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It takes a village to raise a child - emphasising the value of community, significant others and collaboration for learning and development

The Editor, Jenny Willis



When it was first proposed that the theme of this issue should be "It takes a village to raise a child", I immediately associated the saying with Gandhi and rural India. How blinkered this perception was! The diversity and depth of articles submitted for this issue reveal insights I little imagined.

After considering the *African* origins of the proverb, we have personal interpretations from a single American Christian parent, Donna Stefano, raising her Muslim son in Jerusalem; from a final year university student, Navid Tomlinson, who extends the proverb to consider how the village helps us grow as adults; Nadarasar Yoganathan reminds us of the Darwinian concepts of adaptability and change as we move through life; related to this, John Cowan explores how the community enables us to learn together and Gaurav Gupta recalls Abraham Lincoln's awareness of the educational role we all play in raising our children. Norman Jackson finds his personal childhood experience differs from his initial interpretation of the proverb.

We move on to a series of articles which examine how lifeworld learning is being pursued in traditional educational settings. A Detroit High School's ambition, *The Sky's the Limit*, sets the scene. I talk about Jamie Oliver's Dream School, which recruited some outstanding achievers in their fields as role models to

teach a group of disaffected British school 'failures'. Russ Law worked his magic and persuaded an over-worked schoolteacher to find time to canvass the views of a class of Year 4 children on what they think makes an ideal school: I analyse the results.

Our final theme for this issue is how we recognise lifeworld learning. Norman Jackson explains our own Lifeworld Development Award, which is endorsed by Southampton Solent University's Christine Fountain. Sarah Jeffries discusses key issues in designing a university skills award, and we welcome the report on the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR), which shares much with our own notions of lifeworld learning, development and recognition of achievement.

We meet featured artist Andrea Stan, and catch up with news on our membership and media developments before looking forward to our next issue.

So what happened to my blinkered view? Coincidentally, I have just returned from India. Yes, I saw the toddlers carrying their younger siblings, the mothers toiling as labourers with their children playing on the building site... But now I know there is far more to the proverb than this! I hope you, too, enjoy discovering this fact as much as I have in editing our special edition.



Artist: Andrea Stan

It takes a village to raise a child

This **proverb** - a simple and concrete saying popularly known and repeated, expresses a truth, based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity. It is thought to have originated from the Nigerian Igbo culture and proverb "Ora na azu nwa" which means it takes the community/village to raise a child. The Igbo's also name their children "Nwa ora" which means child of the community. Although there is no evidence that the proverb genuinely originated with any African culture, numerous proverbs from different cultures across Africa have been noted that convey similar sentiments in different ways: "While it is interesting to seek provenance in regard to the proverb, 'It takes a village to raise a child,' I think it would be misleading to ascribe its origin to a single source. Let me give a few examples of African societies with proverbs which translate to 'It takes a village...': In Lunyoro (Banyoro) there is a proverb that says 'Omwana takulila nju emoi,' whose literal translation is 'A child does not grow up only in a single home.' In Kihaya (Bahaya) there is a saying, 'Omwana taba womoi,' which translates as 'A child belongs not to one parent or home.' In Kijita (Wajita) there is a proverb which says 'Omwana ni wa bhone,' meaning regardless of a child's biological parent(s) its upbringing belongs to the community. In Swahili, the proverb 'Asiyefunzwa na mamae hufunzwa na ulimwengu' approximates to the same."

H-Africa (a member of H-Net's consortium of scholarly lists).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It_Takes_a_Village

School of Everything



<http://schoolofeverything.com/>

'Everyone has something to learn, everyone has something to teach'

The idea of 'it takes a village to raise a child' is very much embedded in the social innovation called the 'School for Everything' which was started in 2008 by social entrepreneur Dougald Hind.

Aiming to do for education what YouTube has done for television, or what eBay did for retail, School of Everything is a website that links people who can teach what they know to people who want to learn: from language lessons to karate classes. Since its launch in September 2008, School of Everything has recruited over 10,000 members and counting. Last year, School of Everything won a New Statesman New Media Award, and a prestigious UK Catalyst Award, that recognises the use of technology to make a positive social impact. School of Everything is an independent venture supported by the Young Foundation. But how did it all begin? Here is the story told by Dougald Hind on his blog.

Dougald Hind



In the early 1970s, Ivan Illich wrote about educational webs and peer-matching databases by which learners could find each other. At the time, this must have sounded utopian. A generation later, it sounded like common sense. In 2006, five of us set out to create an online platform which would make it really easy to find people near you with the skills, knowledge or interests you were looking for. School of Everything was inspired by Illich and by practical experiments like the Free U and The Learning Exchange.

At an early stage, we were picked up by the Young Foundation - a centre for social innovation which carries on the work of the founder of the Open University. They housed us and provided some seed funding while we researched and developed the project. In September 2007, we were picked to take part in Seedcamp, a hothouse for Europe's top early stage tech start-ups. An FT article on the camp noted that our technical director had missed the final presentation "so he could buy a tank to drive to a protest at a London arms fair." (This was the same tank which would later turn up at the G20 protests in April 2009.) That winter, after a lot of meetings - we closed our first round of angel investment. The School of Everything is still growing - and I suspect that tools like it will play an important role in the world we're heading into. They increase our ability to self-organise around the edges of the institutions we inherited, where government and the market let us down. I moved on from day-to-day involvement with School of Everything in 2009, although the spin-off meet up Tony Hall and I set up that summer - School of Everything: Unplugged - continues to be part of the rhythm of my London weeks.

What "It Takes A Village to Raise a Child" Really Means to Me

Donna Stefano, Project Director for CHF International

<http://www.chfinternational.org/>

Founded in 1952 the Cooperative Housing Foundation—now known simply as CHF International—serves millions of people each year, empowering them to improve their lives and livelihoods for a better future. Their mission is to be a catalyst for long-lasting positive change in low- and moderate-income communities around the world, helping them improve their social, economic and environmental conditions.

Living in the West Bank with my young American son has convinced me that it really does take a village to raise a child.

My son Omar and I moved to Ramallah in 2008 when CHF International, an international development and humanitarian aid organisation, offered me a position in the West Bank helping Palestinian municipalities build good governance. My divorce was still fresh, and Omar was only in kindergarten, but I could not pass up the opportunity. So, sweetening the deal with promises of camel rides galore, I packed up our lives and we moved across the ocean.

We lived in Ramallah for two years before moving to Jerusalem, where we are based today. I continue to commute daily to Ramallah, where I work on helping Palestinian home buyers to understand the mortgage process. This is a nascent but critical issue, as the American housing crisis has tainted homebuyers' perceptions, even more so here, where the dream of owning a home for a Palestinian family is closely linked to the idea of security and stability. My job is fulfilling, which makes the daily commute for me across checkpoints well worth it. But it also means that a seamless approach to child care has been a necessity.

Enter my global village

I can name people representing seven different nationalities who have provided physical and emotional care for my son (and me!) during school hours, after-school hours and those infrequent weekend nights when I needed some time for my own pursuits. More significant is what these childcare providers, my son, and I have learned from each other about our differences and similarities -- from the more mundane, to the significant things that I hope will serve Omar in whichever "village" he ends up as an adult.

For example, I have come to understand that we are all the same worried parents at heart, just wanting what is best for

our kids. Here, too, parents want their children to have access to the best education. Palestinian parents are just as anxious about and attentive to homework and good grades as any American parent I know, if not more so! And just like my American friends, the parents here also believe in pitching in to help in a jam. When I drag Omar along to weekend trainings we hold for bank employees at CHF International, trainees make every effort to keep Omar smiling and content. Or when I was finally issued the 48-hour permit to enter Gaza by the Israelis after a two-month wait following Israeli attacks in January 2009, friends whose commitment to the delivery of



humanitarian aid matched my own, stepped up to provide day to night care.

Then there are the differences. From an early age, Palestinian children are firmly taught to greet all adults with an affectionate "Auntie" or "Uncle," and to politely offer their cheeks up for a kiss. My son equates kissing a stranger on a cheek as romantic; something he firmly believes is "gross." And so, I am often left trying to explain to my female Palestinian acquaintances that Omar is not trying to be disrespectful when he takes a full two steps back when they lean in for a smooch.

However, because I believe showing respect for our global village is so important, I do insist that Omar honour other cultural norms. For example, refusing food is a greater insult to Palestinians than shunning a kiss on the cheek. Therefore, the current mantra in my household is: "You will at least try all the food that you are served on a plate, even if it is entirely green -- and never say you don't like it!" My son also knows

he must use Arabic rather than English when conversing with those who address him in Arabic. It is a sign of openness and friendliness -- something so important to convey when you are a foreigner.

Omar's perception of this experience fascinates me. Here we are, a single Christian American mom raising a Muslim American child in the most holy and revered place for three significant world religions -- and when asked what's "exciting" about living in the West Bank, the first thing he mentions is eating the sushi that his Japanese classmate shares with him at lunch.

Sometimes adults will remark to Omar, "You must have friends from all around the world!" One time I heard him reply, "Yeah, I have some friends from Canada."



For a child whose current fourth grade class at the Jerusalem American International School is made up of 15 children

representing 11 different cultures, Omar's musings make me wonder if our time in the Middle East has had any substantial impact on him.

Friends reassure me that when he is a grown man, Omar will look back on this time with some great wisdom gained only by a child raised in this special place. And I think they're right.

