



The diagram illustrates the Learning Ecology for Making a Cake, centered around the text **LEARNING ECOLOGIES**. The word **LEARNING** is in green, and **ECOLOGIES** is in yellow. Four contexts are shown around the central text:

- process** (top): A person is shown learning to make a cake, with a thought bubble showing a cake and a speech bubble saying "GOOGLE MAKING CAKE".
- relationships** (right): A person is shown on a phone, with a thought bubble showing a cake and a speech bubble saying "I'm calling a friend for help".
- resources** (bottom left): A person is shown looking at a display of cakes in a shop, with a sign that says "CAKESHOP".
- will & capability** (bottom right): A person is shown baking a cake, with ingredients like flour and sugar visible.

Illustrator: Kiboko Hachiyon



LEARNING ECOLOGIES

The Editor reports from the Andes

Personalisation, collaboration and informal learning will be at the core of learning in the future. The central learning paradigm is characterised by lifelong and lifewide learning and shaped by the ubiquity of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). So says an important European Commission Foresight Report¹ envisioning learning in 2030 but there is no mention in this substantial report of learning ecologies which enable us to personalise, collaborate and make use of our informal learning in every context that we live. This issue of Lifewide Magazine explores the idea of learning ecologies to help gain a better understanding of their role in lifewide learning and personal development.

As I finalise the magazine, I find myself experiencing so many of the theoretical dimensions of learning ecologies. John Seely-Brown² suggests these are: a collection of overlapping communities of interest; cross-pollinating each other; constantly evolving; and largely self-organising. Appropriately, here I am, as the World Mental Health congress draws to a close in Buenos Aires, surrounded by diverse individuals and groups of professional mental health workers, users of their services and carers, all drawn together with a common purpose: to share experience and learn. We have all grown from our interaction and take away ideas which will flourish and develop in their new environments. I shall report more in our next edition.

Turning to this magazine, we once more have compelling contributions from around the globe: Canada, Australia, USA, UK, an expedition to Africa, research in Malaysia as well as here in Argentina.

The thematic part of this issue is in three parts. The first provides a number of conceptual pieces aimed at exploring the idea of learning ecologies. In the 1970s, psychologist Uri Bronfenbrenner proposed a set of concentric zones, ranging from the individual microsystem to the cultural macrosystem, within which we exist and develop. The theme of co-development is taken up by Jay L Lenke, who returns to the idea of becoming a village. For Maret Staron, trust has begun to emerge as a key element in personal learning ecologies. We highlight, Brigid Barron's work on the learning ecologies of a group of teenagers as they develop their digital fluencies and Norman Jackson describes the process and resources needed for creating and launching a new on-line university programme. This section concludes with a practical example of a learning ecology based on 'learning to drive.'

The second part provides a number of personal narratives to illustrate the concept. Gideon Coolin, who has yet to

reach teenagehood, describes how he is mastering the game of Pokemon and shows us that our need to be able to create learning ecologies begins at a very early age. Navid Tomlinson uses the idea of a learning ecology to explain his experience of higher education study and shows how a learning ecology can embrace all the learning and development gained while studying a degree regardless of whether it is part of the course. Peter Rawsthorne describes how he created a learning ecology to learn a particular Morris dance. Norman Jackson describes the learning ecology of a lecturer who was trying to innovate in a university and John Tomlinson and Callum Strong describe their learning ecology associated with undertaking a kayaking expedition to Ethiopia - an ecology for discovery!

The third part contains some imaginative pieces - Jenny Willis considers learning ecologies in the natural world, Ronald Barnett shares his ideas for an ecological university and US-based organisation KnowledgeWorks presents their ideas for 'regenerating the learning ecosystem'.

The final set of articles focuses on research and innovation. Christine Fountain and Susan Patrick talk about their experience of participating in a shoebox ecology workshop at Southampton Solent University. From the QAA, Harriet Barnes tells us about a UK survey of Extra-Curricular Awards, which institutions are invited to join in. Lifewiders' news takes us to Malaysia and Argentina, as we see the power of ValuesExchange for teaching and research. Rob Ward reports on a recent workshop on the future of lifewide learning.

Our latest Lifewide Magazine statistics reveal that our readership continues to grow and we have attracted readers from over forty countries. Our e-book, Lifewide Learning, Education and Personal Development has published three new chapters, two related to wellbeing and one on learning ecologies. We remind you of our first conference, taking place on 26 March 2014, and encourage you to enrol.

In short, we have another great edition jam packed with interesting ideas to stimulate your imagination and creative spirit. As always, we are indebted to the time and effort of all our contributors. I welcome your views on the content of this issue. Now, tuck in!

¹ Redecker, C., Leis, M., Leendertse, M., Punie, Y., Gijsbers, G., Kirschner, P., Stoyanov, S. and Hoogveld, B. (2011) *The Future of Learning: Preparing for Change*. European Commission Joint Research Centre Institute for Prospective Technological Studies EUR 24960 EN Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union <http://ipts.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publications/pub.cfm?id=4719>

² Seely-Brown, J. serendip.brynmawr.edu

URI BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK



Urie Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist, introduced his ecological paradigm for interpreting human development in the 1970s in a series of papers. He argued:

in order to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. This system is composed of five socially organized subsystems that help support and guide human growth. They range from the microsystem, which refers to the relationship between a developing person and the immediate environment, such as school and family, to the macrosystem, which refers to institutional patterns of culture, such as the economy, customs and bodies of knowledge (Bronfenbrenner 1994: 1643).

Bronfenbrenner's conceptual framework highlights the nested nature of social ecosystems. Two of the levels (micro and meso) are of particular interest to learners and those who support learning.

The *microsystem* contains the factors within someone's immediate environment, the day-to-day situations they encounter and their relationships and communications with the people they meet or interact with using communications technology. This is the level of our lifewide learning experiences, the level at which our individual situations and our responses to these situations matter to us and to the people they affect. This is the level at which we make decisions and plan what to do and how to do it and the level at which we act and use our capability (everything we can bring to a situation). This is the level at which we reflect on our experiences and the effects of our actions. This is the level of our learning ecology - the contexts, tools, technologies and resources we are able to draw upon to do what we have to do and the level at which we create new ecologies for learning and achieving.

Individuals' microsystems for learning, their personal learning ecologies, are nested within the *mesosystem* which encompasses the interrelations of two or more settings for example their wider experiences in life and the university course they are studying. It involves people who have an interest in promoting and supporting learning. It is the level at which guidance and tools are provided to help learners fulfil the requirements for their programme. Appropriately organised activity in the mesosystem enables people to learn more and better in their own microsystem.

The mesosystem is nested within the *exosystem* which consists of settings that do not involve us directly, but which contains events that impact on us. This is the ecological level at which an institution adopts and embeds certain policies that affect the way a programme is designed, or determine in a broad sense the types of attributes the institution wants to see as an outcome of the education it provides.

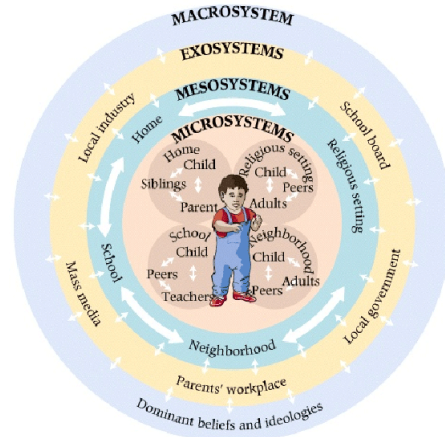


Image source: [Center for Child and Community Development](#)

The *macrosystem* is the wider society in which all other settings are nested including the socio-economic, cultural and political contexts. It includes government policies and strategies for promoting and supporting lifelong learning. This is the ecological level of the higher education system and the vision is that one day the system as a whole will embrace the idea of lifewide education.

The *chronosystem* encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives (e.g. changes over the life course in family structure, socioeconomic status, employment, place of residence, or the degree of hecticness and ability in everyday life).

Lifewide education is primarily concerned with the microsystem and individuals' personal ecologies for learning, together with the mesosystem level which hosts institutional and other social ecologies for learning that encourage, support and recognise individuals' learning and development. Lifewide Education's Lifewide Development Award is an example of a mesosystem.

But lifewide learning and education must also be concerned with the exosystem - the level at which institutional beliefs and policies are created that lead to the adoption of a lifewide learning and personal learning ecology approach, and to the macrosystem which is the level at which society values, supports and recognises this approach.

Few writers have managed to capture the rich detail and nuances of the ecology of learning in the way that Jay Lemke, a Professor in the LCHC/Department of Communication University of California - San Diego, has achieved.



The Autumn 2012 issue of Lifewide Magazine featured the idea of 'it takes a village to raise a child'. In this article, drawn from extracts taken from 'Becoming the Village: Education Across Lives'¹ Jay highlights how our learning ecologies are the means through which we become the villages we inhabit.

BECOMING THE VILLAGE—AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

An old saying has it that *it takes a village to raise a child*. As children, we know how much we need to learn about everything and everyone in our communities to live there successfully. As we learn, we gradually become our villages: we internalise the diversity of viewpoints that collectively make sense of all that goes on in the community. At the same time, we develop values and identities: in small tasks and large projects, we discover the ways we like to work, the people we want to be, the accomplishments that make us proud. In all these activities we constantly need to make sense of the ideas and values of others, to integrate differing viewpoints and desires, different ways of talking and doing. As we participate in community life, we inevitably become in part the people that others need us to be, and many of us also find at least some of our efforts unsupported or even strenuously opposed by others.

The challenges of living in a village define fundamental issues for both education and development. In his pioneering work on intellectual development, Lev S. Vygotsky (1934/1963) introduced the basic principle that the contents of our thinking and the habits of our lives originate in our social interactions with others. What we eventually come to feel as something within us begins first as something between us. At about the same time, Mikhail Bakhtin (1935/1981) was beginning to define the broad social diversity in how a community uses language to describe and evaluate the world. This is exactly the diversity we encounter in our dialogues and social interactions with others, and which we must learn to make sense of, and make sense with, in order to live and work successfully in our 'villages'.

We may prefer one particular way of working, but because we must work together, we also learn how to collaborate. Some of us prefer telling stories, others like to argue; some like to draw, others prefer building things; but we must all learn how our words and their pictures can be combined, and how building gets connected to drawing and to telling. We become individuals who like and prefer, but we always also gradually become in a larger sense the whole village. We learn to take part by learning how parts fit together. Over time we learn that there is nothing worthwhile we can do

without a tool that someone else has made, without combining ways of working we're comfortable with and ways we're not but others are, without taking into account viewpoints that are unfamiliar or unpleasant, without finding a way through conflict. What we do when we learn is to enter into social activities.

It takes a long lifetime to 'become a village'. Some routines can be learned in minutes, performed in seconds, but they only make sense when integrated into activities that may last for hours and are in turn small links in chains of interdependent projects that keep the village running and changing over the course of our lives and the community's history. We easily sense who we are and what we want in each minute's action, but it takes far more work and wisdom to feel our role and know our will across the longer term of years.

A *village* is not just a collection of people: it is also a place, filled with culturally meaningful artifacts and with all the elements of a natural ecosystem, to which people also give meanings. The activities that occur in such a real community involve the participation of things as well as people: books, buildings, bacteria, tools, machines, pavements and trees. What we gradually learn when we participate in village activities is not just how to collaborate with other people, but also how to make sense of and make use of every part of our communities.

We are always learning how to participate in the activities going on around us - activities that have a history as well as a meaning. The meaning comes from a culture: a particular way of doing, believing, and valuing that has evolved over times much longer than any one person lives to see. Each activity connects to others in ways that depend on what is materially necessary and possible; e.g. writing to someone depends on having tools which make marks that last long enough to be read, and on the activities in which those tools were made, as well as those in which the raw materials needed to make the tools were obtained, and even on the activities that physically get what we've written to the people who want to read it. But each of these activities is also connected to others by meanings as well as by material



The narrative in Kiboko Hachiyon's illustration is that we learn things from the people we live amongst everyday. We observe them, we do things with them, they pass on to us their knowledge, values and beliefs and eventually we learn all the things we need to learn in order to fit into and be a part of our 'village'.

necessities: reader and writer must share a common language or code; we must be able to recognise the meaningful function of an object as a tool-for-writing or an object-for-reading; making the tools and transporting what we write depends on collaborative efforts that are only possible among people who make the same general sort of sense of what each other say and do. Culture-specific meanings help us select from all the materially possible ways of writing or using clay just those that will make enough sense to other people to allow us to get on with life together. What we all need to learn is how to participate in these networks of culturally meaningful social activities: conversations, games, reading and writing, tool-using, productive work.

Participation in socially meaningful activities is not just what we learn, it is also how we learn. Even if we are alone, reading a book, the activity of reading -- knowing which end to start at, whether to read a page left-to-right or right-to-left, top-down or bottom-up, and how to turn the pages, not to mention making sense of a language, a writing system, an authorial style, a genre format (e.g. a dictionary vs. a novel) -- depends on conducting the activity in a way that is culturally meaningful to us. Even if we are lost in the woods, with no material tools, trying to find our way or just make sense of plants or stars, we are still engaged in making meanings with cultural tools such as language (names of flowers or constellations) or learned genres of visual images (flower drawings or star maps). We extend forms of activity that we have learned by previous social participation to our present lonely situation.

