

Lifeworld Learning Research & Development Group

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

WEEK 4 #102 to #139

**Vignettes of Experiences
Involving Emergent Learning**

Vignette #102

DOMAINS

FAMILY AND WORK

A significant decision on the house-moving front as we decided to have our house valued on Friday and will then make a decision on the next steps. I use this technique in careers guidance with my students, small steps to reach your goal. My own self-awareness is important to me as again I see the significance of it when making decisions. It is interesting to see how my training and profession seeps into family life and how I have to use this technique on myself as I am anxious about the prospect of moving as I don't particularly like uncertainty. My daughter is applying for jobs and had an interview for a job last week that went really well and she was told in the feedback that she had come second, which she was initially devastated by this news but she has picked herself up and applied for two more jobs and already has another interview. I love learning from her tenacity and her determination to make her own path in the world of work and her goal of owning her own home in the future.

CAREER

I have a reputation as the research investigator in my team as I am always seeking out new information and am keen to learn from others to advance my knowledge and expertise. I also like to share this with others and enjoy coaching and nurturing others. Lockdown has given me the opportunity to do this so much more. This week I went to a workshop that was the culmination of a careers coaching project at a university, which is near to where I live. It was significant to me, as I had applied for one of the jobs supporting this project but was not successful after the interview stage and it made me reflect on how my life and career would have taken a different direction. These moments cause you to reflect and learn from them. One of the positive outcomes was I received the most in depth and positive feedback that I have ever received from the Manager of the team. He was at the workshop I attended this week and responded to my questions. I have learnt from this that it is important to ask for feedback, learn from it, and realise that rejection is part of life and I can be more authentic with my students when they face rejection.

HOBBIES

I have learnt a great deal from my love of yoga, which I have taken part in since my early twenties. It is a brilliant way to learn about the limits of your body. I feel it is important it is to build strength and flexibility. I have met many fabulous yoga teachers who take their teaching and the philosophy behind it so seriously and each one has brought a different perspective to their teaching. Yoga is both physical and mental exercise as the relaxation and meditation is a fundamental part of it. Learning how to quieten your mind and the thoughts in your head are sometimes hard to do and yoga has taught me the importance of this to me my own mental health.

REFLECTION

This process of writing has helped me to reflect on planned and unplanned events. What would have happened if I had been successful in securing the job working with students on the project above which direction would this have taken me? In careers guidance theory, this is based on Krumboltz's theory of planned happenstance which makes it OK not to always plan and be open to taking opportunities as they arise which may open doors and lead to career paths you may never have considered. This is why I am a Careers Consultant after a brief conversation at university with a friend of a friend who had recently graduated and was training to be a careers professional and

completing the postgraduate diploma in careers guidance. I knew I wanted to work with young people on a one to one basis and this chance meeting led me to a profession that I have thoroughly enjoyed for the last 30 years.

Vignette #103

THE VORTEX



A week off my 9 to 5 work commitment and I have let myself dance in a vortex of activities that have put me on a spinning top learning curve. University calling with a draft for an essay, units to respond to through research, yoga lessons and mantra evenings, family commitments and reading time. I waltzed around with the above and actually did a fair amount of sitting which is quite unusual for a teacher in early years.

But how can I waltz, prance, and skip along my week when I am so engaged, and I am not working my 9 to 5 job? Good question. Mmmmmm. I am not completely sure. On my calendar I write a few important items that keep me on my toes, I number the weeks for each activity and colour code them with an overview of a month. I then give myself some mental gym as to when in the week I am going to work on what and then off I go experimenting with time, interest, duty, passion, and a natural curiosity that keeps me happy for small and precious amounts of time. These are like sparks of mental energy that travel through my body as I think and delve in what I do. They arrive with polite announcement while I am thinking and urge me to stand up and do menial physical things such as dusting the parquet floor which comes in gentile and agile sweeps or I might decide to hang up the washing taking in the scent of fabric soften and detergent. When the thought is thought and happiness fills, I know it is time to get back and spill onto paper or the computer.

On Friday evening I decided that a bit of mind wandering was going to be a perfect way to close the day and look into the weekend which in some cases could be the weekstart. I painted thinking of the vortex week I was experiencing and as I let the paint brush move on paper, I noticed that there were no twists and

knots no bridges over gaps or ravines. Colours blended and moved in a very tidy fashion, some tried to squeeze past, but all found their place. This is how the painting you see at the top of the page came into the world.

Reflection. Time is what you make of it. We are the ones that move it and use it. We create it and waste it. We reflect on it and put it aside. Time and how we use it is part of who and what we are. Sure, we have hands and numbers to help us keep track of the conventional concept of time. The circadian rhythm with its sun and stars gives a helping hand but we are the masters of our time.

This week has given me solace in following my natural time warp/waltz/vortex. Thank you, school calendar, for allowing time to close one door and open another although these doors are rarely closed. When there is a gust of wind or a slight breeze, they open and close at different times a bit like adance.

Vignette #104

Title: **The view from Mars**

2 Domain: **Travel**

3 Narrative:

I was a teenager at the time of the first Moon Landings. It was thrilling to look up at the familiar moon, knowing that, at that moment, humans were there. The success of the enormous endeavour that had made that possible seemed to indicate that great things are achievable, given the focus and resources. However, the striking image from that time is the beautiful photograph, [Earthrise](#), taken from Apollo 8 in December 1968, showing a beautiful and fragile planet.

Before COVID, I went to the Design Museum in London to see an exhibition on [Moving to Mars](#). The exhibition offered fascinating things to see and do relating to missions to and living on the planet. The overriding message I came away with was that, beyond the thrill of travelling to explore a new planet, was that the solutions to the challenges that must be tackled to survive on Mars, could also offer strategies to protect Earth from environmental disaster. Problems such as how to live with zero waste; to cope with limited supplies of water; to generate power without pollution, mirror the pressing issues we must address on this planet.

As I write this, the first images of Mars, from Perseverance rover, are circulating via global media. We have overcome the challenge of the long journey to get there. How long might it be before we are able to send astronauts to land on Mars? Is it ironic that we have sent a mission to another planet at the time when we are suffering a pandemic on our home planet? Does it take a mission to Mars or the Moon for us to see ourselves and our own home?

4 Reflections:

During successive Lockdowns I found myself regularly recalling past holidays, while confined to my lawn or living room. I have mentally revisited beaches, canals, forests, cathedrals, cities, galleries, hotels, pools, tents, villas, cafes etc. from previous holidays, and remembered my children as babies, happy young girls, grumpy teenagers, or good companion adults travelling with us. It felt good to be free to go far and wide, in my mind, without actually breaking Lockdown rules. I realise that I have gained greater value from those trips than I had supposed. However, one key thing I have missed about being unable to travel is the view of home and how I am living, which being somewhere else offers me.

It seems that travelling and seeing others living differently inspires me to recognise that there are a greater range of options than I imagine. I have reflected that the sci-fi I used to read also gave me this kind of inspiration, combined with some of that thrill of exploring somewhere new. I know that much of my reading, watching and listening during this past almost a year has been in search of emotional comfort, as an antidote to reality. I think I deliberately sought this. I wonder if now I am ready for some new worlds to fuel my thinking about a "new normal". I have started to experiment with a post plague, novel by Margaret Atwood. Wish me luck?

Vignette #105

Vignette 3: Smell and Learning ...

I am a bit late with vignette 3 as I crushed my fingers and took some time of tying, more of which later. Anyway, an article in the science periodical *Nautilus* on humans sense of smell got me thinking. It looked at the way the brain interprets smell. It drew on recent research into the brain areas triggered by a smell. It suggested that despite the simple and direct route between the organ and the brain, the dynamic nature of smells and the structurally diverse nature of the brain's receptors make it very complex. Thirty years after discovering the route and the receptor, people are no closer to understanding smell. The author suggests that this relates to thinking of smell as a map in the same way vision has been mapped when scent is a mosaic that fire off neurons all over the brain. The most straightforward thoughts on smell seemed to be to do with memory.

The smell of camomile reminds me of blisters on the hands from raking hay. The smell of the hay makes me think of the cows in the byre and scraps of wool stuffed into the wall to stop the wind. Then back along by the sea to the house, out to the shed, to the left the goat smell, to the right the dry dusty smell of grain for the hens and from under the next door smell of the toilet bucket. It makes me think of grandmothers house, about peat smoke, and the smell of the Tilly lamp. I wonder did my parents caravan smell different, damp and plastic mixed with cigarettes, I think. It was a sort of scent map of the past.

I try to pull myself out of childhood, I think about the smell of a crowd in the Barrowlands in Glasgow, of the second-hand books in the shops of the Grassmarket, of a dram in the Malt Whisky Society in Edinburgh, of the slaughterhouse when I take livestock to be killed, of blood. Then I think of the smell of fire, of the sweet smell of burning the hill when I was a kid, the smell of sweat and heat when I was a firefighter damping down hill fires, and the smell of a house when the people didn't make it. Suddenly I am at a birthday party, and a kilted uncle who was in the army has an arm around me and is telling me that you never forget the smell of burning after a car bomb. But the truth is I can remember taking my breathing apparatus, but I cannot remember the smell, so I just nod, and we get another drink.

Having let thoughts about smell roll, I realise I have been almost doing a Margaret Mead, the raw and the cooked, setting up binary, good smells and bad smells. I decided it was not a productive route. What I like most is the smell of the sea, but having been in lockdown and hardly across the ferry for months. I cannot smell the sea because I have not been away from it. Then last week, a trip across the ferry for a family funeral. The graveyard was a few hours away, so I googled it and found it was a place sea kayakers set out. Make a note, perhaps we could take the kayaks out from their sometime. It was good to see everyone, no hugs. On the way home, I wonder if others' smell is part of the sensory deprivation we experience under lockdown.

It was a wild day, and I came back wet. When I am in the shower, warming up, my wife came in to ask how it went. I notice the water from the shower smells very earthy. When I get out, I fiddle with the taps, it is very brown. That night I change the filter, but it does not seem to make a difference. When I was younger, if the water from the pipe was brown first, you undid the elastic band and took the pair of tights of the tap to clean. If it still smelled, you needed to go up the hill. By this point it was dark, so I didn't go up the hill to check the water supply till the next morning. It was clogged. A bit of the bank had come away and was over the inlet. While fixing it, I crushed my fingers. Once, I fiddled around with various pipes to animal troughs and the polytunnel. I went in to get changed and realised I had learnt something using my nose. An earthy peat smell tells me it is time to check the water. I won't share what I learnt when the water had a fishy smell or the time it had an odd meaty taste. But I did eventually come back to the squashed fingers.

Vignette #106

Domain: Hobbies and Interests (connected to Home and Work)

Walking with one of my sisters we were going through a field and we saw a flock of birds flying, landing, gathering. My sister was in an RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) club when she was a child and she pointed them out and said they were fieldfares. They looked like thrushes to us both. She thought she'd seen some red on them. She wasn't sure and I said well I just believed her anyway (a running joke between us around her degree being an 'ology' unlike my own). She wanted me to google it to check. I googled at the weekend and when I shared the images with her, she tried 'redstart' instead and then 'redwing' and decided it must have been those. Then she wanted me to google what religion Constantinople had before Christianity. Answer: pagan or so I thought at quick glance. Then she queried her understanding of the acronym LGBTQIA + and I googled that too as we seemed to be jumbling our answers to A. We then saw a much longer acronym and were having a look at those and sharing our understanding together. All of this revisiting old learning and gaining new learning in the space of probably about fifteen minutes on a mobile phone and having met up for a walk!