Watching non-native English speakers struggle in an all-English school curriculum brings out his natural compassion when he remembers struggling to learn Arabic. With the help of a Jewish teacher who spoke about different Jewish holidays, he learned about religious practices that I never could have explained without confusing him. And play dates at the houses of his Swedish, German and Danish friends taught him that rules and practices in houses differ, but to be a good guest in this global village, being respectful is essential.

Having grown up in the same house in upstate New York my entire life, I've always viewed this time in the Middle East as a wonderful gift. And I have tried to ensure that my son never takes it for granted. But I've finally realised something: For Omar to grow up thinking that life in a global community is just plain normal, well, that is the best gift that I could have given him.

Article Source: <http://www.chfinternational.org/node/37081>

Illustration by Andrea Stan

"Art is not just a passion, it's a reason for living"

Andrea Stan is our featured artist. She was born in Romania but came to the UK for her university education. She is a final year student studying animation at Southampton Solent University. *'Art is not just a passion, it's a reason for living and a way to communicate with people'*. Prior to university she worked as a volunteer for an international NGO in Romania which helped her develop as a person and an artist. She has undertaken a number of assignments for the Lifewide Education Community including making the wonderful stop motion animation of Sarah Campbell's lifewide learning story on our home page.



It takes a village to raise a child: a psycho/socio-dynamic interpretation

Nadarasar Yoganathan



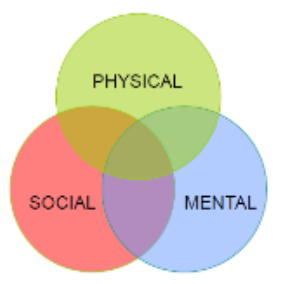
Dr N Yoganathan is a consultant in adult psychiatry and drug and alcohol rehabilitation, working for the National Health Service in the south of England. He is a full member of the Group Analytic Society (London). He is responsible for the post-graduate training in psychiatry in his Trust. In this article, he talks to the Editor about his interpretation of the saying.

Adapting Darwin's theory, I often tell my medical students that, in the 21st century, it is more a question of 'survival of the adaptable' than that of the fittest. This belief underlies my interpretation of the proverb 'It takes a village to raise a child'.

Before I explain this, let me put my personal development into context. I grew up in post-colonial Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). There was a vast Public Sector Department, for which some of my close relatives worked, secure in jobs for life, developing and maintaining the country's infrastructure. During my late childhood, this system began to be seen as too bureaucratic, so was fragmented into semi-government and private organisations, with better salaries, but jobs were no longer secure.

Similarly, when I first worked for the NHS in mid-1980s England, psychiatrists such as me could expect to have a job for life, once they had reached a certain level of seniority. Over subsequent years, we have witnessed the arrival of Trusts, with attendant diversification of roles and even loss of services. The hospital in which I then worked was one of the last asylum model psychiatric units. The complex of buildings resembled a small village, with its own church, farm and industrial training unit. First the elderly patients were moved out, then the long stay patients, with the nursing school which also closed to become part of the local University. The hospital was reduced to one caring for only complex long-term cases. The 'village' that had provided sanctuary had gone and many former patients now find it replaced by the walls of the penal system.

Let me hasten to add that I am not resistant to change, as my introductory quotation suggests, but let us consider the impact that change has on



individuals and communities. As a doctor, I am concerned with the wellbeing of the whole person, their physical, mental and social health. Inevitably any one dimension of this delicate balance can be threatened by change, especially when that change is on the scale and the speed we have experienced in recent decades. Now, the isolated village has truly become global. Survival demands adaptation to this globalisation.

Unlike other animals, human beings are not able to stand (literally) on their own feet at birth. We need nurturing, 'good enough' environments in which we feel sufficiently secure to be curious, to experiment and learn.

At this stage of our development, the key figures in our lives are our parents. With time, the orbit of influence extends outwards in concentric circles as we have to interact with siblings, other family members, children at school, colleagues at work and so on. Freud termed these the pre-Oedipal, Oedipal and post-Oedipal stages of development. From my perspective as a Median Group Convenor, I can compare it to negotiating with small, then medium and finally large groups.

Attributing the 'It takes a village' saying to African roots is readily understood when we look at the learning needs of a child in a tribal community, especially one of hunter gatherers. Children learn their skills through imitation of elders and by practice. Rituals are built in to mark their progression and coming of age. Failure to learn these vital survival skills is likely to end in disaster, sadly for some, but for the tribe it would be Survival of the Fittest (natural selection).

Industrialised societies require literacy and numeracy skills, for which children start by going to school, followed by colleges/universities and so on. We have



evolved in conditions which are less life-threatening, and created other rituals such as apprenticeships. The coming out of a debutante in British society might not have brought about the hoped-for marriage proposal, but, provided the young woman had other competences to fall back on, in other words, was able to adapt to changed circumstances, she would survive.



idiosyncratic values, and opens us up to new ones. One of the biggest problems of the global village is that we all too often pursue perfection, as an eminent psychiatrist, Professor Thomas Szasz, captured in the following quotation:

'Happiness is an imaginary condition, formerly often attributed by the living to the dead, now usually attributed by adults to children, and by children to adults.'

T. Szasz (1973).The Second Sin, "Emotions".

But learning is also about 'unlearning', about adjustment to change. We have all experienced the relentless impact of new technologies which have changed our ability to communicate and made us a global village. Even life in the rural village has been affected: I recall travelling in poverty-stricken parts of India in 2006 and being struck by the sight of a labourer toiling in the field whilst speaking into a mobile phone. We may applaud the practical and ideological values that lie behind equipping each community with a mobile phone, but ultimately technology will change the communities' ways of life and the individual will need to adapt. This is more than just learning new skills, it calls for acceptance of new values. This entails a judgement but there is another truism that I tell my students:

'As long as it serves a purpose, it is valued; as long as it is valued, it serves a purpose.'

So what happens if we are unable or unwilling to adapt? At the individual level, we may experience ill health due to the disharmony between body, mind and society. Collectively, a group may establish an alternative 'village', a cult, for example, or extreme version of the original social/religious values. Hence we see extremists who feel that they have been violated by social change and so are justified in resorting to violence to resist it.

What, then, is my response to the loss of the nurturing family and village which has supported the development of centuries of children? Here I call on the importance of groups. A group forum offers one of the most powerful means of learning, provided it is non-hierarchical. Dialogue enables the sharing and critical evaluation of

We cannot turn back the clock of time, but we must recognise that the loss of the traditional family and village has profound implications for how we raise children. How we adapt to this change will have repercussions for individual and social wellbeing. It will be increasingly important to offer opportunities for lifewide learning beyond the formal curriculum and throughout our lifetimes. Above all, we must shatter the illusion that perfection = happiness, and be more modest in our definition of adulthood. Another thought-provoking quote from Professor Thomas Szasz:

'A child becomes an adult when he realises that he has a right not only to be right but also to be wrong.'

T. Szasz (1973).The Second Sin, "Childhood"

Furthermore, advances in science and technology have given us a much better understanding of disease processes. We are becoming better at curing, but we have become less good at caring. This is more evident in the area of mental (ill) health and the stigma associated with it. Societal stigma may take generations to change but through lifewide learning (and unlearning) processes, individuals can be empowered to confront stigma at a personal level.

I end with my own thought, relating to the patients I treat/manage:

'It will take a society to rehabilitate/care for patients with long term Health (Mental, Physical as well as Drug & Alcohol) Problems.'

Reference

Szasz, T. 1973. The Second Sin. New York. Doubleday

It takes a village to raise a child

Gaurav Gupta

Gaurav has spent the last 8 years working in business - managing diverse product lines, business development, planning sales and marketing strategy across multiple industries facing challenges driven by changing technology, global competition or new economics. As part of his own development he is now taking a year off from full time work and is living in Warsaw, Poland. He writes 'A Good School' blog sharing his thoughts, views, experiences and opinions on Education in 21st Century.



Respected Teacher,

My son will have to learn I know that all men are not just, all men are not true. But teach him also that for every scoundrel there is a hero; that for every selfish politician, there is a dedicated leader. Teach him that for every enemy there is a friend. It will take time, I know; but teach him, if you can, that a dollar earned is far more valuable than five found.

Teach him to learn to lose and also to enjoy winning.

Steer him away from envy, if you can.

Teach him the secret of quite laughter. Let him learn early that the bullies are the easiest to tick.

Teach him, if you can, the wonder of books.. but also give him quiet time to ponder over the eternal mystery of birds in the sky, bees in the sun, and flowers on a green hill –side.

In school teach him it is far more honourable to fail than to cheat.

Teach him to have faith in his own ideas, even if every one tells him they are wrong.

Teach him to be gentle with gentle people and tough with the tough.

Try to give my son the strength not to follow the crowd when every one is getting on the bandwagon.

Teach him to listen to all men but teach him also to filter all he hears on a screen of truth and take only the good that comes through.

Teach him, if you can, how to laugh when he is sad. Teach him there is no shame in tears. Teach him to scoff at cynics and to beware of too much sweetness.

Teach him to sell his brawn and brain to the highest bidders; but never to put a price tag on his heart and soul.

Teach him to close his ears to a howling mob... and to stand and fight if he thinks he's right.

Treat him gently; but do not cuddle him because only the test of fire makes fine steel.

Let him have the courage to be impatient, let him have the patience to be brave.

Teach him always to have sublime faith in himself because then he will always have sublime faith in mankind.

This is a big order; but see what you can do. He is such a fine little fellow, my son.

