

**Learner Managed Learning: a revolution or back to basics?  
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**October 29th 1998 Trent Park, and live on the Internet**

**Status:** Publicly available inaugural professorial lecture at Middlesex University.

**Keywords:** Overview of Learner managed learning, obstacles, ways forward, relevance, challenges for students, challenges for teachers, implications for assessment and course structures, role of ICLML

*Chairman of the Board, Members of the Board, Vice Chancellor, guests of the University and, if there is anyone out there, virtual visitors from cyber-space...*

Reflecting on one's experiences, learning from those reflections and converting that learning into further actions consistent with one's aspirations are key components of learner managed learning. In this evening's lecture I will share some of my reflections on the nature and desirability of learner managed learning derived from 25 years of active involvement in its promotion through higher education and speculate on the revolution that will be needed in our educational institutions - and indeed which may already be upon us - to enable it to happen. The consequence of such a revolution would be the release of our basic capacity and propensity to learn.

In fact I will go back more than 25 years. As a boy I used to climb the Lake District hills, always feeling cheated by each false summit and the certainty that the wider views enjoyed with each new triumph always seemed to reveal yet more summits to reach.

Somewhere buried within this metaphor are some key features of learner managed learning: a challenge to be met; a sense of moving forward (or upward) even if you do not know exactly where it will lead; an element of risk; the usefulness of a map and some kit; progress in stages, always looking for the next; feedback on performance (leg-ache versus satisfaction) - and always the knowledge that decisions on whether to go on, and in which direction, are down to you. As a callow youth, admiration for my modest achievements from family and friends was part of the reward; now satisfaction is internal and personal.

I am in danger of doing this metaphor for learner managed learning to death but before I leave it, I must refer to the importance of companionship: for sharing the view; holding the rope; sharing judgments on where you are and possible routes ahead; knowing whether summits are false or final- and reflection on what it all means, if anything. Most profound of all, there is the realisation that your success, in a very real way, is down to your own efforts. Belief in your yourself is a key outcome. But more on the nature of learner managed learning later; you will be pleased to hear that the metaphors may be different.

This is my second Inaugural Professorial Lecture. The first was 10 years ago at what was then North East London Polytechnic. In preparing for today's lecture I have found it most instructive to reflect on the differences between the two events and the changes which have occurred in the time between.

The 1988 lecture was given towards the end of what was one of the most remarkable episodes in post-war British Higher Education. In that lecture, reproduced in Norman Graves' Book *Learner Managed Learning* (1993), I tried to make sense of a scheme which first saw life in 1974 when a group of idealists took a proposal to the Council for National Academic Awards (CNA) for a new approach to HE in which the purpose, content, process and location of what was to be learned would be negotiated by the learners. We presented the CNA with a scheme for Diploma in Higher Education and (2 years later) an Honours Degree programme in any subject covered by

the Polytechnic. We presented no syllabuses, no reading lists, no model examinations - only a statement of principles, a set of procedures and proposals for quality assurance based on partnership with the outside world. Our audacity in proposing such a scheme was exceeded only by the courage of the CNAA in actually giving their approval. Panic set in when we realised it was a false summit, - a bigger mountain lurked beyond - we would actually have to run a scheme which was so innovative, none of us had any experience of how to do it. Learner managed learning for both staff and students!

At the height of its operation, the School for Independent Study, as it was called, had over 900 learners on courses in all areas at all levels from Dip HE to Masters Degrees. Today The School and its programmes have virtually disappeared.

During that lecture I proclaimed the school's achievements, admiring and telling people about the view - and a very good view it was too. This was necessary because the world even in 1988 regarded learner managed learning within formal institutions as eccentric and therefore suspect. The environment was not yet ready. In 1988 I was essentially looking backwards and sideways.

Today's lecture is different. It is forward looking. The world has moved on to a point where learner managed learning is increasingly a feature of the rhetoric and practice not only of higher education but also of business. Government departments, major employer organisations, funding bodies and national committees of inquiry are promoting curriculum changes which encourage learner autonomy. The UK Government's Pathfinder Prospectus for the University for Industry envisages 600,000 new learners many of whom will be managing their own learning with the aid of new technology. The Learning Society, the Learning Company, Learning Pays, Campaign for Learning - the list of initiatives seems endless. The time is right, it seems, to be looking at the challenges and the summits appearing all around us.

