

L'Autoformation: The State Of Research On Self- (Directed) Learning In France

**Philippe Carré, Annie Jézégou, Jonathan Kaplan, Pascal Cyrot,
and Noël Denoyel**

The term *autoformation* (literally, self-learning) first appeared in French literature on education in the early 1970's, within the wake of the lifelong education movement. Globally, the notion of autoformation may be viewed according to five complementary perspectives: radical (autodidacticism), sociocognitive, educational, organizational, and biographical, which are presented here. These diverse views are united by a common thread: the role of agency, *i.e.* the human capacity to make choices and decisions and act on one's own, in the field of adult learning and development. Paradoxically, at a time when the European Union promotes the image of a lifelong, independent learner within a cognitive society in the making, autoformation appears as both essential and hazardous for the future of adult education in France.

The term *autoformation* (literally, self-learning) first appeared in French literature on education in the early 1970's, in the wake of the lifelong education movement, in the seminal writings of established authors such as Dumazedier (1985), Schwartz (1973), and Pineau (1977). A first collection of articles specifically devoted to the topic appeared a few years after the upsurge of the concept of self-directed learning in North America (Dumazedier, 1985). By the end of the 1980's a link between both strands of research was established in France and Quebec (Carré, 1992; Tremblay, 2003).

For the past 25 years, a common thread has united several views of autoformation, which will be presented here. Whichever the focus, each of them stresses a common paradigm of agency in learning and self-development. The concept of autoformation places the emphasis on the learner's personal control of his or her learning (learning by oneself), as opposed to the idea of *heteroformation* (learning through the action of others). In spite of differences and even oppositions between perspectives that we shall examine in this paper, all of them underline the agentic dimension of learning. The idea of autoformation implies looking at education, learning, and development from the angle of the agent's personal power to act, as the French philosopher Ricœur (1986) put it, in accordance with Bandura's image of people as "at least partial architects of their own destinies" (1997, p. 8). According to this view, there is room for freedom and choice in the individual's way of leading his or her life and learning, alongside and

beyond the constraints of historical, social, and biographical determinants that French sociology and clinical psychology have repeatedly uncovered for the past 50 years. Within this common paradigmatic view, there is room for *autoformation* as a powerful agentic lever of human learning and change.

Globally, the notion of autoformation may be viewed according to five complementary perspectives. According to the oldest view, which could be labeled *radical*, what is at stake is the learner's complete control of his or her learning, in total independence from educational agents or institutions. We are close to the historical notion of autodidacticism here. Secondly, a more psychological, sociocognitive approach, draws us closer to the North American notion of self-directed learning, with a deliberate focus on the psychological dimensions of adult learning (Long, 1989; Carré, Moisan, & Poisson, 2010). When leaders and teachers endeavor to promote learners' self-direction within schools, training centers or open learning programs, we are faced with a third *educational* conception of autoformation. Fourth, an organizational perspective examines collective practice of autonomous learning in 'natural' settings such as trade unions, voluntary organizations, companies and local communities. Lastly, a biographical outlook, strongly linked to the phenomenological approach of life histories, focuses on human experience as deciphered and analyzed by the agent himself or herself. Let us now turn to these different views.

Radical Perspective: Autodidacticism

Autodidacticism is an old term. It comes from the Greek *autos* (self) and *didaskain* (to teach) and is synonymous with self-teaching. There are many different terms for self-education. As Tough (1967) writes,

...Self-teaching has also been called self-instruction, self-education, independent study, individual study and self-directed study. The term self-teacher has been used to refer to any person while he [sic] is engaged in self-teaching.... Self-teachers have also been called autonomous learners, self-propelled learners, and autodidacts. (p. 3)

