

Lifelong Learning, Work, Retirement and Inalienable Interconnectivity: Reflecting on Personal Successes and Framing Collective Futures

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Abstract

This paper explores the connection between lifelong learning and work by analysing the authors' respective experiences of formal and informal work and retirement.

Inalienable interconnectivity is a fruitful way of understanding lifelong learning, work and retirement that simultaneously reflects on personal successes and frames and builds on collective futures.

Overview of Presentation

- Introduction: focus and argument
- Conceptual framework
- Work–life balance in retirement
- Creating spaces: work–life balances in semi-retirement
- Work–life balance: what's that when it's at home?
- Possible implications for framing personal successes and collective futures in lifelong learning
- Focused discussion

Introduction: Focus and Argument

- Formal, full-time work remains a powerful force in defining individual identity and community acceptability
- What space is there for lifelong learning before, alongside and after formal, full-time work?
- Focus on authors' shared and separate experiences of work, retirement and lifelong/lifewide learning
- Analysis informed by concept of inalienable interconnectivity (Danaher, 2006)
- Underlying research question “How do the author—researchers understand their formal, non-formal and informal lifelong learning experiences in relation to inalienable interconnectivity?”

Conceptual Framework

- Inalienable interconnectivity
- Education as inalienable value
- Interconnectivity between
 - Local and Global
 - Physical and Spiritual
 - Learner and Learning Experience

Articulates clear alternative to dominant discourses associated with late capitalism, marketisation and alienation

Work–life Balance in Retirement

- After more than 30 years in full-time and part-time employment, need for careful preparation for this new stage of life
- Healthy retirees can choose from a range of learning options, defined by personal interest
- Learning in retirement can be a core rather than an exchange value via self-emergent groups (book club, University of the Third Age writing workshops, volunteer activities in new community)
- Productivity and usefulness can become community-based as we continue to learn and pass on our renewed wisdom

Creating Spaces: Work–life Balance in Semi-retirement

- Seeking both value of work and freedom in choosing projects
- Seeking alternative economies of pleasure
- Partial removal from alienated world of speed and work
- Ecologies of pleasure – imaginative textual engagements (creative writing and reading), local communities, natural ecosystems
- Self-emergent groups: book clubs, creative writing retreats, creative writing characters

Work–life Balance: What's That When It's at Home?

- Enduring ambivalence about work: privileged to be an academic, yet consumed by intensification, managerialism and hierarchisation
- Work–life balance a chimera
- Inalienable interconnectivity: evidence of enjoying education in its widest sense for its own sake, yet interests and impact might be seen as limited and localised
- Two examples of self-emergent groups: fellow Traveller education educators and researchers in Australia, England, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Scotland and Venezuela; postgraduate students and early career researchers at my current institution

Possible Implications for Framing Personal Successes and Collective Futures in Lifelong Learning

- Personal successes (and failures) and some possibilities for lifelong learning futures in looking at three places on the continuum from full-time work to full-time retirement
- This continuum is not linear or uniform; what is constant is the sustaining power and the contagious enthusiasm of and from lifelong learning and self-emergent groups
- Lifelong learning successes and futures depend on both individual activity and agency and on the active interest and collective energy of significant others

Possible Implications for Framing Personal Successes and Collective Futures in Lifelong Learning (Continued)

- Potentially resistant character of lifelong learning, self-emergent groups and inalienable interconnectivity
- Lifelong learning futures that highlight the emotional dimension of learning and living and that create spaces for fun, frivolity and sheer *joie de vivre* are well worth exploring – seriously
- Inalienable interconnectivity one possible navigational device for reflecting on personal successes and framing collective futures along the work–retirement continuum that hopefully maximise fulfilment and meaning while minimising alienation

Reference

- Danaher, G. R. (2006). Inalienable interconnective lifelong learning: Pathways, partnerships, and pedagogies. In D. Orr, F. Nouwens, C. Macpherson, R. E. Harreveld & P. A. Danaher (Eds.), *Lifelong learning: Partners, pathways and pedagogies: Keynote and refereed papers from the 4th international lifelong learning conference Yeppoon, Central Queensland, Australia 13-16 June 2006: Hosted by Central Queensland University* (pp. 56-60). Rockhampton, Qld: Lifelong Learning Conference Committee, Central Queensland University Press.

Thank you for participating!

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Focused Discussion

- What other ways are there of understanding lifelong learning and the work–retirement continuum?
- To what extent might inalienable interconnectivity be useful in analysing other lifelong learning issues?
- What conceptual resources might facilitate reflecting on successes and framing futures in lifelong learning?
- What are some [other] good questions for focused discussion of this paper?