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Exploring Ecologies for Professional Development

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Lifewide Education's contribution to

Open Education Week is a global event that seeks to raise awareness of free and open sharing in education and the benefits they bring to teachers and learners. Coordinated by the Open Education Consortium, the event showcases projects, resources, and ideas from around the world that demonstrate open education in practice. The open education movement seeks to reduce barriers, increase access and drive improvements in education through open sharing and digital formats. Open education includes free and open access to platforms, tools and resources in education, including learning materials, course materials, videos, assessment tools, research, study groups, and textbooks, all available for free use and modification under an open license.

What is Open Education?

Open education encompasses resources, tools and practices that employ a framework of open sharing to improve educational access and effectiveness worldwide. Open Education combines the traditions of knowledge sharing and creation with 21st century technology to create a vast pool of openly shared educational resources, while harnessing today's collaborative spirit to develop educational approaches that are more responsive to learners' needs.

The Lifewide Education and Creative Academic community networks believe in the value of open education resources and practices and open social learning and our mission is to contribute to the realisation of this goal shared by so many committed educators all over the world.

Commissioning Editor's Introduction

Norman Jackson

We are publishing this issue of the magazine during Open Education Week because we believe in and try to follow the principles and values of Open Education and Open Social Learning. Since its inception in 2011 'Lifewide Education' and more recently 'Creative Academic', have adopted the principles and spirit of open education. We are two community-based organisations run my volunteers and we provide all our resources on-line and most of them are published under a Creative Commons Licence. We encourage the academic community to share their ideas and practices through our Lifewide Magazine and Creative Academic Magazine. We have developed and published under a Creative Commons licence an award scheme for the recognition of learning, development and achievement in all aspects of a person's life and the guidance materials are free to download and adapt. Furthermore, we offered our Award as an example for a European-wide Award as a contribution to the European Commission's Future of Open Education 2030 Project[1,2] For Lifewide Education, Open Education is already here, we provide a concrete example of an idealistic, inclusive, free, community-based open learning enterprise that embodies the Future of Open Learning vision. It is our belief that our ideas of lifewide learning and learning ecologies are very much in tune with the ideals and practices of open education and learning and we believe in a future of learning that is lifelong, lifewide, ecological and OPEN.

An ecological perspective on learning, developing & achieving

Our learning, development and achievement constitute the most important ongoing project in our life. It is both continuous (lifelong), and rich and diverse in the multiplicity of everyday contexts and situations we inhabit (lifewide). Whether we are employed, self-employed, unemployed, work voluntarily or are retired, activity that can be related to 'work' constitute one of the most important domains for our personal and professional development.

Lifewide Education has been developing the idea of learning ecologies over the last three years [3,4,5] and we have recently published a book setting out our ideas on this theme[6]. In this issue of Lifewide Magazine we want to explore the proposition that when we have a significant learning and development need relating to our work, or vocational or voluntary mission in life, we create ecologies to fulfil our learning and development needs.

In the natural world, every organism inhabits an ecosystem which comprises the complex set of relationships and interactions among the resources, energies, habitats, and residents of an area for the purpose of living. Each organism within an ecosystem has its own ecology within the ecosystem. Human beings are no different. We inhabit our own ecological (ecosocial) system which comprises the set of relationships and interactions among the people, resources, energies, habitats, and other residents of the particular environments we inhabit for the purpose of living.

Learning is one of the most important dimensions of our ecology for sustaining our life and the concept of a learning ecology provides us with the means to visualise the dynamics of complex self-determined and self-organised learning process and appreciate how the different elements of the ecology - contexts, process, will and capability, relationships and resources, fit together. The concept provides a more comprehensive and holistic perspective on learning and development than is normally considered in higher education. The value of an ecological perspective is that it encourages us to see our learning and development as a process that connects us in a holistic and profound way to other people, to our environment and to the things we want or need to do.

PAST
My past learning ecologies provided me with experiences through which I have learnt, developed and become aware of the affordances of my life. I can draw upon this in my new ecology for learning.

RELATIONSHIPS
With myself and with other people - both existing and newly developed, and with things, objects and tools and experiences that provide affordances in my physical, social or virtual environment.

PROCESSES
Enable me to explore the possibilities for action in my environment in order to learn, achieve and develop. They may be learning or task oriented and include the dimensions of time, space and purposeful action. My processes enable me to discover and create the affordances I need to learn, develop and achieve. They enable me to gain the feedback I need to develop my understanding and capability. They provide the means of connecting activities and experiences to create a more meaningful life.

CONTEXTS
The physical and social environment and situations I inhabit with their distinctive cultural and procedural settings physical characteristics and affordances

TIME PRESENT
LEARNING ECOLOGY
created by me for a **purpose**, shaped by my **proximal goals** and **distal goals**

WHOLE PERSON
My learning ecology is self-motivated, self-directed and self-regulated. I have to trust that the ecology I build will enable me to achieve my goals. My will, agency and integrative thinking enable me to pursue my goals recognising the affordances in my life. My capability involves everything I can bring to a situation to deal with it and my self-belief enables me to work with whatever emerges. My self-awareness enables me to monitor the effects I am having and change my performance to achieve better results and reflection helps me make better sense of what I have learnt.

SPACES
The spaces I inhabit or create for exploration, inquiry & learning. Liminal spaces – betwixt & between states of understanding. Smooth rather than striated spaces. Dialogic spaces for conversation and discussion. Creative spaces for imagining and reflective spaces for making meaning.

RESOURCES
Resources are things that have value to me in a particular situation or more generally in lots of situations. What makes something a resource is a matter of perception and my ability to utilise it. Resources help me learn and achieve my goals, they include information, knowledge, expertise, mediating artefacts – signs, tools and technologies

AFFORDANCES
Any situation contains ideas, 'objects' – things, people, circumstances, experiences that provide affordances – possibilities for action formed by my interactive relationship with the situation

FUTURE
My learning and development will be drawn upon in future ecologies which may also be inspired and influenced by my distal goals

Figure 1 Components of individuals' learning ecologies[4]

The proposition Lifewide Education is developing is that an individual's self-created learning ecologies grow from the circumstances (contexts and affordances) of their life and they are established for a purpose that is directed to accomplishing proximal (short term) goals connected to more distal goals or life purposes. Their learning ecologies include their processes, activities and practices, their relationships and networks, and the tools and technologies they use, and they provide them with the opportunities, experiences, information, knowledge and other resources for learning, developing and achieving something that they value (Figures 1 & 2).

Our learning ecologies are the means by which we connect and integrate our past and current experiences and learning. They embrace all the physical and virtual places and spaces we inhabit and the learning and the meaning we gain from the contexts and situations that constitute our lives. Our learning ecologies are the product of both imagination and reason and they are the vehicle for our creative thoughts and actions. They are one of our most important sites for creativity and they enable us to develop ourselves personally and professionally in all aspects of our lives.

CONTEXTS
PAST
PRESENT
SPACES
RESOURCES
LEARNING ECOLOGY created by a person to achieve proximal goals informed by distal goals
RELATIONSHIPS
FUTURE
PROCESSES ACTIVITIES & EXPERIENCES
PERSON THEIR WILL, CAPABILITY, THINKING, CREATIVITY, EMOTIONS, ATTITUDES, CONFIDENCE, TRUST & SELF-AWARENESS DEVELOPMENT & ACHIEVEMENT
AFFORDANCES

The perpetual challenge of development

The perpetual challenge facing all human beings is fundamentally a *developmental challenge* focused on problems like 'learning to deal with and make the most of the situations and opportunities in our lives' and 'solving the problems and challenges we encounter day to day'.
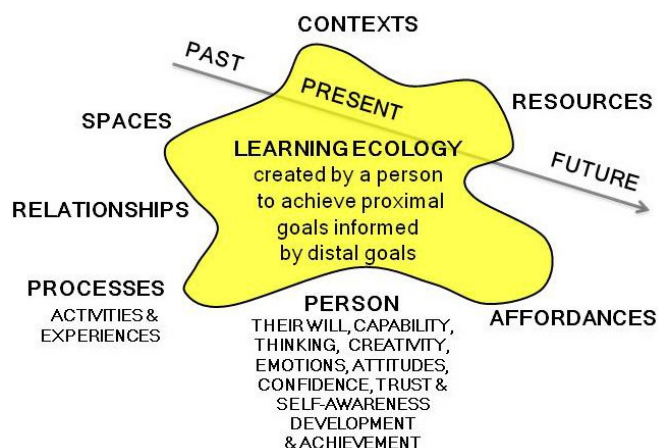
Figure 2 Simple conceptual tool for evaluating the components of an ecology for learning and development [6]

Our ecologies for learning and developing are revealed in the narratives we tell about our significant learning and development projects and events. Our projects come in all shapes and sizes, and in all contexts. We might illustrate the idea of an ecology for personal development (Figure 2) through the scenario of learning to drive a car (Figure 3) an important learning project for most young adults. The scenario involves the learner in a comprehensive and mainly informal way interacting physically and emotionally with his environment in order to develop the knowledge, awareness and practical skills to drive competently and safely.

The process begins when the learner decides they want to learn to drive *(motivation/will)* and take the test to demonstrate proficiency *(proximal goal)*. Consciously or unconsciously their desire to drive will be embedded in the idea of a better and more productive life (distal goal). The individual has created a need and they must perceive and find the affordances available to them in their environment in order to meet this need. The individual, often with parental guidance and support, creates a new ecology *(process)* drawing on the affordances in their existing ecosocial system, to learn and develop themselves in line with their objective. The ecosystem they create includes *context, resources, relationships and an unfolding (emergent) process over a significant period of time.*
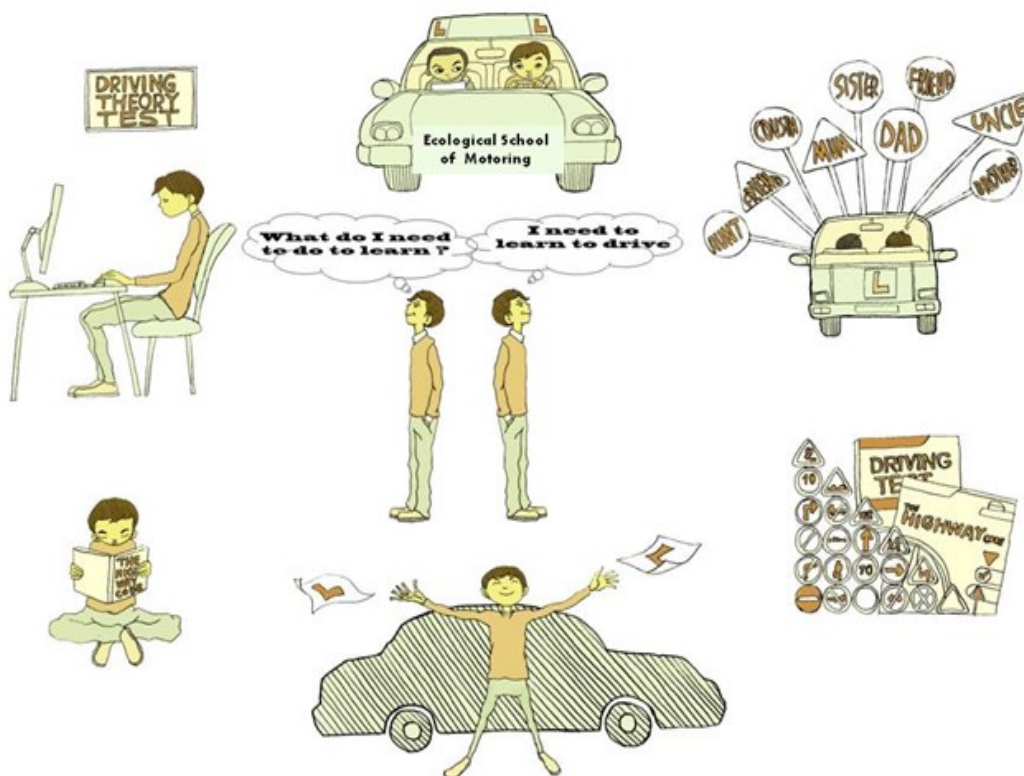
Figure 3 *Personal learning ecology created in order to learn to drive a car and pass the driving test. Includes my context, affordances and process for learning to drive, the contexts in which I learn to drive, and a set of relationships and resources that enable me to learn.*

Typically, the process involves:

- several months of dedicated activity reading, practising, discussing, observing,

- access to a car so they can practise

- access to information about driving and the rules of the road - either as a book/booklet, DVD or on-line resources

- a range of driving instructors including a trained professional instructor

- and untrained family members and friends

- physical environment - safe areas for practising - like empty car parks and quiet roads - then public highways with various traffic conditions

This scenario provides an example of a learner appreciating the *affordances* they have to learn to drive in their particular *context* - their social, physical and virtual environment. They formulate a specific goals - to learn to drive and pass the test to become a qualified driver. Their self-determined learning *process* may well be aided by a professional instructor but the learner also draws on *resources* available for learning in their own environment - the knowledge and experience of people

they know (*relationships*) - family and friends. As they practise driving they are immersing themselves in situations that are relevant to their learning and developing their own case examples of situations they encounter on different sorts of roads in different sorts of driving conditions. The experience is rich in emotion which helps anchor their learning in memorable moments and incidents. Over time experience is accumulated in a range of contexts - road, traffic, day time/night time and weather. As they participate in this process they can tap into the experiential knowledge *(resources)* of the people who accompany them on journeys as both drivers and passengers and their new awareness also encourages them to be more observant as a passenger so that they begin to think like a driver, reading and anticipating situations even when they are not driving. This ecology aimed at becoming a competent driver - may last several months and perhaps involve 50-100 hours of time and effort in which learning and its embodiment in their driving practise is the primary goal.

Through the process the learner learns and masters a body of procedural knowledge and embodies the practical knowledge and skill in the performance of driving and they have to demonstrate this to a defined standard in order to pass their test. Their learning, development and achievement have emerged from their interactions with their everyday environment and the circumstances of their life and the idea of a learning ecology embodies all these things.

Exploring the idea of learning ecologies for developing ourselves in and for work

In this issue we want to explore how we create and use our learning ecologies to enable us to learn, develop and achieve in work related situations. As in previous issues of our magazine we are seeking stories of how people have developed themselves for their work or a particular role or mission that they have set out to perform. We have encouraged our writers to make their own sense of the idea of an ecology for personal or professional development in this way we not only explore the validity of the idea but we open up the idea to new ways of thinking. We are also interested in any research studies that help us understand how people build ecologies for their learning and development in a work context. This process is part of our own ongoing ecology for learning and developing the ideas we care about and we thank all of our contributors for sharing their stories and perspectives.

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ECOLOGY

1. The branch of biology dealing with the relations and interactions between organisms and their environment, including other organisms.

2. Also called human ecology. The branch of sociology concerned with the spacing and interdependence of people and institutions.

Dictionary.com

Learning and Developing Through Work

Norman Jackson

A personal perspective

Much of our development as a professional takes place in the work environment. An ecological perspective on professional learning and development involves consideration of the environment within which it is situated and work practices are conducted. Developing oneself for performing in the context of current or future work is the primary focus for most professional development activity. Some of the activity relating to professional development might involve formal instruction or training; much of our development is gained informally from performing a role and doing a job.

I have had over a dozen jobs/roles in my 40 year professional career but none of them involved me going through a formal educational process like I experienced while at university. All of them required me to learn on and through the job, often, but not always with the help of other people. Much of my learning was through a trial and error process although some of it was guided by people with more experience.

My professional career began while I was studying for my geology degree in the early 1970s. In the summer vacation of my second year I managed to get myself a job working as a sampler in a Cornish Tin Mine. I received no formal training but by working alongside other samplers, observing, talking to them and copying them, I learnt to do the job. I used my experience and the affordance for studying the environment I was in to undertake a research project which gave me the basis for my final year dissertation, and that led on to me being employed by the same tin mine as a mine geologist when I graduated and the a PhD based on a study of the geology of the mine and surrounding area.

Looking back I can see that through the job, I managed to create a new context for myself to learn. My development as a field/mine geologist and an academic researcher were intimately linked to my employment context which provided the necessary affordance for learning work-relevant situations, it enabled me to form relationships with people I could learn from, it provided me with access to places and resources (the mine environment) that I could study. My university education had taught me how to study these phenomena e.g. how to make a geological map, interpret the rocks I saw and take samples, and I later learnt how to analyse the samples to understand what they mean and grow new knowledge from my studies. In this way I had created an ecology that spanned the work and academic environments I was inhabiting and I was able to develop.
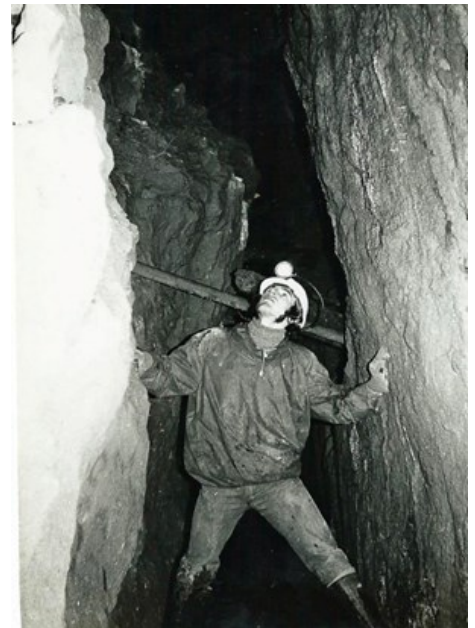
Decades later after I had changed my field of study to education I am able to appreciate and interpret my experiences through the lens of a self-created ecology for learning,   development and achievement. I am also now able to look back on a long career as a geologist, geology teacher and researcher, inspector of higher education, educational researcher, educational policy maker, educational and system developer, broker, social entrepreneur and many other things and realise that my presence and accomplishments in these roles were not through any formal education or training but through developing myself within the environments in which I worked. Many years ago I remember hearing a retirement speech from my Head of Department who was moving on to another Headship in an American University in which he said 'we develop ourselves for the next position through the things we do in our current role'. He was right in that everything we do contributes to our capability but he might have added that 'we actually develop ourselves for the roles we perform in the particular context in which they are performed.'

Learning through Work

In contrast to learning in structured educational environments, most workplace learning is informal and occurs as a by-product of engaging in work processes and activities (Eraut 2010):

Newcomers often have to learn "How we do things here" without being given any specific objectives or advice. Thus a learning goal might be described by a vague phrase like "being able to do what X does". Even when more detailed advice is given, learning will still be evaluated by the extent to which you can do what X does, rather than by some indirect and less authentic type of assessment. You may be given sets of objectives or competencies, but the 'real' assessment will be whether your performance meets the expectations of significant others in your workplace.

Progression often involves doing the same thing, or not quite the same thing, in more difficult conditions or across a wider range of cases. Although these types of progress seem fairly obvious, they are not necessarily conscious. People recognise that they have learned things through experience, but do not necessarily remember how or when. Often people simply realise that that they are doing things that they could not have done a few weeks or months earlier.

Learning is situated in the social practice of work

Learning in the professional work environment is 'situated' in a particular social setting in which people perform certain sorts of roles and engage in certain types of social interaction. As a result people are exposed to, and learn from and with others, the cultural knowledge of the organisation, as well as the field specific knowledge required for practice. These different types of knowledge are learnt and incorporated into the personal knowledge of an individual. Eraut (2010, 2011) identifies different sorts of knowledge that is used and developed in the professional work environment.

- *codified knowledge* necessary for the job in the form(s) in which the person uses it
- *know-how* in the form of *skills and practices*
- personal *understandings of people and situations*
- accumulated *memories of cases* and episodic *events*
- other aspects of personal *expertise*, *practical wisdom* and *tacit knowledge*
- *self-knowledge*, *attitudes, values* and *emotions.*

Work provides a context and a set of situations and circumstances within which things relating to work are learned and new capabilities to perform the job are developed. In other words learning is situated in work practices and the environment in which work is undertaken.

Situated learning was first proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) as a model of learning in a *community of practice* comprising people who share a craft and/or a profession such as a group of people performing similar roles in the same context. Situated learning is learning that takes place in the same context in which it is applied. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that

learning in a social setting like work is a social process whereby knowledge is co-constructed by the people who are directly involved in the work in the specific environment within which work takes place. From a situated cognition perspective, learning occurs in a social setting through dialogue with others in the community (Lave 1988). Learning emerges through a process of reflecting, interpreting and negotiating meaning among participants engaged in connected work practices.

Situated knowledge is obtained by the processes described by Lave (1997:21) as "way in" and "practice." Way in involves a period of observation in which a learner watches someone who is more expert and makes a first attempt at solving a problem. Practice is refining and perfecting the use of acquired knowledge in the same context (p. 21) and perhaps extending it to other contexts. Situated learning is not only reflecting upon and drawing meaning from previous experiences but is immersion in and with the experience.

Situational understanding is 'a critical aspect of professional work, and probably the most difficult' (Eraut 2011). It tends to be taken for granted by all but newcomers in an organisation who often struggle to make sense of practice until they develop this understanding. Situational understanding is hard to develop because people who have it take it for granted and cannot imagine anyone else "not being aware of the obvious". Even more experienced members of an organisation may encounter this from time to time, for example if they take on a new role or move to a different part of the organisation or they embark on an innovation that involves them in interacting with parts of the organisation with which they are not familiar.

Modes of learning

Longitudinal studies of prospective chartered accountants, qualified engineers and nurses learning in the workplace during the first three years after graduating revealed that most learning was not a separate activity but a by-product of their ongoing work; and most of these events involved working with other people (Eraut et al. 2005a; Eraut, 2007b). Eraut and his colleagues, developed a typology of learning modes (Table 1).

Three modes are distinguished. In the left column learning is judged to be part of a *working processes*, from which *learning* was a *by-product*, while those in the right column are clearly recognizable as *learning processes in their own right,* several involving more experienced colleagues and more formal structured learning processes. *The middle column* contains comparatively *short activities,* such as asking questions, observing or reflecting. These activities can occur many times in a single process, and were found within almost every type of process, often several at a time.

Table 1 Modes of learning in work settings

1 Work Processes with learning as a by-product	2 Learning Activities located within work or learning	3 Learning processes at or near the
Participation in group Processes - collaboration Working alongside others Consulting Tackling challenging tasks and roles Problem solving Trying things out Consolidating, extending /refining skills Working with clients	Asking questions Getting information Locating resource people Listening and observing Reflecting Learning from mistakes Giving and receiving feedback Use of mediating artefacts	Being supervised Being coached Being mentored Shadowing Visiting other sites Conferences Short courses Working for a qualification Independent study

Learning and Developing Through Work:
The idea of leaning trajectories

Jenny Willis

Before we read the diverse articles on learning ecologies that follow in this edition of Lifewide Magazine, let us first recall some of the ways in which we learn and develop personally and professionally. In this introductory article, I revisit some of the research I conducted into the complex forms of learning and development gained by students on work placement at the University of Surrey and relate the outcomes of this work to the idea of learning ecologies.

Background

As a teacher, manager and researcher, I have enjoyed helping people of all ages and levels of learning to further their personal and professional development over five decades. My focus turned to professional development whilst working at the University of Surrey, one of the pioneers of workplace training, where a year of professional experience is integrated in the 4-year degree programme. For many years I had conducted an annual survey of students on their work placements and in 2009-11 I joined the research team working at the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTrE). Between 2009-11 I undertook a number of studies into the characteristics or learning and development of the university's students in all the contexts of their lives, including while they were on placement. Building on the longitudinal data base of student feedback on their year's professional placement that I had accumulated, a Fellowship in SCEPTrE enabled me to conduct deeper research into what professionalism means and how individuals develop it [1]. This was followed by further research with undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff, allowing us to increase our understanding of the skills, competences and attitudes necessary for the 21st century workplace. Through the Lifewide Education Community [3], of which I am a founding member, we have continued our exploration of, among other themes, professional and personal development. Here I attempt to synthesise what I have learnt through these various studies.

2009: What Does Developing Yourself to be a Professional Mean?

One of the leaders in the field of researching how professionals learn in the work environment, Michael Eraut, provided me with a starting point for my own exploration. His 2007 model of professionalism[3] identified 8 trajectories, or domains of competence, each containing detailed dimensions e.g. the domain 'Task performance' involves one or more of the following: speed and fluency; complexity of tasks and problems; range of skills required; communication with a wide range of people; collaborative work.

