Critical Education

Education Beyond Institutionalization:
Learning Outside of the Formal Curriculum

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Abstract

Education is a concept that can be as limited, or as expansive, as the current mindset of the individual or group who is involved seeks to realize, understand, define, undergo, use, or take in any given context. It is within the mindset of expansiveness, that this article seeks to explore the concept of education as it takes place outside of the formal, institutionalized curriculum—as well as how it relates to the formal curriculum. This theoretical exploration will begin by investigating the relevance of the topic. It will then consider a variety of meanings constructed around the concepts of formal education, informal education and non-formal education. The article concludes by addressing the need for rethinking the status of learning that emerges from outside the formal curriculum and discussing the potential affects of a more expansive approach to envisioning education.

If a tree falls in the woods, and there is no one around to hear it, does it make a noise? Likewise, if someone learns something and there wasn't a teacher around to tell it to them or grade them on it, was it educational? The response to this question is dependant upon the understanding of what education is—what learning is—in the mind of whom ever seeks to answer. Education is a concept that can be as limited, or as expansive, as the current mindset of the individual or group who is involved seeks to realize, understand, define, undergo, use, or take in any given context. It is within the mindset of expansiveness, that this article seeks to explore the concept of education as it takes place outside of the formal, institutionalized curriculum—as well as how it relates to the formal curriculum.

This exploration will begin by investigating the relevance of the topic. It will then consider a variety of meanings constructed around the concepts of formal education, informal education and non-formal education. The article will conclude by addressing the need for rethinking the status of learning that emerges from outside the formal curriculum and discussing the potential affects of a more expansive approach to envisioning education.

Although the readership of this article will most likely be educators, the author requests the audience attempt to shift perspective from "how can I use this in the classroom" to considering the ideas presented in this article in relation mostly to ourselves as learners. The purpose of this article is to consider learning in a more expansive context. For those who desire some specific recommendations for implementing learning outside of the classroom into classroom practice, the author recommends referring to books cited on the topic, especially Kuh, Douglas, Lund and Ramin-Gyurnek (1994); Bekerman, Burbules and Silberman-Keller (2006); and Richardson and Wolfe (2004).

To situate and argue the need for this discussion, the author presents perspectives from a number of well-published educational scholars as groundwork. The article is not focused on justifying the positions posed by these scholars (since this is done quite well by these authors in the works cited) nor to pit informal learning against formal education as an either/or dichotomy. A perspective is presented here that raises the issue of a problem identified by the author: The problem of narrow perspectives for what is and is not valued and acknowledged in education as credible and what learning is defined as important, worthwhile and valid in U.S. society.

Learning Outside the Formal Curriculum

The topic of learning outside of the formal curriculum is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it is intriguing that learning beyond what is presented in the formal curriculum seems to have been all but illegitimatized as education, yet it is where the greatest learning and growth usually takes place. Outside of the formal curriculum is where we live and learn for the majority of our lives—the place that is referred to as "the real world" in schools, for which the drudgery of classroom exercises and disciplinary practices are supposedly geared to prepare us. It is a space filled with ambiguity and uncertainty, where we are supposed to be able to prove the worth of what we have learned in the formal schooling curriculum. Ironically, however, we end up finding little

of what we actually learn in the formal curriculum relevant to apply beyond its own purposes. This irony of formal education has managed to sustain throughout many ages. As long ago as circa 40 A.D. the Roman philosopher known as Seneca quipped that schools offered "learning for school not life" (quoted in Howie, 1988, p. 9).

Outside of the formal curriculum is a space for authentically purposeful, personal educational pursuit. Demanding of pure self-efficacy and independent judgment, it is where the intrinsic inquiry that is necessary to initiate momentum and motivate an individual to learn, even to learn within the formal curriculum, is derived (Astin, 1977; Kuh et al, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzine, 1991)—yet it is all but ignored as a source and resource by educators and students alike. The learning that takes place outside of the formal curriculum is seldom taken seriously as part of our *education*, but it is perhaps the most necessary element to ensure our success in formal education (Kuh et al, 1994).