Middlesex university is an excellent place to set up an International Centre for Learner Managed Learning. It too pioneered new approaches to learning in the 1970s. The University's Mission seeks to promote learner autonomy in its students. The School for Lifelong Learning houses the award-winning National Centre for Work-based Learning Partnerships, another major initiative which has proved that large numbers of learners can gain credit for their own learning through work. A School for Lifelong Learning and Education is an appropriate context for further work in this field.

But I have another reason for being pleased that we are in Trent Park tonight. It allows me to introduce another metaphor and to quote one of my favourite lines of verse from Music Hall (another of my childhood interests). This evening we are gathered between Chingford to the East and Hendon to the West. The verse is relevant to that first lecture 10 years ago, since it pokes fun at an over-emphasis on what is good (which the School for Independent Study certainly was) whilst conveniently ignoring obstacles to continuing survival and progress.

*Oh! it really is a werry pretty garden,  
And Chingford to the eastward could be seen;  
Wiv a ladder and some glasses,  
You could see to `Ackney Marshes,  
If it wasn't for the `ouses in between.  
(Anon)*

We will have the 'Endon verse later. But for now, bearing in mind Karl Popper's advice that greater understanding is achieved through falsification rather than through verification, what were the 'ouses in between' and what can we learn from them?

At this stage I'll list a few of what in retrospect have turned out to be the one's from which we have most to learn. The rest of my talk will explore them further.

### *Institutional Culture*

Do not underestimate the power of an institution's prevailing culture (as opposed to its aspirations for a different culture) to subvert innovations which appear to challenge those prevailing values.

### *Validation and formal negotiation of programmes*

Learner negotiated programmes have to be seen to be rigorously formulated, negotiated and conducted. This requires transparent procedures and criteria for the approval of learning plans which are relevant to the intended award and capable of accommodating individual programmes of study.

### *Assessments*

Assessments leading to public awards will subvert learner autonomy if they are based on the question 'Can you do what we have pre-planned that you should be able to do?'. Assessments which ask students to show what they can do as a result of their studies, judged against generic criteria appropriate to the level of the intended award, open up a greater range of learning opportunities.

### *The control of specialist expertise*

As long as control of specialist materials and expertise is managed by gatekeepers who mediate interpretations and uses to which that expertise can be put according to their own values and needs, there is reduced scope for learners to take control.

### *Roles of staff*

Learner managed learning fundamentally changes relationships, from teacher and taught to learner and guide.

### *The importance of strategic learning*

If learners are able to negotiate and manage the overall strategy of their learning - its purpose, direction, location, and outcomes - they will be well prepared for lifelong learning and well equipped to engage in a variety of specific learning activities including, dare I say it, drill.

### **'The times they are a changing'**

Today, 10 years after lecture no. 1, the environment is much more favourable for learner managed learning. Changes within higher education itself have been significant, mostly related to the move from an elite to a mass system: the greater variety of student needs, pressure on resources (particularly space and student / tutor ratios), the emergence of the student as consumer, and sponsorship of changes in teaching methods by government initiatives and companies through schemes such as Enterprise in Higher Education and Government-managed networks for academics working in Work-based Learning and Guidance and Learner Autonomy.

Probably of greater significance are the changes taking place in employment and information and communications technology.

### **First, changes in employment.**

In recent years, there have been dramatic changes in the working environment. This is not the place to explore those changes in full - a whole new lecture would be needed for that. These changes include:

- new recruits to the labour market can expect to change jobs every 2 years and careers every 10 years;
- layers of middle managers are being removed, leaving people at all remaining grades to take more responsibility for more of their own development and work;

- a greater proportion of people are working part-time or are becoming self-employed and port-folio workers.