As an archetypal figure of clandestine learning, the autodidact epitomizes in Europe a bygone way of learning. When sociologists became interested in this issue they devised a sociological category for autodidacts. Some recognized that autodidacts lose their sense of belonging to a social class in their cultural promotion efforts; others distinguish the old-style autodidacts from the new-style ones, or the true from the false. Obviously, these scientific works are very helpful for the understanding of this ancestral and particular way of learning, but now it seems more appropriate to work on the process of self-teaching in a world where knowledge is more and more short-lived; a world that prompts everyone to indulge in independent learning at some point. Today's processes of self-teaching are in effect different from the old ones. Compulsory schooling does away with the entirely personal learning, which carries the mythical model of the autodidact, and invites us to focus on the activity. We can then consider that a self-teaching episode develops outside of the school environment and independently of a

full-time tutor or mentor. One also needs to distinguish between intentional and unintentional learning. Such episodes are free of any external aims or syllabi, but may rely on the help of others.

In line with the French concept of *apprenance* (Carré, 2005), autodidacticism exists, and has always existed, in all professions. We encounter autodidacticism in ancient Greece as well as in Arab philosophy; in working classes as well as in upper ones; during the French Renaissance as well as among African-American slaves. Characteristics of autodidacticism differ through the ages. For example, during the Age of Enlightenment, autodidacticism seems to have mainly been an aristocratic peculiarity; but, right after the French Revolution it seems to have become extremely proletarian. As much as historians have neglected this issue, educationalists have worked on it ever since the late 1960's. Across the Atlantic, Tough (1967) focused on adult self-teaching projects and questioned the reasons for beginning and pursuing a learning episode; Spear and Mocker (1984) underlined the organizing circumstances in self-directed learning; and Tremblay (1981) studied the needs for assistance during self-teaching periods. More recently in France, Le Meur (1998) identified the elements of a professional neo-autodidacticism; Verrier (1999) endeavored to gain better understanding of contemporary self-teaching; while Bézille-Lesquoy (2003) noticed the discrepancies between autodidactic representations and practices. Nevertheless, self-teaching is seldom considered through the relationships which support it. If we focus on self-teaching sociabilities, we can easily identify that self-teachers' social networks are very important throughout past and contemporary independent learning phases (Cyrot, 2007). Furthermore, the new social networking websites (FaceBook, Hi5...) bring this issue to the fore. Through vastly increased possibilities of high-speed horizontal communication between peers, opportunities for group autodidacticism are soaring.

Scientific interest in the matter certainly prompts new respect for this kind of learning. Indeed, often derided in literature or in everyday life, the formerly stigmatized self-learner is gaining increasing legitimacy in France; more so since legislation on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) came into effect on January 17, 2002 (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2011), allowing academic institutions to deliver formal recognition for curricular units; and, if all requisites are fulfilled, to deliver degrees on the basis of life experiences.

Social-Cognitive Perspective: Self-Direction in Learning

The next perspective on autoformation is directly inspired by the works of several North American authors on self-directed learning from the 1960's and 1970's, such as Houle (1961), Knowles (1975), Long (1975), Tough (1967), Hiemstra (1976) and Guglielmino (1978), as noted by Carré (1992). A global sociocognitive model of self-learning was gradually elaborated on this basis, using three key psychological concepts targeting both to better understand agentic learning processes, and to understand environmental conditions. The emerging theory articulates the concepts of self-determination, self-regulation and self-efficacy within a common framework (Carré, Moisan, & Poisson, 2010).

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) helps us identify the role of self-processes in human motivation, choice and decision-making within the area of learning and education. The self-determination continuum spans the gamut of possibilities between absence of motivation and fully self-determined action, with varying other-determined forms of action in between. What is at stake here is the understanding of personal control (or the lack thereof) in learning projects, educational choice, commitment, persistence and efficiency in adult training and development. The core of research efforts in this domain is on adult learners' initial motivation, decision, freedom and choice to learn... or not to.

When it comes to actual learning behavior, self-regulated learning theory (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008) provides us with an ideally suited empirical and notional framework in order to investigate and promote agency during the learning process itself, once the decision to embark on a learning project has been made. There is a surprising lack of interaction between the two research traditions of self-regulation and self-direction in learning, which opens an avenue for empirical and theoretical work within the sociocognitive perspective of autoformation.

