

*Lifewide Learning Research & Development Group*

# **GUIDE**

**Towards a Better Understanding  
of Our Own Learning Lives**

**February 1<sup>st</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup>**

*facilitated by*

**Norman Jackson, Rob Ward & Jenny Willis**

## Introduction

This collaborative inquiry aims to explore the nature of lifewide learning – how, why, when, what and where learning emerges in the everyday lives and practices of participants. The outcomes will inform Lifewide Education’s strategy for encouraging and supporting lifelong-lifewide learning. Over six weeks we are inviting participants to pay more attention to their learning in the different domains of their life, and to describe their experiences and insights in a series of learning vignettes. The collection of vignettes and reflections on learning will provide a useful database through which to develop our understanding of adult lifewide learning. **If you would like to participate in this social learning project please email Norman Jackson lifewider@gmail.com.**

## Process

**1** We will launch the project with an online meeting to introduce the process and provide opportunities for discussion on Monday Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 12.00-13.00. Link to be provided.

**2** You are invited to prepare a map showing the different domains in your life in which you experience living, learning and developing yourself and achieving things that matter to you. The map should represent the current situation. It can be text-based or it can include photographs to enhance the contextual information (Figure 1). A template is provided in Annex 1. The map provides a reference point for experiences you will describe during the inquiry.

**Figure 1** Examples of text- and -image based experiential domain & activity maps.



**3** We hope that as each day unfolds you will be conscious of the situations in which you are learning and how the need to learn something emerges in whatever you are doing. We also hope that you will spend a few minutes reflecting on your experiences and, when something noteworthy emerges, you will create a short vignette describing what happened and its significance to you. We are not expecting stories of major transformative experiences. Rather, we are expecting stories about everyday situations and happenings that we don’t often pay attention to.

Examples of vignettes are attached to these notes (annex 2). Ideally your vignette will comprise a text-based narrative typically **400-500** words (no more than 1 A4 page). It can include photos or other images.

### It would be helpful to include the following information:

- 1 Title : The substantive theme
- 2 Domain: Identifies the part of your life in which the experience occurred
- 3 Narrative: describing an experience that was meaningful/significant to you from any part /domain of your life including information on such things as context, situations, the environment and how, why and what learning emerged

- 4 Reflections on what was learnt & why it was meaningful/significant together with any insights, wisdom and principles relating to everyday learning

Please share your learning experience vignettes with other participants in the community of inquiry Linked In discussion space.

4 We want to encourage ongoing conversation and interactions between participants so we have set up a private conversation and learning space on **Linked In**. Please use this 'safe' space to share your experiences and the insights you gain from them and if possible your vignettes of learning. We encourage you to value other contributions and offer your own constructive commentary and questions aimed at promoting deeper reflection and understanding.

5 At the end of the whole process we will provide an opportunity for participants to come together in a final meeting to share what we have all learnt about the way learning that we have not planned for, emerges in our life.

#### After the process has finished

We would like to curate some of the knowledge we gain from this collaborative learning process for the benefit of the wider community of educators, but there is no obligation to participate in this additional process. We will invite all participants to prepare a short reflective account of what they have learnt through the process, drawing on their vignettes and the process as a whole, for publication in the June Issue of Lifewide Magazine. We will discuss this further in our final meeting on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

### Outline of the research process



#### Some questions to keep in mind when reflecting on a learning experience

- MEANING: What does learning mean to me in the context of my own life experiences?
- MEANING: Does learning mean the same thing in different contexts and in different parts of my life?
- MEANING: Am I learning something entirely new or developing/adapting something I already know and can do?
- CONTINUITY: How did my past experiences influence what I did to learn in my present?
- CONTINUITY: How does what I have learnt shape my plans for future learning?
- CONTEXTS: What was the context for learning?
- DOMAINS: What are the domains in my life in which I learn and use my learning to achieve? (see Annex 1)
- ENVIRONMENT: How did my environments and the people and things in it influence my learning?
- ENVIRONMENT: How does place or space influence my learning? Some things can only be learnt in a particular place/space.
- ENVIRONMENT: What resources did I utilise when I was learning?
- RELATIONSHIPS: What relationships helped/enabled me to learn?
- OPPORTUNITY: How/when did I recognise the opportunity to learn and decide to act upon it?
- PROCESS: What sort of activities did I engage in, in order to learn?
- PROCESS: What mediated/facilitated my interactions with my environment?
- MYSELF: What motivated me to try to learn?
- MYSELF: What has changed as a result of learning?
- BEYOND MYSELF: How has or will my learning benefit others?

