

There is no institution of lifelong education ... and such a formation is unlikely nor desirable.

Sociological Perspectives on Lifelong Education

by Dr. Peter Jarvis
The University of Surrey

Lifelong education, as a concept, has existed in educational literature for many years. Indeed, in 1929 Basil Yeaxlee wrote the first book on the subject and since that time it has filled the pages of many treatises. However, in common with much of education, the sociological perspective remains one that has been sparsely explored (see, however, Janne, 1976; Jarvis, 1986), and it is the intention of this brief paper to begin to outline some of these areas.

At the same time it must be recognized that this paper can do no more than to explore a few areas of what is a major phenomenon of societies that have undergone the information technology revolution. This paper starts with an elaboration of the concept of lifelong education itself. Thereafter, it seeks to relate lifelong education to five social features in four sections: social change; the world of work; demography; control and the mode of delivery. Each of these sections will contain no more than a discussion of some of the sociological issues with which educationalists are confronted in contemporary society.

The Concept of Lifelong Education

There has frequently been confusion in the literature between the two quite basic concepts of education and learning, so that lifelong education and lifelong learning have occasionally been used interchangeably. However, it is argued here that such a confusion does nothing to aid the development of the academic study of this field since the concepts are totally different. Learning is the process whereby experience is transformed into knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Jarvis, 1987) which can occur within an organization or in any process of daily living.

By contrast, education is a much more formalized type of learning and might legitimately be regarded as the institutionalization of learning. This does not limit learning to the educational institution, only specifies that some types of learning actually occur within that institution. It is also necessary to note that education, as a term, is used sometimes to refer to the social institution and not to any specific

type of learning.

Finally, it is very important to note that the educational institution usually refers to initial education, that is education pre-work, rather than education throughout life. Thus, in common speech education has two meanings, the institutionalized process of learning and the institution itself.

For the purposes of this discussion it has to be recognized that there is no institution of lifelong education and it is argued here that such a formation is unlikely nor desirable. The reason why it is unlikely will become apparent as the argument of this paper unfolds but its desirability might need some comment.

If there were schools that encouraged cradle to grave education, and no other place of formal learning then learners could be "imprisoned in a global classroom" (Illich and Verne, 1976) the curriculum of which was totally in the hands of professional educators and those who control and manipulate the educational institution, such as those who set examination syllabi and the politicians. Clearly this is undesirable in democratic societies and, therefore, for political reasons, as much as anything else this would be an unacceptable state of affairs.

It is now necessary to define the concept of lifelong education. Perhaps the most well-known definition is that by Dave (1976, p. 34) who suggests that it "is a process of accomplishing personal, social, and professional development throughout the lifespan of individuals in order to enhance the quality of life of both individuals and their collectives."

"However, this definition confuses education and learning, and concept and purpose, so that it is one that is not considered precise enough. Elsewhere, it was suggested that lifelong education is "any planned series of incidents, having a humanistic basis, directed towards the participants learning and understanding at any time during their lifespan" (Jarvis, 1986, p. 13). It is recognized that this is a process definition of education and the reason for this is simply that in this paper education *per se* is distinguished from the educational institution.

In addition, it contains a number of features that seem significant within any process that is claimed to be educational: It highlights the philosophical point that education is a moral process, eg, humanistic, and this would exclude such planned learning as indoctrination; in addition, it points to the fact that education is planned and not any learning process.

The definition actually sought to avoid the idea of institutionalization simply because it is possible to see education on a number of levels of formalization and the educational process within a number of different social institutions. Consequently, it is proposed to adopt that definition here. It is now necessary to begin to relate this concept to the wider social structure.

Education and Social Change

There are a number of theories about social change, such as the Marxist theory, following Hegel, that change comes through the conflict of the thesis and the antithesis. However, this might be true of changes in the power structures of society but it is not so true for the normal process of social change. Such change may emerge from the division of labor in society that is generated by the ever-changing level of technology. It is suggested here that this approach lends itself to an understanding of a great deal of social change from the perspective of social evolution.

The concept of social evolution is perhaps best defined by Robert Bellah (1970, p. 21) when he suggested that

Dr. Peter Jarvis is professor of adult education at the University of Surrey, Guildford Surrey, U.K., and editor of the *International Journal of Lifelong Learning*.

it is "a process of increasing differentiation and complexity of organization that endows the organism, social system, or whatever the unit in question may be with greater capacity to adapt to its environment, so that it is in some sense more autonomous relative to its environment than were its less complex ancestors." This reflects the truism that contemporary society is like a complex organism rather than a simple machine, a point well made by Durkheim in his original formulation of "The Division of Labor" in 1893.

