

Informal Learning: Theory and Applied

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Abstract

The article will firstly study informal learning meaning, include representative person, definition, distinction and classification; secondly discuss the way of informal learning, for example, triggers, interpreting the experience, examine alternative solutions, learning strategies, produce the proposed solutions, assess intended and unintended consequences, lessons learned, and framing the business context, thirdly, the informal learning applied in educational practice, and finally try to make comments on my conclusion.

Keywords: *informal learning, formal learning, lifelong learning*

1. Introduction

Affected by the trend of lifelong learning, informal learning increasing attention. The term was first started in informal learning Knowles published in 1950 years "informal adult education" (Informal Adult Education) mentions this concept, when all adult education is informal learning (LuoBaofeng, 2002). Caffarella& Merriam (2000) to link adult learning into individual learner's point of view (the individual learner) and choroid of view (the contextual perspective), individual learner perspective, the learner as a self-help on understanding the experience of individual participants; views on context: interactive learning from nature, we know that learning is the product of the individual learner and the social context of interaction. In addition to focusing on adult learning individual differences, learning must be interconnected with the social system, social system can not be isolated from the outside, so deeply influenced by contemporary adult learning trends and trends. Merriam &Caffarella (1999) pointed out that three of the twentieth century social context, including demographic changes, globalization of the economy and Mengjin technology. Economic globalization and technological development which generated widespread and multifaceted impact on adult learning today. The global economy from production-oriented to promote services for the center of gravity of the economic structure, and bring to information rather than heavy industry migrated from the priority industries, structural changes in society also stimulated changes in learning content and methods; development of technology to promote rapid flow of large amounts of information, so you can take advantage of diverse adult learning during the learning and teaching content pipeline, the majority of the world's knowledge, the establishment of autonomous learning and growth (Zhao Changning, 2002). And informal learning is the trend in the twentieth century, education has nearly critical, philosophical views explanatory power possessed empirical learning model (Garrick, 1998). In today's trend of lifelong learning, informal learning pipeline adult daily life, an integral part of workplace learning convenient door (Wanggui Qing, 2005). Thus, informal learning is extremely important modern adult learning methods.

To better understand informal learning, this article first understand the meaning of informal learning theory, and then explore ways to promote informal learning and informal learning are summarized in the

face of practical application of adult education, informal learning Finally Implications for education recommendations and research.

2. Informal Learning Theory

Informal learning is an important way of modern adult learning , informal learning in order to understand the theory , the following representatives of informal learning this paper , the definition , characteristics, classification depth :

2.1 Representative

Watkins & Marsick is to promote informal learning (informal learning) famous scholar. Karen E. Watkins dedicated to the research of adult education and human resource development for the University of Georgia Department of Education, Professor of American adults. From 1990 to date , has published seven books about the workplace , and to engage in theoretical and practical work in the Field studies of adult learning impact on organizational learning , including learning organizations, action learning , field work study , reflection learning , informal learning , incidental learning , to promote learning (facilitating learning) and core learning (learning at the core) (Watkins, 2003). Victoria J. Marsick adult education scholars, researchers individuals, groups and institutions of informal learning, is a professor of Department of Organization and Leadership at Columbia University, specializing in adult and organizational learning . Marsick also leading JM Huber learning institutions (JM Huber Institute for Learning in Organizations) engaged in organizational change and learning, training and development, and co-founded with informal learning mode (Marsick, 2001).

2.2 The Definition

Karen E. Watkins and Victoria J. Marsick Informal learning is considered with respect to formal learning from, formal learning is supported by institutions and sophistication as the standard classroom structure, and informal learning includes incidental learning , may also occur in the organization , but usually does not have a high degree of structure , the result of learning to control the learner itself ; incidental byproduct of learning compared to other activities (byproduct), such as the completion of the task , social interaction , feelings of multiculturalism , trial and error or experience obtained in formal learning (Marsick, & Watkins, 2001a). Informal learning can encourage organizational learning environment conducive to growth , while informal learning is incidental learning occurs in people unconsciously (Marsick& Watkins, 1990), such as those containing self-directed learning , e-learning , coaching (coaching), supervision (mentoring) , to complete the task , namely to provide learning opportunities needs (Marsick& Watkins, 2001a), and informal learning is a special way of learning , as the experience of learning a ring (Garrick, 1998), learning can happen at work, in order to help organizations operate more efficiently , the occurrence of non- structure , which is a way of learning outside the classroom activities informal learning (Watkins & Marsick, 1992).

Hu Dream Whale (1997) refers to non-structural adult informal learning in everyday life carried out , disorganized , sporadic learning activities and learning through spontaneous , usually in order to complete the task , or other intrinsic goals , with other learning opportunities for informal learning or the learning process is completed (Doornbos, 2004). Bandura (1986) considered informal learning through social model to be implemented. The Marsick& Volpe (1999) is considered informal learning must be raised by internal and external events learning through action and reflection -induced generated. The composition of informal learning in the workplace through experience , liberal arts education , open- minded, critical

reflection is the other learning activities, encourage questions, feedback, and listen to the views of others (Brooks, 1989).

