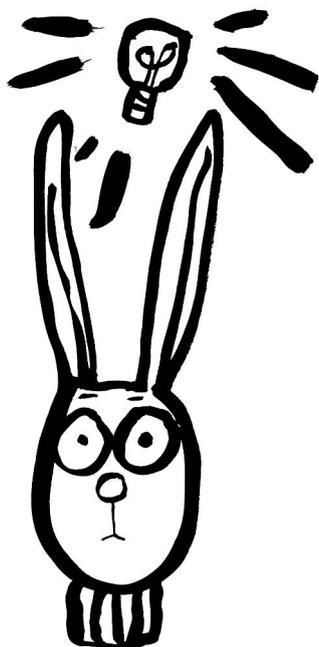


## FORMAL, NON-FORMAL, INFORMAL LEARNING



Formal  
Informal  
Non-formal



It is difficult to make a clear distinction between formal and informal learning as there is often a crossover between the two (Mc Givney 1999).

1. Eraut (2000): Formal and non-formal learning in the workplace.
2. EU's definition (EC 2001): The framework of life-long learning
3. Livingstone (2001): Formal, non-formal and informal learning of adults
4. Billet (2001): There is no such a thing as informal learning. All learning takes place within social organisations or communities that have formalised structures.
5. Beckett & Hager (2002): Informal learning is not only more common, but also more effective than formal learning.

# DEFINING FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

## Eraut (2000): Formal and non-formal learning

- uses the concept of non-formal learning , (no informal)
- Learning takes place mainly outside formal learning contexts
- presents five features of formal learning
  - ◆ a prescribed learning framework
  - ◆ an organised learning event or package
  - ◆ the presence of a designated teacher or trainer
  - ◆ the award of a qualification or credit
  - ◆ the external specification of outcomes
- defines the dimensions of non-formal learning
  - the timing of stimulus (past, current, future)
  - the extent to which such learning is tacit (tacit, reactive or deliberative)
  - to the extent to which learning is either individual or social
  - to the extent to which learning is either implicit or explicit

Eraut's definition of non-formal learning is based on an investigation into learning in the workplace.

## EU's definition (EC 2001)

- Formal learning: learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learners' perspective
- Non-formal learning: learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.
- Informal learning: learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or incidental/ random).
- EU 's definition is related with the context of Life-Long Learning policy.

## Livingstone (2001): Formal, informal and non-formal learning of adults

- Formal education occurs 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...whether in the form of age-graded and bureaucratic modern school systems or elders initiating youths into traditional bodies of knowledge
- Non-formal or further education occurs when learners opt to acquire further knowledge or skill by studying voluntarily with a teacher who assists their self-determined interests, by using an organised curriculum, as is the case in many adult education courses and workshops.
- Informal education or training occurs when teachers or mentors take responsibility for instructing others without sustained reference to an intentionally-organised body of knowledge in more incidental and spontaneous learning situations, such as guiding them in acquiring job skills or in community development activities.
- Informal learning is any activity involving the pursuit of understanding knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria ...in any context outside the pre-established curricula of educative institutions.

This definition has a different organising principle – the relationship between the teacher / mentor and learner

## Billet (2001): There is no such thing as informal learning

- sees learning as ubiquitous in human activity.
- Most learning takes place outside formal educational settings
- This means that something akin to non-formal learning should be regarded as the standard form, rather than what is left over, once formal learning is accounted for.
- has strong objections to the term informal because all learning takes place within social organisations or communities that have formalised structures
- never addresses the term non-formal but the logic of his argument is that learning cannot be non-formal either

## Beckett & Hager (2002): informal learning

- Learning is organic or holistic, engaging the whole person, so that intellect, emotions, values and practical activities are blended.
- Informal learning is more common and also more effective than formal learning.
- Characteristics to informal learning:
  - Practice-based informal learning is organic / holistic.
  - Practice-based informal learning is contextual
  - Practice-based informal learning is activity- and experience-based
  - Practice-based informal learning is arises in situations where learning is not the main aim.
  - Practice-based informal workplace learning is activated by individual learners rather than by teachers / trainers
  - Practice-based informal workplace learning is often collaborative / collegial.

# FEATURES OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

## (Colley, Hodkinson & Malcom)

### Formal learning

Teacher as authority

Educational premises

Teacher control

Planned and structured

Summative assessment/  
accreditation

Externally determined  
objectives / outcomes

Interests of powerful and dominant  
groups

Open to all groups, according  
to published criteria

Propositional knowledge

High status

Education

### Informal learning

No teacher involved

Non-educational premises

Learner control

Organic and evolving

No assessment

Internally determined objectives

Interests of oppressed groups

Preserves inequity and  
sponsorship

Practical and process knowledge

Low status

No education

Measured outcomes

Outcomes imprecise /  
immeasurable

Learning predominantly  
individual

Learning predominantly  
communal

Learning to preserve status quo

Learning for resistance &  
empowerment

Pedagogy of transmission &  
control

Learner-centred, negotiated  
pedagogy

Learning mediated through agents  
of authority

Learning mediated through  
learner democracy

Fixed and limited time-frame

Open-ended engagement

Learning is the main explicit  
purpose

Learning is either of secondary  
significance or either implicit

Learning is applicable in a range  
of contexts

Learning is context-specific