These employment trends are happening against a background of continual - and discontinuous - technical change and information growth. The implication of these developments is that all people preparing themselves to enter the work force need

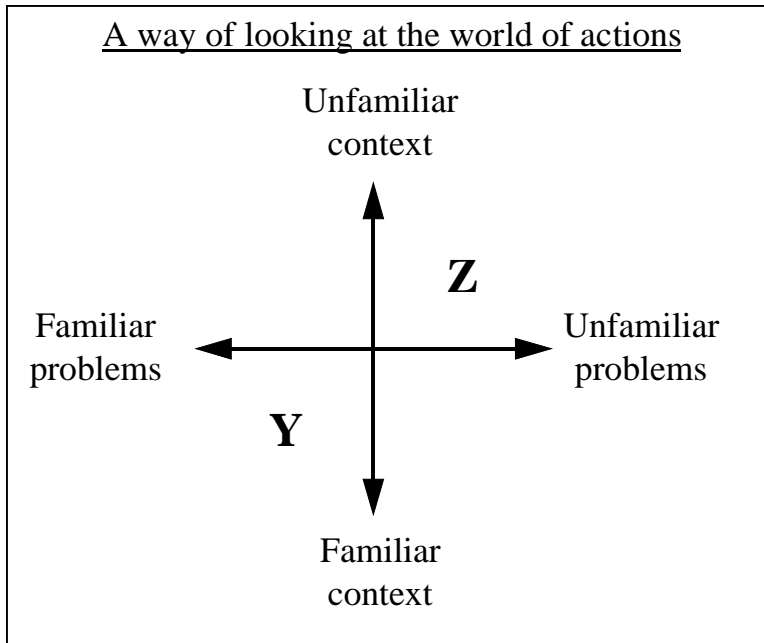
- confidence in their own ability to master different working environments and to become effective in them;
- the capacity to update their own skills and knowledge on a regular and routine basis, and
- the commitment to drive their own learning forward.

Against this background it is easy to see the force behind movements such as the Learning Company which argue that corporate survival in no small measure depends on the extent to which companies create an environment in which individuals manage their own development at work.

The Government's responses to this problem have included the setting up of a national qualifications structure using industrial standards available to the work-force as a whole. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in effect provide benchmarks by which employers can judge whether their employees are up to scratch. A recent study of people's experiences of NVQs suggests NVQs have the effect of consolidating existing practice, including people's existing roles, rather than stimulating employee development beyond some incidental benefits related to self-esteem and portfolio preparation. The implication is that NVQs, based on top-down committee-devised specifications, do not necessarily relate to the actual reality of individual people's circumstances and aspirations. They are about quality control, not employee development through learning. NVQs are based on past performances; they are not helping learners to imagine the future and to bring it about.

This tension between organisational control and individual development can be illustrated in this simple grid showing two variables: the relative familiarity of the context in which we work and live, and the familiarity of the problems we face within it. The two extremes, labelled Y and Z, characterise a control and a learning environment respectively (for a full exploration see Stephenson, 1998).

Most of us operate, for much of our time, in Position Y. In position Y, we are dealing with familiar problems for which we have learned familiar solutions. The context in which we are operating is also familiar. We give students information about the context; the more complex the context, the more information we give them. We give them information about the kinds of problems they will meet, and details of the solutions which have been found to be effective. We might even give them practice in the implementation of the solutions and evaluation of their effectiveness. We help students and employees by passing on other people's experience, knowledge and solutions. Though no doubt effective in the context of Position Y, the resultant capability is essentially a dependent capability.



But Position Y is not the whole of our experience. As indicated above, change is the order of the day. Many more of us will be spending more of our time having to operate in Position Z. In Position Z, we have less familiarity with the context and we have not previously experienced the problems with which we are faced. The slavish application of solutions perfected for familiar problems may have disastrous effects in Position Z. To a large extent we are on our own, either individually or collectively.

Position Z is essentially a learning situation. By definition, we must inform ourselves about the unfamiliar context and not simply remind ourselves of what we were taught or trained to do. By definition, we must formulate the problems we have to deal with, not remind ourselves of problems previously learned. We must devise solutions and ways of applying them without the certainty of knowing the outcome, as a way of learning more about both the context and the problem. We need confidence in our ability to learn about the new context and to test possible ways forward from which we can learn. We need confidence in ourselves, and in our judgements,

When taking action in Position Z, intuition, judgement and courage become important; there is no certainty of consequences based on previous experience. Specialist knowledge and skills are still relevant, but they are insufficient by themselves. The solutions devised for the problems which are formulated will be essentially propositional in nature, developments from existing understanding. Evaluation of the consequences of actions taken in Position Z will enhance our understanding of, and perhaps even improve our performance in Position Y.