Figure 1
A Typology of Workplace Learning Trajectories(2) which I adapted (3)

TASK PERFORMANCE	1 Speed and fluency 2 Complexity of tasks and problems 3 Range of skills required 4 Communication with a wide range of people 5 Collaborative work
AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING	1 Other people: colleagues, customers, managers etc. 2 Context and situations 3 One's own organisation 4 Problems and risks 5 Priorities and strategic issues 6 Value issues
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	1 Self evaluation 2 Self-management 3 Handling emotions 4 Building and sustaining relationships 5 Disposition to attend to other perspectives 6 Disposition to consult and work with others 7 Disposition to learn and improve one's practice 8 Accessing relevant knowledge and expertise 9 Ability to learn from experience
ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS	1 Use of evidence and argument 2 Accessing formal knowledge 3 Research-based practice 4 Theoretical thinking 5 Knowing what you might need to know 6 Using knowledge resources (human, paper-based, electronic) 7 Learning how to use relevant theory in a range of practical situations
ROLE PERFORMANCE	1 Prioritisation 2 Range of responsibility 3 Supporting other people's learning 4 Leadership 5 Accountability 6 Supervisory role 7 Delegation 8 Handling ethical issues 9 Coping with unexpected problems 10 Crisis management 11 Keeping up-to-date
TEAMWORK	1 Collaborative work 2 Facilitating social relations 3 Joint planning and problem solving 4 Ability to engage in and promote mutual learning
DECISION MAKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING	1 When to seek expert help 2 Dealing with complexity 3 Group decision making 4 Problem analysis 5 Formulating and evaluating opinions 6 Managing the process within an appropriate timescale 7 Decision making under pressure
JUDGEMENT	1 Quality of performance, output and outcomes 2 Priorities 3 Value issues 4 Levels of work

I began[4] by comparing my own data, elicited through questionnaires and interviews with university staff and students, and converted Eraut's trajectories into a colour-coded table (Figure 1). These trajectories were found to anticipate learning outcomes of 4 types: **personal qualities, generic skills, subject skills and subject knowledge.** These are reproduced in Figure 2.
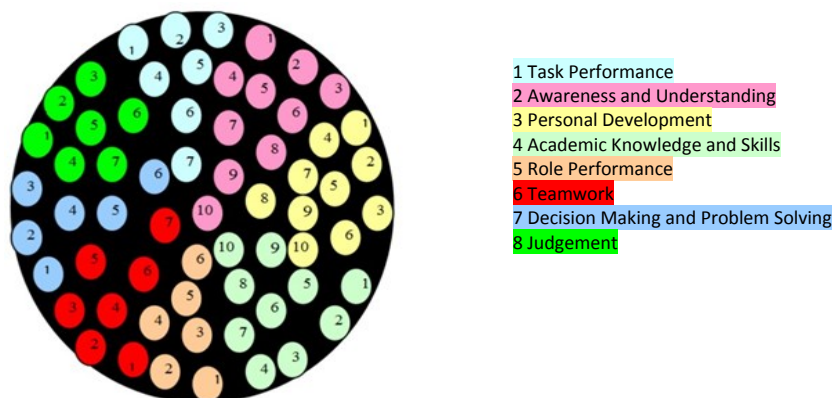
The specific nature of desired learning outcomes was identified and analysed according to the trajectory or trajectories to which each belongs and I compared where learning was happening: in the **curriculum, extra-curricular activities related to the subject of study and general extra-curricular/lifewide activities**. Clearly, some learning outcomes were, or could be, achieved in more than one of these domains, as the colours illustrate in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Overview of Trajectories and Learning Outcomes, Student Feedback, Willis 2009

	Personal qualities	Generic skills	Subject skills	Subject knowledge
TASK PERFORMANCE	2	5		1
AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING	5	6	45	43
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	16	6		1
ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS		10	45	1
ROLE PERFORMANCE	5	7		1
TEAMWORK		5		
DECISION MAKING/PROBLEM SOLVING		4		
JUDGEMENT	7	4		

My next step[4] was to envisage the colour coded trajectories as strands of a multi-coloured rope of professional capability. Within each coloured strand, there were threads of the same colour (5 for Task Performance, 6 for Awareness and Understanding, etc. as numbered in Figure 1). If an individual had developed competence in all trajectories and dimensions, a complete image of their professional development would be as shown in figure 3.

Figure 3 Achievement of all predetermined dimensions of professional development

1 Task Performance
2 Awareness and Understanding
3 Personal Development
4 Academic Knowledge and Skills
5 Role Performance
6 Teamwork
7 Decision Making and Problem Solving
8 Judgement

The conceptualisation in Figure 3 does not distinguish between levels of achievement in each dimension, but this could be shown by using different shading patterns for each level within a coloured pathway. The advantage of such a model is that it allows the individual and the employer to see at a glance which areas of development are missing or require further support.

The study of students' development through the professional training work placement demonstrated the general validity of this way of viewing development of capability through a rich and challenging professional work experience sustained over a year. In figure 4, we can see how the model has been applied to the evidence provided in student narratives in order to derive individual images of the current state of the professional competences they reveal.
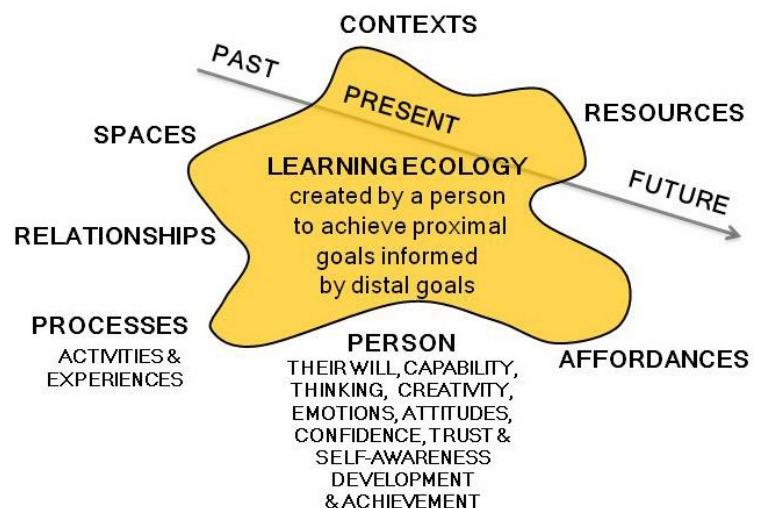
The first observation is how different each student is. The coloured circles offer an immediate image of which domains have been well or under-developed. For instance, narrative 17 has only 3 dimensions of task performance (pale blue) whereas narratives 4 and 22 have five, indicating greater experience in the latter two students. Although not visible in this small scale reproduction, each of the coloured circles is numbered to correspond with the competence listed in figure 1.

Figure 4 Representations of self-reported learning and development trajectories of students after completing a one year work placement (Willis 2010:13 Figure 10)

Narrative 3   Narrative 4   Narrative 17

Narrative 20   Narrative 22   Narrative 28
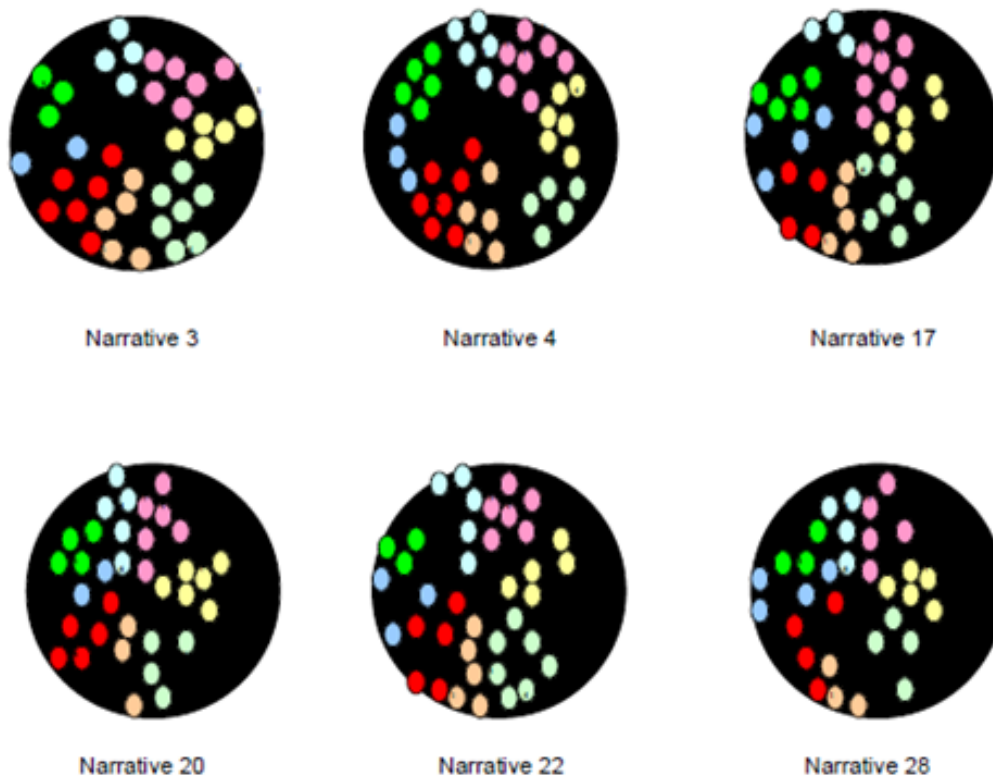
Connecting learning trajectories to learning ecologies

Any significant new project an individual takes on in work environment will require them to create an ecology to achieve the goals of the project and learn and develop through the processes and practices that are involved. In this significant   project, all the components of the learning ecology will be involved and learning and performance will emerge from the ecology. This way of viewing development as improved or new capability and performance along one, several or many   trajectories simultaneously provides a useful and holistic way of viewing the developmental outcomes from an ecology in the work environment [x].

CONTEXTS

PAST   PRESENT   RESOURCES

SPACES

LEARNING ECOLOGY
created by a person
to achieve proximal
goals informed
by distal goals   FUTURE

RELATIONSHIPS

PROCESSES
ACTIVITIES &
EXPERIENCES

PERSON
THEIR WILL, CAPABILITY,
THINKING, CREATIVITY,
EMOTIONS, ATTITUDES,
CONFIDENCE, TRUST &
SELF-AWARENESS
DEVELOPMENT
& ACHIEVEMENT   AFFORDANCES

Figure 5 Representation of the complex learning and developmental   outcomes from a learning ecology in the professional work   environment shown as a family of learning trajectories (based on Willis[4], and Jackson's[5] representation of a learning ecology.)

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Teacher Education and Professional Development: a learning ecologies perspective

Mercedes Gonzalez-Sanmamed, Francisco Santos & Pablo Munoz

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Introduction

Since the 80's there has been a major change in the analysis of teacher training[1] The focus is no longer on external processes of institutionalized education, for example on the training curriculum of teacher education institutes or the learning of specific techniques to teach effectively. Nowadays, the focus is on observing, analysing and conceptualising how every trainee teacher lives, feels and rationalizes the process of being and becoming a teacher, and how every teacher evolves throughout their career by managing their own professional development. The concept of a learning ecology would seem to be relevant to this way of perceiving being and becoming a teacher research being undertaken by the authors investigating the ways in which school teachers develop is drawing on this idea. This article shares our underlying thinking.

Learning to be a teacher: Knowledge and professional socialisation

Research on teacher training aims to identify the types of professional knowledge, the sources of such knowledge and the ways it is articulated [2,3,4] Studies on teacher cognition have revealed the contributions of formalized knowledge acquired in teacher training institutes and the incidence of other contributions, such as non-formal and informal education, in the construction of teachers' professional knowledge[5,6,7] Shulman,[4,8] a pioneer in this line of research, identifies four sources of teacher professional knowledge namely: schooling disciplines, educational materials and structures, school research and the vision of the practice itself. The first three components refer to formalized knowledge that is often learned and transmitted as propositional knowledge in teacher training institutes through regulated and fixed systems. The practice of teaching itself as a source of learning, provides personal knowledge through cases, anecdotes and stories that require effort to create meaning and conceptualization so it can be codified and formalized. Such knowledge, derived from the process of teaching in a specific context, opens a possibility of recognition of learning in uncertain and changing situations, in which interaction plays a very important role. Such contextualised learning also involves learning with others, even among people with different characteristics and diverse roles. It is learning that happens when one is acting and through reflexive processes and discussion by peers Schön [9,10], it can become a high-level conceptual knowledge.

Moreover, through the theories of professional socialization of teachers the influence of personal, structural and institutional variables can be analysed. These occur before and during institutionalized training and after training as part of the professional performance, and they have an impact on the configuration of learning and professional development of teachers[11]. By means of socialization processes, a kind of tacit knowledge is generated, that commonly remains hidden and about which we are often unaware until it is needed. It is a knowledge that takes shape through a person's biography itself and through the experiences that gradually everyone develops in the sphere of professional, familiar or friendship relationships[12,13].

In an effort of synthesis and with the aim of structuring the available research in the nineties, González-Sanmamed[14] conceptualizes learning to teach as a double process of building professional knowledge and becoming socialized into the profession field. It involves combining formalized and codified learning that makes up the training curriculum of trainee teacher and the learning experiences that occur spontaneously and unconsciously, even before making the decision to begin studies to become a teacher and that persist once he is integrated into teacher professional cultures. In a research with

trainee teachers about the process for becoming a teacher, a factorial analysis was carried out that allowed three determinant factors of the professional learning of teachers to be identified: the first factor, with greater weight, brought together the items related to the professional activity itself; the second factor referred to professional relations and interactions; and the third factor pointed to the pre-professional experiences, i.e., to their own biography. In other qualitative researches, a thorough study of the process of learning to teach that the trainee teachers develop in the frame of their training programme, has been carried out[15], in which the incidence of their biography[16] and particularly the contribution from their experience along their *practicum* have been taken into account[17].

We must take into account that research on teachers' professional knowledge is no stranger to disputes on the pedagogical knowledge base, about how it is generated and how it should be used in teacher training courses[18,19,20,21,22] Fenstermacher[23] defends the existence of different connoisseurs and various known objects in the study of teaching, which will lead to a double discourse: one more theoretical based on research, independent of context and underpinned by the canons of scientific tradition; the other practical, linked to action, with its own specific nature, situational and narrative based, that has its origin in the activity of teachers when they review and reconstruct their actions as a result of systematic reflection[24,25,26]

The differences in the origin and the way of developing pedagogic knowledge will also condition the functions and uses that will be attributed to it [3,27] Therefore, analysis of the construction of teachers' professional knowledge refers to problems of an ontological, epistemological and methodological nature, regarding its origin and structure. This complexity causes administrative and institutional difficulties when the design of teacher training programs has to be addressed.

Professional Development for Teaching in the Digital Age

The characteristics of the networked digital society have substantially changed the way we live, interact, work and learn. There has been a significant transformation not only regarding what and how we learn, but also when and where we learn. Apart from the classic models of classroom-based training, different options of informal and non formal education have emerged, especially by means of the expansion of ICT and online education. Learning is not developed in a linear or standardized way, the roles of teacher and student can be interchanged, and the means of accessing and internalizing content is now more flexible, open and multiple. Mobile devices allow ubiquitous learning and a greater connectivity contributes to the development of virtual learning communities.

Every person and every professional has a wide and diverse range of possibilities for learning, training and developing themselves. But learning depends on certain personal characteristics and specific factors that everyone has by virtue of the strategies they use, the relationships they have and the environments in which they live. In this uniquely personal and situated context the concept of learning ecologies is used to refer to both physical and virtual environments, that provide opportunities for learning through activities, resources, relationships and the interactions that emerge in a person's own unique contexts [28,29,30,31,32]

Ecological Perspectives

A learning ecology perspective is extremely useful to review and enrich the research, reflections and proposals about the processes of teacher training and continuing professional learning and development. As already mentioned above, the research conducted on learning and teacher professional development highlights the confluence of the formal components carried out through institutionalized training programs and the incidence of other informal and non formal factors, both conscious and tacit. Such a scenario is rich, complex and still largely unknown because research has not   provided any conclusive data. Personal professional learning and development contexts are complicated and enriched by the technologies and digital environments with which individuals leverage knowledge and experiences.

The challenge for research into professional development is to adequately embrace the personal dynamics and integration of learning and development across all these contexts. Research now being undertaken at the Universidad de A Coruña conceptualizes learning ecologies as an all-inclusive metaphor through which teacher training and ongoing learning and professional development in the teaching context can be observed, analysed and understood.
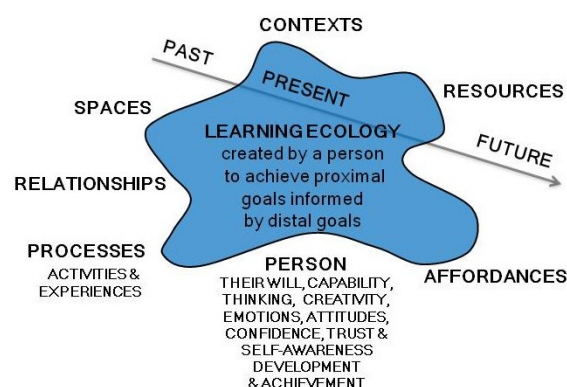
The learning ecologies perspective in teacher education and professional learning could lead to the following considerations:

From the point of view of research: an imperative need to incorporate the analysis of learning ecologies in order to review and complete studies on learning and teacher professional development. Specifically, the knowledge acquired through informal and non formal mechanisms should be considered, particularly through the possibilities offered by electronic devices and the various contexts in which enriching personal and professional experiences may arise[33,34] :for instance, giving value to the Personal Learning Environments and taking into account that its improvement may contribute to the teacher professional development[35] or the opportunities that MOOCs may offer [36].

From the point of view of the processes of formal education: it is absolutely necessary to banish the idea of trainee teacher as someone who enters the course with a blank mind. It will be necessary to recognize the knowledge that future teachers have developed through their life history through the diversity of possibilities that the networked society offers to them and then to contrast it in the light of the formal knowledge that educational research has codified

From the point of view of teachers' professional knowledge: the value of the tacit knowledge a teacher has developed throughout their life is undeniable. This kind of knowledge is sometimes relegated to a personal sphere that neither is valued nor is taken into account when studies to become a teacher are initiated. But many authors insist that during training, the implicit knowledge (beliefs and values) that every aspiring teacher has developed through their life story has to be made explicit, and in order to achieve it, they suggest a double process that combines reflection on practical experience and reflection on theoretical knowledge.

As to the conceptualization of teacher professional learning: we must begin to recognize the potential of the experiences that each person has accumulated in his career and how they have helped to shape their way of being and learning. During training, one will have to help students to be aware of their learning mechanisms so that they can regulate and manage them properly.

As for the design and implementation of training programmes, it should be taken into account the possibilities of peer learning and the importance of collaboration as a powerful and highly satisfactory mechanism to promote teacher professional development.

A learning ecology perspective provides a new opportunity to assess learning processes and teacher professional development. Especially, it reinforces the idea of recognising a teacher as a competent professional, who:

a.   builds expertise about teaching through different experiences, by integrating knowledge that comes from diverse contexts and sources,

b.   articulates conscious processes of analysis and reflection that encourage self-learning and peer learning,

c.   leverages contextual resources to develop rich and valuable personal and professional relationships that contribute to refining their thoughts and actions in order to promote improvements at conceptual, procedural and attitudinal level, and support their ongoing development as a professional.

Further research is necessary to find responses more consistent with the fundamental and perennial questions of teacher training, and also with the issues that are emerging in terms of the evolution of society itself and specifically the new requirements of education as a social practice located within the digital age.

In order to learn how to improve teacher training it is necessary to recognize the various sources, mechanisms and processes that can be used today in learning in the teaching profession and, simultaneously, help future teachers become aware of it and use it for their own professional development. Conceptualising learning and development as a holistic process deeply rooted in the circumstances of the individual teacher's professional and wider life might provide trainees with a useful aid to visualise their own learning and development process.

> *A copy of the article with references can be accessed at*
>
> *http://www.lifewideeducation.uk/references-lwm16.html*

Image: http://www.sulsa.ac.uk/sites/sbsweb2.bio.ed.ac.uk.sulsa/
files/styles/article-header/public/pictures/Colouredhands-for-web_1.jpg?itok=BmJnEBgI

Editor's comments: Learning Projects

The ecologies we create to learn and to develop ourselves are inspired and deeply connected to what the Canadian educator Allen Tough (1) called, our 'learning projects'. These are significant, deliberate efforts to develop knowledge and or skill or to change in some other way. Some learning projects are efforts to gain new knowledge, insight or understanding, others are aimed at improving skill or performance in something, or to change attitudes or emotional responses. Others involve effort to change behaviour or habits or help us move from one context to another - for example when we change our jobs. Many significant learning projects, like the ones described in the following pages, involve all these things and they may even lead to us changing our identity as we become another sort of person in another sort of role.

Typically we spend hundreds and sometimes thousands of hours each year on our learning projects. Many projects are motivated by immediate needs like: to make a good decision, to make or fix something, or carry out/perform some task related to a job, home, family, sport or hobby. Some projects are motivated by interest, enjoyment or the desire to do something for others. Some are inspired by long term (distal) goals as we strive to develop ourselves to become a particular sort of person.

In the articles that follow, Barbara Nicolls, Victoria Wright, Sue Wattling, Norman Jackson and Emily Crapoulet share significant learning projects that they have been involved in and offer perspectives on the learning ecologies they created to achieve their goals.

(1) Tough, A. (1971) The Adult's Learning Projects: A fresh approach to theory and practice in adult learning. Available at: http://ieti.org/tough/books/alp.htm

My Learning Ecology
Barbara Nicolls

As an academic skills development tutor at the Learning Development Unit In Buckinghamshire New University, UK, I help and support students in their academic studies through interactive workshops. I am keen to utilize the technological tools students are familiar with to enhance learning and teaching developing their academic and professional skills. I am exploring social media tools such as Twitter, Whatsapp, OneNote, EverNote for communication, collaboration, presentation, bookmarking to enable effective and efficient learning. I am promoting digital portfolios within the curriculum and I consider myself a pioneer at Bucks facilitating the integration of ePortfolios within curricula. My mission is to achieve "an ePortfolio for all" at the institution within the next five years. I truly believe that being able to utilize the different elements in the learning ecologies is a great asset in accomplishing my mission in life.

I had been teaching Business English at a University in SE Asia for about five years when I was promoted to Deputy Chairperson (DC) of the Department of English. Although I had had the required English language teaching skills and experience, I felt I needed to develop my leadership and management skills to help me perform more effectively in my role heading a team of international lecturers. I had the strong belief that these skills were essential if I were to progress from DC to Chairperson or even be the Curriculum Manager in the field so I decided to study for the MA (Education Management) at a UK university.

This was my second teaching post abroad and in a country where there were unlimited opportunities for professional development for anyone who was prepared to seize them. Therefore, I hoped that achieving my proximal goal at the UK university, would enable me to extend to other distal goals e.g. my aspiration to lead and manage an ePortfolio implementation project at another HEI in another continent. The perceived affordance for my learning and professional development resided in the masters course and my engagement with it and the possibilities in my work environment for acting on what I learnt.

My desire to study to be an education manager in order to become a better manager provided me with the motivation/will to achieve the learning outcomes of the MA (Education Management) course to demonstrate proficiency. This was the start of my developmental process, or ecology, to achieve my longer term ambitions. I enrolled on the three-year part time course which required attending the two, four-week blocks of summer courses in the first and second years of study. Fortunately, my Chairperson granted my requests for a sabbatical the first year and leave without pay the second year enabling me to fulfill the course requirements. Their support was a necessary relationship in my learning ecology especially as I was pursuing my professional development while

working full time. An essential resource was my personal savings which enabled me to pay the course fees, the cost of text books, flights and UK accommodation. I was thankful that I had been brought up in a family with strong work ethics and the value of saving for a rainy day.
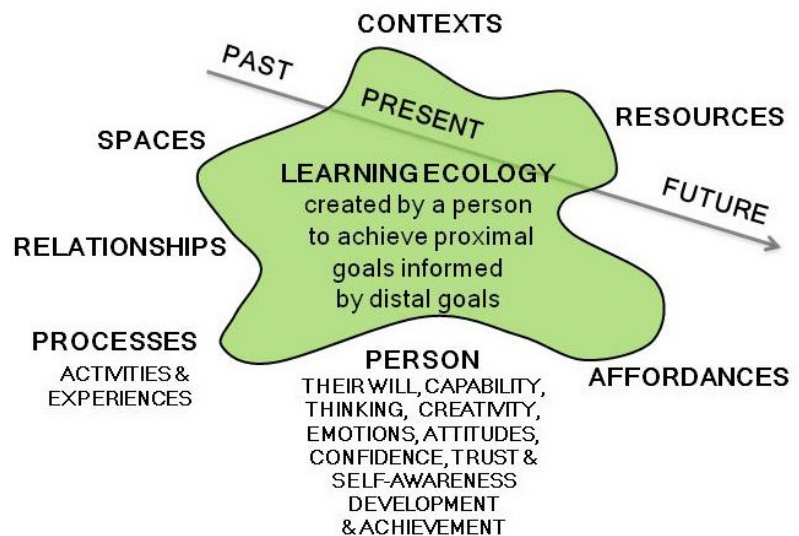
My process for learning and achieving my goal involved a significant period of time, two summers of travelling to the UK university, participating in lectures, group work, independent study. During this time relationships with the course team including the librarians and administrators, and my peers were crucial for me to make the best use of the available resources which afforded me to complete eight 30-credit modules plus a 20,000 word dissertation. I realized the importance of peer relationships for a community of practitioners whose goal was to become Education Managers in their individual contexts: the campus with its classrooms afforded the space and the resources for discussing our assignments, collaborating on group tasks and learning about one another's culture, past and contexts especially aspirations. Nonetheless, I believe that my

Once I returned to my place of work, I was in a familiar space where I juggled my responsibility of leading and managing the department as a DC while completing my assignments. Not only were my time management and organizational skills crucial to achieving my goals but the ongoing support of my Chairperson was an essential relationship to achieving my proximal goal of graduating with a MA (Education Management) within three years. An equally important relationship was with my UK course tutors: email and telephone were the communication tools that afforded the long discussions that kept me motivated and on target with my assignments in the absence of the face to face relationships with them and my peers in the common spaces we shared back in the UK. Access to information for my assignments was essential so the library at my place of work was a resource I relied on and the space that afforded peace and quiet for study.