Underlying the two basic concepts of self-determination and self-regulation, a third milestone of the sociocognitive approach is self-efficacy, also encompassed by self-determination theory under the heading of perception of competence. The role of self-efficacy in self-directed learning has been delineated in numerous recent studies. It is a major determinant of both self-determined and self-regulated action and thought. As Bandura (1997) states, "Unless people believe that they can produce desired results by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties" (pp. 3-4). It seems quite obvious that this central statement applies strongly to self-directed learning issues.

The sociocognitive approach formulates autoformation as the dynamic interplay of self-determination (an autonomous, authentic free will to learn), self-regulation (the exercise of agentic, self-controlled learning activity) and self-efficacy. Current research in this area in France has contributed to endorse the model with empirical meaning, based on field studies of nurses, medical doctors, managers, entrepreneurs and teachers (Carré, Moisan, & Poisson, 2010). Future research using this approach should enable establishing a link with the educational perspective presented below, in order to further elaborate on issues relating to learning environments that are favorable to self-directed learning. The notions of autonomy supportive, enabling, or capacitating learning environments, whether they be thought of in terms of instructional design, informal learning or digital resources, are crucial here.

Educational Perspective: Self-Learning Environments

Another important trend in research and practice in autoformation and self-directed learning focuses on open and distance learning environments, designed and implemented by in-house corporate training, adult education providers, and institutions of higher education. Environments designed to individualize instruction so as to foster more self-direction in learning can be found in classrooms, adult learning groups and

many face-to-face situations (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990). But, most of the discussion on the educational perspective in recent years in France has focused on open and distance learning. These environments take on forms such as multimedia resource centers, settings for individualized training, or e-learning. Instructional design in these environments endeavors to support the expression and development of the learner's self-direction. In France, Jézégou (2005) points to two main levers that can be used to achieve this.

The first lever is to provide the learner with opportunities for personal decisions or self-determination in the choice of various components of the learning environment, while helping the person to regulate management of these components (Hiemstra, 2000; Jézégou, 2005). The learning environments are shaped by training modalities, pedagogical methods, course documents, distance communication tools, human resources or spatial and temporal aspects of learning situations (Jézégou, 2008). One is able to promote learner self-direction by providing the learner with freedom of choice in the determination of these. The learner can thus exercise control over the structure and manage learning situations (Garrison, 2003; Jézégou, 2005). However, opening to freedom of choice does not automatically guarantee the learner will be self-directing. Two fundamental aspects are in play here. The first is the learner's motivation to seize that freedom of choice, while the second refers to his or her ability to exercise control over the learning settings. An instructor may play a facilitating role in helping the learner make choices, organize and manage the various aspects in these settings. To be effective, the educational intervention requires transactions based on dialogue and negotiation between instructor and learner according to their respective constraints and resources (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Dron, 2007; Jézégou, 2005).

The second instructional design lever to support expression and development of self-direction in learning is to create the organizational, pedagogical and technical conditions to encourage collaboration between learners at a distance. Collaboration here is seen as the conditions that enable learners to engage in a joint and common approach for solving a problem or conducting a project. A distance collaborative approach is based on transactions between learners (Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Jézégou, 2010). Transactions are social interactions built on confrontations of points of view, on negotiations and deliberations. They are promoted when the socio-emotional climate generated by the interactions between learners is based on asymmetry of the social relationship and affability (Jézégou, 2010). Despite the geographical distance between learners, these transactions and climate create a cognitive and socio-emotional presence which, in turn, contributes to the emergence and the development of a learning community (Jézégou, 2010). In addition, this collaborative dynamic allows the expression of self-direction by each learner in the group. On one hand, it encourages the learner to participate in making choices and organizing all aspects of the collaborative space, and in the collective management of these aspects, while controlling his or her behavior during interactions with other learners, as well as his or her emotions and motivation. On the other hand, this collaborative dynamic may enable the learner to satisfy a need for affiliation and belonging to a community, which is a driving force for his or her distance learning. Such an approach, both collective and individual, may be encouraged by an instructor who acts as coordinator, moderator and animator. Through

such interventions, and despite geographic distance, the educational agent embodies a pedagogical presence for the learners and supports not only the transactions and socio-emotional interactions existing within the learning community, but also motivation and strategies of self-regulation of each learner in the community (Jézégou, 2010). These two main levers, together or independently, contribute to open and distance learning environments supporting the expression and development of learners' self-direction.

