Lifelong learning

In this article, the importance of lifelong learning will be explored, and in particular, the ways in which hand-held digital communication devices can be used as effective ways for adults to learn. Mobile Learning offers some very significant potential benefits to adult learners. Our challenge is to ensure that, educators, policy makers and learners themselves can all play their parts in ensuring that these new ways of learning really do make a positive difference to people's personal and professional lives.

Non-formal educat on: any organised educat onal act vity outside the established formal system – whether operat ng separately or as an important feature of some broader act vity – that is intended to serve ident f able learning clienteles and learning object ves.

Informal educat on: the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires at tudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educat ve inf uences and resources in his or her environment – from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media.[4] It is of en added that a substant al element of informal educat on may not even be conscious on the part of the learner
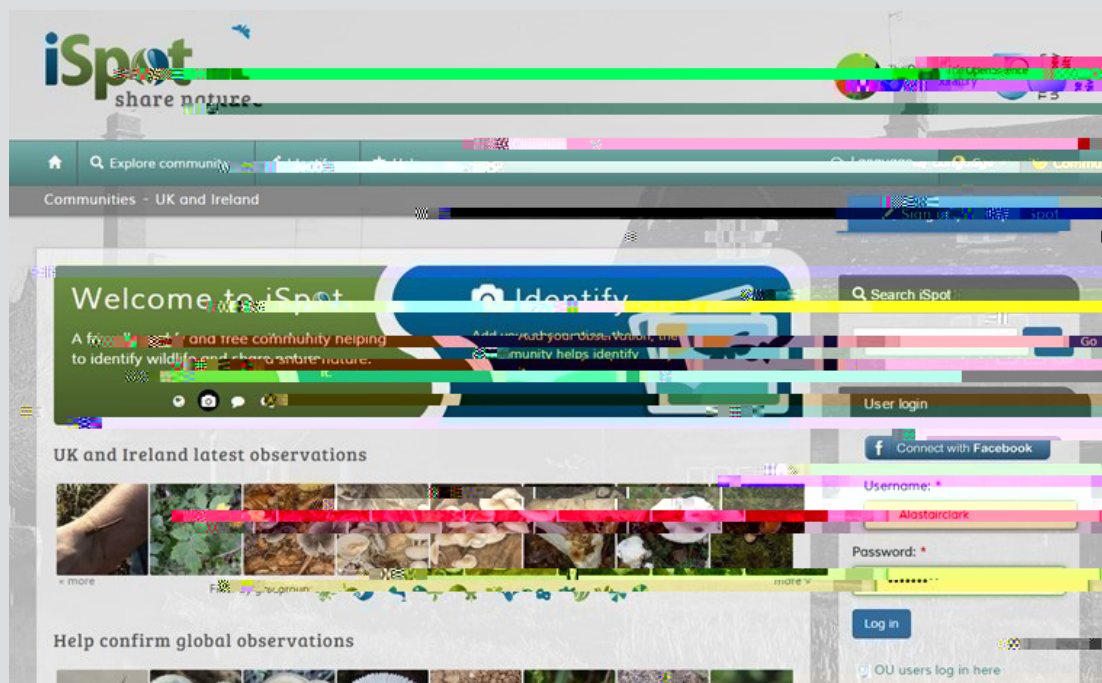
specif cally stated (tacit learning). Non-formal learning has many manifestat ons but examples would incluc   illage   ased literacy classes for ac   lts and training of coaches in a sports club. The iSpot Natur web site of ers an online example of self dircted and collaborat ve learning wher users learn to ident fy and apprciate f ora and fau   hrugh sharing informat on on an online commu   ty (Box 1.1).

As seen frm the prior   Q   es set at Conf   ea VI, ensuring that c   Q   zens have access to learn thrugh   ut their lives has bcome an object of policy and has ben associated w   h ef orts to crate a mor just world. Beyond the formal

structures of UNESCO and national governments, the Non-Governmental Organisations have raised their voices in support of lifelong learning in the name of social justice. The International Council for the Education of Adults identifies this key role of adult learning in promoting positive changes. The Council has as its mission:

[5]

This role for lifelong learning resonates with the approach to critical pedagogy championed by the influential Brazilian educator, Paolo Freire who challenged the notion that learners were like empty bank accounts waiting for deposits from the teacher but instead advocated the co-creation of learning. This notion of co-creation was central to the foundation of the Workers Educational Association in the UK that set out in 1904 to ensure that 'teachers would be learners and the learners would be teachers.' The *7* movement of the Nordic countries has had a world-wide influence on approaches to lifelong learning with its strong on the value of self organised Study Circles and the principles have also been applied to online learning circles too.