Abraham Lincoln

are now, but luckily they had support of their community, village or neighbourhood. Yes, they attended schools, but quite often, they learnt with and from their relatives, neighbours, community members or local institutions as well. Their role models were not just parents or teachers- they were also uncles/ aunts, neighbours or a members of their community.

Today, as parents, we participate in our children's lives and provide them with as many resources as we can. We give them the technology that helps them interact with the world in the way we or our parents never could. But because we lead such busy lives we also sometimes neglect the social experiences that teach them the sorts of lessons that Abraham Lincoln wrote about. Increasingly, we pass the responsibility for teaching our children the lessons of life on to schools.

Almost a century and a half ago, Abraham Lincoln wrote this letter to his son's Head Master.

As parents, educators or community members we want the same for our '*fine little fellows*'.

Sometimes, my parents remind me how they—and their parents were not as privileged as I have been in my life. For them, the reality was different. Very early in their life, they had to learn to 'stand on their own two feet'. Resources for learning were scarce and schools were not as good as they

Without realising it, we are restricting the education of our children to our schools. However, education transcends the classroom and home. Not all subjects, matters and dilemmas can be addressed in a classroom setting only. We learn many of life's lessons outside the formal educational environment.

No man or family is an island. We live in a globally connected, interacting and interdependent world. Schools and homes are no longer the only places where our children live, grow up and learn. We prepare them to grow up and live in a society where life is often messy and unpredictable (like the cartoon featured overleaf).



work in such a community. Wouldn't it be better for the

With such a goal in mind surely the community would provide a good nurturing ground for our children to learn. After all, sometime in the future, when their formal education has been completed, they will live and

children to hear from multiple voices around them before they decide on their beliefs, values, opinions and before they form their worldview?

In the absence of good schools, our parents and grandparents had little choice but to depend on their community, village or neighbourhood to help them raise their children. Nowadays, we are more fortunate, we have an abundance of formal resources and good schools but we make little use of our community to help develop our children. The choice is not one or the other. We can do much more to link our schools with their communities to help our children grow into the citizens we would like them to be and learn the lessons that Abraham Lincoln wisely wrote about so long ago.

How does 'it takes a village to raise a child' relate to my life? Norman Jackson

I have to thank Gaurav Gupta whose Good School blog drew my attention to this African proverb and caused me to think about its relevance to my own life. The proverb seems to be saying that in a small tightly knit community - such as an African village, each child has a formative relationship with everyone living in the village and each adult member of the village has a responsibility to nurture the child. *The village acts like an extended family.*

Reflecting on my early life I realised that while I had contact with many adults I did not have a sense that I was raised by a community from which individuals helped me grow up. Perhaps if I had lived in a village it would have been different to living in Manchester. I know I learnt my values through family, school and church. There were adults who influenced me but I think I learnt more from my friends and being out and about in the world : a pattern that continued through my teens. So I'm not sure that my childhood story fits my interpretation of the African proverb. My experiences reflect more the idea that as we grow up we have to find and join communities and social groups that we are attracted to in order to be like the people in those groups and to learn from them and gain the experiences that will help us develop into the sort of person we want to be. One interpretation of this is that we create our own village by joining these communities.

When I discussed this with my 14 year old daughter she accepted that , with our encouragement and support , she had participated in activities outside school in order to develop new skills like ballet, swimming, drama and horse riding. She also recognised that there was more to learning than the obvious skills and new knowledge she



had gained from participating in such activities. For example, sustaining the will to participate week after week, and, interestingly, learning to cope with disappointment when not successful, not giving up but trying again, and putting herself into unfamiliar situations with people she didn't know. But she also provided another interesting perspective. She felt that her mother and I, the main adult influences on her as she has grown up, were shaped by our own past histories and therefore who we were, had been shaped by the communities we had ourselves participated in and been shaped by. Who we are is really a synthesis of our own upbringing so what we passed on to her - our values and beliefs, was our embodied history. Add to this the influences of siblings and our

large, multicultural extended family with members living in England, Iran, South Africa and Australia, she felt her *family fulfilled the role of the African village*. My daughter's reasoning made a lot of sense to me. My parents grew up in 1930's Manchester. Both came from poor but proud working class families and their values, work ethics and positivity were forged in what were harsh , impoverished

conditions. I wasn't brought up in such a tough environment but their core values were passed on to me and remain very much a part of me. I in turn, am passing on my embodiment of them in what I do and how I do it, to my children.

As we enter adulthood and start making decisions about who we want to be and become we have to find new communities and role models to help us achieve our ambitions. We have to leave the

African village of our youth. University provides one sort of community for many young people, or rather communities, because universities are constellations of communities. I went to university in order to become a geologist and I mixed with other students to develop the knowledge, language and thinking skills of a geologist. In my second year summer vacation I worked in a tin mine to learn how to be a 'real' geologist and both of these communities - the academic and the applied were essential to me becoming the sort of geologist I was to become. When I left university and started my career I put myself into organisations and situations where individuals continued to influence me, and beyond work into other social groups and this continues even today. In other words we keep

creating and recreating our African village throughout our life.

As I was completing this reflection my son introduced another perspective on this theme - that not only do we join existing communities to learn and develop ourselves, we can also create a community for that purpose. Our attempts to create a community around the idea of lifewide education would seem to fit this idea.

You can read my son's inspiring story on page 10.

I have to conclude that the African proverb still has a great deal of relevance to my life and the world of my children but it is a much richer conception than I first imagined.

Learning together - the value of community

A wee story to illustrate the principle of collaborative learning

John Cowan

In the mid-1980's, a number of us, in secondary schools as well as FE and HE, were wrestling with the challenge to devise activities for learners which would enable the development of fundamental skills. Our settings and particular aims were naturally somewhat different, so there were doubts when one of our number suggested meeting every five or six weeks to hold an action learning set. When we met, each of us in turn would report progress since the last meeting, and outline the next challenge they had in hand. They then drew back their chair, and listened as the remainder of the group discussed what *they* would do in that situation. After an appropriate time, the owner of the problem situation rejoined us, and told us the aspects of our suggestions which they thought impracticable. Usually there were many of these reservations - yet members continued to attend, with enthusiasm. One summed up the experience by saying positively that the suggestions of the other members on their challenge weren't very helpful, " But, while I was discussing the other ones, I found myself seeing actions which I should take in *my* situation!"

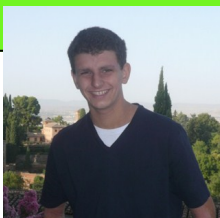


Around this time, I set up what I called "co-operatives" for first year students of engineering, engaged in producing essay assignments about engineering materials. They were admitted to the co-operative session if they had a reasonably complete draft to display as their entrance ticket, otherwise, we suggested that they go to the library to carry out further research. Meantime, groups of five or six collected their drafts which were then allocated to a group on the other side of the room, when all were prompted to offer helpful suggestions for improvement. The first time I ran such an activity, I found myself being told, as I returned drafts and made suggestions for improvement: "I don't really need to see the comments; I've already seen from the weaknesses in *our* bundle what *I* need to be doing with *my* draft." Other members of staff received similar feedback.

The moral of these two tales, confirmed by much research into collaboration, is that the major benefit arises for a collaborator through constructively considering similar efforts produced by a peer, relegating the value of focused peer feedback to second place. So set up your peer networks, and structure the interaction there around the formulating and offering of helpful suggestions, from which both parties will benefit.

It takes a village to enable us to grow as adults: Experiences with Homeless Heritage

Navid Tomlinson



Navid is a third year student at the University of York studying archaeology.

You can find out more about the Homeless Heritage project at: www.arcifact.webs.com
See also its facebook page, with video films : <https://www.facebook.com/HomelessHeritage?ref=ts&fref=ts>

The essence of the 'it takes a village' saying is that we become who we are with the help of the people around us. The strength and stability of being in a close knit community, whether that be friends or family, helps us develop into the people we are. It seems to come down to having stable relationships through which people value and care enough about each other to want to help each other. My story to illustrate this simple truth relates to my involvement with the 'Homeless Heritage' project in York working with homeless people from a very unstable community but a community none the less. It gives us another useful insight into the 'it takes a village' idea. It has also helped me understand the social relevance of archaeology and changed me as a person.

As an archaeology student I am trying to take advantage of all the opportunities available to me to learn how to be one. That is why I decided to get involved with Homeless Heritage in my second year. Homeless Heritage was started in 2009 by students at the University of Bristol. It is dedicated to working with homeless communities in order to understand and value the spaces used by such communities using archaeological methods. But it is more than archaeologists just applying archaeological techniques to the study of spaces that a particular group of people use : it involves working *with* homeless people in order to understand the relevance of what is found. From digging up crisp packets in the rain with people who live on the streets of York, to meeting rough sleepers from Bristol in a 15th century hall filled with "rubbish" this has been a project that has shown *me* the stark contrasts existing in modern life.



Archaeology has always been about studying the human past by looking at material remains, or what people have left behind and yet even within this understanding there are clear limitations to what people consider archaeology to be. Why is the rubbish of a Roman deposited 2000 years ago considered by many to be worthy of excavation and study, and yet the

rubbish of people left last week has no value - at least to archaeologists? But as one of my homeless colleagues put so succinctly, "*it will be archaeology one day, if it was dropped a thousand years ago or yesterday*". The key question seems to be, which day does it become archaeology? Contemporary archaeology argues that all material remains (no matter what the date) are *archaeologically relevant* and therefore fall



within the remit of

Navid and other students working with homeless people on the dig.

archaeologists to study.