In this view of human development, schooling today would seem to be paying too much attention to what we study and not enough to who and how we become; priding itself on what it brings into the classroom but blinding itself to all it shuts out. Teaching isolated literacies but not how to make them work together and creating many meanings for an hour but few for a day and none for a lifetime contributes little to how we become our village.

Students in schools today are deeply alienated from the curriculum. For many students school presents an alternate reality that bears no obvious connection to the rest of their lives. Some take it on faith that obedient conformity will lead to later financial rewards many are justly sceptical as to whether that promise applies to them. Schools as institutions are isolated from the mainstream of both public and private life. Far from helping students to understand the village in which they live, schools become micro-villages in their own right, with their own typical activities that are only distantly related to those outside. The range of activities that

occur in schools is narrow and impoverished in its diversity when compared to activities that define the reality of the larger village

New technologies can help with simulating and talking about the typical activities of the community far better than the average teacher in the average classroom. Technologies will not, however, be able to substitute for direct participation, nor will they be able to replace thoughtful guidance of students' critical reflection and analysis, nor the emotional encouragement of achievement and creativity that teachers provide. For these purposes professional teachers will always be needed, especially for younger students. Schools will become places where students and their teachers decide together what comes next: collaborative projects, participatory internships, multimedia study modules, specialized learning activities, places to see and things to do. Students will participate in online peer-discussion groups, in cross-age groups where they can learn from older students and teach younger ones, and they will also have online access to a wide range of part-time mentors who mainly live and work in the world outside schools.

Teachers must not, however, become merely managers of such multi-resource learning systems. They must be concerned with the long term, with who each student is becoming, with how all that learning adds up to an education. They must take responsibility for posing the difficult questions: about life, about self, about social justice. Again and again, over the very long times it takes to engage seriously with serious matters. A village is not built in a day.

Extracts from 'Becoming the Village: Education Across Lives'

¹Lemke J L (2002) Becoming the Village: Education across lives, in G. Wells and G. Claxton (eds) Learning for Life in the 21st Century: Sociocultural Perspectives on the Future of Education Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Oxford, UK available on-line at <http://www.jaylemke.com/storage/becoming-the-village.pdf>

"A village is not built in a day."



LEARNING ECOLOGY – A MATTER OF TRUST

Maret Staron



MARET STARON is principal of a Sydney based consultancy 'Mindful Creations' and a member of the Lifewide Education Community. Maret offers services in group facilitation, problem resolution and ways of re-connecting to our own joyful wisdom. She has worked primarily in the education and training sector in workforce capability development, strategic planning, leadership development and action research in learning and teaching. Maret is currently studying Fractology, which provides a skill set for personal transformation and connection to the authenticity of the self.

A few years ago I wrote a chapter¹ in a book on lifewide learning and drew attention to the ecological nature of our everyday learning and personal development. In this article I develop the idea of personal learning ecologies further and include some new thoughts on the importance of trust and the key elements of a personal learning ecology.

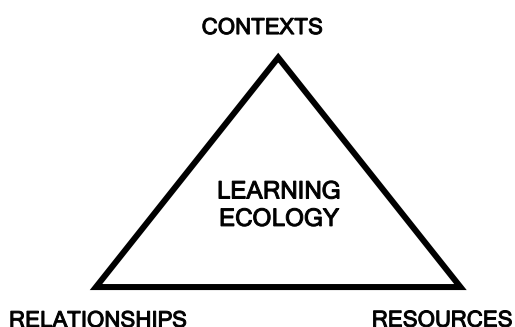
We learn in relationship and in context – not in isolation. As Krishnamurti said:

... you learn from everything, therefore there is no guide, no philosopher, no guru. Life itself is your teacher, and you are in a state of constant learning²

This is why our learning ecology is so important to us. It tells us about our learning environment and interrelationships - with others, with our culture, work and with our educational institutions. And most importantly, it tells us about our learning relationship with ourselves. We need to trust ourselves to establish a learning ecology that is meaningful, authentic and supportive of our growth and personal wellbeing.

For many, trust is an issue. We defer to what others expect of us and to the social norms of the day. We feel confusion or doubt around the decisions that we make or goals that we set. We respond to what others demand of us rather than to what's most appropriate and authentic for ourselves. I know this only too well from my own experience. Clearing the fog or lack of certainty has been a lifetime task for me. Learning to trust myself has been a key.

Figure 1 Key elements of an individual's learning ecology



How does this relate to learning ecology? Without self-trust, it's hard to understand and to modify our learning ecology. Our learning ecology needs to take us towards our lifewide learning goals, rather than away from them. I believe it's crucial to trust that still small voice within (our higher self), that part of us that knows what works best for us.

But what is our learning ecology? It's a way of describing our context, resources and relationships with learning (Figure 1). We all look through different windows of the world, i.e. through different personal realities and with different ways of understanding our relationship with learning and the world.

The illustration is not hierarchic, rather it represents the *interrelationship* between the three elements of **context**, **relationships** and **resources**. If you improve one element, you improve the others – and vice versa, if you weaken one element it tends to weaken the others. For example, if you increase your resources, then you can use those resources to develop new learning relationships, and through new relationships, increase our positive learning experiences and expand the context within which we learn. Or if, for example, you narrow your context by believing no one will support you, then your relationships can deteriorate and access to resources feels more limited.

The *first step* is therefore to identify and reflect on the key elements within your learning ecology. They can include:

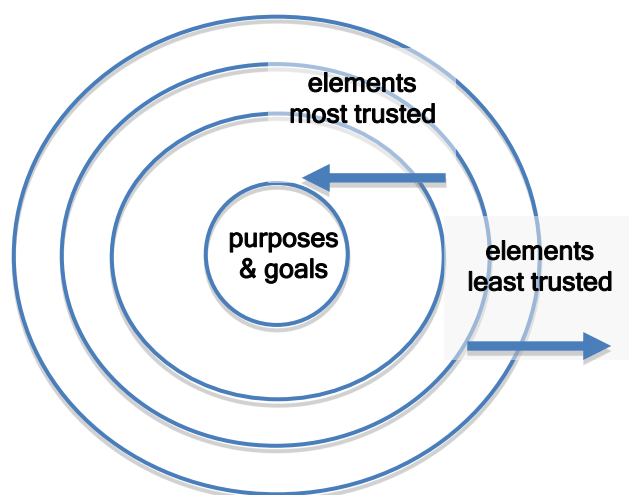
context e.g. country, group culture, systems and organisations, opportunities, beliefs, core values, attitude (to self and others)

relationships e.g. with friends, family, work colleagues, co-learners, teachers, facilitators, the environment

resources e.g. time, money, books, world wide web, formal and informal learning facilities, work, teachers, facilitators, groups and your own learning style, skills, knowledge, experiences, aptitude

The *second step* is to distinguish those aspects of you and your contexts, relationships and resources that support, nurture and appropriately challenge you in your learning – and those that don't. You can map this in five concentric circles based on an idea inspired by Kerry Armstrong (see Endnote) as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Mapping our personal learning ecology



The circles provide you with a framework for appreciating and mapping your learning ecology. At the centre of the circle you place your purposes and lifewide learning goal(s). Then in the circles closest to the centre, place those elements that you *most* trust to support your learning and development, and achievement of your purposes. The circles furthest away from the centre contain those elements that you *least* trust to support your learning and development, and / or which get in the way of achieving your purposes.

Mapping your learning ecology is a very personal process. There is no right or wrong way to do it. Simply do what is most helpful and joyful for you, trusting your intuition and experience. Hopefully it will provide you with new and useful insights into your learning journey and how you accomplish your learning and development goals.

To map your learning ecology.

1. Draw the 5 circles
2. In the *centre* (or *1st circle*), place your purposes and the lifewide learning goal(s) that will enable you to achieve these purposes
3. Using Figure 2 as a guide, appreciate and assess the elements of your learning ecology such as your attitudes, friends, teachers, feelings, goals, subjects, educational institutions, time, money, culture, hobbies, personal learning characteristics, work, skills, etc. – then:

- In the *2nd circle* – write those elements that you absolutely trust to appropriately support, nurture, encourage, challenge and sustain you in your learning – they are consistently important and valuable to you in achieving your purposes

- In the *3rd circle*, write those elements that you feel comfortable with most of the time and that support you – however, you don't have the same certainty about these elements as those in the *2nd circle*

- In the *4th circle*, write those elements that could support you but are missing from your learning environment – you'd like to acquire them because you believe they will help you with your learning

- In the *5th circle*, write down those elements you want to avoid (perhaps including your own attitudes and behaviours) because they are not aligned to your learning goals, to your life as you wish to live it and to the sort of person you want to become – they hold you back from maximising your learning and personal growth and obstruct you from achieving your purposes.

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

Endnote

Acknowledgement: the idea for using concentric circles to map learning ecology came to me after reading Kerry Armstrong's book *The Circles*³ where she uses seven circles to examine personal feelings and relationships.

References

- 1 Maret Staron (2011) Connecting and integrating life based and lifewide learning in N J Jackson (ed) Learning for a Complex World: Lifewide Concept of Learning, Education & Development Authorhouse.
- 2 Mary Lutyens (editor) (1954) The Krishnamurti Reader p222 Penguin Books, London.
- 3 Kerry Armstong (2008), The Circles, Simon and Schuster, NY.

PERSONAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Featuring the research of Brigid Barron

How people use the internet and associated information and communication technologies to interact, create, co-create and learn has been one of the main drivers for visualising learning as an ecological process. In 1999 John Seeley Brown wrote an influential article about learning in the digital age in which he talked about the radical changes that were taking place as a result of the increasing use of the internet and the social interactions it was encouraging. One of the concepts he talked about was new *knowledge ecologies* and showed how gamers shared their experiences with each other in order to master a particular technology or learn a particular on-line game. These ideas, thanks to the internet, were quickly distributed to other thinkers, writers, educational designers and researchers and the next decade witnessed a raft of articles using the ecological metaphor to describe and interpret learning.



Brigid Barron, an Associate Professor working at Stamford University, applied the idea of personal learning ecologies to the development of digital fluency. Her research¹ demonstrated how teenagers develop these literacies and fluencies through being involved in lots of different activities inside and outside school, see for example this sixteen year old student's response to the question, how did you learn about computers?

Student: *At the beginning I was reading magazines, surfing the net, I talked to my cousin Ian, my step dad, Uncle Jack, I took a course after school at Kingston Computers called Teen Tech. They taught you how to build computers and they taught you about small networks. That was another helper to my knowledge.* Barron (2006: 193)

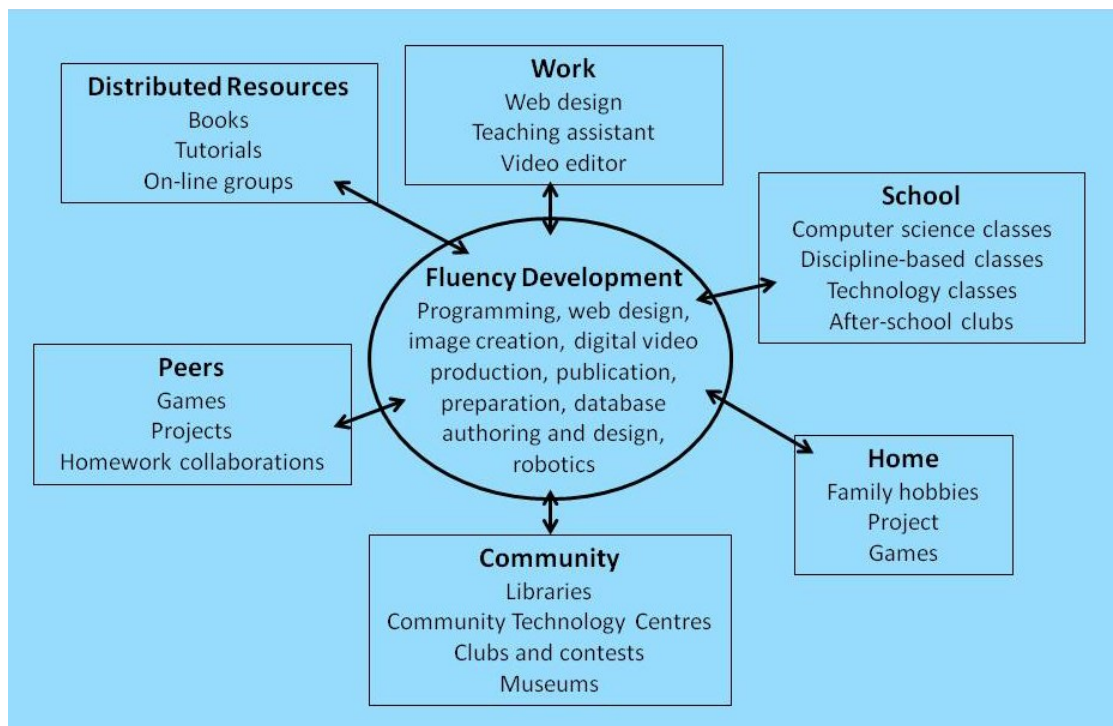


Illustration of the contexts for development of digital fluency (Barron 2006:195). An individual's learning ecology aimed at developing their digital and technological will utilise these different contexts (and others) in their own ways for their own purposes.