A turn towards 'academic' writing: I got a paper rejected last week and I can see now very clearly that I totally lost track of it in the middle section. I was kind of appalled by that but I realise that sometimes you can look without seeing and I was also in the throes of all sorts of stresses so it would have been quite something to have seen it clearly at all. One of the comments, absolutely rightly, was about the limited attention to research on professionalisation. I didn't google but the search was a similar process i.e. what works, what doesn't, what connects, what new. I went to my university e-library content and put in terms such as professionalisation, professionalism, professionalisation of further education teachers and I put in names of people I've read before and who I knew would have something to say. I scanned abstracts and papers and chapters of books. When I landed on something I thought was very helpful, I added them to my electronic store and sometimes I also looked at the authors they were citing.

Reflection

The process of searching is much quicker in its results and for me probably more systematic as well as exploratory than when I was at university myself. We did have computers in the library but I don't remember using them much. I had a little word processor I used to type my assignments on! I have habits of searching (like we all do) – if I've read a good book I will have a look to see what else the author wrote and think about whether I'd like to read that too. I will also look at who recommended them on and within the cover and look for some of their names at some point as well. I see searching variously as strategic, exploratory and interconnected. During lockdown one I put an app on my phone for the Woodland Trust so as to look up tree types by inputting about their leaves (shape etc.). I put it on my phone because I'd come across some cut logs in a field near me. I could see that they were going free and I have a cat who had been scratching my new railway sleeper which I hadn't predicted when I had my patio done! I went past a few times thinking mm I wonder if she might like to scratch one of those instead. I then decided, seeing the pile depleting, that I'd try and roll one away. Bit of a crazy tale but yes it did start off being rolled away but then it had to get picked up and put in the car boot! Anyway having then rolled it on to the patio I realised I didn't know what tree it was. The next time I walked I collected a leaf from its matching neighbour tree. I checked on Woodland Trust – answer: sycamore. (And no the cat hasn't started scratching the log but she does like to sit on it as if it's a lookout!)

Vignette #107

Vignette #3 Pandora's box

Domain – The virtual world we inhabit

As an Australian, we have been in the news this week for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the Australian Open but also the standoff between Facebook and the Australian government. Australian media organisations are unhappy that Facebook has been able to benefit from use of its platform to freely gain from circulation of news that was originally paid for by media agencies. I am sure it is much more complex than that but the bottom line is that the internet enables people, rightly or wrongly, to copy and forward just about any information. The up side of this of course is that we all now have quick access to current news. The downside is that people and organisations who have incurred time and costs, to research and prepare the stories, are missing out on deserved income.

When I reflect back on my younger days, everything was hardcopy. I can still remember sitting on a train in Melbourne in the afternoon and just about everyone was reading their copy of the evening paper. Now, they are all staring at their smart devices. From a control perspective, in the 'good' old days, governments were able to legislate the requirements with regard to boundaries of appropriate media content. Now, governments have to somehow control the flow of digital information from anywhere.

After it was told by the Australian government that it would have to pay for having Australian news on its platform, Facebook took the initial heavy handed approach of blocking wide access by Australian users but this attracted immediate criticism because in the process it also cut off access to essential information sources. So, now I believe there will be some sort of negotiation process.

Other countries will be keenly interested in the outcome from the Australian government stand because they each face their own similar issues with the tech giant. This begs the question: who is really in control? Is it good or bad that governments are now trying to play catch up with local and international laws regarding the exchange of information, goods and money? I have no idea what happens on the dark web but its very name suggests that it is hiding something from the light.

Again, as I reflect on advancements in technology, I am left wondering how it has happened that governments have, at least for the moment, lost some significant control.

Getting back to far more interesting reflections, during the Australian Open, a spectator attracted international attention by disrupting Nadal during one of his matches and calling him an "OCD fxxx". Of course, this was totally out of order and she was swiftly removed from the stand. Perhaps it was just a bad day for her but for the rest of her life, she will be associated with that momentary incident. The internet is able to destroy someone's reputation not just locally but worldwide. We hear of young children committing suicide because of negative posts and pictures about them.



(Image from the Daily Mail Online, 12 February 2021 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9252129/Heckler-centre-Australian-Open-row-doubles-wild-exchange-Rafael-Nadal.html>)

Why do I mention this lady? Because, as I reflected on her actions, I thought this could have been someone I know. We all have our faults. Just because someone can take a photo and post it on the internet, does that make it right? Even if it is subsequently taken down, it is normally too late because at least some people would have saved a digital copy.

The internet is a wonderful innovation, if used for the right purposes. The real issue for me is that just because we can now share something with the world does not mean we should.

So, my reflection for this week is on the whole issue of control. If there are no boundaries, then people will keep pushing as far as they can because that seems part of our human nature. I am not advocating suppression but rather protection. The internet has opened so many wonderful doors, but is it also the ultimate pandora's box?

Vignette #108

Vignette #4 Domain: The Unanticipated Emergence of paid Work. Feb. 22, 2021

Definitely, our lives are an emergent phenomenon in many areas. Like the phantom of the Opera, we wear a variety of masks based on our functions in the different facets of our lives. I have never been one to follow a daily routine. In fact, I do just the opposite. Each day is a new discovery in the pursuit of value, importance and relativity of daily actions. Close to 15 yrs. ago I decided that the nine to five lifestyles were not for me. I packed up a good position at a University as a Curriculum Design Specialist and opened my educational consulting business. Life and work have been incrementally interesting, rewarding, and exciting. Today I found myself back in a nine to five consulting 1-year



contract position, at the first institution I worked at for 25 years. It is with great trepidation one steps back in life to where it all started. Only this time it was virtually. Onboarding virtually is quite interesting instead of walking from one office to the next, one can feel bombarded by jumping from one meeting to the next, having everyone "in your face" literally. However, it was interesting how you can tell a lot by the

enthusiasm displayed by individuals, the willingness to genuinely assist, and the dedication to what they do. I sense this is going to be a critical time for me to learn from those taking the reins of an organization with unbounded zest and vitality. I feel fortunate to have this window of opportunity to catch their vision of creating a better society, ensuring and upholding quality and currency in educating young minds for a future that is yet to be determined.

Reflection

I had a rough plan for how I wanted to spend my twilight years. It consisted of easy-going workshops, retreats, and creating a more relaxed atmosphere for learning for myself and others in academe. This plan has now taken a back seat, but just for a while, as I pour myself into this unplanned opportunity, that was never envisaged as part of the neat little life map that my colleague created during our divergent brainstorming session. I am filled with the renewed spirit of the youth in the indomitable task of painting on a new palette.



Learning



I see this position as a wonderful opportunity to share ideas, discuss possibilities and caution about the pitfalls, that might not be initially visible. Walking the same path for over a few decades, one gets to know all the cracks and crevices in the roadway. Although the circumstances may be different, being able to identify, point out and walk around them can be useful while navigating new pathways that may seem like short cuts but are intentional, expeditious, and together carving out emergent learning that is new and unbounded. It is an opportunity to invent new metaphors and narratives as compasses for new ways of being.

Vignette #109

Title: Writing community

Domain: Environment, Employment, Relationships

Background: I developed a publication plan to disseminate my research findings following the completion of my phd. My plan was not progressing and I realised a need for support. Through speaking with a senior colleague I heard of a discipline writing group which I asked to join, but probably due to COVID nothing eventuated. This year realising my motivation was inconsistent I recruited a writing coach and further conversations at work led to another email inquiry about participating in a writing group if one was available.

Last week I joined the College writing group. It's online, cross-disciplinary, for early career researchers (ECR) and has a membership of about 20 people. Meetings run for two-hours on Thursdays and Fridays but there is no obligation to attend or stay for the full two-hours.

Narrative: Thursday morning I join the online ECR writing group meeting and note that as I started the meeting an announcement would have been sent to all members. My 'new' presence is stated. I'm the only one here in the online group space. The facilitator for this group had advised me that they might be late but suggested someone else was reliably present.

I set myself up and ponder whether I got the details wrong. No, a quick check of email correspondence confirms date, time, and location as correct. Left waiting in a virtual space I wonder whether anyone will show. Thank fully a few minutes later I am joined. We introduce ourselves and discuss a little of our research and approaches. We come from different disciplines, I'm a qualitative researcher with interest in developing quantitative skills. They're a quantitative researcher. They make a statement that resonates. A statement something along the lines of 'we should collaborate together on a research project'.

Three days a week I'm employed as a research assistant. It's an interesting study and the data collected to date is both quantitative and qualitative. A colleague from another institution has been brought onto the project for the sole purpose of quantitative analysis.

As my new ECR writing group 'friend' made their statement I wonder why collaborations like this haven't happened. Perhaps somewhere they are, but I'm not so sure. Possibilities. We are joined by the facilitator and our writing session begins.

Reflection: In my previous employment I advocated for cross-disciplinary networks. In recent years this writing group is my first experience of such an activity; although there were only two disciplines present and I was the sole representative of one. I appreciated being included, found the time productive, and am hopeful that this new community might lead to future collaborations. I should try and remember people's names though - I can't recall any at present!

Vignette # 110

VIGNETTE 3 "THE TRIBE"

DOMAIN: FAMILY/WORK LIFE ("worksonal"= work and personal areas)

NARRATIVE

We have had the opportunity to be all together as a family in the past year. We have a son and a daughter who are adults and have been working for a while already. The covid circumstances, made as all be back at home together for several hours, combining spaces and time for home-office, sports, (limited exercise indoor), enjoying our family time (barbecues, board games, long conversations, watching movies, walking the dogs, redecorating,).

We have developed teamwork for redecorating, or cooking, researching and searching for the right material, paint or ingredient; becoming apprentices in similar areas. But it also has made us more aware of what the other does work wise.

As time passed, each one of us took "possession" of a space, and due to the situation, each one also "personalised" that space during working time (which of course was not as clearly limited, and it got blurred with the rest of the time). It meant also that we would take special care of not invading and respecting all spaces, because one of us was "in a meeting". I have to say that without having talked about all this, our "new rules" or invisible boundaries, emerged naturally, and made it really cosy to work from home for each one of us. Each one created their own "working corner". We have shared our thoughts and we feel happy to keep the "work from home" scheme, which in fact means we have felt happy with the conviviality that emerged.

It also brought a lot of respect and knowledge regarding "the other". I now know lots of artificial intelligence and the food industry, as well as the real estate business, and much more! In return they now know more about education, which is my field. We have all learnt more from a direct source, about new subjects and areas. About the other role that we have in society. My son and daughter, and my husband, have also become professionals to my eyes. I believe I understand much more of their challenges, passions, and difficulties, making me even prouder of them.

What we have lived has open new conversations and roles, which merge and mix. Learning has become a part of every conversation, that today goes way beyond the old: "so how was work today?"-.....

REFLECTION

Being together sharing different roles, has made me learn from each member of the family, and it is noticeable that in different moments each one has taken a variety of roles. My vision of what has happened is that we have become "a tribe", in which each one of us have rotating roles that have enriched our life as a family, and our knowledge and like for a different area than our own field. I am aware that this has not been the case for many, that living the same experience, have felt overwhelmed and invaded. I am aware that we are lucky to live in a place where we can all keep a certain privacy, but that also gives us the chance to "see" more about the other... and learn more about areas which before may have been seen only as "headlines", which would not show the real value of what they mean.

We have learnt about the jobs of each other, and we have shared new learning as a “tribe” redecorating, cooking and sharing together, in areas that we were all exploring, as beginners. We have become “students” in shared areas.



Vignette # 111

Vignette: Making art locally in public park spaces helps to be part of things again

Domain: Park/public space, self as artist

My own art practice is deeply concerned with landscape and the human body's relation to it, the phenomenological issues implied by this, and the forms in which such relations may be represented, in photography, drawing, video and other media.

It is about walking, a feeling of the movement of walking, the elements, watching the landscape in front of me, discovering and exploring. It's about losing oneself and finding it again.

I haven't been able to get out of the city into a wild landscape, so I've used the parks instead. It's an environment outside the house to think about 'senses of self': drift of identity and selfhood; and with the body's relationship to nature/park spaces.