*Please add your own questions*

## Annex 1 Lifewide Experiences Domains & Activities Map 2020/21

Take a few minutes to think about your life **at the scale of a year** and ask yourself the question, what are the main areas or domains in my life where I spend time and have my everyday experiences through which I interact with different people and learn, develop and achieve? Use a different box for each domain e.g. work, study, volunteering, caring for others, looking after yourself and the other aspects of your life. For each area - briefly describe the situations you experience and the significant people you interact with? Are you trying to achieve something? What are your GOALS? What are the CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES or AFFORDANCES? Adjust headings and text boxes to reflect your situation. **You can use this map to chart the learning experiences you describe in your learning vignettes.**

**PAID WORK OR VOLUNTARY WORK** *What I do, who I do it with, how much time I spend, how I am learning and developing*

**SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS**  
(eg FAMILY / PARTNERS, SIGNIFICANT FRIENDS)

*What I do, who I do it with, how much time I spend, how I am learning and developing*

**FORMAL STUDY / CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

*What I do, who I do it with, how much time I spend, how I am learning and developing*

**MANAGING A HOME/GARDEN**

**TRAVEL** *When, where why?*

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS**

*What I do, who I do it with, how much time I spend, how I am learning and developing*

**OTHER?**

*What I do, who I do it with, how much time I spend, how I am learning and developing*

## Annex 2 Learning Experience Vignettes

### TITLE: Vignette #1 'Identity work' 13/01/20

#### Domain – Social interaction with friends

**Narrative:** I have an ongoing email conversation with one of my school mates and a lot of the chat revolves around a YouTube link to music we listened to in the mid 1960's. As teenagers we loved listening to soul music played by artists on the Atlantic STAX record label. We bought and shared albums by artists such as Otis Redding, Sam Cooke, Sam and Dave and many more... These chats evoke many pleasurable memories of growing up and often lead to the retelling of an experience we had shared. My friend asked me a question about when we had gone to see Otis Redding live and it got me searching for information on the gig we had seen. I found a poster but no recording of the event but I did find a recording of the show at another venue filmed 3 weeks after we had seen him.

Once I got started on this nostalgic trip I couldn't stop and I have just been listening to some wonderful stories told by Steve Cropper who was the guitarist in the STAX band. Youtube is a fantastic resource for not only music but for discovering stories behind the music.

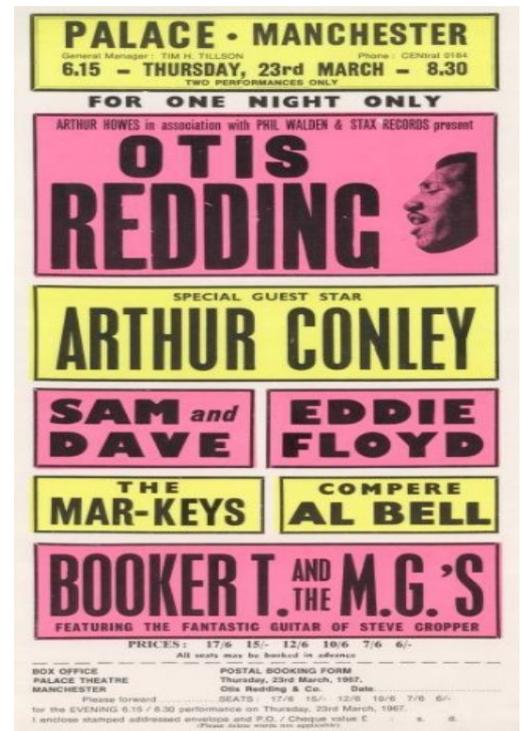


*Joe Chambers interviewing Steve Cropper for Musicians Hall of Fame available on YouTube*

Listening to the music and watching the performers was a fantastic experience and its burned into my memory but learning about how the musicians felt about each other, how they came to be in the band and how they felt about the experience on their European tour took me to another level of understanding.