Learner managed learning is an inevitable feature of survival in Position Z. The more we see our students and employees having to operate in Position Z, the more we will need to help them to become effective autonomous learners.

When working with colleagues I often ask them to reflect on what for them have been important learning experiences in their lives. I ask them to place their current working activities on the Y/Z Grid. Most people recognise the importance of Position Z in their own development. Perhaps some of you here would do the same.

There is abundant evidence that employers are looking for autonomous learners as recruits, or are developing the capacity for autonomous learning in their current work force. IBM (UK), for

instance, employs many technical specialists but every three years requires the members of its professional groups (e.g. systems analysts, HR specialists) to demonstrate how they have kept their expertise up to date. Staff negotiate personal learning plans or learning contracts as part of their cycle of personal appraisal and review. Rover Group expects all of its workers from Boardroom to the shop floor to maintain personal profiles of their own learning at work whilst the Association of Graduate Recruiters suggests that employers and recruits will 'grow' jobs together in response to changing circumstances and the emerging potential of the person concerned.

Sainsbury's Supermarkets found that a learner-managed learning approach to employee development gave the company *much more than a traditional training course ... confident and able individuals who have the courage to tackle the many tough issues brought about by a changing organisation*. (Evans, 1997)

### **And in America**

Richard Boyatzis and David Kolb et al (1995), after 7 years closely monitoring MBA students at Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University, USA, including pre- and post- testing of student performance in key areas, observed significant student progress which they attributed to the fact that, unusually for many MBAs, this scheme allowed students to set their own goals within personal action plans.

What these examples have in common is a belief in the power of individuals to manage their own development. The drive, willingness and capacity to manage one's own learning, and the propensity to look for learning opportunities when dealing with problems or planning ahead has a different flavour from 'learning how to learn', study-skills and getting on with teacher-determined assignments.

I would also argue that the kind of learning suited to Position Z is in its nature high quality learning. It is ground-breaking, often done under stress and related to practical problems. Learner responsibility and accountability also promote *deep learning* by taking students into a search for meaning, relevance and underlying principles - a search usually conducted on their behalf by the teachers on the course.

### **Information and Communications Technology**

This evening's lecture is going out at this very moment on the Internet. Anyone anywhere in the world can drop in. The text and slides can be downloaded, as can a video of the actual delivery. People in the antipodes can set their machines to download whilst they sleep. A dialogue box is available for instant comment and continuing discussion. Whether anyone is actually watching in, say, Peru is less relevant than the fact that they could if they wished. Or from Bounds Green, Chingford and 'Endon. For a fraction of the cost of opening a classroom, people in remote areas of Borneo with access to a laptop, modem, telephone point (or, satellite) and power can see Stephenson exploring the nature of learner managed learning. For Middlesex University this, I think, is a first (possibly the first inaugural professorial lecture on the Net), as is the live seminar on Learner Managed Learning currently being led from Sydney by the Centre's Visiting Professor, David Boud. After an initial learning curve and small investment (and considerable thanks are due to Andy Wilson and Andy Bardill), routine transmission of all lectures is possible at negligible cost. And wouldn't it improve the quality if lecturers know that anyone anywhere could be watching?

The virtual university, so to speak, is already a reality. It is rumoured there are more virtual universities in California than real universities in England. Established universities such as Harvard and Stanford are already leading the way. Pessimists (or optimists, whichever way you look at it) anticipate that soon there will be no more than 20 global centres of excellence for each area of study. Why should someone in North London with a job or difficult personal circumstances seeking a business degree sit in lecture theatres in 'Endon when they can download materials for a degree at Harvard Business School? Commercial providers are also in on the act. You can, today, get a University of London external Law degree with professionally

produced lectures, on-line seminars with full transcripts of the discussions (and from earlier seminars), call-centre advice on content from current practitioners, on-line self diagnostic assessment of progress and transcripts, digests of the latest House of Lords judgments, reading lists with abstracts, links to other sites - all of this for a fee of just £800 pounds a year - a fraction of the cost of achieving the same by conventional course attendance. Anyone here can rent a professionally maintained chat-line for their own virtual class for just 35 dollars a month, and get a set-top camera for one-to-one face-to-face contact for less than £200.