Reflection:

I've reflected and during these lockdowns realised how peripatetic I am. Something that I have returned to in a more conscious way is my walking. Drawings while walking in the park, this means that during walks of one or two hours of duration I am constantly making marks whilst moving along. Using oil pastels or other mediums I record, physically and literally the movement of my body through space this record is obviously effected and is a direct product of many contingent features: my own body's internal and external movements, my shifting perception as I move through space, the awkward fluidity of the medium being used and various other features such as temperature and terrain, atmosphere and the general ambience of the place that I'm in. In the two weeks it has snowed and we have had warm sunny days.

For the current project I'm particularly interested in working with a writer, with a view to exploring the relationship between the physical mark making I have referred to above and language in the conventional sense of the word. I aim to produce two screen prints for this project.



Vignette # 112

Vignette 3: Learning through curiosity and observing the other's behavior

Domain: Technology and communication

Narrative:

Since this group discussion space was my first experience on LinkedIn, and I used other social media to connect and chat with friends, using this network was a bit new to me. At the time you were commenting on each other, I was very curious about how you reply to each other in the comments and that person's name also has a link in the replay, and if you click on that name, it will take you to that person's page (a great way to find people page on comments). Early in the comments, I tried different methods to find this affordance and use it, but I did not understand how?

A few days ago, when I was commenting in this space, instead of clicking on the replay box, I clicked on the replay option under the name of the person and realized that I had discovered the Affordance.

Reflection:

This experience reminded me of research from several years ago that was about e-learning ecosystems, and I became somewhat familiar with the affordances by reading Norman Jackson's (2016) book on exploring learning ecosystems. I discovered a new affordance that was previously unknown to me, and the discussion environment of this group and observing the comments of others created a learning situation for me so that I could become aware of the existence of this affordance, discover it, and learn it.



Vignette # 113

Vignette: Using our senses and other things to create self

Domain: Home/garden, self

One of my most important sources of learning at the moment is from the contributions that are being made in this space. I am continually being provoked to think about either something I haven't thought about before or have not thought enough about it. This week it was Ranold's post on smell that grabbed my attention. It forced me to confront the fact that I take my senses for granted. By this I mean that generally I value my experiences as an integrated whole rather than the individual sensory inputs that make up the experience.

I decided to conduct a little experiment. I took myself into the garden and shut my eyes. For 5 mins I gingerly walked around asking myself what are my other senses telling me about my environment? Quite honestly, without the visual cues I could have been anywhere outside on a coolish day. I could deduce that it was day because I could hear birds singing, but I could not have told you what time it was. I might have guessed that I was in England because of the bird sounds (rather than Australia if you know what I mean). I could have guessed it was cloudy because I could not feel sun on my skin. It felt as if I was walking on grass and I confirmed it by touching it, but it was spongy with more moss than grass. It was cool so it was probably winterish assuming I was in England but it could have been spring or autumn. I could hear road traffic some distance away so I knew I wasn't deep in the countryside. Taste and smell didn't help me beyond knowing I was in fresh air which was moving because I could feel it on my face. Without my sight I had to infer so much and use my reasoning and imagination to construct a picture of the world around me.

If I had stumbled around I would have eventually bumped into a fence, encountered some trees and fallen into the pond and these experiences would all have helped me build a more detailed mental picture of my environment. If I had been with someone I could have asked them to describe for me what they could see and this additional information would have helped me mentally visualise the world around me.

All in all, the absence of sight left me feeling pretty disconnected from the world. What this told me is so obvious yet so important to our understandings of lifewide learning. If we inhibit in some way the flow of information from our external world we can change our perception of it in quite a radical way. Our senses work together with our perception, reasoning, imagination and emotion to make sense of our situation and to create the whole experience of living in the world and interacting with it.



Research on perception tells us that our sense of an experience is in fact not just based on our perceptions of information flowing into us at a particular moment, it also involves memories of similar experiences which help us interpret and make sense of the current information especially if the information is incomplete.

Reflection: I looked again at my previous vignette 'Belonging to a Place' which described the experience of taking a walk near my home during which I gathered information through all my

senses and combined my perceptions with past experiences, family stories and other sources of information, including taking photographs. The act of taking photos, or adding any other activity to a walk for that matter, changes the nature of the experience. Some thought is being given to what to photograph and why. And having taken the photos and video new possibilities (affordances) are available to extend the experience – eg by making a movie and using it to reflect on the experience. After the walk I reflected upon my experience, I wrote about it and made a short movie about it. This extended experience elevated into something with far more meaning and significance. Such is the way we extend the meanings, impacts and significance of our experiences as we engage and re-constitute our inner self.

In replying to my post Rebecca Thomas used this quote which I thought extended a little more my understanding of the nature of experience

'Thus, we could say that representation of the particular is a matter for us to be aware of when we live in the world, with our senses, and representation of the general is a matter for us when we withdraw, when we enter into the quietude of thinking.' Maxine Greene

Vignette # 114

Title: Learning from observation

Domains: Environment, Technology

Narrative: We have spoken about affordances and seeing the opportunity to learn, even from mundane events. Here is a typical example.

This week, I took my car to have one of its tyres inspected for a slow leak. I've been through this process before, so didn't bother to watch the mechanic as he went about the task. Instead, my attention turned to a new building project that has been under construction for a while on the opposite side of the road. First, I was taken by the structure of the building: huge concrete blocks reinforced with steel rods stand upright every few yards. By now, the builders are up to level six. I watched as one removed the supporting prop to a stretch that had a ceiling of metal beams in place. Some of the rods in the concrete



columns were vertical, the others had all been bent over. How did they do that, I wondered? And why? I was beginning to gain a deeper respect for the skill involved in such work, and the danger.

A towering crane began to swing round through nearly 360': I saw that the driver was communicating with a man standing on the back of a lorry, just across the road from me. The latter had his arm in the air, apparently guiding the pulley towards his load of steel rods. When the pulley reached him, he studiously secured bundles of rods ready for lifting. How many were safe to lift in one go? How did he make the judgement? Now, two colleagues appeared and stopped the traffic in both directions before an arm signal told the crane driver it was safe to raise the load. Carefully ensuring that no pedestrian or motorist was put at risk, the foursome worked in unison until the rods were safely on the building site.

Reflection: this was an everyday scene, the sort of thing we take for granted, probably don't even bother thinking about. But when we do think about it and can see events through the eyes of a child, how much we can learn! I took a naïve delight in inspecting the builders' work, asking myself questions and learning how they went about their jobs. I saw their skills in a new light, appreciated their communication and work as a team. Not important on a grand scale, but important to me in that I have come away from the experience with a much greater understanding and respect for a profession so different from my own.

Vignette # 115

PAUL KLEIMAN - Vignette 4

A Tale of Two Online Communities

My wife Jo and I are Jewish. Though not particularly religious, we are very much attached to some of the rituals and practices.

Last April Jo's father died, and it customary for the children to attend synagogue and say the Kaddish (the memorial prayer) at least once a day for a year. Only very religious Jews do that every day, but even non-religious Jews will say the Kaddish when the opportunity arises as a mark of respect. Jo wanted to say the Kaddish at least once a week on the Shabbat/Sabbath.

Judaism, like most religions, is very much based around the idea of a community, particularly worshipping together, usually in synagogue. The Kaddish, particularly, is only to be said in the company of others so that they can respond. Of course, with the Covid emergency in full swing, synagogues were shut along with almost everything else. A friend mentioned that a group of people from a synagogue in London had started a Shabbat service on Saturday mornings on Zoom. So we asked to join and received the link to the service.

Zoom Shabbat was started by a small group from within that community as soon as the first lockdown started back in March 2020. One of the key features is that there is no rabbi in charge. No spiritual leader. It is run by the community, for the community and, crucially, with the people from the community contributing. Different individuals lead different parts of the service every week including the traditional 'sermon' which is usually a fascinating, erudite, insightful, thought-provoking address often given by a leading member of a particular profession: lawyers, medical professionals, scientists, artists, writers, etc. One week we even had a Nobel Prize winner!

Crucially, as well as serving the important function of creating a community, Zoom Shabbat allows those in mourning or commemorating the Yahrzeit (remembrance) of a loved one to say the Kaddish amongst other people. What started as a service for about 30 members of a single synagogue in London has now grown to over 300 people attending every week not only from all over the UK but also the world. Many have joined in order to say the Kaddish, and it is always a very moving (and also chaotic!) moment when everyone unmutes and recites the familiar words.

At the end of the service those attending are randomly allocated to a breakout room to meet up and chat with three or four other people for a few minutes. Sabbath greetings are exchanged, connections made, and it is all very pleasant and a virtual simulation of what usually happens after the 'normal' service in a synagogue.

Jo and I are also members of another Jewish community that has gone online. This one is a much smaller one and based in Cornwall, where our daughter lives. That community meets on a Friday night, when Shabbat actually starts, and there are usually about 20 people attending.

Most weeks, just like the Zoom Shabbat service, the service is led by members of the community, and there a great and similar sense of a coming together, of belonging, of supporting each other, especially the 'chat' before and afterwards. But this last Friday night was very different, as the service was led by a well-known guest rabbi. The rabbi led the service in its entirety. There was no involvement in or participation by other members of the community. It was almost as if he was going through the religious motions, resulting in a peculiarly impersonal, unspiritual, uninspiring service...so unlike the usual service.

REFLECTION

Reflecting on these two experiences in regard to education, it occurred to me that there are parallels with what we might call, on the one hand, the traditional 'transmission' mode of teaching what is, essentially, a teacher-centred/ content-oriented curriculum and, on the other hand, student-centred/learning oriented curriculum where the teacher has moved from being the 'Sage on the Stage' to the 'Guide on the Side'.

What those two very different experiences also demonstrated was just how powerful and empowering a genuinely open, shared experience can be. How it can engender a real sense of belonging, of contributing, of supporting and being supported. All of which are so important if we want to engage in deep, rich, meaningful learning experiences.

Note:

If you're interested, an article about the phenomenon of Zoom Shabbat in North America appeared in The Guardian last May. There are some similarities but also significant differences between the one described in the article and the ones I describe above:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/may/28/zoom-shabbat-unexpected-joy>

Vignette # 116

Vignette 4

Domain: Emergence/Context for Learning

Narrative: In 2002 I completed my dissertation which included a creativity model with person, process, and product (figure on right). Then from 2008-2010, I lead a creativity faculty learning community and the group developed a “postmodern creativity model” in which place was the new emergent component (see Figure 1). I have included this model in several presentation and tried to get articles published with the model included but get push back about “postmodern creativity” – what does that mean?

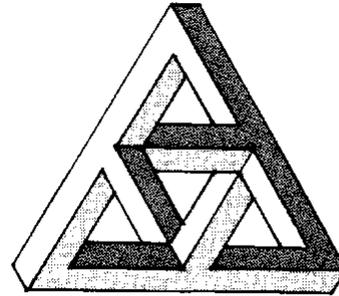
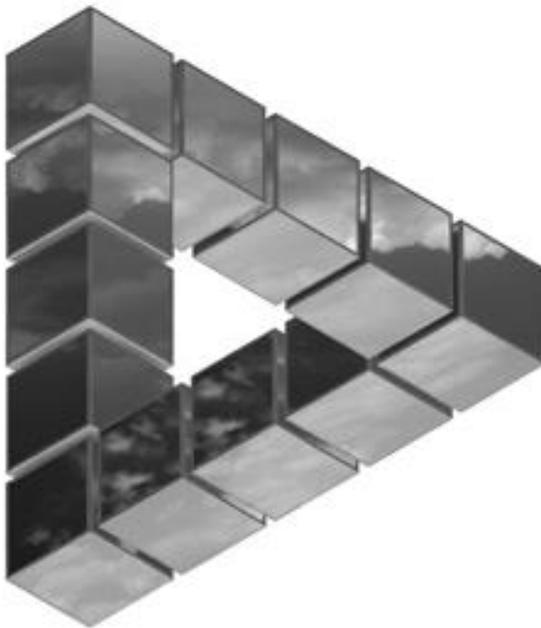


Figure 1. Model of creativity as seen in a postmodern context.



