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## ECONOMIES, TRANSITIONAL

The breakdown of centralized socialism in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Central and Eastern Europe, and Asia at the end of the twentieth century resulted in the adoption of the market process as a means of organizing the economy. The movement from a centralized socialist economy to an economy based on market relations has been termed *transition* and thus the economies that have adopted this process are called *transitional economies*. In particular, the transition process was associated with an explicit end-state, namely the establishment of a capitalist economic system. Hence, the transition involved, in essence, the introduction of private ownership and restructuring through the privatization of state enterprises; the establishment of market equilibrium through the abolishment of centrally administered commands; the liberalization of economic activity through institutional reform; a change in economic behavior as a result of economic actors adjusting their behavior in line with self-interest and the rules of market exchange; and the reduction of the state to the role of legislator and facilitator of economic activity.

The term *transition* has been criticized as being inadequate, however, because it does not capture all the complications involved during the process. The term implies a

linear movement from point A (centralized socialism and disequilibrium) to point B (capitalism and equilibrium). Specifically, because transition implies an end-state, the achievement of that end-state completes the whole process. It can thus be argued that the process is already complete, for the transition economies have in fact established a capitalist economic system and most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are members of the European Union. In this view, the term *transitional economy* is obsolete.

It can also be argued, however, that the “transition” process is continuous, and that equilibrium can never be achieved. This has led to the use of terms such as *transformational economy* and *developing economy*. In addition, capitalism comes in many varieties, so the question of what type of capitalism should be the goal complicates the process (Marangos 2004). Some commentators have also questioned the goal of achieving a capitalist economic system, with alternatives such as market socialism being proposed as the most appropriate economic system. China and Vietnam are examples of this type of system. Lastly, an alternative term, “integration-assisted transition,” has been introduced by Aristidis Bitzenis and John Marangos (2007), who argued that the goal of transitional economies was the participation in the globalization process and attempting to integrate their economies into the globalized system by opening their borders, liberalizing their markets, and attracting foreign direct investments with the assistance of international financial institutions and multinationals.

The economic program of transition involved four elements. The first was macroeconomic stabilization, which reduced inflation and decreased the debt burden. The second was the liberalization of economic activity, including prices, trade, currency, and convertibility. The third was the reduction of the size of the public sector through privatization and the restructuring of state-owned enterprises. The last element was the establishment of new laws and regulations in areas such as property rights, corporate law, accounting practices, and tax regulation. It is clear, then, that the decision to move to a market-based economy required a total transformation of the economy. Meanwhile, the citizens of these countries were unprepared to face the economic adversity and uncertainty resulting from the free-market process, mainly because they had been protected for so long by the Socialist State.

Although all the countries in transition had more or less the same final goal, the results of their efforts are diverse. This is because different strategies, policies, paths, and conditions ensured a variety of *transition* processes and outcomes (Bitzenis 2007).

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*Aristidis Bitzenis  
John Marangos*

## EDGEWORTH, FRANCIS YSIDRO

SEE *Probability Theory; Crowding Hypothesis*.

## EDGEWORTH-BOWLEY BOX

SEE *Welfare Economics*.

## EDUCATION, INFORMAL

Informal education refers to intentional educational encounters occurring beyond the classroom. Many learning experiences are random and accidental; however, informal education, although it may flow from chance encounters or fortuitous events, embodies an element of premeditation. Certainly informal educators, like their compatriots operating in schools and colleges, consciously set out to promote learning and impart skills. They are teachers and like all teachers will plan, evaluate, and reflect upon their teaching. Clearly some overlap exists with *experiential learning*, since informal educators may also create opportunities for learning. However, the key difference between the two is that informal educators predominately work via the conversation that emerges from reflection on the daily experiences of the individuals and groups rather than the analysis of experiences initiated by the facilitator and educator (see Warner Weil and McGill 1989).

The first text to deliberately employ the term was *Informal Education* (1946) by Josephine Macalister Brew (1904-1957). However, such essentially unstructured edu-

cation, characterized by spontaneity and built upon the interplay inherent in dialogue and conversation, clearly has a long history. Possibly predating the formal variety, unstructured education flourished in ancient Athenian society (Jeffs 2001). There it stood apart from rote learning and instruction as the accepted way whereby individuals acquired social skills, an understanding of the arts, and appreciation of matters philosophical and spiritual.

Although it is important to avoid minimizing the commonalities between teaching in the formal and informal sectors, crucial differences do exist. First, informal educators predominately operate via the mediums of conversation and dialogue. Unlike the formal sector, where the curriculum and syllabus mold the educational encounter, here content emerges from conversational encounters. Informal educators consciously engage in conversation with the purpose of fostering learning, intentionally encouraging others to clarify their thinking, formulate their ideas, and articulate learning needs. The objective is to cultivate dialogue that will enable both parties to learn from and better understand each other (Jeffs and Smith 2005).

Second, informal education is based upon a voluntary relationship. Even within such institutions as prisons or schools, where attendance for one party is compulsory, informal educators strive to ensure those engaging with them do so freely.

Third, informal education requires the practitioner to operate where people are. They need to be “around” and “accessible.” Therefore they must either work in settings they do not control, such as schools and the “street,” or establish sites, such as settlement houses, youth clubs, and community centers, that provide services, programs, or activities that individuals and groups will seek out. For example, those operating in schools work the public spaces, such as hallways and canteens, in ways that enable students and staff to engage them in conversation (see Hazler 1998). In the clubs, community centers, and settlements, informal educators make time between and in activities for users to engage with them (see Hirsch 2005). They also create social spaces in these buildings where conversation will naturally occur. Those operating on the “street” usually target “hot spots” where, for example, young people or the homeless gather. Irrespective of the environment, informal educators draw upon a repertoire of skills to enable them to make contact and develop relationships. This means they must improvise and think for themselves. To be successful, practitioners must, as Brew (1946) stressed, be interesting and trustworthy people with whom others will freely spend time. Also they must be sensitive to the social and cultural environment they operate within if those they work for are to respect their judgment and opinions. Simply being “around” is never enough.