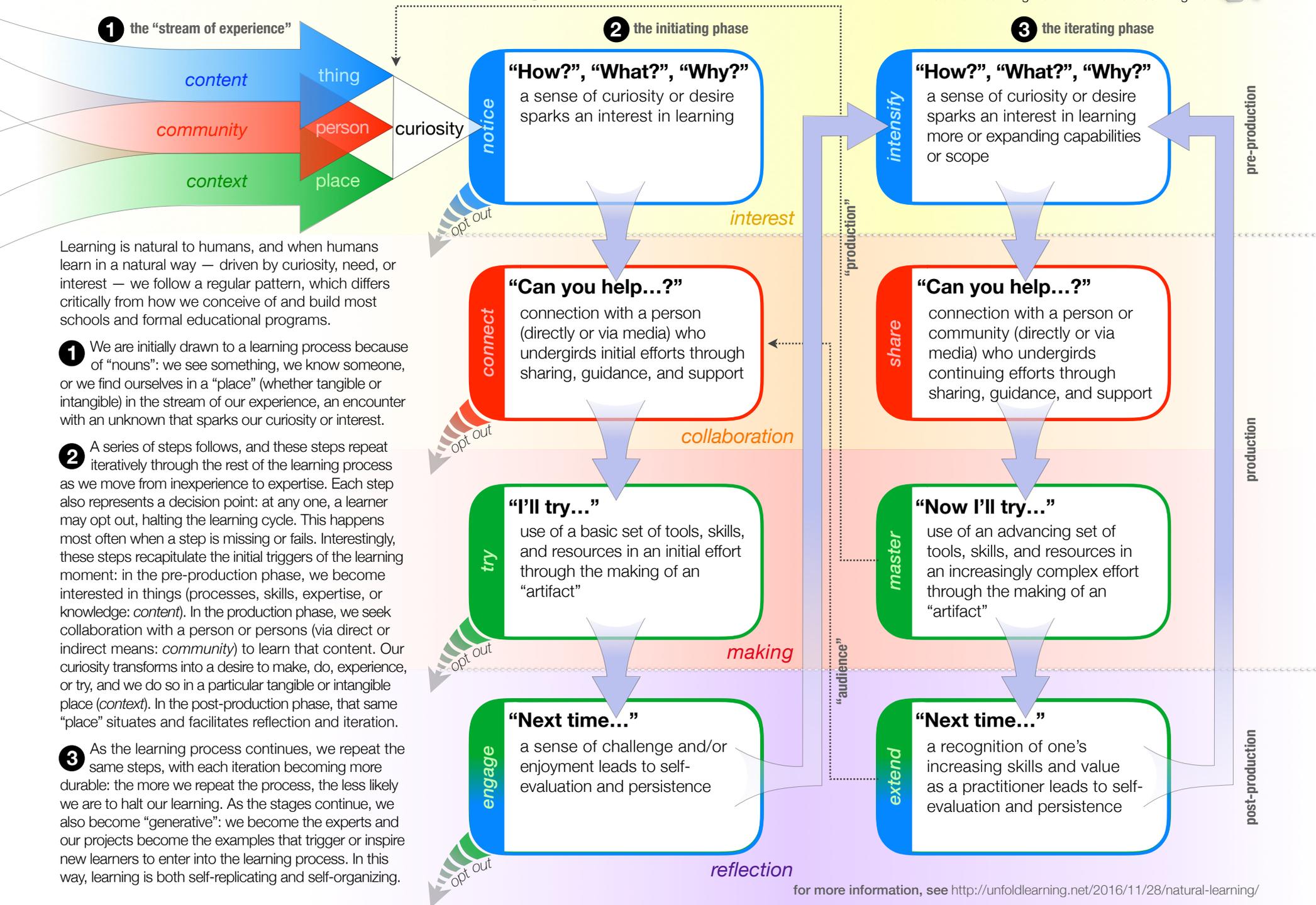


Natural Structures of Personal Learning



Learning is natural to humans, and when humans learn in a natural way — driven by curiosity, need, or interest — we follow a regular pattern, which differs critically from how we conceive of and build most schools and formal educational programs.

1 We are initially drawn to a learning process because of "nouns": we see something, we know someone, or we find ourselves in a "place" (whether tangible or intangible) in the stream of our experience, an encounter with an unknown that sparks our curiosity or interest.

2 A series of steps follows, and these steps repeat iteratively through the rest of the learning process as we move from inexperience to expertise. Each step also represents a decision point: at any one, a learner may opt out, halting the learning cycle. This happens most often when a step is missing or fails. Interestingly, these steps recapitulate the initial triggers of the learning moment: in the pre-production phase, we become interested in things (processes, skills, expertise, or knowledge: *content*). In the production phase, we seek collaboration with a person or persons (via direct or indirect means: *community*) to learn that content. Our curiosity transforms into a desire to make, do, experience, or try, and we do so in a particular tangible or intangible place (*context*). In the post-production phase, that same "place" situates and facilitates reflection and iteration.

3 As the learning process continues, we repeat the same steps, with each iteration becoming more durable: the more we repeat the process, the less likely we are to halt our learning. As the stages continue, we also become "generative": we become the experts and our projects become the examples that trigger or inspire new learners to enter into the learning process. In this way, learning is both self-replicating and self-organizing.