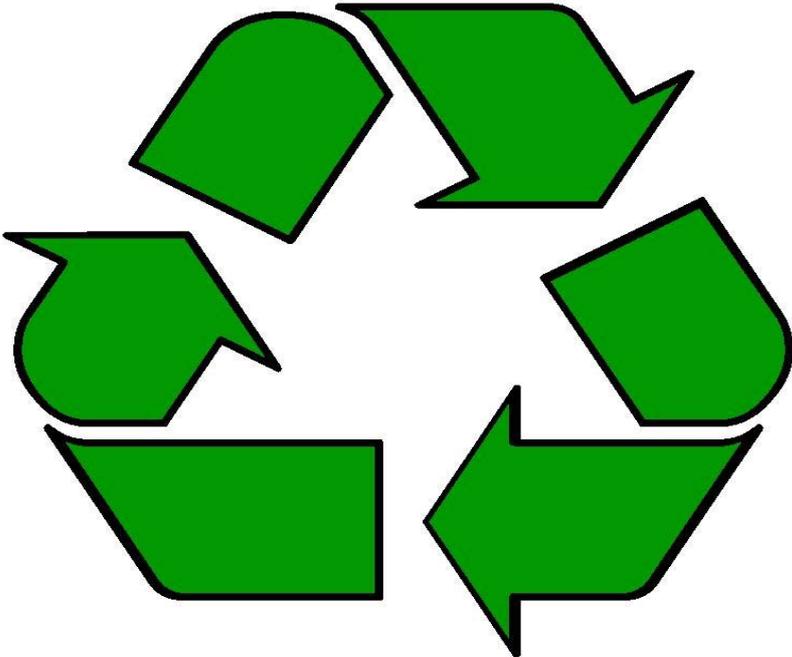




RECYCLING SCHOOLS



Compiled and Edited by Peter Humphreys

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This special edition of our *Personalised Education Now* (PEN) journal is entirely devoted to the concept of *Recycling Schools*. We explore how we might reconfigure our learning system without the current emphasis on schooling.

Why on earth should we think about radical change to the cornerstone of our family, community and national organisation, you ask? What about learning and standards; national curriculum; global competitiveness; education and skills shortages; social cohesion; national identity and values; discipline; jobs and crime; obesity; mental health; special needs; gifted and talented; child care; teachers' jobs; my job; family life; quality time with the kids; homework; road safety; drugs education; sex education; money? Yes, what about them! ***If this was a market environment the business would have withered and been closed down years ago!***

One of the consistent issues is the failure to address what schools are actually for. Our educational aims are confused. They do not align either with the nature of society we currently have nor that we would like to aspire to. When asked, most people would generate lists of aims designed to address the elements above. Yet, those same people do not comprehend the contradictions in the practice of schooling and in the recurrent failure to meet them. Some would argue that the failure is partial, applying only to particular groups of hard to reach and disengaged youngsters. We would argue that this reflects ***a remarkable lack of aspiration for those currently considered successful and for the qualities of the society we wish to build.***

Over the last few decades we have perhaps woken up to the fact that education is indeed important but we rarely make the ***distinction between education and schooling.*** These are two very different entities and must be separated in our thinking. If we don't, we fall prey to a range of largely unchallenged assumptions. Some of these are particularly pernicious:

- ***'compulsory' learning must be shoe-horned into the ages of 3-16 in institutions called schools***
- ***learners must be segregated by age***
- ***there are fixed school days, terms and holidays at the convenience of the schools***
- ***learners must progress through an uninvited nationally identified curriculum regardless of their own needs and aspirations***
- ***progression must be age-stage stepped and punctuated by uninvited testing***
- ***tests = learning = standards***
- ***learning occurs through teaching and is dependent on teachers***
- ***teaching is only effective when done by 'professionals'***
- ***our new knowledge about how the brain works and learns can only be used where it fits into school settings***
- ***parents are the problem***
- ***learners are the problem***
- ***society is the problem***
- ***if learning isn't happening then do more of the same***
- ***homework must occupy young people's free time***
- ***schools have the right to compel, arbitrarily punish, confiscate***

The list is endless and we can debate various points at length. But our argument stands, these remain the overall dominant values, organisation, culture and practice of schooling. ***Basically, it is***

schooling that is the problem and schooling limits us from conceiving something better.

Schools have not necessarily much to do with education...they are mainly institutions of control where certain basic habits must be instilled in the young. Education is different and has little place in school.

Winston Churchill

We now stand at a pivotal moment in time. Our very existence on this planet is threatened. Environmental disaster, unsustainable consumption, moral and values crises are amongst the pertinent challenges. New emerging superpowers are changing our lives. The ramifications of these shifts are uncertain. Do we drift into obscurity and destitution or do we have something to offer? How do we respond to the present and face the future? What will be the best kind of educational system for our citizens? What we can be certain of is we are going to need some of the most imaginative and creative thinkers. We will need resourceful, social, community-orientated individuals. We will require strong, cohesive communities and a renewed sense of democracy and service. This goes beyond increasing SATs grades year on year, arguing the merits of grammar schools, finding time for physical education or increasing the leaving age to 17 or 18. Nor is it about filling the existing workforce gaps with electricians, plumbers and builders. Our questions should dig a lot deeper than this... Does the current model assist in generating life-long learners, an imaginative, adaptive, entrepreneurial, peaceful and sustainable cohesive society? Are learners really enabled to achieve their best, their goals, their potential (much talked about – but what does it mean?). Are disenfranchised and despised youth actually taught anything by citizenship classes or is this something that needs to be lived and experienced? What are the true outcomes of an education and how would we measure them? Such questions are difficult but they are the sort we need to direct our energies at.

We need not be content with arguing about the merits of one teacher to 30 or 20 pupils for a given period of schooling. It is evident that we're all teachers, we're all lifelong learners. We're all part of the ***educational capital*** of society. We all have something to offer throughout our lives as friends, parents, co-workers, community members. ***We must appreciate that engaged, active life is learning and that our opportunities to learn are endless.*** We cannot hope to capture everything we need to know into a national curriculum. This is a lifetime of learning, of continuous adaptation and change with learning provided from a range of settings and experiences within the physical, human and virtual landscape.

We look at things differently. We reject the institutional silos model. We believe a learning landscape needs to be acknowledged, legitimated, and resourced. ***The learner must be at its centre, actively leading and managing their own personalised learning pathway. These learners should be responsible for their learning and their lives with the support of others.***

Existing rigid, inflexible rules and systems don't apply here. If people wish to partake of community and societal resources then there will be requirements to meet and acquire certain learning, dispositions, standards, skills and competences. They will need to set about getting these if they are to meet their own goals. ***The key is choice. Currently, it appears there isn't any, or where it exists it's minimal or illusory.*** There is also little prospect of

Toddington Conference 2006 – Recycling Schools.

In the October of 2006 PEN held its national conference at Toddington in Gloucestershire entitled *Recycling Schools*.

looking at life in any other way than the conventional linear model...birth, school, work, retirement, death. Learning is imposed and directed. Effectively young people's lives are hi-jacked on the basis that they are not yet capable of responsible thinking and they don't know enough. We would maintain that this is far from the reality and truth...just a product of schooling and *a society wedded to a deficit model of young people.*

This special edition was prompted by our *2006 National Conference, Recycling Schools*. We have included a brief account of some of the work we achieved at the conference along with other information and thinking we hold dear. We start from the premise that schools cannot stay as they currently are. The very name is problematic and should ultimately be consigned to history. We have moved on considerably and the context allows us to consider an altogether more mature approach to continuous education. The notion of *recycling schools* is useful to us in that respect. We can look at what is reusable from the current institutions and conceive of a wholly different educational landscape of which they become just one part. In doing so we meet head-on the very foundations and assumptions upon which our learning system is built.

For those of you already conversant with our message, *recycling schools* will not be unfamiliar - just a different label. It does help us move the debate forward and permits another framework for both understanding and developing our learning systems. For those who come to the ideas for the first time, they will confront your thinking! We understand this. We have been wrestling with the ideas for 20-30 years and others have for much longer! We can't hope to share everything here but you will be furnished with sufficient frameworks, language, ideas and links to enable you to take the next steps in *your* learning journey.

Please be clear *it's not about apportioning blame*. Things develop and are as they are - often with the best of intentions. Many people within the PEN network have and have held very senior backgrounds in all phases of mainstream schooling and education. We are informed and do speak from experience and insight. Equally, we include people who think and operate beyond mainstream solutions and they have enlightened and influenced us with other perspectives. The process towards recycling schools is one where *we must be open to new learning*. Often this is to be found in the most surprising places.

We are at a point where we need to take stock of what we're doing. *Doing nothing is not an option*. All we ask is that you suspend your immediate reactions and allow yourself to think out of the box and beyond your current comfort zones. Having done this we are certain you will have whetted your appetite to learn more. You will be ready to explore learning systems which develop effective learning and contribute to a saner world. You will be able to do this in the knowledge that this is far from a rose-tinted vision. It is a practicable sustainable idea that will energise learners and communities. It meets the real needs of today and tomorrow. It is also a vision rooted in evidence...it already works!

Never regard study as a duty, but as the enviable opportunity to learn to know the liberating influence of beauty in the realm of the spirit for your own personal joy and to the profit of the community to which your later work belongs.

Albert Einstein

The conference was effectively split into two parts. The first day looked at the idea of *Deconstructing School* led and facilitated by PEN trustee / director *Alan Clawley* and the second looked at *Recycling Schools* led and facilitated by *Roland Meighan and Peter Humphreys*, also PEN trustees / directors.

In deconstructing schools participants covered two distinct purposes. *Alan* took us through an initial interactive exercise where the institution of school was related to various broad categories (*Plant, People, Organisation, Equipment, Activity, Purpose/function*) – all on different coloured cards. The simple task actually turned out to be one which gave very important clarifications and shared understanding between participants from a wide range of backgrounds.

The group was then asked to assign the elements of a school into categories which were *hostile, friendly* or *neutral to personalised education*. This activity generated a huge amount of dialogue. Categorisations were discussed and challenged. This process went through a number of stages, identifying areas of dispute, listening to the arguments until there was agreement and resolution.