The formal curriculum, which is the learning experience administered in schools and marketed as *education*, is found by many educational scholars to be intentionally limited and tailored to what are often the most uninspired purposes of society (Apple, 1996; Freire, 1970, 1974: Freire & Macedo, 1987; McLaren, 2006; Pinar, 2004; Reynolds, 2003, etc.). In this view, economic necessity and social order are perhaps the most obvious of the aims of schooling which can be deduced by analyzing schools as an institutional model: They emphasize hierarchical structuring, administrative formality, large-group classroom management by teachers and strict measures on student discipline (Smith, 2006). The formal schooling curriculum thus is seen as a mechanism of indoctrination for the practical purposes of social efficiency (Kliebard, 2004). More enlightened considerations for education, such as fostering the unique growth potential of the individual or group are ancillary concerns—for the administers and the participants alike—if considered at all.

This brief analysis of the literature related to the purposes of schooling does not offer an ideal picture of the formal curriculum as all that *education* can and should be. However, it is not the purpose of this article to contest the education promoted by the formal curriculum of schooling. The aim here is to focus on the characteristics of learning that takes place outside of institutionalized schooling, examine its current and historical status and consider how altering the way it is perceived within the minds of individuals might positively impact the lives of those individuals.

Expanding Education

As Albert Einstein once stated, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." The problems just discussed as characteristic to the formal curriculum are the direct result of a curriculum that is decided for and imposed upon the learner. Thus, following Einstein's wisdom, innovative ways of thinking about education must be adopted outside of institutional pursuits by the learners themselves, in order to advance toward a more expansive concept of education.

Parents could also adopt this expansive mindset for their children and teachers for their pupils in order to support a more holistic approach to learning, but it is more importantly understood and achieved by the learner himself or herself. Many educational

theorists have written about the importance of capitalizing on "out-of-class" experiences as a means "to attaining the goals of…[institutional] education" (Kuh et al, 1994, p. 5), in an effort to enhance institutional productivity (Astin, 1993; Baxter Magolda, 1992: Boyer, 1987; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, etc.). But perceiving learning that takes place outside of the formal curriculum as a means to an institutional end is antithetical to the purposes of expansive learning outlined in this article. Though it would be concessionary to allow that "Such experiences are educationally purposeful when they are congruent with the institution's educational purposes and a student's own educational aspirations" (Kuh et al, 1994, p. 9), it may also be seen as a contradiction (Nocon & Cole, 2006). Learning outside of imposed institutional structures is intrinsically motivated, it is initiated by the learner and allows the learner to experience being the authority in full control of their own effort to expand their concept of education for their own fulfillment, not for the purposes of the institution.

Being aware of and actively involved in the expansiveness of our own education should be a personal choice as well as an educational goal, especially if we concede that, "the ideal aim of education is creation of power of self-control" (Dewey, 1997, p. 64). Nevertheless, it is a choice that seems obfuscated by various oppressive factors acting within society and thus is often not made. If Sir John Lubbock's (a member of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in his lifetime) observation is as transferable to education today as it was for those who preferred to be educated outside of the formal curriculum in the early 1800's, then "What we see depends mainly on what we look for." If we are not looking any further than the formal curriculum for our education, then we will certainly not see that going outside of the formal curriculum is an option. The formal curriculum can serve as a mechanism to obscure hegemonic coercion, often misleading learners into mistakenly believing that education is synonymous with subjugation:

> Schooling is not neutral politically; it takes place in an institution designed and operated by those in power, to serve those who will come into power, to teach each child to accept his preassigned place. (Bateman, 1974, p. 60)

Through a pedagogy of liberation (Freire, 1970) in schools, teachers could assist in raising the learner's awareness to the oppressive and hegemonic power structures in society through a formal curriculum, but again, it is up to the learner to further their own awareness into experientially-based belief and to activate personal modes of resistance in the learning spaces outside of the formal curriculum. The resistance spoken of here is not for the purpose of deviance—it is for expansiveness, freedom and transformation. Though revolutionary in a sense, it is not a reckless or destructive revolt. As stated by Paulo Freire:

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Freire, 1970, p. 15)

It is outside of the formal curriculum that the application of Freire's liberation pedagogy takes place, extending the realm of learning about one's reality far beyond the institution of education, into the heart of societal structures, and back again.