And new technology is not just about the Web. Digital TV is already with us offering the prospect of hundreds of channels. But that is only the start. When linked to computer keyboards and mobile cell phone technology with access to high quality material, including film and TV archives, it is possible to contemplate personally tailored learning channels some time during the first decade of the new millennium.

The UK Government's flagship programme for the Learning Society, the University for Industry, aims to exploit these developments by brokering partnerships with public and private providers to promote and service a much higher take-up of learning opportunities amongst groups currently outside the formal education system.

### *Assessments*

Information and Communications Technology (I&CT) also opens up considerable opportunities for the assessment of off-campus learning. It is *technically* possible for learners to register directly on-line with awarding bodies bypassing colleges and, depending on the subject matter, to be assessed on-line when they want to be, without going through a registered course or to a recognised assessment centre. Smart card technology, with banking style accounts and pin numbers can, under learner control, record all on-line learning episodes, tutorials, seminar contributions and on-line assessments the learner would like it to record. On-line shells or templates for three way learning contracts already exist, as do the opportunities to self-test your own learning styles, pre-test your basic skills, use 'tasters' to find out whether you would like the course you were contemplating taking, and explore your own motivations and aspirations.

Of course, there is no essential link between these developments and good practice in learner managed learning. Much of what is available is little more than electronic text versions of lecture notes. At their worst, CD ROMs can be even more controlling than live lectures, trapping learners in a predetermined sequence at a predetermined pace.. Most people want some face to face contact; some learning needs can be better satisfied in 'warm' social groups. But there can be no doubt that developments in new technology will have a profound effect on the way universities operate and how they relate to their students.

### **The Revolutions**

#### **Revolution number 1: What kind of institutions?**

If employment trends and mass higher education are putting LML firmly on the agenda, I&CT is making it a real possibility. I&CT has the potential of bypassing teacher control of their own materials (only mine is any good) giving learners access to high quality materials from elsewhere. The quality and variety of content-related dialogue can be better on-line than on-campus. Hard-pressed students working in fast-food outlets can study at times which fit in with their enforced study cycles. As unit costs fall with the emergence of a small number of major suppliers as predicted earlier, university managers will quickly realise the dangers of using their highest cost resource, academic staff time, to deliver low cost services, information - particularly within a market which has more private providers and is increasingly international. If, as is the case with many universities, only 16% to 20% of the income they receive per student is actually spent on tutor-student contact, then costs of overheads are going to be under pressure when private providers without those overheads can so easily undercut.

Despite the attractions of I& CT for the autonomous learner, learner managed learning offers universities major opportunities. They can of course, like the Open University, become major

providers in their own right. I&CT opens up real possibilities of partnerships with employers and links with overseas. But mostly, universities can offer autonomous I&CT serviced learners high quality face-to-face dialogue, specialist guidance, access to specialist facilities, quality assurance, accreditation for distinctive learning achievements, assessment of performances, group activities, active skills development, 'real books' and demonstrations of capability. The days of institutions relying on the recruitment of pre-specified groups of students to fit into pre-planned, teacher-controlled courses designed to suit teacher expertise and institutional room allocations rather than learner needs are clearly numbered.

From the experience of LML summarised at the beginning of this lecture, for LML to survive within universities, the institutional culture will have to change from one of top-down control to one of learner development. Earlier this year, Stephenson and Yorke published a grid showing how this might be done. There is no time to spend on it now, but here it is. For your own amusement you might wish to see where your own organisation fits in this Institutional Control - Learner Development Continuum Ready Reckoner. The revolution that is needed is a rapid switch from the control to the development end.