Place

- Time
- Freedom
- Access to resources

Person

- Cognitive style & abilities
- Behavior
- Emotion

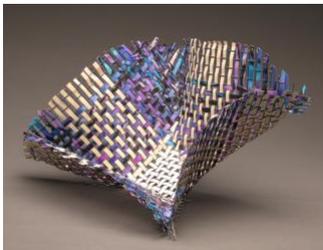
Process

- Motivation
- Initiative
- Formation & exploration

Product

- Attention & concentration
- Reflection
- Integration

Reflection:



And guess what: I’m just going to keep trying. The more I learn about how I learn, the emergent nature of my own understanding of emotions, my behavior, and belief in my abilities, my self-motivation and my ability to reflect and integrate as I go along – the more I believe in the value of the model and the work done by the group. Additionally, I keep staying the course with making. The work on the left is hardware cloth woven with strips cut from a print I

deconstructed with the belief that something better will come out of taking what I know, pursuing with curiosity what I want to learning, and incorporating that through reflection, and attention.

Vignette: #4**Domain: Family & friends) and new domain - (traditions & roots)****Date: 21 Feb 2021**

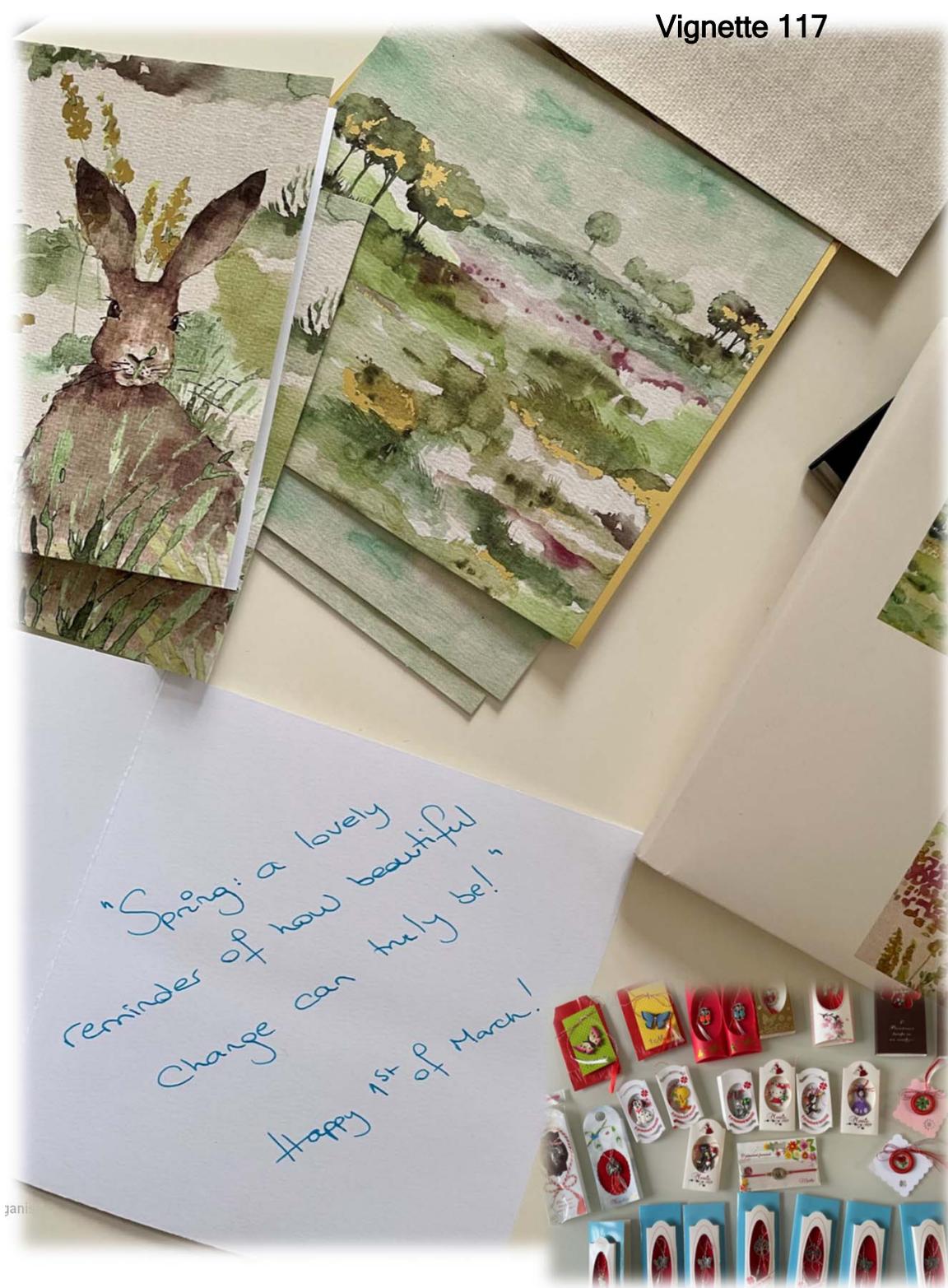
Keeping traditions alive

Narrative:

- Over the last few days I have diligently (and carefully!) been preparing a bunch of envelopes filled with lots of tiny and jolly spring symbols to send to my friends and family across the world.
- This is part of a Romanian custom where on the 1st of March we celebrate “Martisor” (literal translation – little March). What is it you ask? Well, it is a beautiful and ancient tradition related to the arrival of Spring and warm weather, also symbolizing love, respect, appreciation and friendship. On this day, women and girls typically receive a small trinket with a red and white string to be pinned to their jacket and worn for the first 8 days of March. You can read more about it [here](#).
- There are many legends and explanations for the symbolism and it precedes a few other March-related customs, all around the defeat of Winter by Spring. I have also recently learned that other cultures across Eastern Europe celebrate it too (or a similar version of it), which made me feel part of something broader, but also awoke by curiosity to learn more about differences and similarities.
- I cannot explain the joy and happiness it brings me to carefully assemble my envelopes, write a nice message and share my long-rooted traditions with those I hold dear. I specifically like receiving photos from my friends whose children love wearing the pins and sharing them at their schools!

Reflections:

- Every time I write a vignette, it makes me think more thoroughly about what it is that I’m sharing and why. On this occasion, I wanted to share the tradition with everyone in this group, as well as highlight one of my learnings which is around the nature vs nurture piece and how much of who I am today is due to customs and traditions and how much stronger they are when you live in a different country. And yet how nice to be able to share...



Vignette 119

Every week in this project I have written a vignette which then I have not shared that week. This may be in response to reading someone else's vignette or it could be because of something that has happened to me during the week.

So, I had written about the joy of zooming with grandson as part of the 'training' Molly to be a help to children reading. And I am including this subject principally so I can show the 'cute'



photos of grandson showing Molly his book and of course of Molly herself the furloughed unpaid therapy pet (needing a haircut). She is a small Australian labradoodle

But really, I want to talk about the emergence of forming new bonds of friendship and support through a yoga class. We are a group of women aged 50's up to until last year one woman in her 90's. (She is still driving but has stopped her yoga, even though she was the best in the class called Bendy Betty). Before Covid, we met once a week in a barn, carried out the yoga class and raced to coffee and scones in the local National Trust coffee shop. In fact, I would have happily missed out the yoga and gone straight to the coffee and scones.

Now we meet four times a week on zoom with our wonderful teacher who prepares her sessions with forensic detail (she used to be a lawyer). She manages to adapt each lesson to try and meet our individual physical and emotional requirements. Some of these women I have only met at the yoga classes but through the chat at the beginning of each class and at the end we have tried to support each other. And after nearly a year I realise that we have as a small group have tried to support each other through bereavement, loss of job, serious illness, puppy training, house moving, issues around wills, worry about family members, retirement, relationships, missing family who live in other continents, what we are 'allowed to do because of Covid and ' what we actually do' and of course the yoga.

So, my emergent thoughts are although the yoga is our common denominator; I wonder whether talking through a screen has freed us up to be honest with each other. Or is it that we trust each other because we see each other virtually at least three times a week. Or is that our yoga teacher stops the conversation from going on too long knowing that we can always chat on whats app after the class.

And I contrast this group with 'the housewives of any area' This is a group where some members have felt alienated and have left; where some hold dominance over others and others make pathetic excuses why they can't attend but never get round to actually dropping out (that is me). I found my answer this afternoon, the second group is Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austin in the modern age and the first group? I think it is because our teacher constantly reminds us of 'do no harm' to ourselves and each other.

Vignette 120

V4 A salad like no other

by Chrissi Nerantzi

Domain: Life

Instructions seem to get in the way, also extensive lists of ingredients. In cooking, I mean. Only in cooking? A complex meal, reminds me of a complex teaching session, in which things have been over engineered and a jungle has been created in which light struggles to get through. There is something beautiful about simplicity and I think it is harder to achieve than we think. Maybe easier in cooking than in teaching?



As I experiment in my work as an academic developer, I do it also naturally in every aspect of my life. That includes cooking. I regularly come up with dishes that are a fusion of ideas. Usually they are simple, such as holiday pasta... Spaghetti with feta, mint and butter. I find it disappointing when looking into a cookbook I realise that I don't have half of the ingredients... this is another reason why I often/most of the time start from what we have. It just seems to be a more satisfying tactic. I also love shopping and discovering new ingredients, markets especially but during the pandemic shopping is no longer something I enjoy. At the beginning of the pandemic I was scared to go into a shop and

avoided them altogether. I still rarely go to the supermarket.

Travelling back in time, hurtful memories surface... about how my cooking was perceived from a very young age when I trying to learn. Stories about my cooking skills or the lack of them, made others laugh, while I wanted to run away. However, I didn't stop experimenting and continued cooking. My holiday pasta has become an institution with my boys and created unique family memories as I first made it when we were on holiday on Lesbos, when

they were little.



The pandemic led to more collaborative cooking with my boys. Adam is our baker. He likes to be on his own in the kitchen. He gets all the ingredients out, measures them carefully and prepares the exact amount in bowls, all lined up in front of him, ready to be used. He also follows recipes by the book. I find this hard.

With the boys we have used some new recipes we found on the web, Simply Nigella for example became a Christmas success. We got for the first time ever strong flour for bread in 16 and 20 kilo bags as there was none to be found in the

supermarket for months. Nassi is now also a student and has been developing his own culinary skills further.

The boys have got used to and accept mummy's style of cooking and baking, even if it is not the best one around. I want them to learn to use their imagination, to improvise, to be resourceful and find ways forward when obstacles are in the way. Cooking is a valuable vehicle to achieve this...

Nothing gets wasted	Adam's lemon meringue	The famous Greek salad
		
Holiday pasta	Stuffed peppers	Ody's brownies
		

Vignette 121

My Learners Learning

One of the courses I am leading is a postgraduate course about Creative Pedagogies. The assessment moves away from our traditional forms of assessment and we are asking the learners (who are predominantly lecturers but also other educators in our institution) to submit one or two artefacts (as in the OED something produced by a human) they are using in their own teaching practice. The only really formal element is that we ask for a 500 word contextualising statement for the artefact which included literature and some reflection on learning from the course. Every year this is causing issues. The assessment is so wide and the control over the experience entirely in the hand of our learners that they really struggle to know where to start. I add more and more explanation to the assessment but still the struggle is real.