Barron's research demonstrated that learning is often distributed over several settings and across many different types of resources with more experienced and capable learners accessing and using a greater number and variety of resources even when access to computers and the internet was the same for all learners. She suggested that the extent to which young people developed and used their digital literacies was due to variations in interest and resourcefulness. Where interest and resourcefulness was high learners accessed and used more resources in a wider range of contexts. Barron's definition of a learning ecology was grown from this realisation which she defined ((Barron 2006: 195))as

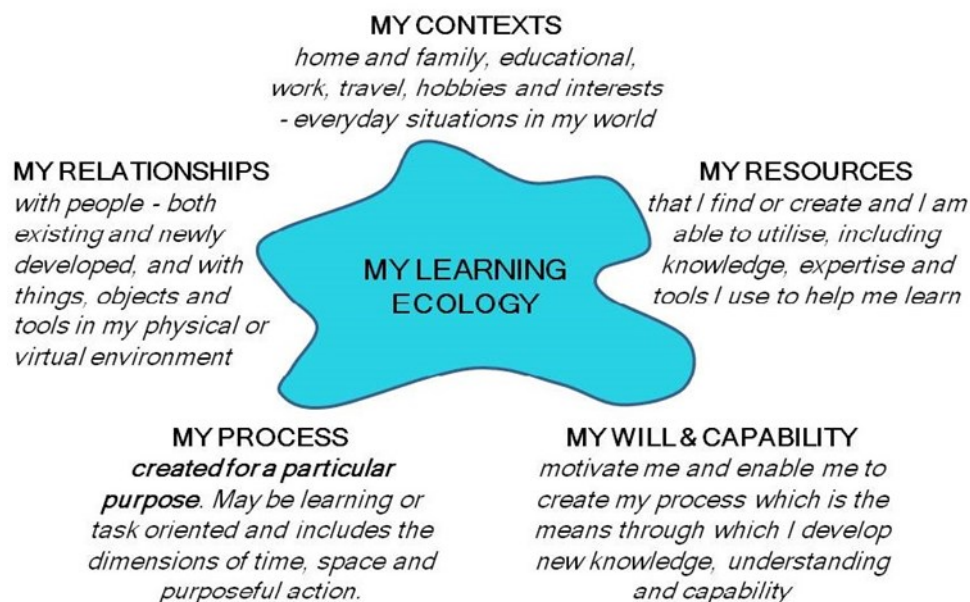
'the set of contexts found in physical or virtual spaces that provide opportunities for learning. Each context is comprised of a unique configuration of activities, material resources, relationships and the interactions that emerge from them'

¹ Barron, B. (2006) Interest and Self-Sustained Learning as Catalysts of Development: A Learning Ecology Perspective. Human Development 2006;49:193–224 Available on-line at: <http://life-slc.org/docs/barron-self-sustainedlearning.pdf>

KEY ELEMENTS OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S LEARNING ECOLOGY

Norman Jackson 2013

In a new chapter for the Lifewide Learning, Education & Personal Development e-book I examine the conceptual basis for learning ecologies. I have tried to summarise the most important elements in the simple graphic below. It represents the integration and interdependence of a person's *context(s)*, *relationships*, *resources*, (*the most important being knowledge and tools to aid thinking*), and *an individual's will and capability to create a learning process*. Such actions may be directed explicitly to learning or mastering something but more likely they will be primarily concerned with performing a task, resolving an issue, solving a problem, or making the most of a new opportunity.



Learning ecologies have temporal dimensions as well as spatial dimensions and they have the capability to connect different spaces and contexts existing simultaneously across a person's life-course, as well as different spaces and contexts existing through time throughout their life-course. The personal narratives in the next section of this issue show this very well.

Knowing how to create and sustain a learning ecology is an essential part of 'knowing how to learn' in all the different contexts that comprise an individual's life. Self-created learning ecologies are the means by which experiences and learning are connected and integrated across the contexts and situations that constitute a person's life. Learning ecologies are therefore of significant conceptual and practical value to the theory and practice of lifewide learning and education.

Reference

Jackson, N. J. (2013) The Concept of Learning Ecologies in N. J. Jackson and G.B. Cooper (eds) Lifewide Learning, Education and Personal Development e-book available on-line at www.lifewideeducation.co.uk

The uniqueness of human ecosystems

Jay Lemke

What is so special about ecosocial systems among all other possible ecosystems is not that they contain us and our things, but that our behaviour within the system, and so the overall dynamics of the system as a whole, depends not just on the principles that govern the flow of matter and energy in all ecosystems, but also on what those flows mean for us

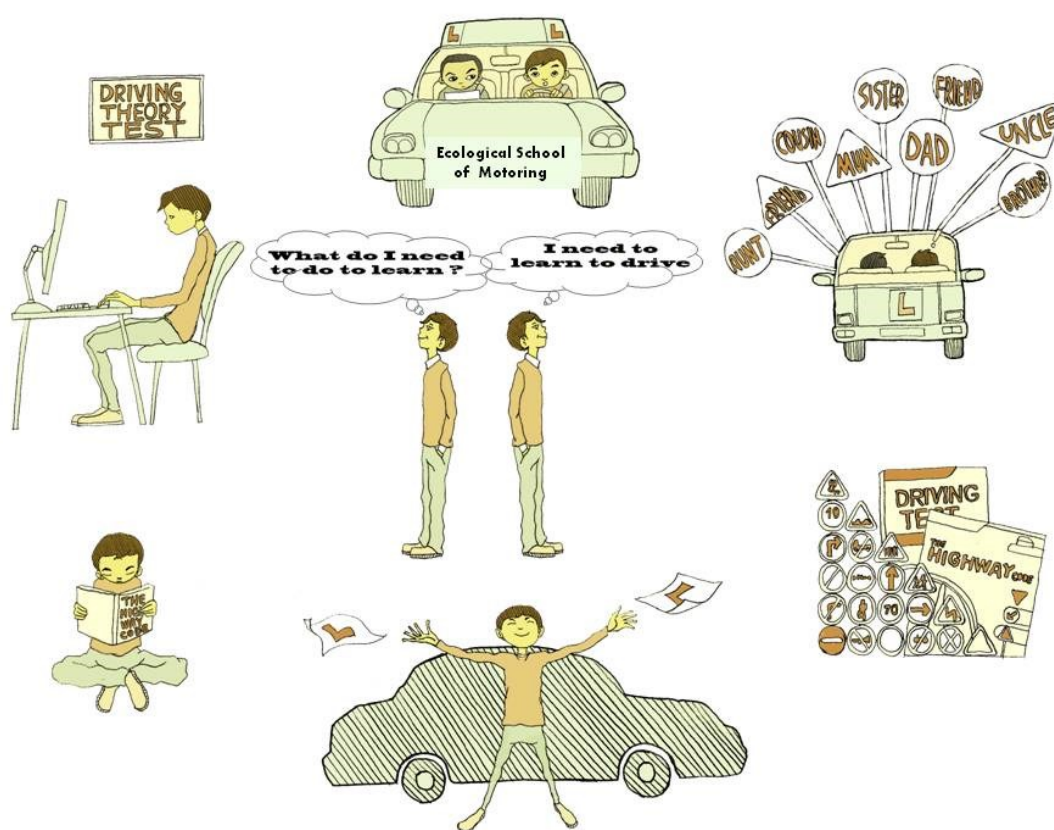
Lemke, J. (1997) Cognition, Context, and Learning: A Social Semiotic Perspective" in D. Kirshner and A. Whitson, Eds., *Situated Cognition: Social, Semiotic, and Psychological Perspectives*. (pp. 37-55). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

ECOLOGY OF LEARNING TO DRIVE

Most of us will have had the experience of learning to drive a car and perhaps will have helped others to learn. It can be an emotional and challenging experience that's why it's so memorable. But the process also illustrates the idea of a personal learning ecology. Because it involves the learner in a comprehensive way - head, body and heart - it's a good scenario to use.

The process begins with the learner declaring their intention and setting themselves the goal of learning to drive (a very useful new capability) and passing their driving test (the form of recognition that denotes the level of competency required to drive alone). The individual, often with parental guidance and support, gradually creates a new ecosystem to learn and develop themselves in line with this goal. The ecosystem they create typically might include:

- access to a car so they can practise
- access to information about driving and the rules of the road e.g. as a book/booklet, DVD or on-line resources
- driving instructors with a range of expertise and experience e.g. parents or other family members or friends
- a professional instructor to teach them both how to drive safely and to prepare them for their driving test
- physical environment - safe areas for practising - like empty car parks and quiet roads - then public highways with various traffic conditions



Illustrator: Kiboko Hachiyon

This scenario provides a good example of a learner interacting with a social, physical and virtual environment in order to learn and develop themselves. The learner develops knowledge relevant to using the roads safely and driving, skills that have to eventually become automated, and knowing that is experiential and embodied in what they do as they actually drive the car and create their own case examples of situations they encounter on different sorts of roads and in different sorts of driving conditions. Experience is accumulated in a range of contexts - road, traffic, day time/night time and weather. As they participate in this process they can tap into the experiential knowledge of the people who accompany them on journeys as both drivers and passengers and their new awareness also encourages them to be more observant as a passenger so that they begin to think like a driver, reading and anticipating situations even when they are not driving. This ecosystem from learning to drive - *to become a competent driver* - may last several months and perhaps involve 50-100 hours of time in which learning is the primary objective. The process includes mastery of a body of procedural knowledge as well as the actual embodiment of knowledge and skill in the performance of driving.

HOW DID I LEARN TO PLAY POKEMON?

Gideon Coolin



It's well known that game playing is a major stimulus amongst young people for creating a learning ecology. Not only do they want to learn the game they want to master it's intricacies and perform against other players. Trying to master something that interests us provides the intrinsic motivation to create a process, find resources and form new relationships through which we learn. This story by Gideon who has yet to reach his teens shows that creating learning ecologies begins at a very early age.

When I started playing it was around spring last year and I had pretty much no idea of how to play the game. My friends had played it for many years before me and I felt I should join in too. First I bought myself a "theme deck" which comes with a complete deck and a very rough and uninformative rulebook. I read this and still had hardly any idea of how to play the game so I went to a games shop and got taught by a very experienced player. She taught me how to play the game but not the complex aspects such as deck building and strategies.

I bought a starter deck and rulebook

I got an experienced player to teach me

I started listening to a podcast about how to build decks and used YouTube tutorials

I competed in many tournaments to improve my skills

↑ My learning ecology

When I noticed that I still was lacking in many areas of playing I started listening to a podcast that was released every week. This was very valuable. I knew the person who ran it and frequently asked them for tips which helped me play with more strategy. I also watched tutorials and deck reviews on YouTube and read articles on the internet. This has all been very successful because, earlier this year I competed in the National Championships. I would have not got in if it wasn't for these things and they have been an invaluable resource.

From salt plains to kapok trees and unidentified birds to the hovels in which the first immigrants lived, here is a preview of my Argentinian learning experience, More in the next edition of Lifewide Magazine.

Jenny Willis



THE ECOLOGY OF LEARNING AT UNIVERSITY

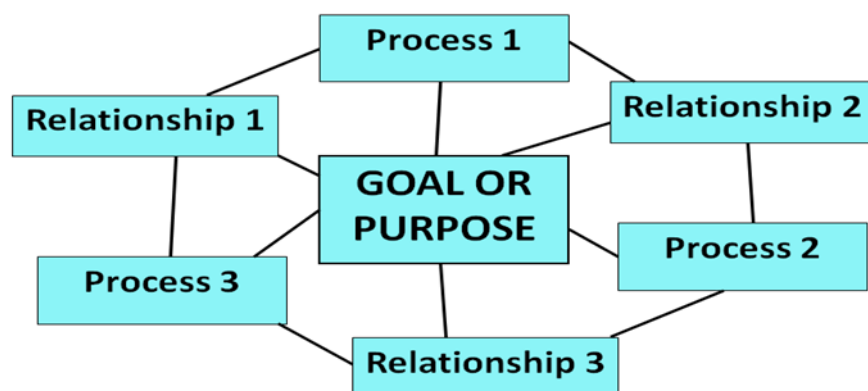
Navid Tomlinson

Navid is a member of Lifewide Education's team of volunteers. In July he completed his three year archaeology degree at the University of York graduating with a first class honours. In this reflective piece he looks back on his experience at University and tries to view it from the perspective of a learning ecology.