View the above scholars, informal learning usually occurs in daily life, based on past experience, the internal and external events triggered by learning, a long pass is non- structured, unstructured, non-classroom- based, is a spontaneous of learning, but can also be reached through action and reflection in practice and other activities.

2.3 The Characteristics

Informal learning to play the spirit of adult education , emphasizing learner-centered , life experience is the main source of all learning , learning mastership in learners who (Watkins & Marsick, 2001b), frequently occur in the workplace but the learning process is not determined by any organization or design study . Informal learning is active, immediate, and specific job or task -related, usually not in the classroom based, nor with structured. Marsick & Volpe (1999) summarized a few characteristics of informal learning:

A. It Combines Everyday Life Events

Informal learning usually occurs in daily life events, and by human senses, such as hearing, touch, taste, sight etc., to experience the life events, and produce learning mode.

B. In the event that caused by internal and external learning

Informal learning is affected intrinsic goal of learning incentive effects arising, or from external events triggered by the environment or learning.

C.It is not highly conscious

Informal learning with respect to formal learning, usually do not have a classroom -based learners are not highly conscious, nor a highly structured.

D.It is affected by infrequent events

Informal learning may also be subject to a separate event, or after a specific event, triggering learning.

E. Course which contains reflection and action

Informal learning is monitored for action and reflection, is a natural, highly conscious of history, and the results thus triggered already internalized without even realizing it, after this course can produce a lot of tacit knowledge (Marsick & Watkins, 1990) .

F. It links to other learning

Informal learning and formal learning generally, non-formal learning, social patterns, experiential learning, action learning, action science, critical reflection and transformative learning, tacit knowledge and cognitive concepts are related, but not synonymous (Marsick& Watkins, 2001).

2.4 Types of Carr & Kennis analyzed three learning paradigm in 1983:

A rational positivism based technology model (technical paradigm), taken from a model of humanism and phenomenological interpretation of (interpretative paradigm) and strategic model (strategic paradigm). The key is the strategic model which is to understand the social, cultural, historical and economic factors shaping meaningful way, and can be more capable of using this understanding to take action on these factors, so a model Marsickr & Watkins developed a new learning paradigm , including groups and individuals focused on learning , caring positioning and solve critical reflection and problems, and emphasizes informal learning (see release salty , 2002) . Under the new learning paradigm, proposed three informal learning (see release salty, 2002):

A. Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning is that it can meet the needs of the individual, not necessarily depend on the particular instructor, can be carried out in situ, continuous learning and get the information most needed. Self-directed learning can provide learners with more self control.

B. Mentoring

Supervisory relationship, in essence, that is developmental, after which you can enter, build trust, adventure, skills taught at different stages of development and dissolution of professional standards and so on. Found in other studies to be supervisors from supervisors or technical ability can be learned there were four categories: risk-taking behavior, communication skills, political skills, special skills in a professional. General supervisors will develop their own ways of counseling supervision objects. From the perspective of informal learning, supervision is a kind of supervisors, by the supervisors and the organization beneficial learning experience.

C. Coaching

Focus on coaching learning method is the coach of learning in the workplace can serve several important functions, when implemented will be a variety of organizations, and the programs on interpersonal factors, coach law itself has its complexity, there are a variety of ways, and have different meanings in different tissues, explained the benefits of coaching methods in the workplace and an important factor in the coach's companion.

3. Promote Informal Learning Methods

Nordhaug construct a model in 1993, will humans learn to do a classification of different types of learning is based on whether it is conscious, have a plan, formal and results-oriented criteria, such as sorting. According to this classification, informal learning refers to learning is unconscious, conscious unplanned learning, and have a plan but no organizational learning. Unconscious learning at the bottom of the triangle, the area has the largest share of it is passive, and is considered the socialization process, is anyone in the organization will experience. Up one is conscious unplanned learning, most learning occurs in work situations without planning, therefore belong to this level. The third informal learning is planned, but the non-organized learning, the majority of informal training is part of this section, such as job rotation, job development or job-related programs. The other two levels of learning belong to the category of formal learning (Lee TszOi, 2004).

Marsick & Watkins in 1990 to strengthen the concept of informal learning in recent years, with Cseh designed to study informal learning mode, the root of its models from John Dewey, Argyris & Schon and Mezirow (Marsick & Watkins, 2001).

Since the non-highly structured informal learning, unconscious learning, and links with other learning activities, and therefore, how to promote informal learning activities, according to Marsick & Watkins informal learning, providing promote informal learning methods:

3.1 Trigger Learning

Cause of adult participation in learning is influenced by internal and external events, not satisfied with the current situation, while learning needs (Marsick & Watkins, 2001b), can lead to adult learning needs motivation, chemotactic force, to adults willing to learn. Therefore, to stimulate learning, you should explore the learning needs of adults, can lead to learning.