My involvement with the project began when a lecturer in the department asked me to help with a dig that was being organised with people from the homeless shelter in York. For me this was an exciting opportunity to get involved in an excavation and meet some new people, little did I know the community it would take me into. The idea was that a group of students and a few lecturers would work side by side with some homeless people to excavate a site used for rough sleeping . The week long excavation allowed me to not only work with people I would never have had the opportunity to work closely with as equals, but also to experience the benefits of archaeology in a way that it is often not seen - as a way of forming new bonds. It was from this close working that I was able to understand the value of not only contemporary archaeology, but community archaeology, and the value of inclusion in all aspects of life. My understanding of the homeless site and my appreciation of the problems of homeless people in York was increased massively by the group I was working with. I began to see the world through the eyes of homeless people right down to the way they walk through town and the way they identified their sites for sleeping. But although they lived a very different life to me as a student



with a roof over my head and a safe comfortable bed, I discovered by talking to the homeless friends I made that there were so many similarities in what we both wanted from life and from each day.

This understanding stemmed from the shared experience of excavation, by working together to understand something as simple as an archaeological site we were able to understand each other, share our values and understand what was of value to each other. For me this was the perfect example of archaeology bringing communities together. Furthermore, it enabled me to challenge my own thinking about important things. From simply digging up crisp packets with the people who inhabited these spaces and places we not only made some interesting observations about homeless life on the streets of York, through the shared experience we (both archaeologists and non-archaeologists) had changed our views on each others' lives.



Some of the artefacts found on the dig



The excavation was only the first stage of our project, the next one involved telling people what we had learnt, ensuring that they understood the essence of the project and what it was that we were doing. After carefully cleaning, describing and cataloguing the artefacts we had discovered we organised a week-long exhibition in March. It had two main aims, to ensure that people heard about the

project, and that everyone who had worked on the excavation and finds analysis played an active role in presenting the results. This meant the team of archaeologists and non-archaeologists continued to work together in setting out our exhibition and the results of this productive collaboration showed. The layout of the exhibits and words we used to describe them were not something that could have been done without input from the homeless people who had been partners in the dig. And the results were fantastic. With hundreds of visitors to our exhibition over the weekend it really got people thinking about the homeless people of York in a different way. And for the archaeologists amongst us it introduced us to a whole new way of thinking about heritage. The true wonder of this project has been working with people, meeting new people and talking to them about things both mundane and ordinary as well as conversations I'd never

thought I'd have (one that springs to mind includes A&E, a heckler and some rather extreme archaeology, I'll leave it at that).

So how does this project fit into the idea of a village raising a child?

Many of the people I have had the pleasure of working with have been significantly older, well

past the stage at which we might think that we have finished developing, so how does this context relate to the village idea? Homeless Heritage introduced me to a new community, the homeless community which like all communities contains a mix of people - some who don't get on, won't speak to or help each other, but where most will support each other and be there for one another within the chaotic world that is life on the streets. The difficulty for this community is lack of support and high levels of instability as people come and go. While some members stay in the same area for many years homeless life is by its very nature chaotic, and it is this chaos that hampers development and moving on from this very uncomfortable life. The work done by Homeless Heritage brings people together, forming bonds between students and shelter residents. The project has opened new doors for all involved, if you like we have created our very own 'Homeless Heritage community' in York. The stability of this community, and its constant presence is a massive force for social cohesion and out of the fifteen or so residents that we worked with well over half have moved on to a better stage (whether this be their own house and job or simply moving out of first contact shelters) than when they were first involved with the project. It seems that by creating a new community homeless people were better able to progress to a more stable, comfortable and safer life.

Having started this project and seen the tangible benefits, the challenge is to keep the community alive. We are hoping to build with funding from the Heritage Lottery Foundation. However the transient nature of homeless life means that the people we worked with a year ago are often no longer around or willing to get involved, and some of the students who were involved have now left university. It is like starting all over again trying to attract new people to this community. Creating new communities in social environments where people move in and out quickly is extremely hard. It is this same problem that university societies, archaeology clubs and many other groups face. How to encourage new people to join when all you can offer them is mountains of hard work and an



The Arcifact exhibition:
Unearthing York's Homeless Heritage

opportunity to do something that is socially worthwhile. But it is worth the effort, as without these communities people would often feel lost and unsure, because we all feel a deep need to belong to something and be part of an identifiable community. This fantastic experience has led me to think not only do I think it takes a village to raise a child but it also takes a village to look after the needs of adults, no matter

what the age.

You can find out more about our Homeless Heritage project at: www.arcifact.webs.com

See also our facebook page which includes some nice video films : <https://www.facebook.com/HomelessHeritage?ref=ts&fref=ts>

Davis Aerospace Technical High School, Detroit USA

Where students learn 'the sky is the limit'



Davis Aerospace Technical High School offers a one-of-a-kind learning experience that engages students in a rigorous college preparatory academic curriculum coupled with a remarkable technical education program that prepares students for careers in aviation, aerospace, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The only programme of its type in the entire State of Michigan, students learn to maintain and fly Cessna aircrafts—yes fly! And they can earn their Private Pilot license prior to graduation. The school partners with Delta Air lines, Western Michigan University, College of Aviation, Tuskegee Airmen, Detroit City Airport and other business/community organisations.

In recognition of the remarkable aviation programs that Davis Aerospace offers, the school was selected as the starting point of the 2012 Michigan Air Tour. Nearly 30 pilots from across the state and Canada landed personal aircrafts on the grounds of Davis Aerospace. The tour also held stops in Marshall, Adrian, Battle Creek, Cadillac and Alpena.

A presentation was held honouring the Davis Aerospace Flight Training Programme for being only one of a few flight programmes available to public school students in the United States that allows students who successfully complete all flight-training requirements to achieve their Private Pilot license prior to graduation. The students also provided school tours to the visiting pilots of the MAA.

"This is not only one of the gems of Detroit, but also of the entire country," said Bob Shafer, Michigan Aviation Association President. *"I don't know of any other high school programmes in the state of Michigan that offer a pilot's license to high school students. As you can see, this school isn't just producing our pilots of tomorrow, it's producing great people."*

Davis Aerospace began life as the "Aero Mechanics" school in 1946, an institution to help veterans returning from WWII get civilian certification to maintain civil aircraft. The programme is one of only a handful of flight programmes available to public school students in the United States that has an approved FAA curriculum coupled with an in-house fleet of aircraft that are owned, operated, and serviced by its students and staff. And, the school's graduation rate is 96 percent.

In the 1980s, a Private Pilot flight curriculum became available to high school students. Graduates of Davis Aerospace can leave high school with an Airframe or Powerplant Mechanic License and a Private Pilot License. Areas of concentration include Federal Aviation Regulations, Aerodynamics, Flight Planning, Radio Communications, Basic weather theory and Aircraft Performance/Weight & Balance.

A remarkable school offering learning and professional development experiences that are supported by people who work in the aerospace industry. Another example of 'it takes a community to help an adult develop themselves'.

Source: <http://detroitk12.org/content/2012/10/01/school-of-the-week-davis-aerospace-technical-high-school/>

Jamie's Dream School

Jenny Willis reflects

Attempts to realise the ideal school are not new: I grew up in an era which still perceived A.S. Neill's controversial Summerhill School as a dangerous social experiment. Established in Suffolk in 1921, it was founded in the belief that

'The function of a child is to live his own life, not the life that his anxious parents think he should live, nor a life according to the purpose of the educator, who thinks he knows best.'

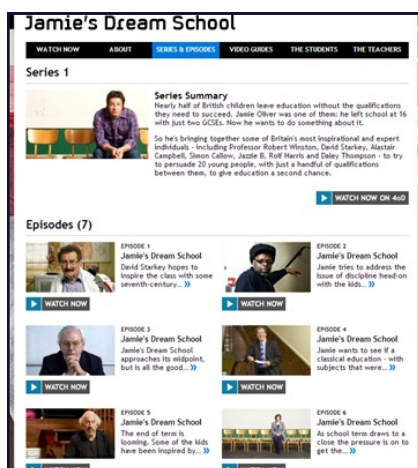


This was clearly a challenge to tradition and authority and it also seems at odds with the 'it takes a village' theme of this issue. Surely within this idea is that people from the community to which the child belongs have a responsibility to share their learning and give their time to help shape the child. But time has proven the success of its

progressive methods. Today, the school proudly describes itself as *'Still ahead of its time.'*

A less happy experiment of the 1970s coincided with my entry to the teaching profession, and in my authority. In Islington, William Tyndale junior and infants' school became notorious as an example of the havoc that results from removing all boundaries from young children and when there is no consensus between staff, parents and the local authority regarding the school's purpose and practices.

Many attempts have been made over subsequent years to innovate locally, and countless legislative constraints have been imposed to foil departure from 'the norm', be it curriculum or pedagogy. One of the most fascinating



experiments I have seen in recent times was actually conducted as a Channel 4 TV documentary series. It was the dream child of well-known chef and philanthropist, Jamie Oliver, who has become a celebrity despite his modest formal qualifications.

The series is still available if you would like to watch it!

For 2 months in 2010, a vacant premise was transformed into Oliver's Dream School. The aim was summarised by the school's head, John D'Abbro



Headteacher John D'Abbro

(in real life, head of an organisation that works with children with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties):

'we need to work out why nearly half of school leavers are leaving school without the magic 5 GCSEs at C or above (including English and Maths).'

20 UK youngsters aged 16-18 were selected as pupils.

D'Abbro explains:

all these young people had left school without the magic 5 GCSEs above grade C and wanted a second chance to succeed. They've had a range of challenges facing them and most of them are actually really bright, they just needed that extra help to succeed.