In a second session the new characteristics of the latest groupings were explored. There was great debate on the merits of the various categories used in describing a school, the place for outcomes - successful and unsuccessful - and how the exercises could develop to look at what could be changed and how easy, difficult or impossible this might be.

In terms of the specific outcomes of these sorting and ranking activities some themes emerged.

At a very basic level, the plant and buildings of schools were strongly felt to be problematic. Indeed this is something we'd all recognise. The government's *Building Schools for the Future Programme* is beginning to address this in some cosmetic way. At the same time, the availability and access to resources of certain kinds was identified as a positive.

Some professed purposes and functions of schools were identified as potentially friendly but at the same time many were recognised as hostile because of the manner in which they were being attempted and the actual contradictory outcomes.

The most damaging hostile factors related to the organisation of schools and the people within them. These two issues are related in the sense that people tend to behave to the organisational and cultural parameters around them. The rigidity of time and timing, content, age-stage curriculum and assessment, hierarchies, dependency and lack of responsibility were all flagged.

These activities provided a sense of just how limiting schools are. They diminish and constrain learning, life and experience. They ultimately coerce, divide and label, creating considerable damage in the process and over a lifetime. The vast resource was perhaps in itself a positive but needed to be recycled towards identifying talents, developing engagement and personal responsibility. In

doing so participants felt it would actually lift achievement, happiness and social cohesion to new and unseen levels.

Such exercises have their limitations and reflect the nature and experience of the participants. But, everyone agreed just how quickly and efficiently they were able to get into really 'meaty' debate and consideration of the whole picture, including key principles and values. This exercise would provide a good basis for a mainstream school community or indeed any setting to understand itself and how it could change.

The first day effectively continued throughout the evening as conference members were keen to continue deliberations and engage in informal learning exchange. We ended the day with viewings of *Raising Small Souls 'Animal School Movie'* <http://www.raisingmallsouls.com> and the 1960s classic film and true story of transforming the nature of a school *'Eye of the Storm'*. Both of these are recommended to all readers for inspiration!

Day two was devoted to the concept of recycling schools. Peter began with the current context and agendas within the schooling system. We looked particularly at the areas where there are changes and the potential for recycling our schooling system. We explored briefly the mainstream dynamics with *Building Schools for the Future, Every Child Matters, Extended Schools, 14-19 Provision, personalisation, new learning in brain science, some of the out of the box thinking with the OECD Futures Project, QCA Futures thinking, the new digital environment* and so on. The distinction between the government's limited view of personalisation (shallow / mass customisation) and the deep transformative personalisation we in PEN support was clarified. Peter illustrated a range of values, principles and frameworks that we can use to underpin the recycling of schools and rebuilding our learning system. We looked at:

- PEN's 8 Principles of Personalisation and Statement of Purpose
- PEN's concept of a Personalised Educational Landscape
- The Wondertree's Declaration of Learner's Rights and Responsibilities (and the extension)
- The Learner's Charter for a Personalised Learning Environment
- University of the First Age – Conditions for Deep Learning

Roland followed by facilitating a look at a range of examples, of possible building blocks and starting points for a recycled system. They were not intended to be exhaustive but introduced participants to a range of settings that offer scope for beginning the recycling the schooling system...

- Year Round Education
- Flexi-schooling
- Home-based Education
- Home-based learning education co-operatives
- Community Arts Programmes and Projects
- The Public Library
- Notschool.net
- Citi-school
- Efterskole
- Village College/ Local Community Learning Centres
-

Peter then ended the conference with a session looking at where the focus of *Centre for Personalised Education Trust (CPE) / PEN* energies should be in the drive to win hearts and minds and to reach the 'tipping point'. This turned into a very interesting debate

and established how often those most ready to take on new ideas are not within the mainstream educational establishment. Rather they are to be found with creative and entrepreneurial thinkers from business and commerce. The characteristic they often had was the ability to reinvent themselves in a process of continuous adaptation.

What is wrong with schools?

There has been so much written about this question over the last 100 years or more. The introduction surveyed some of the key issues. We add here a selection of quotations from a range of thinkers that beg the question: **Why haven't we grasped the nettle and addressed this issue by now?**

Much of our expenditure on teachers and plant is wasted by attempting to teach people what they do not want to learn in a situation that they would rather not be involved in. Colin Ward

Schools have not necessarily much to do with education...they are mainly institutions of control where certain basic habits must be inculcated in the young. Education is quite different and has little place in school. Winston Churchill

For all the students some of the time, and for some of the students all of the time, the classroom resembles a cage from which there is no escape. Philip Jackson

Schools are (a) obsolete, (b) counter-productive, and (c) abuse of several human rights. So, not just a museum-type experience is imposed, which might be just quaint, but a persistently damaging one. Schools are learner-hostile places. Some long-serving inmates, however, suffer from the 'Stockholm Syndrome' of having learnt to love their captors, or at the very least to adopt their captors' ways of seeing things as inevitable. Roland Meighan

School is not a good idea gone wrong but a bad idea from the start. John Holt

I resented being told what to wear, what to think, what to believe, what to say and when to say it. A young learner on resentment; in The School I'd Like, Burke, C. and Grosvenor, I. 2003

The teacher said 'What do you think of the new school buildings?' 'It could all be all marble sir, but it would still be a bloody school' Newsom Report 1963

Taylor-Gatto lists the bad habits that school instills: confusion, class position, indifference, emotional dependency, intellectual dependency, provisional self-esteem, and 'you cannot hide' – the lack of privacy and constant surveillance feature. John Taylor-Gatto

Bertrand Russell proposes that 'freedom is predicated on good habits'. But the habits learnt in schools are:
Intellectual – becoming dependent learners, learning practical slavery, getting used to indoctrination,
Physical – Alexander teachers report that the bad posture habits learnt from school furniture keeps them in business for years afterwards, and then there is the question of junk food at schools and obesity,
Social - bullying, pecking orders and conformity,
Emotional – anxiety, stress, self esteem defined by the institution,
Political – authoritarian submission, totalitarian tendencies, and non-cooperative attitudes,
Economic – wealth chasing, wage slavery, consumerism,
Health – junk food sales, drugs, smoking,
Peer group – smoking, drugs, petty crime, bullying, profane language, fashion slavery. Roland Meighan

It was Albert Einstein who defined madness as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Simon Caulkin, in 'You call this "best practice"?' (The Observer, 5th June 2005)

A large and rarely referred to body of evidence shows that school destroys the enjoyment of learning in the vast majority of children by the age of nine. I doubt very much if there is anything wrong with your son; there is plenty wrong with the goals and methods of our education system. What is a parent to do? At the least, I would try to delay schooling until seven. If you think you could function well doing home ed., then go for it. Oliver James (OM supplement to the Observer, 24th July 2005)

'Driving up standards' has too often meant driving up stress and disillusionment, driving down morale and the breadth of what counts as learning, driving out good teachers/lecturers from the profession. Stephen Sterling in Sustainable Education: Re-visioning Learning and Change, Green Books 2001

I wish to argue that where once we saw it our duty to impart as much knowledge as possible to our pupils and students, it is now our duty to impart as little knowledge as possible... The influence of the internet is mostly felt by the regime of explicit knowledge, the know-what. The internet, still in its infancy, is the wonder-child of education. It knows everything that is to be known. It forgets nothing. It is the intellectual equivalent of Aladdin's lamp. It will do anything within reason that you ask it to do and without question. It therefore absolves human beings from spending their lives accumulating knowledge as information. It therefore denies the hitherto accepted purpose of education. Graham Hill, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Strathclyde. Quoted in The Independent, 19th April 2005

Some true educational experiences are bound to occur in schools: they occur despite school and not because of it. Everett Reimer

When you take the free will out of education that turns it into schooling. John Taylor Gatto

From the play 'Roots': 'but education is asking questions all the time.' But the system does not encourage asking questions all the time. It encourages you to listen to the answers as defined by the system, to learn their answers and repeat them. The system does not encourage you to ask questions; it encourages you to ask the questions the system approves of. Arnold Wesker

At present, we spend about three times as much on testing children in schools than we do on learning resources. John Crace, 'Cook the Books' (Education Guardian 12th May 2005)

City and Guilds Survey - the Percentage of People Saying They Enjoy Their Work. Ranked 1 - Hairdressers 40%; Ranked 21 - Teachers 8%; Ranked 30 - Social Workers 2%. (Guardian 25th Feb 2005)

Given that teachers and increasingly social workers are charged with core care and influence over children's learning and lives it's depressing to know 92% of teachers and 98% of social workers are unlikely to be enjoying any of it!

The first National Curriculum along with its repressive trappings, had eventually been discarded after the Chief Inspector for Schools, Edmond Holmes, wrote in 1921. This was the system Holmes saw as stultifying teachers, debasing teaching and learning, inducing cheating by linking funding to test results, and weakening imagination, creativity, and flexibility, whilst promoting 'a profound misconception of the meaning of life' by replacing improvement through encouragement and co-operation with ruthless competition and the allocation of blame for 'failure'...

