Informal Learning, Practitioner Inquiry and Occupational Education

Professor Brian Sutton and Dr Sai Loo

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Introduction

- Theoretical Framework 1 – Informal learning
  - Rationale of this project
  - Informal learning
  - Professional inquiry
  - Occupational education
- Project details – 11 'case studies'
- Theoretical Framework 2 – Informal learning
- Preliminary findings
- Tentative conclusions

Theoretical framework – I (Informal learning)

- Learning continuum/spectrum: formal (Clarke and Winch, 2004) and informal (Coffield, 2000; Hager, 2004; Hager and Halliday, 2008; Marsick and Watkins, 2016; Segers, Dochy and Messmann, 2018)

- Perspectives of informal learning

- Perspectives of know-how from an epistemological approach(Evans 2016; Loo 2018)

- Relevance of informal learning and related know-how to the case studies of this project

- Possibility of capturing the nuanced insights from the 'empirical case studies' to formulating a conceptual framework of informal learning, professional inquiry and occupational education
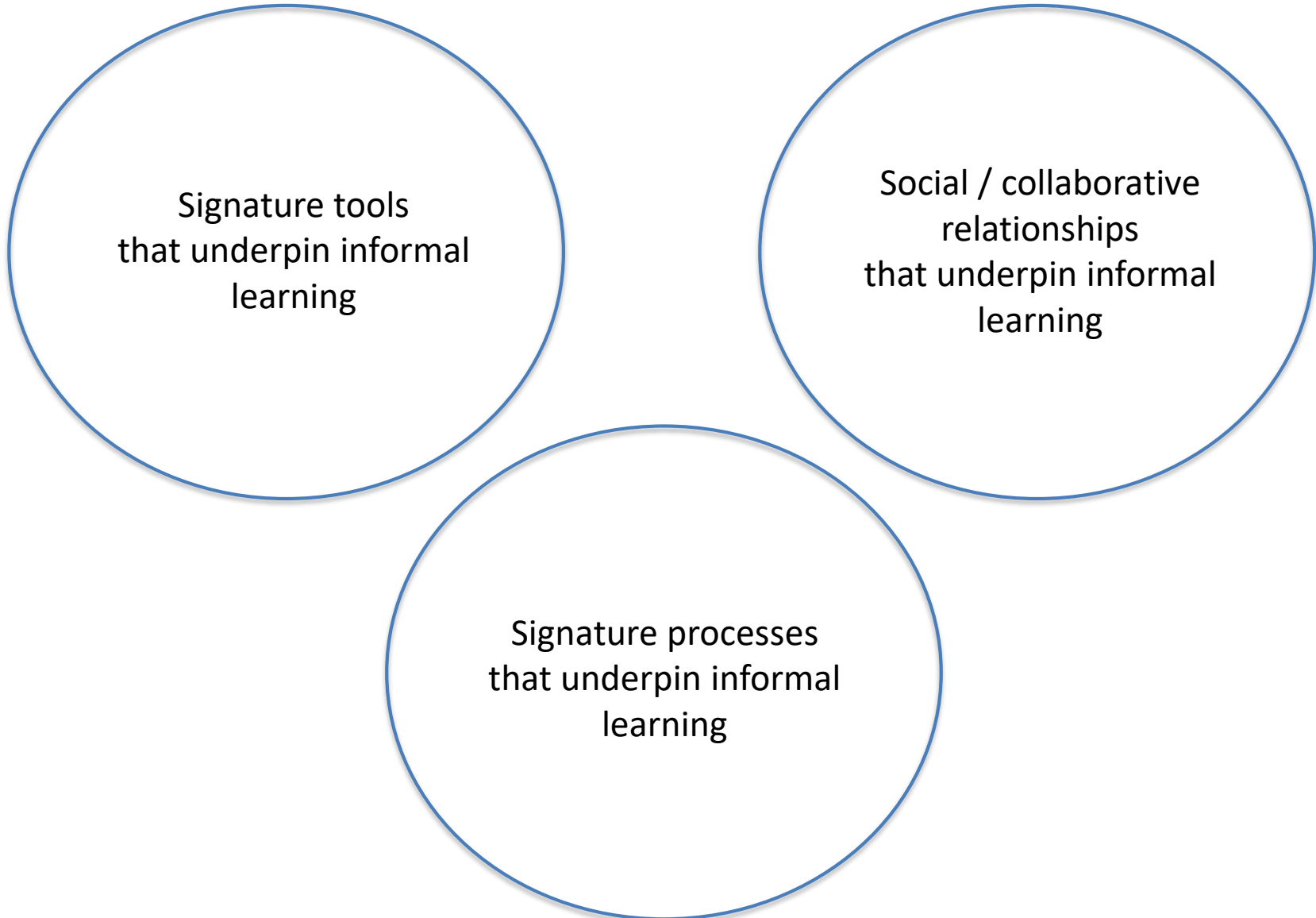
Project details

11 Case Studies

- 2 Board level coaches
- 2 Nutritional therapy academics
- 1 academic – equine assisted leadership development
- 1 corporate leadership trainer/consultant
- 1 head of a professional body
- 1 road transportation strategist
- 1 police consultant – child homicide
- 1 Jazz musician / marketing academic
- 1 Actor

HE Exposure

- 3 Mdx Transdisciplinary MProf graduates
- 2 Mdx DProf by Public Works graduates
- 3 Mdx DProf graduates
- 2 current Mdx DProf students
- 1 no exposure to Mdx pedagogy