Figure 1 How I am applying what I have learnt in my everyday work context
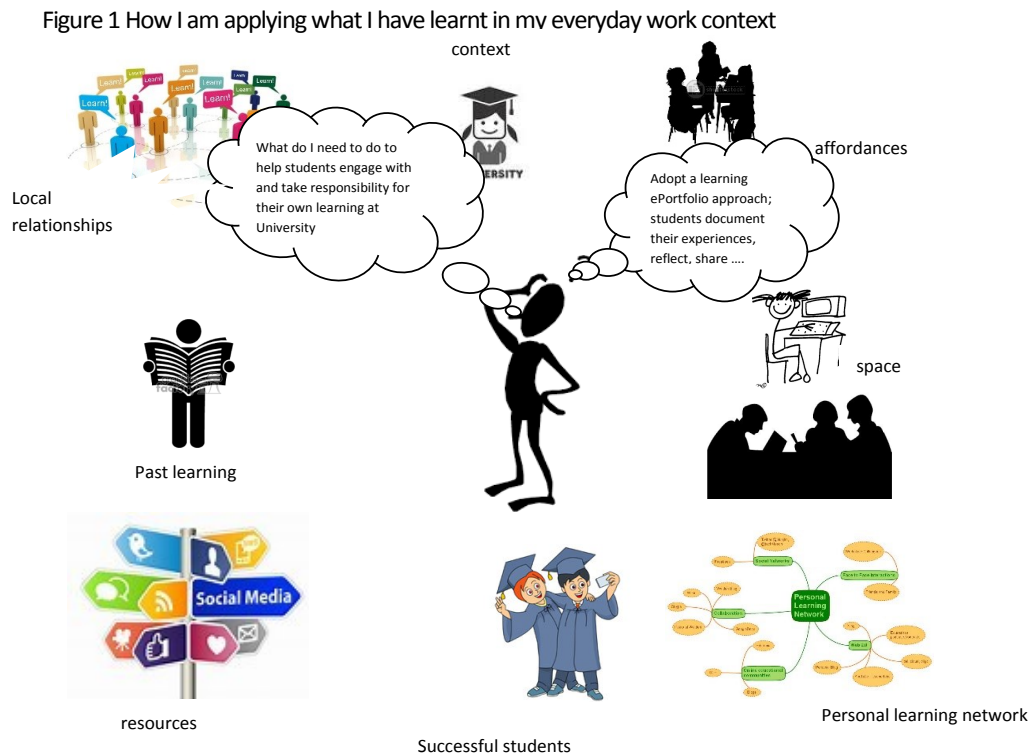
Looking back, I can now interpret my experience over an extended period of time using the concept of a learning ecology. While I clearly utilized an ecology for learning that someone else had created (MA Education Management) which contained the affordance for learning and developing specific and relevant knowledge and skills I needed, I had to create, enact and manage a complex experience in order to achieve my goal drawing on my past learning in order for me to prepare myself for the future I sought for myself. I felt that relationships were crucial for me to achieving my goal as they directed me to resources and further relationships in a variety of contexts. Underpinning all this of course is my intrinsic motivation for my own professional development.

I also realize how technology has developed since those days and how today's students can use different processes to engage with the resources, and their relationships in a virtual space developing new skills while harnessing the technological affordances. So my next goal is to help these students make effective use of technology available to them by developing an ePortfolio, a virtual space for collecting evidence of achievements, reflecting on them, sharing with their relationships, personal learning networks and presenting them to future employers.

Figure 1 is an illustration of how I apply what I have learnt since my first MA (Education Management) in my everyday work context to achieve this goal. My past has taught me that relationships are crucial so I have formed a Personal Learning Network which contains individuals and organizations in touch with the ePortfolio concept, implementation guidelines etc. Participating in webinars, conferences and SIGs, lead me to resources such as the free web based tools which I then explore with my colleagues and students in my work context. The computer suite, the library are space affordances for consultations and testing new tools. It demonstrates that we create learning ecologies whenever we are motivated to achieve not only our professional but also our personal goals and ambitions in life.

Editorial comment: learning ecologies are important sites for relationships for example we develop a network of professional relationships whenever we get involved in a significant project. But relationships also include ourselves and in this article Victoria Wright reveals something of the development of the relationship with herself during her doctoral research.

LETTING MYSELF GO TO FIND MY VOICE

Victoria Wright

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Reading David Burkhart's article[1] 'How and Where I Sometimes Get Creative Ideas', I was struck by the 'let myself go' sentiment he expressed: 'When I do not apply pressure, then I can be creative. I let myself go'. Like him, I was also in the bakery having a delicious cup of coffee - well at least metaphorically. I saw the invitation from Lifewide Education to write for this issue and decided to let myself go. In this piece I explore my doctoral experience from the perspective of an ecology for professional learning, development and creative self-.expression.

Evolving Goals

Having recently completed my doctorate thesis[2], I have just read the letter with those lines: it is to be conferred. So what now? My distal goal when I was studying for my doctorate was not surprisingly to achieve it. That goal was also given to me. As a Senior Lecturer in Post Compulsory Education (my context) and having made the transition from further education in to higher education, a doctorate seemed to be something that was expected of me. So if you'd asked me what my proximal

goals were at the outset, I'd have talked about my intrinsic desire to learn (I specifically chose a Doctorate called Learning and Learning Contexts). I'd also have highlighted the external impetus: it seemed to be an expectation of my professional context. I didn't know it at the time, but it was to become a hugely important venture/ adventure, one in which my own proximal goals changed.

After a while I switched one proximal goal for another. Instead of worrying about the 'bit of paper'; something that seemed to recede the longer I was on the course, I decided I wanted the Elizabethan looking cap you get when you graduate. It made me smile as I remembered Stevie Smith's[4] poem where she uses her hat ('My Hat') as a visual metaphor. The

Looking back

So I'm on the doctorate course. It's six years part time and I'm a full time senior lecturer. I enjoy those moments when I learn something that I can take in to my teaching. I don't enjoy other moments. Those other moments occur when I can't relate what we are talking about to my teaching or to my research. I feel time pressured, task oriented, a strategic learner.

Those moments also occur when I know that I just don't understand. Not today. Not on a Saturday (on a part time course). My self-awareness tells me that I am positioning myself as a frustrated learner. I feel unable to participate fully and I am uncomfortable stepping out of a more secure teaching identity.

In the first two years, it is the small peer group that supports me continuing. In the thesis years, I have a new supervisor, someone whose background seems to resonate with mine. I like how 'academic' my supervisor is, how their brain seems so much more capable, their 'knowledge' so much more expansive than mine. Above all I like our conversations. This is an important relationship in my learning ecology. It might sound strange, but I feel more confident now about the things that I do not know. I tell myself that I do not know them yet (echoing Dweck [3]). Words and phrases that my supervisor says are stored in my notepad to be read again after tutorials. I do not know them (concepts/ ideas) yet, but I am determined to know them at some stage. Even now, a phrase ' [name]….will be the fulcrum of your thesis' makes me chuckle. At the time, I didn't see that. Now I do.

hat became a visual metaphor that I could hold on to (and imagine holding on to). It is still secretly my favourite reason. More seriously, in my role as teacher educator, I had a very authentic personal goal which stemmed from my previous experiences of being observed in lessons and of being the observer. As someone who conducts a lot of observations of student teachers, I wanted to see my practice as an observer more clearly in order to improve my ways of conducting the feedback

Affordances

Any process that is educational affords learning. Embarking on the doctorate afforded me an outwardly professional but actually increasingly personal learning journey. It was professional in the sense that it put me on the 'right' path: moving in to research as a key ingredient of the sector I am employed in. As Jackson[5] explains, 'individuals [are] situated in their physical, social, emotional and virtual environments trying to comprehend, resolve problems, challenges and perplexities, and make the most of opportunities, by finding and utilising affordances that their environment provides'. The university afforded me the opportunity to study for a doctorate. I chose the particular doctorate route by looking at the modules I was teaching, and the modules I would study and making connections therefore between a more externally motivated goal (the achievement of a doctorate as seemingly connected to my job) and my own intrinsically motivated proximal goals around being an effective teacher, developing my theoretical knowledge of learning and learning contexts so as to inform the modules I was teaching on.
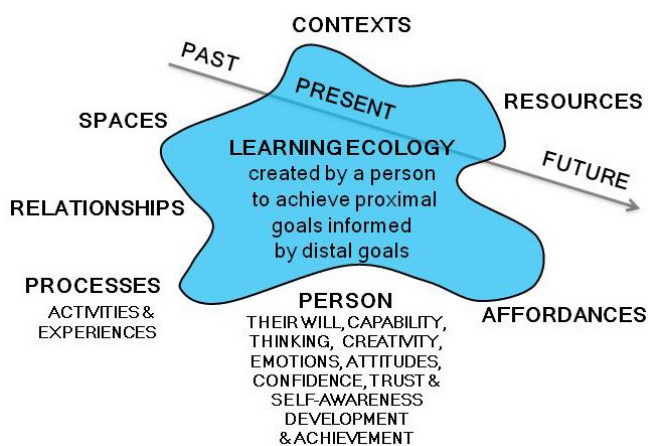
As I journeyed through my personal process of intellectual inquiry, I afforded myself more and more opportunities: to increase my resources (my reading and the doctorate discussions stimulating my 'knowledge' and critical engagement), to feel more confident as a university lecturer (more secure in my understanding and now able to integrate some of my newer learning), to re-learn what it means to be a 'learner' or student, to conduct research in an area (lesson observation feedback) that I was personally very strongly motivated by, and to reach through the boundaries of what I felt I could personally understand. As described, I spent a lot of moments in that space between the things I know I know and the things I do not understand! I learnt to feel increasingly at ease in that liminal space.

Liminal space

From the start, I wanted to enjoy the learning experience and what emerged from it. I kept saying to myself: 'I don't want the bit of paper at the end, I want the experience'. Of course that was only partly true. It was a way of reassuring myself in those (frequent) moments when I didn't understand something. I knew the affordance for my learning and development lay in the journey I was undertaking (my process) but I didn't know how, where or when it would emerge. There were plenty of moments when 'I don't know it yet' became 'I don't know it yet, but I have to have confidence that if I persist; and if it seems important to my research and to myself, then I will come to understand it by and by'. I don't

Looking back

I have aspirations now. I want to write about my practice with a view to problematising it for myself. I want to learn on my own account. How will I improve my practice if I don't critically examine it? I also want to encourage other teachers to write. How do we get together to share our practice, to share those uncomfortable/ uncertain moments in teaching, and learning, and observing (or being observed)? Are those discussions to remain by the photocopiers and the kettles? In glimpses of each other's practice? Or can we move that dialogue in to other spaces…more informally in blogs, as fixed items in our meetings, and more formally in to educational research?

remember having experienced those moments in quite the same way before. I felt that I could see the 'knowledge/ learning' but it was ephemeral, tenuous, and not yet grasped. Such moments of perplexity you might see echoed in the poem I wrote 'Writing the thesis, or using big words'.

Relationships: Connecting my Present to my Past

Our learning ecologies are sites for new relationships. In this piece I explore the relationship with myself. In my thesis similarly, I was the case study. I created space in which to look back on the past and imagine possibilities for the present grown from my experiences of the past[5]. In looking at my current practice as a teacher educator I had to look back at my experiences of conducting graded lesson observations in further education colleges. My past experiences provided me with an important resource for my current learning. I have made various shifts between observing established teachers and grading them as part of internal quality assurance procedures, and observing student teachers in ungraded and strictly developmental observations (as part of their assessment on the teacher education course). By the time I started to write the thesis, I had set myself another proximal goal: to share who I was as an observer. My personal context and previous learning ecology (being

I made explicit connections between the learning and experiences associated with being a quality observer and the learning and experiences of a teacher educator. Jackson (op cit) cites Savin Baden (2008: 8-9): 'Learning spaces are often places of transition, and sometimes transformation, where the individual experiences some kind of shift or reorientation in their life world'. I was always clear about what I wanted to research on the doctorate. It was always lesson observation feedback. I had become uncomfortable about the ways in which I was giving feedback (particularly graded judgements of experienced staff) and the ways in which observers gave feedback to me. I looked in to the past and re-remembered experiences that I wanted to capture. For me personally, it had become a moral dilemma. As already acknowledged, I wanted to see my practice more clearly in order to improve it.

An Ecology for Creative Self-expression

We create when we write and we interpret when we read. Though I included empirical data (of tutor observation feedback dialogues, peer student teachers feeding back to each other, student focus groups on observation and feedback), I also had autobiographical and synthesized and creative extracts. My thesis was 'an autoethnographic account of giving observation feedback'[2]. Autoethnography, as an approach to writing research, requires autobiographical and ethnographic details[6]. As a participant in the culture I described (ethnographic), I deliberately shared experiences that resonated with and informed the context I explored (lesson observation feedback). In looking back at the past, I re-experienced and re-imagined some of my duties as observer (the graded lesson observations) and those occasions when I had been observed as classroom teacher.

Muncey[7:55] reflects that if writing 'is to be used to convey something of oneself to a stranger, then writing tactics are required to evoke the researcher's self. This involves techniques for releasing creativity and stimulating the imagination'. Subjective experiences of giving observation feedback as a previous quality observer, and receiving observation feedback as a classroom teacher, became more composite. They were re-imagined as I sought to evoke through my choices of language and form.

Ellis et al (2011)[6] explain that autoethnographers 'seek to produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience.' I was drawing on long term memories with no empirical records. Those experiences were also sometimes more dramatised as I worked to share but also to protect individual confidentiality. In my mind, I wasn't just writing, I was talking about the experience with a colleague across the desk in the staffroom. When I put myself metaphorically back in further education settings; echoing Burkhart's words, I 'let myself go'. I started to write poems, narratives and scripted dialogue. My creativity flourished.

The synthesized and creative extracts became points of emphasis that, for me, stitched the thesis together by creating opportunities for my learning. They suggested connections between my past and present context. There were experiences that I could not write in any other way. That creative self-expression was critical to my learning ecology as it afforded me opportunities to review and re-imagine myself in my previous context and to perceive its influences on my current context. In this way I created new affordance to learn about myself and achieve what I wanted to achieve.

'Letting myself go' enabled me to write in a voice that sometimes evoked more than it explained. It freed me up to experiment by writing in different ways. It enabled me to move closer towards a lifetime goal: to be a writer, while meeting my immediate goals to complete the doctorate, and it expanded that goal to position writing as a way of examining and sharing complex and subjective teaching experiences.

Writing the thesis
Or using big words.
Words play.
They are playing.
See them there
hanging by threads
above my head.

I reach up and
pull one down.
On red silk threads,
they're knotted and
snarling.

It's no use,
See that one there?
I have to use it.
It's one of those ....
whatdoyoumacallits,
technical term,
theoretical concept.
It's just a big word,
okay?

Yes, I see it,
that other word
that's much easier to grab.
But no,
it has to be this one.
Yes, even if
it pulls at my hair.

It's one of those...
clamouring words,
shouting words.
See how it stutters and
splurges across the page
and yes, I know,
it's dragging heaps of other words
down with it.

I wrote this poem on 21 June 2014

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Stretch Zone—the Optimal Space for Learning & Developing

The Learning Zone Model[1], which was developed by the German adventure pedagogue Tom Senninger, highlights that in order to develop we need to stretch ourselves. In order to learn we have to explore and venture out into the unknown. We already know our immediate surroundings, which form our Comfort Zone. In the Comfort Zone things are familiar to us; we feel comfortable and don't have to take any risks. The Comfort Zone is important, because it gives us a place to return to, to reflect and make sense of things – a safe haven.

Although it is cosy to stay in our Comfort Zone, we have to leave it in order to get to know the unknown. We need to explore our Learning Zone, which lies just outside of our secure environment. Only in the Learning Zone can we grow and learn, live out our curiosity and make new discoveries, and thus slowly expand our Comfort Zone by becoming more familiar with more things. Going into our Learning Zone is a borderline experience – we feel we're exploring the edge of our abilities, our limits, how far we dare to leave our Comfort Zone.

However, beyond our Learning Zone lies our Panic Zone, wherein learning is impossible as it is blocked by anxiety, uncertainty and fear. Any learning connected with negative emotions is memorized in a part of the human brain that we can access only in similar emotional situations. Experiences of being in our Panic Zone are frequently traumatic, and any sense of curiosity is shut down by a need to get out of our Panic Zone. Therefore, we should aim to get close to, but not into, our Panic Zone.

In the transition from Comfort Zone to Learning Zone we need to be careful when taking risks that we don't go too far out of our Comfort Zone – beyond the Learning Zone – into the Panic Zone, where all our energy is used up for managing/controlling our anxiety and no energy can flow into learning.

Ideal zone for personal/ professional development

Importantly, these three zones are different for different situations and different for each person – we all have our own unique Comfort Zone, Learning Zone and Panic Zone. For example, for a child who has grown up in chaotic family circumstances, drinking out of a dirty cup might be perfectly normal and within their Comfort Zone, whereas sitting down for a meal together might be far out of their Comfort Zone to begin with – for children with different experiences this might be the other way around.

Where one zone ends and the other starts is very often not as clearly visible as in the illustration above. This means that we must never push someone else into their Learning Zone, as we cannot see where one zone leads into the next. All we can do is invite others to leave their Comfort Zone, value their decision, take them seriously and give them support so they won't enter their Panic Zone.

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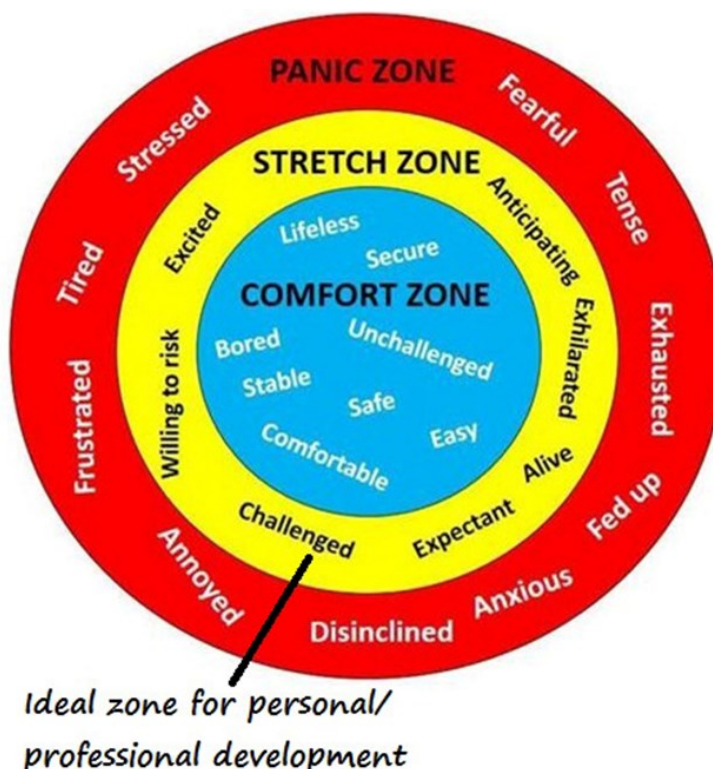
If you want to feel secure
Do what you already know how to do.
But if you want to grow…
Go to the cutting edge of your competence,
Which means a temporary loss of security.
So, whenever you don't quite know
What you are doing
Know that you are growing…'
(Viscott, 2003)

Building an Ecology for Developing Ourself: It's All a Matter of Trust
Maret Staron

A few years ago Maret Staron wrote an article for Lifewide Magazine [1] in which she considered that an ecological approach to our own development is founded on trust. In her article she said..

We need to trust ourselves to establish a learning ecology that is meaningful, authentic and supportive of our growth and personal wellbeing. For many, trust is an issue. We defer to what others expect of us and to the social norms of the day. We feel confusion or doubt around the decisions that we make or goals that we set. We respond to what others demand of us rather than to what's most appropriate and authentic for ourselves. I know this only too well from my own experience. Clearing the fog or lack of certainty has been a lifetime task for me. Learning to trust myself has been a key. How does this relate to learning ecology? Without self-trust, it's hard to understand and to modify our learning ecology. Our learning ecology needs to takes us towards our lifewide learning goals, rather than away from them. I believe it's crucial to trust that still small voice within (our higher self), that part of us that knows what works best for us.

Trust that you know what you want to learn, how you want to learn it and the relationships, resources and context that will support you in your learning. You may not know these things at the start of a project or experience that will involve learning but you must trust your instincts [and create processes that will take you in the direction you want to go]. Your learning ecology is a living evolving thing – it shifts and changes with you as your purposes and goals evolve. New relationships, contexts and resources will open up new opportunities and possibilities that could not have been imagined before. Over time, elements that were at the outer edge of your learning ecology may shift closer to the centre; and other elements that were nearest the centre, may shift further out. Ensure that you maintain your learning ecology and focus your energy on those elements that are congruent with the highest goals that you have for your life and for your learning

The idea of trusting in yourself lies at the heart of these personal stories of professional development.

Source:

1) Staron M (2014) Learning ecology a matter of trust Lifewide Magazine #7 7-8
Available at: http://www.lifewideeducation.uk/magazine.html

Image credit: April Seymore sketch note from the Thriving In Uncertainty conference http://www.tangentconsulting.com.au/2012/07/graphic-harvest-from-thriving-in-uncertainty-ainoz12/

Changing Jobs, Changing Institutions, Changing my Future: The ecology of transition, learning and development

Sue Watling

Sue is Academic 'Technology Enhanced Learning' Advisor at a large northern university. With a broad range of experience supporting digital education and digital capabilities, Sue supports staff and students to use a range of different virtual learning environments and is completing a doctoral research project investigating e-teaching as the essential partner to e-learning.

My past professional circumstances

After 15 years in the same institution, I made the decision to change jobs. At a time when friends and colleagues were discussing, and in some cases taking, early retirement, I set out on a new work adventure, leaving behind a post of Senior Lecturer in Education Development for the role of Academic Technology Enhanced Learning Advisor. It involved transitioning from a medium sized, new university to a large, traditional red brick institution and swapping an academic contract for a professional services one. These were big changes and the whole process, from job application to arriving on my first day, involved a deliberate disruption of everything secure and familiar and the giving up of one professional life and identity in order to form another.

This is narrative is about the significant professional change I have recently made. When climbing career ladders, decisions are made about moving up, down, across or simply staying on the current rung. But changing jobs and institutions is rather like jumping off the ladder altogether. For a while you free fall before finding a suitable rung and starting the process again. The first day in a new job is the same for everyone. We lack the most basic contextual knowledge and it's a continual process of finding out. Where's the loo? what are the coffee rules? how do I use the printer? why can't I log on? what's the number for the IT Helpdesk? Your work/learning ecosystem has completely changed and you have yet to develop sufficient contextual knowledge to be able to operate effectively in the new ecosystem. Furthermore, the affordances of the new one have yet to be revealed. Significant adjustment is required. In terms of learning ecologies, your existing framework has been deleted and replaced with a blank template: a situation that induces both excitement and apprehension at the same time. At this stage it's the people who are closest to you in your team that help you orient yourself in the new environment.

But you tell yourself that you have done it before so this time should be no different. Drawing on similar transition experiences in the past you know that it's all a bit uncomfortable at first and you have to work hard to search for the information you need and find and build relationships with the people who can help you make sense of it all. There are of course physical changes like uprooting yourself and moving to a new place but there are also considerable psychological adjustments to be made. We have to go through a process involving a series of developmental stages over a period of time. In fact many months after I started I'm still going through this process. Each stage involves making decisions, letting go of the familiar and entering the unknown. This is a narrative of the stages I went through to develop myself for the new role I have taken on to become the different professional person I am becoming. I will try to relate the narrative to Jackson's model (1) of an ecology for learning, developing and achieving - in this case achieving means adapting to and performing in a new role (Figure 1).
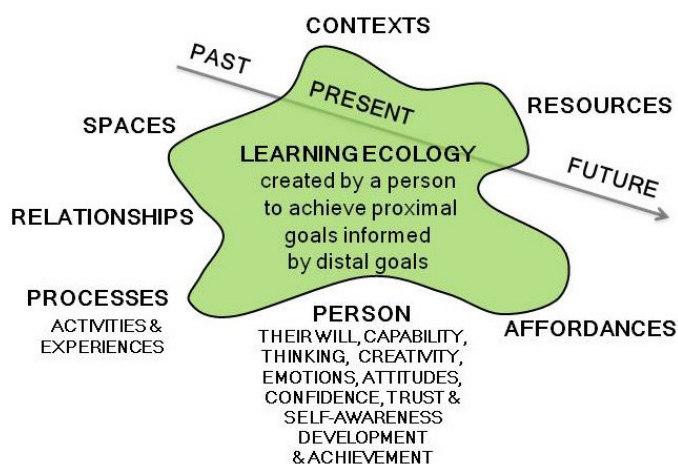

Figure 1 Learning Ecology Model [1]

Stage One – it all began with a ping

In July 2015, there was a familiar 'ping' and before I even finished reading the email I knew two things. I was going to apply for a new job and it would involve a significant shift in lifestyle. I'd been with the same university for over 15 years. This bestowed history and attachment as well as time in service. When I walked across campus half a dozen people would smile, nod, say hello or stop to talk. I knew the institution and its people. I understood its systems. I could find my way around on multiple levels and I was half way through a PhD. Would I really give it all up to start out somewhere else?