My Learning

Besides showing the learners examples from previous years' assessment, how else could I make the learners trust that they are not punished for something that is entirely their own? Do you think trust is an issue? Is it because we—particularly academics who went through the whole process including PhD—are so trained to stay within our lane, to follow detailed performative instructions that once these structures are taken away, dissolved, and the assessment literally states: Create something that is meaningful to you and your practice (you learners) the cognitive dissonance is so big that learners struggle to trust the process. I want my learners to trust the process rather than being goal oriented. Mind you during the course there are several points to obtain peer feedback on the artefacts, to discuss with us and with one another. Still the new equilibrium seems to only establish once the learners have their summative assessment back. I think today I would like to ask you to help me learn. How can I support my learners to reach this equilibrium before the summative assessment so this is not too stressful? (Comment: there is formative which becomes part of the summative, and there is a three hour long showcase session in which the learners show either their artefacts or pose a teaching challenge and obtain in situ peer feedback and feedback from us)



Vignette 122

Vignette 3

Catching up

Last-minute efforts have worked well for me in the past so my 'good resolutions' of a week or so ago have been over-written by old habits ...

Reading all the other accounts today (now caught up on them all) has been inspiring with so many resonances from my own past experience, such as:

- concerns about the often unpleasant 'politics' of higher education. In retrospect there were a couple of unsuccessful job applications which were extremely good news as success would have put me into political arenas. I may have had to prove the Peter Principle (people rise to a position where they are basically incompetent)
- appreciating skills in a new light when you can observe them first hand. My examples would include the guys (all male workers at that time) inserting windscreens in new cars with a bit of string in about 30 seconds. They had found a quicker and better way of doing it than the 'official' manual.
- understanding our animals, ranging from the way they go their own way to the relationships we develop with them
- counting blessings!

This got me speculating about commonalities and differences.

Reflection

In terms of commonalities, it looks like most of us share to some degree my experience of what I have now discovered as a result of this project – planned happenstance (thank you, Cathy). This is the notion that, rather than have a rigid plan, you can make progress by 'being active and doing the right kinds of things'. It seems to have some similarities to ideas which I have read - Richard Wiseman's research in 'The Luck Factor' where he found that people who were lucky tended to behave differently from people who were unlucky in life – they were much more proactive and positive and made the most of any opportunities they were offered. One illustration from my distant past – I was doing a Masters degree and was offered a tutor's job (serendipity works – personal contact by one of the tutors on the Masters). I took the role - teaching the same general topic area to HND students. I discovered that I really enjoyed teaching and that it was the best way to learn! We had some written exams on the Masters and I realised that I did not have to revise for them. Having to teach and be challenged on the material for a year (albeit at a slightly - often only very slightly - lower level) meant I knew the basics and could focus on finding the new research which the staff probably had not caught up with. In subsequent years, I regularly volunteered to teach areas/modules which were beyond my capability level when I started.

But the more profound realization from my catchup reading is how different we are. And that raises questions for me about my aspirations and ambitions re learning. Two alternatives:

- a) Should I try to look for something very new and challenging? Or ...
- b) Should I try to further develop areas where I have some basis as a starting point?

As an example, I would love to create some drawing or graphics which had some artistic merit. 'No chance' I hear my subconscious say. And all evidence so far supports this conclusion! I admire with some degree of envy the work that many of you do/have done. As far as creative visual art is concerned, I've decided that (a) would not be worth it. So I am working in other areas on (b).

And that started my reflection on education more generally. In an ideal world, we should be introducing everyone to new areas (a), discovering what they are good at, and then helping develop those areas (b). My own experience – school, university - *never* lived up to that. Has modern education changed to represent that ideal? (now worrying on behalf of grandchildren) I suspect not.

When I hear colleges and universities talk about 'student-centred education', I am often suspicious and disappointed. I have only really seen this once – in a special school for children and young adults with disabilities – where *everything* focuses on what the child can do and builds from that. My step-grandson is in that school and is making amazing progress.

My argument is that the regimentation and systems of further and higher education do not allow that sort of development for the most part. We are too keen to stuff people in wee boxes (modules)!

Rant (and wordcount) over.
Vignette 4 awaits.

Vignette 123

Cutting the grass: a fresh perspective!

Domain: Home

Narrative: Cutting the lawn around our house has never been my favourite activity, and as the years go by it does not seem to get any more attractive. In fact, the folk we bought the house of said something along the lines of 'we need to move, this garden has simply become too much for us'. Way back then I thought 'we'll be fine with that' but recently – and time has passed - their words have come back to me.

But today, the weather is warm, and sunny, and – here I am, lawnmower ahead of me, strimmer at the ready, feeling quite different. Actually enthused by the prospect. And here I go...

Reflection: So, what am I finding different? The task is the same, the tools/technology unchanged; my level of competence (or lack thereof) unaltered. The answer lies in me, and my reaction to the context. As I write this, I realise it's almost a relief, or perhaps a release. It's about emergence- not to a growing lawn but to a new year with a sense of warmth in it. This is not necessarily anything about vaccines, or timetables, it's more down to how I feel, not about grass-cutting, but about me and the world I live in. For, as Norman said in a previous post, Learning is about perception and relationships. Plus, as Andra, reflected, writing vignettes of itself brings the 'what' and 'why' into a stronger light and sharper focus. So, another bit of my learning here is that the sharing of the vignettes by others enriches my appreciation of my own experience. As a group of students at the end of the first week of a postgraduate professional programme I taught many years ago wrote '*we all arrived on different ships, but we're all in the same boat now*'. And there is more than a bit of that in the experience of this process for me.

Vignette 124

Vignette #5 Domain: Leisure. Feb. 28, 2021

I live near Lake Ontario. From my home I can see the water from several rooms. Within walking distance there are numerous parks and beaches and within driving distances there are more open access to lovely sightseeing vistas that spread as far as the eye can see. On Friday, around mid afternoon I drove by one of my favourite parks and was welcomed to the most iconic city of Toronto skyline from my neck of the woods. It was shrouded by several shades of poignant blues that I do not recall observing before. I stood there just clicking away on my camera trying to capture this massive scenery in a tiny image that certainly does not do justice to the magnificence of the moment.



Reflection

Currere, which involves examination of a person's accumulated body of knowledge, both academic and lived, allows for critical reflection of memories and in our case, moving from restorative to reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2001). I quickly went through my recollections of approximately 10 years being in this neighbourhood to determine whether I had been an audience to this particular colour schematic before and could not find a match. I cannot do justice to describing

the feelings I was experiencing throughout this episode of picture taking and standing under what looked like a massive blue umbrella being a spectator but yet being part of.

Learning

I took several pictures that day that will serve as a framework and anchor for my arts-based representations. These will be used in workshops and presentations involving the use of story-writing, through the medium of photography, metaphor and poetic expressions. It brings to mind the use of Crystallization, which combines symmetry and substance



with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionality, and angles of approach to arts-informed teaching and learning. I love the interplay in those transmutations, so going around to the various local parks I tried to capture this wonderful scenery from many angles, some more flattering than others.



Boym, S. (2001). *The future of nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

Vignette 125

Learned behavior

Domain Travel/another culture

We noticed on the first morning of our prolonged stay here in Zanzibar that some cute little sparrows would peck around on the sand in front of our lounges. So, we kept some bread from dinner and scattered it the following morning.

It was nice to see the sparrows enjoying the treat. However, the message must have got out because we soon found that larger crows started to appear and of course they scared off the tiny sparrows. Nonetheless, we noticed the sparrows were still able to find some crumbs after the crows had disappeared.

It was not long before the situation got out of hand. The crows invited all their relatives and friends and yesterday there were well over twenty of them actually waiting for us to come out in the morning as they knew our ritual. Learned behavior. In the process, we created a monster for ourselves and now have to scale back the practice.

What does this have to do with lifewide learning? Be patient. It gets worse. When we first started walking along the beach near the resort, young children would come up and say 'Jambo' or 'hello'. We thought this was nice and smiled as we keep walking. However, obviously we had not understood their real motive in greeting us and so the next time as we passed, they came up and asked straight out for a dollar. It appears that some tourists must have given them money in

the past and so their learned behavior is that a percentage of visitors will hand out money for nothing. Learned behavior. For better or worse, what impact is this having on their lifestyles now and into their future?



There's still more. For sixteen years, I worked for a Christian community organization in Australia. We were involved in many different welfare and support programs including food hampers for needy families. Of course, nobody ever wants a family to go hungry. However, we kept records of our distribution and it was obvious that certain households were in the habit of contacting us every fortnight and this same pattern was passed down to the next generation. We had the grandparents and the parents separately on our books. Learned behavior.

So, what have I learned from all this. Pure charity is not always the best way to help people. You all know the saying "Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach them to fish and you feed them for a lifetime". Well, its true.

I want to finish by referring to a comment in a previous vignette. Christine and I have now been 'stranded' here at our resort in Zanzibar for four months. Every evening we sit in the restaurant and each week we see new faces who have come for the usual duration of around 7 nights at the resort. Therefore, we have seen and casually observed lots of family groups. Far too often, while they are eating, we see the parents on their smart devices and the kids, of all ages, on theirs. Even toddlers sit there glued to cartoons on mum or dad's mobile. What message is this sending the next generation? What is their learned behavior?

Covid has pushed us into online lifestyles for the moment. However, educators and society leaders must strive to ensure that in the 'new normal', we nurture environments where our children grow up in real not virtual communities.

Vignette 126

Vignette 5: Virtually Human

Domain: Professional Practice

Today my new online subject, for a new online degree, goes live. There are 40 students, and I am super excited to watch them engage with the online pages that I've spent over 600 hours (I checked the LMS analytics) creating. The subject is called 'Learning and its Trajectories' and the students are professionals who have some remit for (adult) learning in their professional fields (e.g. nurse educators, senior teachers, L&D professionals, community educators etc).

This is my first time designing an online subject and so there was a lot to learn. Today seems like a good day to reflect on this (not to mention fulfilling a commitment to this group to produce a vignette). So, I thought I would make a list and see what happens. But before I do, I wanted to share a related story.

The subject is a rewrite of an existing subject that was offered face-to-face (with a similar cohort). It's a (sort of) foundational subject that aims to help the diverse cohort to get off to a good start in their post-graduate studies. Because of the cohort diversity, there is a range of starting points when it comes to understandings about learning and learning theory.

The subject traces 3 trajectories. First, it starts with the notion of 'learning pathways', then to 'lifelong and life-wide learning', then to 'learning ecologies. Next, it traces learning theory from 'traditional thinkers and their ideas' through to 'contemporary learning theories' then to 'learning futures'. A third trajectory is that of the students themselves who develop skills and capacity to succeed in their chosen program.

Vignette 127

Domain: Creative Thinking/Collaboration/Connection

Title: "Let's be creative - together!"

Narrative

I have just presented my first ever virtual workshop at an NQT (Newly Qualified Teachers) conference, focusing on innovation in education. Typically, my face to face sessions are practical and hands-on, so the prospect of presenting on-line caused me a few sleepless nights. How would I engage the audience on a digital platform? How would I facilitate a workshop, as opposed to deliver a lecture? I needed to think creatively, and most importantly collaborate with others.



Over the past year several friendships have emerged through connecting on Twitter. I have become good friends with an artist called Darrell Wakelam, whose 'paper plate dove' is shown here. Darrell describes himself as the 'King of Cardboard'; his ingenuity is incredible. He has acquired many followers globally during lockdown, as his artwork uses everyday objects, and is therefore extremely accessible. I knew that showcasing Darrell's ideas would inspire beginning teachers, and I was not wrong! The teachers loved the simplicity of his art work; arguably the best ideas for teachers are those that are easy to implement!

I was fortunate to have the support of a wonderful moderator during the virtual workshop. Catherine - my on-line collaborator - monitored the participant chat and deftly posed questions during the workshop. She read comments from the audience and also offered her own reflections. I have known Catherine for many years, so I had trust in her ability to keep the creative flow moving forward at the right pace. I know that I struggle to keep to time in face-to-face workshops; my enthusiasm literally bubbles over! But today with Catherine's help, the session literally flowed to the perfect finish.