I also discovered a fantastic article in the independent which fills in some of the details about the tour and the musicians <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/stax-the-heart-of-soul-434649.html>

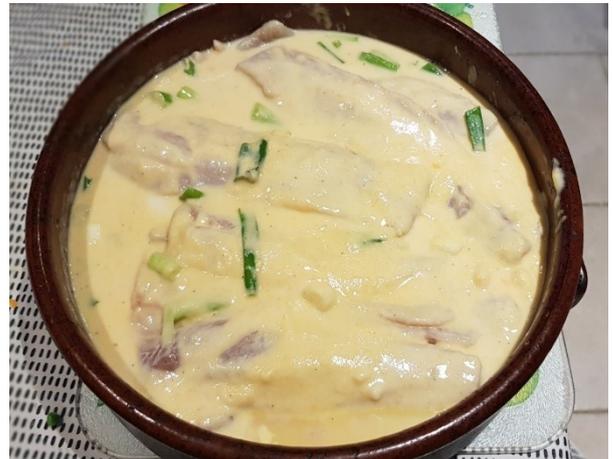
**Reflection:** I've been distracted for about 30mins while I put this vignette together but I think its typical of the way in which my knowledge and understanding gets extended in the course of a typical day along side other things I'm doing. Part of it is about revisiting my past – the who I once was.. it's "identity work". This type of knowledge is distinctive because it's an important part of my emotional wellbeing. While I have been writing this I had lots of memories about that gig in Manchester and times spent with friends (sometimes skipping school) to listen to soul music which I guess relates to who I wanted to become [at that time!].



## Vignette #2 'What Counts as Learning?' 15/01/21

**Domain:** Home and family life

**Narrative:** I know that most if not all of my learning is building on stuff I already know and can do so there is a question of what actually counts as new learning. I pondered this question as I prepared the evening meal for the family. I had decided on Fish Pie. I have made Fish Pie before with fish and a topping of mash potato as the main ingredients but usually used a pre-prepared white sauce. I couldn't find a white sauce in the supermarket so I had to make one from scratch. I find it hard to believe myself that I hadn't made one before, so I decided to look up, 'how to make a fish pie sauce' on YouTube. I found a video clip and followed the instructions and the result was delicious.



**Reflection:** They say necessity is the mother of invention but its also the mother of learning. I make a lot of family meals so I know the basics for cooking a meal, so I was adding to what I already knew and could do. I didn't see the situation as an opportunity for learning rather, it was doing what I had to do. I had watched my wife and daughters make sources so I had a rough idea and I could probably have had a go at making a sauce, but I found it really helpful to watch someone making the sauce that I wanted to make at the point I wanted to make it. I guess you might call it 'just in time' learning. I recognise that I used the resources on YouTube to help me make something in the kitchen and I had all the tools and ingredients necessary so my environment was set up to help me do the job. Through the process of making I know I have committed the simple procedure to memory and so I guess I can claim I have learnt something - even though it's quite trivial. More importantly perhaps, I'm confident to try making other sources.

## Vignette #3 'Getting Stuck' 14/01/20

Domain: Work

**Narrative:** Sometimes after trying everything we can think of to learn we are still stuck. I find this particularly so with technology. I learnt a long time ago that when you get stuck with technology 'ask google' and increasingly 'ask YouTube'. This generally works as long as I ask the right question and that often involves a lot of trial and error until I find the right words. I consider myself reasonably proficient with using a computer and social media but this last two days I've had a couple of problems that I have yet to learn how to solve. It reminds me that sometimes (quite often actually) we may not know how to learn something.

**Experience 1** My wife has just bought a new laptop. She needs to use it for work conversations and yesterday she came to use the ear buds for the first time. There was no sound only loud static. She was not amused and soon proved to me that it wasn't the headset by plugging in mine. As far as she was concerned the laptop was broken. Mistakenly, I glibly said 'no problem', went to settings and discovered that everything that should be enabled was enabled. There followed the best part of a couple of hours asking google and dell what I had to do.. I followed up quite a few things but nothing has worked yet. I will keep trying and my son will be home tomorrow so if all else fails he's my tech support.

**Experience 2** As if this was not enough, I have spent another couple of hours this morning messing around trying to upload a header image and logo to the new linked in group I've set up. I have done it several times before and it is quite straightforward. There are plenty of instructions but these all relate to something that is working and not something that refuses to work. I have cleared my browsing history but it has not cured the problem.