The answer was a resounding yes. I'd been through a number of restructures but the most recent one had changed my job role. I was no longer using my experience and expertise in technology enhanced learning but working with the non-digital aspects of education development instead. The job I was now reading about was a re-advertisement of a post which called for the pedagogical application of technology to learning and teaching. I'd seen it three months earlier and been tempted then, but told myself to give the new routine a year to settle down. This time there was no hesitation. I knew I wanted a new challenge and this job was closer to my interests and ambitions. So this set of circumstances provided the context for my decision and the motivation to propel me through this difficult transition.

Stage Two - engaging with the new affordance

A job advert opens new affordances or new possibilities for action, new spaces to explore and develop in but to realise the affordance requires certain actions to be undertaken. One these actions is to take stock of your own interests and capabilities and evaluate how they match up to the requirements of the job, and all the motivating factors in your life that give your life purpose and meaning. While preparing firstly for the application and then for the interview, I took a long hard look at my CPD. It's something we don't do often enough and pushing yourself into the spotlight offers a brilliant opportunity to revisit goals and ambitions. Interviewers are looking for well-rounded souls. They want to be sure the person is not only right for the job but will fit on other levels too. This is the time to gather up achievements including your publications, income generation, conference presentations, voluntary work, professional and other accredited courses and workshops all of which have helped you develop yourself and show what you are capable of. I reflected on the major challenges in my working life, how they were overcome and the lessons I learned. Pulling your CPD all together in one place reinforces what you have achieved and who you are. We should all do it more often. Having taken stock of myself it was then relatively easy for me to apply for the job demonstrating how my interests, capabilities and achievements met the requirements for the job.

Figure 2 Stages in detaching myself from one context and attaching myself to another
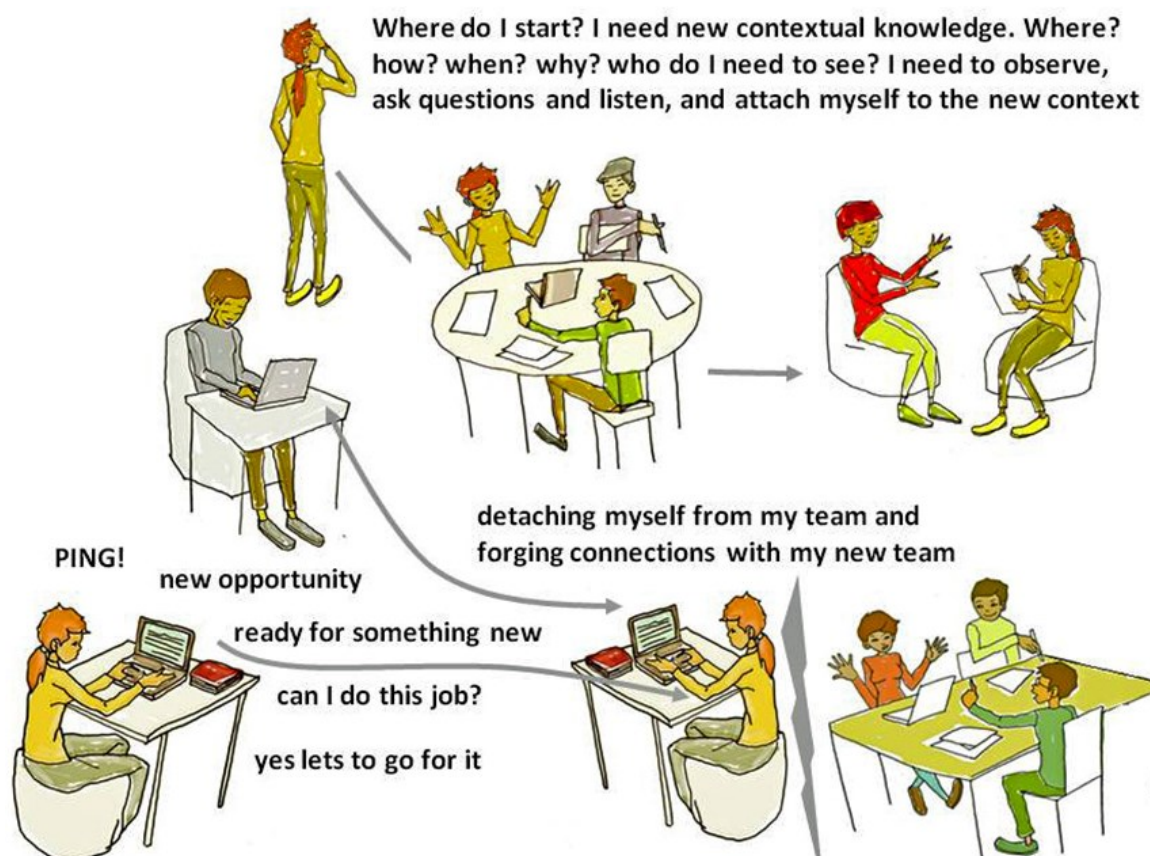
Stage Three – detaching from the past and reorienting to the future

Getting the job was a huge boost to my confidence but giving notice and beginning the process of detachment bought home the enormity of the decision. The physical emptying of desk drawers, choosing what to take away or leave behind and the reality of leaving colleagues who have become friends was hard. Our paths were dividing and working your notice can be difficult in these circumstances when your future does not coincide with the future your colleagues are imagining. The relationships within your ecosocial system are crucial for wellbeing yet you are actively dismantling and abandoning them. The atmosphere around me changed. While you are embarking on a major life change, you are taking apart the life of your work team as well: it's a difficult psychological process for them as well.

To offset these uncomfortable feelings, and to begin preparing myself for my new role I began to build a new ecological framework. I made sure my own online profiles were up to date and set about searching for my new team members, contacting them via Twitter. A profile which mentioned keeping an allotment offered the comfort of shared interests. We were in touch virtually before we physically met up. The interactions reinforced the value of an effective online presence and how interacting with people online to build new relationships is a useful CPD activity in itself. This process enabled me to start detaching myself from my past and reorient myself to my future.

Stage Four – beginning my new job

The weeks of goodbyes with presents, cards, balloons and cake were over. I felt like a kid on the first day at school. I wore new shoes, smiled at new faces, shook strange hands and sat in my new place of work. I was now in a totally new and unfamiliar physical and mental space. Any team has established habits and ways of working. I knew I needed to sit back, observe and take time to fit in to a new culture. Through this process I was developing new contextual knowledge and new relationships to enable me to function effectively. At the same time, as an experienced professional, I was expected to perform the job I had been employed for. I expected a transition period but underestimated the time it would take. I knew everything would be different but misjudged how intensive the difference would be. Nothing was the same. I was used to MS Office 2007 and was now using Office 2013. My user id was a number. I border on Dyscalculia and continually locked myself out of the network convinced I was using the correct sequence. The internal staff contact list was clunky and gave little away. It took time to discover it wasn't broken but required the surname (spelt correctly) with initial capital. PDF documents refused to print from Chrome but were fine using IE. My screen was littered with post-it note reminders. The small printer didn't have A3 or copy functions. It was push only, located down the stairs and along the corridor so you couldn't risk printing anything sensitive. The nearest full-size printers were in the library. They were activated by the barcode on your staff card but there were no instructions saying this. Coming from a place where everything is familiar, it's a shock to realise how much you don't know about ways of working you previously took for granted. This is the core of a new ecology for learning when you start a new job and its more about 'how do I do the most basic things?' and unlearning stuff I had previously assumed than about new ideas and ways of working. But the experience also gave me new insights reminded me what it is like to be a new member of staff. I hope I was always sympathetic to the confusion of new staff but I will be even more so from now on.

Stage Five - learning and adapting to a new culture

I made lists of people to see, knocked on doors and introduced myself over and over again. I seemed to be talking about myself constantly. What I did, why I left, how I was finding it, what my remit was. There were times when the adjustment was hard. I practised mindfulness, breathing through difficult moments, separating myself from negative experiences. I knew these were coloured by my own perceptions and anxiety to impress rather than anything intrinsically lacking. I continually reminded myself where I came from and how I'd got to where I was. The university was structured into Faculties which had a higher degree of autonomy than I was used to. Everyone had their own ways of working and while I was broadly welcomed, it took longer than I expected to appreciate the different ways of doing things here. There were some unexpected surprises. The shift from academic to professional services meant I no longer qualified for funding for my PhD so have to pay the fees myself. But in return I get a different approach to research and new ways of managing the research process. Everything in life is a duality of opposite forces. The skill is in finding the balance between them. This whole period of settling in has lasted several months and my learning and development have been fundamentally connected to trying to understand and adapt to the institutional culture.

Reflecting on my experience

A learning ecology provides the space for reflecting on past experience in order to make more sense of that experience. Four months after I started my new job I'm still learning and discovering but I can now look back and see how far I've come and understand better how I have managed to make the change. You have to leave somewhere to realise the extent of the learning and development which took place while you were there. When you become familiar and comfortable with your everyday routine there is a risk of becoming complacent. I was part of the furniture, going with the flow, having seen it all before, but all the while becoming increasingly concerned that the new role I had been given was taking me in the wrong direction. It was halting me, stifling my potential to make a difference and ultimately taking away the joy from my life.

So when the opportunity to change emerged, my growing sense of dissatisfaction with my situation made it easy for me to make a quick decision to fundamentally change my circumstances. Nevertheless, jumping out of my comfort zone into what has certainly been my stretch zone(2) where I have had to challenge myself, involves taking a risk, but having taken stock of myself, I was confident that I could make the change. To make the change I had to convince myself that I had the require-ments for the job. I had to improve my self-awareness so I reviewed my experiences and accomplishments over the past years and I was surprised by how much I'd learnt and achieved. If I'd stayed I would have never carried out such an intensive self-audit - there was no reason to. The possibility of a new job in a new institution caused me to reimagine my future, it helped me create a new goals and a new purpose which motivated and energised me and enabled me to engage with the necessary actions to accomplish this new goal. Looking back I can see that physically and psychologically I progressed through a number of stages - each was necessary to develop myself in ways that enabled me to detach myself from my past and reorient myself to a different future. The ecology I intuitively created enabled me to engage in a series of processes to achieve this fundamental reorientation to new purposes, goals, physical and intellectual spaces, relationships, utilising and developing new resources along the way.

Figure 2 Senningers(2) Learning Zone model

Ideal zone for personal/ professional development

I knew that changing jobs would be a risk. It has taken me out of my comfort zone and completely disrupted my professional life. In order to learn we have to explore and venture out into the unknown what Senninger[2] calls the Stretch Zone where new events and experiences offer us opportunities to develop from which we can usually step back and return to the Comfort Zone at any time. A deliberate choice to leave the Comfort Zone behind, such as beginning a new role in a new institution, means abandoning its familiar safeness for good. The Stretch Zone becomes the environment in which we are permanently located until sufficient time has passed for it to start to feel more natural and new rou-tines, structures and relationships are developed. During this process the Panic Zone is never far away, as I discovered on numerous occasions. It becomes necessary to recognise this temporary fear as part of the wider process of dismantling the old and accepting the new. Taking yourself to the edge of what you know can be a challenging process but is also an essential mechanism for development and growth.

Since starting my new role, I've developed a new sense of myself as a stranger in the familiarity which belongs to others. This has encouraged an examination of the roots of my own confidence and helped me to become more independent and trust my own judgement that what I was doing was the right thing to do. For the past four months I've been in transition and it has made a difference to how I feel and how I function but overall it's bestowed the confidence to stand up and be counted for my beliefs and the rationale for owning them. I have better sense of myself and a new confidence to engage with and manage change. In terms of continuing professional development I was getting stuck, it felt like going round and round a roundabout, unable to find the correct exit. Now I've successfully made the move I am well on my way to a new pathway for my own development with no regrets and looking forward with optimism to my future.

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Ecologies for Innovation

Norman Jackson

This article is based on a research study that I undertook in 2011-12 in which I interviewed over twenty higher education professionals who had been involved in educational innovation at an English university to try to discover how they had accomplished complex change[1]. I have selected a pair of related narratives from this study to show how the process of innovation might be understood using the model of a learning ecology: in this case an ecology for innovation that was co-created by two people.

Linda, a senior lecturer, with expertise in the fashion industry, worked collaboratively with Mike, an instructional designer from the university's central e-Development Centre (EDC) in order to develop an innovative on-line course comprising 12 Professional Development Units (PDUs). In this example the new on-line course was the innovation and the development of new professional expertise was a bi-product of learning how to innovate and engage with the organisation in ways that enabled the innovation to happen. As in all innovations that affect the workings of an organisation, they encountered resistance and blockages to progress that had to be overcome and this is typical of these sorts of professional learning ecologies within a university.

Linda's story

I obviously used the [market] research that we had done. Discussed with the head of school and the other school management what the outcomes of this research were and the headings that we would put together to begin to develop the short courses. Then I had to find external people to help with writing content. Obviously I had to start somewhere. My strongest feeling was that I needed to provide a framework for the people to work with. So I began to think about that before getting anyone external involved. I worked with Mike in the e-Development Centre quite extensively on trying to develop this effective way of delivering taught modules online and trying to put together a framework for the externals to use when putting together their teaching material. Basically I wrote most of the unit descriptors, the sort of bible for how these would be developed in terms of teaching material and then provided that usually to the external [person].

Figure 1 Summary of the process involved in bringing the new on- line course into existence
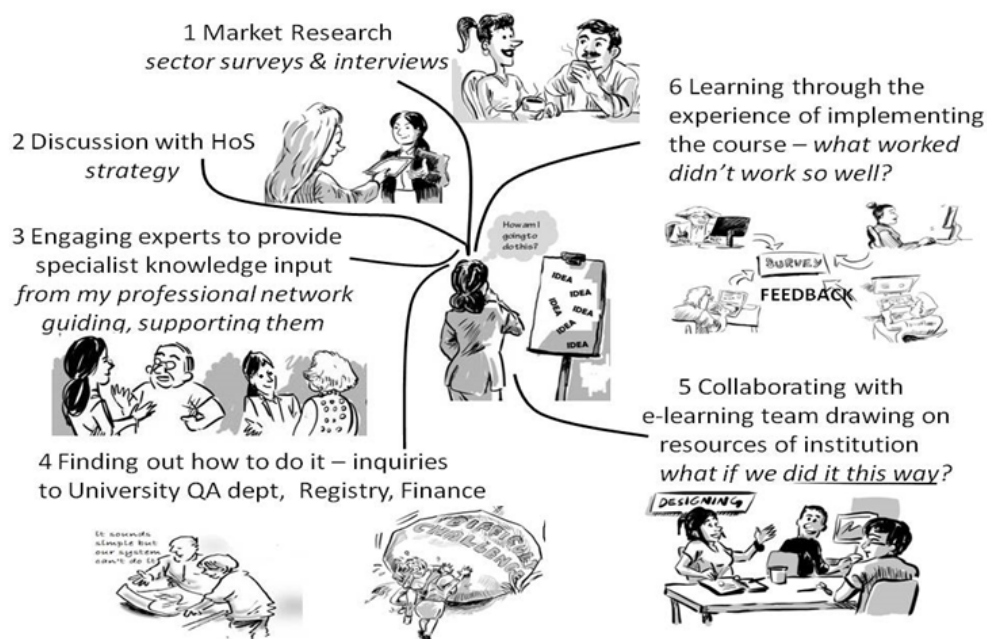
I found these [external] people [using] my own contacts and appealing to people's better nature because I think the payment that they were receiving wasn't necessarily equivalent to freelance pay that they would normally... But I worked very closely with them. They came into the university at certain strategic times throughout the development and a lot of email communication took place with them sending me materials and me checking it and going back to them with feedback. Really, really

resource heavy actually. Really time consuming for me in terms of head space and having to pull myself out of my daily operation, job, my normal responsibilities and doing this on top of that.

I was getting six hours relief from my normal duties. Six hours doesn't reflect in any way, shape or form the amount of time that I put into developing these twelve short courses that were to be accredited by the university all at once with externals helping for some of them and not for others. I was doing a considerable amount of reading through materials and feeding back during my own time in the evenings and weekends. Without that, it would not have happened. But I felt very, very strongly at the time that these are winners. There is a market for them and if we can market them in the right way I always felt they would be successful. I believed in the framework that I developed and that it was an effective, clear and understandable way to go through a short course for anyone who is working and [wants learning] that is relevant to their industry.

It was a constant battle because I always felt as though I was having to push other departments and other areas of the university to give me answers to questions that I had. It always felt as though the answers didn't exist at that point in time, but I needed them. I needed to know answers to certain questions and I needed sometimes some kind of framework for me to be working within and none existed. I eventually got a hold of the guidelines for developing professional development units from our quality department, but I had no knowledge of that prior to poking and pushing and constantly asking for that information. I was actually quite aggrieved at the time that that existed and I hadn't been alerted to the fact that it existed before I began to develop the courses, because surely that would have helped. Some staff development for me would have been highly appreciated.
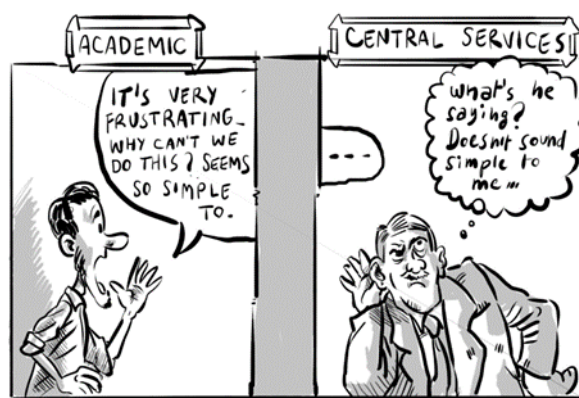
Once I had actually got past that initial stage of how do I put these first drafts of the units together, things began to roll and I began to discover who I could at least go and say 'Look I have this question, who can I ask? Who is going to answer it for me? I need answers.' I think I probably began perhaps to become a little bit annoying for some people because I kept saying 'I need an answer' and 'I need to know.'

Some of the most difficult issues, I would say, were managing the externals because some of them didn't have a huge experience of teaching...it was very difficult to find people that could actually do this with me. I chose them based on their expertise in the areas that I wanted the content developed around. So I was having to sort of almost coach them in learning and teaching as we were going, plus trying to help them understand how their material was going to be used online and the amount of discussion on text that was required of them rather than just bullet point teaching. So that was another challenge that came later.

I was having to be a subject person - most of these [PDUs] are in an area that I can apply my expertise to. I was having to be a learning and teaching person and an online education person, working with Mike and others from the EDC. Initially it was a couple of conversations that I was going to be doing this and understanding that a really clear framework would need to be put in place and how online teaching and learning would be different to in-class teaching and learning. They, I guess, explained to me the most important aspects to consider in on-line leaning. Then I gradually spent more and more time with the people from EDC, particularly Mike, and asked for their feedback on what I was developing and what the externals were developing with me. They got more and more involved in it because they really believed in what I was doing once the momentum got going. They sort of started to understand what I was trying to achieve from my perspective and then they saw the potential in that and gave me more and more time. Their time was then really important to the success of the project because without them helping me so much, I wouldn't have achieved the outcomes. Basically I felt like I had made some friends there and they were going to help me get through this if no one else was. So they were incredibly supportive. It wasn't uncommon for Mike and I to both be online at 11 o'clock at night talking back and forth and looking at the units online and discussing areas of the unit that were strong or not so strong, that needed a bit of work, a bit of development, changing things, 'What do you think of this?' It wasn't uncommon for us to be doing that in the evenings because of our own personal motivations.

[The development project] was a huge learning curve for me and because at certain times I was quite vocal about the fact that I wasn't getting answers and I was quite persistent and tenacious about sorting things out and getting through this project. I was just tenacious in the fact that I will get this done and I will find the help somewhere and someone will give me the answers I need because I have to do this... and there were I think two occasions when... and I am being really honest now. Two times in the year when I said 'I have had enough. No one else is as driven as I am about completing these PDUs so I give up.' You know, those moments of kind of this is just so frustrating and no one else seems to be as bothered as I am so why am I doing it. You know? Actually this is only my own personal motivation that is making this happen, so why am I so worried? But the next day was a new day and I continued to work on it because I know I am not really going to give up on doing this. I was venting frustrations and trying to I guess not get attention but get people to respond to me and find a way through. But yeah, there were two occasions at which I got to that point.

Mike's story

Early in 2010 I took on the role of Instructional Developer in our Flexible Delivery team. One of our first activities as a team was to start developing a set of high quality standards for our on-line provision. We undertook an informal survey of the existing provision for distance and online learning from other higher education institutions in the UK and overseas. Places like the Open University obviously, and then Stamford and MIT, a lot of places have got open educational resources now as well and looking at the manner in which they deliver their content and what we felt was effective and what was less so. Also looking at some of the private providers as well, places like Adobe TV and Lynda.com and again, people are doing quite high quality online training or online education. And we started to distil from that survey components that we felt different providers were demonstrating. But we also noticed that nobody had the whole package as far as we were concerned, so we were consolidating a set of standards that we felt if we could work towards so we would be creating the whole package. So it was a sort of benchmarking process and it resulted in a new University Framework for Online Learning. So the work that we've done has become policy in regards to courses or online content for courses that are predominantly delivered online.

I worked with a number of academics to help them develop their on-line courses targeted at the professional market - the concept is for entirely distance and entirely online professional development units, short 12 week credit bearing units. One of the people I worked with was Linda in the Fashion Department. She had a fairly good idea of how she wanted to structure the units in terms of how the content would be delivered and also in terms of some of the learning activities that the students would participate in. Where I came in was then to look at how that actually translates into online content, how you get it online, how you guide the students through the materials, how you make it accessible, how you stage and present particular events. Because on-line units have events such as web conferences that happen two or three times during the duration of the twelve weeks, and there's points where the students are asked to then communicate with a peer partner and they might have a one-to-one tutorial with their tutor.

So I went into discussions with Linda particularly at first over the unit that she wrote herself. She was at the forefront of this area of development: she was the first person [in the university] to actually get a unit developed. I looked at what originally was a word document map of how she wanted the activities to occur, and sat down and discussed with her how that might be better structured in terms of the activity points that happen throughout it, where you might place the assessment tasks, like the formative and final assessment tasks. And then, because what we'd worked on as a team was getting a look and feel and format for how the content goes online, I worked with her word document plans and putting that up online, putting the content in the correct places. Together we created the detailed design and content Linda typing directly the stuff online or I took ideas of hers and put it up for her, putting the online tools into the correct place. And between us, moving things within her unit until it felt like there was a structure that would actually guide the students through structured study. And the work on Linda's unit kept going on for a long time because that was the one we were really trying to refine down as an exemplar. So it was a highly co-creative process and the work we did then helped us to establish a template and a guide for how other PDUs could be developed and written ...which has proved very useful.


Cartoon images by Andres Ayerbe, commissioned by Lifewide Education

Ecological perspectives on learning, development & achievement

These narratives reveal the wonderfully productive and supportive relationships between colleagues from different parts of an organisation who share the same vision. They formed a team of two although other colleagues from the EDC were also involved and both interacted in their own ways with the university and the world outside the university.

Using Figure 2 as a descriptive framework we might elaborate the main features of Linda's learning ecology. Her innovation project lasted about 12 months. During this period of *time* she created *space* for herself, with the help of additional *resources* provided by the university (funding to buy out her teaching time), to engage in a developmental process. She had no prior experience in designing on-line courses so this space required her to explore, research, problem solve, design and experiment. It was clearly a space that was betwixt and between her past (non-existent knowledge and expertise) and her future capability in the area of on-line learning developed through the project.

Figure 2 Essential features of a learning ecology [2]
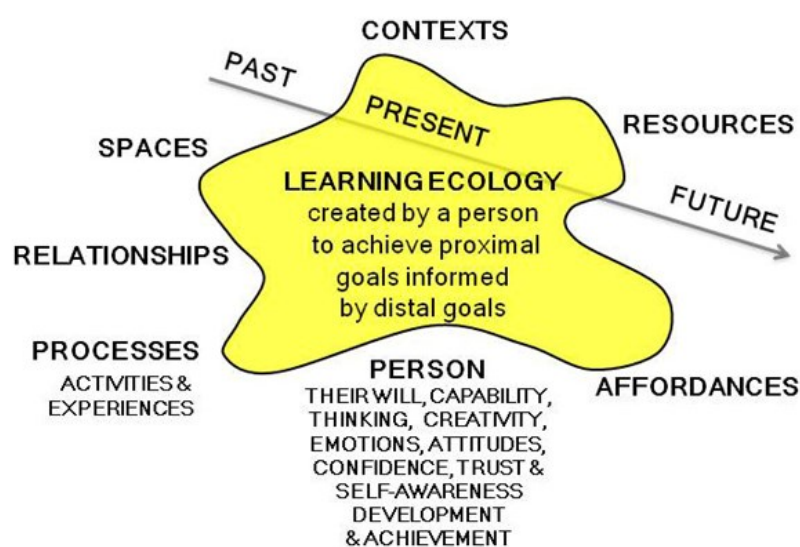
The university provided the key *affordance* through its strategic development programme which set out a strategic vision for change and also provided funding for staff who wanted to contribute to this change. There were also other affordances in the environments of the two participants for example, Linda's network of professional expertise and the research that Mike and his team had undertaken to create a frame-work for the design of on-line learning.