**The Institutional Control - Learner Development Continuum: a Ready Reckoner (After Stephenson and Yorke, 1998)**

Feature	Institutional control model	Learner development model
Main curricular focus	TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE	DEVELOPMENT OF AUTONOMY
Programme control	PRE- DEFINED CONTENT	FRAMEWORKS FOR LEARNING
Programme boundary	TEACHER DETERMINED	LEARNER DETERMINED
Programme structure	CONSTRUCTING	ENABLING
Programme coherence	RELEVANCE TO SUBJECT	RELEVANCE TO LEARNER
Expected learning outcomes	FRAGMENTED	INTEGRATED
Status of personal skills & qualities	SUBSIDIARY	INSEPARABLE
Admission	STUDENT FITS SPECIFICATION	SPECIFICATION FITS STUDENT
Primary curricular activities	DIRECTIVE	SUPPORTIVE
Focus of assessment	CLOSED	OPEN-ENDED
Role of the teacher	AUTHORITY	CHALLENGING GUIDE
Institutional supply of resources	PRESCRIPTIVE	RESPONSIVE
Primary purpose of monitoring	CONTROL	DEVELOPMENT
Academic guidance and support	DISPENSABLE.	INDISPENSABLE
Careers and the world outside HE	PERIPHERAL	CENTRAL
Quality assurance	INSTITUTION ORIENTED	LEARNER ORIENTED
Research/ scholarship	EXCLUSIVE	INCLUSIVE

**Revolution Number 2: for teachers**

As with institutions, so with teachers. If teachers are freed from giving formal instruction to large groups of anonymous students, and released to provide support for LML students, they will need a new armoury of skills and qualities.

Before identifying what those skills and qualities might need to be, we must recognise just how difficult a task we are giving learners when we ask them to:

- formulate the overall strategy of their learning programme
- devise a programme relevant to that strategy,
- negotiate approvals and access to resources,
- determine the pace, location and character of learning activities,

- monitor progress,
- demonstrate their achievements
- critically review the overall learning experience and
- plan the next stage.

and to do all of these within the context of what for them is a highly unfamiliar situation.

We need to recognise that LML can cause anxiety and expose learners to some risk. For instance:

*Exposure of deeper motivations*

Putting together an appropriate strategy involves students asking serious questions about themselves, including *Why am I here? (and to share the answer with peers and tutors)*

*Might get it wrong*

What happens if it is not right? Will my plan be taken seriously? Who am I to decide these things?

*Outside their experience and expectations*

Nene College, (1997) identified a pervasive feeling amongst students entering university for the first time that education is something *'which is done to you'*, and that it is *'the teachers' role to ensure that the student will pass provided the student does what is asked of them'*.

In Canada Marilyn Taylor's work (1986), based on the experiences of a small group of in-service teachers on a self-directed learning programme, discovered that all the students experienced a period of disorientation at some stage of their programmes ... identified by... *confusion, anxiety, tension, a crisis of confidence, and a withdrawal from others with whom the learner associates the source of confusion* (p60).

**Strategies for tutors**

Here are a few hints for tutors seeing to equip themselves for survival within an LML environment.

*Believe in the process*

First, keep your nerve but be on hand (think of the hill-climber's rope-holder) and know when and how to intervene.

It was our experience at NELP, and Marilyn Taylor's too, that making the transition from disorientation to taking control was a powerful learning experience. Taylor's disoriented in-service teachers moved from a state of *'disorientation'* to one of *'exploration'* by **'naming the problem'**

When students get to realise that they are taking control of demanding and potentially risky situations through their own efforts, albeit with a rope and some help, they can legitimately expand their personal belief in their power to perform. Many learners have already done that before they arrive and for them it is not an issue. But for others it could be the most useful outcome from the whole experience. Anyone wishing to explore this area further should read Albert Bandura's work on self-attribution.

*Provide supportive and enabling course structures*

In 1974 we discovered the following structure to be very helpful to students planning their own programmes.

- Where have you been? (prior experience)
- Where are you now ? ( strengths, weaknesses, interests)
- Where do you wish to be? (aspirations?)

- What do you need to get there? (what do you need to study, acquire etc.)
- How will you know when you have arrived? (what are you going to produce to show what you have done)

If learners demand to be dependent, give them the security of teacher imposed assignments with tight schedules, for instance 'Write 1500 words on 'A critical appraisal of my own education to date - and what I have learnt from it" - by Friday at 10 .a.m. sharp. Next give me 1500 words on what you would want to learn if really had the chance - by Friday at 10 a.m. sharp. And so on - structures to transfer responsibility.