### Postscript 15/01/21

I went back to my first problem several times during the next 24 hours. Although my problem was fairly trivial I was annoyed with myself for not being able to solve it. I like my websites and pages to have an identity and this was irritating me. I was also annoyed with the fact that the information provided by Linked In did not help me and there was a complete lack of any other support on Linked In. I am not sure how long I would have gone on googling for solutions but I eventually came across a post <https://www.linkedin-makeover.com/2015/02/26/linkedin-ga-how-to-add-a-logo-to-your-linkedin-profile-page/> and I knew when I read it, that it provided the answer. The reason I couldn't



upload my company logo and create a header was because my company name was not in the title of the page. So I changed the name of the page to include the company name and low and behold my logo and header uploaded. Then I changed the title back to my original title without the company name.

### Postscript 19/01/21

A few days later I had another go at fixing the audio on my wife's computer. After spending a bit of time searching Youtube I found a clip 'How to Fix Sound or Audio Problems on Windows 10' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncO8vekrfao> I noticed it had over 6 million views so reckoned it must be providing good advice. I dutifully followed the instructions and 4 mins into the video, having updated one of the windows drivers I had sound working in the headphones. I realise that all I learnt was how to fix a particular problem by simply following a set of instructions.

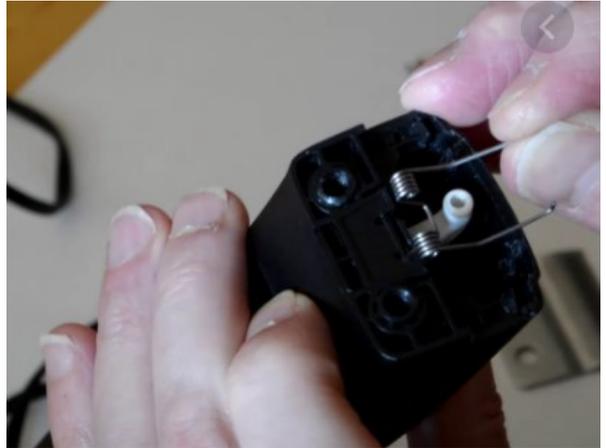
**Reflection:** I'm familiar with this type of scenario when it comes to technology. Something doesn't work and we have to work out (learn) how to fix it. Learning to use technology often involves just trying to use it...it's a trial and error process that is speeded up if someone shows us what to do. But when things go wrong, and the information I have accessed doesn't help me solve the problem – I feel incompetent, angry with myself (and the service provider) and frustrated. The feeling of being stuck brings out a lot of negative emotions and is bad. Worse still there is an opportunity cost. I am way behind doing the things I intended and my emotional state is not conducive to work. I suppose this is also where resilience and persistence kick in. If these things haven't worked where can I find out or get help from? Perhaps that's tomorrow's lesson. I'm going to go for a walk to try get rid of some of my angst.

## Vignette #4 'Needing to Fix Something' 17/01/21

Domain: Home/garden

**Narrative:** 'It's stopped working', my wife reported holding out the cordless branch cutter.... I recognise this as both a piece of information and a request... But these things are often designed to be unfixable, I think to myself, 'no user serviceable parts' and all that. Plus my experience of school (a very long time ago, but still somewhere buried within me and capable of being re-awakened by almost any encounter like this) was that me and practical stuff were not very compatible. In fact I'm tempted to say that my early formal education taught me a lot about what I could not do. However... I got the screwdrivers out and took the dead garden tool to bits, marvelling as I did so about how many, and how many different size screws were holding it together.

With a bit of wiggling it came apart, and I found myself looking at a collection of mostly unrecognisable and mostly inaccessible bits. Will I ever get it back together again? So, with nothing to lose, I lifted the switches out, cleaned these and put them back together and – it worked. Hoorah, and the opportunity to re-mind myself of two lessons 'my skills and competencies might not be strong in this area, but 'it's always worth having a go.' It does not always go this way, but when it does it's another small step in correcting some faulty learning from way back!



**Reflections:** Thinking about this experience a little more, I suspect it's partly about the challenge of 'having a go', partly about needing to try to mend stuff (itself down to a mix of a childhood where not everything was plentiful and a newer desire to avoid continuously buying new stuff as the answer when things go wrong). Plus I'm reminded that I'm not sure that I do know quite what to do when I start something like this, it's more about being willing to have a go and at the end, having done it, knowing that I could do it and having a better idea of what to do next time.