The present domination-riddled learning system is the result of the Great Leap Backwards of 1988 when the Thatcher government, after a power struggle in the Cabinet between traditionalists in the Department for Education and futurists in the Department for

Employment led by David Young, took us back in time to the kind of schooling system of the early 1900s. The discredited idea of a National Curriculum, endless testing and aggressive inspection was re-established... We need radical re-think in education... tinkering with an obsolete system will not do it. Humans invented current schools over 150 years ago. People can now change a system that has outlived its usefulness. Roland Meighan

Dear Teacher. I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no one should witness: gas chambers built by learned engineers, children poisoned by educated physicians, infants killed by trained nurses, women and babies shot and burned by high school graduates. So I am suspicious of education - reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human. A Survivor

A general state of education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another, and the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the dominant power in the government whether this be a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a majority of the existing generation. It establishes despotism over the mind, leading by a natural tendency to one over the body. John Stuart Mill (1859) 'On Liberty'

I began to realize that bells, confinement, crazy sequences, age segregation, lack of privacy, constant surveillance, and a national curriculum of schooling were designed to prevent children from learning and thinking critically. These were designed to convert them into addiction and dependent behaviour. John Taylor Gatto

Why do we tolerate a totalitarian-style, domination-riddled system of learning heavily rooted in fear - while a democratic system is characterised by an absence of domination. Nelson Mandela

I would say that all the educational systems I've had contact with are a disgrace and a disaster. Edward de Bono

Students do not participate in choosing the goals, curriculum, or manner of instruction. This is in striking contrast to all the teaching about the virtues of democracy - the political practices of the school stand in striking contrast to what is taught... students are experiencing powerlessness, and almost no opportunity to exercise choice or carry responsibility. Carl Rogers

Education is an important instrument for the development of persons and societies. It should foster peace, justice, understanding, tolerance, equality, and health for the benefit of the present and future generations... It is important to ensure... that present and future generations be able to enjoy full freedom of choice as to their political, economic and social systems... UNESCO 1997 from the Declaration of the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Toward Future Generations

Trying to get more out of the current education system is like trying to get the pony express to complete with the telegraph by breeding faster ponies. Edward Fiske

The traditional educational system is obsolete... we need to replace today's assembly-line lockstep with 'self-directed' learning that is based on modern day principles of cognitive science - including discovery, meaning making, immersion and self-assessment - and the natural love of learning with which every person is born

Arthur Andersen Consulting Group

Overview: Principles, Landscapes, Networks, Settings.

The schooling system is characterised by rigid, inflexible institutions. A Personalised Educational Landscape based on clear principles is more suitable for a learning system for the 21st century.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century we already have an extensive but underused and under-explored educational landscape. It comprises physical institutions and settings, human resources, virtual frameworks, formal and informal elements. Issues of access, integration, information and opportunity remain, but it's plainly there. Compared to the embryonic situation in the early twentieth century with its public libraries, museums and the growth of organisations like the *Workers Educational Association (1903)* it is an enormous resource. In the early days working class pioneers had only the most elementary of educational experience within schools. Nonetheless, countless working men (and women) set about the process of educating themselves with the support of family, friends, community, mentors and teachers. Many proved to be astonishingly successful despite limited and narrow formal schooling ending at eleven or twelve.

Have we been slowly anaesthetised by the embarrassment of riches since that time? Personal responsibility, sense of mission and engagement appears to be at a real low. How many of us will know of learners who have 'successfully' navigated schooling with an amazing clutch of A and A* grades, attended universities and graduated with similarly impressive degrees? *Yet these 'successful' outcomes of our current system can be startlingly despondent and directionless.* Many are still highly dependent, unable to identify their special abilities and possible contributions to society.

We have become persuaded that the current linear schooling, further and higher education model is somehow the only pathway. In the name of efficiency and expediency we have siloed, age-stratified and specialised our centres of learning. In the process they have developed their own distinctive identities and values. They have lost the sense of whole. *They have become dominated by teaching and the interests of teachers and lecturers rather than the learners.*

Learners and the community at large have become nervous about their own judgements and abilities to question the 'professionals'. *We have been seduced by numbers and grades... the 'scientific' incontrovertible evidence of success and failure.* It is within this context that the current personalisation agendas have arisen.

Personalisation as it is currently presented is perhaps best described as 'mass customisation' or 'shallow personalisation' (*Leadbeater 2006*). In terms of choice it is still overwhelmingly limited to the current 'offers' - a far cry from the transformational possibilities offered by 'deep personalisation'. It leaves substantially unanswered the critical questions of:

- When learners learn
- Where learners learn
- What learners learn
- Who learners learn with
- How learners learn
- Why learners learn

'Deep personalisation' goes beyond a personalised, tailored service that is currently emerging (*Gilbert, C. et al. 2006*). It moves to *participation, self-provision, self-creation and authentic self-managed learning*, rather than imposed learning experiences. These are *co-created with others on an invitational basis and chosen from a personalised educational landscape.*

The digital world we now inhabit provides an enabling context and fresh opportunity. The emerging networked society promotes revisiting our understandings of active democracy, flexible institutions, sustainable commercial and consumer worlds and the transformation of the way we learn. Ultimately, this will be achieved by unshackling people from oppressive institutional and systemic frameworks of a bygone age. This is not just a feature of the educational world. Similar struggles are occurring across all areas of our lives. In medicine it will be articulated in terms of person-centred care. However, fundamental issues still need addressing before we can fully understand personalisation and reshape our learning systems. Some key aspects include:

- *The need to articulate basic visions and values such as to what kind of a world do we aspire? Currently, we do not have a convincing shared story of what will drive our development and existence.*
- *Breaking from rigid, artificial, linear models of life... usually conceived of as birth-education-work-retirement-death.*
- *Building on what we know of brain science and learning along with social and cognitive bases for learning. Our learning systems have not adjusted to this new knowledge.*
- *Grasping the developments in the digital landscape that have eased many of the previous challenges to mass personalisation.*
- *Recognising and providing for basic human needs relating to personal responsibility, voice and control of our own lives.*
- *Establishing social cohesion through policies that permit families and communities to direct their own lives and not through one-size-fits-all systems, control and policing.*

In a very practical sense it also means re-orientating and recycling the current and dominant educational resources to better meet this agenda. The embedded nature of the contemporary systems, and the limitations to thinking of those working within them, make this a real problem. Schools in particular have major difficulties.

It is time to do the impossible...the possible is no longer working.

Robert Theobald

Nevertheless we do not begin with a blank sheet of paper. *Personalised Education Now* has developed the principles and indices of personalisation which follow. They manage to capture the essential values for considering a *personalised educational landscape and signpost the way forward.*

Personalised Education Now

8 Principles of Personalisation.

Learner-managed and co-constructed learning - to meet learning styles and preferences and supported by a range of others.

Key Rationale:

1. Evidence, from brain science, child development, from practice and common sense tells us choice, ownership and responsibility are keys to engagement and deep learning.
2. Few actually learn alone – we are essentially social learners and will request a variety of support, monitoring and challenge. In this sense learning is co-created or co-constructed with others. The core issue is whether learning is invited or imposed.
3. This would be facilitated by a range of professional / community / family / peer / learning 'travel agents', educators and co-learners.
4. Learners who lead, manage and co-create their own learning draw upon a wider educational landscape, are able to choose and challenge their own preferred learning styles and develop their own 'learning and teaching capital'. This is in turn, shared with others and develops a learning capital within family, community and society as a whole.

Shift from dependency to independence and interdependency - based on the principles of subsidiarity, personal responsibility and choice.

Key Rationale:

1. Our dominant learning systems create dependency and are contrary what we need to develop a sustainable, adaptive, innovative and mature 21st century democracy.
2. Dependency is disabling and damaging to self-development and maturity.
3. Dependency exacerbates issues for different generations... young children, teenagers, and the elderly in particular. Most of these issues are social constructs rather than actual problems.
4. The principle of subsidiarity is useful in determining those who are capable enough and who are able take responsibility for their learning and life regardless of any other factor like age, sex, race or disability.
5. Living and working more interdependently is an advantage for family, societal and global sustainability and social cohesion.

Invitational learning and assessment - within convivial institutions, contexts, settings and experiences.

Key Rationale:

1. Choice, ownership, responsibility are all key to engagement and deep learning. This cannot continue in a learning landscape where schooling operates an effective monopoly and compulsory role (though legally this isn't the case).
2. Invitational learning is learner-driven, responsive, flexible and adaptive.
3. Invitational learning is financially effective and efficient. It doesn't incur the massive costs used to massage the 'fall out' and casualties of schooling. Neither is it burdened with the costs associated with those who later become disengaged from their families and communities evidenced in crime, anti-social behaviours, poor physical and mental health.

Learning from an educational landscape of opportunities - within physical and virtual places and spaces.

Key Rationale:

1. There is currently limited recognition or use of the wider educational landscape and the massive formal / informal / professional / community learning resource (physical and virtual).
2. We need to legitimise, support and fund a Personalised Educational Landscape (PEL). It would include all learning resources: human and physical, institutional and virtual to be found in current educational sectors, in homes, libraries, workplaces, community arts and adult learning programmes, our science and art museums, television and public services and individual learners... an abundant, e-enabled, life-long learning landscape of which our current institutions become just one transformed part.
3. This approach removes the totality of silo and linear thinking, responding more flexibly and in an adaptive way to learner and societal needs.
4. A PEL develops that is based on diversity – 'edversity' and not the vulnerability of current schooling monoculture models.

Re-integration of learning, life and community - because life is not necessarily lived to a pre-determined linear pattern. This implies interweaving learning with all aspects of living and community.

Key Rationale:

1. Lives, education and learning have been scripted into poor 'shorthand' called schooling.
2. Institutions are organised around outdated notions of childcare, linear patterns of life, work and careers.
3. Family and generational cohesion are threatened by age-stage and institutional silo thinking.
4. More and more people are looking for more creative and flexible non-linear patterns of living. Provision for learning needs to respond to these agendas.
5. There is limited recognition and use of the massive community learning resource. We miss the opportunity to develop family, community and societal learning capital.
6. Learning and social cohesion could be developed more through action and community-based issues education.
7. Schooling organisation exacerbates travel and congestion peaks, skews and limits shopping, leisure and holiday patterns.

Democratic values, organisation and practice - since democracy is not pre-determined and has to be cultivated and developed.

Key Rationale:

1. We currently pay lip service to democracy. Much of what we have is uniformed, fragmentary and tokenistic.
2. If we really value democracy we need to ensure it is continuously cultivated and developed.
3. Ultimately, we need to live out democratic values and organisation in our daily lives.
4. Guides to these values already exist in UN Rights and Responsibilities.
5. Reasoned persuasion, the needs, rights and responsibilities of all need to be acknowledged.
6. Young people are capable of understanding democratic values, organising and practising democratically.
7. The 'fall-out', casualties of our limited democracy threaten its existence. We cannot afford disengaged citizens or we risk totalitarian regimes.
8. Lack of democracy strikes at family, societal and global sustainability and cohesion.

