A possible model for the interpretation of informal learning

Un modello possibile per l'interpretazione dell'apprendimento informale

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abstract

Informal learning can be a connotation of any activity, and it consumes a significant amount of time and space even in the case of highly educated people. This topic has been studied since the 1950s, and a high level of interest in the subject has developed in the last two decades. Since there are several approaches to the subject, there is neither complete consensus in definition, nor in typology. In this study we approach informal learning from a pedagogical aspect, and we use Colley et al's (2003) typology of learning. Our objective is to present one model which incorporates the diversity of informal learning. We analyse the informal learning based on two attributes: its explicit-implicit character and its intentional-incidental character. We introduce the dynamics between the four matrixes, and emphasise the role of reflectivity, which can take incidental learning to a more explicit level in the course of the learning process.

Keywords: informal learning, typology of learning, reflectivity, lifelong learning, model for interpretation of informal learning

L'apprendimento informale può essere una connotazione di qualsivoglia attività e investe una significativa quantità di tempo e di spazio anche nel caso di persone con un alto livello di istruzione. Questo tema è stato studiato fin dagli anni Cinquanta e negli ultimi due decenni si è sviluppato un grande interesse intorno ad esso. Poiché vi sono diversi approcci alla tematica, non vi è un consenso completo né sulla definizione, né sulla tipologia. In questo studio affronteremo l'apprendimento informale da una prospettiva pedagogica e ci riferiremo alla tipologia di apprendimento proposta da Colley et al. (2003). Il nostro obiettivo è presentare un modello che incorpori la varietà dell'apprendimento informale. Analizzeremo l'apprendimento informale basandoci su due attributi: il suo carattere esplicito-implicito e il suo carattere intenzionale-casuale. Presenteremo le dinamiche delle quattro matrici e sottolineeremo il ruolo della riflessività, che durante il processo di apprendimento può condurre l'apprendimento casuale verso un livello più esplicito.

Parole chiave: apprendimento informale, tipologie di apprendimento, riflessività, lifelong learning, modello per l'interpretazione dell'apprendimento informale

1. Introduction

Informal learning has already been studied in the United States during the 1950's, from the approach of being the definitive form of adult learning (Knowles, 1950). Later, the importance of informal learning in adult education has been confirmed by several researches (Coombs, 1974; Livingstone, 1999; Marwick, 1991, 2006; Marsick and Watkins, 2003; McGivney, 1999; Mezirow, 1991; Tough, 1979, 2002; Watson, 1999).

It has also been determined that informal learning – which can be a connotation of any activity – consumes significant amount of time and space even in the case of highly educated people (Coombs, Ahmet, 1974). The interest in the subject has grown strong in the last two decades. In Europe, the EU-conceived conception (Memorandum, 2000) of lifelong-learning (LLL) has given a new momentum to the research of informal learning.

An essay, published in 2016 depicts an image about the diverse world of informal learning by traversing almost 600 publications concerning the subject. It comes to the conclusion that specialized literature discusses the investigated phenomenon from a diversity of aspects, highlighting three of these; the groups of: 1) direct literature about informal learning, 2) literature analysing adult-, lifelong- and 3) on-the-job learning. These aspects not only diverge in their sphere of research, but also in the fact that on-the-job learning handles the subject from a structural aspect, while the rest does the same focusing on the individual (Van Noy, James, Bedley, 2016)

The three authors emphasize that since there are several approaches to the subject, there is neither complete consensus in definition, nor in typology. It is hard to formulate a precise definition – as some of the authors (Eshach, 2007; Marsick, 2009) write – because the contents of formal and informal learning often interweave and overlap each other, thus it is hard to make a distinction between the two concepts.

In this study we investigate informal learning from a pedagogic approach. The framework to our viewpoint and interpretation is provided by pedagogy. Zsolnai (1996) considers the root position of pedagogy as a triangle, where learning, learning aids and values are situated at the different angles. According to Zsolnai, this triangle can only be considered pedagogic if 1) the learning individual is present in the situation with its actual learning, 2) the subject of learning holds a value, and 3) actual

help is provided. Any deviation from this is considered pathology. Of course, pedagogic research incorporates a much wider field than the investigation of the clearly pedagogic root situation, as in daily practice complex combinations of symptoms can occur. The model of pedagogic root situation sets out the criteria for deciding which parts the complex phenomena of the investigated reality fragment should be considered as pedagogic, or to say ideal-typical, and which are the ones that are dysfunctional from the aspect of pedagogy.