Perhaps the greatest problems facing the education system are: Subscribing to the limited information exchange that has come to be understood as *education* within the formal curriculum and placing the full accountability for learning on the shoulders of teachers within such a narrowly focused institution. Pinar describes accountability as part of a miseducative "nightmare;" he says, "'accountability,' [is] an apparently commonsensical idea that makes teachers, rather than students and their parents, responsible for students' educational accomplishments. Education is an opportunity offered, not a service rendered" (Pinar, 2004, p. 5). Popular educational rhetoric and actual educational practice are contradictory and are seemingly countered against more astute educational theory prevalent in the field. Programs that are facilitated in the institutional education format focus on high-stakes standardized testing and carry titles such as "No Child Left Behind." These programs are the ideas of political specialists directly dictating what is to be taught and all that is to be considered as education. George H. Wood refers to such programs as "a continuation of the trend to 'teacher-proof' the curriculum; that is, a desire to standardize and routinize the curriculum in ways that dictate teacher behaviors, leaving little or no room for creativity, individuality, or spontaneity. Only in that way will the top-down reformers be assured that they, not teachers, are in control" (Wood, 1998, p. 182).

Standardization of curriculum and assessment in the manor of "No Child Left Behind" reduces the complexities of education to the lowest common denominator and focuses on skill and information accumulation, rather than thought provoking learning (Apple, 2006; McLaren, 2006; Nocon & Cole, 2006; Spring, 2006). "Learning has increasingly been portrayed as a commodity or as investment, rather than as a way of exploring what might make for the good life or human flourishing (Smith, 2006, p. 12). As futurist writer Alvin Toffler predicted, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." The hoops that politicians have constructed as *education* represent mere obstacles, not learning. This is not to downplay this issue—the problems these obstacles create for society in terms of social justice are very real, however this is simply an example of how the formal, institutional schooling curriculum presents a diversion from realizing the true expansiveness and personal quest of education.

In spite of its limitations, and perhaps in some respects because of the limitations it creates, the formal curriculum is a societal institution that carries a lot of weight and wields a lot of power. It is not surprising that politicians have found ways to usurp that power for their own means. In addition, formal education as a function of the state, empowers politicians to feel entitled or even obligated to brandish the power of this institution.

Perhaps it should be accepted that the institution is as structurally flawed as the society it serves, it is not a utopian establishment and cannot be all things to all people. That is not to say that the institution of education in this society cannot or should not be bettered, or that reform efforts should not be focused on reconceptualizing the formal curriculum and expanding our concept of education. The point is that the institutional

curriculum serves a purpose, but will always present limitations on education that the individual is capable of overcoming and expanding for personal fulfillment.

For the learner, there is a great deal of power in the form of cultural capital to be accrued from institutionalized education. According to Dimitriadis and Carlson, cultural capital includes "…those attitudes and set of beliefs that get rewarded in schools having to do with individualism, competition, motivation to 'succeed' within the system, and a certain disciplined performance of self" (Dimitriadis & Carlson, 2003, p. 12). But, the learner can succeed within the institution and still rise above the societal necessities of the formal system by developing a more expansive epistemology; essentially reconceptualizing their own education to encompass, but extend far beyond that which is formally offered.

The political function of the institution should be understood by the learner as posing societal limitations, but not necessarily personal limitations. If the learner believes that institutional education is all that there is to learning, then their growth as a whole person will be stunted upon completion of the institutional credential. Drawing from the ancient wisdom of Epictetus, *"It is impossible to begin to learn that which one thinks one already knows."* To think oneself completely educated and finished learning based on institutional credentials is unwise and limiting.

The limitations inherent in the formal curriculum span beyond the narrow perimeters of whose knowledge is presented or the marginalizing of varied ways of knowing that were previously discussed. In the institutional setting constraints fall back upon themselves. The bureaucratic environment of the institution becomes regulatory and normalized to the point of constriction (Foucault, 1995). Spaces for experimentation, mistake making, ambiguity, and thus growth become less and less, until the institution reaches a point of irrelevance to life and learning. Reexamining fundamental concepts like the purpose of learning becomes necessary. In *Principles and Practice of Informal Education*, Linda Deer Richardson and Mary Wolfe describe learning as"…build[ing] upon the essential human abilities to query, to adapt, to rethink, to understand or to be confused. We see these abilities as the basis for learning, whether formal or informal" (Richardson & Wolfe, 2004, p. xii).