Catalogue and natural versions of curriculum and assessment - with no imposition and choice from pre-existing curriculum catalogues or developing the learner's own natural preferences.

Key Rationale:

1. The current dominant approach within the schooling system is an uninvited, pre-determined, pre-packaged curriculum and assessment progression breeding disengagement and superficial learning.
2. We are developing over-schooled and but undereducated people.
3. Many superficial accreditations are taking on a value beyond their actual worth.
4. Too little learning originates from the learner and their choices, desires and dispositions.
5. All sorts of curriculum are needed... pre-packaged, bespoke, natural. All have a place for differing needs and times in a learner's journey. All can be part of a catalogue curriculum. The critical issue is that of choice.
6. Our basic needs are for engaged, motivated life-long learners - society cannot afford disengagement and shallow learning.

De-coupling of age-stage progressions and assessments - with learning linked to readiness and the principle of real life-long learning.

Key Rationale:

1. The brain-based, practical evidence for age-stage is not convincing.
2. Age-stage thinking originates in the development of schooling. It is very different thinking from that based on the learner's needs.
3. Age-stage thinking creates 'one-size-fits-all' solutions and produces underachievement and spurious notions of success and failure whilst also fuelling the 'special needs' industry.
4. Age-stage thinking 'infects' both educators and learners, inhibits learning and creates institutional silos.
5. Age-stage thinking develops target culture fuelling disengagement from real learning.
6. Age-stage thinking assumes we can capture all learning in pre-determined, pre-packaged curricula and assessment... it is continually inflexible and outdated.
7. Age-stage thinking develops an ageist approach to living and learning and weakens social cohesion.
8. 'Readiness' is a better guide, representing motivation and commitment as much as it does notions of current capacity and future potential.

Just consider these principles. Here we have the basis, the **operating values** for recycling schools, indeed recycling all current learning resources and for designing new ones. Here are the **underpinnings of any personalised educational setting**. They are the agenda for transformation, personalising learning and recycling schools.

What is proposed is that recycling schools needs to take place within the context of consciously developing, resourcing and legitimating a **Personalised Educational Landscape**.

Such a landscape includes any and all the learning resources, human, physical, institutional and virtual within current educational sectors. It includes homes, libraries, workplaces, community arts projects, adult learning programmes, our science and art museums, television, digital media, world-wide web, public services and individuals (see Meighan 2005). The current institutional silo approach is replaced by an **abundant, e-enabled, life-long learning landscape of educational settings. Our existing institutions become just one recycled and transformed part**. The 'environmental approach' is inclusive, allowing exploration and incorporation of the learning and values of those currently at and beyond the margins.

By thinking about **learners as travellers** we return to them **control over learning and life**. In our vision a **traveller can learn independently or with groups, take up packaged learning or bespoke learning journeys**.

Learners can investigate a range of learning pathways, co-constructing their own learning and **personal learning plans** with the assistance of **travel agents and guides**. Over time some common pathways and patterns might emerge but they would never become tired, oppressive or institutionalised because learner choice would remain central. In this landscape more learning is learner-led. (See Cunningham, I. *Self-Managed Learning Publications and Papers* <http://www.selfmanagedlearning.org/publicat.htm>). Educational experiences are fundamentally invitational, based on choice - a process of co-constructed learning with families, communities, networks and educational professionals.

Modern technologies are facilitating transformation. The significance of **ICT (information communications technology) and DT (digital technologies)** are that they connect, energise and facilitate access to the landscape. They shape new learning environments, pedagogies, tools and media for learning. They assist access, networks and pathways for exploration throughout the global learning environment. They **support navigation and signpost the way** with guidance and **'just in time'** learning (see Green, H., Facer, K., Rudd, T., Dillon, P. and Humphreys, P. 2005).

These technologies are enablers that sustain learning at the learner's **preferred time and pace, anytime, anywhere**. They **support e-assessment, mentoring, coaching and continuous feedback**. ICT and DT become a part of the **learner's toolkit and media, the learner's communication and evidence base**. The power and potential of **Personalised Learning Environments (PLEs)** and **Web 2.0** are already challenging our understanding of education and learning (see Attwell, G. 2007 and <http://www.schoolofeverything.com/taxonomy/term/223>).

Undoubtedly, some learning institutions remain, but would be **recycled, re-orientated**, and would **evolve** along

personalisation and landscape principles. Over time learners could explore other **learning-life journeys and episodes** (Meighan, R. 2005) and **move increasingly from current dependency models to independence and interdependency**. Pressure to meet age-stage norms, study particular age related material or to enter different sectors is removed. **Readiness to travel (that is - learn)** becomes the driver.

System transformation requires an **evolutionary approach** rather than operating from a blueprint. It must reflect a **co-construction with learners as it is principally an adaptive landscape**. It is established and funded on need and success.

We need the attitudinal and cultural shifts that will promote **'edversity'** (that is educational diversity). **Edversity** is not about institutional silos, passive learners and inflexible offers... it is about **networks, choice and voice** (Rudd, T. Colligan, F. and Naik, R. 2006; Meighan, R. 2005).

An educational landscape like this brings **learner responsibilities and commitments** to the resources that support, facilitate and teach (*we will look at his later: see - the Declaration of Learner Rights and Responsibilities and The Learner's Charter for a Personalised Learning Environment*). This is a learning system where people 'buy in' rather than being dragged or falling into superficial, dutiful compliance. **Edversity** supports a blended experience, where **institutionalised logic is replaced by network logic of learning communities** and extended learning (Rudd, Sutch and Facer 2006), and where linear 'universal institutional experience' is replaced by **'universal participation in a far more fluid system combining formal and informal learning around a personal pathway'** (Bentley and Miller 2006). It is an environment where minimal competencies are replaced only by the limits of imagination and ambition.

The **evidence base** for such a vision is already available. **Alternative learning systems** already exist but have largely failed to attract the exposure or legitimisation they actually deserve. **Personalised Education Now** consistently attempts to fill that gap and to champion taking choice and learners seriously (see Meighan, R. 2005 and the **Personalised Education Now website** <http://c.person.ed.gn.apc.org>).

We can see this in the **effectiveness of informal and community-based learning and home-based education** (see Meighan, R. 2005; Webster, M. and Buglass, G. 2005; Jeffs, T. and Smith, M.K. 2005 *Informal Education* http://www.infed.org/about_us.htm). Glimpses can be found in the **programmes working with the disaffected and most hard to reach. There is also the rich heritage of democratic and alternative schools, community and community arts projects**. All can furnish examples of other ways of thinking. These different settings are a rich vein of pedagogical and philosophical frameworks that can enrich the landscape. It's time we were prepared to learn **with the educational heretics** and not just the existing hierarchies (*Educational Heretics Press* www.edheretics.gn.apc.org). We must do this with our eyes open to differing perspectives and the 'real outcomes'.

We propose that **edversity** is at the heart of a sustainable future and the driver to meet personal and societal aspirations. Undoubtedly, we do not begin with a common platform and different learners and educators hold a range of views and understandings. This should not be seen as problematic but rather a strength. Our answer is to move with those who are ready and

where capacity exists and can easily be developed. Our *model of change is 'organic', adaptive, network-based and 'viral'*. As such, *social and educational networks should generate and dissolve 'virally' as they adjust to changing needs*. We recognise that empowered, motivated people stay successfully engaged with learning.

This is a positive outlook which draws more and more people in as they are exposed to the possibilities and achievements. Learners make active, reasoned decisions to travel with different learning experiences, episodes and pathways. They do so because they meet needs and aspirations meshing with the broader contexts of their lives. This is an environment where *learners are researchers*. Where varying degrees of support - mentoring, coaching and teaching - will impact on particular learning experiences, based on choice and not compulsion.

This is a perspective where concepts of success and educational 'currency' are broadened and reflect relevance and authenticity. A *personalised landscape* would recognise *a range of assessment and evaluation tools*. Personalisation takes a more holistic and flexible view of ascertaining what a learner can do or has achieved.

This is a landscape:

- where learners do not have to downshift or 'power down' their learning experiences at the institutional gates.
- where a complex, mature democratic civil society is encouraged, developed and strengthened.
- where social cohesion grows because the fabric and frameworks of our lives permit it.
- where government removes itself from expensive prescription and policing models.

We move into sustainable thinking and action. Success will be evidenced...in lives, work and learning careers; in the biographies, health and contribution of individuals; in the strength of families and communities and the rapidity of how we address sustainability, poverty, disengagement, crime, personal and social disintegration.

The nation seems to be intent on reinforcing a failing system at present. It is no use tinkering with our 19th century model of education. It needs to be completely re-thought and restructured. Gradual reform is unlikely to succeed. Radical change is needed.

Sir Christopher Ball

What if we set aside all discussion of things *as they were, as they are and as they might become*, and concentrated on what they ought to be?

Dee Hock in Birth of the Chaordic Age

Don't impose on me what you know
I want to explore the unknown
And be the source of my own discoveries.
Let the known be my liberation and not my slavery.

The world of your truth can be my limitation;
Your wisdom my negation.
Don't instruct me; let's walk together.
Let my richness begin where yours ends.

Show me that I can stand
on your shoulders.
Reveal yourself so that I can be
Something different.

You believe that every human being
Can love and create.
I understand, then, your fear
When I ask you to live according to your wisdom.

You will not know who I am
by listening to yourself
Don't instruct me; let me be.
Your failure is that I be identical to you.

An abridged translation of a poem in Spanish, originally written by the young son of the Chilean Biologist, Umberto Maturana.

Learner-Researcher-Traveller.

Current schooled learners are 'done to'...caged, controlled and coerced. They mature into dependent learners, unsure and lacking in experience of real issues. They are ill-equipped for the present let alone for lifelong adaptive learning. A learning system where the learner takes responsibility in his / her life is a more effective option.

It will be apparent that one of the key issues with recycling schools and the wider re-conceptualisation of our learning systems is the position of the learner. Essentially we currently problematise them at every opportunity. *From the moment of entry into schools children are a deficit community*. Indeed, within the UK the opinion is now clear that they are a problem even in the womb. No one can deny that certain young people begin life with a range of extreme social, emotional, physical and learning challenges but this mindset is not helpful in shifting our thinking.