I confess that this struck home with me. After a 20-year career spent teaching and managing schools in areas of social deprivation I recognised the pattern of low aspiration and rejection of formal learning. I was envious of the opportunity the experiment offered to teach a group of young people who apparently now 'wanted' to learn.



Some of the pupils

This being a Dream School, it had to have ideal teachers. So, role models and celebrities in their field were recruited to energise these pupils. They included, from the musical world, Jazze B and Tinchy Stryder; from sport, Daley Thompson and Ellen MacArthur; eminent historian, David Starkey; barrister and wife of former PM, Cherie Blair; also from the Blair era, then communications director, Alistair Campbell; Robert Winston, world-famous pioneer of IVF; artist and TV personality, Rolf Harris; classicist, Mary Beard; actors, Simon Callow and Dominic West; photographer, Rankin, and other figures likely to inspire learners who had failed to respond to more

traditional schooling. This diversity of experienced people involved in educating these young people resonates with the 'whole village' to educate a child theme of this issue. The fantasy school knew no boundaries. Hence the teachers' personal networks gave their pupils access to Downing Street, the Globe Theatre, even a geosphere, constructed in the school grounds. Ian Hempleman Adams led them on an expedition to Snowdonia. Curricular and extra-curricular (lifewide) learning were seamlessly juxtaposed. Free to think beyond the politically correct, Winston had the pupils analysing their own sperm. These were all fantastic, motivating opportunities, but clearly their transferability to all schools was limited by issues of resource and ideology. Nevertheless, 18 year old Londoner Nana Kwame recognises the value of creative teaching:

'I learnt a lot about myself and the skills I have at Dream School, that I didn't see before. Kids don't like going to school because it is boring and mostly written down, but Dream School was different - I learnt more in a month than I did in 15 years at mainstream school. I think the schooling system is very old-fashioned.'

How, though, did other students respond to their teachers and the Dream School? Predictably, they kicked against the imposition of a

uniform and demands for punctuality and responded more immediately to the obvious role models. Alvin Hall (pictured)



had the advantage of talking about money and of presenting a smart image, both dear to the heart of many young people. 16 year old Jenny explained who was her favourite teacher and why:

'My favourite Dream School teacher was Tinchy Stryder because we can look up to him because he is so close to our age and knows what we are about. Teachers should respect you and not expect you to respect them straight away; respect is a two-way thing.'

As teachers, we cannot control our age, but we can remember the importance of mutual respect. Danielle, a smart 18 year old from Lewisham, neatly summarises the danger of forgetting students' sensibilities:

'My worst teacher was Cherie Blair as she didn't really have the right skills to teach young people and in my Dream School report she said I thought I was too pretty to take part in her lessons. I was really annoyed that she judged me before she had even spoken to me!'

David Starkey and Mary Beard had a somewhat more difficult task in persuading their students of the value of history and Latin. Beard achieved this by translating David Beckham's tattoos into Latin!



D'Abbro remarked:

'I think the debate the series has provoked shows that it has hit a raw nerve and brought the challenges around teaching to a broader audience. It's been fascinating to see how such high achievers have got on - and often really struggled - faced by some challenging behaviour! They've certainly taught some amazing lessons. And it shows why we give teachers at least a year's training! All of the 'star' teachers, however expert in their fields, came away with a renewed respect for what teachers do every day.'

Whatever the difficulties and despite the occasional loss of temper, the teachers persevered and each won the respect of students. We have only to read students' own words to see the impact these brief 2 months of tough but imaginative schooling had. Each one of them benefited personally as well as academically from the experience, as noted by 18 year old Danielle from Lewisham:

'The whole Dream School experience was great though, I had loads of fun and learnt a lot, both educational and personal things. At the moment I am doing a drama course at the National Youth Theatre and I would like a career in modelling and acting.'

Students did not necessarily come away with career ideas, but they recognised that it had raised their self-awareness, as in these two instances:

'I learnt that I need to be more confident, otherwise I might as well just quit all my dreams right now. I learnt that life is what you make of it and I intend on making mine amazing, and helping other people at the same time, well, at least once I'm out of Dorset!' (Emily 17 Dorset)

'I'm not too sure what I have learnt from Jamie's Dream School and if anything is going to come from it. What it did do was get me back into sport and make me think about cooking more.'
(Henry 17 Lambeth)

"Respect is a 2-way thing"

18 year old Jourdelle could be a spokesman for Lifewide:

'Dream School was wicked; every day was different and although it was not all challenging it was a good LIFE experience.

At the moment I am still completing my business course while working in an estate agent. In five years' time I'd like to have established my own successful business.'

It is hard not to be moved by the failure of one young man's school to recognise his abilities:

'Dream School was so much better than my secondary school. If my secondary school was like Dream School I would never have left. It was the most amazing time of my life as I've now met friends I'll have forever and I'm also so proud of myself for achieving things and proving my own doubts about myself wrong.' (Rick 16 Devon)

And if readers think Dream School has raised unrealistic aspirations, let us consider the words of 18 year old Connor, from Kent:

'My future has been changed by this experience and I will more than likely go back into education now. I feel that I've now got more of a chance at a better life than I would have had if I hadn't been to Jamie's Dream School. Of course, I would love to be full-time actor for TV and film, that's the dream, but right now, I am doing a drama course every Tuesday and looking for a part-time job.'



So what is the message of this Dream School experiment? For those involved in education, perhaps many of the lessons were predictable: we need empathy, creativity, respect, perseverance. Learners also have to be able to see the relevance of their education to the real world - something which these teachers did very well. Sadly, in the 'real world' we cannot offer some of the more lavish lifewide experiences we witnessed here. Nevertheless, we would be foolish not to acknowledge the profound impact this Dream School had on a group of 20 school 'failures', every one of whom is now motivated to pursue an active future. And perhaps, at a more modest scale, involving more people who are not teachers but who can share their life experiences in an interesting and motivating way, will enrich the educational experiences of students. Perhaps this is one way in which 'it takes a village' can be realistically enacted in the modern world.

References

www.channel4.com/programmes/jamies-dream-school

<http://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/>

Learning From Each Other

Adapted from an article by Nicholas Negroponte, founder of One Laptop Per Child organisation <http://www.dougwoods.co.uk/curation/ailink/424/>

Another important dimension of the, 'it takes a village to raise a child' story, is the way children learn from each other without the involvement of adults. Sugata Mitra, in his hole in the wall experiments, demonstrated how children help each other learn to use computers and internet technology with no instructions and without any involvement of adults (see inspiring TED talk http://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_the_child_driven_education.html).

Building on this, Nicholas Negroponte described an experiment with children in two remote Ethiopian villages by simply dropping off tablet computers with preloaded programs and seeing what happens.



The goal was to see if illiterate kids with no prior exposure to written words can learn to read all by themselves, by experimenting with the tablet and its preloaded alphabet-training games, e-books, movies, cartoons, paintings, and other programs. The devices involved are Motorola Zoom tablets—used together with a solar charging system. OLPC workers dropped off closed boxes containing the tablets, taped shut, with no instruction. "I thought the kids would play with the boxes. Within four minutes, one kid not only opened the box, found the on-off switch ... powered it up. Within 5 days, they were using 47 apps per child, per day. Within 2 weeks, they were singing ABC songs in the village, and within 5 months, they had hacked Android." Ed McNierney, OLPC's chief



technology officer, said that the kids had gotten around OLPC's effort to freeze desktop settings. "The kids had completely customized the desktop—so every tablet looked different. We had installed software to prevent them from doing that. And the fact they worked around it was clearly the kind of creativity, the kind of inquiry, the kind of discovery that we think is essential to learning."

This remarkable experiment shows in a small but significant way the ingenuity and resourcefulness of young children and the power of peer learning in their own small self-contained community. It should fill us with hope for the future.

And lest you think this phenomenon is only found in these remote Ethiopian villages. Take a look at this photo of a 4 year old showing a 2 year old how to play Minecraft.



Learning environments: What do children think works best? Reported by the Editor

If we were to do justice to the theme of 'ideal' learning environments, it was logical that we should include the views of children. A simple idea, but one fraught with problems in its realisation. It was not sufficient to canvass those children known to us, who may previously have contributed to Lifewide Magazine: we needed a more random source. But the timing of this edition, early in the school year, made it difficult to eat into teachers' already bursting timetables. As our intermediary, Russ Law, explained apologetically, *'Every minute of their day is at a premium for some school priority or other.'* This being the case, we are specially appreciative of the teacher and children of Skylark class, who found time in October 2012 to investigate for us, and Russ for facilitating this enquiry.

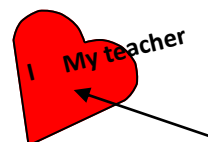


subject area. Here are the results for the 22 children who answered the question. The clear popularity of Maths is perhaps surprising when this is so often perceived as a 'hard' subject, and we may speculate that the result owes more to the teacher/teaching than to the intrinsic nature of the subject. This is, of course, a fact known to teachers and parents alike.