Theoretical framework II – Practitioner inquiry

Signature tools
that underpin informal
learning

Social / collaborative
relationships
that underpin informal
learning

Signature processes
that underpin informal
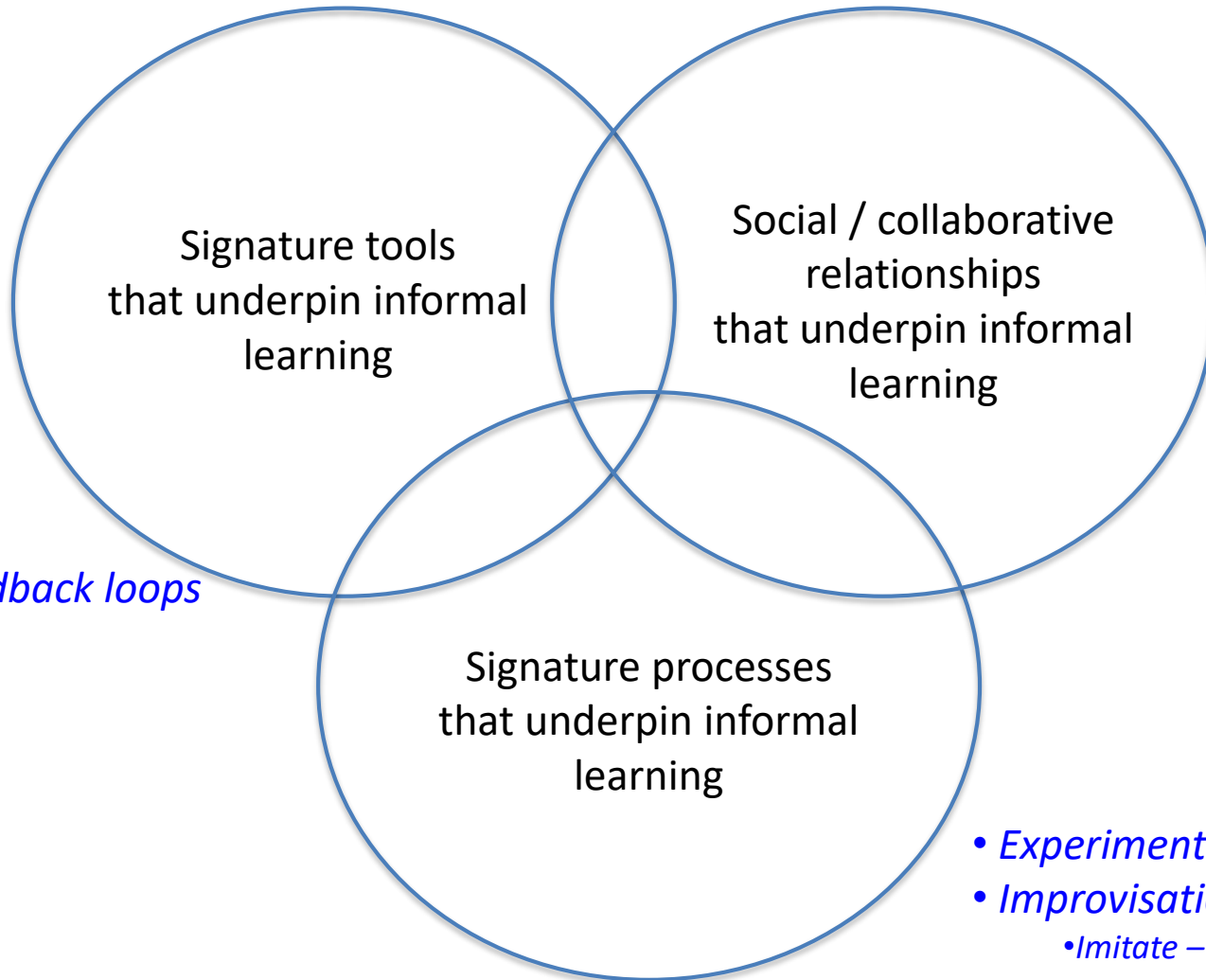learning

Preliminary findings

- 8 of the 11 cases report one or more mid career shifts of profession
  - Nursing → Law → Board level coaching
  - Industrial psychologist → academic → Equine assisted leadership
  - European languages → foreign aid → Nutritional Therapy
  - To be explored
    - Does achievement in one profession conveys transferable skills and approaches that reduce time to competence and increase success in a new profession?
- 7 of the 11 cases highlighted the collaborative nature of learning and sense making with and through others.
  - We are already seeing a
    - Social element
    - Process element
- 6 of the 11 cases operate with emerging professions

Tentative conclusions

- Based upon this small sample we are seeing some interesting trends that may be pointers to a wider patterns of how professionals learn and develop within and across careers
  - All 11 have careers that are punctuated by rather than built upon formal education programmes.
  - Only 2 of this sample are operating within the profession for which they were originally educated
  - 8 of the 11 are consistently engaged in the creation of new understanding and modes of practice rather than the direct application of existing theory
    - None of them think of themselves as researchers and too often their theoretical insights do not feed back into the academy
    - All exhibit natural curiosity
  - 5 of the 11 speak of the importance of
    - Embodied knowledge
    - Co-creating understanding in the moment

Theoretical framework II – Practitioner inquiry

Informal professional learning appears to be focused primarily on finding new ways of being in the world.

Signature tools
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Signature processes
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- *Journaling*
- *Reflection*
- *Multiple feedback loops*

- *Experiencing*
- *Negotiating*
- *Relating*
- *Translating*

- *Experimentation*
- *Improvisation*
  - *Imitate – Assimilate - Innovate*

References

- Clarke, L. and Winch, C. (2004). Apprenticeship and Applied Theoretical Knowledge. *Educational Philosophy and Theory: Incorporating ACCESS*, 36(5), 509-521.

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