Having just completed a three year archaeology degree at the University of York I am in a good position to look back and try to make sense of my experience using the idea of a learning ecology. For me a learning ecology is defined by the interactions between numerous processes and relationships which are connected for a particular purpose such as are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 My concept of a learning ecology - a network of processes and relationships linked by a goal or purpose.

Using this concept of a learning ecology, which focuses on the interaction of my relationships and processes, I can look at the



various learning ecologies that I was involved in during the three years I studied for my degree in archaeology. The core aim around which my overall learning ecology formed was to develop my understanding of archaeology to the highest possible level I could achieve. I wanted to become a *good* archaeologist and that ambition caused me to get involved in many things outside my course that I thought would help me become an archaeologist.

The most obvious process and set of relationships I engaged with to learn and understand archaeology was the timetabled and structured university course. This involved the reading of set course material much of it accessed through on-line journals and participation in lectures and seminars in ways that were dictated by the lecturer. This structure that was designed and taught by my teachers allowed me to follow a very clear process of learning, helping me to fully understand what information I had to know within the course. This structured process allowed me to form what I see as the backbone for my learning of archaeology but my personal learning ecology which was much richer than the course itself, was what enabled me to be the sort of archaeologist I wanted to be and become (see Figure 2, overleaf).

The course formed the backbone to my learning about archaeology. It provided me with contacts/relationships with

people who were also interested in my subject and enabled me to develop a mind-set that encouraged me to engage with archaeology (both material resources from the course and opportunity and resources outside my course) in ways that are outlined below. My three years of studying, combined with all the other things I did that were related to being an archaeologist formed a significant learning ecology that gradually unfolded over this period of time. I have attempted to represent this ecology in Figure 2.

The one experience in my course where I feel I had to create my own learning process was my final year dissertation which

required me to create a learning project around something I found interesting and challenging. I had taken a course in my second year which involved a technique called ZooMS for analysing collagen in animal bones to identify animal genus. The academic responsible for developing the technique wanted someone to try the technique on erasure rubbings from bones. I thought this was interesting so I wrote my proposal and created a process that involved me sourcing samples, experimenting using different rubbing and collagen extraction techniques, with the extracted collagen then put through a

Mass Spectrometer followed by data processing and writing up the results. Although the process for achieving my goal was not particularly smooth it was one that I had largely created based on my past experiences of academic research gained throughout my three years at University. From an ecological perspective I can see that I involved a lot of different people to help me including my supervisor, laboratory technician, two of my peers who were involved in similar work and as well as sourcing materials from both the local museum and a PhD student within the department. I drew on a range of resources and facilities including collections of ancient animal bones, specialist laboratory, processing software, and articles. The research process was not straightforward and I was forced to modify my process as I realised that certain methods did not give me the results I was hoping for.

But perhaps the best opportunities for me to learn how to be an archaeologist lay outside my course. For example, in my second year I joined a group of students that acted as an editorial team for a monthly archaeology journal called The Posthole, which published articles by archaeology students. I acted as a coordinator and also tried to attract writers. Working within this team was an important learning curve, ensuring that the team operated together smoothly to achieve a goal while bringing together the priorities of different individuals within the team.

Figure 2 My learning ecology



Being an archaeologist involves 'digging' to expose artefacts through which we can interpret the past. Unfortunately, my course only provided a four week introductory fieldwork course so I joined a number of 'digs', six in total run by two different PhD students, a member of the academic staff, a commercial company, and an external public organisation. Overall I probably spent over three months on excavations which gave me valuable insights into how to organise and conduct a dig, how to conduct various types of surveys, how to prepare, identify and display artefacts and beyond this how to work as a member of a team. The commercial digs I undertook introduced me to the world of commercial archaeology and the different approaches and mindsets that are used in the commercial world.

One of these projects had a particular significance for me. Homeless Heritage was started in 2009 by a PhD student 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 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. In this way I was able to form friendships with people I would never have come into contact with in my student life. I began to appreciate the problems of homeless people and to see the world through their eyes. The experience enabled me to understand the value of contemporary archaeology, but I also began to see a new relevance of what I was doing, through it I became interested in the ways archaeology can be used to engage communities. The excavation was only the first stage of our project, the next stage involved telling people what we had learnt. After carefully cleaning, describing and cataloguing the artefacts we had discovered we organised a week-long exhibition, in which everyone was able to get involved and introduce the project to a wider audience.

There is one more set of experiences that contributed to my overall learning ecology. Throughout the three years of my course I was fortunate enough to attend a number of

conferences organised by the theoretical archaeology group. I had to pay for these and they were outside the academic term. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and it was a great opportunity to be exposed to people working in the field who presented the results of their research. This experience gave me the idea that we could maybe run a conference for archaeology students nationally. With two other students I spent a significant part of my final year organising and marketing the two day conference which we held in July 2013. It was a great success with over 60 participants. Throughout the months of organising the conference a whole range of problems and issues were raised from working out the live streaming of the conference through to booking rooms and organising payments. Each of these challenges required us as a team to find contacts and resources that would help us to overcome each challenge allowing us to fully develop the conference into the successful project it was.

Through the Homeless Heritage project I developed an interest in the idea of using archaeology as a means of involving people in a community project and I made this the subject of a seminar I had to give at the end of my course. In my final year I began to imagine myself working in the field of 'community archaeology' and I discovered that the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) offered a number of Community Archaeology Training Placements. I decided that I would apply for one of these and to give myself a better chance of securing this position I volunteered to help the local organiser of the Young Archaeologists Club (YAC) and was able to assist her with the running of several Saturday trips for school children which I really enjoyed. Unfortunately, because of illness, I was not able to apply for the Community Archaeology Training Placements but the experience provided me with a useful insight into archaeology as a possible career, outside the more traditional roles of archaeologists.

Looking back over my higher education experience I can now see that my course provided me with the basic knowledge I needed but that my attempts to learn archaeology and become an archaeologist involved much more than turning up for lectures and studying the reading list. Many of the experiences through which I learnt and developed myself were part of a bigger self-initiated and to some extent self-created learning ecology. I believe that the choices I made in getting involved in these wider experiences personalised my experience and the learning I gained from it. Most of these experiences were connected not so much to my course but to the bigger context of being amongst, and putting myself amongst, like-minded people interested in archaeology. The relationships I formed with some members of staff and doctoral students in particular opened new opportunities for me and enabled me to find the help I needed when I needed it. Since finishing my course, circumstances have meant that I probably will not pursue archaeology, other than for my own interest, but what I will carry with me is the belief that there are always opportunities to learn and develop if you look for them and if you are willing to get involved.

PERSONAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES, NETWORKS AND ENVIRONMENTS

Peter Rawsthorne

Peter Rawsthorne is a man with a mission. He's 'hellbent to implement the ideas in and around pedagogy, new media, social networks and communities of practice'. Amongst other things he's Canadian, an IT professional, educational technologist adult educator and keen Morris Dancer.



I was prompted by a very interesting tweet, the person asked the question "What was the difference between a Personal Learning Network (PLN) and a Personal Learning Ecology (PLE)". This question got me thinking and I have reflected upon it often in the last few days. One thing that jumped out from this reflection is to add the Personal Learning Environment to this question. This is how I define these three related ideas.

Personal Learning Network is global and includes wherever your network reach extends, all resources are available (these resources can be; filtered or unfiltered, human, digital, printed, or otherwise). It is important to consider everything in your network that can contain or process knowledge and provide skills acquisition or understanding as a part of this network. Your PLN is very broad.

Personal Learning Ecology is more geographically related... the learning objects are what is available in the "local area" or within easy reach (digitally or otherwise). Items in the learning ecology are what come available as the learner goes through their day and are the items in which the learner has built their knowledge. These objects have the ability to be viewed through multiple intelligences and consumed using multiple tools. They are the things that are on the current learning path and not too far out in the persons network. What is in the ecology is a subset of your PLN and these items

are very easily accessible through multiple modalities at the right time. Often it is the objects that are right in front of you during your learning that are most important, it's the "when the student is ready the teacher will come" idea. And with PLEcologies the teacher can come in many forms. Depth and breadth is also important, therefore when the learning opportunity presents itself it needs to be explored in its entirety.

Personal Learning Environment is the full extent of the tools used to gather knowledge and deepen understanding. This PLE is more technology based and includes all your devices, approaches and collaborative technologies.

An example:

I have taken it upon myself to develop an expert understanding of the Morris dancing and related folk music tradition with focus on learning to play the pipe and tabor. I've committed myself to this journey and for me its about getting to mastery, not the rate in which I get to mastery. I purposefully put myself in positions to learn more. I have been documenting my process in learning the pipe and tabor and regularly seek out opportunities to deepen my understanding of Morris dancing and playing these traditional musical instruments. I have felt this is slowing due to not getting the correct mentorship and feedback as I try to learn, and not knowing what is my next step toward deliberate practice is difficult. I continue to read books on the subject and attend festivals and face-to-face



workshops to learn more. Recently two things have occurred that I consider show the difference between a *learning ecology* and a *learning network*.

A while back I was searching for books in these subject areas. My emerging learning network on this subject pointed me toward a couple of books which I have begun to read. One of the books describes when learning the pipe and tabor it is good to do this by ear, and it is a good idea to practise while sitting at a piano so you can listen correctly to the notes as playing on the piano then play them on the pipe. This back and forth between piano and pipe will greatly assist in learning the tones that occur when over-blowing the pipe. Training the ear is important to learning the pipe. Even though the book(s) came via my network, it is the presence of these books close at hand that put them into my ecology.

I have also been focused on learning a jig called "I'll go and enlist for a sailor". Some of the steps were eluding me. Over this last weekend I attended the Marlboro Morris Ale and was fortunate enough to meet John Dexter, who could teach me the jig. I was shown the steps in detail by a master of the dance, much of the mystery of the steps were demonstrated, they are no longer a mystery. All my reading of the dance, watching videos had prepared me well for this master/apprentice type session. I was ready to learn and the correct situation presented itself as I was on my learning journey. The Morris Ale became a part of my learning ecology.



These are both examples of how what was right in front of me from within my PLEcology is what I needed best. How this is different from the PLN is that I focused my learning on what was directly in front of me as resources instead of searching my broader network. Most often it is important to hold the faith that the right learning is available at the right time.

This article was originally published in my blog in June 2011
<http://criticaltechnology.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/personal-learning-ecology.html>

Ecologies, ecosystems and personal learning ecologies

The terms 'ecologies' and 'eco-systems' are used to describe the dynamic interactions between plants, animals and micro-organisms and their environment, working together as a functional unit.

An ecosystem is¹

a habitat in which individuals of various species co-exist in relative stability and inter-dependence

a set of overlapping but distinct territories and niches, each with its own rules, affordances and constraints

a self-regulating [self-organising] system that consumes and recycles resources

an organisation in which change occurs over time, modifying individuals, species and inter-relations, without destroying the overall cohesion and balance.

The ecological metaphor has been applied to many contexts and is well suited to human interactions. In human ecosystems the ecological perspective views people in their physical, social and virtual environments as a unitary system living within a particular cultural and historic context consuming, recycling and producing resources, including information and knowledge, and changing (learning and developing) through the process of interaction².

¹Open Space Learning Blog available at: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/activities/projects/osl-final/technology/ecology/

²Germain, C. B. and Gitterman A (1994) Ecological Perspective available on-line at http://www.uncp.edu/home/marson/348_ecological.html

ECOLOGY OF INNOVATING

Norman Jackson

Work projects involving significant change must involve significant learning and sometimes unlearning the ways of doing things that had been done previously. Here is an example of a university teacher's learning ecology taken from a study of how people innovate in a university.

Sarah is grappling with the many dimensions of her work problem, which involves creating a new on-line course for a particular professional market and working out what she has to do as she goes along. We see her structuring her environment to find out what she needed to know in order to do what she needed to do. We see her encountering challenges from some of the central departments of her university who cannot give her the answers she needs to progress. We also see her using her ecology to develop meaningful and productive relationships that eventually enable her to achieve her goals and which support her emotionally in the process. Anyone who has been involved in trying to innovate will recognise this complex ecology.

I obviously used the research that we had done. Discussed it with the Head of School and the other school management and what the outcomes of this research were and the headings that we would put together to begin to develop the short courses. Then I had to find external people to help with writing content. I found these people by sort of utilising my own contacts. I needed to provide a framework for the people to work with. So I began to think about that...a lot of email communication took place with them sending me materials and me checking it and going back to them with feedback. It was really time consuming for me in terms of head space and having to pull myself out of my daily job, my normal responsibilities and almost doing this on top of that. ...I was doing a considerable amount of reading through materials and feeding back during my own time in the evenings and weekends. Without that, it would not have happened.

[it felt like] a constant battle because I always felt as though I was having to push other departments and other areas of the university to give me answers to questions that I had. It always felt as though the answers didn't exist at that point in time...once I had actually got past that initial stage of how do I put these first drafts of the units together, things began to roll and I began to discover who I could at least go and say 'Look I have this question, who can I ask? Who is going to answer it for me? I need answers... 'need to know.'