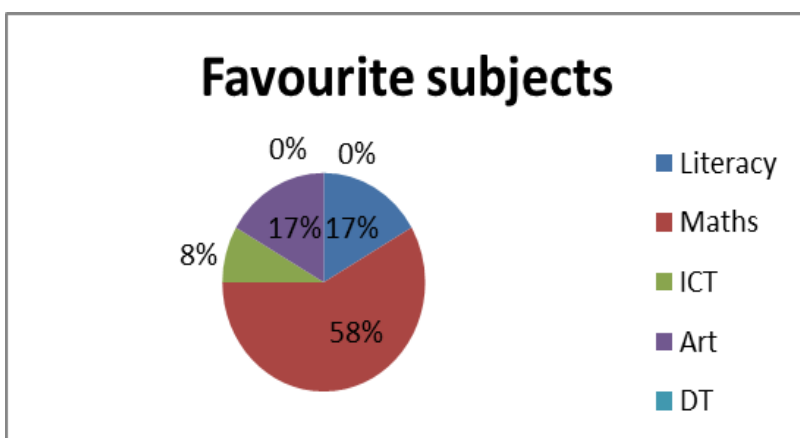
Their anonymous school, in a deprived area of southern England, with a high proportion of children whose first language is not English, gives us a fascinating insight into the views of one small group of 27 Year 4 children (aged 8-9). It is but a snapshot, and may not be typical of the whole country, but the children's voices are honest and often touching.

The class was given a brief questionnaire, which allowed them to rate different forms and places of learning, and to explain their answers in their own words. It is evident that some children did not fully understand all of the questions, so the total responding to each may vary.

The children's explanations for what helps them to improve or to learn new things also reveal the importance of the teacher, and a certain insecurity in independent learning – not a wonder, for such young children. As we read in Dr Yoganathan's piece, these children are still in the formative stage of development, when imitation and role models are paramount. Most (18) of the class prefer to have a single teacher, with only 7 liking different teachers. In terms of the village raising a child, a variety of teachers would be more desirable, so as to maximise different talents.



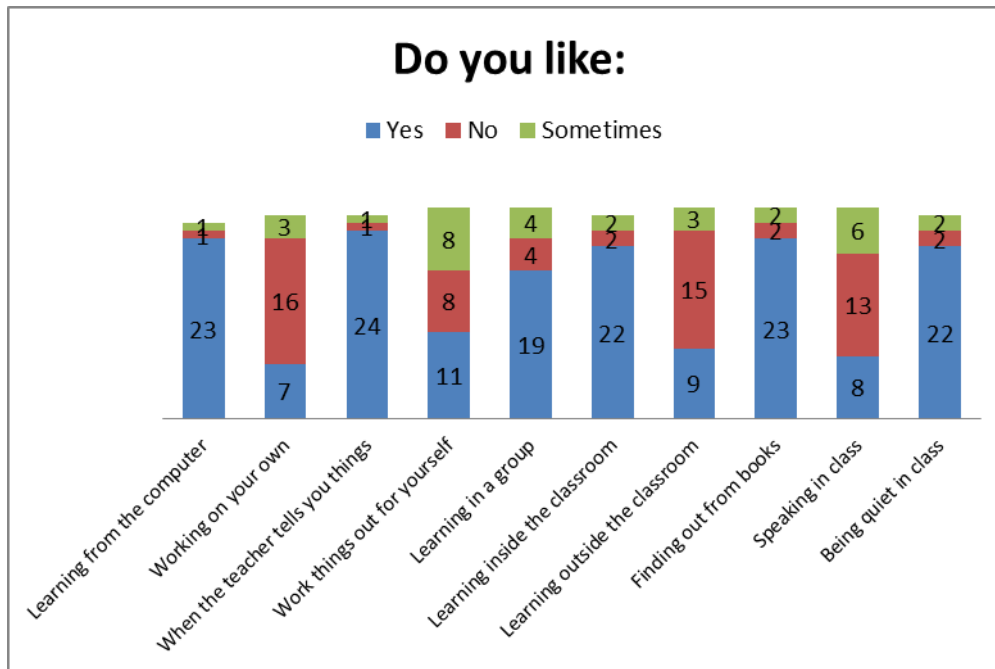
In order to explore learning styles more thoroughly, the questionnaire listed 10 types of learning, and asked the children to say whether they like, dislike, or sometimes like, each. The chart below shows the scores for each response to each question.



They were asked which kind of learning they like best, which they interpreted as what was their favourite

The results confirm these children's preference for being TOLD things by the teacher. Conversely, only 7 children like to learn alone. This raises difficult questions about the responsibility held by the teacher, and how/when/how to encourage more self-reliant learning. An alternative security blanket is favoured in group work with peers, though nearly half the class said that they enjoyed working things out for themselves.

We might have anticipated that learning from the computer would be much valued, but the authority attributed to books is almost as high.



From personal experience of teaching (disruptive) adolescents, I was surprised that so many of this class like to work in silence, though the lack of self-confidence in speaking in class is understandable, especially for children who have yet to master English. A related question was asked: do you like learning music in class? Now, 25 said yes, feeling it is fun, is relaxing, *'we get to use instruments'*, *'there are actions to do'*, and *'there are nice chunes'*. The exceptions who disliked music claimed not to be able to sing or to dislike the noise.

We have seen the assumption, in creative curricular work in schools such as Summerhill and Jamie's Dream School, that children want to learn outside the classroom. This was not the case for this group, though views were split, potentially reflecting levels of both ability and linguistic integration. It may, alternatively, be that 'outside the classroom' in urban environments, is a very unattractive proposition! Those who did like learning elsewhere chose the playground, hall, ICT room and huts, all familiar locations.

"Home is where you chill with your family"

Views on learning at home were varied, though still a majority (17) like this. Their reasons included: *'it helps my progress'*, *'I can take a long time'*, *'you can mess about'*! There is a definite sense of commitment to learning in some responses, e.g. *'I want to be good at literacy and maths'*, *'I like to do new things.'* The 8 children who do not like learning at home, draw firm

boundaries between school and leisure: *'home is where you chill with your family'*, *'I have other things to do'*, *'home's for fun.'* These latter children remind us of the importance of the 'village' in raising a child, by plugging gaps which a family cannot or will not address.

We know the importance of giving feedback to learners, but how do these children know when they are making progress? 15 of the class associated progress with meeting targets or work becoming harder; teacher interaction through getting ticks, or 'green on my book' were cited, and three children relied on when 'the teacher tells you.'

"This school is perfect"

Finally, the children were asked what they would like to change about the way they learn at school. Responses were limited in ambition, and perhaps by the children's young age. One or two were loyal to their school, saying *'I like this school the way it is as long as I am learning something I do not mind'*, and even *'I would like to change nothing at this school because it is perfect.'* Some interpreted the question in terms of their own behaviour and performance: *'be good and don't get into trouble'*; *'be good at literacy.'* A few did venture suggestions, mostly regarding the curriculum *'go outside and draw things'*, *'change the old stuff to new stuff'*, *'do a bit more maths.'* There were also some pedagogical ideas: *'mini breaks'*, *'easier explanations.'* Should we be proud that the children are so contented with their schooling, or anxious that they are not more imaginative? Only time will tell.

Designing a University Skills Award

Sarah Jeffries



Sarah manages the University of Birmingham's Personal Skills Award (PSA), and is a member of the AGCAS Skills Award Task Group. In her own time Sarah is in the final year of completing her part-time MSc Public Management at Birmingham (INLOGOV); is enjoying using Q-methodology for the first time; and is interested in the changing nature of public sector job roles. She has also enjoyed every moment of being a student again, and isn't sure that she's ready to give it up just yet.



On 18 September, the AGCAS (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services) Skills Award Task Group held our first webinar of the academic year (and in-fact, our first ever webinar) on the subject of *'Designing a Skills Award'*. We had decided on this particular topic as we are aware that although there are approximately 80 Co-Curricular Awards across the UK, there are more institutions considering Awards as an option; additionally some of the more established Awards are also considering expanding their scope. With this in mind, we targeted four very different types of Awards to ensure that there could be 'something for everyone', and potentially watch some very interesting discussions unfold.

The presenters were:

Professor Norman Jackson, Lifewide Development Award
 Dr Sharon Milner, University of Ulster EDGE Award
 Kasia Senyszyn, University of Kent Employability Points Scheme
 Hannah Speight, Durham Postgraduate Award (as part of the Durham Award).

All of the presenters were asked to answer the following questions in their presentations:

Why did you choose your particular structure?
 What were the challenges of implementing your Award?
 What are the successes/benefits?

The Awards themselves revealed they were quite different in structure and audience: the Lifewide Development Award will be open to 16-24 year olds in its pilot; whereas the Durham Postgraduate Award, as the title suggests, is designed to meet the needs of Postgraduate Taught students. The Ulster EDGE Award recognises student engagement in specified extra-curricular activities; and the Kent Employability Points Scheme offers work experience rewards for involvement in extra-curricular activities. I could talk you through each design, but I think that's best left to the experts themselves, and you can watch the presentations back here for more information: <https://connect.le.ac.uk/p6w4nmrfr4/>.

What actually struck me from the presentations, and the

questions from the webinar community, was actually how many similarities there were, despite varying designs. There were three areas of discussion in particular that highlighted their similarities and caught my interest: inclusivity; boundaries of student success; and the students' learning journey.

"Are Awards Inclusive or Exclusive?"

This was an interesting question from a participant that prompted debate on both the online chat, and from the presenters themselves. The consensus from the presenters was that the issue of inclusivity had been a key issue at the design stage of each Award. Professor Norman Jackson summarised the issue by commenting that when designing an Award, you make a framework that is inclusive, however the reality is you can only afford some students.