Looking at it quite bluntly *we consign our youngsters to 'day prisons'* - some more convivial than others, but all subject to the same limitations and inflexibilities. Stripped of rights we place them in an environment that is the antithesis of our declared values. Controlled and coerced they learn the hidden curriculum of schooling.

Abbott (1999) and Abbott and Ryan (2000) amongst others have written about how the schooling cultivates dependency...a damning indictment of a system declaring to enable people to live their lives. *John Abbott* pointedly asks: *'Do we want our children*

to grow up as battery hens or free range chickens?'(Abbott, J. 1999)

Our rapidly growing understanding of brain science and how we learn only serves to confirm what some have long known intuitively or through reflection and practice. The facts are people are pre-programmed to learn within a nurturing context and where they have control over their lives. Some would have us believe huge numbers are pathologically predisposed not to learn and to rebel against it. What they fail to take on board is that virtually all serious attempts at working with challenged and excluded learners succeed where they empower the learner. What they also avoid acknowledging is the catastrophic failure and fall out of the schooling system. The detractors would do well to take a serious look at some of these projects, at informal learning and home-based learning, and they might be less committed to swear blind allegiance to the schooling model.

The notion of *learner-researcher* is a useful concept and describes a clear shift in the relationship to learning and power structures. It is often talked about in relation to children in the early years where there remains some insight into learning (even within mainstream schools). It is also to be found as a central tenet of *Notschool*, a virtual online learning community <http://www.thecademy.net/inclusiontrust.org/NS-overview-notschoolhome.html>. *Notschool* is focused on learners disengaged from schools. It is a 'last resort' designed to re-engage them in learning. Its learner-led approaches have been proven effective even with the most challenged learners.

Self-managed learning (SML) as advocated by the Centre for Self Managed Learning <http://www.selfmanagedlearning.org/> has demonstrated its worth globally with business, commerce and the public sector. SML translates just as successfully with children and young people. The centre also works through the *South Downs Learning Centre* <http://www.selfmanagedlearning.org/SDLC/SDLC.htm> with secondary and primary schools and home-based learners. The SDLC works with youngsters with wide-ranging challenges and those without. There is a well-verified tradition with some home-based educators for this more *autonomous approach* (see *Meighan, R. 2005; Fortune-Wood, J. 2000*). It is often the 'default' position although they can explore democratic learning co-operatives with other families and opt for authoritarian experiences from the available catalogue of curriculum offers (see *Meighan, R. 2005*).

The learner-researcher-traveller model can vary and manifestly there are limitations to its use within schooling. Despite the work claiming to be taking such thinking on board, ultimately choice is superficial and played out in an inflexible, impositional context.

Within the *personalised educational landscape* we propose the model comes into its own. The *learner maintains choice and invites learning and assessment along his (or her) chosen pathway*. Inevitably, family, friends, guides, mentors, coaches, teachers and tutors take part in the dialogue (offering support and challenge) about those choices but they are invited and not imposed. *Leadbeater's co-construction / co-creation of learning becomes a reality*. These conversations are influenced by factors like the learner's career aspirations, skills, understandings and needs for accreditation.

Where a learner works autonomously and from freely available resources their plans and commitments may be as loosely or tightly mapped as they prefer. Where resources are drawn in from

others within the landscape commitments will necessarily be required and then planning agreements will need to be articulated. There is plenty of experience in drawing up *Personal Learning Plans*. These set the scene for specific learning experiences and can be contextualised within broader and longer term plans when and if they are clear to the learner.

Other tools come to the fore with this approach. Learner-researchers freed from the necessity to follow established routes and timescales will ideally need some form of *portfolio* to track their invited learning and assessments, their outcomes and accreditations. These become the *broader more holistic 'currency' of experience and achievement*. Again, this is not a vast new area yet to be explored. Those who have been educated beyond the mainstream schooling system have deployed such approaches for many years. What will have an important impact will be the digital environment particularly the *Personalised Learning Environments (PLEs)* and *Web 2.0* tools (*Attwell, G. 2007*).

Our view of recycling schools is underpinned by a view of the learner as researcher-traveller who has control over: when, where, what, who, how and why to learn.

Meighan (2005 and 2007) discusses the various types of educational ideology that lead to authoritarian, democratic and autonomous learning systems. We recommend the reader familiarise themselves with these differences as space prevents us covering them here. Essentially, *Meighan* argues that in a mature complex modern society we actually need to have people educated in all three ideological behaviours and disciplines. However, critically *the default position would always be democratic or autonomous*.

At first people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done
Then they begin to hope it can be done
Then they see it can be done
Then it is done and all the world wonders why it was not done centuries ago.

Frances Hodgson Burnett

What we want to see is the child in pursuit of knowledge - not knowledge in pursuit of the child.

George Bernard Shaw

Learner's Charter for a Personalised Learning Environment.

Throughout we have been arguing for a truly learner-centred, learner-managed approach. The following *Learner's Charter for a Personalised Learning Environment* is useful for clarifying the learner perspective. It summarises and stands as a minimum specification for any learning setting or experience.

The Learner's Charter for a Personalised Learning Environment.

- The Core Group from the seminar series 'Beyond the Blackboard: Digital Technologies and Learner Voice'.

This charter gives very useful insights into the learner's perspective and is relevant for any personalised learning setting.

As a learner I expect:

Choices

- To be considered as an individual with wide-reaching potential irrespective of age, gender, disability, ethnicity or socio-economic status.
- To take joint responsibility for and be seen as an active agent in determining my own learning priorities.
- To understand and critically engage with the choices open to me in the education process.
- To understand the potential implications of these choices personally, socially and economically.
- To develop the personal and social skills and attributes necessary to make these choices and to engage with the people and resources of the education process.

Skills and knowledge

- To be supported to co-design my own curriculum and learning goals.
- To draw upon and make connections between the expertise and competencies I develop across all areas of my life.
- To develop my expertise and understanding in knowledge domains that are of personal significance to me.
- To be supported to take risks and develop understanding in unfamiliar knowledge domains.
- To have access to learning which will prepare me well as a member of the adult population.

Appropriate learning environments

- To have access to different teaching and learning approaches and resources that meet my needs.
- To have access to people who are able to extend and develop my understanding in my chosen areas.
- To have access to learning environments and resources that enable me to develop my understanding and experience in authentic and appropriate contexts.

Feedback

- To use diverse assessment tools to enable me to reflect upon and develop my own learning at times and in sites appropriate for me and in ways which inform decisions about my future learning.
- To have access to a diverse range of assessment mechanisms and media that are appropriate to the activity I am participating in.
- To achieve recognition for learning irrespective of the context of my learning (in home, in school, in workplace, in community).
- To achieve recognition for learning that enables me to progress within the wider community.
- To participate in assessment activities that provide feedback to the education system and are used to improve the learning environments in which I learn.

The seminar series was held by NESTA Futurelab, Demos, Beeta and Toshiba. A report Personalisation and Digital Technologies was authored by the Core Group Hannah Green (Demos) Keri Facer & Dr Tim Rudd (NESTA Futurelab) Prof Patrick Dillon (Exeter University) and Peter Humphreys (Personalised Education Now). Digital and hard copies of the report and the charter available free from <http://www.futurelab.org.uk/research/personalisation.htm>

Recycling Schools. Building the landscape - starting points.

Ten options for developing the educational landscape including possibilities for beginning recycling schools.

The *learner-researcher-traveller* already stands within the context of a rich educational landscape. It is a landscape where unfortunately the dominant school offer lacks personalisation and flexibility. *The potential of the landscape to expand exponentially, very quickly and include elements we haven't even dreamt of is exciting in comparison.*

At the conference *Roland Meighan* asked participants to consider ten options for beginning the recycling process. These are not exhaustive but illustrative of starting points.

The task is to change schools from coercive institutions to convivial ones (after Illich), from being like prisons to being like clubs, pubs and cinemas where people choose to go. They are to be based on invitation, not compulsion. Compulsion is for societies with totalitarian tendencies not democratic ones: democracy requires the absence of domination.

Here are ten options for starting the process of recycling schools

1. Year-Round Education (YRE)

When schools are open all year, 8-00 a.m. until 8-00 p.m., students can attend on a flexi-time basis choosing amongst various courses, workshops and timetables. In USA such schemes have a long history with some examples back as far as 1840. Currently 39 States operate such schemes in some of their schools. A central idea is that schools, like hospitals, are helping institutions and should be open longer hours. Families can choose times that suit their employment requirements, holiday plans, or domestic arrangements, and so can teachers. Year-round education schemes allow real choice for all, including those who prefer the existing arrangements. The USA experience is that this can be done within existing budgets.

Volunteer schools can be given incentives to pioneer this approach before it is made available for all.

2. Flexischooling

Flexi-time is part-time attendance at school using schools just as they are. It can be seen as a temporary expedient for those who cannot wait for a new system to get established, but for various reasons, do not want to home-educate full-time. But it has great potential to offer real choice and to facilitate personalised learning.

School becomes one of many resources, such as libraries, radio, television, computers, etc., to be used when the child and parent choose, according to a contract between them and the school. The parents are as equally involved as the teachers in the education of the child, whilst the children are encouraged to learn for themselves as well as being taught.

Any school can accommodate flexi-time if it wishes to, but under current law, no school is obliged to do so. The Education Act 1993 (Part IV, subsection 298, No.4) applies:

'A local education authority may make arrangements for the provision of suitable full-time or part-time education otherwise than at school for those young persons who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them.'

Currently headteachers have the power of veto and this is widely used and so this initiative is stifled. Either headteachers should lose this power, or incentives should be given for this approach to be adopted.

3. Home-based Education

Personalised learning is more frequently found in home-based education than in almost any other context – a rival being the public library system. Many home-educating families start with 'school at home' with timetables, courses and textbooks. Some continue this way but most, in the UK at least, review their progress, and move to more and more learner-managed learning. A major difference between homes and school is in the method of learning. Schools use a great deal of formal instruction, an approach with about 5% - 25% effectiveness, whereas learning at home uses a great deal of purposive conversation (discussion)

with a 50% plus level of effectiveness. In spite of regular attempts to find or invent it, there is little bad news to be found regarding home-based education.