As previously mentioned, teachers and parents can support and model learners efforts to reconceptualize their own education. They can do this by expanding their own perceptions on education, focusing on their own role as learners and rejecting the role of teacher as information authority. This would involve cherishing learning that takes place outside of the formal curriculum for themselves and reflecting on it as a form of practice. Furthermore, teachers and parents could work toward acknowledging that there is valuable education beyond the institution and encourage other learners to seek knowledge outside of the formal curriculum. Charles Darwin once said, "It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change." Following this logic, finding more spaces within the formal curriculum to learn to successfully handle ambiguity may be of assistance to provide useful tactics in dealing with challenges characteristic of expansive learning spaces.

Perhaps the best way that teachers can support and enhance the expansive learning process would be to find ways to build on the learner's outside of institutional

learning experience and refer to these experiences as educational within the formal curriculum, *without* attempting to assume them as a function of the institution. Adapting learning from outside of the curriculum into the formal curriculum alters and stifles the uniquely personal, intrinsic process that is necessary to experience the transformative value of expansive learning beyond the institution because the purpose, motivation and control are essentially altered from a purely intrinsic, self-directed, unique interest; to an officially monitored and assessed task. This form of learning should not be capitalized upon nor administered in ways that would result in the corruption of its essence.

Concept Meanings and Histories

This paper has already gone quite far into addressing issues within the formal curriculum without sufficiently pursuing the origins of this concept or building a framework for the reader regarding what is characterized by this term. This section of the paper will review how discourse in the field of curriculum studies portrays the formal curriculum. It will also refer to movements outside of the formal curriculum to delineate meanings for the terms informal education and non-formal education, as put forth by contemporary theorists working in these fields.

Formal Curriculum

What is meant by the *formal curriculum* or *formal education*? Theorists and practitioners representative of a variety of ideological points of view define the formal curriculum of schools as widely encompassing and complex. The term *education* is derived from the Latin word, *educere,* which means "to lead forth," which may be interpreted to presume the presence of a teacher, or someone with a greater knowledge leading someone with lesser knowledge (Livingstone, 2006). "When a teacher has the authority to determine that people designated as requiring knowledge effectively learn a curriculum taken from a pre-established body of knowledge, the form of learning is *formal education*" (Livingstone, 2006, p. 203). A chorus of definitions include:

> Considerable time and energy have been expended on developing the formal curriculum of American schooling….the educational philosophy statements and general goals and, to varying degrees, the specific objectives, learning activities, teaching strategies, and assessment procedures, which, taken as a whole, comprise a general definition of curriculum. (Sirotnik, 1998, p. 58)

> That curriculum is defined as the student's total educational experience. This includes the classroom, the school environment, and all human interaction that takes place. (Sugar Creek Mission Statement, from Reynolds, 2003, p. 28)

> Formal education refers to a highly institutionalized system that goes from preschool to graduate studies…often organized as a top-down system, with ministries of education at the top and students at the bottom. With few exceptions, schools are supposed to deliver a prescribed curriculum—

normally developed or at least approved by the state—with explicit goals and evaluation mechanisms… after competing successfully…students are granted a diploma or certificate that allows them to be accepted into the next grade or level, or into the formal labor market. (Schugurensky, 2006, p. 164)

Credited (or accused) as the educational theorist behind the social efficiency movement in American schools, Franklin Bobbitt defines the formal curriculum as, "…the entire range of experience, both undirected and directed, concerned in unfolding the abilities of the individual; or…it is the series of consciously directed training experiences that the schools use for completing and perfecting the enfoldment. Our profession uses the term usually in the latter sense. (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 43).

Beyer and Apple indicate the following as concerns that make up the complexity of the formal curriculum: Epistemological, political, economic, ideological, technical, aesthetic, ethical and historical (Beyer & Apple, 1998). Pinar situates the curriculum within the concept of time. "The school curriculum communicates what we choose to remember about our past, what we believe about the present, what we hope for the future" (Pinar, 2004, p. 20). In fact, over time the definition of the curriculum has changed some, but it is the content of the institutional curriculum that fluctuates most:

> While there have always been particular trends favoring one approach to curriculum rather than another, the major currents of curriculum reform actually tend to exist side by side. At the same time that some proponents of curriculum reform were proclaiming that the curriculum should be derived from the spontaneous interests of children, others were proposing that the curriculum should be direct and specific preparation for adulthood. Still others saw an urgent need to infuse into the curriculum a strong element of social criticism. Each doctrine had an appeal and a constituency. And, rather than make a particular ideological choice among apparently contradictory curriculum directions, it was perhaps more politically expedient on the part of practical school administrators to make a potpourri of all of them. This, in fact, is what the American curriculum has become." (Kliebard, 1998, p. 32)

