

## Chapter 21

# If at First You Don't Succeed, Become a Lifelong Learner: Gaining Capital through Online Higher Education Environments

**Kathleen P. King**

*University of South Florida, USA*

**Christina M. Partin**

*University of South Florida, USA*

**Hidelisa C. Manibusan**

*University of South Florida, USA*

**Gillian M. Sadhi**

*University of South Florida, USA*

### ABSTRACT

*In this chapter, the authors propose examining online learning in higher education as a mechanism for promoting lifelong learning skills, and thus, as a way to provide capital to students. With that in mind, they provide a theoretical foundation to demonstrate the need for workforce development as well as interdisciplinary perspectives on the skills and requisites necessary for successful lifelong learning, and how both are important to the central mission of higher education. This chapter explores the literature and major issues surrounding the importance and use of capital and lifelong learning skills, and how both can be gained through online learning. The authors argue that lifelong learning skills can be generated through transformative learning experiences and that facilitating these experiences should be a goal of online learning in higher education in order to ensure that students have the skills necessary to gain social, cultural, and economic capital in order to remain relevant through their lives in a 21st century,*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-2181-7.ch021

*learning society. In this chapter, the authors discuss several relevant examples of “Tools for Lifelong Learning” including specific examples to demonstrate how online classes can serve as a mechanism to generate capital for students in higher education settings. They provide a model and build upon theory across higher education, sociology, adult learning, and educational psychology to provide a new perspective of the importance of lifelong learning as well as best practices for achieving these goals.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The term “capital” takes on a variety of meanings from different disciplinary perspectives, but we’re looking very broadly at capital as “accumulated value” and we argue that different types of capital can, and should, be cultivated through online learning in higher education. There are several specific themes that emerge upon reviewing the existing literature regarding adult learning and lifelong learning, distance education, and transformative experiences. However, these separate bodies of literature have not been linked together in a meaningful way to describe how lifelong learning skills can be developed within the higher education curriculum, particularly through online courses, by encouraging transformative learning experiences. Additionally, no connection has been made to the increased social, cultural, or economic capital that exists as a direct result of obtaining lifelong learning skills.

Based on this review of literature, it becomes clear that the skill set of a successful lifelong learner can be enhanced through online courses that provide transformative learning opportunities. Generating a profile of a successful online

college course will provide insight as to how the environment can provide the skills necessary to gain social, cultural, and economic capital in order to remain relevant through their lives in a 21st century, learning society.

This chapter exposes relevant connections between the separate bodies of literature related to lifelong learning, online learning, transformative learning experiences, and their relationship to social, cultural, and economic capital. The scenario below demonstrates the need for this chapter. Based on extant research, we introduce a model that illustrates the reciprocal relationship between lifelong learning and capital. The ultimate goal of this model is to serve instructors and/or administrators in developing and disseminating online courses as well as develop recommendations to facilitate student success and transformative learning experiences in online courses.

Example 1 illustrates how very difficult it has been for recent college graduates to enter the full-time job market since 2008. With the USA’s financial crisis persisting for several years, companies have chosen not to replace employees who resign for other opportunities or retire. As every field has scaled back, even graduates like Guill-

### *Example 1. Recent graduates in the full-time job market*

*Guillermo Rey graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Technology in December, 2010. During his undergraduate studies, he worked independently as a private consultant troubleshooting and building both networks and workstations for corporations and individuals to support himself and build hands-on skills. As a highly talented and popular student, people thought he should have no difficulty finding a full-time position upon graduation, especially given the extracurricular activities that he undertook to differentiate himself from the other graduates. However, in nine months, as of September 2011, there were still no call-backs or interviews. As difficult as his struggle is, Guillermo is not alone: his classmates across mathematics, engineering, science and even the liberal arts have also found the job market impenetrable.*

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/first-you-don-succeed-become/70170](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/first-you-don-succeed-become/70170)

## Related Content

---

### Student Performance in Mathematics: Should we be Concerned?: Evidence from a Retail Course

Mary C. Enderson and Manveer Mann (2018). *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology* (pp. 59-72).

[www.irma-international.org/article/student-performance-in-mathematics-should-we-be-concerned/198368](http://www.irma-international.org/article/student-performance-in-mathematics-should-we-be-concerned/198368)

### Opening Doors for Career Advancement: Masters' Students Insight on Program Participation

Edward C. Fletcher, Johanna L. Lasonen and Victor M. Hernandez-Gantes (2013). *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology* (pp. 38-54).

[www.irma-international.org/article/opening-doors-for-career-advancement/102998](http://www.irma-international.org/article/opening-doors-for-career-advancement/102998)

### From Critical Practice to Response: The Outcome of a Singular College Strike

Howard A. Doughty (2021). *International Journal of Adult Education and Technology* (pp. 12-36).

[www.irma-international.org/article/from-critical-practice-to-response/288787](http://www.irma-international.org/article/from-critical-practice-to-response/288787)

### Participatory Learning in Formal Adult Education Contexts

Ilhan Kucukaydin and Patricia Cranton (2014). *Adult and Continuing Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1865-1877).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/participatory-learning-in-formal-adult-education-contexts/105347](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/participatory-learning-in-formal-adult-education-contexts/105347)

### AI Technology and Academic Writing: Knowing and Mastering the "Craft Skills"

Valerie A. Storey (2023). *International Journal of Adult Education and Technology* (pp. 1-15).

[www.irma-international.org/article/ai-technology-and-academic-writing/325795](http://www.irma-international.org/article/ai-technology-and-academic-writing/325795)