That society is complex is beyond dispute and this might be typified by indicating that not only has society become more autonomous relative to its environment, so have each of the institutions of society evolved and have become more autonomous relative to other institutions. In fact, it would be true to claim that there is a sense in which different institutions are different and independent in many ways from other institutions but that they need to be interdependent in some ways and it is this interdependency that lies at the heart of society itself.

If this is what has occurred in society, it must have some effects on those institutions, such as education, which seek to serve all of them. Traditionally, the education institution has prepared young people for adult life and then they have entered the world of work, that is they have entered other social institutions in society. But as those institutions have grown apart and away from the educational institution, there has been increasing criticism of it by people in the other institutions because it has been unable to prepare young people to fit into their niche in those different institutions in the wider occupational society.

Whether this is actually a function that education should be performing is a question about which educationists seem strangely silent at the present time and, indeed, it is at least debatable as to whether education is only the handmaiden of other social institutions in society. It is, however, accepted here that it is interdependent with them, but this is another matter.

However, this analysis has considerable significance when education is seen as a lifelong process rather than merely a pre-work one. If the education institution is so far removed from the other institutions in society, then the question has to be raised about the place of that institution within the lifelong learning process. Clearly certain educational organizations, such as universities, have high status and consequently other social institutions in society, e.g. commerce and industry, might desire to utilize this high status, so that it might be possible for universities to adapt to serve those other institutions.

Clearly this is happening to some extent, but Milton Stern (Alford, 1980, p. 23) has argued that universities will "be proportionally reduced as providers of continuing professional education; the gainers will be the professional associations." What he is claiming is that the universities, as part of the education institution are so far removed from other institutions that their significance will decline and that the professional associations themselves will assume an even greater educational role.

To some extent this analysis is demonstrated by Eurich (1985, pp. 6-7) who demonstrated clearly that the industrial corporations are assuming a significant educational role in society, since their educational expenditure is probably greater each year than the cost of the 3,500 colleges and universities in America.

Each different industrial concern is assuming its own educational role as the institutions of society evolve and become more complex and more autonomous, so that they do not need the educational institution to undertake so much

of their own educational work.

What then of education and non-occupational work? In some ways the educational institution is responding to those elements of society that are not so fully institutionalized, so that aspects of educational gerontology and much of the leisure-time education is still provided by colleges, etc. But this might be a minority of the teaching and learning provision that is made after initial education.

Thus, it is suggested here that lifelong education will never be a social institution, like initial education, but that it will always reflect something of the fragmentation and specialization of modernity.

This clearly raises questions about the future role of the educational institution as it is currently established, but that is beyond the scope of this study and it is now necessary to focus upon education and the world of work a little more specifically.

Education and the Industrial Infra-Structure of Society

It is a fact of history that as the Western world industrialized the working classes were expected to work extremely long hours and that children were also expected to work from a very early age. Industrialization has certainly been a major feature in the history of the modern world and, as was demonstrated above, it is still a major feature in social change, so that it is essential to relate education to this industrial infra-structure. Three points only are made here: the demands for a labor force; the place of the unemployed; the demands for a knowledgeable labor force.

The Demands for a Labor Force: While the demands of the industrializing world were for a labor force it was unthinkable to consider child education, since children had to attend to their place of work. Hence, there could be little or no education for those children who were expected to work. Indeed, while work was mainly manual and unskilled, it was argued that most people had no need of education. Only those from the leisured classes were able to attend to schooling in the first instance.

When the workers needed education in order to cope with the complexities of modern society, then the educational institution emerged. However, the process of industrialization has continued at an ever increasing rate, so that the machine, and now the robot, has become increasingly efficient. Hence, the demands for a work force have not been so intense and this increasingly freed children to attend school. Gradually the school-leaving age was raised as the need for a workforce of all ages declined.

As industry has decreasingly needed a child labor force, so the minimum school-leaving age has risen, so that Bravaman (1974, p. 439) could claim that "the postponement of school leaving to an average age of 18 has become indispensable for keeping unemployment within reasonable bounds." It is also becoming commonplace for people to retire earlier in some occupations, although there is not always a statutory compulsion on their so doing, and there are many educational opportunities for them. In other words, the education institution has expanded to fill the gaps that the world of work leaves in the time of social change.