The presenters all acknowledged that due to resources, there was a limit on the number of places available for students, and that the students were self-selecting to participate in the Award. There was an acknowledgement that self-selecting often attracted a proportion of students who were already engaged in a personal or career development processes (as opposed to those students who were unengaged) for their next step: be that the graduate recruitment process, or further study for example. That said, why should the 'informed' students not have the choice to engage in Awards to refine their personal development and employability even further? The presenters actually revealed a huge variety of marketing and outreach tools they employed in order to reach a diverse and inclusive audience as possible.

“It’s not a failure; it just means it’s not for them at that moment in time”

This discussion led into the issue of student retention rates. If students were self-selecting then why did they withdraw from the Awards? As this quote by Norman Jackson suggests, there was a feeling that just because a student didn’t complete an Award, it didn’t mean that it hadn’t had an impact on their development.

The presenters discussed that Awards were a two-way process; the Awards were assessed and had additional benchmarks in place for participation. The issue of quality arose here, as Awards have to ensure a quality and structured experience for students (and whilst not referenced in the webinar, the majority of Awards are also subject to quality assurance). So, for participation and engagement, a student can expect a value-added experience (employer engagement was raised as just one of many examples). The reality of an Award, and the expectation of undertaking additional activities or assessments whilst undertaking their programme of study, can lead to a student withdrawing. A presenter, Hannah Speight (Durham Award), noted that an Award is a journey: some will make it to the end, and some will not, but all who have engaged at any point on that journey will get something out of it that enhances their personal development.

“Opening students’ eyes to so many opportunities available to them.”

This for me, was the most important message to come from the presenters, and was my summary of the discussion that had just been had. When a student self-selects on to an Award, whether they complete or not, they are having their eyes opened to so many opportunities around them that they may not have known existed. Outside of the webinar, at the University of Birmingham on the Personal Skills Award last year: 69% of students had said they had engaged in an extra-curricular experience they hadn’t previously considered, as a result of the Award. This is a whole host of experiences and reflections for a student to have had as a result of engaging in an Awards framework.

I think that is a good place to conclude for now... We have three more webinars coming up this year, so I hope you will join us to continue the debates.

Sarah Jeffries

Sir Robert Burgess



WELCOME NEWS!

Higher Education Achievement Record: A great boost for lifewide education

It’s taken nearly eight years to accomplish, but in October 2012 Universities UK and GuildHE published the final report of a steering group overseeing the development of the report of the Higher Education Achievement



Record (HEAR). Hear is an electronic document that provides a concise yet comprehensive record of students’ academic and extracurricular achievements during their time in higher education. More than half of higher education institutions are now signed up to introducing the Hear, and there is every reason to expect that more will follow soon as it has been recommended to the sector by the representative bodies. It provides a far more sophisticated way of recording student achievement than the present honours degree classification system, and it goes a long way towards answering the call for institutions to do more for students and to demonstrate the full value of a degree both to graduates and their parents, and to prospective employers. Implementation will be taken forward under the stewardship of the Higher Education Academy with the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) and the National Union of Students (NUS) providing practical support and guidance.

The Hear has important implications for lifewide learning, education and personal development because of the way it will recognise the ways in which students develop themselves through the many extra-curricular activities they engage in while they are at University. The many Skills Awards that have now been developed by universities and colleges to support and recognise personal development (see adjoining article by Sarah Jeffries), will now be able to make a formal contribution to students’ record of achievement when they graduate.

The idea of a comprehensive record of students’ achievements to complement and enhance the degree classification was first proposed by Lord Ron Dearing in 1997. His recommendation was for a Higher Education Progress File. Since then many people have worked very hard to achieve this goal, none more so than Sir Robert Burgess, Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester, Chair of the Burgess Implementation Steering Group for the Hear.

Lifewide Education congratulates the higher education community in taking an important step forward in supporting the much richer lifewide concept of learning, personal development and achievement

Lifewide Development Award

An opportunity to help people develop themselves

Norman Jackson Director Lifewide Education

It takes a community to enable us to develop

The Lifewide Education Community is a contemporary response to the proverb 'it takes a village to raise a child', because underlying the idea of a community of people interested in the idea of lifewide learning, education and personal development is the more substantial moral purpose that members of the community will help make a positive difference to the lives of others by helping them develop themselves.

One of the greatest feelings we can have is when we begin to accomplish something that we have been working towards for a long time. In September Lifewide Education began to realise one of its main objectives - to launch its own 'Award' that will recognise achievement and commitment in learning and development by people who use their whole lives as their vehicle for personal growth. We are at the beginning of a long journey but we have made a start—that is what is important.



<http://www.lifewideaward.com/>

The Award embodies the educational principles on which Lifewide Education has been founded. Inspired by the wonderful words of Eduard Lindeman writing over 80 years ago, 'the whole of life is learning therefore education has no ending', the Award will enable the Lifewide Education Community to encourage and support people who would like learn and develop themselves through the supportive social structure we are offering.

Who is the Award for?

Our vision is for an Award that will encourage and support an experience that anyone from 16 to 80+ can enjoy and learn from. 'The joy of learning and of determining and recognising our own development', lies at the heart of the experience. Students in full or part-time education might use it to complement their academic studies. It can also be used by anyone who is not involved in formal education. The scheme can also be adopted and adapted by schools, colleges and universities, and other providers of education and training.

How will participants benefit?

The primary benefit to individuals participating in the award is development of their own awareness of who they are and who they want to become, and most importantly developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of how they are realising their goals in different parts of their lives. Greater self-awareness enables people to make better decisions about their pathways through life and enables them to present themselves more effectively. Demonstrating commitment to their own development through this scheme will show an employer or educator that they have developed attitudes, values and life skills to manage their own learning and development and be effective lifelong learners.

What do participants have to do?

A summary of what people have to do to achieve the Award is shown below. The learning process extends over at least 6 months. It is underpinned by 4 simple tools: a lifewide activity map; a personal development activity plan; a website building tool to record their experiences and their development; and an on-line community Forum that enables people involved in the award to share experiences and challenges with other members of the Lifewide Education Community.

Summary of what participants must do to achieve the Lifewide Development Award

- 1 Read the guidance so that they are familiar with the purpose of and expectations for the award, and the concepts on which it is based
- 2 Complete the Registration Form which can be downloaded from the website
- 3 Prepare a lifewide activity map (LAM) and personal development activity plan (PDAP)
- 4 Participate in self-determined and self-managed activity through which they learn and develop over at least 6 months
- 5 Record their experiences and reflections on what they have learnt in an on-line diary or blog
- 6 Share and discuss their experiences and personal development with a mentor - through their website and 3 conversations conducted through videoconference
- 7 Summarise what they have learnt and how they have developed in a written account, audio or video story or annotated scrapbook and share their synthesis story with their mentor.



**lifewide
development
award**

After reading the guidance and registering for the Award, learners are invited to think about all the things they

are doing in their lives and what they are trying to achieve in different parts of their life. Most people recognise between about four to seven distinct areas in their life and can identify their purposes and what they are trying to achieve whether it be with friends and family, study, work or some other situation. This *lifewide activity map* provides the foundation for an individual's *personal development activity plan*.

Participants identify four or five important goals in different parts of their lives, the most important aspects of themselves that they need to develop in order to achieve these goals and the activities in their life through which they might develop themselves in order to achieve their goals. They are also reminded that some of their learning and development will not be planned and intentional, rather it will be unanticipated and emerge through activity when they not expecting it - learning *en passant*.

As part of the development process, participants set up their own website using the *weebly website building tools* <http://www.weebly.com>. The website building tool is simple and intuitive to use. It allows people to design and customise a site to represent themselves in the way they would like to. Each site has a blog; learners are expected to make at least one entry each week reflecting on their experiences and what they learnt from them. Over the six months that learners engage with the process their story of personal development unfolds and can be witnessed by their mentor who visits the blog every few weeks.

Towards the end of their developmental process (after about five months), learners summarise what they have learnt and how they have developed and identify further opportunities for development in their future life. This may be in the form of a written word or web account of about 2000 words or it may utilise other media such as audio, video, or graphic visualisations like a scrap book. Giving participants the choice of how they represent themselves and their development is an important underpinning principle. We want them to be creative and to express themselves in the ways they find meaningful. It is however expected that they will discuss and agree the form of their summary account with their mentor.

Learning partnership - the role of mentors

The learning and personal development process is intended to be a 'partnership' in which participants are assisted (helped to imagine, plan, reflect and evaluate) by a more experienced person who acts as their 'mentor'. The mentor performs a number of important roles. Firstly, they help the lifewide

learner 'to make a start' (probably the hardest part of the process) and to 'make progress' by answering questions, providing reassurance and building their confidence and self-esteem. Once every 2 weeks they check their mentees' on-line diary and where appropriate add comment or questions to help them reflect more deeply or add another perspective. Through this process the mentor is experiencing the learner's commitment to their own self-managed learning and development process and witnessing how they respond to the events that emerge in their life. They are also sensing the learners own awareness of themselves. This is a form of 'formative evaluation'.

Over the 6 months the mentor has 3 (30min) conversations with their mentee via a video-conference 'chat room' that has been created, to discuss the learner's experiences, challenges and personal development and to consider plans for further development. This is another form of 'formative evaluation.'

Towards the end of the 6 months the mentor receives the learner's summary account of their experiences and what they have learnt from them. The mentor prepares a short report for the Lifewide Development Award 'Accreditation Panel' with their evaluation of the evidence and self-evaluations the learner provided of their own learning and development.