According to the interpretation of Mészáros (2017), a particularity of pedagogic research is the investigation of the so-called teaching triangle. He suggests that this triangle can be interpreted outside of the sphere of formal education, stating that "specific pedagogic reality is when *people affect each other while mediating values, knowledge and skills*". From the plethora of human interactions and correlations, the author considers those as pedagogic, in which the intention of mediating values, knowledge and skills is present. Thus, the pedagogic aspect of the investigated reality fragment is characterized by learning and by the intentional, teleological engagement of at least one of the participants – not necessarily the teacher – and also by the fact that interaction is directed towards values (knowledge, skills).

Both the approaches of Zsolnai and Mészáros provides us the opportunity to perceive the process of teaching-learning as a partnership relation, more extensive than the typically hierarchic relationship between teacher and student, and wider than the sphere of education.

We consider the investigation of informal learning as a pedagogic research, since one of its definitive elements is the intention for development (Falus, 2004), in order to help the conjugation of different forms of learning, increase the effectiveness of formal education and the consciousness of the learning process, while helping to endear learning itself by the possible most extensive exploration of the processes of informal learning. Of course we have to make it clear that the diverse phenomena-world of informal learning extends over the territory of pedagogic research defined by the pedagogic root situation or by the teaching triangle.

A significant part of informal learning is not conscious, as it were that learning appears only as a by-product in the given process, and moreover, the individuals might not even notice that learning actually happened. Thus, not only deliberate – and purposeful nature are absent, but learning itself also becomes inexplicit and questionable, so those characteris-

tics could be missing that actually define pedagogic research. We investigate informal learning at its fullness, and by the help of a model presented later, we confirm that this just-mentioned inexplicit part of informal learning can also be included in the pedagogic research.

According to Sfard (1998), learning not only occurs through gaining knowledge by the process of acquisition, but it can also be built on participation, thus it can also operate by active involvement in joint communities. The clearest case is when the given community is organized for learning, thus the participation in it is interpreted as learning both by the individual and by the collective. In our work we hypothesize and confirm that active involvement in joint communities – with necessary duration and intensity – can also result in learning – and not only socialisation – even if the given community is not organized for learning, and does not even has the intention to learn or to teach.

2. Typology of informal learning

In our works, we refer to learning according to the definition of Jarvis (2010): "Learning is an existential phenomenon belonging to the essence of humanity: it is a resultant of complex processes, in which the man as whole (including the genetic, physiologic, biological abilities of the body and the complexity of the mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses), construes empirical experiences in the world of social situations, which are then transformed into the cognitive – emotional – practical personality spheres and built into personal existence (the record of becoming an individual), thus changing the individual (making him more experienced)". This definition confirms that he considers the learning process both as individual- and social-level construction. The corporate nature and social structure of learning is highlighted by Burr (2003), who says: "our understanding of the world does not depend on objects, but is an outcome of complicated social processes, interactions and perceptions". Thus, learning is a complex process, in which the individual takes part with its wholeness, and which shapes its individualisation by also building various social constructions into it. We further investigate this interpretation of learning as a continuum, introducing one of its accepted typology.

The above referred authors (Van Noy, James and Bedley, 2016) – pro-

viding a synopses about informal learning – build upon the perceptional framework outlined by Colley et al. (2003) in their works upon embracing the problems of formal/informal learning. The foundation of this approach is that all kind of learning occurs in one continuum, and this continuum can contain different levels of formality and informality. (Reference is based on formal learning.) The indicated problems are described along four characteristics – in the aspects of: 1) location, 2) process, 3) content, 4) purpose.

The listing connected to the first aspect, location (classroom, workplace, home) already pictures the difference between the above mentioned spaces, but the authors warn us that a non-traditional educational environment can also be very formalized, while a classroom is not always necessarily like that. Thus, the definitive factor is not the name of the location, but its real level of formalization.

From the aspect of process, a distinction can be made between different levels of formality and informality based on the presence and role of a teacher/instructor. There can be a teacher/instructor, who uses total control over everything, but there can also be such, who rather takes the role of a facilitator or mentor, and as a result of that, the process runs with much less control. At the same time, learning can also occur without the presence of a teacher/instructor.

From the aspect of content, the absence or presence of a curriculum, and in latter case, its quality gives us some ideas in order to make a distinction between different levels.