Keeping track of 'stuff' is important from bitter experience - so I did keep all the screws in relation to the holes they came out of. So some transfer of learning definitely went on. And a bit of reinforcement provided by a successful outcome, which helps me to remind myself that my earlier view - that practical stuff is something I can't do - is replaced by a more nuanced perspective, namely that - with some thinking, planning and perhaps a bit more time than others - I can actually succeed at practical stuff!

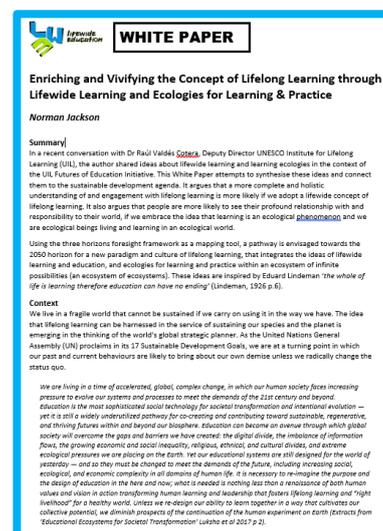
## Vignette #5 'Learning to achieve something at work' 12/01/20

Domain: Work

**Narrative:** I'm on the mail list for the Qatar Foundation's (QF) global education think tank WISE events and publications. In early I was informed of a new initiative called the Learning Ecosystems Living Lab (LELL). I decided to participate in the launch event, an online panel discussion Dec 10<sup>th</sup>. Each member of the panel was given 10mins to speak and what David Atchoarena, Director UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), had to say resonated with my own ideas and beliefs. I made a few supportive comments and posed some questions in the chat box but at some point, while he was speaking, I decided to contact him.

After the session I googled UIL and found his address and emailed him explaining the work that I had been doing with Lifewide Education. He responded positively within an hour and put me in touch with Deputy Director Dr Raul Cotera who is also Director of Lifelong Learning policy at UIL who arranged a time for a discussion on 'Teams'. A few days later on Dec 16<sup>th</sup> I had an hour long discussion with him and a researcher involved in UNESCO's Learning City project. I could tell by their reactions to what I was saying that they were interested in the ideas and practices I was sharing and it was clear that they wanted to continue the conversation beyond the meeting. So I offered to produce a White Paper showing how the ideas and practices of lifewide learning and learning ecologies might be used to enrich the concept of lifelong learning and support the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The positive feedback I had been given motivated me to spend some of my Christmas preparing a White Paper on the theme of "Enriching and Vivifying the Concept of Lifelong Learning through lifewide learning and ecologies for learning & practice". It took over a week of fairly intensive work. I had to familiarise myself with UNESCO's policy positions and their 'Future's of Education initiative'. I downloaded and read UIL's reports citing passages that I thought were particularly relevant and then tried to show the relevance of the ideas of lifewide learning and education and learning ecologies. My aim was to develop a compelling narrative that would make sense to the UIL team. Through the process of reading and writing I gained new understandings about Lifewide's strategic position and value and how lifewide learning and education could be related to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals especially SD#4 'lifelong learning opportunities for all'. My new understandings are expressed in the White Paper and these were incorporated into Lifewide Educations Vision & Strategy statement. I felt confident that the ideas were useful to UIL. I emailed the paper to the Deputy Director on Jan 1<sup>st</sup>.



**Reflection:** In making this effort I realise that what I was doing was more than learning about something. In addition to learning about UIL's work and UNESCO's policy positions, I was developing a new position for Lifewide Education's advocacy role and also trying to develop a collaborative relationship with UIL. That I was successful in this endeavour is shown in an email I received inviting me to contribute to the UIL Blog, and programme of webinars, and a research project with universities.

My learning was driven by an attempt *to achieve several things*: I always find the idea of efforts and actions serving several purposes highly motivating. There was no planning, just an intuitive response to try to keep moving in a particular direction. Firstly, I wanted to develop the strategic position of Lifewide Education in order to show that the ideas we had developed had value in the context of evolving thinking about the role of lifewide learning in the dominant policy idea of lifelong learning. This new thinking fed into our new vision and strategy statement. Secondly, I wanted to show that we were delivering on the role we had set ourselves to be an advocate for lifewide learning and to influence the thinking of decision/policy makers. I needed to learn in order to achieve these things, I also needed to act in ways that were informed by how I have acted in the past in order to achieve similar objectives. I am clearly in an unfolding situation but in achieving this short-term goal I have created new opportunities to keep working towards these goals over a longer time-scale.