Once we got into the middle stages of the project because I was having to be on one hand a subject person.... I was having to be a learning and teaching person and an online education person, working with Michael and actually trying to understand the requirements of the [university's innovation] project itself and making sure that I was still coming always back to what we originally set out to do. I spent more and more time with the people from [university's educational technology centre] and asked for their feedback on what I was developing and what the externals were developing with me. They got more and more involved because they really believed in what I was doing once the momentum got going....without them helping me so much, I wouldn't have achieved the outcomes.

This story illuminates how an innovator adapts and develops her learning ecology in order to learn how to accomplish the innovation she was seeking to develop. It included amongst others people with knowledge and expertise in the design of on-line educational courses and learning environments, experts in her professional network who would provide the content for professional on-line courses for the fashion industry, people in central roles such as quality assurance, registry and marketing and her head of department. The narrative reveals something of the dynamic, the messiness and emotion of learning in demanding stressful work environments. But it also reveals the wonderful effects and emotional support of creative collaboration by people who believe in and trust each other.

What is a Personal Learning Ecology?

the process(es) and contexts that provide me with opportunities and resources for learning, development and achievement in respect of my particular learning project. Each context comprises a unique configuration of activities, material resources, relationships and the interactions and mediated learning that emerge from them.

Jackson 2013

Jackson, N. J. (2013) The Concept of Learning Ecologies in N. J. Jackson and G.B. Cooper (eds) Lifewide Learning, Education and Personal Development e-book www.lifewideeducation.co.uk

STUDENT VOICE: KAYAKING IN AFRICA

John Tomlinson



John Tomlinson has just completed a two year Masters course in Social Work at the University of Durham. He has been an active kayaker since an early age and has competed at the highest level. Unfortunately his sporting passion has had to take a back seat in the last two years while he has been studying but after winning sponsorship from the British Universities Kayaking Association he is embarking on a seven week expedition to the uncharted parts of the Omo river in Southern Ethiopia. Here he tells the story of the way in which their expedition has come together: a story that illustrates well the ecology of informal collaborative learning.

Where did your passion for kayaking begin?

I started canoeing with my twin brother at an early age with mum and dad on the waterways of Norfolk. I saw some kayakers on the river and they were going much faster than us. I decided that I wanted to do that. So around the age of seven mum and dad put me in a summer school, I did a week of kayaking and after that it was something I did every summer. At the end of primary school I saved up my pocket money and bought myself my first kayak, a nice yellow kayak, which I was in love with. When I was 14 I saw some people doing some white water¹ kayaking, doing freestyle where you do lots of tricks and I wanted a go. One of the guys showed us some stuff and he told me and my brother that if we wanted to do it we should get some coaching. So my brother and I did and we got quite good at it and by the time we were 16 we made the Great British Freestyle team and we did that until we were 18 and we were quite lucky because mum and dad were willing to invest money and their time in it, so we got quite a lot of coaching and then in the summer we would go on holiday camps to Austria, Germany, France and then at aged 18 I went out to Zambia. When I started university I moved onto river running, paddling rivers and waterfalls. So I've had a lot of experience but until now I've never really been on an expedition.

Why is it important to you to paddle on unknown waters as it were?

It is exciting to paddle a river that no one else has paddled before because you are not sure what is around the corner. You might know the gradient that the river falls and know the distance so you can work out how much it is going to drop but you don't know what's going to be in the river just around the corner. So there's an air of excitement and anticipation and you come alive. Often it's not possible to do a reconnaissance

before you paddle because the river is just too inaccessible but thanks to Google Earth you can look at it and see roughly what happens. But quite often you don't know what you're dropping into until you're there. Sometimes you might find something that is really dangerous and sometimes you might find something that is really clean and exciting.



Who is financing the expedition and how were you chosen?

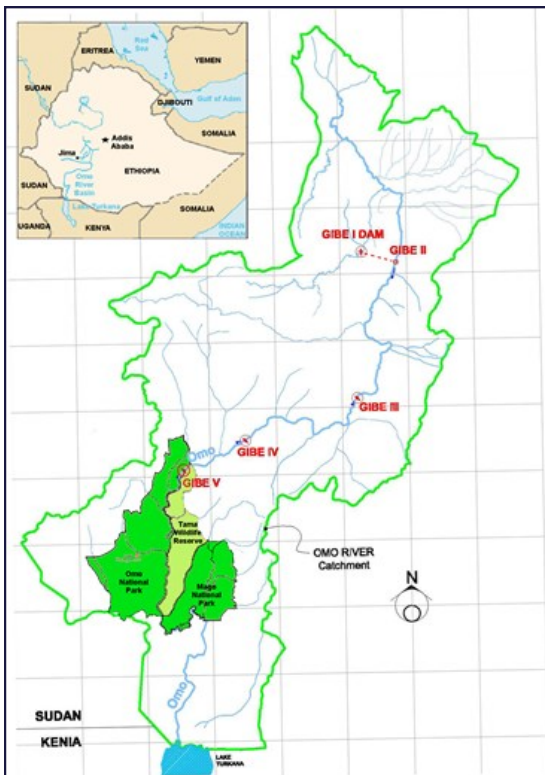
Every two years the British University Kayaking Expedition is organised and typically between five and seven of the best university kayakers are selected to run an expedition somewhere in the world. I wasn't planning to enter the competition but then all my kit had been broken, by signing up I could get cheaper kit because people are willing to sponsor your expedition, so initially it was one of the motivating factors because I thought if I can't afford to buy the kit then I can't afford to kayak.

Selection involved a written application and I think about 50 people applied and this was narrowed down to 20 people who attended the selection event where we demonstrated our skills. People got selected for a variety of reasons, not

necessarily just their kayaking ability but whether they could write trust fund applications and whether you could get on with other people. Five of us were selected. Jamie and I are from Durham University and then there's Callum and Debs from Edinburgh and then you've got Peter from Oxford.

Where are you going and what has planning involved?

We originally intended to go to Pakistan, the northern area around Gilgit. A group had gone the year before that we're friends with and had only scratched the surface. It's the most glaciated region outside of the polar regions and it has eight of the world's highest peaks, so a lot of gradient, a lot of water because we would be going in monsoon season as well which means there is a lot of white water which would have meant it is a kayaking paradise and these guys who went the year before us reported that it was and they had only scratched the surface and they had given us all this information that there was lots of stuff that hadn't been kayaked before where we could go and they gave us all these contacts as well. So, it was an expedition on a plate.



The only difficulty was that it was in Pakistan and there's a lot of Taliban movement there and unfortunately three weeks before we were due to go ten foreign trekkers were murdered by the Taliban and they reported that they would continue to kill trekkers as long as the ground strikes happened. We decided it wouldn't be safe or sensible for us to go there

So with three weeks to go we had to decide on another

location for our expedition. We did in fact have a plan B. One of the team members had proposed southern Ethiopia at the selection weekend and it was between Ethiopia and Pakistan that we had voted originally. He had already done some ground work for an expedition to Ethiopia so we decided to go for that.

What have been the challenges to realising this expedition?

Peter knew a lot about the rivers in Ethiopia because that was the kind of research he had done. What we didn't have was contacts in the area we were going to but Peter had a lot of contacts in the rafting industry in Kenya who put him in touch with people in Ethiopia. One of the most difficult things has been trying to find a driver, a vehicle and a guide for when we are out there. We have tried to find contacts and people who can help us in a variety of ways. Some of it has been through internet searches and finding people who have kayaked in Ethiopia before and then trying to use their contacts. So through the rafting industry, because that's quite a close knit community, we asked them if there is anyone who does rafting in Ethiopia who could organise a tour for us.

At a personal level my little sister is adopted from Ethiopia and when my mum was out there for just over a month she made connections in Addis, so I contacted these people and we're going to stay with them at their guest house initially and they said they would help put us in contact with a driver.

Finding a vehicle was a difficult one because it was something like \$150 a day to rent a vehicle. So Peter has bought a vehicle in Nairobi and is driving it across Kenya and into Ethiopia.

Our biggest challenge has been the speed with which we have had to do this and get visas and paper work sorted but we have pooled our resources as a team. Once we get there we will encounter another set of challenges to do with the logistics of getting to our destination on the Omo river and then another set of challenges day to day deciding on the specific locations we will paddle. We cannot plan these in advance because they need local knowledge and actually seeing things as they are on the ground.

We also know we will need help. We've got maps for the rivers but we will need a guide who knows the area and is a bit of a fixer. None of us speak Amharic so we need someone who can fix things for us if we get stuck and if we're in trouble we need somebody who can talk to local people and if we're desperate we need to sort out food.



How will other people benefit from what you are doing?

“we also know we will need help”

One of the aims of the expedition is to document what we find through photos, videos and articles so that others might benefit from what we discover. One of our team, Debs, has set up a website and we will put all of our materials on it and there are links to British University Expeditions websites. We will make all the information available on our website so that if people then want to go and explore Ethiopia further then there's a database out there of rivers paddled and what grade they were and what to expect, also information about the logistics and how to organise a trip.



We will also do a lecture tour of the different kayaking events or at the different places where they've given us money and just tell them about our expedition and about what we've found and what we did and the difficult bits, the scary bits, the fun bits.

What do you think is going to be your biggest challenge?

Avoiding getting eaten by crocs! There are lots of crocodiles and hippos in the rivers of Ethiopia. In Zambia, on the Zambezi they shoot all the crocs so the tourists don't get eaten but I don't think they do that in Ethiopia. Google tells me that apparently if you bang your boat with your paddle it makes the hippos come to the surface and then you avoid them but I can always get unlucky and it's one thing reading about it on the internet but another thing putting it into practice.

Editor: We hope that John will survive the crocs and hippos and continue his story of the ecology of his learning for his African adventure. Good luck, John!

¹ White water is formed in a rapid, when a river's gradient increases enough to disturb its laminar flow and create turbulence, i.e. form a bubbly, or aerated and unstable current; the frothy water appears white. The term is also used loosely to refer to less turbulent but still agitated flows.

The term "whitewater" also has a broader meaning, applying to any river or creek itself that has a significant number of rapids. The term is also used as an adjective describing boating on such rivers, such as *whitewater canoeing* or *whitewater kayaking*.

Source: Wikipedia

AFRICAN ADVENTURE (Part II)

Callum Strong (second from right)

In this article, Callum Strong continues the story of this adventurous group of kayakers

In real life learning ecologies are all about improvising and adapting to the environment and changing circumstances. John and his team of intrepid explorers could only do so much to prepare themselves for their exploration work. By its very nature venturing into the unknown requires you to go where no one has been before and work things out along the way. This blog entry by Callum provides an insight into the nature of this process of exploration in which the learning ecology was about working things out in real time and responding to what happened. The photographic record and commentary provide future kayakers in this region with useful knowledge that they can build upon.

'So the team were in high spirits after completing the first descent of a river called the Kola, first paddling a class three section followed by a lovely 10km bridge to bridge section of continuous class 3/4 and after some permit banter decided to make a more ambitious plan...



Our Plan:

Wake up to find a lovely sunny day.

Drive to the Gidabo, a very promising river dropping an average of 20m/km for 25km through a big gorge, to find a perfect medium water level.

Paddle a 20km first descent gorge section of awesome class 4/5 whitewater.

Float leisurely down about 5km of flatwater meandering through vegetation to meet our driver and guide at the take-out in time for tea.

It was a lovely simple plan But what actually happened?

We were woken by thunderous tropical rain throughout the night, and crawled out of bed in the morning to find a day on the damper side of sunny.

We drove to the river to find a promisingly not flood stage water level. Deciding it was good to go we jumped on and paddled 15km of awesome class 4/5 white water. Ear to ear grins were the order of the day as we proceeded smoothly and swiftly down what we all decided was some of the best paddling of its style we had ever done. The gorge was spectacular with untamed jungle and impressive cliffs towering above us. To our relief the crowds of people that had set the scene on the Kola, invariably waving smiling and shouting; running away screaming and crossing themselves or (least desirably) throwing sizable rocks from high above, disappeared. With beautiful black and white Colobus monkeys leaping overhead and only one straightforward portage round a scary 25ft waterfall our plan was developing well, the rapids were easing and we felt we must be getting close to the flat water at the end of the river.

Now at this point it would be proper to add a little bit of information divined upon us by Google maps. The Google map terrain showed an ominous close packing of contour lines just



before the flat section, whereas our Russian topographic maps from the 70's showed no indication of this. We had decided the Russians were right.

So, somewhat peskily, instead of petering out to flat water as was indicated by the Russians the river started picking up some significant gradient again. We found ourselves picking our way through some great class 4/4+ rapids characterised by huge boulders (and enough siphons to force concentration). Soon we found ourselves on the lip of a giant class 5+ boulder-jumble rapid and late in the day this was a clear portage for the team.



On a scale of 1 to vertical the gorge walls were quite up there and exactly how to portage was a lot less clear. John and Jamie opted to gain a scary eddy above the lip of this beast and check whether access was possible along the left bank. Luckily it was and after one by one safely making the eddy some classic expedition jungle portaging ensued. A peek over the next horizon reluctantly concluded that the score was Google 1:0 Russia.