Reflection and Learning

So what learning emerged from today's creative workshop? Importantly, I learned that the success of the session was not down to my presentation; the partnership in the delivery was the key element. It was definitely not about me – it was absolutely about us!

Paraphrasing the thinking of the developmental psychologist Howard Gardener: Creativity is not always about having an original, one-of-a-kind idea. When I explained to teachers today that many professionals working in the creative industries 'build-upon' the ideas of others, there seemed to be a huge sense of relief. To be frank, I don't think I've ever had an original idea in my life!

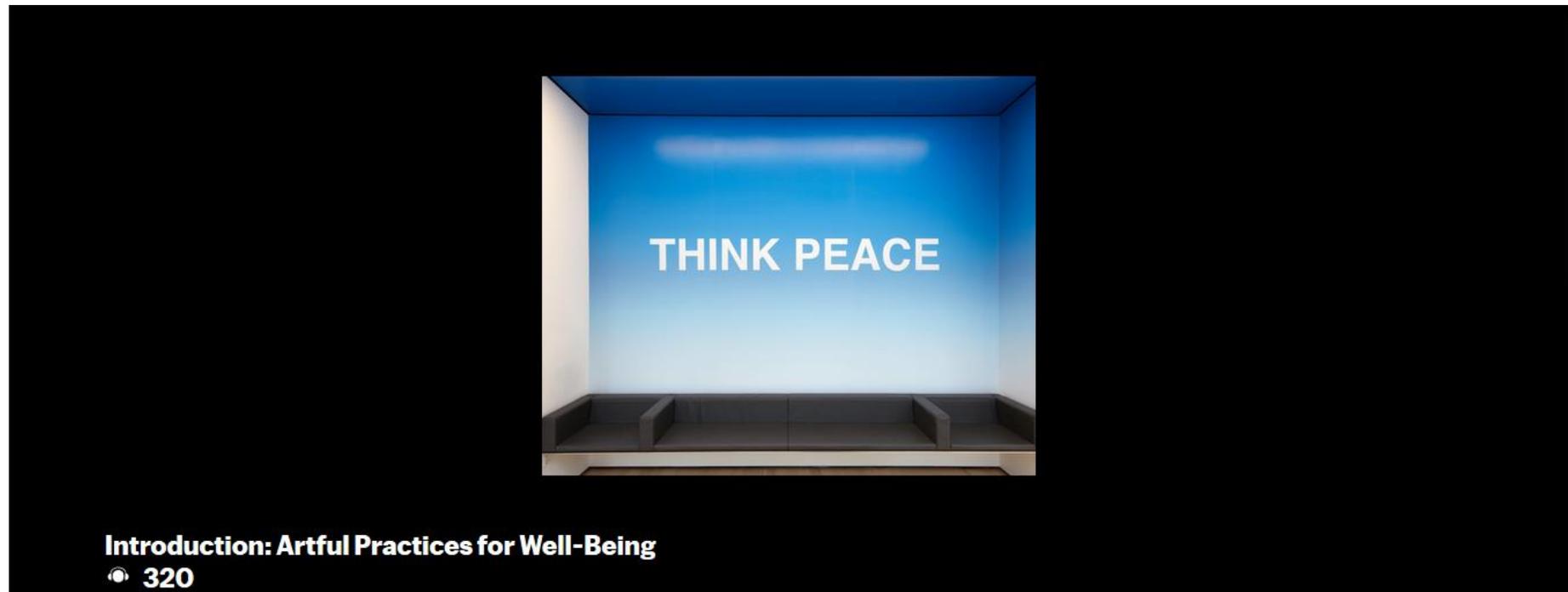
In my domain map, I refer to 'standing on the shoulders of giants'. Today, I felt much more confident presenting to an unknown audience by sharing creative insights from colleagues. I felt more comfortable promoting other people's work; I could really give their ideas a 'shout out'! I was not being the show-off; I was showing off their talents and expertise. This was so much easier. Thank you Darrell and Catherine for helping me to be creative in a brave new virtual world. Together, I know that we have helped other teachers to think creatively too.

Vignete 128

Vignette 3

Title: Emotional Well-being through Art and Meditation

Domain: Life and Spirituality



<https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/309/3984>

In my previous vignettes I mention that I am spending considerably more time outdoors these days like many other people. Being outdoors energises me and it helps me ‘notice’ things that I would have quickly passed over in the busyness of life pre-pandemic. Feeling more connected with nature and learning to slow down elevates my mood and thinking. Interestingly, the act of slow looking reportedly helps people to be more present in the moment and aids wellbeing. A chance discovery of a series of podcasts titled ‘Artful Practices for Well-Being’ (see <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/322>) introduced me to the idea of slow looking using artwork and guided meditations.

For me, the strength of this initiative lies in the multi-sensory aspect of these resources and the way in which they invite you in to the experience from your own position and guide you along to more expansive ways of viewing all the while enabling you to bring your own interpretations to the artwork on display. And as MoMA's Department of Education (2020) adds:

The skills used to engage with art have practical use in our daily lives. The curiosity to question an artwork and reflect on one's response to it connects to an ability to self-reflect and consider what emotions one is experiencing. Spending time with an artwork that you don't understand—or that you even dislike—relates to the ways all of us can build capacity within ourselves to see things from multiple perspectives and expand our window of tolerance. The ability to be in front of an artwork and notice the details allows one to be in the moment, and aligns with the same mindfulness skills that can help manage stress. The desire to express oneself creatively relates to a need to feel seen, heard, and understood. All of these things together can build up resilience, support, and emotional well-being, and help people feel more in control even during times of chaos and uncertainty.

The works convey to me in a meaningful way the opportunity to see things from multiple perspectives from a place of careful looking, and the importance of groundedness. I think these podcasts resonate with me because the messaging within is so relevant to where I am in my life right now. I am attending to my emotional life to an extent that I previously did not, prioritising it high on my agenda in life.

Right time, right place to awaken to this new learning!

Vignette 129

Title: **What makes me want to work?**

2 Domain: **Work**

3 Narrative:

I am currently furloughed from my part time job as a premises administrator. My job is concerned with the administration for premises related and compliance tasks: disposing of general commercial, office and building waste as well as hazardous waste; routine building maintenance; regular testing for Legionella; annual asbestos monitoring etc. Knowledge gleaned through my lifetime of home DIY, general house maintenance and disposing of and recycling household waste items, helped me get to grips with the job. Before starting, I was vaguely aware of the legislation, environmental standards and accreditations that govern and regulate businesses. It has been interesting to discover these as the context for my work, and to see how such regulation is designed to protect employees and volunteers, the public, wildlife and the environment.

My experience of using office systems and software, team working, liaison with colleagues with specialist expertise, and of initiating and promoting organisational and culture change also assists me in my current job. I am particularly interested in the way the organisation relies on the work of both paid staff and volunteers. Most teams include staff and volunteers, with the latter being in the majority, and it is fascinating to be part of this collaboration.

4 Reflections:

My current line manager has told me that she sees that my motivation is linked to how the work I do connects to "the bigger picture". This rings true for me. Throughout my career, my work has been involved with initiatives, projects, policy, institutional strategies etc. to achieve longer term goals. I suppose, I could take for granted that my day to day work in these roles was key to incremental steps to achieve a vision for the future.

I have paid work and also volunteering within my present portfolio, and I have been thinking about what motivates me in these different contexts. I realise that being thanked for my volunteering hours is extraordinarily rewarding. I suppose that thanks have been a rarity in my experience of paid employment. I make a point of thanking the volunteers I work alongside for the gift of their time.

I have learned that my tolerance of work pressure is linked, in part, to financial reward. I had not noticed that money was a key motivator for me (I have been lucky to be paid enough to live well). I now recognise that the being offered a bigger salary, enabling me to be in a better position to pay bills, buy a family holiday etc. affected the level of stress I have been willing to manage. Having recently experienced a stressful predicament, I found that I was prepared to see the difficulties through (I am practiced in doing this), but I do not wish to continue to bear such a level of stress as a volunteer.

I have been furloughed from my paid work since last April. The whole organisation has been restructured and downsized since I last worked, in response to the impact of the pandemic. I anticipate that much will have changed by the time I return to my job. I have regular contact with my line manager to keep in touch, and receive updates and newsletters, which help me to feel connected to my workplace and the organisation as a whole. This bigger picture feeds my purpose at this stage of my life, and this might explain the startling level of relief I felt that the restructure did not make my job redundant.

Vignette 130

Vignette 3 : “Stepping outside”

Domains : Travel – Home – Work

Narrative :

9/11 happened and not so long after, my American employer along with other electronics companies, went bust. The Celtic Tiger would never last forever although it would persist well into the 2000s. It was time to re-evaluate things and having spent two years with my French girlfriend, the idea of living for a while in France was a no-brainer. France was not a huge unknown to me since as a boy my parents brought me and siblings to places like Normandie, Paris, La Baule, Cognac and various locations slightly north of the Garonne. Despite leaving family and friends, somehow I knew that this would be a very long trip abroad and I was sure to let people know it so they would come to visit us. I also somehow knew that this would be a learning opportunity more valuable than any foreign holiday could offer.

The move was admittedly thrilling for some time and it was amazing to have our family and friends all together to celebrate our wedding. My work occasionally brought me to various countries around the world and I incessantly found it fascinating to observe the underlying typologies during flights.

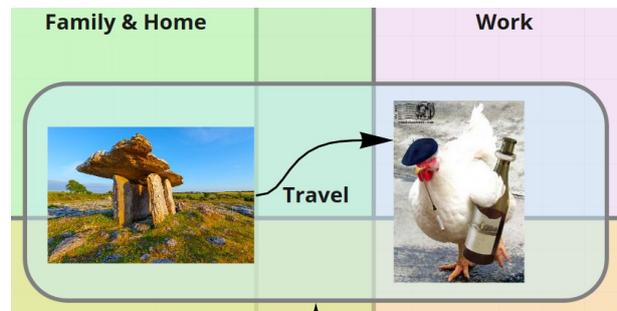
I was discovering the world for myself and while it opened my eyes, I was all the while realising that the Ireland I had left behind was not so much a state but an ever evolving organism that I would have to get to know again should ever we decide to move back. With careers, children, a school calendar, activities and routines in place it seemed clear that a move back at this stage would ignore the investments that had been made.

What I was not expecting was to be taken back at the aesthetic beauty that Ireland always had but that I had barely seen before. I didn't expect to see such profound and progressive social evolution in such a short time either. The Irish state standing up to the Vatican against abuse was amazing, the adoption of same sex marriages was a surprise and the seemingly day-over-night success of the ban on smoking in pubs had me in shock. The lengths to which the Irish go to assert identity all while passionately integrating British premiership football into their lives is not without irony and it's interesting albeit self explanatory to see how close the Irish and British cultures are when compared to France, Spain or Germany.

In reading the vignettes, noting references and exploring the resources that are being shared within this group, I often feel like I am traveling and visiting the world around me once more. All the while, I keep in mind that the beautiful images, stories and gastronomic savors that you share are only part of the story and that there's plenty more to discover.

Reflections :

Having fulfilled my objective to step outside the front door, I managed to go so much further than I had anticipated and although I'm happy to say that I can now spend more time with my immediate family, travel did help me acquire an array of new perspectives that helped me look at my own home country with a more critical view. I wonder how often I should remind myself that every concept, construction or process harbored within the mind should be reviewed, tested and improved so as to better reflect reality. To do this though we often need to look from afar.