*Here are some of the roles which tutors will need to be able to play*

The challenge for tutoring LML students - not a contradiction in terms - is to be able to switch between roles as appropriate. Key roles include:

- a) *Fellow learner*  
sharing and celebrating learning, understanding learning blockages and joys of discovery.
- b) *Educational counsellor*  
being sensitive to the student's basic personal motivation and able to guide the students through learning or aspirational difficulties and to think things through.
- c) *Constructive critic*  
provide feedback which is both supportive and critical, aimed at enhancing the learner's capacity for accurate self-criticism.
- d) *Process consultant*  
how to plan a programme, monitor progress, demonstrate achievements.
- e) *Specialist expertise*  
a guide to materials and expertise, and taking the learner's own emerging expertise seriously.
- f) *Positive attitude to failures*  
Tutors need to be fully supportive of students who make mistakes, encouraging them to see failure as an opportunity for learning.

### **Support from students**

There is increasing evidence from current HE initiatives that students themselves, in informal peer groups or acting more formally as buddies and proctors, can provide effective support and constructive criticism to enhance their learning from both the giving and the receiving. (Evatt and Boyd, 1998)

### **A focus on learning**

Where students are pursuing distinctive programmes of study they have few opportunities to judge their progress by easy comparisons with their peers. It is therefore crucial to help autonomous learners to judge for themselves how they are doing - and against which criteria to make such judgments. Collaborative activities focused on the learning process have an important role to play - dialogue with other learners about what it means to be an autonomous learner helps with one's own learning and promotes greater understanding of learning as a whole.

Learning logs, diaries, a critical review of learning - these are just some of the many devices helpful to the autonomous learner currently being used in universities. The more useful systems go beyond recording experiences to critical reflection of the learning from the process of

recording those experiences. Improved learning-skills and greater self-awareness are key outcomes from this process

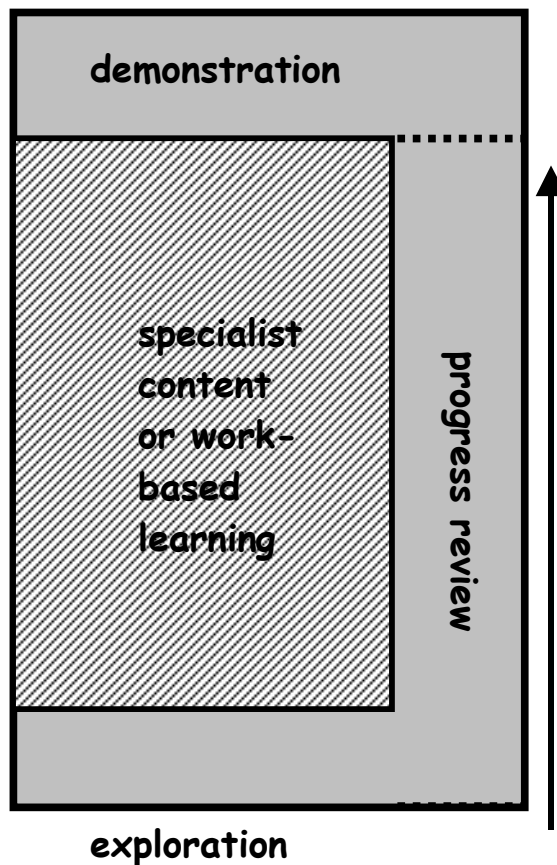
By illustration I would like to share with you an exchange I had with Donald Schon, author of *The Reflective Practitioner* and *Educating the Reflective practitioner* who gave a live demonstration of reflection in practice when he addressed an HEC conference on Professional Capability in London in January 1996 (Schon, 1996). I sent him a transcript of his answers to questions raised from the floor for proof-reading. Instead, he asked himself two questions. First, 'Why did I answer in that way' and second, 'What have I learnt from the fact that I answered that question in that way?' Each question took him further from the record to an internal debate about his own learning, leading to greater understanding of himself and awareness of the significance of what he already knew.

### **Revolution Number 3: in course design**

A Learner Managed Learning approach to course design would emphasise a) professional and peer support for the learning process; b) helping learners with the formal requirements of negotiating programme approvals and demonstrating achievements, and c) facilitating effective engagement with a wide variety of material and learning experiences.

One such model emerged during my years with the capability movement, so it is called the Capability Envelope (see Stephenson and Yorke, 1998).