Participation rates in formal and non-formal adult learning vary greatly. Even in the countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) the range is from 60 per cent of adults in Sweden and New Zealand to just 15 per cent of the adult populations in Greece or Hungary[6]. Informal learning is far harder to measure but the World Wide Web is being used extensively to seek instant answers to 'just in time' questions through search engines and topic based user-forums.

The ability to create and to read communication using the written word remains vitally important skills. Without literacy skill, doors are closed to further learning and to full participation in civil society. It is therefore of real concern that UNESCO has identified that 774 million adults across the world cannot read or write and that two out of

three of these people are women. Even more challenging is the fact that this figure only dropped by 1 per cent between 2000 and 2011, and UNESCO predict that, at present rates, it may not be until 2072 that 'the poorest young women in developing countries achieve universal literacy!

Seeking to address the need for reading materials in local languages, the World Reader WRM app is available in 53 countries and gives access to reading material in 43 languages (Box 1.3).

The problem may not even be solved through the current initial education system as UNESCO has also identified that around 250 million children are 'not learning the basic skills, even though half of them have spent at least four years at school'. It follows that there is huge need to raise the skills and effectiveness of the current teaching work force.[7]

Whilst work on literacy in some countries may be focussed on the widely used colonial languages, there are also shrill calls for new technologies to play their part in strengthening and celebrating the position of traditional and indigenous languages.

South African teachers have shown the effectiveness of using local languages to make audio recordings on mobile phones of key learning points from science lessons (Box 1.4).

The 2013 *y V-o#\ -   ˙˙ ˙U   k* sets improvements in quality of teaching as one of its six goals. Indeed the reports suggest that 'in a third of countries the challenge of training existing teachers is worse than that of recruiting and training new teachers'. Examples of good practice exist of use of mobiles for in-service training for teachers and school leaders.

In addition to the need to improve literacy levels and to address the closely-related issue of in-service teacher training, there are further global issues that should call   saB h   r irs.   B unt   le !
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countries in the world having achieved gender parity of access to secondary educaton.[8] Whilst there may also be some parallel gender disparity in access to mobile technologies, there has been some very encouraging work in use of mobile phones to extend literacy material to women.

Changes in global climate are increasing the need to learn how this is happening and what can be done as a result. Whilst UNESCO declared the

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from 2004 - 2014 there remains an ongoing and increasingly vital task of raising the understanding of the science along with the social and economic consequences of changes in climate and other environmental changes. These in turn are fuelling a growing demand for new skills and new
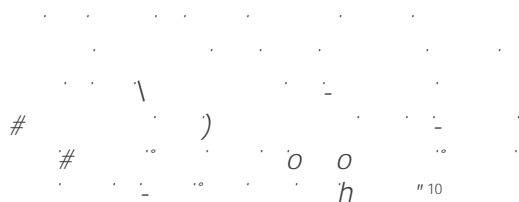
available for people in employment to seek advice from co-workers including those who are not co-located.

Mobile learning has a dist nct and powerful role to play in init al vocat onal training, but also in support ng the mix of learning methods and styles that help to keep a workforce f exible and innovat ve.

When facing these global educat onal challenges, the rapid inc

Charles Jennings[11] has famously proposed the 70:20:10 rat o suggest ng that for most jobs, 70 per cent of the skills, knowledge required are learned on the job, 20 per cent from other people and 10 per cent from formal training. Whilst the exact f gures will vary, this does remind educators that formal training must be of good quality and relevant and that communicat on methods are

- mobile technology should be presented in policy statements as a tool for all, of ering a window on a wider world of knowledge to women and men, all ages, all abilit es and to

rich and poor alike. Ambit ous but achievable goals should be set for widening access to learning for all through technology.

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[1]   UNESCO Inst tute for Lifelong Learning. (2010). *O   O   *. Available at: ht p://www.uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning-0 Accessed 16 Nov. 2016.

[2]   Schuller, T. and Watson, D. (2009). *O   ·   O   · @   ·   ·   ·7   ·   ·O   ·O   *. Leicester: NIACE.

[3]   EFA: Educat on for All, MDG: Millennium Development Goals, UNLD: UN Literacy Decade, LIFE: Literacy Init at ve for