As was addressed briefly earlier in the paper, the content and delivery of the institutional curriculum is in many ways an envoy for political ideologies that serves as a contentious field of conflict. This trend is not new. In fact, it was an issue in societies as early as ancient Greece as recorded by Aristotle in circa 300 B.C.E.:

> At present opinion is divided about the subjects of education. All do not take the same view about what should be learned by the young, either with a view to plain goodness or with a view to the best life possible; nor is opinion clear whether education should be directed mainly to the understanding, or mainly to moral character. If we look at actual practice, the result is sadly confusing; it throws no light on the problem whether the proper studies to be followed are those which are useful in life, or those which make for goodness, or those which advance the bounds of knowledge. Each sort of study receives some votes in its favor. (Aristotle, 1945, p. 244)

In contemporary curriculum studies, the concept of curriculum is broadly defined and is analyzed from many different theoretical points of view to scrutinize its form, content, delivery, reflection of society and impact on society. A critical look at curriculum theories expose themes that represent the formal curriculum as it is currently administered in schools as fragmented, hegemonic, artificial, ideological, biased controlled, controlling, limited and/or limiting. This is by no means an exhaustive list of critical themes. For example, from a neo-Marxist perspective the curriculum is expressive of an antithetical neo-liberal, capitalist ideology:

> The formal curriculum of schooling is an expression of bourgeois ideology. The organization of the learning process, along with the social relations of the school and classroom, are about socializing young people into the 'social and technical relations of production,' inculcating them with the attitudes, dispositions, and skills corporate elites want in workers destined for various rungs of the labor hierarchy. (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003, p. 11-12)

A number of issues and behaviors have increased within the institution of schools recently that contribute to the rigidity and limitations of the formal curriculum. There is an increase in the use of coursework and in monitoring through bureaucratic records and reports (Reynolds, 2003; Smith, 2006). There is a notable change in the orientation of teachers and students. Teachers' ability and likelihood to explore ideas freely with students is on the decline as the vocabulary of management used in schools is on the rise. Students are being molded into the role of passive conformists (Alexander, 2000; Smith, 2006). "The overall impact has been a decline in the amount of time and freedom that classroom teachers have to engage with their students in conversation and open-ended activities" (Smith, 2006, p. 19).

Pinar's thought often resides on the boundary fringe of the formal curriculum. His reference to the public and private spheres in education provides an example of the relationship between the formal curriculum to that which is outside of the formal curriculum. He states that the subjective and social spheres are "split off from each other in the current curriculum" (Pinar, 2004, p. 21). Pinar draws the private sphere into the public, referring to learning from outside of the curriculum as a mechanism to facilitate learning within the formal curriculum:

> Our professional obligation is the reconstruction of the public sphere in education…We cannot do so without also reconstructing what I term the private sphere in education. Since the 1970's I have argued that the sphere of the subjective is where teachers and students connect academic knowledge to their self-formation, a connection made in historical time, embedded in regional, national, and diasporic cultures. (Pinar, 2004, p. 21)

He proposes that one way this can be done through a teaching method called *currere*, an autobiographical method situated in time, to which he refers as "the infinitive form of curriculum" (Pinar, 2004, p. 4).

Another perspective in the literature presumes that it is not possible to categorize learning into that which takes place in the formal, from that which takes place outside of

it. "Apportioning what students learn…into discrete categories of in-class and out-of-class experiences does violence to the assumption of holistic talent development" (Astin, 1985). However, most of the theorists that take this position work within the institution to promote co-curricular activities; which it can be argued are as much a part of the institutional curriculum as the formal course curriculum, just not as obligatory.

Although all possible points of view have not been represented here, there is one common factor that is underlying the otherwise diverse discourses from these and so many other historical and theoretical discussions of curriculum. The formal curriculum is decided for and imposed upon the learner, and upon the teachers (Smith, 2006), in the institution of schools. Whether it is for the learners good, the good of society, in the best interest of the state or in the best interest of the neo-liberal corporate elite; the formal curriculum puts the learner in the role of passive recipient.

The idea that learning takes place outside of the curriculum is by no means a new concept, nor is the idea of incorporating it into the formal curriculum. Many theorists have considered it a worthy topic of study. The idea has been approached from various depths and distances in relation to the formal curriculum, shaping concepts into an array of new forms.