Vignette 131

Vignette 4

A custom of use path below the house provides muddy access through the trees to the shore. It is rocky, large black stones that you can jump between to avoid slipping on the seaweed. I go down every day walking and rock hopping along to a small river and then onto a stretch of gravel sand and then across more rocks to a tidal island that I can see from my office window. The dog does not like it if I use a different route. On Wednesday, when the tide was in and the river in spate when I raised my head into the rain, Sorley (a border collie) stopped at the side of the river and looked back at me. If he is having second thoughts, I will not make it. With my waterproofs and care, I can cross when the water is up to my knees, and the spray goes right over me. There is a thrill to it. That day, no chance, I cannot make it, and Sorley will not cross, but he is also very reluctant to go around, to trace through the woods to a bridge upstream. But he does.

The next day the wind and the river are down, and the tide is out. I can see the sand that is revealed at low tide. It is still windy, an easterly blowing into my face as I walk towards the island. The dog is ahead of me. When I get to him, he is looking intently at me and then out to the waves. His right paw is raised, following his gaze, I see two young otters in the water. It is almost as if they are surfing. Sorley looks at me, he stares into me, and I nod, low and slow. He moves towards the edge of the water.

Years ago, when I first saw him one paw up in the seaweed slow and low through the rocks, I wondered what he is was doing. Then suddenly, he had an object in his mouth, which he shook vigorously. Panic, shit, he has caught an otter, "Sorley, Sorley, that'll do". He dropped it then, and he has dropped the others he has caught. He has not caught one for a long time because now I am far more vigilant. I watch for the telltale signs, I watch what he is doing, watch for the paw up, the stare back to me, the slow low steps.

Now when he looks back, I nod he can go on or shake my head for him to stop. It is not just that I look for. I check the wind. If it is in my face, it's a good sign day for seeing an otter. The tide needs to be half out as this creates a current on the island's far side, and the otters seem to feed there. These other signs are part of it, but I wouldn't see them as frequently as I do if it was not for Sorley. There is an idea that our sense of self extends into the tools we use, that when we use a tool, it becomes an extension of ourselves. Our relationship is not instrumental, Sorley is not a tool, but it is an interesting train of thought.

Sometimes when he looks it as if he is saying, "can I go, please please", sometimes it is, "look here, you idiot with your dull senses, there is a fucking otter right here". It is my senses extend through him, I cannot hear the sounds or pick up the scent, but I can learn to read the dog's body language and couple that with signs from around me. I found an old book written by a gamekeeper that said they used collies for hunting otters. I check with my father. "Yes, that is right", he remembers his father skinning otters and selling the pelts.

Friday is my wife's day off, and we walk together down to the island. Rather than walk to the isthmus, I take us up a rocky rounded cliff to get to the high ground. Sorley has a stick. He always has a stick when my wife comes. She is better at throwing things for him than I am. I see the otters first and point them out to my wife, "look", I say. Sorley drops the stick, and the paw comes up. We watch it fish for a while, we are close enough to hear it crunch, then my wife and I lose sight of it in the brown seaweed, but the dog stares at a place on a rocky outcrop, and even I can hear the throaty bark of an otter telling us to piss off.

Vignette 132

Mixed Methods

Work domain

This week I have had four independent instances where I have been able to participate in discussions in some depth that explore the benefits and problems of Mixed Methods research. The first of which was during the first of four formal study sessions from UCL as part of my doctoral studies. We discussed the 'Quant Qual' balance and the related ontological and epistemological stance. Our task was to prepare an answer to the question in 'How can we use mixed methods if quantitative and qualitative approaches are underpinned by such different paradigms/philosophical positions that contradict each other?' Fast track one hour, and the team discussion to prepare for a Teacher Effectiveness study in a LMIC centred around the challenges of only using an online survey to explore teacher effectiveness. So, we created a mixed method study, but my colleague commented 'Oh here we go again. Mixed Method because we don't know how to do any one study well enough'.

'MM' discussion number three came about as I worked with a colleague to prepare an abstract for an upcoming conference. 'I really can't see why you would ever do a single study', he said, 'the triangulation you get from a Mixed Method approach is much closer to real life. It's intuitive.' Discussion four arose during the final preparations for my own research into CPD in another LMIC. My supervisor suggested that my interviews, literature review and content analysis were going to produce a lot of data. Was I sure that could manage it all within a 20,000-word assignment?

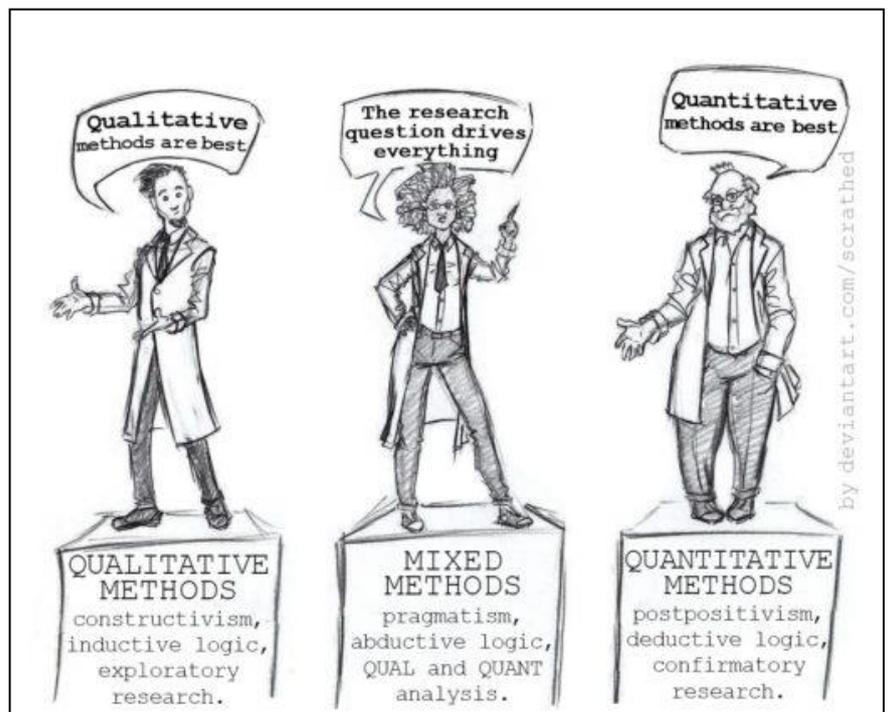
Reflection

Just tell me the answer!

All of the curriculum materials I create (pretty much) clearly emphasise the benefits of constructivism, finding things out for ourselves building on prior knowledge. Exploring, pausing, stumbling, falling and getting back up....hopefully ending up with a higher vantage point than when we started ([James Nottingham 'The Pit'](#) – if you haven't seen that already, is an image I like). But when the stakes are high (in this case satisfying a client, moving up through doctorate studies and the moral imperative to the best I can for LMIC learning communities) it is frustrating not to be able to easily settle on an answer. Although intellectually I agree with the swampy lowlands that Schoën encourages us to wallow within, it is hard to persist in such an environment when the pressure to 'solve' is pushing you out in search of a quick fix or final score. Is Mixed Methods research more likely to help me answer the research question or not??

I can see why teachers when faced with bewildered students 'just tell them the answer' (**just add a zero**) because the pull of a quick solution and a satisfied learner is hard to resist. But I don't believe this mindset will help ultimately as the dynamic world within which we live reveals increasingly complex problems that can not be solved with a unitary solution.

So I will persist with my investigations into the effectiveness of Mixed Method research and through experience/reflection, some expert support and a few muddy boot walks in the swampy pit, I expect to reach the useful conclusion that context is king once again...but also that sometimes, just being given the answer enables you to move forward when external pressure is such that if you don't you will sacrifice the opportunity to participate at all. There is something here about risk which I will come back to another time also.



Vignette 133

Vignette: Sometimes there are no explanations for what learning means Domain Family / selves

Today is the 22nd anniversary of the death of my wife's first husband. It's a beautiful spring day which fills us with joy but we are sad, such is the way that happiness and sadness intermingle in life. We talk about him and there is a ritual, my wife and her two daughters who live with us buy pots of plants and visit his grave. I buy an orchid for them to show them that I care about their loss and how they feel. In a few weeks it will be my turn, my first wife also died 22 years ago, and my three children and I will pass through this same sad reflective space. My point is – what does learning mean when confronted with such loss? What does learning to live with loss that extends across a lifetime mean? Sometimes there are no adequate explanations for what learning means, but we still have to do it.



Vignette 134

Title: Thinking finances and values

Domain: Environment

Background: Since leaving home I've been financially independent. Often savings were modest and at times credit cards were accruing interest. Thank fully, those days of scraping from pay to pay have been behind me for quite sometime. Budgeting is not rigorous, but I have an overall understanding of what my quarterly bills are and price points for certain grocery items. A few of my friends think I'm frugal, but I disagree; we just have different priorities.

Narrative: I woke up this morning thinking I should sit down and draw up a budget. This concern has arisen from recent conversations with people financially supporting others. Plus, with Christmas and the lack of income over this period, deciding to increase mortgage repayments, wanting to contribute to superannuation, etc. etc it's a good time to take stock of where I am, what's coming in, and where I want to be in 6 months, 12 months, and so on.

Sitting down for breakfast, the news in the background, and flipping through a catalogue received in the mail this week I wonder how people can justify spending AU\$175 for salad servers or AU\$4990 for a gold phantom premier speaker. I find myself wondering why I even look in this catalogue. Yes, I really liked the Royal Dulton jug for a modest AU\$99.95 but I've successfully managed entertaining for 30 plus years without a jug and won't be getting one.

As I flick through this increasingly 'absurd' catalogue, in the background, the news has played, and a panel is speaking of the Government's decision to increase the unemployment JobSeeker rate to \$40 a day. COVID has brought this change. Everyone, at least on the panel, realises the unemployment payment remains insufficient for living costs and employment seeking. An acknowledgement is made by a panel member that this is the first 'significant' rise in unemployment benefits in decades. During the same time the aged pension has increased numerous times.

Many years ago, I was unemployed, and I recall paying just over half my benefit in rent. A casual cleaning job once a week paid for my utilities. I managed to get by, and in fact credit being unemployed with my decision to stop smoking. The times were challenging but I was independent and starting to breathe, pun somewhat intended, far easier.

Thinking of my current situation I wonder what I can do to help people when the COVID unemployment payments reverts to the new general rate. How can people justify spending \$175 on salad servers? Thinking of the dichotomies I consider the irony - I'm reclined on one of three pieces making up my AU\$3000 leather lounge seats (bought with a significant cash gift from a family member).

Reflection: It's very easy not to think about people without work and how they 'manage' to get by on unemployment benefits. I know I'd struggle if my circumstances changed. My savings and mortgage overdraft would deplete fairly quickly. I'm sure I'd manage but the morale would be damaged and where I would end up geographically or vocationally is unknown.

A divide between people is present, and large, and increasing. Poverty is present but seemingly unthought and unseen by many. The Government has reluctantly increased unemployment benefits because of COVID. More needs to be done.

At the end of the day my budget remains a thought not actioned. I'll keep a track of things as I have in the past. I'll not end up where I was 30+ years ago – I think. I continue to think about a concern that is so large, closer, yet still remote.

Vignette 135

#Vignette 5



A few days ago, I was wonderfully pleased by my encounter with a person I had met many, many years ago. It started with a casual meeting and then there was a phase of keeping in touch while we both maintained a curious watch on each other. With the promise of setting up a zoom meeting we left time and circumstances to guide our way. The day and time arrived for us to zoom meet and what an incredible meeting it was. It started with the usual conventional pleasantries and then moved into a deeper conversation on education and how cognitive capitalism is taking stance in different countries with new or not so new provisions. We talked about each other's parcours from different points of view and age as I have still a bit to cover before retirement and he is now retired but full of energy and passion for his profession.

