

The Vision – A Personalised Educational Landscape

Personalised Education Now seeks to develop a rich, diverse, funded *Personalised Educational Landscape* to meet the learning needs, lifestyles and life choices made by individuals, families and communities. It promotes education based on learner-managed learning, using a flexible catalogue curriculum, located in a variety of settings, and operating within a framework of democratic values and practices. The role of educators moves from being, predominately, 'the sage on the stage', to, mostly, 'the guide on the side'.

We can envision a *Personalised Educational Landscape* in many ways. Two linked possibilities follow. The first looks at the educational landscape posing the idea of 'learner traveller' supported by 'travel agents' and takes note of the influence of new technologies. The second puts some flesh on such ideas and looks at possible 'learning episodes' and 'journeys'. Both take us out of the current thinking into the territory where *Personalised Education Now* is working at re-conceptualising learning, life and community.

A Personalised Educational Landscape – Peter Humphreys

A *Personalised Educational Landscape* includes all the learning resources, human and physical, institutional and virtual in current educational sectors, in homes, libraries, workplaces, community arts and adult learning programmes, science and art museums, through television and public services and so on - anywhere where learning takes place. A *Personalised Educational Landscape* is an e-enabled, lifelong learning landscape of which our current institutions are just one part. The concept of a *Personalised Educational Landscape* is inclusive, allowing for the exploration and legitimisation of the learning and values of those currently at the margins as well as those in the mainstream.

Degrees of personalisation may be represented along a continuum from shallow personalisation (mass customisation, where institutional agendas currently lie) to deep personalisation (where educational systems are transformed). The continuum may be explored through key values and learning principles:

- A shift from managed to co-constructed learning.
- A shift from dependency to independence and interdependency.
- Increased invitational learning and assessment.
- Learning choices from an educational landscape of opportunities.
- Re-integration of learning, life and community.
- Democratic values, organization and practice.
- A shift centralised to 'catalogue' and 'natural' curricula.
- Decoupling of age-stage curricula and assessments.

The more personalised the landscape the more learning is learner-led and educational experiences are based on choice. For the vast majority this would involve co-constructing learning journeys with families, communities, networks and educational professionals.

Viewing learners as travellers enables us to explore the influence they have over their learning and lives. A *Personalised Educational Landscape* traveller:

- Learns independently or with groups, and undertakes packaged or bespoke learning.
- Investigates a range of learning pathways, co-constructing and researching his or her learning with the assistance of 'travel agents' and guides.
- Assists in co-creating *PLPs (Personal Learning Plans)* setting goals and selecting programmes from a catalogue of curricula.

Travel agents and intelligent information and communication technology (ICT) agents offer information, challenges and opportunities for reflection, in a '24/7, 365' network of invitational support, as the basis for deep learning, engagement and motivation.

ICT and design and technology (DT) connect, energise and facilitate the landscape, shaping new learning environments, pedagogies, tools and media for learning. They become a part of the learner's toolkit and media, the learner's evidence base, and have a major role in assessment. In a *Personalised Educational Landscape*, ICT provides access, networks and routes for exploration throughout the global learning landscape. In particular, ICT and intelligent agents:

- Support navigation with signposting that provides guidance and just in time learning.
- Support and sustain the guidebooks, the common route maps, and the brokering, matching and booking of learning plans.
- Enable a resource rich landscape complete with freely accessible learner essentials – toolkits, skills, knowledge, and schemes for change management and active and accelerated learning.
- Enable learners to learn at their preferred time and pace, anytime, anywhere, supported with e-assessment and continuous feedback.
- Integrate narratives with other information into unique and personalised formulations.

Personalised Educational Landscape's would require changes in the roles of institutions so that they:

- Recycle, re-orientate and evolve along *Personalised Educational Landscape* principles.
- Place less emphasis on age-stage norms and materials.

Current work, life and care patterns mean that at the outset the majority of young people will still learn in transformed institutions but over time they could reassess the potential for exploring alternative learning and life journeys and move increasingly from dependency to independence and interdependency.

A *Personalised Educational Landscape* would:

- Accommodate and validate a wide range of assessment and evaluation tools as credible possibilities.

- Be a more holistic and flexible means of ascertaining what a learner can do or has achieved.
- Accumulate societal learning capital and have a profound, positive generational impact.
- Advance social cohesion and inclusion, active democracy and other qualitative aspects of our lives and communities.

System transformation requires evolutionary development with commitment and capacity to build and sustain it. We legitimise, learn from and include others who welcome deeper personalised choice. Current learning systems are resource rich and can be transformed. It requires attitudinal and cultural shifts promoting 'e-diversity' to provide continuous adaptation and evolution of a learning and learned society.

