance. It is an ephemeral concept since it is only created by those who are experiencing it. While e-learning presents considerable potential for the future, Peters (2002) does note that few experts think that it will take over the learning market, and it is clear from many educators' experience that learners still seek face-to-face educational opportunities. Additionally, the concept of learning space is not one restricted to online learning. Indeed, Peters (2002: 90) lists 10 such spaces, which he calls: instruction, document, information, communication, collaboration, exploration, multimedia, hypertext, simulation and virtual reality.

Conclusion

From the above discussion we can see that the educational institution has been radically transformed in recent years: even the ideas of time and space have changed. This chapter has outlined some of the most fundamental changes that are occurring. We have made no attempt here to analyse why they are taking place, since this is the task of the following chapter. In the remainder of the book, we examine some of the major theories of learning and then look at ways in which learning is being discussed in contemporary society.