The Place of the Unemployed: In the monetarist policies espoused by certain Western governments, notably the United States and the United Kingdom, there is the claim that there is a natural level of unemployment. This implies that for the system to be as efficient as possible it must employ only sufficient numbers of people and that others should be left unemployed, or left to start their own businesses. It is what the Marxists call, the reserve army of labor—when there is work the reserve army of labor can be

employed, and when there is none it can be dispensed with. Migrants and women have been used this way in the labor force, but currently the unemployed are to be found in nearly every society in the Western industrial world. However, too large a reserve army of labor can result in many unemployed who are seeking outlets for their creativity and energy, and such a situation can become unstable, so that it is important to keep people occupied. Education is increasingly being used to fill the time of the unemployed and to offer them re-training. Governments are using education to provide courses for the unemployed, so that once again the education institution expands to fill the gaps left by the world of work.

The Demands for a Knowledgeable Labor Force: What is the extent of this knowledge? This is the first question that needs to be asked and clearly the alleged discontent with the education institution indicates that the knowledge needs to be specific to the demands of industry.

Hence, the movement for different commercial and industrial organizations to assume responsibility for their own education and training, but with the speed of knowledge change as a result of the forces of contemporary society, it is becoming even more imperative for companies to continue to educate their work forces in order to compete in the market place of world trade. Where they do not undertake this for themselves, there is a general expectation that the education institution respond rapidly to these needs.

Indeed, Kerr et al (1973, pp. 47-48) described education as "the handmaiden of industry," suggesting that the curriculum should be orientated directly towards the demands of the world of work and that humanities and other cultural activities should be relegated to leisure-time activities.

Thus it is argued in this section that the variety of educational provision in industrial society will relate specifically to the demands of the industrial infra-structure. That some aspects of lifelong education will be provided by those infra-structural institutions and these will be carefully controlled and be seen to be relevant to the world of work, while other aspects of education will expand to fill the gaps left by the changing world of work and some of this will be less controlled, less relevant to that infra-structure and provided by the present educational institution.

Education and Aging

America is "graying" and in the Western world generally there has been both a prolongation of life and a decline in the birth rate, so that the age distribution in each society is being changed and the elder citizen is a more common phenomenon.

Education, therefore, has had to respond to the changing age structure of society and education throughout the whole lifespan has become more of a reality. The elderhostel (Zimmerman, 1979) has become a common feature on many a campus in the vacation, the University of the Third Age is a feature of both the French and British educational scene, and a variety of other educational services for the elder citizen have been started.

Education, then, has changed in structure to respond to the demographic changes that the Western world are undergoing. But not only has its structures changed in this way, higher education has now changed to allow, even encourage, older learners so that Peterson (1986) reports that there has been 76 percent increase in students, aged 35 years and older, enrolled in higher education between 1972 and 1982.

Not only are the structures changing, but the content of educational study has also changed. Educational geron-

tology has emerged, specialist institutes for education and aging have been established and now it is possible to study this branch of education as a separate field of study.

Thus education has responded to the pressures of social change, both in structure and content, so that another aspect of the lifespan has been brought within it.

Thus far it may be seen that two processes are happening simultaneously in the creation of lifelong education. Firstly, the educational institution is expanding to fill gaps left by other institutions in the process of social change but, secondly, as each social institution is growing more autonomous and specialized it is having to create its own educational service to respond to its own needs. Thereafter, each educational service within a social institution is changing in response to the social pressures on it, so that lifelong educational opportunities are emerging in different ways and they are also changing within the complexity of modern society.

It will be necessary, therefore, at the end of this paper to reconsider the conceptualization of lifelong education in the light of this discussion, but before this occurs there are two other factors that demand discussion: the first of these is the mode of delivery of education and the second, the issues of power within society.

Lifelong Education, Control and the Mode of Delivery

Modern technology has not only altered the content of education, it has also altered its mode of delivery. Ever since the foundation of the Open University in the United Kingdom in 1970 there has been something of a taken-for-grantedness that face-to-face teaching and learning is not the only mode of educational delivery, although some of the social implications of this have not been discussed as fully as they might. The mass media are beginning to assume an important role, not only in higher education but also in other forms of education.