Instead of grudging passive acceptance or even hostility, this approach should be celebrated and families encouraged and supported when they want to try this approach with their children.

4. Home-based learning education co-operatives e.g. The Otherwise Club

The Otherwise Club's roots go back to 1990, to the home of a family, the Barsons, with a long-term vision of providing a community centre for home educators. The group quickly expanded beyond the capacity of a family home, and in February 1993 new premises were found in Kilburn, London. It was here that The Otherwise Club began in its present form. Currently there are in the region of forty families with each family paying membership fees towards the cost of renting premises, regular workshops, educational visits and holidays together. Leslie Barson gives three rules of thumb that she has learnt from the last ten years at club. The first rule of thumb is to be eternally patient. Children take adults' censure to heart. You may not mean to be hurtful but a young person can feel it that way. Please, always (and we are all human) try to take a breath before saying something negative to a child or young person. The second rule is to be ever flexible. You may decide to do X craft. When the children arrive they do Y activity with your ideas and craft materials. Often, if you are truthful, their ideas are better than yours were. The third rule is never turn down offers of money. The Otherwise Club remains a unique project in alternative education and looks forward to its continuation.

Groups of families who want to establish home-based education co-operatives should be encouraged to do so and supported in their efforts.

5. Community Arts programmes

Community Arts is a term embracing all those activities which involve groups of people doing creative things together. What differentiates Community Arts, say, from amateur arts or the professional or commercial arts, is that:

- It promotes participation, regardless of the existing level of skill or 'talent'.
- It is undertaken by a group who either have the same collective identity or a goal greater than the art form itself, or both.
- It is developed primarily to provide opportunities for people who through economic or social circumstance have little access to the means to participate in the Arts.

The activities are often in the form of projects and (though not exclusively) consist of workshops that lead towards an end event or end product.

The activity itself could be anything from a Community Festival to a book, a video to a dance, a mosaic to a mural, or even a combination of all these and more. Community Arts is not defined by art form but by process.

More publicity should be given to these venture and their efforts celebrated and encouraged.

6. The Public Library

Home-based educating families make a bee-line for the one learner-friendly institution they know most about – the public library. The philosophy of the library is autonomous learning. It is assumed that learners, of whatever age, will manage their own learning. Britain's first public lending library opened in Manchester just over 150 years ago (in September 1852), an event so significant for literacy and democracy that Charles Dickens felt compelled to make the trip north. 'This is an institution knowing no sect, no party, and no distinction, nothing but the public want and the public good,' he said in a speech at the formal inauguration.

Visiting the library is the fourth most popular pastime in the UK, after going to pubs, restaurants and takeaways. 58% of Britons are members of their local library borrowing some 480 million books per year. As regards value for money, it costs the price of a first class stamp per person per week. There are 4,160 libraries in the UK plus another 630 mobile libraries in use. Therefore, we already have a learning institution in our midst fit for a democracy because it is based on the principles of learner-managed learning. It is called the public library system:

'There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the Earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters where neither rank, office or wealth receives the slightest consideration.'

(Andrew Carnegie)

There are other democratic learning systems, such as museums, nursery centres, home-based education co-operatives (such as The Otherwise Club, London, The Learning Zone, Isle of Wight, and the Centre for Self-managed Learning, Brighton) and also Community Arts programmes. So we already know how to make such systems work.

Here are some ideas from Bill Ellis of www.CreatingLearningCommunities.org. He writes that there is currently no perfect library that he knows of, but that it provides a model on which we can build. Could we envisage a learning centre that served all the needs of the self-learner? In addition to books, it might include:

- equipment loans (microscopes, plastic models, telescopes ...),
- a library of learning CDs so that learners could work up the ladder in any topic they choose, when they choose, and how they choose,
- class and meeting rooms so that self-learners could meet regularly and could hire teachers if they wanted,
- a data-base of learning opportunities both in the local community and world-wide, including farms, organic farms, factories and museums,
- Community Mentors who have the skills to advise self-learners who want advice.

So, why not phase out schools altogether and ...

'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.'

(Roland Meighan in Times Educational Supplement 21st June 2002)

John Taylor Gatto wrote:

'If we closed all government schools, spent twenty times as much as we do on free libraries ... we would quickly find that the American school nightmare had vanished.'

We need to add ... and the school nightmare of all the other countries, too.

Any decline in the finance of Public Libraries needs to be halted and their further development made a priority.

7. Notschool.net (now renamed TheCademy)

Notschool.net is a research project run by Ultralab at Anglia Polytechnic University. It began in the year 2000 and the director is Jean Johnson. It devises ways of re-engaging young people in education when all else has failed and there is a broad mix of teenagers currently taking part. There are young people excluded from school, sick children, school phobics, young mothers – a range of people that conventional schooling has failed to inspire or cope with.

'Researchers' is the name given to the young people in the project: their needs determine any content to be devised. They are not called pupils, or students, or even clients, but are called 'researchers'. It is a significant piece of 'rebranding' that signals their switch to a form of personalised learning. In the project, young people learn at their own pace and at a time that suits them. The starting point is to find what interests them and to focus on it, whatever it may be. They become part of a secure on-line learning community that is supportive and has an ethos of self-respect. There is no destructive criticism or blame culture. The young people grow to be proud to show their work and to share their experiences. They manage their own learning with whatever help they require being made available.

Many of the young people turn out to be high achievers within their chosen field of study. The broad and balanced curriculum idea has stifled their progress in the past and they will happily spend hours on a subject that interests them, whether it is art, music, mathematics, ICT or any other focus. Most seem quite capable of making choices about their education and are quite clear about the reasons they have difficulty with schools.

This approach to learning should be made available to anyone who wants to try it, and not used merely as a last resort.

8. Citischool - a school without walls

Tom Bulman is Project Director of this innovative initiative in Milton Keynes, which provides full-time education for disaffected 15-16 year-olds through work experience and core sessions on employability, health and citizenship. Citischool, based on City as School USA and the earlier Parkway Project of Philadelphia, is a facility for young people who learn best when working in the wider community. Learning takes place at a range of locations across the city and involves a range of adults, all experts on the world of work, life and learning. The students learn individually and co-operatively with the guidance of a personal advisor. Citischool is a striking example of a virtual school. It has no buildings of its own. It points the way to a more learner-friendly, personalised, flexible and relevant curriculum.

This approach to learning should also be made available to anyone who wants to try it, and not used merely as a last resort.

9. Efterskole

In Denmark there are Efterskole also known as continuation Colleges. They are residential colleges for 14-18 year-olds and Danish students can opt for a year's study in one. Some like the independence of being away from home and the experience of living in a residential community. Efterskole tend to have a focus on one special activity such as sport, music, arts, ecology or languages. Students can also join the catering or housekeeping teams that help run each Efterskole.

This would be a new development in the UK but existing residential schools may well welcome a new modern role in the scheme of things.

10. Village College/ Local Community Learning Centres

Henry Morris developed the idea of the Village College and they were established in Cambridgeshire in the 1950s and 1960s. The Village College was to be shared by all ages, a local community learning and meeting centre, an institution offering a rounded education for young people of school age whilst simultaneously providing a cultural, leisure and social centre for the whole community.

Ultimately, age-related schools should be recycled into local community learning centres that are invitational not compulsory.

Meighan's last point is the *key signpost for recycling schools*. The resource can be recycled in an infinite number of ways. Given that schools are one of the few institutions that currently cover the geographical landscape and the vast majority of communities they are ideally placed to become the bases, places and spaces for a range of activities... including those detailed. Their real benefit to a personalised educational landscape would be to emerge as world class *invitational, all-age local community learning centres*. They would be underpinned by the personalisation principles and be *one important part* of the new landscape.

Learning is what most adults will do for a living in the 21st century.

Alfred Edward Periman

The hard task of education is to liberate and strengthen a youth's initiative and at the same time to see to it that he knows what is necessary to cope with the ongoing activities and culture of society, so that his initiative can be relevant. It is absurd to think that this task can be accomplished by so much sitting in a box facing front, manipulating symbols at the direction of distant administrators. This is rather a way to regiment and brainwash.

Paul Goodman

We must change our values, lifestyles, priorities and institutions, if there is to be a golden age in the coming decades.

Buckminster Fuller

Learning Journeys and Episodes.

The researcher-learner-traveller within the landscape – package and bespoke learning pathways.

Freed from constraints of trying to squeeze learning into the 4-16, pre-packaged schooling progression the *learner has the opportunity to travel along a rich variety of learning journeys and episodes* (Meighan 2005) from the available landscape.

Meighan made some simple illustrations of journeys and episodes contrasting them to the limitations of restrictive schooling.

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 Efterskole) 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. NotSchool.Net

Year sixteen:

City as School 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(s). 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.

In reality this is only the beginning. The types of setting available are extensive and episodes could be as long or short as desired. Choices could be bespoke and co-constructed or off the peg and packaged from the wider catalogue curriculum offers. Without the current time frames progress can be as diverse, rapid or slow as the learner chooses. Importantly, it can be right for each learner permitting learning to fit with other aspects of his (or her) life. It permits time to strengthen both the wider development of the individual and develop family and community ties and cohesion. Some home-based learners already adopt versions of this approach and they are well attuned to this kind of adaptability. We occasionally hear of the really adventurous... families who will decide to learn together in a totally bespoke fashion perhaps whilst sailing round the world. Others will take on more conventional packages and learning journeys. The important element is that the

choice lies with the learner and that the whole spectrum is available for people to mix and match as best meets their needs and circumstances.

The emergent *edversity* within the educational landscape described by *Meighan* is conspicuous for its lack of schools. Indeed, schools as we know them cannot live up to the principles and values of personalisation. We cannot avoid the conclusion that they stand in the way of personalised and imaginative responses to learning and living. They are obsolete.

The world our kids are going to live in is changing four times faster than our schools.