3.2 The Experience of Interpretation

Informal learning and incidental learning center for adults background context, the experience of adult learning in the background is extremely heterogeneous, the interpretation of their experience through adult, perhaps by family members, influence colleagues, or other activities, other policies, social, and cultural influence (Marsick & Watkins, 2001b).

3.3 Try various Alternatives

After the experience of interpretation, leading members of the interpretation of experiences from the past to find various alternatives (Marsick & Watkins, 2001b).

3.4 Learning Strategies

According to seek alternatives, the development of effective ways of learning, so that students can have sufficient capacity to accomplish the task (Marsick & Watkins, 2001b).

3.5 The Solution Produced

If the solution requires a new method of generating capacity will have to produce learning needs (Marsick & Watkins, 2001b) individuals.

3.6 The assessment Results Intentional or Unintentional

Based on past experience, and the way to resolve the past, and to assess the results of the individual may be reached, determine what is able to reach his goal (Marsick & Watkins, 2001b).

3.7 Learn New Topic

From past experience learned in different ways and connotation (Marsick & Watkins, 2001b).

3.8 Built Environment

Learn by creating suitable diversified the environment, and promote informal adult learning and incidental learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001b).

4. Informal Learning in the Face of Practical Application

Foregoing has been learned about the strategies and methods of informal learning, the then explore informal learning and incidental learning in educational practice surface. Currently used in informal learning research, including research university research library, multi-level marketing, senior learning, teacher education and continuing professional learning networks collate as follows:

4.1 The University Library

In the information overload, technology innovation and the impact of globalization, human society is facing unprecedented challenges. Adult workplace environment, whether it is construction, professional content, work or interpersonal relationships organizations have played a significant change. Librarians, as information professionals, it is the need to constantly enrich the knowledge, learn new skills in order to meet the needs of readers, improve service quality. According to research results for Lee Tsz Oi study built on the work of librarians being ; inside and outside the organization affect change in task forces and cause learning, they are learning to include technical/functional knowledge, interpersonal communication of knowledge, self-knowledge, and cultural knowledge, you should use diverse resources and strategies to learn, interact with others, among which is the most important way of learning, and found active in organizational culture conducive to learning, and leadership curator style and practice shaping organizational learning culture (Lee TszOi, 2004).

4.2 Multi- Level Marketing

In recent years, the rapid rise of multi- level marketing , MLM necessity also learning providers , while informal learning channels and ways to learn more of its importance and convenience. According Wanggui Qing (2005) study found that : learning through independent have observed , read , reflect, learn by doing , through interpersonal distributor network interactive learning methods are : ask , mentoring , discussion and sharing. The distributor due to physical health factors , attitude factors , capacity constraints , the family's situation, the instructor does not match the required expertise , skills and personal factors causing informal learning disorders.

4.3 The Elderly Learn

With the changing demographics of the elderly retired population continues to grow, in order to improve the working age population participating in the labor force, education and learning perspective should encourage elderly people to participate in learning. The elderly themselves due to aging, physical, psychological, and because of past experience is different, greater heterogeneity, and therefore suitable to participate in informal learning and incidental learning. According to Josephine Ng (2005) study shows: Education should respect the elderly informal learning experience, planning and design of the course must be combined with a life and adopt diverse variety of learning activities to enhance their learning. Fisher (2003) study of informal learning in Canada to take four research areas: employees, communities, families and the general topic of interest for the study found that elderly people with general learning is usually related to activities of daily living, learning and working is no longer concerned, they are more inclined to self-directed learning, exploring their inner thoughts to pursue answers.

4.4 Teachers' Continuing Professional Education

Teachers and other highly competitive industries, must continue to learn. Therefore, teachers in his spare time , to always remind myself not to forget to read or learning , whether formal or informal learning, learning , continuous learning , it may work better, according to Luo Baofeng teachers continue to learn (2004) study shows not only to participate in the study , the majority of teachers do not hold hope for learning , learning in the workplace is just a formal way of learning , in fact , seventy percent of workplace learning is the result of informal learning , informal workplace learning involves learning by doing , interact with others, observing the experience of others , self-reflection, learning from mistakes and so on. Therefore, teachers need to learn to strengthen informal learning, Williams (2003) findings also show: Teacher professional learning in informal learning continues to far exceed the non-formal learning, group learning together better than the effectiveness of individual learning.

4. Conclusion

Informal learning technology advances changed the social structure of the organization, through informal learning can strengthen and increase the learners' knowledge and help individuals keep learning. We by individuals, groups and organizations to informal learning, informal learning individual can acquire knowledge and skills, informal learning groups can construct knowledge and skills, including the ability to develop specific, joint action research, informal organization learning can develop and work history and information systems, the development of the internal organization model, and generate a summary of knowledge(Marsick & Watkins, 2001b).Advocated informal learning will help further deepen the

individuals, groups and organizations, so that individuals, groups and organizations have encountered to adapt to the needs of social change.

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