### **The Capability Envelope**



*student controls overall  
strategy of programme*

<http://www.iclml.com>

The Capability Envelope is a sequence of stages focused entirely on the learning process, formally established as part of the total programme and wrapped around the specialist content. As key learning activities, these stages can be resourced as modules on the basis of credits earned. The Envelope begins with an **Exploration Stage** in which students are helped to plan and negotiate approval for their programmes of study; continues with a **Progress Review Stage** running through the main study phase, in which students are helped to monitor and review their progress; and ends with a **Demonstration Stage** in which students show what they have learnt through its application to real situations relevant to their intended career.

Each of these three stages relates to the other two, giving an overall coherent structure to the learners' programme of development which is managed by the learner. The Exploration Stage helps student identify and build on their prior experience and look ahead beyond the completion of the programme. The Progress Review Stage monitors progress according to the plans which emerge from the Exploration Stage and facilitates changes in response to experience and evolving aspirations. What is demonstrated at the end of the programme is what was planned at the beginning or re-negotiated on the way. A final critical review of the whole process provides a basis for the students' plans for the next stage of their development. The Capability Envelope provides both a structure and a process for the autonomous management of lifelong learning, whether on campus, at work, or in life generally. People who adopt the central features of the Envelope as a habit are, I would argue, independently capable.

Within this supportive framework, **specialist content** can be provided through a variety of learning modes, including unsupervised student-managed learning environments such as multi-media, the Internet, independent study and work-placements as well as more conventional teacher-student learning environments including taught modules, workshops and large lectures.

#### **Revolution Number 4: The proposed University for Industry**

As mentioned earlier, the Government's flagship programme for the new Millennium is the University for Industry (Ufi), a virtually supplier of learning opportunities through high quality materials and brokered support from learning providers. Unless Ufi embraces an LML culture, it will not progress beyond being a high quality distance learning programme, welcome though such a service would be. Ufi's target groups embrace a wide variety of people, many of whom have absented themselves from existing provision because it doesn't meet their needs. If Ufi's target is 600,000 new learners, it is possible there could be 600,000 distinctive individual learners. Employees of SMEs will find it difficult to attend courses but will be attracted by opportunities to relate their learning to their own circumstances at work.

Ufi's commitment to using I&CT has the potential - but not the inevitability - of allowing an LML approach to emerge.

To achieve this ambition, Ufi will need to

- establish an institutional culture based on a commitment to LML which is built into the fabric of its procedures right from the beginning, including the design of materials;
- make personal guidance available on-line or face-to-face in learning centres;
- provide opportunities for dialogue between learners and learners and between learners and tutors;
- negotiate new ways of engaging with the awarding bodies to ensure learners can achieve qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework for demonstrating learning outcomes which directly relate to their own circumstances and aspirations, and not to pre-planned packages..

- create a shell or framework similar to the Capability Envelope, available on-line and serviced by mentors from institutions with such experience.

### **But what about the basics**

So much for the revolutions. What about the back to basics? Well, with all the top-down control systems developed by supply side management out of the way, replaced by an open system committed to the support of learner managed learning, learners can get on with learning in ways which suit them best. My hill-climbing metaphor is apposite- taking stock of where you are, setting yourself some targets, equipping yourself with some maps and toolkits, working with others for companionship, reassurance, support and dialogue; reflecting on what you have learnt, setting new targets. Learning by doing and with support. Stretching yourself. An audience such as this could continue the list of learning activities which would be released were the revolutions to take place (though there would, no doubt, be a preference for orderly evolution)

But wait. I have been here before. Rose-coloured spectacles. Back to the music hall:

Oh! it really is a werry pretty garden,  
And `Endon to the westward could be seen;  
And by clinging to the chimbley,  
You could see across to Wembley,  
If it wasn't for the `ouses in between.

I can feel many of you saying - ah, all very well but what about this, and what about that? Well, that is the job of the International Centre for Learner Managed Learning: to work with researchers and practitioners who are devising or delivering LML within universities, in the work-place or in cyber-space to share their 'yes buts' (identify the houses - even tower blocks in between). To those, if any, who have endured all of this through shaky images on a monitor screen, let us know what you think about the issues I have raised. Use the feedback box provided.

Learner managed Learning will continue to grow in importance whatever we in this room do. We need to acquire a greater understanding of what it means so we can be better at helping learners take responsibility for their own education and development. The prize could be an educational service which directly helps individuals, groups and organisations to maximise their potentials according to their own aspirations - an aim well worthy of a School for Lifelong Learning and Education about to enter the 21st Century.