Concerning the fourth aspect, purpose, the level of formality depends on how much learning itself occurred with a definitive purpose. It can happen, that the person gaining the actual knowledge does not even notice that he is in the process of learning.

The next table, wherewith the authors also follow the footsteps of Colley et al. (2003), denominates the different forms of learning, also specifically characterizing them according to the above mentioned four aspects.

Table 1 – Continuum of learning forms (according to Colley, Hodkinson és Malcolm, 2003)

	Formal learning	Organized informal learning	Everyday informal learning		
			Self-directed learning	Incidental learning	Tacit learning
Local	School awarding formal credential	School not awarding formal credential, work, or community	Work, community, home	Work, community, home	Work, community, home
Process	Instructor led	Instructor led	Learner led	Contextual	Contextual
Content	Organized curriculum	Organized curriculum	Learner organized	Spontaneous based on need	Social norms and practices
Purpose	Intentionally sought	Intentionally sought	Intentionally sought	Not intentionally sought but aware after	Not intentionally sought not aware after

The basis of being organized in a matrix is provided by formal learning, whose definition includes that highest level of formal learning is characterized by the facts that it occurs in school, awarded with a certificate or a license, led by teacher/instructor/trainer, follows an organized curriculum, the gaining of knowledge is intentionally sought by the learning individual[1]. Organized informal (in other works, non-formal) learning is distinguished in the table from formal by that in this case the activity does not result in being awarded a form credential, however it is still led by a teacher/instructor/trainer, and covers an organized curriculum. In the exposition, the authors add, that organized informal learning can occur in a range of settings including schools, work, the community, and home[2].

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1 "Learning that is most formal can be characterized as learning that occurs in schools that award credentials, is instructor led, covers an organized curriculum, and where knowledge is intentionally sought. Based on this framework, we categorize informal learning into broad categories".

2 "Organized informal learning can occur in a range of settings including schools, work, the community, and home. It is intentionally sought by learners, employs a curriculum and an instructor, but does not lead to an educational credential".

Everyday informal learning is divided into three subgroups based on the level of purposefulness of the individual towards learning. Thus, self-directed, contingent and hidden learnings are discerned. Socialisation is related to the latter. A shared characteristic of all three subgroups that they can occur in school, at a workplace, in a community and at home, but there is no teacher/instructor/trainer, and they do not cover an organized curriculum.

The table paints a differentiated picture about the various forms of learning, and within this, informal learning. Concerning our approach, we have to draw attention, that although the benchmark of being organized in a table is formal (institutionalized) education, but the domain of formality (school) is examined from the aspect of learning. Thus the focus is on learning, providing an aspect that offers a new dimension not only for contemporary schools, but also for the enrichment of educational history researches concerning previous ages.

3. Role of reflectivity in informal learning

Informal learning is present in school and at work just as it is in family or in recreational activities. The Commission Report about actualizing lifelong learning in the European Region (2001) defined the concept as: "Learning that ensues from the everyday activities related to work, family, or recreation. It is not structured (concerning learning purposes, learning time or learning support), and typically does not result in gaining any qualifications. Informal learning can be intentional, but most of the time it is not (incidental/random)". Concerning this definition, the document presents an extended interpretation of the concept of learning, upon identifying lifelong learning as having a purpose of "development of knowledge, skills and proficiencies in personal, civilian, social and/or employment aspects", and the learning extending over every area of life (covering every form, namely formal, non-formal and informal) being one of its projections[3].

3   http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:WgXaN4RyFW8J:www-.nefmi.gov.hu/letolt/nemzet/kozlemeny_tanulas.doc+&cd=1&hl=hu&ct=clnk&gl=hu&client=firefox-b.

This extended approach can also accommodate another repartition of learning, in which Gyula Csoma makes a distinction between concepts that are pragmatic, and the ones that are beyond pragma. The former "fit into […] the orderliness of everyday life, lifestyles, and constant responsibilities. The pragmatic way receives its inducements, objectives in such medium, also making use of the gained knowledge in it". Being beyond pragma means such way of learning, existential attitude – emerging at the dawn of humanity – which "points towards dimensions more universal than the practical immediacy of the manifestations of human existence" (Csoma, 1998).