Learning community



The Lifewide Development Award encourages and supports the idea that everyone involved in the Award (participants and mentors) are members of a learning community. We want to encourage communication and interaction within the community through an on-line Forum which is open to all members of the Lifewide Education Community

Evaluating learning, personal development and commitment

The onus is on the learner to evaluate and explain their own learning and personal development in the contexts that form their lives. Through the formative evaluation process the mentor has developed an understanding of their mentees life and how they have sought to develop themselves through their self-directed learning process. The mentor completes a report outlining his/her view about the evidence of personal development provided. In reaching a judgement as to whether their mentee deserves the Lifewide Development Award, the mentor considers the learner's:

- commitment to their own development through self-directed and unplanned activities and their commitment to the learning process promoted by the Award
- self-awareness - of how they have changed – what they can now do that they couldn't do before, or how they now see and understand things in ways that are different to before
- ability to explain and communicate their self-awareness of learning and personal development in a realistic and convincing way using the tools and frameworks provided, or tools and frameworks that they have created.
- contribution to the community of lifewide learners.

Recognising achievement

The Lifewide Development Accreditation Panel will receive and consider the online evidence of personal development provided by the learner and their mentor's report and recommendation. If sufficient evidence is provided the Lifewide Development Award will be made to the learner and they will be entered on the register of recipients.

On achieving the Award we hope that learners will want to become a mentor to support other people engaged in their lifewide development. This would of course provide further opportunities for their own lifewide development as well providing a valuable voluntary service to help other people develop themselves and grow and sustain the lifewide education enterprise.

Everything must have a beginning

I realise from a recent discussion on the Lifewide Community Forum that lots of people find that making a start can sometimes be very hard to do <http://www.lifewider.com/>. But we have made a start by launching our Award. But we also know we are only at the start of realising our vision for an Award that encourages, supports, values and recognises individuals'

own attempts to develop themselves and there will be many challenges ahead.

Our first challenge is to secure enough volunteer learners for our pilot: ideally between 20-30 people over the next 12 months. We are very grateful to Christine Fountain, Director of the Human Resources Management course at Southampton Solent University for providing us with our first group of learners. If you know of anyone who you think might be interested in the opportunity provided by the Award, please let them know about it <http://www.lifewideaward.com/>

We also have to build our capacity to mentor - if each mentor supports three learners then we need ten mentors to complete our pilot. We currently have five volunteers to begin the process so we need to grow our pool of mentors. Our hope is that other members of the Lifewide Education Community will take on this role and demonstrate that our Award is truly owned and supported by the community. If you would like to become a mentor please get in touch: lifewider1@btinternet.com.

A social innovation

I like to think the Lifewide Education enterprise and Lifewide Development Award are *social innovations* - new ideas that meet social goals. Our ambitious goal for the Award is to serve society - not just the privileged in our society - for example, people who are already benefitting from a higher education, but those who have never benefitted from a higher education. With this cause in our minds our agenda for the future is clear.

Christine Fountain Southampton Solent Business School

As a lecturer in HRM possessing a personal commitment to learning and development I am inspired to commend the value of the Lifewide Learning Award to our students. The joy of the Award is that it helps us reflect upon 'where we have been' in the wider context of our lives and to what we might aspire. It empowers the learner in reflection, evaluation and planning. The Award celebrates the myriad roles and experience that contribute to the learning and ambition of individuals. For our students (at whatever age, stage or level), with mentor support, it is a journey of self-awareness aligned with the pivotal skills of reflection and development which will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives (personally *and* professionally).

Whilst not exclusively so, concepts of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) have long been predicated upon the individual learner, their future needs in a professional context and the demands and aims of the employing organisation. Of itself this is laudable and appropriate in a contemporary work environment encouraging professional reflectors. However, this is not the whole story. We are all more than our professional persona, with wide reaching and valuable experience that makes us who we are today. The Lifewide Award brings this to life for our students and encourages reflection and life wide development.



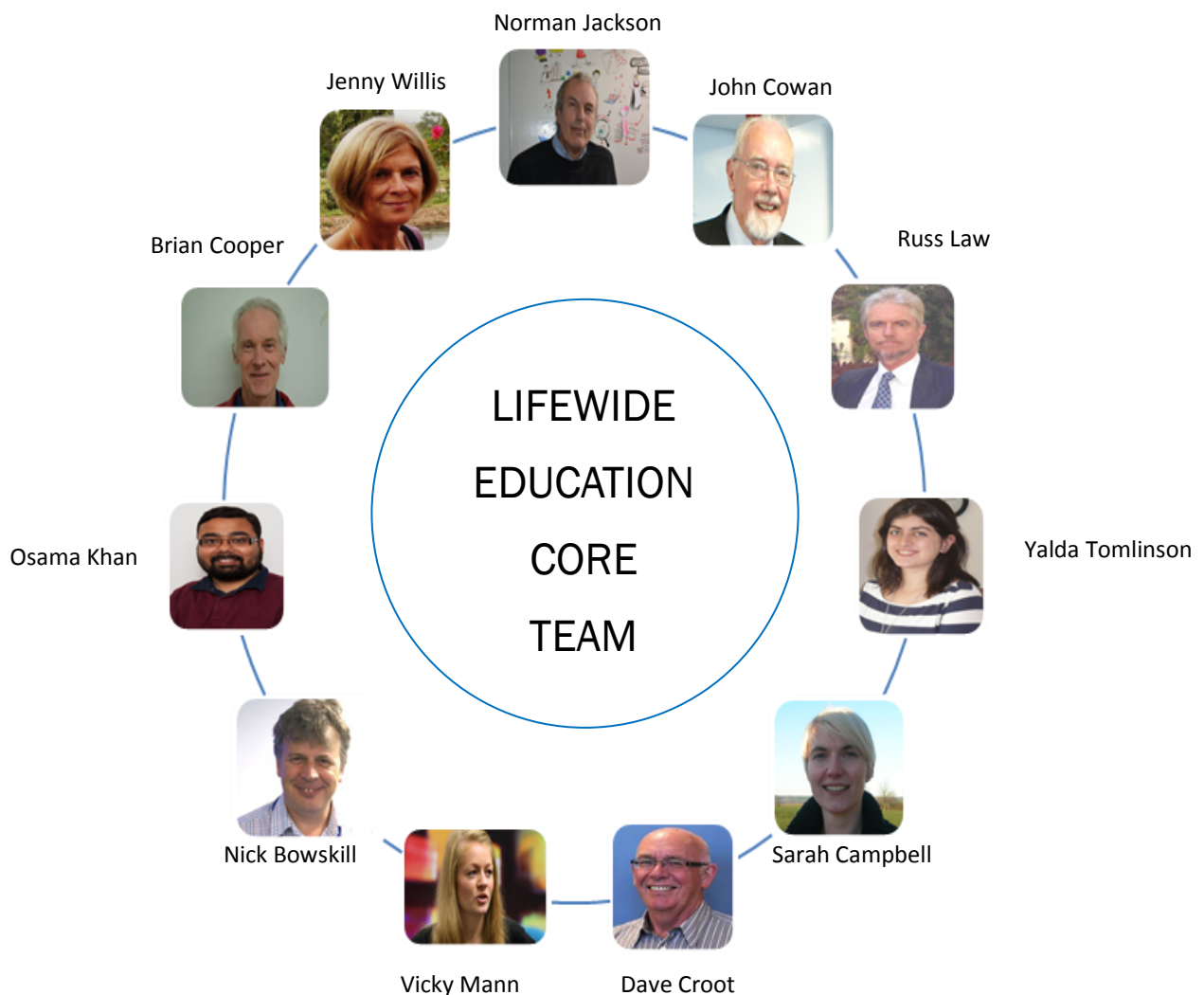
Membership matters

Welcome to 2 new members of the core team

Osama Khan We are delighted that Osama Khan has agreed to join us. Some of our community know Osama from SCEPTRe days. He was a great champion at the University of Surrey and a very good and innovative teacher. He is now Associate Dean in the Business School at Southampton Solent University - a university with which we have very close association through our piloting the Lifewide Development Award. Osama is full of ideas and he will be a great asset to our project.



Dave Croot Regular readers will remember Dave from our Spring 2012 issue, when he wrote for us about the Plymouth Award scheme. He holds two roles at the University of Plymouth: a 0.5 fte position in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (SoGEES), and an equal role in the Teaching and Learning Directorate, where he leads the Plymouth Award scheme (which recognises extra-curricular achievements), the development of the University Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), Learning Through Volunteering and is involved in the further development of institution-wide learning initiatives. We are thrilled that Dave has joined us.



Our core team is expanding all the time—here is a reminder of its current membership. You can find out more about team members' roles and experience by logging in to the membership page of Lifewide Education. Thank you to the whole team for your support and commitment to our work.

Lifewide Learning, Education & Personal Development e-book

<http://lifewideeducation.co.uk/page/lifewide-learning-education-personal-development-e-book>

Forthcoming chapters:

'Explorativity': Implications for Lifewide Education and Lifelong Learning (November 2012)

Russ Law

Plymouth Award (January 2013)

Dave Croot

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<http://chalkmountain.co.uk/>

LIFEWIDE MAGAZINE, Issue 5

Winter 2012

“Authoring our Lives”

The next issue of Lifewide Magazine will be formed around the idea of *authoring our lives* - the way that we create our sense of who we are through the things we do across our lives. We are delighted that Distinguished Professor Marcia Baxter Magolda, who developed the concept of self-authorship, has kindly agreed to contribute to the Magazine. We welcome contributions from our community. If you would like to offer an article on this theme, please contact the editor, Jenny Willis at:

jjenny@blueyonder.co.uk

Deadline for receipt of submissions of next edition:

31 January 2013