Socio-Organizational Perspective: Collective Self-Learning

In contrast with the previous perspective, the Socio-Organizational Perspective of autoformation or self-learning focuses on learning processes organized outside of education institutions. This type of self-learning takes place in associations, unions and other instances of civil society. It may also designate learning that takes place in corporations when it is part of the daily work environment. The fact that the learning is integrated into regular activities distinguishes these forms of self-learning from the previous category which relates to institutionalized education.

Self-learning in groups relies on collective organization of the learning activities by the persons implicated. This distinction sets collective self-learning apart from autodidactic self-learning. In collective self-learning collective aims and individual aims need to be accommodated for in the pursuit of learning goals. In this type of self-learning the weight of collective aims on one hand, and those of individuals on the other, can result in varying degrees of perceived control over choice, management, and orientation of the learning. This does not imply that individuals risk feeling that they do not have as much control as they may wish to when collective aims are strong. First, collective aims may be endorsed by individuals; and secondly, individual aims can co-exist harmoniously with collective aims. By all means, effective learning is a question of the suitability of that which is learned within a social context. In such cases where collective learning settings promote self-direction, the balance between individual and collective aims becomes tangible when the boundaries of the self blur. In research that inquired into learner self-direction in Study Circles, learners could not easily distinguish between their inner self and their collective one when asked about their strategies when regulating their learning. Moreover, learning regulation strategies were more often than not, perceived as collective (Kaplan, 2010a).

One can classify in the category of collective self-learning, networks of learners such as those organized by the Reciprocal Exchange of Knowledge Movement (Mouvement des réseaux d'échanges réciproques de savoirs) (Héber-Suffrin, 2001) where individual goals are salient; nevertheless, embedded in collective organizing of the learning. Study Circles (Oliver, 1987; Kaplan, 2010b), which were used at the end of the nineteenth century and became culturally embedded during the twentieth century in Sweden and the Nordic countries, are illustrative of a format in which social aims weighed more; at least this was the intention of the unions that organized them when they were initially launched in Sweden. The reemergence of the format in the mid nineteen eighties in other parts of the world, sometimes referred to as Learning Circles, is generally underpinned by aspirations for social change also.

These examples are given as an illustration of collective self-learning; nevertheless, many other such forms of learning occur in communities of learners. Self-directed work teams and the learning organization (Senge, 2006) are other forms of collective self-learning that, in the latter examples, emerge in organizational environments. One can find many other examples in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) such as in associations, unions, activist groups or the professions (*e.g.* physicians, software programmers, educators).

When realizing the scope and effectiveness of learning in collective situations (communities of practice, communities of learners, online communities, etc.) one can hardly ignore their potential power to shape the environments people inhabit. Realizing this opens up perspectives for the development of these forms of collective self-learning, if not as a new social reality, at least with renewed interest.

Biographical Perspective: Existential and Experiential Self-Learning

The biographical perspective on existential autoformation, or self-learning, aims to cope with the harsh modern and postmodern experience of incompleteness in adult life. Life is not an achieved given. It still remains something to be done, repeated and reflected on; something to which a shape must be given. This intrinsic incompleteness of life literally founds the necessity for an ongoing process of shaping life and giving meaning to it through biography-forming approaches. In the context of lifelong learning in French-speaking regions, the biographical perspective, the concept of autoformation and the research on what is possibly learned through experiential learning emerged simultaneously, and to a certain extent in a conjunct manner, in the 1970's and 1980's. They were thought to deal with essential and unseen issues, emerging on existential and experiential levels.