While Linda had the vision and experience to see the value in developing a suite of on-line courses for professionals in her industrial sector, she lacked the expertise to be able to achieve this goal by herself. Mike's organisational role was to help staff who wanted to develop new forms of e-learning. By combining their expertise and interests both participants in this developmental project were able to contribute ideas, knowledge and expertise to the process that enabled the new on-line courses to be produced together with the knowledge and capabilities necessary to help other members of the organisation achieve similar goals in future. In other words, development gained through the project resulted in enhanced capability at the individual and organisational levels.

The narratives are grounded in the contexts of two people involved in the project: *Linda's work context* and her desire to bring about change in her professional field and *Mike's work context* and desire to help colleagues across the university to adapt and develop their practice in order to enable the organisation to change. Both of these contexts are situated within departmental and organisational contexts which at that time, were highly supportive of staff who were attempting to innovate in line with the organisation's strategic objectives.

Both Linda and Mike had clear proximal and distal goals. Both wanted to develop the best possible on-line course. In Linda's case her proximal goal was set in her distal goal of developing her professional skills as a higher education teacher. While Mike's distal goal was to develop himself as an e-learning professional. Both were intrinsically driven by the interests and beliefs they had about what they were trying to do.

Although the *process* was task-oriented significant new learning and personal development were gained in the process. Linda's *learning trajectory* shows that she knew little about designing for the on-line environment at the start, but with the help of Mike and other colleagues she designed and later facilitated an on-line course that became a model for best practice within the institution.

Linda's narrative reveals important **relationships** some of which enabled some of which hindered or mediated the innovation - but all had to be accommodated and worked with. The most important relationship was with her colleague Mike and his colleagues in the EDC. This provided her with access to the expertise she needed to learn how to develop a high quality on-line course. Learning was a bi-product of a collaborative design process.

Her relationships included people in her professional network with knowledge and expertise **(resources)** who provided her with content for the on-line courses. She developed tools and frameworks (**mediating artefacts**) to enable other people to contribute to what she was trying to achieve. She in turn made use of the tools and frameworks **(mediating artefacts)** that the EDC had developed to support the design of on-line courses.

The narrative reveals something of the dynamic, messiness and emotion of the development process that anyone who has to tried to engage in significant development in a university will recognise. Linda highlights a number of tensions as she encountered that her innovation conflicted with current practice. Such areas of local contentious practice are common where bottom-up innovation encounters structures and procedures that were never designed for new practice emerging through innovation. These areas have to be resolved often with the aid of independent brokers who have the power and authority to overcome the barriers to change. Such people helped Linda to extend her agency in order to complete her work.

Figure 3

Representation of Linda and Mike's overlapping learning ecologies

The narratives also reveal the wonderful effects of creative collaboration by talented people who trust, respect and understand each other. Their professional relationship did more than simply combine knowledge and expertise - it stimulated ideas and helped Linda sustain their motivation particularly at difficult times. This close working relationship resulted in a significant overlap of their individual learning ecologies.
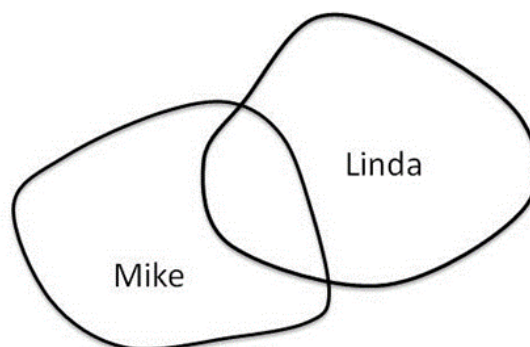
Engaging in innovation can be a very lonely business and its clear that Linda was on the point of giving up on more than one occasion but she didn't. With the support of her colleague she continued. The narrative reveals her will to succeed and agency to imagine, implement and manage a strategy to achieve her goals with the help of people who were more knowledgeable than she was about some aspects of the project and her organisation. In the process of achieving her goal she developed her capability and performance, her confidence and many dimensions of her character that she will be able to draw on in the future.

Source:

1) Baker, P., Jackson., and Longmore, J. (2014) Tackling the Wicked Challenge of Strategic Change: The story of how a university changed itself. Authorhouse.

2) Jackson, N.J. (2016) Exploring Learning Ecologies Chalk Mountain https://www.lulu.com/

Image below: https://i.ytimg.com/vi/gmoDpj1jtyA/maxresdefault.jpg
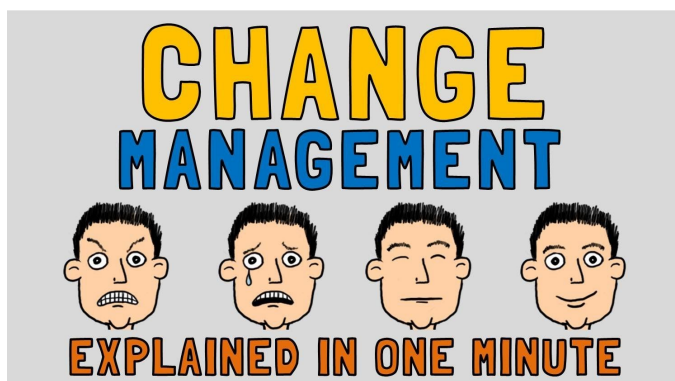
> *Editorial Comment: There are many situations, particularly in the professional environment, where people work together in close collaboration to achieve a goal and in the process co-create an ecology through which they learn how to achieve their goal. In this narrative a concert pianist describes how she worked with other university students to make a high quality classical recording of Chopin's 4th Ballade (for solo piano) to include in their respective professional portfolios to demonstrate their technical and professional skills.*

Ecology of Playing and Recording a Piano Recital

Emily Crapoulet

Emilie is Professor and Head of Classical Performance at the University of West London. She regularly gives solo and chamber music recitals in international music festivals and concert halls in Europe, the USA, Canada and Latin America. In addition to her busy solo career, Emilie has built a strong reputation as a lecture-recitalist and guest speaker. She gives illustrated talks on the relations between music, literature and painting in international literary and music conferences and has recently been invited by Glyndebourne to give pre-performance lectures on their operatic touring season. At the time she wrote this article in 2008 she was studying for her doctorate at the University of Surrey.

The [recording] project was a true journey of discovery: it was a challenging undertaking that necessitated total engagement and concentration and the use of many skills - musical, technical, technological, creative and relational. It involved good preparation, good [technical] skills and an open enquiring mind... We were plunged into a world in itself, with its own time-scale, its own space, and a complex problem to solve, which prompted us to respond with enthusiasm and dedication, revealing a rewarding and inspiring process of investigation, enquiry and revelation....

This project involved students from all years and backgrounds, thus cutting across the usual disciplinary boundaries. [The main people involved were] the pianist (myself) a PhD student (music), Tonmeister, final year BMus student and a producer, MMus Production Module student. Others involved included an assistant to the Tonmeister (first-year BMus Tonmeister), observers (other MMus Production Module students) and a lecturer who was there for advice but who did not directly participate in the recording. Even though we each had specific technical knowledge and an individual role to play in the process, we were also very much aware of each other, constantly interacting with one another and learning new skills. Overall, the atmosphere of the whole project was particularly exciting because we felt that we were doing something worthwhile and meaningful.

Our objective was to produce and edit a high quality classical recording of Chopin's 4th Ballade (for solo piano), one which combined a good sound quality and a good performance. A good recording should make the listeners feel that they are sitting in a concert hall hearing a live performance, but without those distractions and potential flaws which can sometimes mar the concert experience (background noises, performer's mistakes, etc.).

Figure 1. Chopin, 4th Ballade, op. 52 – facsimile of the score of bars 1-16 (score downloaded from www. sheet m usi carchiv e. net)

The context was particularly conducive to good team-work and collaboration. We were all, in some way or another, seeking to achieve the best possible result, primarily because the whole process was not a purely academic exercise, but it was intimately linked to the world of recording classical music outside higher education. Not only was the recording to become part of our portfolios of recordings (which we shall be using as demonstration CDs for many years to come), but it was also conducted within a professional recording studio. It was particularly motivating, for instance, to have access to some of the most up-to-date technology in use at the moment in the recording industry. We thus discovered together the ins and outs of SADiE, for instance, the editing software we used at the postproduction stage. The Tonmeister student was very much familiar with this software as it was used in the (mainly classical) Chandos CD company with which he did his placement year. He was therefore able to show us how the programme worked in great detail as well as give us insights into his experience of his placement year.
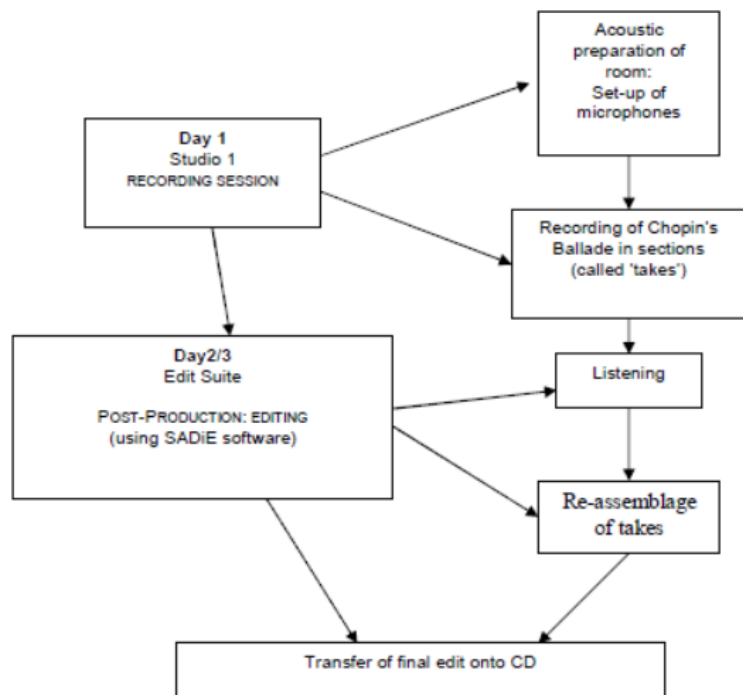
Figure 2 The recording process took place over 3 days

Such a complex project, involving so many different skills and people, necessarily put us to the test and challenged our creativity. From this experience, we learnt first hand which qualities are fundamental to any form of inquiry that takes place within such a close-knit immersive experience: how to work together as a team, how to listen to each others' opinions in order to discuss the issues constructively, how to sometimes allow for compromise and how to always have an open, positive and dynamic attitude.

A studio recording could best be described as a musical jigsaw puzzle – my performance is split up into sections during the recording session and then reassembled during the editing process. We aim to have at least two or three good 'takes' of each section from which we can choose when editing the piece.

Playing to a forest of microphones is not like playing to a live audience. In a recording studio, the musician relies exclusively on the producer and the sound engineer to achieve the best possible result. The latter is responsible for placing the microphones to ensure the best quality sound is captured during the performance.

In order to be good, a classical recording must not only be note-perfect, it must also sound spontaneous and natural – something which is particularly difficult to achieve in what are often clinical studio conditions. At this stage, the producer's role is very important as [they have] the responsibility for noting down on the score all the errors and potential retakes. Throughout the session, the Tonmeister also keeps a detailed record of all the takes we make (take numbers, bar numbers, sections played, quality of take, timing, etc.) so as to be able to locate them as fast as possible in the final editing phase of the project. In this way, at the editing stage, we will not have to listen through the whole 4 or 5 hours of recording in order to find the one we want each time. The producer and the Tonmeister's work at this point is crucial from my point of view, as I cannot remember all the mistakes I have made, nor can I judge certain aspects of phrasing, dynamics or tempo. It is indeed very important to keep the same tempi and dynamics throughout, in particular in multiple "takes", so that any potential cuts will not jar. It is not only my role but also the producer's role to judge whether my interpretation remains consistent throughout the session. The producer has to focus on listening to both the micro-level (specific mistakes which may require retakes) and the macro-level (the coherence of the takes in relation to each other).

The whole recording session is extremely tiring because I have to maintain my concentration and physical energy as well as the sense of spontaneity and freshness in my playing for the whole duration of the recording session. It is also a very exciting process as we try to solve problems of dynamics (the effects on tape are often achieved differently from those of a live performance, so I have to change my interpretation accordingly), discrepancies in tempo, technical difficulties, etc. within a short time-scale We discuss various ways of interpreting passages and most importantly, the producer and the Tonmeister

also support and encourage me when I get frustrated with certain passages which I sometimes cannot get "right" even after a dozen takes. Even in a sound-proofed recording studio, sometimes, a creaking piano stool, somebody banging a door outside or the ceiling cracking in a soft passage can spoil an otherwise perfect take, to our great dismay.

Once satisfied with all the takes, the producer, Tonmeister and myself will meet again in order to start the editing. The producer will prepare an editing plan which he works out from his notes. The idea is to have the fewest possible cuts in order to maintain continuity in the flow of the music. The Tonmeister will use the producer's editing plan to make a "first" edit. The three of us will then listen to this first edit in one of the listening rooms, marking down on the score any spots which need re-editing. Very often, the first edit is a very rough cut and the editing will take several days to complete as we listen painstakingly to each and every note. The whole recording appears on the screen as a complex network of sound waves, which enables the Tonmeister to pinpoint the very start of each note with extreme precision. Sometimes it is very difficult to paste in certain sections where no silence occurs in the music and the Tonmeister will work on blending two takes together in order to smooth over the cut.
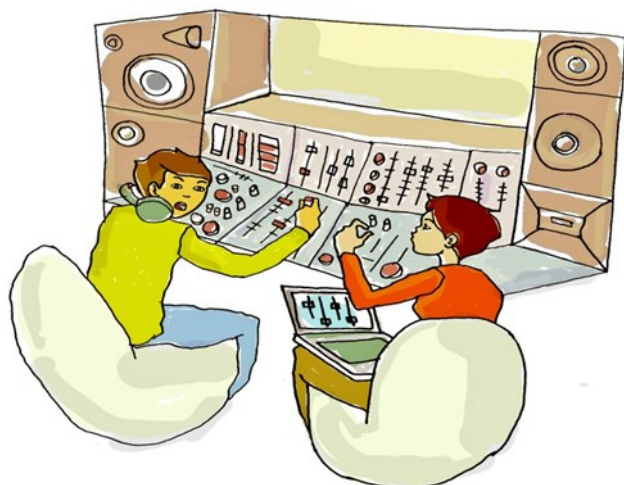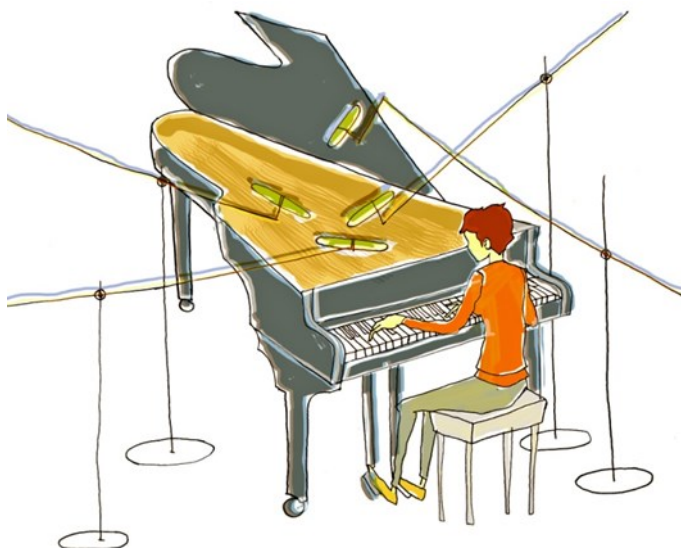
I have never had a more stimulating and rewarding time. If I were asked to briefly summarize what made this experience so valuable, I would emphasize the quality of the teamwork and the sheer excitement of having to deal constructively and creatively with the many problems and new challenges we faced at each and every stage of the project. All three of us - the Tonmeister, the producer and myself, the pianist –worked in such close collaboration throughout and with such utter dedication to the task that we were able to produce a recording of Chopin's 4th Ballade whose quality we felt surpassed many commercial classical CDs. On the way, I also discovered many other things: the project involved not only sitting down at the piano and playing a piece of music, but also, in this case, listening to others' directives and opinions, deciding as a team how to proceed, and working out potential difficulties. To be allowed to try out our own ideas and proceed at times by trial and error was far more effective than to be simply told what to do. This was particularly valuable as in a non-academic or professional situation, we would not expect to be told how to solve the problems which we would be facing. [Rather] it involved making judicious decisions at every step throughout the process, working hand in hand and collaborating closely together at each stage of the project and always keeping an open enquiring mind as to the best ways to proceed and obtain the best result.

What it felt like to perform

I sit motionless at the piano, my hands lying on my lap, my head bowed in intense and quiet concentration. I am about to perform one of my favourite pieces, a Ballade by Frederic Chopin. His fourth and last. Different from the others. Pervaded by mournful gypsy tunes reminiscent of Chopin's Polish roots, this work has always had an elusive, strange and mysterious quality. I remember walking alone in the hills, preparing this moment, playing the music in my head, over and over again, asking myself "what, why, how?", and linking tones with tones, phrases with phrases, chords with chords, trying to make sense of the music. As I searched for a meaning, a new world appeared, a world of abstract patterns and colours, relations and structures, a world which I would soon be bringing to life and communicating to my audience... A click. The black speaker in the corner of the studio suddenly comes to life, its little red light flashing urgently in the muted light, breaking the stillness. I look up towards the control room, vaguely seeing human shapes in the penumbra, separated from me by a thick tinted glass window. They wave and smile. I nod and wave back. 'All set, ready to go, take 1'. The disembodied voice of the producer breaks through the air. With another click, the sound engineer flips the microphone switch off. Again, I am alone.

A wave of silence washes over me. But it is not silent. Small sounds which would have otherwise gone unnoticed are suddenly magnified out of all proportion. The aeration vents are gently breathing in and out and the fluorescent lights are softly buzzing. The room feels alive, like some sleeping beast which will soon awaken to the sound and fury of Chopin's Ballade. I am not only to play the music. For a moment, I am to forget myself and be the music, and so doing draw my audience into the music so that they too forget themselves and become the music. But today, my audience is a forest of grey and black microphones. These are particularly difficult ears to please. Blind, unresponsive, unforgiving, silent, cold and calculating, they will remember and record every detail of my performance, the good moments, but also, the bad. It is difficult not to become self-conscious of one's technical limitations, to focus on the bad rather than the good. It is difficult not to give up in despair when two minutes into the music, something goes wrong and the whole section needs to be played again, and again, until every note has its correct place in the flow of the music. Every flaw, however minute, needs to be rectified until the piece is "perfect".

But what is perfection in performance? In a concert situation, many variables affect one's interpretation. The piano itself, sometimes bright, sometimes muted, its action heavy or light, greatly influences the way one plays a piece. The acoustics of the room – from a reverberant church to a dry, deadened hall – will affect its sound world. The audience, quiet or noisy, sullen or enthusiastic will change the whole atmosphere of the concert hall. Tempo, voicing, balance, phrasing or dynamic progressions are thus governed by such external variables, by a constant adjusting and readjusting of the interpretation to suit the moment, thus creating a two way communication between the artist and the audience.

That is why each and every live performance is never perfect as such because it is always different, but also always new and exciting, spontaneous and alive.

How different is the experience of the recording studio. Playing on one of the most beautifully toned and desirable pianos in the world, in one of the most carefully gauged acoustics in the world, without the distractions that even the most well behaved audience will provoke, my interpretation is stripped down to its most essential expression. Pencil poised above the score, the producer is waiting patiently, straining to hear the first notes of the piece, wishing me to play my best, ready to inspire me to new heights by taking on the role of an entire audience, responsive, enthusiastic and trustworthy. My lifeline.

The Tonmeister sits at the control panel, keeping an eye on the little screens, hands hovering over the buttons, ready to adjust volume and balance. He has already spent hours perfecting the sound, moving microphones here and there, until the recorded piano sounds as lifelike and natural as the piano itself. I reflect that they too are in a parallel world – a small box of a room dominated by two giant loudspeakers. Connected together by a thin network of wires, we are never so close as in those instants of silence before I play, when I can sense them holding their breaths, willing me to outdo myself. Lifting my hands to the keyboard, I close my eyes and feel the space around me receding, the walls of the studio falling away. The first three bell-like notes of the opening of the ballade seem to softly probe the surrounding air, an emerging melody as mellifluous and enticing as the call of a siren to lost sailors. Gradually, more voices are heard and the calm opening section gives way to an ever increasing crescendo of colours, textures and speed. Like fireworks, crisscrossing waves of sound build webs of lightning filaments, the chains of atoms dancing hand in hand to the sound of music. Sound is colour. Sound is texture. Sound is pattern. A revelation. I can see it, I can feel it, I can create it. Swaying slightly on the piano stool, I set my whole mind and body on building a living, ever changing architecture of sound from Chopin's masterpiece.

As the last notes of the piece die away, I feel the room heave a sigh, as if exhausted by such an onslaught of sound. The Tonmeister and producer are smiling and laughing, happy at the result. I too am elated, if slightly dazed by the intensity of the performance. Even so, for the next three hours, we painstakingly go through the piece line by line, page by page, over and over again as I try to recapture the spontaneity of the first take and improve each section so that the producer's final jigsaw of assembled takes will be as spontaneous, seamless and flowing as that first performance, so that it will be perfect not only in letter but in spirit. At the end of this experience, it seems to me that, together, we have transcended the emptiness and inhumanity of the recording studio, that I have been playing not to a blank wall of microphones but to a universal audience, the music thus reaching out far beyond the walls of the concert hall. Finally, we close the lid of the piano, disconnect the microphones and switch off the lights, locking the doors behind us.

An ecological perspective: Norman Jackson

This narrative captures something of the intensity, energy and spirit of close collaborative working (*relationships*) under pressure and in an environment akin to a commercial recording situation. The *affordance* for professional development and achievement for all those who were involved, lay in the experience of musical performance and real-time recording of the performance in an environment that had been constructed for this purpose (*space*). It provides an excellent example of a group of highly skilled people working together to achieve a complex goal, striving for excellence in their achievement and learning and developing in the process. It reveals the complex interaction between people working together, with their specialist tools in a highly specialised environment (*relationships between people, tools and environment*) which provided the physical *context* for their collaborative learning ecology.

The components and contributions to this collaborative ecology for learning, developing and achieving. Over a few days the participants worked intensively as a 'collective' to utilise the affordances, performance space and resources to produce a high quality recording.

Complex performances and achievements, such as the one described cannot be accomplished by a single individual and the involvement of a group of people working as a team and their *relationships* and interactions were core to the success of the project. Each participant contributed their talents and capabilities gained from past experiences, and together they created an inquiry-rich problem solving *process* which not only tested their own capability in performance but also provided an experience that was rich in opportunity and potential for their own learning and professional development. The *process* through which the recording was made and the performance space were authentic in the sense of mirroring the commercial world of recording with access to high quality studio *resources* - instruments, recording equipment and software that were all necessary for the performing and recording task. All participants shared the same *proximal goal* - to create a recording of the highest technical and artistic quality and this was set within more *distal goals* concerned with both gaining the best marks for this aspect of their course and building a portfolio that would enable the students to gain employment in their chosen professional fields. This team of students were behaving as a collective (Thomas and Seeley Brown 2011) in which over the space of a few days their individual learning ecologies were merged to form a single collaborative ecology for the purpose of achieving the goal they shared. Their *learning trajectory* is evidenced in the achievement of the high quality recording which reflects the performance of all the individuals involved in this *context.*

While performance is embedded in a learning ecology (including the performance of creating the ecology) in this case the ecology is geared to achieving excellence in performance by the musician and the excellent recording of the performance by the technicians supporting her. Performance is one of the most difficult things to capture in a reflective narrative but this performer manages to convey a sense of her thoughts and feeling about the experience very well. She reveals something about her imaginings and planning for the moment of the performance, and her knowledge of the work, how she felt as she was waiting to perform and of her act of performing as she strives for musical perfection. Such heightened self-awareness is a necessary part of the ecology of a performer and it helps her convey something of what it is actually like to be immersed in your own ecology for achieving something you value.

Acknowledgement

This article was originally written for the Immersive Experience Conference organised by the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTrE) held at the University of Surrey in 2008. The article was published in the conference programme which can be downloaded from the conference wiki You can hear a recording made by Emilie at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loozKs7uMgM

Reference

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Commissioning Editor - patterns of life

There are two spatial-temporal dimensions to the narrative of a person's professional learning life. The first is a lifelong journey of personal change and development. The second is the lifewide experience we participate in every day by living and performing the roles in whatever job or jobs we are doing. While the lifelong dimension of our life reveals the places we have visited and inhabited that make perfect sense to us when we look back, the lifewide dimension is the space in which the meanings of our life are created through every thought and activity we engage in every moment of our life. It is in this dimension of our life in which we think and perform, and engage in activity that enables us to move into, through and out of - one stage of life to another, and one physical environment and its social - cultural contexts and relationships to another, and one role with its particular contexts, problems, challenges and identities to another, and one knowledge field to another, which all give our life meaning and the sense of who we are.