Dr Williard Daggert

The reality is that all schools as we know them would be recycled into all age invitational community learning centres. They wouldn't have one fixed model although they might have a core of quality community resources.

Community Learning Centres.

Schools should be recycled predominantly into all-age invitational Community Learning Centres - a core part of the personalised educational landscape available to self-managed learners.

We might imagine a little further as to what this new personalised educational landscape could mean for people by 2025:

All schools have now evolved into all-age Community Learning Centres (CLC) open 24/7 and all the year round. They all now have the most outstanding world-class facilities for learning, sport and leisure housed in buildings of inspirational design and functionality. Typically, they are built around a comprehensive multi-media library, ICT hub and resource centre. Here much of the community media and publishing facilities are based. Cultural, sporting, health and social service components exist according to local needs.

The networks, clusters and federations of schools of the previous decades developed into the CLC networks and collaboratively ensure that learning and setting needs of their communities can be met.

The networks are bases for the pedagogues (PEDAs) (Meighan 2005) and extended educational professionals. Master educators steeped in the knowledge and skills of how we learn, how we can accelerate learning, and in human development. They have expertise in assisting those who have challenges in their learning. They act across a range of roles: guide, mentor, coach, tutor, teacher and assessor. They assist in co-producing personal learning plans and help in solution building. They bring together learners with learning experiences and courses. They put learners in touch with key professionals in CLCs. with community based tutors and volunteers, with work experiences and apprenticeships. They are important guides and links beyond the local community. They help co-create learning journeys, inspire and challenge.

Learning takes place in a range of settings in the landscape according to the needs, aspirations and aptitudes of the learner. CLCs still run curricular courses but rarely in groups of more than 10. This facilitates the high quality and quantity of discourse we expect in most learning. The CLCs operate on various cycles so

that not all learners and staff and others are in at the same time. There are no traditional schooldays, weekends and holidays.

Distance learning is widely available with external expertise being channelled in via digital links and local follow up. Most learners have flexible learning paths with episodes made up of localised CLC experiences, independent study, distance learning and small group tutoring. Some are home educated and others have periods of home learning. The range of options described by Meighan above are a but a fraction of the available opportunities and all learners have access to high quality resources and support wherever they learn. They follow a mixture of their own naturally defined curricula and they select and modify the catalogue of curricula found locally and globally.

Issue-based integrated curricula and research are at the heart of most learning rather than the isolation of past subject curricula. Experiences are open to all regardless of age. Learners and mentors are well used to supporting, and teaching across the age ranges. What impresses visitors to our communities is the early age at which the learners attain independence. They also come expecting to see choice equalling a laissez-faire, shallow approach to education. Nothing could be further from reality. They find highly committed learners, learning more and more effectively than they did under mass-schooling. The learners are freed from enforced timescales, lessons, terms and years. Readiness is pivotal.

Learning is contextualised in communities where learning is valued highly and where everyone shares the sense of responsibility. Learners are learning because they want to for the benefit of their futures and at their pace and are not jumping through hurdles at the behest of others.

Learning is available anytime and independent of place. All citizens have access to the latest ICT, worldwide web and digital connections at home. The country long considered this digital future investment as a necessity in a modern educational landscape. It is recognised as a freely available utility, as also is its transport system.

Some of this kind of thinking already permeates educational futures debates and it is certainly not new. The proposed *Minnesota Experimental City (MXC)* planned as a laboratory for social, technical and environmental innovation along with a new approach to education looked to replace schools as we know them (*Glines 1989*). Schools were to be changed into a variety of learning centres:

Early life studios will be designed so that parents, young children and staff members can meet regularly to create an environment that provides creative learning experiences and offers opportunities for parents and older young people and other adults to learn about the mental, emotional, physical and other needs of early childhood.

Stimulus studios will be established, where there will be a constantly changing array of prompts to provoke and extend learners' perceptions and thinking, to arouse curiosity, to stimulate laughter and wonder, reverence, imagination and competence. There will be films, tapes, videos, exhibitions, books, resourceful people from the community and virtual reality experiences.

Gaming studios where learning takes place by playing educational games, where there is the opportunity to take part in simulations and role-play, and where arena theatre events will be developed.

Project studios will be available where learners work on real projects, such as making a video, writing a book or TV script, designing new materials and products, or planning projects to be undertaken later in the community. In the UK, Walsall Community Arts has produced a *Dreaming for Real* project pack which has been setting such projects in motion.

Learner banks will be designed to store and loan out the tools and equipment needed by learners. A large part of the bank would store books and other material now found in conventional libraries.

Family life Centres where families will learn together. The centre will offer meetings, seminars, tutoring or community-centred discussions. For those who learn well some of the time in school-type settings, these will be provided here. Community facilities such as homes, businesses, public places and sports facilities, will be available as appropriate, as part of the learning network. The network of learning centres will remain permanently fluid open to evaluation, review and change.

(From Meighan and Harber 2007)

John Adcock detailed a vision with many features in common with the *Minnesota Experimental City Model* in his two books *In Place of Schools* (1995) and *Teaching Tomorrow* (2000). Even a global corporation like *Arthur Andersen Consulting* conceived of **multi-age Community Learning Centres** in every neighbourhood for self-directed learners with facilitators and not teachers (*Arthur Andersen and Creative Learning Systems* 1999).

The essential point here is that CLCs develop to meet the community need and are established on personalisation principles. Core assets, resources and functions might exist but there might also be differences or specialisms within neighbouring CLCs serving a particular community. Child-care functions would be an important feature to permit the kind of variety in journeys and episodes to take place.

CLCs would be at the core of social policy and be subject to massive funding, continuous development, adaptation and redevelopment as needs change.

Question (from the editors of *Education News*, New York City):

'If America's schools were to take one giant step forward this year toward a better tomorrow, what should it be?'

Answer:

'It would be to let every child be the planner, director and assessor of his (*her*) own education, to allow and encourage him, with the inspiration and guidance of more experienced and expert people, and as much help as he asked for, to decide what he is to learn, when he is to learn it, and how he is to learn it, and how well he is learning it. It would be to make our schools, instead of what they are, which is jails for children, into a resource for free and independent learning which everyone in the community, of whatever age, could use as much or as little as he wanted.'

John Holt

Advisors and facilitators were self-selected by the learners. Students could 'vacation' whenever they wanted, or 'learn' at school, at home, in the community, or in the world...

Don Glines (2006) talking about an enlightened programme at the Wilson Campus School, Minnesota

The Learning Landscape – learning all the time.

Once these ideas have taken hold communities need to re-assesses the contribution of everything to modelling and scaffolding learning. For example, re-valuing building and housing design, and public spaces.

In thinking about recycling schools we are inevitably drawn along a path which prompts us to re-assess other areas of the learning landscape for their impact on and potential for learning. **When learning takes place beyond schools and school like institutions how can we avoid considering the impact of everything around us for modelling and scaffolding learning?** In just a few examples here let's imagine by 2025:

There have been other significant developments in the physical fabric of our communities. The tradition of magnificent public parks and green areas has been reignited and our communities have gone out of their way to revalue these in terms of their impact on learning, emotional and physical well-being, the social and cultural capital. Smaller areas based on abandoned or redevelopment plots in housing estates, marginal, industrial and commercial areas have also blossomed. Following on from the work of early years practitioners many of these environments have been equipped for play... both formal and traditional and the more expressive and free. All ages have reclaimed their spaces for communal play, recreation and cultural pursuits. In fine weather many of the spaces are homes to theatre, music and arts. Cafés have proliferated and more citizens use these areas to walk, talk, read, listen and just be, in the ways which they choose. The areas are jealously protected and looked after and cherished in the communities.

When schools began to be recycled into CLCs they were immediately used to model sustainable design, energy and living. Community based renewable energy projects were based at the CLCs and these acted as a catalyst and information resource for developments in homes and businesses. No expense was spared in keeping these models current and effective.

Concepts like *City as School*, *Citischool*, the *Deschooling* movement (*Illich 1971*) and the *Minnesota Experimental City (MXC)* make the landscape (physical, and virtual) an integral learning resource. Indeed in the MXC proposal:

There were to be no schools or colleges: learning was envisioned as a lifelong concept with the city as the living learning laboratory. People would 'study' in existing facilities – homes, businesses, outdoor sites - and in special facilities as the Family Life Centres, Stimulus Centres, Beginning Life Centres, Project Centres, Gaming Centres and Learner Banks. This design was for 250,000 people on 60,000 virgin acres, only 10,000 of which were to be cemented; the central city was to be covered by a geodesic dome for year round climate control. No cars were to be allowed, people movers and waterless toilets were planned, along with the latest available electronic equipment. People would be connected as desired through the sophisticated LORIN computer system (Learning Opportunities Resources Information Network)...

The personalised learning system for the MXC was based upon valid assumptions: learning is life, learning occurs everywhere... Delivery of opportunities was to be through a variety of avenues, none of which involved a school or site where students had to report each day. (Glines 2006)

The Learning Landscape – the human resource.

The resource actually is everything around us ... physical and human. It's actually staggering that as yet we are unable harness the astonishing human resource available to learners. In recycling schools we can begin to tap into this. *HBE and community educators know this.*

The schooling system is remarkably inefficient in the way it relates to the available educational resources. By its very nature with arbitrarily defined, staged and paced curricula, and by its segregation of learners away from the world it's actually a *poor short-hand for a complex, fast moving reality beyond.*

In schooling there is much talk about learning *with, from and in* the community. There continue to be many lovely projects that draw on the expertise of artists, dancers, musicians, writers, parents, grandparents and so on. These are often some of the most powerful life-influencing and life-changing experiences for youngsters because they are in touch with authentic, motivated and motivating people. Nonetheless, despite their success the potential of this resource is far from developed, and squeezed out by other curricular demands.

This is in stark contrast to what has actually happened in the virtual world. *The astonishing growth of the internet and web resources has given us some indication of the human resource and content we can unleash.* The ICT and digital worlds can signpost pathways to as well as through the educational landscape. The development of the internet, the web and the emerging Web 2.0 illustrate how concepts like co-creation, user generated tools and contents are *explosive in growth, adaptive and viral.* Coupled with mobile technologies, communication technologies and interactive platforms the learning landscape has a portal into the vast majority of homes available literally at the click of the button.