From Peter Humphreys and Professor Patrick Dillon: *Towards A Personalised Educational Landscape (PEL)* a paper produced from the outcomes of the *Beyond the Broadband Blackboard Seminar Series 2004-5 – Demos, Nesta Futurelab, Becta, Toshiba*. http://www.nestafuturelab.org/events/past/demos_intro.htm

'What is and What Might Be,' Personalised Education as Learner-Managed Learning Instead of Government Directed Learning – Professor Roland Meighan

What Is and What Might Be was the title of a book by chief inspector of schools, Edmond Holmes, published in 1911. Holmes had spent 30 years trying to make the first National Curriculum work, along with its testing, its payment by results and its aggressive inspection regime. He finally came to the conclusion that he was ashamed to have been a party to it in a later book entitled *The Tragedy of Education*.

I thought I would borrow the title from Edmond Holmes to show the difference between personalised education as learner-directed learning, and the current orthodoxy of government directed learning.

The current profile of an individual's learning journey in the UK, for the first stages of their lives looks like this:

One to four/five years:	Home-based learning with playgroups experience, and/or child-minding and nursery experience in some cases.
At four/five years:	Attendance at a state school with a government dictated curriculum, testing, and inspection with a teacher-directed learning regime, apart from small minorities who attend private schools, or are home-educated by family choice.
At six years:	The same
At seven years:	The same
At eight years:	The same
At nine years:	The same
At ten years:	The same
At eleven years:	The same
At twelve years:	The same
At thirteen years:	The same
At fourteen years:	The same
At fifteen years:	The same
At sixteen years:	Some continue with the same, some leave school and go into employment.
At seventeen years:	the same
At eighteen years:	Approaching half the population go to a university where they study a lecturer-directed learning regime with university dictated course contents and testing. A growing minority are choosing the more learner-friendly regime of the Open University at a fraction of the debt incurred from the old-style, 'late-adolescent three-year exile', university course.

Within this time period, some will have had some true educational experiences: *"Some true educational experiences are bound to occur in schools. They occur, however, despite and not because of school."* (Everett Reimer) But, overall, none of this has much to do with personalised learning. It is people processing. It has been said that education is *'asking questions all the time'*. The profile above is based on the idea of NOT asking questions but learning the required material, and developing only the required skills, hence the description by Paul Goodman of it as *'compulsory mis-education'*.

From the point of view of personalised education, what are the possible building blocks of a learner-managed education? I will call these 'episodes' and work in one year building blocks. But such episodes could be shorter – a half year or a quarter of a year. These building blocks can be seen as the macro-level of the catalogue curriculum, the alternative to an imposed, dictated curriculum. The micro-level contains the more detailed items of the content of experiences, projects, courses and, where appropriate, subjects – the whole range of all possible learning experiences available in society, including the methods of invited teaching, research, books, computers, workshops, and so on.

Here is a list of possible 'episodes':

1. Home-based education – properly acknowledged and supported
2. Home-based education learning co-operatives
3. Weekday programmes at Community Learning Centres (schools recycled into non-ageist centres)
4. Weekend programmes at local Community Learning Centres
5. Travel and Study year UK
6. Travel and Study year Europe
7. Travel and Study year elsewhere
8. Residential College (recycled residential school similar to the Danish EFTA Skole) year with a sports focus
9. Residential College year with an arts focus
10. Residential College year with a music and dance focus

11. Residential College year with a rural studies and environmental focus
12. Year for exploration of the learner's locality and its learning sites
13. Joining a Democratic Learning Co-operative based on the local Community Learning Centre or public library
14. Joining a *City as School* scheme
15. Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme year or a Scouts, Guides or Woodcraft Folk year
16. Voluntary work in the community
17. Joining an ICT Virtual Learning community or programme such as *NotSchool.Net*

I am sure readers could add further options to this list.