A few hours, lots of portaging, 3 swims (under trees and rocks), one paddle and some scary kayaking later we were running out of day in which to paddle. The Plan was starting to go awry.

We decided with limited daylight left and no sign of the borderline unrunnable whitewater relenting we had to call it a day and spend a night in the gorge. We found a decent foot-path leading out of the gorge and pitched camp halfway up, with a troop of baboons surveying us from the opposite cliff face. Dinner was 375g of noodles and a tin of tuna shared between 5 and breakfast was a multipack snickers bar chopped into 5 pieces. Between these much enjoyed luxuries a cold and bitey night was endured, albeit in a stunning location.

All craving a good feed we got kitted up early, only to find the

river had risen at least a foot overnight and gone from a muddy brown to bright red. The gradient looked stuck on turbo steep for the foreseeable future and we cracked on with portaging another kilometre through jungle. Soon enough we came to a vertical gorge wall and were faced with the decision to hike a long way up and over or run a tricky rapid down and round a corner in the hope the river flattened. Sick of portaging we rounded the corner to find glorious flat water. John in high spirits and oblivious of the high chance of encountering crocs and hippos forged ahead while the rest crowded together tapping our kayaks.

At this point it would be proper to add a little more information divined upon us by Google maps. The satellite imagery showed the river disappearing slightly worryingly into a few km's of swamp before the takeout but we had decided that there should be paddable channels of water through the swamp.

As the river split into increasingly narrower channels we found ourselves paddling swift flowing water through a very very dense forest. After 4 out

of 5 of us had had some pretty scary capsizes and tree pinnings we decided things were getting ridiculous and we had to take our chances on foot. In the next half an hour we covered 10 horizontal metres. It was rubbish. Things continued in this fashion for the rest of the day as we cut our way through hundreds of metres of incredibly dense vegetation, frustratingly close to the takeout. We were all very tired and hungry and our legs and arms were in tatters as most of the plants here are armed better than the US military. At 5pm we broke free of the swamp and hauled kayaks up and out of the steep sided valley carved by the river. The cold Ethiopian equivalent of Fanta Orange brought to us by our (very worried) guide was possibly the best thing ever apart from maybe a helpful Ethiopian man with a rifle who carried our kayaks the last few hundred metres to the our trusty Landrover for 100 Birr...

As a kayaker I am usually against dam projects, however we all welcome with open arms the proposed dam at the bottom of the Gidabo, replacing the last 5km of the river with a lake would, in our eyes, be no bad thing.'

Photos from the Adventure are here: https://www.facebook.com/ca11umstrong/media_set?set=a.601839363172703.1073741828.100000399347253&type=1

LEARNING ECOLOGY IN THE NATURAL WORLD

Jenny Willis

Understandably, the articles in this issue focus on learning ecologies related to our human experience. However, I was moved by a striking example of learning in the natural world, which gives us a warning of the ambivalent nature of learning's consequences.

I have a special affinity with Sri Lanka, and indeed wear a Ganesh¹ around my neck. The BBC programme Sri Lanka: Elephant Island², therefore had a dual appeal. It was made by award winning wildlife cameraman, Martyn Colbeck, who has studied elephants in Africa. The very existence of the Sri Lanka strain results from a biological adaptation to its environment – we might even speculate that that includes the impact of the labour man has forced upon it, reforming, over centuries, the structure of its head and back. Martyn was there to compare the behaviour of the Sri Lankan elephant.

We begin in a sanctuary for orphaned elephants, where the young animals are fed and nurtured before being released back into the wild. They play happily, instinctively spraying each other with water: I ask myself, will instinct take over when they find themselves in control of their own lives? Will they know how to fend for themselves without the benefit of adult role models during their formative years?



Out now in the wild, Martyn comes across a group of elephants gathering to see a new-born calf. Two females stand over the prostrate calf as it struggles to come to its feet. The females are becoming more aggressive and begin to fight for possession of the calf. Amazingly, the mother is driven off by the aggressor, who gathers the baby under her body. But its tiny trunk searches in vain for a place to suckle. Martyn expresses our anxiety: how can such a tiny, vulnerable creature survive without a mother's milk? His fears mount, as the elephants all disappear and he eventually assumes the calf has died.

Then, after a long absence, the calf appears once more, this time with its natural mother. It is well and returned to its proper place. So how do we explain these strange events?



The answer to the apparent aggression emerges when Martyn is told that the mother's female rival had been raised in the sanctuary. The most important thing the young learn there is to protect and care for one another. She had never before witnessed a birth, so moved in to protect the tiny calf, fighting off what she wrongly perceived to be a threat to it. We are reminded that Man's well-intended intervention in caring for the orphaned elephants may have adverse repercussions for the future of these individual creatures.

But then, Sri Lanka has a sad history of upsetting its ecology. When I visit my Tamil relatives, victims and descendants of the diaspora which has scattered them across the globe, I grieve for the beautiful island to which they will never return. They maintain their language and culture alongside that of their new nations, but will the ecology of Sri Lanka ever recover from the loss of these talented people?

¹ Ganesha is widely revered as the Remover of Obstacles^[7] and more generally as the Lord of Beginnings and the Lord of Obstacles,^[8] patron of arts and sciences, and the deva of intellect and wisdom.^[9] He is honoured at the beginning of rituals and ceremonies and invoked as the Patron of Letters during writing sessions. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganesha>

² Clips and more information about the programme can be found at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0388q39/>
Natural World 2013/2014 Sri Lanka Elephant Island/



THE ECOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY—a note

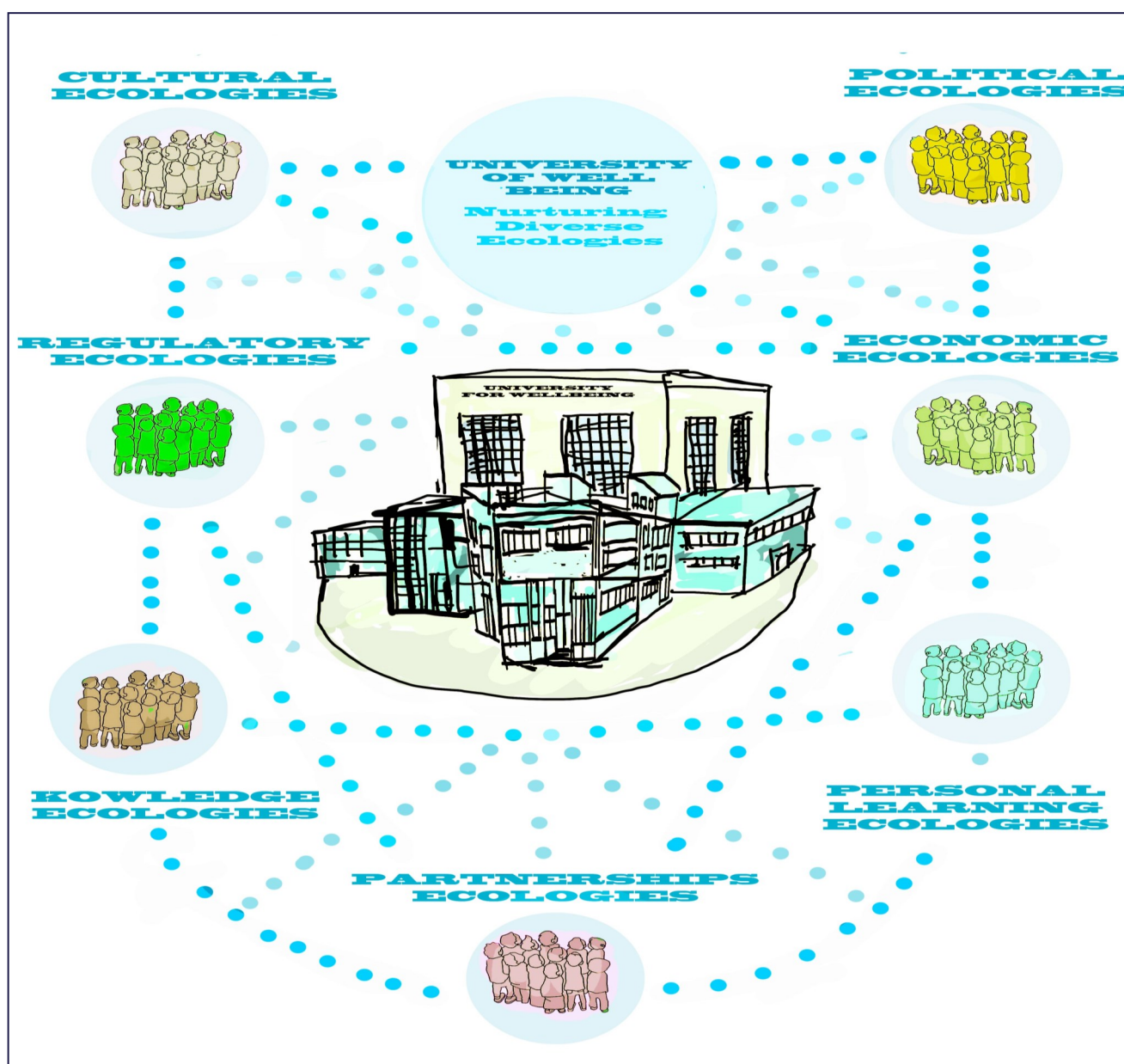
Ronald Barnett

Given the ecological theme of this issue we might inquire as to the role of the university in all this? Universities are, and always have been, important in the learning and knowledge ecologies of people and society but it is worth reflecting on the idea of an ecological university.

The modern university is necessarily a networked university. Such networks can be considered to constitute a constellation of ecologies. Knowledge ecologies, economic ecologies, political ecologies, institutional ecologies and cultural ecologies: the university is embedded in all these and other

are interlaced in fragile inter- relationships.

In his chapter on 'Learning Ecologies and their significance for Lifewide Learning and Education', and drawing on Bronfenbrenner, Norman Jackson observes that in relation to education, ecologies can be found at different levels. These include: the microsystems (of individuals), a mesosystem (containing organised learning activities), an exosystem (in which an institution has responsibility for learning programmes), the macrosystem (the higher education system itself) and the chronosystem (inter-related systems evolving through time).



ecologies which must be nourished and nurtured if they are to flourish. By drawing on the idea of ecologies here, I am wanting to draw attention to the dynamic systems in which the university is embedded, the individual entities of which

In this schema, a university is manifestly an exosystem, which has responsibility for mesosystems on which individuals can draw in working through their own ecological microsystems. But this reflection in turn poses the question as to the

conditions that a university needs to satisfy in order for it to be judged an *ecological* system in its own right. Just what does the ecological university comprise?

I would suggest that the ecological university has the following features (Barnett 2013:136-7):

The ecological university understands its situation, and its unfolding, within multiple ecologies, including knowledge ecologies. It has a concern for the sustainability and the self-generational capacities of these ecologies. It is sensitive to the idea of 'deep ecology' (Moog 2009) in that it understands itself to be embedded in these ecologies and not separate from them; although it considers, too that it has pools of freedom to exercise in relation to these ecologies.

The ecological university has an interest not merely in sustainability, but in wellbeing. Whereas sustainability looks to maintain a given state of equilibrium, wellbeing looks to a continuous flourishing of the many ecologies that intersect with it. Certainly, what is to count as flourishing is itself open to debate but the ecological university understands too that it itself constitutes a space in which debate as to what is to flourish should be conducted.

The ecological university therefore has a care or concern for the world. Unlike the research university (which is a university-in-itself) and unlike the entrepreneurial university (which is a university-for-itself) the ecological university is a university-for-the-*other*. It has a profound sense of the whole world (both within itself and beyond itself), having large claims on it, and it is intent on contributing to the world in ethically justifiable ways.

The ecological university is engaged with the world. It reaches out into the world, but is sensitive to the ecological balances at work and to its own responsibilities in the world.

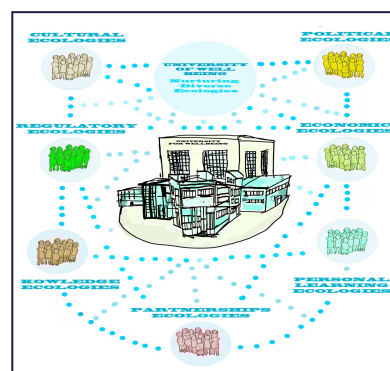
The ecological university puts its resources into play such that they serve the world. The ecological university does not *directly* serve the world; it does not simply serve the interests of the world as defined by the world but additionally it contributes to the definition of the interests of the world. Part of its serving the world is be active in shaping the interests of the world. As stated, it has a concern for the sustainability of the world (which include its own sustainability) but as a necessary condition of its living out its concern with wellbeing and flourishing.

How does all this bear on lifewide education? It does so in two ways, indirectly and directly. *Indirectly*, the ecological

university – as just sketched out – lives out fully the principles and values of the ecological. It not merely looks to sustain the world in all its inter-related complexity but also seeks to develop and improve the world. *Directly*, it opens spaces for lifewide learning. Picking up further ideas in Jackson's chapter, the ecological university provides a space in which task-oriented learning can become learning-conscious learning. In its learning spaces, processes of reflection can be systematically orchestrated. Through such processes, an individual's lifewide learning can be brought into view and critically appraised, with resulting gains in an individual's lifeworld trajectory.

