**WORKSHOP Recognising Personal Learning Ecologies**

***Norman Jackson Founder Lifewide Education Community***

**CHALLENGE:** The focus for the workshop is 'how might we enable students to visualise, explain and gain recognition for their own learning ecology when they undertake a significant self-managed learning project?'

**PERSONAL LEARNING ECOLOGY**

**The collection of activities, situations and contexts deliberately used by the learner to provide opportunities and resources for learning, development and achievement in respect of a learning project.**

**LEARNING PROJECT**

A *learning project*  is 'a sustained deliberate effort to learn or master something'. A learning project involves self-organised learning activities like reading, listening, observing, doing something, that are connected over a period of time and held together by the similarity of intent, nature of activity and/or the place of thoughts and actions (adapted from Tough 1971).

Tough defined a 'learning project' in terms of at least seven hours effort within a six month period but projects often involve significantly more time than this. Few people would use a term like *learning project* to describe a sustained effort to learn or master something new. They are more likely to use a term like interest, hobby, task, challenge, tackling a problem, or having an adventure.

**EXAMPLE LEARNING ECOLOGY : LEARNING TO DRIVE A CAR**

The learner declares their intention and sets themselves the goal of learning to drive and pass the driving test.The individual, often with parental guidance and support, creates a new ecosystem to learn and develop themselves in line with this objective. The ecosystem they create might typically include:

PHYSICAL & INFORMATION RESOURCES

* access to a car so they can practice
* information about driving and the rules of the road - either as a book/booklet
* perhaps access to computer (information on DVD) or and internet (on-line resources and simulations)

HUMAN EXPERTISE

* driving instructors with a range of expertise and experience who may be parents or other family members, friends
* a professional instructor with up to date knowledge of the test

CONTEXTS & SITUATIONS FOR LEARNING

* safe areas for practising - like empty car parks and quiet roads - where manoeuvres can be learnt
* public highways with varying traffic conditions

This ecosystem from learning to drive - *to become a competent driver* - may last several months and perhaps involve 50-100 hours of time and effort in which learning and its embodiment in driving practice is the primary objective. The process includes mastery of a body of procedural knowledge, development of skill/capability which needs to become automated, experiential knowledge derived from driving under different conditions.

**PAIRS 10 MINS**

If this was an individual's learning project, 'how might we enable them to visualise, represent and explain their learning ecology and the learning and development they gained from their learning project?

**Record - three suggestions on sheet 1.**

DISCUSSION

**INDIVIDUAL TASK - 15MINS**

1 Thinkabout a learning project that you have engaged in, or are currently involved in. It can be a work project or a project in any aspect of your life.

2 On a blank sheet of paper **create a visual representation of your learning ecology****for this learning project**

* give your map a title and explain what you were trying to achieve and why - *the purpose that made you commit to this process and the context*
* identify the things you did and where you did them - *these are the activities and environments in which learning, development and achievements were/or are being accomplished*
* annotate your map with the important details of how learning and achievement were/or are being accomplished. *For example you might emphasise 1) the people who have been involved and their roles 2) the significance of the environment in which activity was taking place* 3) *the resources you have drawn upon or you have created 4) the tools you have used or created (eg work plans and reviews, contracts, concept maps, ICT/social media and many more)..*
* the most important achievements, learning and personal development arising from your learning ecology

**GROUP TASK 15MINS (GROUPS OF 3 or 4)**

* Share your personal learning ecology maps with the members of the group.
* Discuss how would you design a system that would enable you to gain recognition for the forms of learning and personal development described in your learning ecologies and for the creation of your learning ecology.
* On sheet 2 record the key features of your system for recognising your personal learning ecology and the learning and development gained from your learning project.

*What would be the most appropriate form of recognition for these forms of learning?*

*What would be the challenges of implementing such a recognition system?*

**WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION 10mins**

**Post workshop**

At the end of the session I will be happy to collect the sheets and try to summarise the information contained on them. I will post the summary on this webpage.

<http://www.normanjackson.co.uk/cra-seminar.html>