One individual learning profile might look like this - decided by the learner in conjunction with the family and a support and advice service of a new profession of personal tutor-guides. These would be pedagogues or PEDAs for short, who would act more frequently as educational travel agents than as instructors:

Years one to five:	Home-based learning with play-groups experience, and/or child-minding and nursery experience in some cases
Year six:	Further home-based education and involvement in a home-based education learning co-operative
Year seven:	Weekend programmes at local Community Learning Centres with further home-based learning
Year eight:	Weekday programmes at local Community Learning Centres
Year nine:	Year for exploration of the learner's locality and its learning sites
Year ten:	Residential College year with a rural studies and environmental focus
Year eleven:	Weekday programmes at local Community Learning Centres
Year twelve:	Weekday programmes at local Community Learning Centres
Year thirteen:	Residential College year with a music and dance focus
Year fourteen:	Joining a Democratic Learning Co-operative based on the local Community Learning Centres or public library
Year fifteen:	Joining an ICT virtual learning community scheme e.g. <i>NotSchool.Net</i>
Year sixteen:	<i>City as School</i> scheme combined with voluntary work in the community
Year seventeen:	Residential College year with a sports focus with some music and dance
Year eighteen:	Travel and study year UK
Year nineteen:	Open University studies along with a Travel and Study year Europe

At the outset of such an 'episodes' scheme, many families may ask for the familiar pattern of weekday provision for many of the years. This would be available, on request, in a flexible learning system, with the pattern decided by the learners and their families in conjunction with their personal tutor. But, if the experiences of the all-year-round education schemes in USA are anything to go by, the delight of the first families to vary their pattern is catching.

Such a scheme would also need new structures for its implementation. In a letter to the *Times Educational Supplement* in June 2002, I made the following suggestions:

"My own practical three point plan is:

1. *Close down the Department of Education and Skills and all its domination-riddled apparatus including OFSTED, Curriculum and Standards and its totalitarian model of teacher training. They have taken us back to the school system of the 1900s which the Chief Inspector of the time, Edmond Holmes, finally condemned as the 'Tragedy of Education' for its stultifying National Curriculum and learner-hostile approach.*
2. *Hand over all school buildings and staff to the Public Library Service with the brief to augment their existing invitational reading and information services to develop a comprehensive service of classes, courses and learning experiences in local community centres for personalised learning, responding to the requests and needs of the learners of all ages. The approach of the Public Library Service, after all, is already the customised one, which is why it is our most popular learning institution. They will need at least two kinds of teacher, some 'sages on the stage' offering taught courses, and rather more personal tutor/teachers to be 'guides on the side', supporting personal learning plans i.e. John Adcock's learning coaches (as in his book *Teaching Tomorrow*).*
3. *Open a new Department for the Encouragement of Learning to signal a radical change in philosophy from mass coercive schooling, to open, all-age, local community centres for personalised education, designed to support life-long learning for the multiple educational purposes of employment, citizenship, parenting and personal development.*

These developments will need to be monitored and researched and I recommend that suitable people be recruited from the home-based education movement and also the Open University, since these two groups have been operating the most modern and successful forms of learning for twenty-five years or so now."

The two systems outlined above produce different kinds of people. The repetitive pattern of the current model brings to mind the comment of John Holt that: schooling is really a long drawn-out course in practical slavery:

"What it all boils down to is, are we trying to raise sheep - timid, docile, easily driven or led - or free men? If what we want are sheep, our schools are perfect as they are. If what we want is free men, we'd better start making some big changes."
(*The Underachieving School*, p. 36)

The second system, the learner-managed system, is more likely to produce confident, capable researchers with the ability to co-operate with others and institutions as and when necessary. It does not look like the conventional view of a 'balanced curriculum'. But then, I have long held the view that the 'balanced curriculum' was just a superstition or an adult hang-up with no basis in reality. For example, Patrick Moore, the astronomer, was educated at home and never went to university either. He tells us that he chose his curriculum at the age of seven as,

learning to type, which he thought would be useful, by copy typing some tomes in astronomy. This, he thought, would inform him about the subject that interested him, and would also serve as a course in improving his English. He would also spend some time on his xylophone and later the piano developing his musical skills. This unbalanced curriculum served him well, he explains since the central activities of his life have been astronomy, journalism and music.

In the second system, the learners manage their learning programmes by exercising choice, with support and guidance. Indeed, an alternative title for this article might have been *'real choice in education'*.

I ended my letter to the *Times Educational Supplement* with a challenge:

"Let's be a bit bolder than trying to make yesterday's tired and failed idea of mass schooling work!"

'What is and What Might Be: Personalised Education as Learner-Managed Learning Instead of Government Directed Learning – Professor Roland Meighan. From *Personalised Education*. The journal of *Personalised Education Now*. Issue 2. Summer 2005

The need to look for future scenarios for education is apparent in all sorts of places. The debate as to what education will look like in 5, 10 or 20 years is taking place alongside the struggle to define what is meant by Personalised Education and how we learn. It is clear that in the dominant learning systems the status quo is not an option. At *Personalised Education Now* we believe we can assist clarity of thinking and the development of a *Personalised Educational Landscape* vision. We urge members to become familiar with the extent of current debate and to engage wherever possible