The ecological university, accordingly, can – to draw on Jackson's schema – provide educational **processes** by which an individual can develop new personal understandings and capability, and it does so both through the provision of educational **resources** and spaces for new **relationships** to form (that are conducive to the reflective processes of the lifewide learner). In turn, it offers a **context** that may even become a quasi-home to this reflective (lifewide) learner.

It cannot be said that the ecological university is necessary for lifewide learning to take place but it can most assuredly be said that the ecological university can do much to enhance lifewide learning. In coming to care about lifewide learning, the ecological university can help to reduce the fragility of the personal ecologies present here (those attaching to individuals' learning projects through life) and so aid their sustainability.



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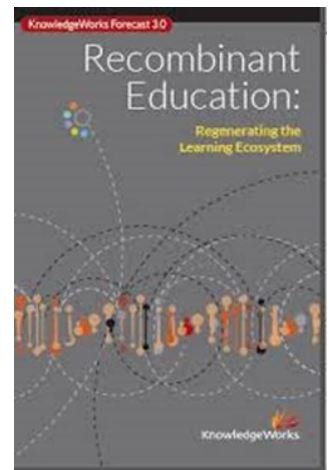
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REGENERATING THE LEARNING ECOSYSTEM

This article is an extract from a forecast on the future of learning called 'Recombinant Education: Regenerating the Learning Ecosystem' published by KnowledgeWorks, a USA organisation providing innovative tools, training and assistance to school leaders, teachers and community stakeholders <http://knowledgeworks.org/>. To read the full forecast, visit

http://knowledgeworks.org/sites/default/files/Forecast3_0_0.pdf

We are very grateful to KnowledgeWorks for allowing us to publish this article.



Context

An explosion of innovation has been transforming how we think about learning and how we organise talent and resources for learning experiences. The tightly bound relationships and resource flows that used to deliver instruction, develop curriculum, perform assessment, grant credentials, and provide professional development are dissolving. Teaching and learning have become uncoupled from traditional educational institutions and are now available through and enhanced by a vibrant learning ecosystem.

The next decade promises to bring extensive *recombination* to education. As new education innovations, organisations, resources and relationships proliferate, we have the opportunity to put the pieces — some long-established and some new — together in new sequences to create a diverse and evolving learning ecosystem.

At its best, recombinant education will discover diverse organisational forms and learning formats that find many ways to integrate talent, community assets, and global resources in support of student-centered learning. New ways of reassembling what seem like disparate pieces — and of incorporating new kinds of inputs — have the potential to usher in a world of learning that provides rich personalisation for every learner throughout a lifetime.

Of course, less promising alternatives are also possible. If we do not effectively engage in ongoing education recombination, we risk letting the disruptions of the coming decade perpetuate inequities for learners, undermine the learning ecosystem's capacity to adapt, and narrow the impact of education innovations by keeping them largely uncoordinated, opportunistic, and fragmented.

Forecast 3.0

The Knowledge Works forecast highlights five disruptions that will reshape learning over the next decade. Responding to them with creativity rather than fear will be critical to preparing all learners for an uncertain future.

DEMOCRATISED STARTUP - Transformational investment strategies and open access to startup knowledge, expertise, and networks, will seed an explosion of disruptive social innovations.

HIGH-FIDELITY LIVING - As big data floods human sense

making capacities, cognitive assistants and contextual feedback systems will help people target precisely their interactions with the world.

DE-INSTITUTIONALISED PRODUCTION - Activity of all sorts will be increasingly independent of institutions as contributions become more ad-hoc, dynamic, and networked.

CUSTOMISABLE VALUE WEBS - Innovative, open business models will leverage complex networks of assets and relationships to create ultra-customer-centric experiences across industries.

SHAREABLE CITIES - Next generation cities will drive social innovation, with urban infrastructure shaped by patterns of human connection and contribution.

Implications

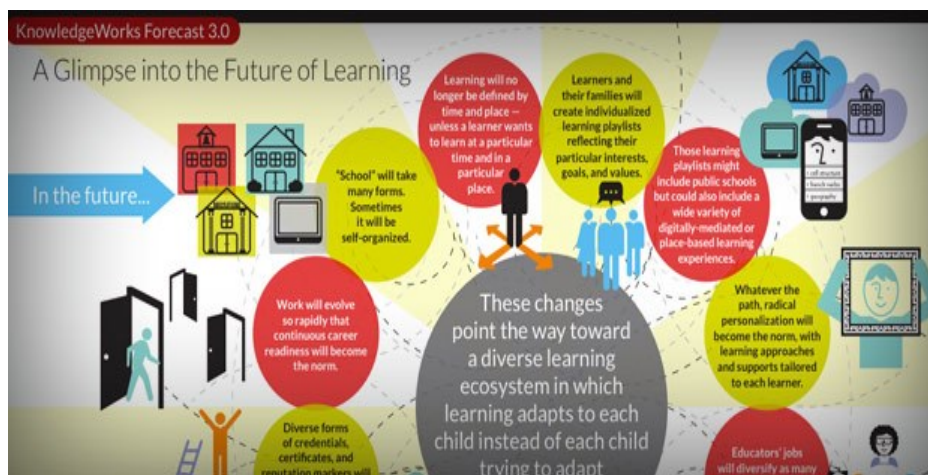
For learners: As we regenerate the learning ecosystem, customisable value webs will allow self-directed learners to navigate diverse resources and opportunities and co-develop highly personalised learning pathways with the support of learning agents. Learners and learning agents will be mutually responsible for seeking out the support of learning experts and maintaining robust networks. Specifically, learners will need to:

- ◆ Use personal performance feedback from multiple digital data streams and dashboards to inform their own learning and development
- ◆ Draw upon their intrinsic motivation to take responsibility for evaluating available learning opportunities and for co-designing their unique learning pathways with learning agents
- ◆ Seek out and work with mentors, peer learning groups, and digital and human learning agents to support and further their learning experiences
- ◆ Use those same resources to navigate the array of choices offered by the learning ecosystem
- ◆ Engage with a wide variety of learning tools, resources, and learning formats to acquire and apply core knowledge and essential skills such as collaboration, initiative, global awareness, creativity, critical thinking, and perseverance
- ◆ Demonstrate mastery of core knowledge and essential skills through performance-based assessment.
- ◆ **For learning agents:** As we regenerate the learning ecosystem, the number and type of learning agents will

expand dramatically. Existing educators will redefine their professional roles to match their strengths. In addition, developers, entrepreneurs, and technologists will create new roles and opportunities for themselves. Successful learning agents will:

- ◆ Use and create multi-layered visual dashboards to discern meaning from learning analytics that guide instruction and communicate progress
- ◆ Integrate technology to customise learning on a continuous basis and to make performance predictions that allow for early interventions designed to prevent failures and drop-outs
- ◆ Collaborate with other learning agents and use community and global resources to facilitate engaged learning that ignites students' intrinsic motivation and builds students' core knowledge and essential skills
- ◆ Integrate performance-based assessments and guide learners in building digital portfolios that represent their unique potential to the world
- ◆ Support development of public-private partnerships and harness social innovations to expand the array of resources, organisational formats for school, and opportunities available to all students
- ◆ Lead the process of articulating what learners will need to know and be able to do in a dynamic world where knowledge is a commodity
- ◆ Create and cultivate social structures by using mechanisms such as community design, game mechanics, diverse pay and reward structures, and intrinsic motivation to encourage collaboration
- ◆ Allocate resources and attention to research and development efforts and communicate about successful edu-preneurial activities, advocating for public policy and partnering with others to encourage innovations to scale
- ◆ Establish transparent, meaningful, and accessible reporting of formative and summative performance data at all levels of the learning ecosystem
- ◆ Ensure that everyone in the learning ecosystem has

The complete infographic can be accessed at <http://knowledgeworks.org/sites/>



access to, and the capacity to use, the data needed to make effective decisions about learners

- ◆ Integrate knowledge from the expanded and diverse range of professionals entering the learning ecosystem and reconsider the most effective definitions of roles for a variety of learning agents
- ◆ Collaborate with stakeholders across the learning ecosystem to identify ways of evaluating the quality of diverse learning agents and learning providers

- ◆ Cultivate their own entrepreneurial skills in using public and private resources to develop customised learning pathways for all students
- ◆ Re-envision their own roles by exploring new ways of blending digital learning tools with other services and resources to leverage their professional strengths and passions in working directly or indirectly with learners
- ◆ Establish professional peer communities to develop their knowledge about deepening and accelerating student learning and closing achievement gaps
- ◆ Use digital portfolios to manage and represent their own continuous learning.
- ◆ Create rigorous and meaningful learning experiences that support learning agents in continuously improving their effectiveness
- ◆ Track and address any new inequities that emerge within the learning ecosystem.

For learning ecosystem development: The learning ecosystem will regenerate unevenly over the next decade. In regions of rapid recombination, engaged edu-citizens, a vibrant edu-preneurial culture, and an urban emphasis on openness and sharing will remove barriers and encourage smart risk-taking. To achieve more consistent regeneration of the learning ecosystem where the needs of all learners are met, stakeholders will need to:

- ◆ Develop interoperability across programs, services, data-

"The future is not a fixed point. It ours to create. The forecast previews five disruptions that will reshape learning over the next decade. Responding to them with creativity rather than fear will be critical to preparing all learners for an uncertain future."

SHOE BOX ECOLOGY WORKSHOP

Christine Fountain and Susan Patrick
Faculty of Business, Enterprise and Sport
Southampton Solent University

The big challenge for any workshop facilitators is how to get people involved in thinking and talking about the subject of the workshop. In trying to raise awareness of lifewide learning amongst colleagues participating in the Faculty's Research and Enterprise Conference we had the idea of a 'shoe box ecology'.

Norman Jackson opened the session with an introduction to some of the concepts that underlie lifewide learning and how students' lifewide learning and personal development might be encouraged, supported, recognised and valued, based on Lifewide Education's Lifewide Development Award.

Participants were divided into groups of an eclectic assortment of items. Each common or shared activity that to, such as caring for a relative, taking social event, arranging a holiday, member of the group was invited to the identified activity, and to select an associate with it, to be placed in the

Each group was then invited to share selected an item for the shoebox. What stories, learning and connections way of revealing and celebrating meaning to the most mundane of that sparked memories and emotions.

meaning and revealing their own ecology of learning. The links to, and identification of, critical points of learning enabled the delegates to pinpoint and share learning experiences and common themes such as places and spaces, travelling and how knowledge was passed through families emerged.



and provided with a shoebox and an group was invited to identify a members of the group could all relate part in a sporting activity, organising a managing a household budget. Each reflect on the learning gained from object or image that they would group learning shoe box.

their stories about why they had a joy it was to hear the real life attributed to these items and what a individuals' creativity attributing objects as participants found items Each delegate was creating their own

'Personalisation, collaboration and informal learning will be at the core of learning in the future. The central learning paradigm is characterised by lifelong and lifewide learning and shaped by the ubiquity of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).'' So says a European Commission Foresight Report¹ envisioning learning in 2030 so universities need to pay more attention to the lifewide dimension of students' learning and development. Southampton Solent University Business School agrees that this is important and we will offer the Lifewide Development Award in a selection of under and post-graduate courses from the next academic year.

1 Redecker, C., Leis, M., Leendertse, M., Punie, Y., Gijsbers, G., Kirschner, P., Stoyanov, S. and Hoogveld, B. (2011) *The Future of Learning: Preparing for Change*. European Commission Joint Research Centre Institute for Prospective Technological Studies EUR 24960 EN Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union <http://ipts.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publications/pub.cfm?id=4719>



RECOGNISING LIFEWIDE LEARNING, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Workshop Report, Rob Ward



Recognising lifewide learning was the focus of a workshop convened by the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) and involving representatives from QAA, Mozilla and Lifewide Education. All four organisations have interests in lifewide learning and personal development.

The interactive event, held at the University of Aston on 10th June 2013, set out to address the challenge of recognising, verifying and accrediting learning and achievements derived from engagement with co-and extra-curricular activities together with the nature of learning ecologies that such awards were implicitly recognising.

The event was somewhat eclectic in nature, embracing organisational perspectives (the work of the QAA in developing a Toolkit for 'Recognising achievement beyond the curriculum'), permissive recognition frameworks (the Open Badges initiative) and personal, phenomenologically-oriented perspectives (Personal Learning Ecologies) drawing on the work of the Lifewide Education Community.

Three stimulus contributions at the start created an interesting and engaging set of contexts for the workshop discussions which formed the centre piece of the day. Within the latter in particular were to be found concerns about personal/institutional boundaries ('institutional space', 'shared space' and 'private space'). The potential to democratise accreditation ('*anyone can award a badge*') was recognised, yet for some accreditation needed to come from a trusted source which, not surprisingly given the audience, many felt should involve an institution (accreditation being a continuing key function of Higher Education institutions).