Informal and Non-formal Education

From the perspective of some informal educators, informal education is the antithesis of formal education. The formal curriculum is seen as a controlled institution where "a tiny minority wield enormous power" (Jeffs, 2004, p. 46):

> A handful of politicians and civil servants, supplemented by educators selected because they are 'biddable', define knowledge as either 'essential' or 'optional'. They cull the subjects, then place those spared in a hierarchy of importance…The chosen subjects are then gutted to what is 'worthwhile', 'testable' and 'important'. The rest, comprising the overwhelming bulk of human knowledge, is judged 'inessential', even trivial. (Jeffs, 2004, p. 46)

But, although it tends to be fiercely contrasted with formal education by those who practice and write about it, the *informal education* performed by some practitioners appears closely related in structure and purpose to formal education.

Claims of informal education's strong points are akin to theoretical positions of educators working to reconceptualize the formal curriculum. This may be because "…as soon as we begin to look at the characteristics of learning activities within 'dedicated' and nondedicated learning environments, we find a striking mix of educational and learning processes in each" (Smith, 1988, p. 125-26). The similarities are embodied within statements like, "Education at its best is always informal, largely unstructured and even an unsystematic process, characterized by spontaneity and closely related to the living experience and interest of both teacher and taught" (Howie, 1988, p. 9).

Unlike formal education, informal education is practiced in a multiplicity of situations, some institutional and others communal settings. Informal education is often referred to as the educational pursuits of non-teachers—those working in social work and

community-based fields (Mahoney, 2004), youth work, adult education and play work (Jeffs, 2004). Mahoney characterizes informal education as favoring process over product and emphasizing relationships, which enable informal educators to learn about the people with whom they work. "We are concerned with the conversations that are going on just as much as we are with the activities: indeed at times we are more interested in the conversation" (Mahoney, 2004, p. 32).

Wolfe and Richardson describe informal education in *Principles and Practice of Informal Education: Learning Through Life*, as being, "based on relationships in which both educators and learners recognize their own, and each other's, potential to 'be more' within their respective roles" (Wolfe & Richardson, 2004, p. xi). They refer to informal education as a subtly transformative means of learning and assert its relevance to the larger field of educational study, calling it "an area of study which at times seems to suffer from being so ordinary, so everyday, indeed so downright obvious, that we may forget its importance…there is no special value in moments of great upheaval or achievement. On the contrary… everyday exchanges can and do enhance and even transform the understanding of those involved" (Wolfe & Richardson, 2004, p. xii).

According to Jeffs, informal education pre-dates formal education, referring to philosopher-teachers who gathered with people in public spaces to engage in dialogue as possibly the first informal educators (Jeffs, 2004). Coffeehouses served as sites for informal education for adults in the form of discussions on politics, religion, science or literature in the mid-1700's (Kelly, 1970). More recently informal education settings have been founded as information networks—alternatives spaces of useful and "liberatory knowledge" for dissenters and those marginalized or distrustful of the formal education institution (Jeffs, 2004).

The concept of informal education for some theorists and practitioners of informal education is analogous, if not synonymous with other terms that have been employed to describe similar ideas. Educational theorists like Dewey, Kolb and many others might present similar arguments with different terms, but agree with statements like: "In informal education we respond to situations, to experiences" (Smith, 2006, p. 16). People learn responsibility "only by experiencing that responsibility" (Freire, 1974, p. 36).

For other informal educators the distinction between formal and informal learning is in "the degree of the directive control of learning" (Livingstone, 2006, p. 203). Livingstone refers to three basic forms of learning: formal, informal and self-directed (Livingstone, 2006). But the term *non-formal* education is often used as a synonym for informal education to simply describe learning that takes place outside of schools, especially in international contexts (Bock & Papagiannis, 1983; Clark, 1981; Freire, 1970; Kindervatter, 1979; etc.).

There is disagreement among theorists regarding whether the primary difference between informal and non-formal education is the presence or absence of a teacher, instructor, guide or hierarchically derived facilitator of any kind (Schugurensky, 2006) or whether a teacher is still an element in both the concept of non-formal and informal education, but absent in self-directed learning (Livingstone, 2006) or self-educating communities (Burbules, 2006). An abundance of other terms look at similar ideas from a plethora of different directions, as noted in Pinar et al (2004): "the out of school

curriculum" (Schubert, 1981), "non-school curriculum" (Schubert et al, 2002), "the hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1968; Apple, 1975; McLaren, 1994), 'the unstudied curriculum (Overly, 1970), "the unwritten curriculum" (Dreeben, 1976) and "the null curriculum" (Apple, 1993; Flinders, Noddings & Thornston, 1986).