Our learning ecologies then provide us with the means of not only developing ourselves within our jobs or professional roles, they are our means of securing new jobs and roles and enabling us to move from one work context and role to another. Sue Watling's description of leaving one job and starting another in a different institution captures this process well. But we also sometimes make more severe transitions like leaving one sort of career to enter another in the same general field, or even move from one field to another.

When I look back on my own life it seems like I have been in a perpetual state of transition from being one sort of person to becoming another. Of moving into, through and out of - one stage of life into another, or one physical environment and its social - cultural contexts and relationships into another, one role with its particular contexts, problems challenges and identities to another, and even one field of professional knowledge to another. Some of this change is self-determined out of necessity, obligation, interest or opportunity, but sometimes its forced upon us. Regardless of the cause we have to learn to adapt to the new set of circumstances. Looking back over my life I can create a narrative around my personal and professional development at each stage of my life so cumulatively my overall pattern of learning and development can be recognised and I can give an account of why I have come to be the person I am, at least that part of me that has been shaped and grown through the work I have undertaken.

Figure 1 Main educational and work domains in my life. The black jagged lines represent significant transitions and dislocations in my life

Figure 1 shows the lifelong dimension of the pattern of my learning, development and achievement through my formal education and the various jobs and work roles I have had. The jagged lines show the points where I have had to make significant transitions and readjustments to my life in some cases involving building a new professional identity. Talking to friends I feel that this sort of pattern is not uncommon and many people 20 or 30 years into their working life have experienced something similar.

The next couple of articles provide some examples. Firstly, Hazel Messenger describes the evolution of her professional life in terms of a zigzag pattern that has been shaped by the circumstances of her life and the choices she has made, while Maja Jankowska shows how the sort of professional she now is has been shaped by a lifetime of events and circumstances.

Something Old, Something New: Learning and Developing through the Zigs and Zags of an Improvised Career

Hazel Messenger

Hazel, much to her surprise, is currently the MBA course leader at London Metropolitan University, a role that has taken her to work with the university's partners in Nepal and Sri Lanka. She has been determined to make a difference through her practice since first qualifying as a teacher, but would never have predicted the twists and turns that have characterised her career. She researches, writes and publishes on the creation of transformative learning cultures, takes business students to art galleries and is more than happy to disturb and disrupt in order to pursue her ultimate goal.
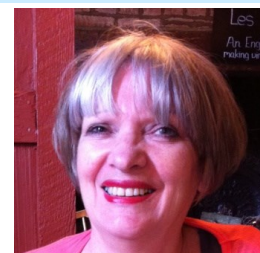
The ZigZag Pattern of Life

In her book 'Composing a Life', the anthropologist Mary Bateson [1] looks at the experiences of five women who, for a variety of reasons, were unable to focus on a single goal, but by improvising around the opportunities on offer they were able to develop successful and meaningful lives. The standard idea that the shapes of lives and careers should be monolithic and unidirectional is fading in the light of global changes, but it remains that society tends to view those who have needed to make numerous fresh starts as inferior, unsuccessful or unreliable in comparison to those that have had more straightforward more linear career trajectories. Bateson's challenge to this view is to claim that such protean and fluid 'zig-zag' lives [2:82] are themselves acts of creation and as such may make a significant contribution to understanding the role of creativity in human development. She also suggests that improvisatory lives are not random but underpinned by threads of continuity, with apparent continual redefinition masking a purposeful whole.

Two key contemporary writers on the process of development are Robert Kegan and Barbara Rogoff. Kegan [3,4,5] considers that it is through the repeated confrontation and resolution of increasingly complex dilemmas that the human identity develops. The unique continuity between the past and the present remains, so that a new identity develops which retains individuality. Viewing this process through the lens of creativity, and in particular Teresa Amabile's componential model [6,7,8], provides a way of exploring the relationships between creativity, context and human development. Resolving dilemmas requires harnessing the personal characteristics associated with creativity like persistence, the ability to tolerate ambiguity and the ability to reflect, so that a new stability is created. However, Kegan [4] suggests that the majority of adults have not had the opportunity to go through this process and so do not develop to their full adult potential. This in turn, he suggests, means that society is restricting its own growth and capabilities for solving its own problems, as there are not enough people around who are socially mature enough to do so. He considers that striving towards adulthood is not about developing quantitatively, i.e. having a greater fund of knowledge, but about developing qualitatively, having a more secure internal base from which to interpret experiences and make decisions.

Barbara Rogoff [9] contributes to the debate on human development by indicating the significance of the cultural context, pointing out how human beings both create and are created by the context in which they live. In an improvised ZigZag pattern of life, the creative person perceives the affordances in their contexts and creates an ecology to exploit the possibilities for development [10]. New affordances enable the person to create new purposes for themselves and develop processes, relationships and resources to enable them to take advantage of the affordance (Figure 1).

***Figure 1** Ecology for development [10]*

Each new context contains affordances that a person can take advantage of by creating an ecology that enables them to develop themselves for the experiences they will encounter or create in that context.
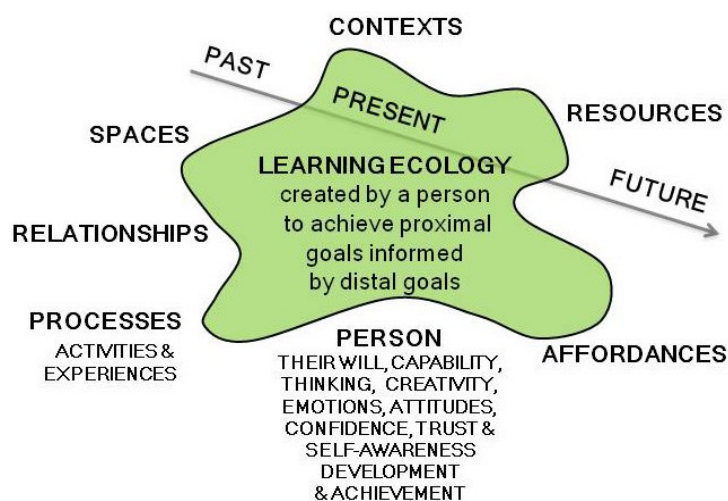
Where there are barriers or challenges to be overcome, motivation towards a distal goal provides the overarching drive to find ways of harnessing experiences and capabilities to influence the present in pursuit of a different future. These related perspectives on human development can be used to explore how the ecologies of improvisatory lives can provide ways of identifying how creative individuals can promote their own development and suggest ways in which society can benefit from such knowledge.

My Personal Perspective

My own career has had plenty of Zigs and Zags, with the first big Zig the transition from BC (Before Children) to AC (After Children). At the end of BC I was an unhappy head of science in a large urban secondary school, but finding solace in education/employer partnership working with the local university. Before 'settling down' into formal education, I had spent a number of years as an environmental educator, developing educational programmes with a wide range of groups across the east of England. Although entering AC gave me the chance to escape secondary teaching, what characterised this Zig was a deep personal need and desire to continue to work in education, to not do so would have been denying who I was. An opportunity arose in the local FE college and I found myself working part-time, teaching communication skills to hair and beauty students, working with employers on development programmes and learning about teaching in a very new environment. When this contract fizzled out five years later, the Zag took me to a small, local village school, where for the first time I learnt that teaching could be fun as well as rewarding. This was an environment that emphasised integration; of the curriculum, the school and the local community. In this setting I could be my whole self, and developed relationships which would have life-long impact.

Figure 2 Zigzagging between different professional contexts
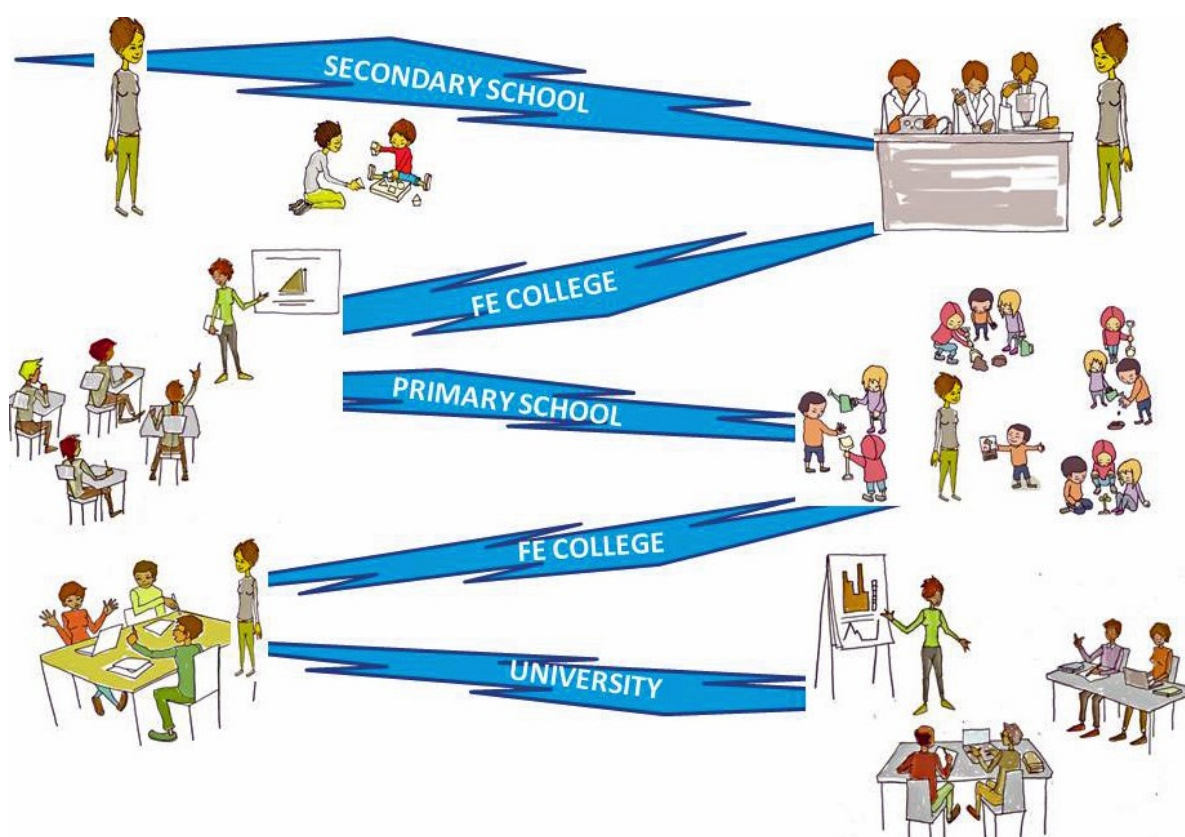
It was from these experiences that I Zigged back into FE, this time to be involved in new higher education qualifications for those that worked with the youngest children. This was a significant moment for those of us working in this sector, with changes to policy, practice and qualifications requiring the development of new curricula and new ways of working in partnership. This was the start of my career in higher education, and the essentially integrated nature of learning and development which underpins early years' practice has guided my work ever since. Although during the following years the deep desire to make a difference through education was accompanied by the practical need to be financially independent, I continued to identify opportunities where I could make use of previous experiences in a new context. Because of family responsibilities these Zigs and Zags were located within a defined geographical area, and eventually I made the transition to become an academic at the local university, involved in partnership working and art and design education.

If the story ended there I am sure I would have enough material to write on learning from the inflections that constituted my ZigZag life. However, seven years ago a major disruption took me in a new direction, as I was made redundant and found my-self having to make another move. It was a time of great fear for the future, anger and grief, but the necessities of employment and maintaining a home were accompanied by the desire to complete my doctorate, so I remained in higher education and moved, unexpectedly, to work at a business school which was within commuting distance. This major change of direction opened up huge new possibilities, and I now, much to my surprise, run an MBA and work with overseas partners in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Reflections on a ZigZag Life

Looking back over the ZigZag points of my ZigZag life I can see that some have been generated by necessity; to cope with the challenges of family life, to be closer to the children's school, after redundancy, or the need to earn more money. More recently, they have been prompted by desire; to be in a position to make a difference, to be involved in research, to be influential, to belong to a community.

Each of the ZigZag points has been a transitional moment, preceded by a period of reappraisal and identification of the possible, and then followed by movement to a new place, or in a new direction, incorporating new relationships, renewed momentum and purpose. Sometimes the period of reappraisal was by necessity quite short, for example following redundancy, but at other times it built up over a period of time involving a dissatisfaction that needed to be resolved. I can relate my experiences to those described by Sue Watling in her article[11] about starting a new job, and also to the idea of trusting in yourself and your instincts described by Maret Staron [12]. As time progressed and I moved successfully between sectors, my sense of internal trust (trusting myself) developed enabling me to identify opportunities for growth in each of the contexts I joined, and create new ways of influencing the learning and development of others. This internal trust enabled me 'to make the connections that appeared to be right', something that I eventually capitalised on in my doctoral studies associated with development of the person in higher education.

Robert Kegan [3] explains the restless process of development as a yearning to be independent and yearning to belong, which could also be framed as a yearning to achieve, in order to make a difference. For my own survival, I have needed to retain a continuing sense of self in all of the environments I have worked in, but I have also actively influenced those environments, and they me [9]. The desire to be creative and to bring expertise from the past has been strong and as time has progressed I have identified ways in which knowledge gained from one context could be of use in another. However, I have also learnt that this is not always welcome, and 'new' ideas can be regarded with suspicion especially when coming from an unconventional outsider. I have not yet found one place where I fit, but now realise that there is more fun to be had in improvising on the periphery, as the centre is far too crowded and too limiting!

According to Mary Bateson[1] although each trajectory of a Zig or a Zag opens up new possibilities, contexts and situations to explore, it should be possible to locate patterns within such improvisation. Far from having a disconnected career, through maintaining a focus on promoting learning and development, at each Zig and Zag I became routinely sensitive to the familiar in difference and able to anticipate the emergence of patterns linking each new context. Resolving these Zigs and Zags resulted in my developing a more mature, secure and integrated identity, something that I had not anticipated from the barriers that appeared to characterise my progress. A ZigZag career pattern may be unconventional, but the diversity produces acts of creation and strength and depth, providing the developmental challenges which provide sustenance for the growth of the individual and their learning ecologies. Diversity creates a new reciprocity; for learning through work, for contributing to the nature of work and for creating the individual.

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Pathways Through Life: Development at the Junctions, Inflections, Disruptions and Transitions of Life

Maja Jankowska

Maja Jankowska is a Lecturer in Educational Psychology at the University of Bedfordshire. Her work has always been inter-disciplinary, crossing the boundaries of psychology, education and cultural studies. In her previous role as a Research Fellow at the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at the University of Bedfordshire, she worked with other staff to help and support the implementation of PDP and the development of pedagogic research across the university. Her interests are in qualitative methodology, personal development, processes of identity development, cultural aspects of teaching, learning and therapy, internalisation of education, meaningful learning and creativity.

The Journey of Life

Thinking of the story of my personal and professional development, an image of a busy 'junction' popped up. Well, actually, several busy junctions with different pathways emerging, disappearing, re-emerging and sometimes converging into one. Life is certainly a journey and it's hard to separate the professional from the personal and the past from the present. Who I am now as a mid-career professional working in higher education has been influenced and shaped by the whole journey I have made through my life. Mine is a story that is always in the making - by this I mean I am traversing a highly diverse territory and the direction neither is, nor can be fully decided upon in advance. It is a story about the choices we make and the risks we take that lead us along different pathways with each one requiring entirely new ecologies for our learning, development and achievement to fulfil new purposes, in contexts that are new and unfamiliar, forming new relationships, finding and using new resources. The pathways we choose to a new and better life are our means of exploring the affordance we perceive in the circumstances of our life and the means of changing these circumstances.
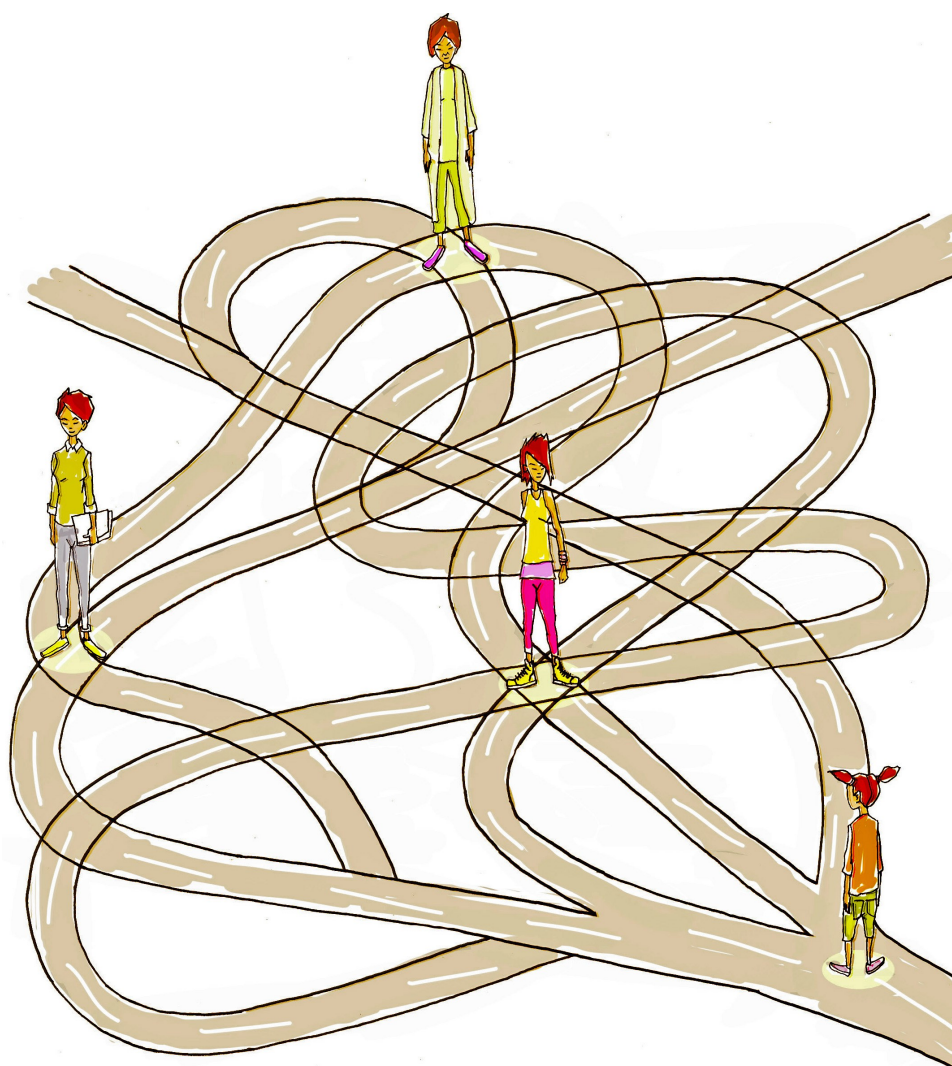
We live in highly uncertain times and we have to learn to live and prosper with uncertainty, ambiguity and 'supercomplexity', especially in the world of education and employment. [1] I am fortunate because I tend to thrive in such environments. It fuels my curiosity and my hunger for constant learning, exploration and experimentation. So when I am thinking of my personal and professional journey so far it becomes clear that while I am travelling along one path, other possible paths are never too far away and I often find myself at junctions where some or all of these paths meet, converge (and, at times, merge), offering me insights and opportunities to re-invent myself.

This diversity, both in terms of educational background and professional experience and in terms of my socio-cultural and linguistic background are both manifestations of and reasons for my agility.

At these junctions I am ready to turn around and move swiftly in a new direction as my desire to question, to learn, to keep going is a constant (perhaps the only constant) feature in my life. I would say I am a highly *agile learner*. However, my definition of agility goes beyond the interpretation that we often encounter in the world of business. For me being agile means not only to be able to adapt to changes to my environment (Stodd,2014 [2]) but, more importantly, not being afraid to move to new, often challenging, contexts and strive for a meaningful interaction. This goes beyond the adaptation of an individual to their changing environment and includes individuals seeking entirely new environments to adapt to or perhaps even creating their own environments. I am also a modern time *Nomad* – moving between disciplines (psychology, education, psychotherapy and cultural studies), between teaching, research and practice, moving between various communities but also, outside of an institutionalised education, in my everyday life moving between countries, cultures and languages. This diversity, both in terms of educational background and professional experience and in terms of my socio-cultural and linguistic background are both manifestations of and reasons for my agility.

> being agile means not only to be able to adapt to changes to my environment but, more importantly, not being afraid to move to new, often challenging, contexts and strive for a meaningful interaction

Moving between these lifescapes requires a certain degree of openness, tolerance to uncertainty and trust in the process of my own learning and development. I also have to trust myself in terms of the decisions I make about my own professional life. To me agility also means always being 'alert' and on the look-out for opportunities. Staying actively open and vigilant of the affordances in my environment enables me to spot opportunities which may go unnoticed by others.

Being an extravert, a 'doer' who likes to experience and experiment and, to a certain degree, a fearless individual, I just 'jump in' and take the risk. Inspiration to do something takes only a moment, [2] it is like a spark which catches up quickly. From my observation this 'jumping in' when an opportunity is spotted, is a feature of many creative and entrepreneurial individuals. If they were to hang around and ponder for too long, either others would spot the very same opportunity or the circumstances would change, making the opportunity redundant or they themselves may go off the idea. Having an inter-disciplinary and multi-cultural and –lingual background also helps when making connections and seeing things from various perspectives. It's an obvious statement but combined with agility - ability to respond rapidly and adapt to a changing environment (which I also see as plasticity) can be powerful in the pursuit of lifelong and life-wide learning. Stodd [2] talks about how one can thrive in chaos and ambiguity when equipped with agility and one's own humility. Humility, for me, links to self-awareness and acknowledgement that I am only a small drop in an ocean of knowledge, wisdom and experience and that there is always much more to learn from others around me. Nowadays social learning and reaching out to various, sometimes distant communities can be achieved so much more easily due to technological advancements. My job therefore is to actively seek out more knowledgeable others and link with them in various ways. In doing so, I seek to construct my personal meanings and these help me make sense of the supercomplex world I live in. In essence, meaning making is my survival strategy.

How we perceive our life is a matter of interpretation

Just like Jackson in his essay on the Ecology of Disruption & Inflection[3] I have been pondering over how our life journeys are shaped by the circumstances of life and how these may 'nudge or propel us along entirely new trajectories' [3]. For me, the emphasis here is on 'may' as I see the ability to respond to the new circumstances often as linked to agility, plasticity and adaptability. Not everybody responds to new circumstances or opportunities and some of our responses are perhaps not the most positive or proactive. This also brings me to the issue of inflections and disruptions in life [3,4]. According to Tobin[4] inflections are the points in life which take us in a different direction, altering the course of our lives. Inflections are usually positive and bring the feelings of hope, adventure and opportunity. They evoke transition, which may or may not be easy. On the other hand, disruptions are often caused by events or circumstances out of our control (illness, death). Here we also go through a transformation but this process is often painful and evokes feelings of loss.
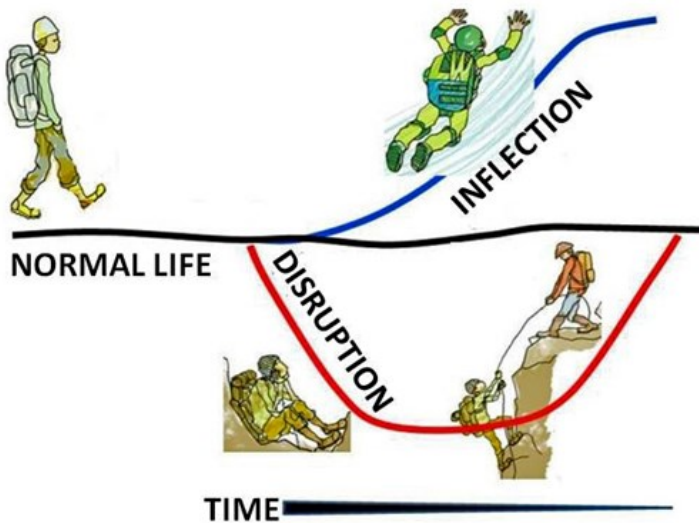
But for me it is all a matter of interpretation. Some situations or events can be understood as inflections but these inflections, at times, may turn into major disruptions. And disruptions can be turned into inflections. Either way it is down to me how I choose to interpret these events, what meanings I attach to these and whether I 'bounce back', draw on and further build my resilience. Understanding the power of interpretation has definitely helped me turn several disruptions into inflections and not to give up or slide into depression. Such an orientation in life may be viewed as positivism or optimism. Although I would not normally see myself as 'a happy-go-lucky optimist', I grew to learn (and apply this knowledge to my life) that seeing the affordances even in dire circumstances in life and realising there is potential for action are among the most powerful mental tools I can use in my life. A conscious choice of a more positive interpretation propels me to actively look for opportunities, resources and social exchanges (mentors, for instance) that can support me in my effort to change even a serious disruption into an inflection.