We consider learning and all of its forms as a process (continuum), which – willingly or unwillingly – is present in the everyday life of the individuals, accompanying them until the ends of their lives. Here, within learning, we focus on informal learning, having a parameter of being present in every day and area of life, and can be recalled by any situation, relation, occurrence, narrative etc., since all of these can also be interpreted as learning situations, enabling the individual to identify them in him/herself as learning, but at the same time they can also stay unnoticed by him/her (also refer to Livingston).

This why reflection has an important role, by whose help – after purposeful development – there is greater chance to make learning more conscious, thus more efficient.

Judit Szivák (2010) links the emergence of the idea-set of reflexivity to Dewey, "who considers reflection (perception) as such form of thinking, which is born out of the doubt of the specific experience or situation, leading to the solution of the problem". Szivák also refers to the work of Schön (1987), who "describes reflecting to something as a kind of experiment, in which the role of reflection is to enable a dialogue between the reflecting person and the problematic situation" (Szivák, 2010, p. 9) The author examines the relation of reflexivity to pedagogy, and its role in the profession of pedagogy, thus her references are linked to this area. She also mentions the works of Griffith and Tann (1992), which further developed Schön's system, separating the temporal dimensions of reflective thinking, arching from immediate automatic reflection towards the systematic-, and further on to the long-term reflection leaning on scientific theories. Besides temporality, this repartition also helps us to see the kind of professional approach.

Table 2 - **Dimensions of reflective thinking**

Fast reflection	Immediate automatic reflection in the course of action
Correction	Deliberate reflection in the course of action
Perusal	Free reflection about the activity
Research	Systematic reflection about the activity
Theory-making and research	Long-term reflection about the activity with the use of scientific theories

(Own compilation based on Falus, 1998)

The table of Falus (1998) interprets reflection in the domain of pedagogical activity, discerning two types within it: one is the reflection of the pedagogue concerning him/herself and his/her respective activity, the other one is about the students. The adapted table does not contain the part concerning the students, and activity is not exclusively interpreted in the domain of pedagogical works.

Reflectivity – typically at a laic level – is also evincible in everyday practices. Good examples for these could be the autobiographies, which, in the course of reminiscence about a walk of life, willingly or unwillingly face the previously experienced problems again, recalling "the doubtfulness of the situation", the precariousness of the past, prompting the individual to evaluate the original response from a retrospective situation. Thus, reflection is inevitable, but the question is, whether the author of the autobiography is able to find a sophisticated, analysing approach, or chooses self-justification instead.

Let's look at a well-known autobiography from the 18th Century: the account of Benjamin Franklin about his own life. Franklin cannot be considered as an average autobiographic, but his work proves that reflectivity was also present in the 18th Century. Franklin gives an account – among other things – about how his work *Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain* was composed. "At Palmer's I was employed in composing for the second edition of Wollaston's «Religion of Nature». Some of his reasonings not appearing to me well founded, I wrote a little metaphysical piece in which I made remarks on them" (Franklin, 1921, p. 39).

Franklin also uses the expression "remark" and uses the kind of thinking described by Dewey. Franklin, the typographer does not reflect concerning his basic activity (composing lines, choosing font types, allocating columns), but about the content of the text instead, whose evaluation

is beyond his basic circle of activities. A pressman is not required to be proficient in sciences or in literature, it is not his responsibility to evaluate the content of the book to be printed. Thus, Franklin's reflection occurred from his activity, but did not concern the same activity. Actually this – reflecting to something beyond his circle of responsibilities, and the publication of his work in London – resulted that his employer – although considering the principles of the dissertation horrible – started to pay more attention to him, regarding him as a talented young man. It was also due to this writing that the young typographer met Lions the surgeon, who introduced him to Mandeville (Franklin, 1921).

In his retrospection he reflects about this dissertation written at the age of 19:

> My printing this pamphlet was another erratum [of my life] In the latter pages of his diary he mentions the pamphlet again[4], and finally summarizes his thoughts about the deeds of his young age, as his convictions "that truth, sincerity and integrity in dealings between man and man were of the utmost importance to the felicity of life" preserved him from "any willful gross immorality or injustice, that might have been expected from my want of religion. […] I had therefore a tolerable character to begin the world with; I valued it properly, and determin'd to preserve it (Franklin, 1921, pp. 50-51).