Pineau and Marie-Michèle's (1983) book *Produire sa vie, autoformation et autobiographie*, can be seen as a sign of the emergence of a biographical perspective and of autoformation in the early 1980's. Its title underlines a vital constructivist perspective by using the prefix *auto* recurrently in order to indicate a dual appropriation; by the individual of his or her own training, and of the written expression of his or her life story. Pineau conceives life narratives as tools allowing a process of autoformation based on a dialogical co-investment, by the narrator and the listener, of a story in which both promoting and hindering episodes are considered. Through such a process the narrator produces a story of his or her life. The biographical perspective can be understood through the use of three different terms: autobiography, life narrative, and biography (Delory-Momberger, 2003; Pineau & Le Grand, 1992).

The term *existential autoformation* made its appearance in 1995 in an issue of the journal *Education Permanente* entitled *L'autoformation en chantiers* (Self-learning under construction) and edited by the Groupe de Recherche sur l'Autoformation (GRAF). In 1997 Galvani's (1997) book *Quête de sens et formation* (Quest for meaning and education) was published. Existential autoformation has been studied since with innovative phenomenological approaches such as life narratives, learning blazons and other projective methods.

As early as 1991, based on Dewey's works, Courtois and Pineau (1991) popularized the neologism *experiential* in the book *La Formation Expérientielle des Adultes (Adults' Experiential Learning)* and thus anticipated the law on RPL, passed in France in 2002. Denoyel (1999) has been working on pragmatism and semiotics in order to formalize the concept of *experiential reason* through a ternary model: perceptive, experiential and formal. Ferry (1991), after analyzing the power of experience, explores the Peircean distinction between icon, index and symbol, in order to configure the cognitive grammars of intelligence. Mezirow (2001) validates the reflexive turn (Schön, 1991) and suggests thinking over one's experience to develop self-learning as an emancipatory practice. In his view, a lived experience becomes a vital one only when it is exposed to the community, where it must be fed with otherness. As in the case of the related concept of autodidacy, autoformation must be accompanied, as it is in trade unions: this training cannot be self-sufficient. Experiential continuity, as Dewey put it, is a matter of process. Biographical approaches may reveal, through ongoing experiences one lives, moments of intense autoformation; moments that singularize our lives and that cannot be achieved through teaching.

Hopes and Perils of Autoformation

The notional and practical universe of autoformation or self-learning is rooted in the traditional, historical and literary vision of autodidacticism. It also explores the potential of the most up-to-date learning resources of the information society. This 'galaxy' of seemingly diverse notions, based on independent empirical and theoretical traditions and references, is held together by the common paradigm of agency that accounts for the individual's personal control and responsibility over his or her learning and educational career. This shared vision of a fully adult, autonomous learner, as the goal of education in the 21st century, is fully supported by the ideological and political program enshrined in the slogans of *cognitive society*, *knowledge economy*, and the *lifelong learner* (Carré, 2005). Yet, we must remain watchful of the perils of a radically liberal understanding that entails the risk of putting tomorrow's learner in a dangerous position of being the sole manager of his or her education. Contemporary forms of educational Darwinism are thus at work under the banner of autoformation and self-directed learning that could lead to neglecting or abandoning those adults who cannot turn to self-directed learning for lack of personal resources, motivation or information. One of the ambiguities of the autoformation / self-directed learning paradigm is that agency in learning may at once be indispensable at the individual pedagogical level of analysis, and highly hazardous at the macro-political level. This paradoxical pitfall calls for even more collaboration between sociologists, psychologists and educationists around what remains the most promising track of research into authentic adult learning in the years to come.

References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: W.H. Freeman.