Additionally, it is being recognized that narrow-casting will have a significant effect on educational delivery in the future. Not only do the media have a role to play, educational packages, the use of computer programs and eventually, satellites and computer networks will all have their effect upon the way in which educational material is delivered to learners.

These changes have a number of major effects on lifelong education possibilities. First of all, it is becoming increasingly possible for educational material to be transmitted into people's homes, wherever they are in the world. People, therefore, will be able to receive educational material and study it, whatever their age, physical state, times of the day that they are free to study, etc. This opens the world of education to many more people, so that this element of educational change is apparently to be welcomed.

Indeed, at first sight, this change may be seen only as advantageous, since it will become increasingly possible for the expertise of one teacher or one centre to be made available to a greater number of people. More people will be able to study since there are fewer restrictions upon them in this process. This is a positive advantage.

However, there is another aspect to this discussion that needs to be examined; the process that is occurring is that of centralizing knowledge dissemination. This has inherent dangers since fewer people are required to generate and teach that knowledge and more are expected to undertake the less skilled working of checking/assessing students' work. Hence, there is the potentiality of a form of de-skilling within the educational institution itself.

Furthermore, those aspects of knowledge that are in-

cluded within the program will assume a higher status than those which are omitted, so that an educational decision by a few academics might help determine the status of a great deal of knowledge in the wider society.

However, it is not only what is included that might be considered to be a problem, what is omitted might possibly be an even greater one, since omissions are not always made on academic grounds. While these might be problems that can be overcome, there is another even more significant one, the centralization of knowledge dissemination also makes it easier to control by non-academic decisions, so that it is consequently open to a greater degree of commercial and political manipulation. This type of control can also occur within each independent occupational education service as well.

Indeed, Hawkrige (1983, p. 216) is fairly pessimistic in that he thinks that by the year 2000 new information technology will be almost entirely under the control of large commercial organizations, each serving their own commercial interests and that governments may not have the political will or be unable to regulate their affairs.

In all these situations the status of the educator has to be seen in the light of the wider social structure. The educator is no more than an agency for the transmission of accepted and acceptable knowledge, and for so long as the education is involved in transmitting this type of knowledge it will be left with a relative degree of freedom.

Concluding Discussion

This brief paper has sought to demonstrate that within the complexity of modern society lifelong education is emerging, not by policy nor by dictate, but simply because of social change. What is emerging is not a simple, single educational institution which may be seen as the lifelong education institution, but rather through a variety of different ways different forms of education are emerging.

Some are the result of government policy, others the result of entrepreneurs who see a gap in the market of educational provision and seek to fill it, still others by deliberate response of industry and commerce to their own educational and training needs in order to help it remain competitive in the world market. The emergence of lifelong education in any society cannot, therefore, be separated from the modes of production nor the political structures of society. It is emerging in the West in the way that it is simply because those Western societies cited here happen to have the types of political and economic structure that they do.

It is not emerging in the Eastern Bloc societies in the same way since they have different political and economic forms.

The approach adopted in this analysis is not value free, but it does point to advantages and potential problems for education in the way that it is developing. It does point to the possible dangers of centralization, since centralization in any society opens the possibility of totalitarianism.

It might be argued that this paper has pointed to the pluralism of the social structure in that each social institution is creating its own educational institution which provides educational opportunities for those who work within them. However, it has also been pointed out that control still exists in the content of the curriculum of education and training and it is to be doubted whether a great deal of general education is provided within the content of continuing professional education.

Democracy demands that there is a pluralism of interpretations and possibilities and that there is access to them and this is one of the major problems with the limited utilization of modern technology. By contrast, the full use of modern technology might actually enable a greater access to a variety of interpretations and meanings, etc., in different forms of education. Inherent within such a diverse society lies the possibility of a pluralist and democratic society, but if the control of information is centralized then the very democratic nature of society is undermined.

Lifelong education was defined at the outset of this paper as any planned series of incidents, having a humanistic basis, directed toward the participants' learning and understanding at anytime during their lifespan. This definition does not allow it to be located within one social institution, but it is applicable to planned learning wherever it occurs. It does rule out certain forms of teaching and learning from being educational, such as brainwashing, so that while these experiences might still be part of lifelong learning they should not be classified as education.

Much which passes for lifelong education might not be education at all, and this is a philosophical debate that is urgently called for among educators who are engaged in all the wide variety of teaching and learning opportunities that are offered to people through their lifespan.

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