All of the above terms have been avoided in this paper. This is because the argument herein is not intended to define for the individual what is considered beneficial learning in accordance to what degree it takes place with or without a facilitator. Additionally, the learner may adopt any term they choose to describe the expansion of their learning, such as "lifelong learning," "self-development," or their "pathway to enlightenment"—believing as Einstein that, *"Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it."* The goal is to involve the reader in the individual process of expanding the concept of learning beyond the formal, institutional curriculum. Because despite the benefits and necessity of its institutional, credentializing force, formal education results in alienation with a focus on accumulation rather than on learning to *be* in the world (Fromm, 1976).

Finally, D.W. Livingstone presents the term "intentional self-directed informal learning" (Livingstone, 2006, p. 206). This concept is distinguished by "(1) a new significant form of knowledge, understanding or skill acquired outside a prescribed curricular setting; and (2) the process of acquisition…on your own initiative" (Livingstone, 2006, p. 206). Intentional self-directed informal learning is perhaps the most relevant, of all previously noted terms, to what is being referred to as learning outside of the curriculum in this paper. Mainly, because this description makes it unnecessary to determine prior to the act of learning what to include or exclude as outside of the curriculum.

Rethinking the Status of Learning

"All our knowledge has its origins in our perceptions."
- Leonardo da Vinci

An expansive view of education incorporates an intentional focus on learning of our own accord. "Attention is like energy in that without it no work can be done, and in doing it work is dissipated. We create ourselves by how we invest this energy. Memories, thoughts, and feelings are all shaped by how we use it. And it is an energy under our control, to do with as we please; hence, attention is our most important tool in the task of improving quality of experience" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 33). Attention to learning is the key to expanding our own perceptions of education and thus expanding our own minds. Focusing attention on learning beyond the formal curriculum will result in a perpetual transformative process. Outside of the curriculum demands thinking and doing, process and product, in whatever measure is appropriate within the given context. Likewise, learning outside of the curriculum demands the intentional devotion of our attention to this cause. Due to the vastness of possibility it represents for education for the individual, an expanded concept of learning can envelope the formal curriculum, but not possibly be subsumed by it. The formal curriculum cannot possibly absorb the authenticity of learning that takes place in the expansive realm and thus must be supplemental to that learning which takes place outside of it.

In "Identity and Agency in Nonschool and School Worlds," Hull and Greeno argue that the current thinking about education should be turned on its head. Learning that takes place outside of the curriculum should not be supplementary to the formal curriculum, but rather the learning that takes place in formal schooling should assume a supplemental role to the students' out of school learning (Hull & Greeno, 2006). Concerned with identity formation in educational environments both within and outside of formal education, they draw on Dorothy Holland's concepts of *positional identity* and *voice*, both of which are concerned with how individuals understand themselves and relate to others throughout their lives (Holand et al., 1998). Outside of the formal curriculum allows for rethinking strategies, altering perceptions and reworking theoretical frameworks. As Eric Hoffa once wrote, "In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists" This is the case for those who subscribe only to the pitfalls of thinking formal learning, beginning and ending in the pursuit of grades and/or test scores, is sufficient and absolute.

Conclusion

This exploration has considered many points of view on the topic of learning outside of the curriculum and its relation to the formal curriculum presented through institutional education. The analysis has resulted in the concluding perspective that by adopting a more expansive concept of education, learners themselves are able to surpass many of the limitations that are purposely imposed by the institution of education. An expansive view of education incorporates an intentional focus of attention on learning of our own accord. Learners cannot necessarily be enabled by teachers or the education system to do this, we must take the initiative upon ourselves to consider and develop our learning in spaces outside of the institution. We must then regard this learning as part of our practice as learners: students, educators or parents. Educators (both formal and informal) can support this process by empowering learners to see past the constraints imposed by the institution and by modeling an expanded learning mindset, but at the same time recognizing the limits of the institution—its structural inability to be all things to all people. Recognizing learning outside of the formal curriculum through personal inquiry is the best option for realizing intellectual diversity and personal fulfillment in education.

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