How the evolving contexts, events and circumstances of my life have shaped me into the person I have become

Many situations, events or circumstances are grounded in particular socio-cultural contexts and historical time. I have been thinking how I have been shaped by the specific socio-cultural contexts I grew up in. I was born in Poland during the later stages of the communist regime in Eastern Europe. Without going into detail, the scarcity of opportunities (that is if one had no 'connections') has sharpened my alertness and made me realise I needed to be agile, flexible and adaptable in order to thrive in this environment.

My father's professional life was thwarted as he refused to enter the communist party. Still, he was a very good lawyer and people flooded to our house asking for his help. They paid him in all kind of strange commodities, which we, in turn, could trade and this helped us survive. My first disruption came early on in life – I was 12 when my father died. The first two years after this were very hard and we ended up in poverty. After the initial bereavement struggle, I saw how my mother picked herself up and very resourcefully followed up a business idea, aside from her daily job as a head teacher. This was a great example of a role model and I decided to do my best to help her with the financial burden, earn money, work towards becoming independent and invest in myself in terms of education. I started selling my own hand-made products (jewellery) and at the same time I discovered writing as a creative form of self-expression – writing stories and poetry helped me deal with the loss of my father. Fortunately, I had a wonderful teacher who encouraged me to send these stories to various competitions. I won/ was commended several times and finally I also started publishing in an alternative teenage magazine. The response was quite overwhelming – I started getting hundreds of letters and this made me realise that there were other young people going through various struggles and looking for social support. This experience led to my lifelong fascination with psychology and psychotherapy. Hence I can say this disruptive early life experience forged my passion and ambition for a career within this sector.

In my high school I started volunteering for an organisation which helped young drug addicts. It was a highly disturbing and disrupting experience as I became exposed to a high level of adversity and the experiment to use 'clean', non-addicted teen-agers to help those addicted, was quite a failure. Only a handful of us did not slip into addiction ourselves, as a consequence of this experiment. Nonetheless, participating in a therapeutic group further fuelled my interest in psychology, and consequently I ended up studying psychology at the university so turning a disruptive experience into inflection in my life.

At the same time, I decided to learn English (alongside Russian and French). Although communism was in ruin by the time I went to high school, travel was still restricted (especially if you did not have substantial financial resources) and my peers generally were not too keen on learning foreign languages as they did not think they would have many opportunities to put them in practice. I however decided that since foreign languages were introduced to the curriculum, there soon would be demand for private tuition. So I put a lot of effort into learning English and by the time I started studying psychology, I knew English well enough to teach the basics to the kids in nurseries and primary schools. Being able to spot this opportunity and respond in a truly agile manner not only gave me the income and the means to live an independent life but it also sparked my interest in pedagogy – another lifelong fascination.

Psychology, education and language and cultural studies became my core interests and I was always actively seeking opportunities to develop further in these areas. In my third year of psychology I became a leader of the psychology student association and represented my country on a European congress of EFPSA (European Federation of Psychology Students Associations). In order to attend I had to raise funds – something completely out of my comfort zone. But as I was highly determined and motivated, I achieved what others saw (in that context and time) as unachievable and I used the congress as a networking opportunity. As a result I agreed with my peers from Hungary to create the first ever exchange of psychology students between our universities. Yet again, I simply spotted an opportunity and 'jumped in'. As this was the first ever event like this (with us going to Budapest for a week and them coming to Lodz, Poland for a week of activities), it required a lot of hard work, organisation, fund raising and creative networking but, at the same time, was incredibly rewarding. With these two events – going to Portugal for EFPSA congress and an exchange with Hungarian psychology students, I started believing I may be able to travel the world and learn other languages and cultures. Not surprisingly therefore, at the first opportunity – the first Erasmus place becoming available to one psychology student at my university - I took the plunge and applied. I was awarded the scholarship and ended up studying a year in Finland (in my fourth year of psychology), learning Finnish and many other subjects which I had not even heard of in Poland.

The above experiences further fuelled my curiosity and my hunger for knowledge and I decided to continue learning languages and look for opportunities to travel and learn from people of different cultural backgrounds. This continues to be my passion.

I returned to Poland to finish my 5th year of psychology and given my top grades and other achievements in psychology, I was convinced I naturally would get a space on a PhD programme. Sadly, 'connections' still mattered a lot and that meant I stood no chance. This was another disturbing experience – to me it felt like my wings were cut and I was brought back to 'reality'. This reality was rather grim – with not many jobs available for psychology graduates and the few jobs that were available were mainly 'ring-fenced' for those with 'connections'. This was a serious disruption but I decided to turn it around by continuing studying (this time Foreign Language Teaching studies), which not only was enjoyable but also added another profession to my CV. Hence a disruption yet again became an infliction and a turning point in my life. While studying I secured a part-time psychologist position and another part-time primary English teacher position and by the time I graduated I had some work experience under my belt.

My ecologies for learning, developing, achieving & adapting

So how do these stories of my early life relate to the core theme of this issue? Looking back I can see that the pathways encouraged or forced me to create entirely new ecologies for learning, each of which enabled me to develop in certain ways.

Each ecology grew from the particular contexts and circumstances of my life and each was formed around a purpose with a specific goal. I had seen the affordance in a situation and the ecology I created enabled me to explore the potential for action, for learning, developing and achieving something in the situation. Each required me to develop new relationships and along the way I was helped by people who cared for me. I found and used the resources I needed and created processes to enable me to learn and succeed. It was my willingness to get involved in the way I did and my capability and creativity that enabled me to succeed and develop in the process.
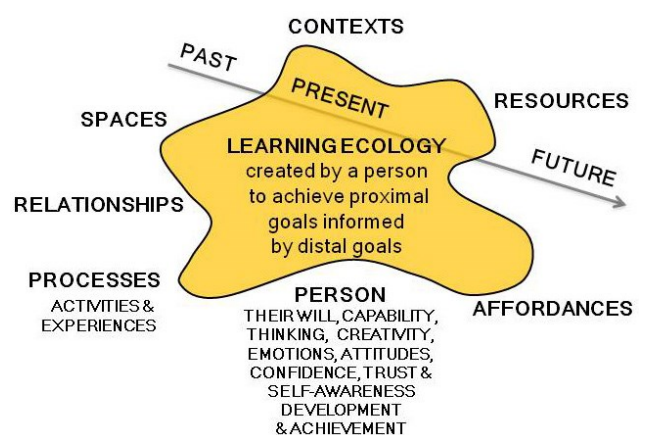
Pathway to my current professional world

It is strange how small events can change a life. One day (during my final year of English studies, in 2004) I was walking down the main street in my home city and saw a banner outside of a hotel advertising jobs for psychologists, pedagogues, therapists, nurses etc. in mental health hospitals in the UK. It said apply within. Without thinking twice I walked in, got myself an interview and secured a job as an assistant psychologist in a hospital in England. I packed up and left for the new country and new job. Initially I viewed this as a great opportunity to gain more professional experience – especially as it was in a different country and in English (an inflection) but soon I realised that the transition was very difficult on many levels and it seriously disrupted my life. On one hand I loved the experience of yet again being immersed in a different culture and language, learning and experiencing new things and broadening my horizons but at the same time the working environment was challenging and our clients dangerous. I was not prepared for the level of physical aggression and other issues within the organisation and for the level of culture shock. Living abroad also seriously disrupted my very new family life and my marriage did not survive the distance.

It could have been the worst experience of my life but instead I decided that this was an opportunity to start anew. I realised I still had in me the passion for learning and so I decided to apply for academic jobs. I wanted to learn something new and the first job offer from an English University also came with an opportunity to do a PhD (something of which I had previously dreamt of back in Poland). The position I successfully applied for involved research on Personal Development Planning and employability. It was a completely new context and my attention shifted to an entirely new purpose (developing myself for a career as an academic) and so I started forging a new identity for myself.

Soon after, however this new pathway was also interrupted by the birth of my daughter and my focus shifted to learning to be a mother and juggle different responsibilities. Not without difficulties, I managed to persevere with my doctoral work. But I was on a fixed term contract and when my project came to an end I was made redundant and unemployed for the first time in my life. This brought a high level of uncertainty and anxiety as I now had another person for whom I was responsible and a steady income was vital.

After a brief period of working in a primary school, I returned to the university and started working as a research assistant. The job was not within my area of interest and quite repetitive but my new boss became one of the most valuable mentors I have ever had in my life and I am truly grateful for her wisdom and advice. She saw potential in me and kept encouraging me to go on further. Although now retired, she continues to encourage and inspire me.

While working for her as an RA I secured my first visiting lecturing job within the psychology department and the rest is history – I am still employed within this department. In my first permanent position I was employed as a lecturer in Educational Psychology with a view to creating a new course, which would be a marriage of Psychology and Education. Within the space of the last three years I have experienced immense growth. I obtained my PhD, worked on a creation of a new course and was charged with the responsibility for our partner colleges (link tutor). Unfortunately, the new course did not get off the ground and my career direction became uncertain again. Just as I was pondering what to do next, the department suddenly was left without a course leader for Psychology, Counselling and Therapies. In my usual agile manner, when the Head of Department asked me to consider this role, I took the plunge. With this new position came an opportunity to train as a therapist. I am now therefore in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy training. Looking back on my life, it feels like I have explored many different paths but I finally got back to what interested me most in my early years of fascination with psychology – psychotherapy. In my latest ecology for learning and developing myself, I am learning something that I am able to put into clinical practice and my distal future goal is to teach this myself
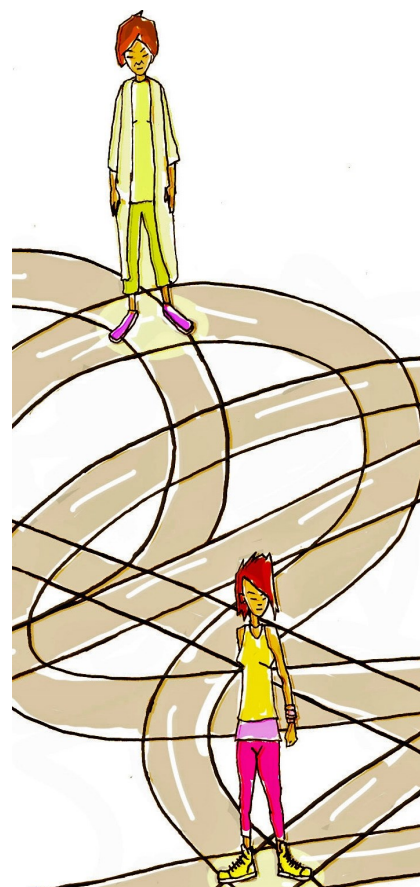
Although each ecology for learning can be seen as separate, I see many connections between them. Having engaged with these different ecologies in my life I initially moved between different disciplines and contexts but now I am immersed in what I see a broader and wider learning ecology as in my teaching, research and practice I can draw on and make connections between all the learning ecologies I have been involved with. Looking back, I now see that I struggled with my professional identity, moving between psychology, pedagogy, intercultural studies and linguistics and not truly having a sense of belonging to any one profession or being fully 'immersed'. However, instead of dwelling on it, I consciously make an effort of a more positive interpretation yet again. I teach psychology, research in areas closer to multicultural and multilingual education/pedagogy and apply clinical therapeutic skills to support migrant communities.

Important lessons from my life story

Looking back on my own life experience I think that a positive "can do" orientation to life that helps and enables us to   appreciate the affordances that are available to us, coupled to the willingness to try new things, to accept the risks involved and to put yourself into entirely new and unfamiliar situations are essential dispositions for lifelong and lifewide learning in the modern world. It takes courage to disrupt your own life and trust that eventually, what will emerge from all the disturbance, discomfort and anxiety will be new confidence, capability and even identity. We often talk about trans-ferable skills in higher education but when we view life on the scale and dynamic that I have described we are really talking about people being able to transfer themselves into entirely new contexts for which they are not equipped. This provides enormous motivation to learn and develop in order to make the necessary physical, mental and intellectual adjustment demanded by the change. Perhaps the key transferable capability required to make such transitions and change the pathway of our life is to be able to learn and develop in the new circumstances of our life. It is our willingness and ability to develop entirely new ecologies for learning and developing that are motivated by our purposes and needs and which involve us interacting as whole people with our environment, and the cultures, people and resources in it to find out the things we need to know to be able to do the things we need to do. I have drawn on Stodd's notion of the agile learner and I would like to couple this idea of being open and able to change and move in another direction to the idea that an agile learner is an ecological learner, with the confidence and willingness to try to learn and develop in and through any new context and set of circumstances that they put themselves into, or are put into by life circumstances.

The challenge for higher education is to help and enable learners to become agile in the way they view and respond to the world. We have to show learners that their lives might be as eventful as my own, that they too will encounter disruptions that require them to be resilient and opportunities that they can, if they choose, take advantage of. The real challenge for higher education is not just to ensure that their higher education experience meets their needs as present learners but that it prepares them to be confident and capable learners during their unknowable and uncertain futures. This perhaps is where the idea of learning through all our life experiences - lifewide learning - can help.
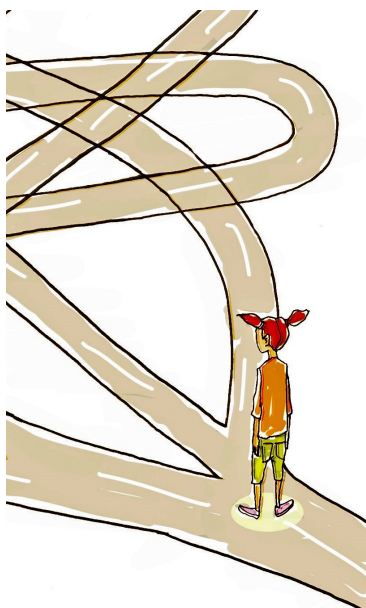
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Integrating Learning Ecologies into a Model of On-line Social Learning
Norman Jackson

Learning in the Social Age

Lifewide Magazine has devoted a number of issues to exploring different dimensions of the Social Age [1] - the age we currently inhabit thanks to the internet and the abundance of technologies that have changed the way we connect and communicate. Because of this technologically enabled environment the Social Age has greater affordance for learning than in any other age. But it is sometimes difficult to connect the learning in the formalised world of education with learning in the informal social world.

Whilst formal learning may talk about application, social learning happens where the application takes place. Whilst formal learning talks about how to make links to reality, social learning is already in the pub, finding a comfy sofa and getting the drinks in at the bar (2 and image to right)
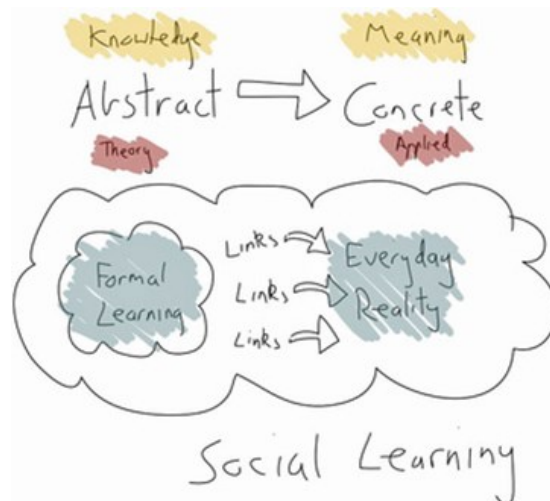
But, thanks to my participation in the #creativeHE [3] on-line course, which was led and facilitated by Lifewide Education Team member Chrissi Nerantzi, I now have a better understanding of these relationships.
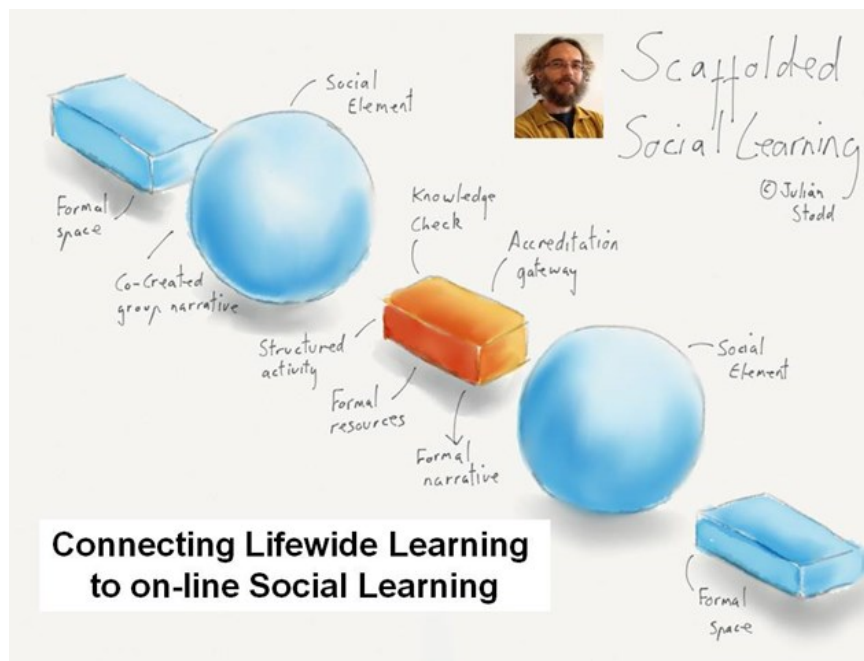
#creativeHE

#creativeHE is an open learning process (OLP) formed around the idea of 'creativity for learning in higher education'. It is underpinned by information and content within the P2PU platform and a google+ community space for interaction and conversation (1). The OLP is populated by open educational resources and practices (OER/OEP). It is facilitated and time bounded (6 weeks) and there is a weekly set of activities relating to the core theme that participants can, if they wish, participate in. But there is also an intentional openness for participants to share their own interests and topics of conversation with others who are interested.

In addition to the on-line community space and interaction, the organiser (@chrissinerantzi) is also facilitating face to face learning events in her university. Furthermore, there is also a group of educational masters students participating from a Greek university. These groups of people connect the enterprise to more formalised professional development and education in institutional settings. This is why #creativeHE bridges the formal, semi-formal and informal worlds of learning, education and professional development.

Scaffolded Social Learning

Julian Stodd, provides a nice model (4 and overleaf) for understanding the type of social learning that #creativeHE affords. He says that scaffolded social learning is built around two types of components: formal elements ('*boxes*') and informal social elements (*bubbles*). At the boundary between each, there is a gateway. The bubbles are co-creative, community spaces, places where we can feed out questions, and responses to case studies, activities and exercises that are carried out over time and within communities. The boxes are formally defined learning e.g. classroom [prescribed activities] or defined resources. The overall arrangement is defined by an overarching narrative which defines the focus for semi formal learning, with a broadly defined outcome in terms of the expectations of learning and personal/professional development.

Connecting Lifewide Learning to on-line Social Learning

The *overarching narrative* for #creativeHE is formed around questions like 'what does creativity mean? and How can we apply it in educational settings? The emerging narrative is created by all the participants as they share their responses to the activities, pose questions and offer perspectives on topics that interest them. The learning process #creativeHE involves individuals participating in structured activities (the rectangular boxes) and the sharing of responses to those activities in community spaces and unfolding conversations that relate directly or indirectly to the inquiry themes being explored. Participants create portfolios to evidence their participation in the structured activities and they earn badges as they progress through them.

Collectives

In addition to the structured activities #creativeHE provides affordance for interest-sharing outside the programmed activities and the formation of collaborative projects determined by participants themselves. Two groups have been established in #creativeHE. The groups are open to all participants in the community but there is an expectation that the cost of admittance is 'participation' in the discussions and activities of the group. You cannot be passive in a group. In this respect the groups are more like 'collectives' in the manner described by Thomas and Seeley Brown (4).

In the new culture of learning, people learn through their interaction and participation with one another in fluid relationships that are the result of shared interests and opportunity. In this environment the participants all stand on equal ground - no one is assigned to the traditional role of teacher or student. Instead, anyone who has particular knowledge of, or experience with, a given subject may take on the role of mentor at any time.

A collective is very different from an ordinary community. Where communities can be passive, collectives cannot. In communities people learn in order to belong. In a collective, people belong in order to learn. Communities derive their strength from creating a sense of belonging, while collectives derive theirs from participation.

The new culture of learning, is a culture of collective inquiry that harnesses the resources of the network and transforms them into nutrients within the learning environment, turning it into a space of play and experimentation.

The group I was involved in began by exploring interests in a google hangout space and identified interests in the topics of creativity and its involvement in emotions, relationships and visualisations. Over a couple of weeks we began to connect these interests to trying to understand how #creativeHE was working as a learning community. We connected our shared interest in creativity and emotion to the ways in which we could see emotions were involved in the formation of relationships in the on-line community and how creativity emerged through these relational interactions. Several members of Group 1 agreed to form a project around understanding their own involvement in the #creativeHE community and learning process and this resulted in activity to represent and share these understandings. We each approached the task of evaluation in a different way and shared our efforts. This multiplicity of perspectives demonstrated the power of social learning. The really interesting thing about this collective was that after the event the members wanted to carry on working together so I invited them to join the Lifewide Education / Creative Academic Team, which they did and our first project was to produce the December issue of Creative Academic Magazine.

Learning ecologies - missing piece in the social learning jigsaw puzzle

Julian Stodd's model of scaffolded social learning[4] offered me a way in to understanding the #creativeHE learning enterprise and it seems to explain most of what I experienced and observed. But it is deficient in one important respect: it takes no account of what participants are doing in the rest of their lives or how what they are doing in the social learning space, connects to their own learning projects - what I am calling learning ecologies (5). In my own learning ecology I am connecting what I am learning in the social learning space to the book I'm writing on learning ecologies and to the talk I am preparing for a seminar in Barcelona in ten days time. I will undoubtedly draw upon this personalised learning in the seminar when I talk to people who are far more knowledgeable than I am about on-line social learning practices.
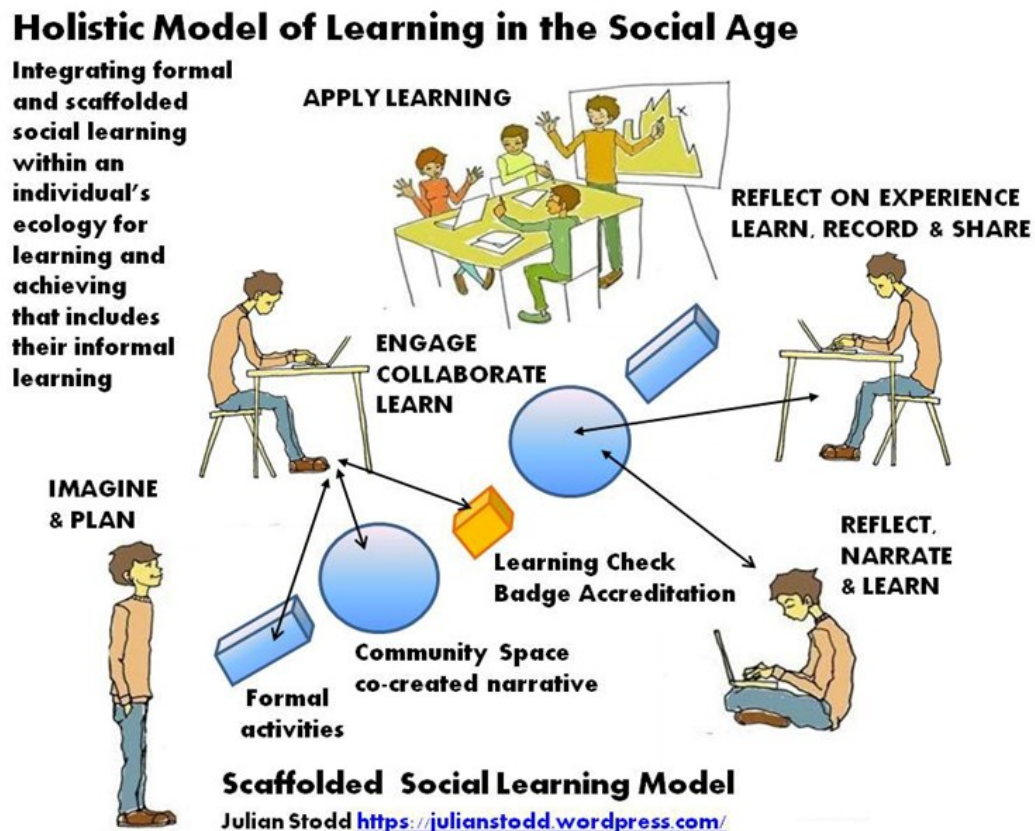
The point I'm making is that Julian's model is not holistic enough. It must also connect to participants' own learning ecologies. Our contemporary learning ecologies provide us with the living vehicle for applying our understandings and new capabilities as they emerge. They provide us with the opportunity to develop new relationships with potential for future learning and achievement. By integrating affordances for social learning such as #creativeHE into my own ecology for learning I was able to see the value of these forms of on line social learning. Furthermore, I was able to share the insights I had gained in an international seminar on the theme Lifelong Learning Ecologies.

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Evolution of My Learning Ecologies Before and After My Engagement with Social Media

Maha Bali

Maha is an Associate Professor of Practice at the Center for Learning and Teaching at the American University in Cairo. She is Editor at the journal Hybrid Pedagogy and editorial board member of two journals: Journal of Pedagogic Development and Learning, Media and Technology. Prof Hacker blogger, and co-founder of virtuallyconnecting.org and edcontexts.org. She also teaches educational game design to undergraduates.