On one hand, Franklin considers the publication of his pamphlet as an erratum, and on the other, he tries to find out where his reasoning became mistaken "so as to infect all that follow'd". Thirdly, he mentions his deficient religiousness. He conceives that the mistakes and injustices he practiced and accounted in his retrospection were not deliberate, explaining them with "youth, inexperience, and the knavery of others" (Franklin, 1921, pp. 50-51). It might seem that the author is looking for excuses, but we rather sense that he pursues to consider every circumstance, since in his conclusion he deems his youthful character tolerable, which is not free of errors, but something to be built upon, just as his later walk of life certifies.

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4   "My London pamphlet, which had for its motto these lines of Dryden:[…] appear'd now not so clever a performance as I once thought it" (Franklin, 1921, p. 50).

If we look at one of the inspirations of Franklin – Pythagoras – based on whose advices[5] written in Golden Verses, he practiced daily introversions – we find that reflection, and its deliberate practice in the form of introversion was already present among ancient Greeks. We can declare that reflectivity is a (potential) part of human thinking, whose development is worthwhile and necessary for the amelioration of the aspects of vocation/profession (economy), more self-conscious lifestyle (individuum), interpersonal relations (society), and direction of communities (politics). It can establish responsible thinking and responsible acting (helping the development of human gender consciousness). It is the task of education to promote reflective thinking in the course of preparation for lifelong learning, and to provide impulse to the students to deliberately use and further develop reflection. Essentially, the foundation of lifelong learning is a preparation for a more effective informal learning, and within this for a purposeful and efficient self-directed learning.

## 4. A suggested model to understand informal learning

With our next figure, we attempt to present the diversity of informal learning in one model (Figure 2).

Vertical axis [Explicit – Implicit (Tacit)] signifies that informal learning can be pronounced (explicit) or hidden (implicit). In the former case the individual/group either entered into the situation with the intention of learning, or they perceive, identify that learning has happened. In case of the latter, implicit learning – partly or fully – learning remains unnoticed.

Typically, learning also happens in situations when it is unnoticed by the individual, when he/she does not perceive the situation as learning (e.g. socialisation), however a change can be noticed in the individual. (At the "occurrence" of socialisation, the change is usually evoked by recurrent, repetitive situations – which even the environment does not consider as learning.) Since we conceive learning as a process, it is possi-

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5 "Never fall asleep after going to bed, till you have carefully considered all your actions of the day: Where have I gone amiss? What have I done? What have I omitted that I ought to have done?" (Pythagoras).

ble that a certain situation is not interpreted as learning by the individual, still, in the whole of the process – learning – it plays an important role. At the same time we have to emphasize the possibility, that the initially unnoticed learning situation is later noticed, identified, and understood by the individuals.
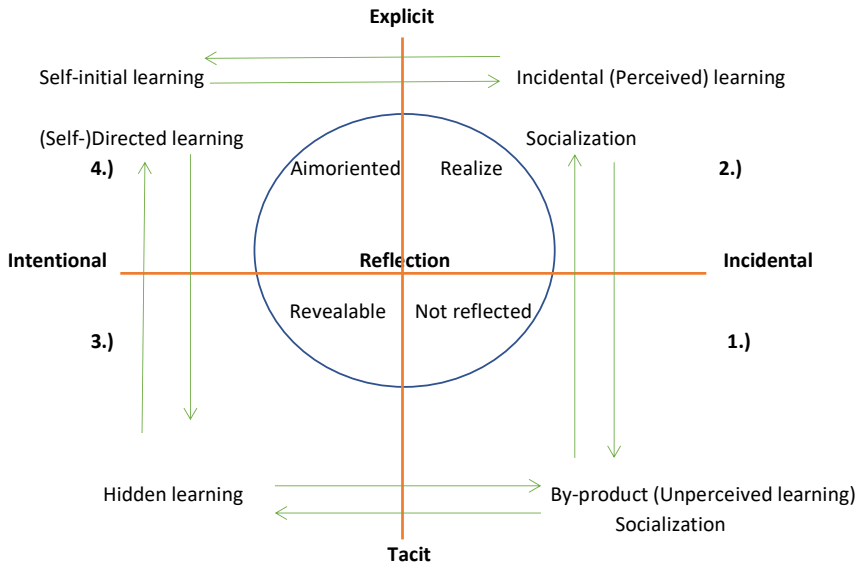
2. Figure Type of informal learning from learner's point of view

Horizontal axis (Intentional – Incidental) shows an aspect of informal learning, whose termini are purposefulness and fortuitousness. Although The Commission Report (2001) describes informal learning as a "mostly non-intentional" process, it still considers the possibility that the individual/group intentionally – even in a purposeful and organized form – becomes engaged in learning by its own impulse and pleasure (which has an increasing role in digital environment).