- Bézille-Lesquoy, H. (2003). *L'autodidacte*. Paris, France: L'Harmattan.
- Brockett, R. G., & Hiemstra, R. (1991). *Self-direction in adult learning: Perspectives on theory, research, and practice*. London, England: Routledge.
- Carré, P. (1992). *L'autoformation dans la formation professionnelle*. Paris, France: La Documentation Française.
- Carré, P. (2005). *L'apprenance - Vers un nouveau rapport au savoir*. Paris, France: Dunod.
- Carré, P., Moisan, A., & Poisson, D. (Eds.). (2010). *L'autoformation: Perspectives de recherche*. Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Courtois, B., & Pineau, G. (Eds.). (1991). *La formation expérientielle des adultes*. Paris, France: La Documentation Française.
- Cyrot, P. (2007). *Episodes et sociabilités autodidactiques* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Université Paris X, Nanterre, France.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). What is the self in self-directed learning? Findings from recent motivational research. In G. A. Straka (Ed.), *Conceptions of self-directed learning: Theoretical and conceptual considerations. LOS, Learning Organized Self-Directed Researchgroup*. (49-57). Münster, Germany: Waxmann.
- Delory-Momberger, C. (2003). *Biographie et éducation: Figures de l'individu-projet*. Paris: Anthropos.
- Denoyel, N. (1999). Alternance tripolaire raison expérientielle à la lumière de la sémiotique de Peirce. *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, 128, 35-42.
- Dron, J. (2007). *Control and constraint in e-learning: Choosing when to choose*. London: Idea Group Pub.
- Dumazedier, J. (Ed.) (1985). L'autoformation. *Education Permanente*, 78-79.
- Ferry, J.-M. (1991). *Les puissances de l'expérience: Essai sur l'identité contemporaine*. Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf.
- Galvani, P. (1997). *Quête de sens et formation: Anthropologie du blason et de l'autoformation*. Paris, France: L'Harmattan.
- Garrison, D. R. (2003). Self-directed and distance education. In M. G. Moore & W. G. Anderson (Eds.), *Handbook of Distance Education* (pp. 161-168). Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates.
- Garrison, D. R., & Anderson, T. (2003). *E-Learning in the 21st century: A framework for research and practice*. London, England: Routledge Falmer.
- Groupe de Recherche sur l'Autoformation (1995). L'autoformation en chantiers. *Education Permanente*, 122(1).
- Guglielmino, L. M. (1978). Development of the self-directed learning readiness scale. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 38, 6467A.
- Héber-Suffrin, C., & Bolo, S. (2001). *Échangeons nos savoirs !* Paris, France: Syros.
- Hiemstra, R. (1976). *Lifelong learning*. Lincoln, NE: Professional Educators Publications.
- Hiemstra, R. (2000). Self-directed learning: The Personal Responsibility Model. In G. A. Straka (Ed.), *Conceptions of self-directed learning: Theoretical and conceptual considerations. LOS, Learning Organized Self-Directed Research Group*. (pp. 93-108). Munster, Germany: Waxmann.

- Hiemstra, R., & Sisco, B. (1990). *Individualizing instruction: Making learning personal, empowering, and successful* (Higher Education Series). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Houle, C. O. (1961). *The inquiring mind*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Jézégou, A. (2005). *Formations ouvertes : Libertés de choix et autodirection de l'apprenant*. Paris, France: L'Harmattan.
- Jézégou, A. (2008). Apprentissage autodirigé et formation à distance. *Distances et Savoirs*, 6(3), 343-364.
- Jézégou, A. (2010). Créer de la présence à distance en e-learning: Cadre théorique, définition et dimensions clés. *Distances et Savoirs*, 8(2), 11-28.
- Kaplan, J. (2010a). From self-direction to co-direction in adult cooperative learning. In S. M. Brigham & D. Plumb (Eds.), *Connected understanding: Linkages between theory and practice in adult education* (pp. 176-180). Montreal, Quebec, Canada: Adult Education – Congresses.
- Kaplan, J. (2010b). *L'autodirection dans les apprentissages coopératifs: Le cas des Cercles d'Étude*. Sarrebruck, Germany: Éditions Universitaires Européennes.
- Knowles, M. S. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. New York, NY: Association Press.
- Le Meur, G. (1998). *Les nouveaux autodidactes: Néoa autodidaxie et formation*. Lyon, France: Chronique Sociale.
- Long, H. B. (1975). Independent study in the education of Colonial adults. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 8, 54-65.
- Long, H. B. (1989). *Self-directed learning: Emerging theory and practice*. Norman, OK: Oklahoma Research Center for Continuing Professional and Higher Education, University of Oklahoma.
- Mezirow, J. (2001). *Penser son expérience : Développer l'autoformation*. Lyon, France: Chronique Sociale.
- Ministère Éducation Nationale. (2011). La validation des acquis de l'expérience (VAE) Retrieved from <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid1106/la-validation-des-acquis-de-l-experience-v.a.e.html>
- Oliver, L. P. (1987). *Study circles: Coming together for personal growth and social change*. Cabin John, MD: Seven Locks Press.
- Pineau, G. (1977). *Education ou alienation permanente? Reperes mythiques et politiques*. Paris, France: Dunod.
- Pineau, G., & Le Grand, J.-L. (1992). *Les histoires de vie*. Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Pineau, G., & Marie-Michèle. (1983). *Produire sa vie, autoformation et autobiographie*. Paris: Edilig.
- Ricœur, P. (1986). *Du texte à l'action*. Paris, France : Le Seuil.
- Schön, D. (Ed.). (1991). *The reflective turn: Case studies in and on educational practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College.
- Schunk, D. H., & Zimmerman, B. J. (2008). *Motivation and self-regulated learning: Theory, research, and applications*. New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Schwartz, B. (1973). *L'éducation demain*. Paris, France: Aubier-Montaigne.