The beauty of polite and erudite conversation where each listen to the other with grace and involvement. Praising without exaggeration, asking without prying and investigating without assuming.

I found that the conversation was like a walk in the woods when I feel tuned with nature, in this case human nature. The flow of conversation moved and swayed, jumped, and sat still as we listened, talked, asked and answered. Visions were swapped illustrating differences and many similarities and then the evening grew into night and ops... it's dinner time. Keep in touch, keep in tune let's do it again.

To sum up the conversation this was a sort of job interview but there was no job there yet just an idea and how we could meet, if we could meet.

Reflection

This was the best potential job interview I have ever experienced because it was all hypothetical and in the making. No strings tied. It was getting to know each other with reflections on where we are and what could be. I was so grateful for the words spoken as I found a mentor in the person I was talking to while he found inspiration in my experience and educational vision.

Now, how often does this happen? When have you last met someone whose conversation was so pleasant and deep that you almost felt that it was a case of serendipity?

Some say that nothing happens by chance. Chance is what we can't explain. It happens when we least expect it and takes us where we can't imagine.

It might help thinking that if we don't have expectations, we are more open to what comes and experience it with bigger, brighter eyes and an open mind.

Where at work I had to make a strong stand to underline my position and expertise here I found a place in the sun, a lush garden of common thoughts that opened my weekend with a wonderful view on encounters.

No matter how brief an encounter you have with anybody, you both change.

Carolyn Kizer

I have now grown into the habit of painting my learning experience. Sometimes colour, form and line can speak the invisible words that are hidden in between the lines.

Vignette 136

Vignette 4: Connecting the threads

My ambition for this vignette was to produce a beautiful and elegantly crafted narrative which seamlessly integrated all the diverse thoughts that have emerged from both my own musings and reading all the truly fascinating accounts that this project has generated.

You may have already guessed that my ambition outstripped reality ... not for the first time.

But I have been thinking a lot about learning ... and that has been a very welcome outcome of this project. Not just my own learning – also becoming more observant of the ways that you can see learning happen in the people we know and love. And also of course the animals ...

Given that learning is often a rather messy and jumbled progression rather than the linear process which some study skills texts imply, I hope that this uncertainty is a step towards my realization which will be fully expressed in Vignette 5 – we shall see.

So – a few rather random events/reflections from the week:

1. Learning from the cat

Ronald's observations reminded me of previous dog encounters but it is our rescue cat who is surprising us at the moment in two ways: her recent increase in self-confidence has made her both more relaxed/affectionate and more proactive in getting our attention and making specific requests. She may have been watching too much 'Simon's Cat' while we have been out on the daily exercise: <https://simonscat.com/films/simons-cat-polished-paws/>

This does illustrate the importance of confidence and maybe that will be one thing that I can make some progress on over the next week in terms of focusing on how I develop confidence in areas that are personally challenging.

2. Ventures into new communities

Part-inspired by this project experience, I have developed a more profound appreciation of the importance of the 'learning community' although I have not lost a more cynical view that this has become a bit of a 'magic buzzword' when used in promotional materials from universities and colleges.

So the 4-week cookery community starts today. We all cook live over Zoom to a pre-circulated recipe under the watchful webcam of someone who I have never met and who knows what we should be doing.

About to join another community of people interested in magic (the conjurer variety as opposed to anything mystical). This is sponsored by a magic shop based near London so it will be interesting to see how they 'use it' as they are obviously hoping to increase custom. So will the community become a 'genuine' learning community or will it be subverted by the commercial pressures? Companies and corporations may start from what seem to be altruistic motives

I have a very peripheral role in one of the local community groups so maybe it is time to think about anything else I can contribute ...

3. Learning style?

In the broader world of education, this concept has been remarkably resilient. The significant pile of research which argues against it seems to have had limited impact. This last week I came across several examples which used the concept as 'established fact.'

My scepticism resurfaced as I reflected on my own preferred approach to acquiring new skills. Trying to work out a particular technique, I realized that I did not fully understand any of the explanations in the books. Youtube videos and demos came to the rescue. But this does not make me a visual learner as defined in the learning style literature. Another theme to review for that 5th vignette where all will be revealed?

Vignette 137

Vignette 4 Inter-generational learning

Domain Family

My grandson has been to stay for a couple of nights and this is allowed as he is on our bubble during lockdown. He provides a new and exciting outlook on life and in particular joy and laughter. He is 3 and we have been enjoying the sunshine and been on some lovely walks around country parks and the canal near the where we live. He loves discovering new things and finding things and exploring and feeding the ducks and geese.



I often sing him nursery rhymes so when we found a worm on the artificial grass at the park, it was a good time to start singing 'There is a worm at the bottom of the garden and his name is wriggly worms. He knows all of the words but I can only remember a couple of lines but join in with him and he does not mind that I am singing badly or out of tune. We both enjoy the connection and familiar sounds. It made me think of how we learn these rhymes as children ourselves. The rhyme and the rhythm help children hear the repetitive sounds and syllables in words, which in turn help with their language



development and learning to read. According to Mem Fox from Reading Magic "Experts in literacy and numeracy have discovered that if children know eight nursery rhymes by heart by the time they are four year's old , they're usually amongst the best readers by the time they are eight "

This is why they are passed on through the generations and become familiar tunes lodged in our brains and how comforting they are to us. Another one of our favourites is two little Dickie birds which my Great Uncle Harry used to sing to me.

CAREER

As well as the familiar, I also like to learn new skills and so I volunteered to record a video for instagram for National Careers Week representing my colleagues and explaining how Careers Consultants can help students and our role at the university as I always put myself forward even with things that are unfamiliar to me that will put me in the spotlight and look a bit of a fool . I find myself saying yes a great deal !

Reflection

Having a grandchild has helped me to have a different outlook on life and learning. I love how fascinating he finds the world and the people in it. He has a happy demeanor and likes making people laugh and having fun. He has a thirst for knowledge and always want to find out more and learn new facts and skills. I am keen to pass on my love of learning and encourage him and see the world through his new eyes.

Vignette 138

Vignette 2... Encounters of wonder with fellow humans.

At school drop off today there is a car in front of me parked. It is a much smaller car to mine. She must have dropped somebody at the forest school and it looks she is attempting to park. The space is limited yet there is abundant space for the car to manoeuvre and turn. I feel the driver's tension from where I am sat as I see the car is trying to manoeuvre a couple of times but seems to struggle.

I turn my whole body back to my baby, as he is in the back seat of my car – in my mind's attempt to not make this person feel even more self-conscious with me staring at her.

She stops. She steps off the car and comes towards me... She is a middle-aged lady. I roll down my window down "are you ok?" I ask.

She says to me " *I'm useless at driving, worthless; do you think I have space to turn around here?*" . I notice her voice sounds a little shaky and I am now aware of a sinking feeling in my heart hearing those words. I too recognise them. I have uttered them to myself in the past many a time.

I empathised with her words and I shared " *That is such a harsh feeling to carry for yourself. I too feel the way you do about my driving sometimes*" ; I then humourously but honestly said " *in fact, I was waiting for you to leave first so that I feel that I have more space to manoeuvre too with ease*". We both share a moment of laughter. Her eyes lit and looked a bit surprised! I continue, " *so if I manage to manoeuvre this car that's bigger than yours so can you*"... It appeared she felt moved by this? She went on to say how she has often been told by her husband for her driving. I felt sad on her behalf... I listened intently and I offered some reassurance and then I left first to allow her the space to leave without any extra-pressure...

As she stood a few meters away witnessing me slowly doing my manoeuvring; I was left hoping that maybe she was managing to connect with that part of her that is trustworthy and valuable.

Reflection: This incident took me on different reflecting paths... where do I start... My story goes back to a bully driving instructor I had when I got my driving licence in my late teens. How a traumatised driving instructor (I do believe aggression and bullying is the result of trauma, though I can stand firm against any of that behaviour I can hold compassion for the person) has influenced me for many years. In actual fact how much "harmful teaching" goes a long way and what impact it can cause to the "learner". How much power plays a role in our efforts to "teach" and how much attention do we pay on this matter in our academic roles? I then thought of her husband. What might be happening behind closed doors for any person in any given moment. What do you say to someone, a stranger, who so openly shares their struggles... did I honour her opening? Should I have stayed longer to chat? I felt anger and rage, on her behalf, - potentially carrying her own suppressed anger? - that she allows her husband to treat her disrespectfully.

Before I know it, here I was again recognising that I was connecting with women in my lineage who in different but similar ways have allowed disrespect in their lives by male figures. It led me to reflect on my life and my relationship with the masculine in my own life. Then I thought of the men in my family and that for some of them this is all they have known, perhaps also seen or heard.

Back on the here and now...then this took me to my role as a parent – *I know, its quite mad and busy in this brain of mine, stay tuned-*. How can I bring up my boys in such a way so that they appreciate honour and respect the women in their lives?. How do I contribute to society in such a way so that they become the chain-breakers of past trauma/ stereotypes/ and stop perpetuating gender inequality ? Do I invite the respect towards my own self from him? Do I even offer him the respect he truly deserves at all times so that he will have an embodied way of being respected, loved and nurtured by a woman ?

These are not new reflection areas for me, however i find it fascinating that life throws at us various experiences so that we can appear to continue this ongoing learning that is forever unfolding.

I wish I could see this woman again to tell her what a gift her sharing has been for me today.

Vignette 139

Vignette #4 – Storing and Retrieving

Domain: Work

With my partner taking his turn to put our children to bed, I took the opportunity to try and get a few additional work(ish) tasks done. I had no specific tasks in mind, but always have work ongoing with the Staff Network that I chair, and now too with this Research Project. I found my way to the job of creating a '[Resource List](#)' for the Staff Networks, with books and website links to interesting reading materials for our members.

I hadn't used the Resource List tool (which is the University's Reading List system) for probably 18 months or more, as a result of maternity leave and then other projects/priorities. So it was definitely going to be a case of "re-learning" what I had once known... and I immediately found myself getting slightly frustrated at the fact it wasn't just magically coming back to me. I was impressed with the slightly more user-friendly interface to when I had last used the system, and pondered how 2 years in tech is actually a significant amount of time... but also how slow Universities usually are to update systems and software.

Initially I thought that I might just read up on some of the training materials for the Resource List tool... but I quickly realised that I wouldn't be able to get my head round it all unless I was actually putting the learning into practice as I went along – so the best thing was just to start creating the actual list. Unfortunately my next realisation was that you need to request to have new lists set up – so I did this, and then wondered if I could go back to my previous lists (now out of date) and use those to practice. I then spent 40 minutes or so clicking back and forth from the instructions tab (on an online course, on our VLE), to the library search tool, to the actual Resource Lists tool – 3 different tech platforms/systems, but at least they were single sign-on! I also found a fourth system along the way that requested a new account set-up with new username and password - BrowZine, a tool for following and reading academic journals online (in a more accessible way?!).

Reflection:

Amongst other things, this process made me think about the aspects of learning which is finding the appropriate way to store information, so that we can easily retrieve it when we need to. This is clearly a challenge at an organisational level – as the amount of different (and only partially integrated) tools/systems at my institution demonstrates. It's not just storing/retrieval of academic materials or scholarship either – for me to be effective in my job role, I also need to be able to store (somewhere) the information on how to use the various systems. So the technology has been useful in one sense – but it has created another challenge too. In writing this, I am reminded of one of the other vignettes, which mentioned how much scholarship has changed with the advent of computing.

Bringing this to the life-wide perspective, I can see that it is easier to create systems for storing our learning in a work context (I have folders on my computer and in my inbox, we have search tools, and I keep notes on my phone) – but how do we do this for information/learning which is more amorphous or emotional? I feel that I am constantly in a process of re-learning things in my relationship, parenting, and self domains – or another perspective might be re-making the same mistakes! Is there a way that tech could help us store and retrieve life-wide learning when we need it?