We have to notice that even intentional learning does not necessarily result in what we have aimed for. It can be more and also less. We consider it surplus if any other, unintended outcome appears beyond the targeted output, and we can speak about deficit if the individual only reaches a medial point (e.g. tries to take an advanced language exam but only succeeds in taking an intermediate one, or pursues to work as an independent accountant, but is only able to work securely under professional supervision).

The two axes, Explicitness (explicit-tacit) and Intentionality (intentional-incidental) marks out the following fields in regards of informal learning:

1. Incidental-Tacit (IcTa), when the learning situation is incidental, and the individual also does not identify it as learning. Such parts of the learning process (respective fields of the co-ordinate system) are called *unperceived learning*. Unperceived learning is a complex phenomenon, as it can even happen when the actions of the individual are not directed towards learning, and he/she does not even identify any learning situations or actual learning in him/herself. Learning emerges as some kind of by-product, causing a change in the actions and/or behaviour and/or narrative of the individual. The difficulty is caused by the characteristic that the fact of learning is not easy to detect, since even if a change occurs, it can be only noticed post factum. It is even harder to find out what was(were) the motive(s), situation(s) etc. that evoked learning. Since we cannot unambiguously discern which one of the many incidental situations, relations, occurrences, narratives etc. has or has not started a learning process in the individual, we have to count with unperceived learning in our system, even if learning is only potentially present in the investigated field. Various elements of socialisation can belong here (e.g. spontaneous pattern following).

2. Incidental-Explicit (IcEx), when in an incidental learning situation the individual notices that he/she has learnt something. Thus, the essential difference from the kind of learning interpreted in the previous field is, that the individual notices the occurrence of learning, while its trigger is not an action, behaviour or narrative directed towards learning. This part of the learning process (this field of the co-ordinate system) is called *perceived learning*. Thus, the common characteristic of the two kinds of incidental learning is that both of them are so-called by-products, being an outcome of some kind of non-learning directed action, situation, behaviour, narrative etc.

3. Intentional-Tacit (ItTa), when the individual/group is deliberately engaged in the process of learning, thus triggering a learning situation, in which simultaneously another kind of learning occurs that was not originally intended by the individual/s, so its occurrence isn't noticed, thus it remains hidden from the participant/s. This field is called *hidden learning*. Albeit we are also in the tacit dimension here, still there

is a significant difference compared to unperceived learning, since learning here is intentional, making it easier to identify for the student what kind of memories to look for; further on, the learning also has explicit outcomes, which help to recall the learning situation, and upon reflecting to it, the so far hidden learning (outcomes) can be also explored. Thus, in this case the post factum identification of learning and its content occurs more easily. This phenomenon can be paralleled with the concept of hidden curriculum[6], used in the course of formal learning. Purposely planned and organized learning could also have unintended, unplanned elements, whose effect can be either positive or negative[7]. The exposition of the interrelations between informal learning and hidden curriculum could be an object of another study.

4. Intentional-Explicit (ItEx), when an individual or a group is involved in the learning process by its own initiative and supervision with a definite purpose. Learning situation and learning itself are both deliberate and explicit, but they do not necessarily lean upon an organized curriculum. This field is called *self-directed learning*. The role and opportunities of this field became multiplied in the digital age. In the same field, the interpretation of organized informal (non-formal) learning[8] also becomes possible, which is also deliberate and explicit, and occurs with a definite purpose. It deviates from self-directed form in that the direction is in the hands of a teacher/instructor, and the learning is supported by a planned, organized curriculum. This variant can be called directed learning, and the comprehensive name of the field is: *(Self)directed learning*.

6 The term *hidden curriculum* was first used by Jackson (1968), and its interpretation is very close to the concepts of Kilpatrick's (1925) *concomitant learnings* and Dewey's (1938) *collateral learning*. Several works have dealt with the exposition of the subject: Green 1977; Rosenthal – Jacobson 1968; Ulich 1976; Vallance 1973, 1985; Wellendorf 1974; Szabó 1979, 1988, 2009.

7 Dewey assigned an emphasized importance to collateral learning: "Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is, much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future" (Dewey, 1938:48).