- Senge, P. M. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: Doubleday/Currency.
- Spear, G., & Mocker, D. (1984). The organizing circumstance: Environmental determinants in self-directed learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 35 (1), 52-77.
- Tough, A. M. (1967). *Learning without a teacher*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Tremblay, N. A. (1981). *Apprendre en situation d'autodidaxie* (Doctoral thesis). University of Montreal, Montreal, Canada.
- Tremblay, N. A. (2003). *L'Autoformation: Pour apprendre autrement*. Montréal, Canada: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
- Verrier, C. (1999). *Autodidaxie et autodidactes, l'infini des possibles*. Paris: Anthropos.
- Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice: Learning as a social system. *Systems Thinker*, 9(5). Retrieved from <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/lss.shtml>

Philippe Carré (philippe.carre@u-paris10.fr) is a professor of adult education at Paris Ouest University in Nanterre-La Défense (France). He heads the *Apprenance et formation* research group within the Cref (EA1589) in the same university. He also runs a doctoral seminar and a Master's programme on adult learning and instructional design and is editor of the refereed journal *Savoirs*. He has authored or co-authored 15 books and 120 articles in the related areas of motivation to learn, self-directed learning and adult education. In 2010, he won the Malcolm Knowles Award for significant lifelong contributions to self-directed learning research

Annie Jézégou (Annie.Jezegou@emn.fr) is a researcher in education at the Ecole Supérieure des Mines de Nantes and in the research team *Apprenance et formation* at Paris Ouest University in Nanterre-La Défense (France). She has been working for close to 15 years on the topic of self-directed learning in adult distance education.

Jonathan Kaplan (kaplan@kaplan-consultants.org) is a social scientist and consultant in adult education who has been involved in project and program design, management, and evaluation in adult education for 25 years. He obtained his doctorate in education from Paris Ouest University in Nanterre-La Défense (France), where as a part-time adjunct professor he teaches cognitive self-regulation. He is an associate member of *Psychologie des acquisitions et des interactions en contexte* lab (EA 4431).

Pascal Cyrot (cyrot.pascal@wanadoo.fr) holds a Ph.D. in Educational Science from Paris Ouest University in Nanterre-La Défense (France). His research focuses on the social dimensions of self-learning. He recently joined the *Laboratoire d'Etude et de Recherche sur les Professionnalisations* (JE 2537) at the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne. He is also a secondary school teacher.

Noël Denoyel (noel.denoyel@univ-tours.fr) is a senior lecturer at François Rabelais University in Tours (France) and a researcher in the DynaDiv (EA 4246) laboratory. His research interests include self-learning, biographical research and experiential approaches to education.