Background

I have always had a hunger for learning, and the only way to satisfy that hunger has been to continually expand and extend my learning ecologies. Every new addition to my learning ecology opens up windows to other potential additions, and so on. I'd like to contrast how my learning ecology looked when I was embarking on my PhD back in 2006/2007 and started teaching in 2008, and what it looks like now: the key difference is that I am now deeply embedded in my social media networks.

I live in Egypt, and have been working at the American University in Cairo as a faculty developer since 2003. I left a corporate IT job to embark on a new mission in life to focus my career on education (my passion) my ambition is to make a positive impact on education in Egypt. But there were no local English-language graduate degrees in the field of education. So I did my masters online at the University of Sheffield in the UK, and my PhD remotely at Sheffield as well (again there were no local options. Sheffield turned out to be among the most reputable UK universities that offered remote PhD study, which I completed in 2013 (after several leaves of absence in 2011/2012 during the revolution in Egypt and the first year after the birth of my child). The remote PhD involved visiting my PhD supervisor annually, and communicating online for the rest of the year. Throughout the year, I knew I was missing out on all kinds of learning experiences that onsite PhD students got, so I tried to take advantage of all the resources around me.

When I was in Egypt, I would participate in events/research conducted by other social scientists (even though most of them were not in education per se). As soon as my university established a Graduate School of Education, I started teaching in its diploma programme. I found mentors to help me throughout different aspects of my PhD, brainstorming with me, reading parts of my thesis. I became friends with most librarians on campus who showed me how to make the best of what we had. When I was living in the US and UK partway through my PhD, I took advantage of the public libraries and whatever resources I could: accessing the library, I learned to love the eResources libraries of the American University in Cairo and Sheffield; I learned to find open access material, and to even value pirated material (particularly scanned books that had no electronic version) that was made available online. Without these resources, I would have been lost. But I also learned not to solely rely on my supervisor for help on everything. I was fortunate to have different mentors who helped me realize I could rely on them for some parts of my learning.

Near the end of my PhD, I started writing for magazines, became active on Twitter (which helped me connect with other doctoral students, something I was missing entirely), and discovered MOOCs. I realized I could learn by establishing relationships with people online whom I had never met. Soon after I finished my PhD, I started a personal blog, accepted an Associate Professor of Practice position at my institution, and became more active on social media via connectivist MOOCs and virtual conference participation. Being the mother of a young child throughout the process of finishing my PhD and starting my academic career has played a significant role in how creative I had to be to become the professional educator I wanted to be.

My contribution to this issue is to show how my ecologies for learning and professional development have changed over the last 8-10 years. More specifically, I want to show how they have changed as a result of my participation in social media like Twitter and MOOCs. I have evolved in many ways, but I will focus on two different aspects of my professional life (teaching and conference attendance), and show how my learning ecology shifted from how it looked in 2008 to how it is in 2016.

Side Note on Serendipity

There is really no neat way to account for serendipitous learning in a learning ecology, but there are ways to view one's own learning ecology in ways that promote this serendipitous learning.

Some examples:

Integrating everything in our past and current life into our current learning and development projects. We are the totality of our everyday lifewide experiences and we can learn from and through every aspect of our life. I remember how reading and writing fiction helped me improve my academic writing style (even as it made it unorthodox). I also remember how I was reading Paulo Freire's *Education for Critical Consciousness* and making connections between what he wrote and the film *Luther* when I watched it. And I will never forget how living in a different country in a small city with no friends helped me reflect more deeply on what it meant to experience living in another culture and the implications of this for intercultural learning and my understanding of marginality and post-colonialism. Being open to making those connections can deeply enrich learning and influence who we are and who we become.

Learning from students. This used to surprise me, until I realized that my students (or peers) were an important and constant resource, and opened myself up to it even more. One way I do this explicitly is to ask students to "liquefy the syllabus" at the end of the semester (make the course syllabus more engaging visually and modify some activities/ assignments using their own ideas of what might be fun for them, but also judgment of what would be supporting their learning). I also learn from mistakes I make with my students, and from how they respond to my admitting those mistakes.

Learning from my child. This is obviously easier for someone who is interested in learning as a subject who practices in the field is education. I also realized that teaching creativity at a time when you are raising a child is perfect because I need to be creative so much of the time while dealing with her. I learn a lot about learning by watching my child learn before my eyes.

Learning because of my child. By this, I mean I had to find ways to have a strong professional career *in spite of* the constraints that having a child can pose, particularly in Egypt's patriarchal society where others expect the child's needs to completely overshadow the mother's, and for the mother to accept this willingly and without struggle. Necessity has caused me to develop into a much faster writer, learning to write at any time of day or night and to find ways to store ideas quickly so I can write them out quicker. (I needed to do this in order to finish my PhD, and my writing muscles stayed with me afterwards, for which I am extremely grateful).

I am also a socially hungry person and having a child can restrict opportunities for professional interaction. Social media allows me to expand my social circle both professionally and personally, expanding my readership along the way. Which led to deepening relationships with virtual colleagues and friends and an ever-expanding Personal Learning Network (PLN).

This led to a second and really obvious way I developed from being a mother: I co-founded Virtually Connecting. It has been socially, logistically and also financially difficult for me to travel to conferences, particularly in the US. Enabled by social media I started attending conferences virtually and Tweeting, then presenting virtually, but I knew I was missing out on something. I was missing meeting people and talking to them in the social spaces conferences provide. When my friend and colleague Rebecca J. Hogue offered to be my "onsite buddy" at a conference, allowing others to talk to me on Google hangouts through her phone/laptop, I jumped at the opportunity. Because I was on the steering committee of the conference, I thought of making this part of my role as social media committee member and co-chair of the unconference, and expanding access to other virtual participants. Soon after, we started organizing such virtual meetings at conferences with a growing team of volunteers, and doing it not for our own selves, but for whoever wanted to join in. It started as a personal project because of my circumstances, wanting to feel like I was physically at a conference and taking part in the onsite conversations; but it is now a public service we offer that helps expand other people's learning and networks. Both of these changes in me work better because I actively participate in social media, because I have a wide network of colleagues and friends with whom I can do this, and I expand my network further by writing more and virtually connecting more.

Comparing my ecologies for professional learning in 2008 & 2016

Teaching in 2008 vs Teaching 2016: In 2008, I got my teaching ideas from things I had read and wanted to try, from mentors and peers around me at my institution, and occasionally from my students. I reflected in scattered word documents around my computer or notes on pieces of paper, and occasionally used a mentor as a sounding board. In 2016, I get my teaching ideas from my Personal Learning Network throughout the year, not just at the time I am preparing my syllabus. I feel comfortable adding new ideas a day or an hour before class time as good ideas can come from a tweet or a blogpost I just saw. I blog my plans, my reflections, the challenges I face, and I receive feedback from others online and in person, and I am more explicit about how I learn from my own students and how I learn from my child. I constantly place myself in the position of a learner in open online courses, and it helps me remember how it feels to be in that position. I also learn a lot from articles I am invited to write (like this one!)

Changes in my learning ecology:

1. Contexts: I teach mainly undergraduate students whereas beforehand I taught mainly graduate students. However, the main difference in context is that I now involve other experts in the field I teach into my classes, and I also try to make my students' work public so that others (not necessarily experts) can engage with it via Twitter, their blogs, or even when my students display their work on campus
2. I am now able to teach / interact in virtual as well as physical spaces.
3. Relationships with people have moved from physical, focused on my day-job to virtual, ever-expanding, based on my expanded Personal Leaning Network
4. Resources have shifted from those physically available and reading material by authors I don't know, to more interactive ones, often authored by people I know and with whom I can converse to expand my understanding. This is partly a consequence of knowing so many open/public scholars willing to share their work, and also of our collaborations to co-create knowledge; often an idea develops over conversations with several different people on different media.
5. I use the affordances of social media to be a producer as well as consumer, and I use the immediacy of it to modify my teaching constantly rather than mainly at the design stage
6. Processes: my daily routine involve checking Twitter every opportunity I get, and working on multiple Google docs with people I collaborate with. I get a lot of teaching ideas from constantly following the work of people I trust and admire, many of whom are friends with whom I can discuss things. When I face a problem, I blog or tweet about it, feeling safe and secure that I can put myself out there, and someone will offer to help. They often do, especially with teaching.
7. My immediate goal shifted from making incremental changes to my teaching, to constantly probing possible ways of expanding my classroom beyond its walls
8. I am more confident venturing into new teaching strategies, and more reflective about how I implement them and how they fit my evolving teaching philosophy. Beforehand, there were few people surrounding me who would encourage me to take such risks, who understood my critical pedagogy or how much of a struggle it was to apply the theory to my practice; now I have surrounded myself by others who inspire and support me in my goals, and I am more confident and trusting of my own self because I have seen them mirrored back to me and critiqued supportively. I am more willing to take risks, and bigger risks, as I am inspired by others who do so.

Notes

1 English is my academic language; I cannot easily study in Arabic; plus the quality of higher education in Egypt would not have been enough for me.

2 https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-beta/contributions-and-connections

> *Editor's Comment*: *In the Social Age, people who are keen to develop their knowledge and improve their understandings and practices continually scan their environment for new affordance. In scanning my twitter feed I noticed that someone (Kate Soper) had decided to follow me so I checked out her home page and immediately came across a blog post she made on Feb 3rd called #1 Minute CPD.*
>
> *#1MinuteCPD: A year of microlearning https://altc.alt.ac.uk/blog/2016/02/5459/… via @A_L_T @1minutecpd*
>
> *I was immediately struck by the idea that those who are in the business of helping other professionals learn are in the business of creating new affordance so that people can incorporate the potential for learning into their own ecology for learning and professional development. So I contacted Kate and asked her if we could publish her article as it illustrated so well this idea and she readily agreed.*

#1MINUTE CPD: A YEAR OF MICRO-LEARNING
Kate Soper
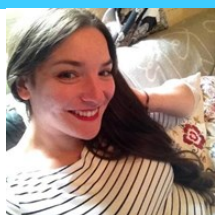
Kate Soper is a Technology Enhanced Learning Advisor (TELA) at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU).

How it all began…

After a term of frustrating no-shows and low sign ups to our advertised technology enhanced learning workshops, we were stumped. What else could we try? We'd advertised a range of different options and approaches, but almost no biters. Over a coffee we vented. Then it occurred to us. In a time-starved world, what if we could deliver a daily dose of CPD that would take less than one minute to read or watch? And that's how #1minuteCPD was born.

#1minuteCPD is an initiative that has been started by Catherine Wasiuk and myself, (Kate Soper). We're both Technology Enhanced Learning Advisors (TELAs) at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). We also managed to rope in Chris Meadows and Colin McAllister-Gibson (also TELAs) to help to contribute to the project.

What is microlearning?

Microlearning is a growing trend in bite-sized training that is a way of delivering content to learners in short, sharp bursts. As lack of time is frequently cited by academics as a reason for not engaging in their own continuing professional development (CPD) [1, 2], microlearning seems to offer an accessible way to introduce learners to new topics, ideas and concepts.

We were attracted to microlearning because of the various benefits it seems to offer. Learners only need to put aside one minute a day to engage with the content, they can access it from wherever they are, whenever they like, in the office, on the bus or in the bath!

What's it about?

As TELAs we are always looking for opportunities to engage staff with new technologies as well as new ways of using old technologies. As such, #1minuteCPD is focused on:

- enhancing staff digital skills
- increasing staff use of educational technologies within their practice
- introducing staff to time-saving tips and tricks

We feel that this approach helps us to lay foundations, spark ideas, generate conversations and tackle those unknown unknowns. Each post is focused on improving digital skills, with an emphasis on educational technologies in a higher education context. For example, one of the most popular posts so far has been introducing Pocket, a bookmarking tool.

By exposing staff, one minute at a time, one day at a time, we are giving them space to reflect and consider how they could use the technologies in their teaching practices. At MMU each faculty has an 'in-house' TELA on hand to offer help and support to integrate these technologies into their teaching.

Early on we decided to make it an open access resource, which would be promoted through **Twitter**, **Facebook** and other social media platforms to widen our reach. We are advocates of open educational resources and wanted to ensure that #1minuteCPD was freely accessible to anybody interested in improving their digital skills.

#1MinuteCPD exists in the **blog** – the posts are scheduled to be released everyday at lunchtime.
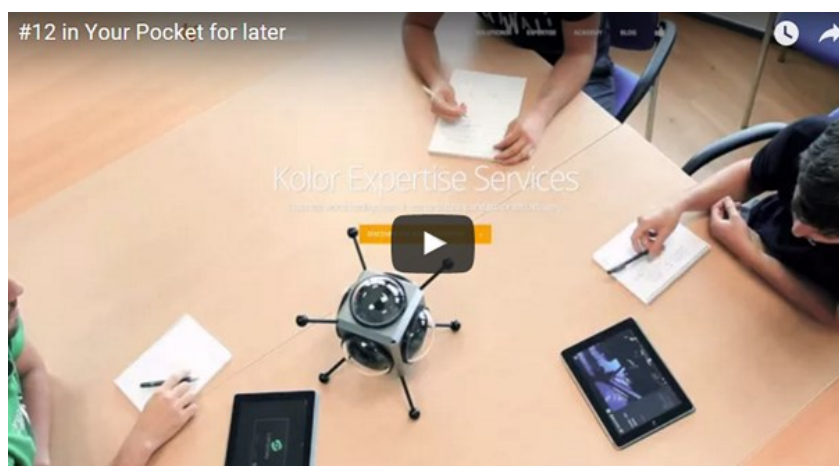
We send a weekly newsletter around each faculty that includes news about technology enhanced learning, #1MinuteCPD has become a regular feature of the newsletter, where we add links to the posts made in the previous week. We are encouraging staff to follow the blog via email so that they can receive the posts directly to their inbox.

Internally we are promoting #1MinuteCPD through weekly newsletters and encouraging staff to sign up to follow the blog when we see them face to face. So far, we are thrilled, and slightly overwhelmed, by the response.

We are sharing 1MinuteCPD as an open access resource, so it is open to all to use. We can see from the WordPress and Twitter stats that the majority of our followers so far have an educational interest. We are pleased with the uptake we have had and a number of colleagues at MMU are beginning to follow the blog via email.

The blog has had over 2000 views so far, so we are pleased that the materials are being accessed and used. This is much better numbers than we had attending our face to face sessions, so there is some satisfaction in that!

To discover our 1min CPD videos visit https://www.facebook.com/1minuteCPD

#1minuteCPD

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WORLD CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION WEEK APRIL 15–21 2016

http://wciw.org/   Twitter   @WorldCreativity   #WCIW

Founded in 2001, WCIW is a time to encourage people to use their creativity to make the world a better and more interesting place and to make their place in the world better and more interesting too.

WCIW is a time to inspire new action, create novel ideas, make new decisions.

WCIW is a time to educate, engage, celebrate and open doors that help people experience freedom from suffering and open up to new worlds of what's possible.

WCIW is a do-it-yourself event - it happens where ever you are and in whatever way you want it to be

Creative Academic & Lifewide Education are participating in this global event

Our contributions will include:

1) Google+ Community throughout April to share individuals' stories of their contributions to WCIW and encouragement for universities to organise their own events.

2) An issue of Creative Academic Magazine on the theme of Creativity in Development build ing on the December 2015 Issue of Lifewide Magazine on the theme of 'Our Creative Life'.

3) Publication of a 'Guide to Encouraging Creativity in Higher Education Teaching and Learning'.

LIFEWIDE EDUCATION NEWS

LEARNING ECOLOGIES IN BARCELONA

In November, Lifewide Education Director, Professor Norman Jackson participated in a seminar organised by the e-Learning Centre of the Open University of Catalonia (OuC) at the invitation of the Centre's Director Professor Albert Sangra who is also

leading the Centre's Eco4Learn research project. The seminar aimed to share perspectives on the idea of learning ecologies and the ways in which learning ecologies provided a framework for understanding self-determined professional development. The researchers at OuC were particularly interested in the role that ICT can play in expanding the affordances for learning within an individual's learning ecology. Norman was one of four invited international scholars who were working on the idea of learning ecologies and networked scholars.

The Open University of Catalan is the only fully-online University in Europe and in 1994 when it started it was the first university in the world to adopt on-line delivery methods for all of its educational programmes. The e-Learning Centre was formed in 2010 to provide pedagogic support for teachers designing on-line courses. An important reason for the visit was to enable the Centre's Eco4Learn research project team to share the results of their project into the ICT-enabled professional learning ecologies of school teachers to be shared and discussed with the four international scholars.

The seminar itself attracted nearly 50 researchers from different parts of Spain who shared the results of their research on learning ecologies. The edulab research team are planning to publish their results in a book to which Lifewide Education will contribute. The seminar enabled Lifewide Education to share perspectives on learning ecologies learn about some of the related research being undertaken by researchers in Spain (see for example the article by Mercedes Gonzalez and colleagues). A full report of the seminar will be published in the next issue.

LIFEWIDE EDUCATION & OPEN EDUCATION WEEK

Lifewide Education & Creative Academic are supporting the #creativeHE open course being led by Chrissi Nerantzi


EXPLORING CREATIVITY IN DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION OUR CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD CREATIVITY & INNOVATION WEEK

Lifewide Education & Creative Academic are working together to support **World Creativity and Innovation Week.** We are trying to promote discussion and exploration of the idea of 'creativity in development and innovation'. Throughout March-April we will be supporting discussion on creativity and innovation in higher education on the Creative Academic Google+ site. We welcome your involvement,

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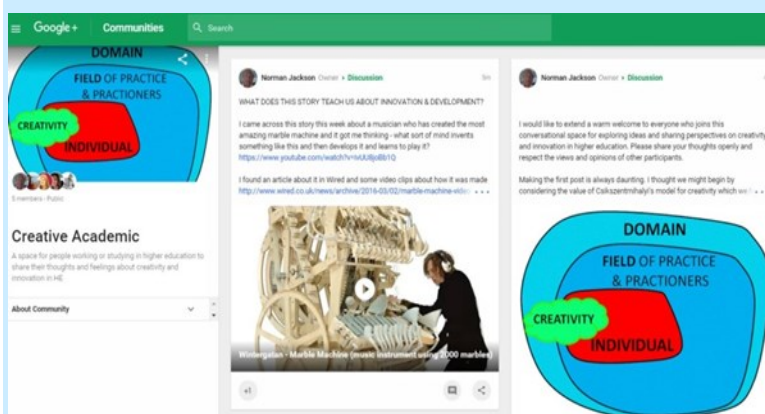
The April issue of Creative Academic Magazine will also explore this theme. We are looking for stories of how people have developed something that they have created and we are interested in the ways in which creativity featured in the process. If you would like to contribute an article please visit the magazine web page where you will find an introduction http://www.creativeacademic.uk/magazine.html or contact the commissioning editor lifewider1@btinternet.com.

New Team Members

We are delighted to welcome four new members to the Lifewide Education/ Creative Academic Team. All four are involved in the planning and implementation of activities for World Creativity and Innovation Week in April.

Maria-Rafaela Tziouvara was born in Thessaloniki, Greece. After completing her Bachelor studies in the Faculty of Primary Education at the University of Thessaly in Volos, she continued her studies in the Master Degree Programme "Didactics of Mathematics and Physics with the use of I.C.T." at the University of Western Macedonia in Florina. Currently she is attending her second Master Programme "Adult Education and Lifelong Learning" at the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, while at the same time working as a primary school teacher supporting students with special educational needs. Amongst her main interests are I.C.T. in the Educational Setting, Lifelong Learning and Adult Learning, Teacher Training, Educational Psychology, Robotics in Primary and Higher Education, Research and Voluntarism.

Nikos Mouratoglou is a Greek Language Teacher. After completing his Bachelor studies "Philosophy and Education" at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, he continued his studies by entering the Master's Programme titled "I.C.T. in Education". This year he attends his second Master's Programme "Adult Education and Lifelong Learning" at the University of Macedonia of Thessaloniki, while at the same time he is a Ph.D. candidate at Aristotle University. His main interests include I.C.T., Higher Education, Writing Research, Lifelong Learning and Intercultural Theory.

Roger Greenhalgh works for Jisc and helps educational leaders make strategic use of ICT in the operations and development of their organisations. He started messing with computers in the mid-'70s and was an early adopter of IT in the classrooms of the '80s. An entrepreneur in the '90s Dot-Com boom and subsequent Ed Tech enthusiast in universities and colleges, mentorship with IT innovators seems to be his forté.

Sue Watling is Academic 'Technology Enhanced Learning' Advisor at the University of Hull. With a broad range of experience supporting digital education and digital capabilities, Sue supports staff and students to use a range of different virtual learning environments and is completing a doctoral research project investigating e-teaching as the essential partner to e-learning.
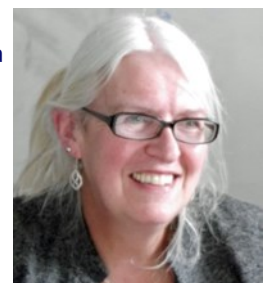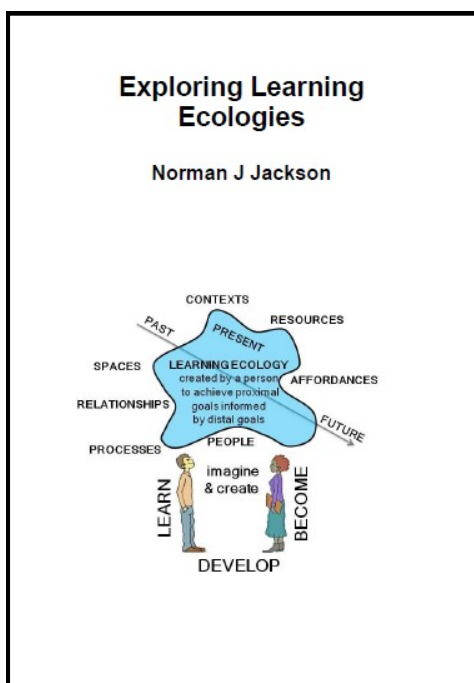
Image: https://www.yourstudentsunion.com/ pageassets/societies/languages/welcome.jpg

Exploring Learning Ecologies

Norman J Jackson

This book explores the idea of learning ecologies: an idea that has grown from the author's interest in and support for lifewide learning. In nature an ecosystem comprises the complex set of relationships and interactions among the resources, habitats, and residents of an area for the purpose of living: this applies equally to human ecosocial systems where learning is an essential purpose of interaction.

Our self-created learning ecologies grow from the circumstances and contexts of our life. They are established for a purpose that is directed to accomplishing immediate goals connected to more distant goals. A learning ecology comprises ourselves, our environment and the things we use in our environment, our interactions with our environment and the learning, development and achievement that emerges from these interactions. A learning ecology provides us with affordances, information, knowledge and other resources for learning, developing and achieving something we value. It includes the spaces we create to think and our processes, activities and practices for acting. It includes our relationships, networks, tools and mediating artefacts and the technologies we use. A learning ecology enables us to connect and integrate our past and current experiences and learning and provides the foundation for our future learning.

The idea of learning ecologies developed through this book, provides a more comprehensive and holistic view of learning and personal development than is normally considered in education. The book will be of value to anyone who is interested in developing their understandings of the way we learn, develop and achieve. The book will be of value to teachers and other education professionals who are helping learners prepare for the complexities, uncertainties and disruptions of their future lives.

"there are large implications of this book for formal educational institutions. The idea of learning ecologies, as worked out here by Norman Jackson, turns out to be a radical concept. If taken seriously, it would call for a fundamental reappraisal of the curriculum so that it promotes an ecology for learning"
Professor Ronald Barnett
UCL Institute of Education

Content
Foreword: *Professor Ronald Barnett* 1 Journey With An Idea 2 Conceptualising Learning Ecologies 3 Learning Ecology Narratives 4 Ecologies for Learning, Developing and Achieving Through Work 5 Ecology of Disruption & Inflection 6 The University Ecosystem: Ecological Perspectives on Curriculum, Pedagogy & Learning Environment 7 Learning Ecologies : Habitats for Self-Directed, Self-Regulated Learning 8 Connecting Learning Ecologies 9 Towards Education 3.0 10 The Future of Learning is Lifelong, Lifewide, Open and Ecological 11 Ecology of Developing an Idea

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Exploring Culture in the Ecology of Learning

Guest Editors Maja Jankowska and Alfredo Gaitan

Culture is an important concept for individuals' learning and development. Attitudes and orientations are influenced by family and the society we grew up in and the culture of the contexts in which we try to learn and work as adults. They become particularly important as we journey through life and transition from one cultural context to another for example when we go to live in another country or we move from one organisation to another or one professional field/discipline to another. In this issue of Lifewide Magazine we want to explore how culture impacts on our learning and development as we move through and across the social-cultural contexts in our life. How does culture influence our learning ecologies and how do our learning ecologies enable us to become the multicultural beings we are?

We welcome personal narratives from people who have lived and worked in different cultures. We are also interested in research articles and on educational practices that help people adapt to a culture that is new to them. If you would like to contribute a perspective please contact the ***Commissioning Editor normanjjackson@btinternet.com***