8 Refer later for exposition.

The arrows signify that the system is dynamic, and there is a back-forth movement between the fields.

The dynamics between 1. (IcTa) and a 2. (IcEx) fields can be described, that unperceived learning can become perceived by a post factum reflection, which the individual can trace back from perceived learnings. Reflection takes place in the second, perceived learning field, but "learnings" are transferred from the first field. Elements from the second field can also get back to the first, unperceived learning field, if the individual is not able to recall or use the otherwise perceived learning, as in this case it essentially falls into oblivion, getting back to the field of unperceived learning.

The presumed dynamic processes between fields 1. (IcTa) and 3. (ItTa) are similar to the ones in case of fields 1. and 2. In this relation, it is possible that hidden learning occurring in field 3. partly or completely remains hidden, thus essentially it can be enrolled among unperceived learnings. It can also happen that in the course of a reflection concerning hidden learning, such previous learnings, learning elements are identified, which belonged to the field of unperceived learning, and now they become explicit. Confirming these dynamics with practical examples is quite hard, but if we accept Polányi's statement (1994), as "we know more than we can express", our model is logically on solid ground. No wonder that Nonaka (1995) also investigates the dynamics between tacit and explicit knowledge in his description of the knowledge spiral.

The dynamics between 2. (IcEx) and 4. (ItEx) fields are more suggestive for everyday approach, since it is easier to find an example that perceived learning in an incidental, non-learning-directed situation became a trigger for deliberate and explicit, (Self)directed learning. These dynamics also work the other way round, since in the course of deliberate and explicit (self)directed learning, incidental elements can occur, which remain independent from the original purpose in the form of perceived learning. (Of course there is also a possibility that the learning elements triggered by the incidental factor are incorporated into the deliberate process, thus enriching it.)

Dynamics between 3. (ItTa) and 4. (ItEx) fields signify that it is possible even in case of deliberate and explicit learning, that another learning occurs, which is not enlisted amongst the original purposes, and which is not incidentally triggered, but is encoded into the learning situation developed by the learning individual or group. For example, someone

can be only interested in Freinet-pedagogy, having exclusively this trend in the focus of his/her interest, however sooner or later he/she is going to get in contact with other representatives and schools of reformed pedagogy, incorporating them into his/her learning. This can be hidden learning, when the individual/group does not make this explicit for him/her/themselves, but it can also become explicit, and can be incorporated into (Self)directed learning.

The co-ordinate system constituting the basis of the model is also implemented by a circle drawn into the middle of the figure, which indicates reflection, signifying that in case of each field, the area drawn into reflection is typically smaller than the field itself. At the same time it also shows that reflection can enrich and modify the learning types described in the particular fields.

We have described the first field (1. IcTa) as the domain of unperceived learning, where learning is very hard to identify. Following the logic of the situation, there should be no reflection connected to unperceived learning. Based on formal logic this statement could be true, but reality is more complicated than that. It regularly occurs that the individual/group post factum identifies these unnoticed learnings – by the help of outside- or self-reflection – and later in the reflectional thinking already interprets them as learning. This sector of our reflectional circle is called *Not reflected.* (We consider appropriate to indicate reflection concerning the area of unperceived learning in another sector of the reflectional circle.)

The second field (2. IcEx) is the domain of perceived learning, where reflection on one hand helps the individual/group to know, recognize, *Realize* the actual fact, and also the subject of learning. On the other hand, as a consequence of the above described dynamics recognizing, realizing reflection can exhort the recognition of the elements, or even the whole of unperceived learning.

The third field (3. ItTa) belongs to hidden learning, which can be revealed and brought to the surface – relatively easily – by the reflection of the individual/group, thus we call it *Revealable.* We consider it relatively easy to reveal, because on one hand, in the course of perceived and explicit learning we can assume the occurrence of another, not planned learning, which, just by itself can involve this kind of reflection. On the other hand, hidden learning is more easy to reveal, as it is connected to deliberate and explicit learning, which can be well defined in time and

space. Of course, it can happen that hidden learning remains hidden, and it won't become anything more than it would be in the field of unperceived learning.

In the fourth field (4. ItEx) we defined self-directed learning, and the reflection concerning its process is called *Aimoriented*, since it is directed towards deliberate and explicit learning, focusing on the planned learning outcomes. Essentially, this makes it possible for the individual/group to comprehend whether the learning could has been implemented on the chosen area and with the planned content. This reflection sector can transform hidden learning into explicit.