Aside from the value of networking that is often reported as being a key benefit of participation in such events, it was interesting to recognise that the different perspectives presented were all considered valuable. Indeed holding and valuing multiple perspectives is likely to be important for the future of these forms of learning.

The work of the QAA and of Mozilla on Open Badges was seen as important from an institutional perspective, in respect of what might 'count' in terms of recognition, perhaps in building on from the current means of managing and accrediting extra-curricular awards and related learning activities. Enhancing student/graduate employability was, understandably, in the minds of many of the participants.

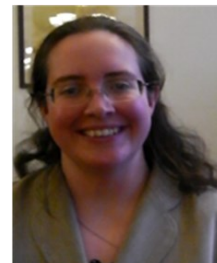
The focus on Personal Learning Ecologies provided a rather different and complementary emphasis as it highlighted the way individuals create their own processes for learning drawing on the contexts, relationships and resources they have access to. An ecological perspective focuses attention on what is significant and meaningful in learning derived from personal experience. The approach developed within the workshop element, was seen as having applicability for developmental work with students, testimony to the ultimate importance, to which all in the final analysis seemed to subscribe. The language of learning here was about self-created processes for learning and personal development, self-awareness and recognition for what individuals believed to be significant and meaningful learning, as opposed to 'accreditation' or 'meeting the learning objectives and criteria set by others'. So, as is so often the case in CRA events, we turned out not to be too far away from the essence of PDP practice despite the non-appearance of such terms in the event title!

Rob Ward is Director The Centre for Recording Achievement

UK-WIDE SURVEY OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR AWARDS

Harriet Barnes

Quality Assurance Agency



The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA, www.qaa.ac.uk) is currently working with practitioners in the UK higher education sector to develop some guidance on extra-curricular awards (also known as co-curricular, or skills, or graduate or employability awards). The number of such awards available has grown significantly in recent years, and with such expansion has come a growing range of approaches. The guidance will therefore seek to capture ideas about how awards can best be designed and implemented to achieve the purpose of making students better at taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development and making the most of their higher education experience. Provisionally entitled 'Recognising achievement beyond the curriculum', the guidance will take a tool kit approach, and will be designed to help practitioners charged with setting up a new award from scratch or revitalising an existing scheme.

To inform the development of the guidance, QAA is currently carrying out a survey of sector practice. The survey has several purposes:

- To provide evidence of areas it would be helpful to feature in the tool kit
- To collect a base line set of data about the scale and nature of activity relating to award schemes across the sector, to form the basis for future comparisons
- To collate information about current award schemes to be used to populate an online directory, which will act as a resource for practitioners.

The survey is available from <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/recognisingachievementbeyondthecurriculum> until 15 August 2013. The questions ask about the scale and nature of award schemes, their organisation and quality assurance, and for views about the future of awards, both aspirations and challenges. We are also keen to have responses from higher education providers who don't have an award scheme, or have had one in the past but no longer run it, to help us build a comprehensive picture of practice across the sector. A report of the findings of the survey will be published alongside the guidance document, towards the end of 2013.

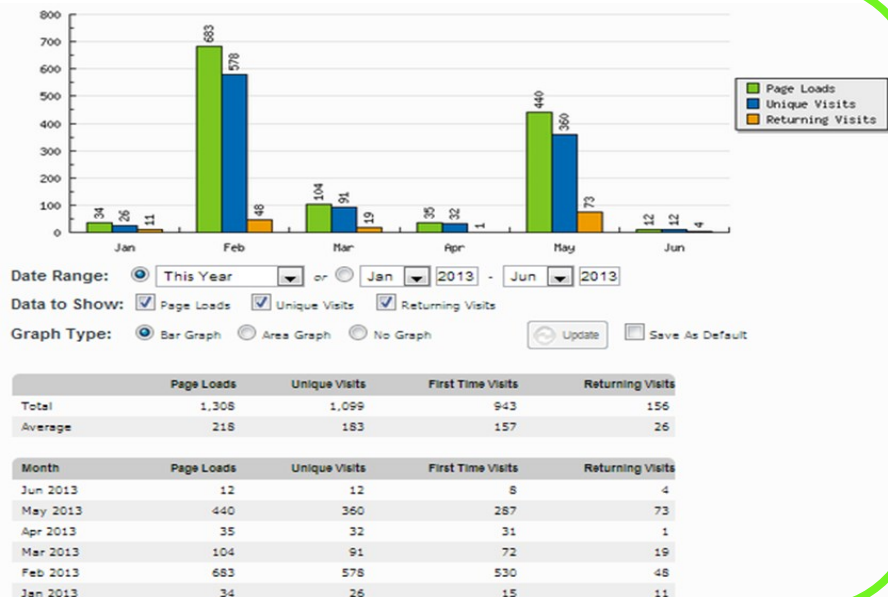
Any questions about the survey or the guidance can be sent to Harriet Barnes, h.barnes@qaa.ac.uk.



Source: John Seely Brown serendip.brynmawr.edu

LIFEWIDE NEWS

The chart opposite shows the spikes in readership for the first two issues of Lifewide Magazine this year. We have had over 1300 page loads and visitors from 41 different countries. The Magazine is our most important vehicle for disseminating our work and our ideas. Thank you to all who have logged on.



Regular readers will recall that we were delighted to welcome Afifuddin Husairi as Lifewide's champion in Malaysia. Afifuddin shares our passion for pedagogy and making the student experience an holistic one. He teaches in the Faculty of Architecture and Built Environment, at the International University College of Technology in Kuala Lumpur. When he saw our research using the Values-Exchange technology, he saw an opportunity for him to investigate his own students' experience and asked us to help with a custom-made questionnaire for them. So he became our first partner in what we hope to roll out as a service to other institutions and organisations, affording LEC a small but much-needed stream of income.

It has taken several months of planning and discussions with his colleagues, but we are about to launch his survey. Afifuddin plans to share his findings at Lifewide's conference in March 2014. We look forward to meeting him there.



We are also delighted that following an international conference for innovative teaching in Riyadh earlier this year, Dr. Mona A. Alkhattabi an Assistant Professor at the College of Computer Sciences and Information Imam Mohammad Bin Saud University has agreed to promote the work of the Lifewide Community in Saudi Arabia

Those of you who have read Jenny's latest e-book chapter, C3, Lifewide Survey of Wellbeing, will know that our research has already suggested cultural differences in our perceptions of wellbeing and our lifewide learning pursuits. We have comparative data from the UK and from China.



In August, Jenny will be talking at the biennial congress of the World Federation for Mental Health, taking place this year in Buenos Aires. Delegates are mental health professionals, users of mental health services and their carers, and come from around the globe.

In addition to discussing LEC's research findings on wellbeing, Jenny will invite delegates to complete an on-line survey using Values Exchange. This is designed to gather further evidence of what wellbeing means in different cultural contexts, and how individuals seek to maximise their personal wellbeing. Data will be reported in a future chapter of our e-book.

"This is a really exciting opportunity to introduce a new audience to Lifewide Education," says Jenny.



LEARNING LIVES CONFERENCE

Encouraging, Supporting and Recognising 'Lifewide' Learning in Universities

Wednesday 26th March 2014

Clore Management Centre, Birkbeck, University of London



This is the first conference of the Lifewide Education Community. It aims to

- Provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and understanding about lifewide learning and personal development in higher education
- Raise awareness of the outcomes of the European Commission's Foresight work on the 'Future of Learning' 2030 and facilitate discussion about how educational institutions and society more generally might encourage, support, value and recognise individuals' lifewide learning, development and achievements
- Consider the practicalities, challenges and benefits of encouraging, supporting and recognising lifewide learning in Universities
- Inform and influence the thinking and practice of Award scheme leaders, teachers, senior educational managers, politicians and policy makers

'personalisation, collaboration and informal learning will be at the core of learning in the future. The central learning paradigm is characterised by lifelong and lifewide learning and shaped by the ubiquity of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)'

European Commission Foresight Report 'Future of Learning: Preparing for Change' (2011)

The big question is how do we prepare and enable EU citizens to inhabit this future world in ways that are relevant, meaningful, interesting and fulfilling.

Lifewide Education's 'Learning Lives Conference' will address this question from the perspective of UK higher education and draw attention to the significance of learning *within* life as well as *throughout* life. It's purpose is to encourage discussion about how lifewide learning, development and achievement is already being encouraged, supported and recognised by universities so that learners are better prepared for the future of their learning.

The conference is designed to attract those who believe that there is an opportunity to improve learners' future lives by adopting a lifewide approach to their education who are interested in sharing their perspectives in ways that will enable higher education to make progress with the challenge of future learning.

The conference will provide an opportunity for members of the Lifewide Education Community to showcase their work in a book that will be available at the conference. If you would like to contribute please complete the proposal form on the conference webpage.

Confirmed Speakers

Dr Christine Redecker
Professor Marcia Baxter Magolda
Professor Ronald Barnett
Harriet Barnes
Professor Norman Jackson

**TO BOOK A PLACE PLEASE VISIT
THE CONFERENCE WEBSITE
<http://www.learninglives.co.uk>**

Lifewide Learning, Education & Personal Development e-Book



Our examination of the many dimensions of lifewide learning continues with publication of three more e-book chapters exploring the concept of wellbeing and its relevance to lifewide learning, education and personal development and the concept of learning ecologies.

Chapters are free to download at: <http://www.lifewideeBook.co.uk/>

If you would like to contribute to the e-book please contact the commissioning editor Norman Jackson lifewider1@btinternet.com

CHAPTER A4

Exploring Subjective Wellbeing and Relationships to Lifewide Education, Learning and Personal Development *Norman J Jackson*

The concept of wellbeing comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity, engagement and fulfilment are characteristic of someone who has a positive experience of their life. Equally important for wellbeing is our functioning in the world and the opportunities we have to be ourselves and become the people we want to become. Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes of wellbeing (Huppert 2008). These are important concerns for lifewide education with its focus on holistic self-directed personal and social development through all the experiences and opportunities an individual's life affords. Drawing on an extensive literature, the chapter examines what wellbeing means, considers key concepts and perspectives drawn from a range of disciplines, and offers a perspective on the relevance of these ideas for lifewide learning and how these ideas might be utilised within an educational process that encourages, supports and recognises individuals' lifewide learning and development.

CHAPTER C3

Lifewide Learning Survey of Wellbeing *Jenny Willis*

This chapter presents the findings of Lifewide Education's survey of wellbeing, conducted in Spring 2013 as part of an ongoing examination of the dimensions of lifewide learning. This was a small-scale investigation (n = 25) and respondents are skewed towards age 50+ so overall results are likely to be biased towards the views of people in this age group. The analysis begins by comparing respondents' qualitative data with the concepts common to established theories of wellbeing, then triangulates this with a close examination of the statistical data arising from a series of potential contributors to wellbeing. Variations in responses are considered according to age, sex and perceptions of being creative individuals. Initial findings suggest further investigation is warranted.

The lifewide learning process promoted by the Lifewide Education Development Award encourages and enables individuals to see and appreciate themselves as a whole person and encouraging and helping them become more of the person they want to become. Because of these fundamental goals embedded in the lifewide educational process, there should be a causal link between an individual's active participation in their own lifewide activities through which they learn and develop and their evolving appreciation of their own sense of wellbeing. A proposition that seems to be borne out in this study, though respondents do not necessarily show awareness of this link. Furthermore, the focus on 'purposes' and the ways in which people are trying to develop themselves to achieve their purposes in the Lifewide Development Award draws attention to this important dimension of wellbeing. It would seem valuable to encourage lifewide learners to consider their own wellbeing as part of their self-directed learning process, and encourage greater consciousness of wellbeing using tools like the questionnaire used in the survey.

And hot off the press to our e-book:

CHAPTER A5

The Concept of Learning Ecologies, *Norman J Jackson*



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

The ecological metaphor has been applied to many contexts and is well suited to human interactions between people and their environment, and their processes for doing, learning and achieving. This chapter examines the conceptual basis for learning ecologies and considers the value of the idea for lifewide learning and education. An individual's learning ecology comprises their process and set of contexts, relationships and interactions that provides opportunities and resources for learning, development and achievement. Learning ecologies have temporal dimensions as well as spatial dimensions and they have the capability to connect different spaces and contexts existing simultaneously across a person's life-course, as well as different spaces and contexts existing through time throughout their life-course.

Knowing how to create and sustain a learning ecology is an essential part of 'knowing how to learn' in all the different contexts that comprise an individual's life. Self-created learning ecologies are the means by which experiences and learning are connected and integrated across the contexts and situations that constitute a person's life. Learning ecologies are therefore of significant conceptual and practical value to the theory and practice of lifewide learning and education. It might be expected that an institution adopting a lifewide education approach to learning and personal development would not only pay attention to the role of learning ecologies but also enable learners to understand and create their own learning ecologies.

COMING SOON

CHAPTER C4 Learning Ecology Narratives

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ideas to the Editor: jjenny@blueyonder.co.uk

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