

INTRODUCTION

LIFEWIDE LEARNING: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The cartoon below (Figure 1) illustrates a simple example of lifewide learning and personal development in action. It depicts the way we learn in everyday situations, often with the help of others, in order to accomplish things we value. Through this experience we develop the knowledge, skills and capability to do new things - we develop ourselves into a different person. In the cartoon a boy learns to fly a kite and develops new capability and experiential knowledge in the process. He didn't learn these things by engaging in a formal education process, he learnt how to fly a kite through a self-determined, self-managed process encouraged and aided by a friend.

Figure 1 Learning doesn't have to be a formal process. Much of what we learn is through a self-managed process, by example or by observation.



'Lifewideness' is a simple idea that recognises that most people, no matter what their age or circumstances, simultaneously inhabit a number of different spaces - like work or education, running a home, being a member of a family, being involved in a club or society, travelling and taking holidays and looking after their own wellbeing mentally, physically and spiritually. We live out our lives in these different parallel spaces and we have the freedom to choose which spaces we want to occupy. In these spaces we make decisions about what to be involved in and what abilities we want to develop to make best use of these options. We meet and interact with different people, have different sorts of relationships, adopt different

roles and identities, and think, behave and communicate in different ways. In these different spaces we encounter different sorts of challenges and problems, seize or miss opportunities, try to achieve our ambitions, and aspire to live a useful and fulfilled life. In these spaces we 'author our lives'.

Lifewide education holds the promise for a more complete and holistic form of education in which people combine and integrate their learning (both formal and informal), their personal or professional development and their achievements. Every day of our life we experience a continuous stream of situations that intermingle in ways that only make sense to us, and sometimes only make sense when we look back on them. If we view our life as an unfolding story then we can 'author' our lives by choosing the experiences in which we want to participate and declining other opportunities, although we also have to deal with situations that are not of our making. The activities we get involved in every day enable us to develop our knowledge and understanding, and new skills and capability to deal with these and future situations. Through this process we enact who we are and gradually become who we want to be. The simple truth is that our life is predominantly made up of this form of self-authorship and personal or professional development and ultimately it is the way we actualise ourselves.

Our e-book project to support the growth of new knowledge in this field addresses the growing need to view learning and development as a continuous process of self-determined and self-organised activities that stretch across (lifewide) and throughout (lifelong) an individual's lifespan. This vision for learning in and for a complex, challenging, ever changing world, is entirely consistent with a recent EU Foresight study which concluded that personalisation, collaboration and informal learning will be at the core of learning in the future. Much of the knowledge, capability, self-awareness, qualities, values, beliefs, behaviours and dispositions that underlie this proposition, will be developed by people through their lifewide experiences.

The Future of Learning - EU Foresight Study

The overall vision is that personalisation, collaboration and informalisation (informal learning) will be at the core of learning in the future. These terms are not new in education and training but they will become the central guiding principle for organising learning and teaching. **The central learning paradigm is thus characterised by lifelong and lifewide learning** and shaped by the ubiquity of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

The Future of Learning: Preparing for Change. European Commission 2011

<http://ipts.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publications/pub.cfm?id=4719>

THE CONTRIBUTION THIS E-BOOK AIMS TO MAKE

The Lifewide Learning, Education and Personal Development e-book is published by the Lifewide Education Community, a network-based organisation formed in 2011. The e-book was launched in May 2012 and is hosted by the Lifewide Education Community website lifewideeducation.co.uk.

The purpose of the book is to advance knowledge and understanding about how and why people learn, develop and achieve through their everyday experiences. These topics

embrace formal and informal learning and associated achievement; personal and professional development and associated achievement; and educational processes and practices that support these enterprises.

Our intention is to encourage the sharing of educational practices that support these forms of learning, development and achievement across all the situations that comprise our life that are not explicitly educational.

The book will bring together research studies, biographies and scholarly essays that provide new perspectives on 'lifewide learning, personal and professional development', and extend our understanding of how people learn and develop simultaneously through different parts of their lives.

It will comprise a series of chapters written by members of the Lifewide Education Community and volunteered contributions from interested individuals who are not part of the Community.

The audience for this book will include:

- Members of the Lifewide Education Community
- People working in education (schools, colleges and universities) who would like to develop their understanding of lifewide learning and the educational practices that support it
- People who are not working in education but who are interested in how we learn and develop
- People working to promote professional and personal development in relation to present and future employment
- Scholars and researchers who are interested in how we learn and develop in this field of experience-based learning and personal development
- Policy and decision makers who need to keep abreast of emergent educational ideas.

The goals of the book are to:

- Provide a vehicle for people to share their own experiences of learning and developing through their lifewide experience
- Discover and showcase pedagogic, curricular and organisational practices that are both effective and inspiring in helping learners develop and actualise themselves in all phases of education
- Encourage the scholarly examination of theory and practice in the field of lifewide learning and education
- Facilitate the sharing of research findings and to make these accessible to the community of educator practitioners who work in this field
- Make effective use of multi-media - ie text combined with cartoons, audio and video, in communicating stories and other reflective accounts.

BALANCING EXPERTS, PROFESSIONALS, STUDENTS AND ENTHUSIASTS

The book aims to strike a balance between academic, scholarly and research-based contributions, and contributions authored by people who do not count themselves as academic but who can provide real-life stories that reveal their personal perspectives on lifewide learning and development. We also welcome contributions from students who are reflecting on their own learning and development experience. When it comes to lifewide learning we are the experts on our own life and our views on our own lifewide learning are as valid as anyone else's on the subject. We envisage the following types of contribution:

- Scholarly essays examining in a knowledgeable and critical way the concept of lifewide and lifelong learning which enable us to develop our conceptual and theoretical understandings.
- Educational practitioner accounts and evaluations of practices that encourage, enable and support holistic development through individuals' engagement with their lifewide experiences.
- Autobiographical accounts (life stories) and self analysis, that enable us to better understand individual dynamics of lifelong-lifewide learning, personal and professional development and the achievement of things we value.
- Biographical accounts created through interviews including researcher analysis.
- Research studies that extend our understanding of the nature of lifewide learning and development and provide evidence of the efficacy of lifewide educational practices.

ORGANISATION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The book is organised into four sections:

- A Conceptual articles
- B Biographical and autobiographical accounts
- C Research studies
- D Practice-oriented accounts

We welcome contributions. If you would like to contribute please read the guidance notes on the website www.lifewideeducation.co.uk and contact the editors - editor@lifewideeducation.co. Contributions will be peer reviewed by members of the editorial team currently comprising: Professor Norman Jackson, Professor John Cowan, Dr Jenny Willis, Russ Law, Brian Cooper and Nicholas Bowskill.

Editorial Team

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