We can see that two of the reflective sectors also works beyond their respective fields. One of these *realizing* perceived learning, while also helping to discover unperceived learning. The other is the one that identifies self-directed learning and its outcomes as *Aimoriented*, and at the same time has an important role in revealing hidden learning. Thus, there is also some kind of dynamics between the sectors of reflection, which makes it possible to draw in the "blind spot" – the not reflected sector – into the reflective process.

Our learning and reflection presumably operates in a holistic manner, not in such divided form as this unfolding description of the model would suggest. We would like to emphasize that our objective was to present the complexity of the process and to reveal interior dynamics, that is why we tried to specify identifiable parts of the whole, or to put it in another way: to mark out sections in a process interpreted as a straight line in order to make its complex occurrences comprehensible, describable.

The presented model follows the typology of formal / non-formal / informal learning, as long as the interpretation does not concern formal and non-formal learning. Since specialized literature is neither uniform in the use of concepts, nor in definitions, we consider important to touch on the approach, which discuss non-formal learning in the domain of informal learning.

This approach (Colley et al., 2003) interprets non-formal learning as nothing else but organized informal learning. It discerns certain forms of learning along four aspects: according to location, process, content and purpose. If we look at location, it diverges from formal learning in that it can also occur in school just as outside of it (at a workplace, in a community, at home), and does not result in receiving a credential. In regards of process, content and purpose, the two types have several similarities:

in case of both, the process is directed by a teacher/instructor; content is determined by organized curriculum, and finally concerning purpose, both forms are deliberate and purposeful.

Now that along some distinctions we successfully separated non-formal from formal learning, it is time for us to place organized informal learning – as its other name stands – in our model. This form of learning appears to be deliberate and explicit, also occurring with a specific purpose. Its characteristic is that the direction, leading of learning is in the hands of the teacher/instructor, it is supported by an organized, planned curriculum, which is not created in an ad hoc manner, but was conceived, developed with the cooperation of professionals. It differs from Self-directed learning – according to the four applied aspects – in that its *location* can also be a school, the *process* is also led by the teacher/instructor, as opposed to the other form, where the group or the individual has control, *content* is defined by the organized curriculum; however, concerning their purpose, there is no difference, as both of them defines a deliberate, articulate objective.

We can declare that our model corresponds both the formal – non-formal – informal, and the formal – organized informal – informal repartition of learning, it can accommodate the forms of learning interpreted by both approach.

5. Conclusion

The complex subject of informal learning has been investigated for seven decades. Its field of research has gained a new momentum in the 2000's. In order to clarify relations of formal, non-formal and informal learning, a good assistance is provided by the explanation of Colley et al., who assume that all kinds of learning occurs in a continuum, and this continuum can contain diverse levels of formality and informality. Their matrix projects a differentiated picture about the different kinds of learning, and within this, about informal learning. The fact that the issue of schooling can be traversed from the domain of learning, offers a new dimension not only for the investigation of modern schools, but also for the enrichment of the educational-history researches of previous ages.

Reflectivity is an essential part of human thinking, its presence can already be evidenced in the ancient Greece. Its role in learning was consid-

ered highly important by Dewey. Reflective thinking has an emphasized role in informal learning because although informal learning is a natural connotation of everyday life, being constantly present in our daily life, but a significant part of it is not intentional, learning often appears only as a by-product, and many times it remains unnoticed by the individuals. Reflection can help to elevate these situations, learnings to a more conscious level. Reflective thinking can be developed, in which schooling, formal learning can have a definitive role, propelling students into the more and more exuberant dimension of reflectivity. Linking learning forms in as many directions as possible is an actual and indispensable responsibility of education.

The suggested model for the interpretation of informal learning can grab hold of the diversity of this form of learning with its axes of Explicitness (Explicit-Tacit) and Intentionality (Intentional-Incidental); while at the same time it presents the dynamics between the fields, in whose course tacit forms transform into explicit and incidental occurrences can relocate into intentional. It draws our attention to the importance of reflective thinking. Interrelations between informal learning and hidden curriculum are worthy subjects for further investigation.

Our model can be a useful instrument in order to motivate education to pursue the establishment of lifelong learning, which in essence is the making of informal learning more effective, and within this a preparation for purposeful and efficient Self-directed learning, whose integral part is the development of reflective thinking.

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