The irony of all this is that the inflexibility and rigidity of schooling systems means they barely keep pace with such developments. Systemic inertia and suspicion are resistant to change. Rather than freeing and trusting learners, schools prevent, restrict and manage access ensuring the old defaults of command and control are not subverted. *Young learners live in parallel worlds, the one outside of school having little relation to that they find within. At the school gates they have to 'power down'* (see article by Puttnam 2007) and have minimal access, if any, to the ICT capacity and tools they can explore beyond. Youngsters continue to develop their own realities and communication tools widening the gaps in generational understandings and experiences.

The more enlightened classrooms are just waking up to the fact that a class of 30 has actually got 31 teachers (indeed a whole community, the world if they care to open doors, free the technology and co-operate). The web adds countless billions in real and virtual time. Teachers of not too many years back (and many still now!) would struggle to locate a small selection of topic books covering the range of levels in their classes. With ICT every learner can access a range of textual and multimedia resources bespoke and 'off the peg' never dreamt of in the past. Despite this it still happens too few times and the fact that the learning is imposed diminishes its potential impact.

As we've hinted the potential of the human, face to face resource in communities is basically untapped... but what if it wasn't? What if the whole community took more responsibility for being part of the *'educational capital'* and were more available to do so. The resource can be found in all sorts of places. The old folks have rich biographical experiences which they can talk or write about. What if they were encouraged to contribute toward the learning landscape or ideally grow up seeing it as a natural thing to do? They could write to websites, pen books, come together with learners and explore issues to which they felt able to contribute. Individuals with hobbies, specialist interests and skills could similarly be more open to share and engage with learners. How often do we come across amazing individuals who maintain the most astonishing wealth of knowledge and skills that inspire through their very passion for what they do? Similarly we have a rich tradition of community groups, from astronomical or history societies to amateur dramatic groups, sporting clubs and so on.

Of course many of these resources are available in emergent form...adult education classes, volunteering schemes and the like. However, they are a vast asset that is underdeveloped and underused by the majority of the population and could be extended further. Imagine if these opportunities were legitimated for any learner, any age and available in the CLCs and other bases during day times. Registers of 'offers' could be more widely available locally and nationally.

Imagine by 2025: *the CLCs and community websites have blossomed. They developed their own local LETS schemes, community banks, recycling and volunteering and society registers. They are centres for newspaper, magazine, book publishing, radio, film and TV production. It is a proud boast that most citizens will have written and published or filmed and shown some work of their own, have presented either radio, TV or the www and will have performed on stage before they die. The avenues for self-expression and fulfilment appear limitless and add a multiplier effect to the ingenuity of the community's inhabitants.*

At present it is groups like the home-based educators who are more able and likely to avail themselves of these experiences. What they bring to learning is often an efficient responsive approach rather than the alternative standardised curricula drip feed. They also bring high degrees of practical activity and a wealth of authentic experience.

Community educators, community arts groups and youth workers also tap into this authentic resource using informal learning techniques. The reality is that they are given little exposure when looking at learning but they provide some powerful exemplars of how so called 'hard to reach and disengaged learners' can achieve remarkable outcomes in both short and long terms (see *Webster, M. and Buglass, G. 2005*).

We're not the only ones thinking along these lines. **The School of Everything** looks like a promising development. Their website states:

If you want to teach (or learn) astrophysics or assembly language, bike maintenance or blues guitar, the School of Everything will be the best place to find the people to do it with.

Our values

We started The School of Everything because we know that learning can change people's lives - and also be a lot of fun. Too often formal education lets people down and leaves them feeling like failures, or doesn't prepare them for the reality of life in the Big Wide World. We don't think it has to be that way. Here are some of the things we believe.

Everybody has something to teach. That old idea of a teacher being somebody who stands up at the front of a class in school is out of date. We want to uncover hidden teachers. We hope some of our first teachers will be young people learning from each other as peers.

Learning is personal. We think people learn best when they can choose what, when and how they learn - and when they can find the right people to learn with.

You can't force someone to learn. Compulsory schooling often leaves people feeling that education is something that 'happens to them'. This can create a sense of powerlessness and a 'habit' of disengagement. But people aren't 'disengaged' in some abstract sense.

Everyone's interested in something. Start from what someone's interested in and it's surprising how fast they learn.

We like face-to-face. The internet's great and all, but we're not encouraging people to spend even more time in front of a screen. There are plenty of e-learning providers already. We want to help people organise real-time, face-to-face learning where, when and in the way that suits them.

Flexibility leads to accessibility. We're not going to put restrictions on whether people use the School of Everything to organise institutional, private or informal learning - or whether or not people charge money. Users will be able to find or start anything, from lengthy fee-paying and accredited courses to book groups or one-to-one knowledge-sharing. And it will have room for plenty of other new kinds of learning groups we haven't thought of yet.

The School of Everything www.schoolofeverything.com

Outcomes and success.

What kind of people do we expect? We can already see the evidence. We need to open our eyes and learn from the edversity we already have and those institutions that have explored flexibility in deeper ways...like the Open University.

There exists a variety of learning systems and each one produces different results and different people. *Bertrand Russell* in *On Education* (p.28) states the problem like this:

We must have some concept of the kind of person we wish to produce before we can have any definite opinion as to the education which we consider best.

So, *first decide your intentions, and then choose an appropriate learning system - the one that is 'fit for purpose'*. Thus, if we adopt the view that the world's most pressing need is to produce people who will,

- (a) do no harm to each other,
- (b) do no harm to the environment,
- (c) do no harm to themselves,
- (d) and maybe even do a little good in the world, learning based on co-operation has to replace that based on competition. We can go on to say more than this – ***we need people who are capable, confident researchers and democratically competent, in order to achieve these aims.***

If these are our intentions, then we will need to design a learning system that gives us the best chance of achieving them. It needs to be 'fit for purpose'. An endless stream of books and commentators has shown that compulsory, ageist schools do not do this (see *Compulsory Mis-education* by Paul Goodman, *Freedom and Beyond* by John Holt – and any of his other nine books – and the writings of Ivan Illich, Everett Reimer, John Taylor Gatto, Chris Shute or Roland Meighan's *Comparing Learning Systems – The Good, the Bad, The Ugly and the Counter-productive*).

The inability of the schooling system to be clear about its values and principles and then the disjunction between what it says and then does is culpable.

Though undoubtedly not perfect those who have been educated beyond mainstream schooling have tended to experience hard fought for value systems that permit greater consistency and alignment with practice. So ***the range of free and democratic schools, self-managed learning groups, home-based educators, learning co-operatives, community educators, virtual and online communities can give us glimpses of 'what could be'.***

The evidence is really rather good. Taking the home-based educated as an example, this community have long 'trail-blazed', and developed learners who are described in *Rothermerl's research (1988)* as ***having high levels of ability and good social skills. Despite the fact age-related norms were not necessarily a priority they were often meeting or exceeding national targets.***

Alan Thomas's research (1994) found that home based learners

- ***learn to read in innumerable ways and without difficulty***
- ***go on to read voraciously***
- ***often read in a 'higgledy-piggledy' fashion without apparent need for sequencing***
- ***in some cases just seem to 'pick up' knowledge including maths***
- ***may pursue a topic for days if interest holds***
- ***can be wrong without losing face, have the confidence and familiarity to challenge if they do not understand or disagree***
- ***are socially skilled and seem to enjoy high self-esteem***

Meighan (1997) summarises the USA effectiveness research. ***Home educated children were on average two years ahead on any aspect tested and up to ten years ahead in some cases compared to their schooled counterparts.*** Consistently, despite typical socialisation arguments research shows home educated children are ***far better socially adjusted, more mature and have fewer problem behaviours than those who are schooled.*** Perhaps more importantly the research shows that the ***positive aspects of this type of education continue into adulthood.*** *Webb (1990) and Knowles (1993)* found that home-based educated learners develop into the whole range of social, work and lifestyle activities. Webb also found there was a high degree of community input and good parental relationships along with ***high degrees of adaptability and flexibility.*** *Meighan (2001)* looked at 25 years of home-based education research and material. In this book, *Chris Shute* ends his contribution talking about home-based education as a valid alternative to school.

They no longer have to expend their energy on compensating for the almost total lack of influence over their known lives. They usually develop flexibility and adaptability. Imagination, ingenuity and creativity are encouraged and found to develop frequently. They become what every employer will want them to be: clear sighted, honest and realistic.

Of course the key elements available to home-based learners are freedoms from imposed inflexible school time frames and structures. Home based learners make choices and invite learning and assessment. *Fortune-Wood (2001)* describes five particular advantages. They thrive in the rich environment of conversation ... often in the form of informal but purposeful dialogue. They have access to the full range of communication media. They learn in the real world. They read books they have chosen. They utilise bespoke resources – access to specialisms not available in

schools. All this leads them to be able to experience event and issue-based learning. They are able to have authentic learning experiences in the real world.

It stands to reason that whatever the learning setting within the landscape when it starts to look at such elements enthusiastic learning follows. The qualities of motivation, adaptability, and flexibility, high degrees of personal and social skills are all the stuff of success and key for 21st century achievement. Young self-managed learners continue to learn throughout their lives. *The distinction between learning and living is not apparent* as for schooled counterparts; thus as adults they naturally continue to learn, and gather whatever knowledge, skills and competences they need to fulfil their aspirations and interests. When they do decide to enter various courses or universities the qualities and dispositions they possess are recognised and valued by those who mentor and support them.

We should not be afraid of looking beyond the schools. The listings of non-schooled achievers is an astounding guide to some of the world greats... some ten US presidents including Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt; inventors like Bell, Edison, the Wright Brothers; scientists like Einstein, Pascal, Curie; artists like Monet, Da Vinci, Blake; composers and musicians like Mozart, Mendelssohn, Menhuin; writers like Dickens, C.S. Lewis, Christie. An interesting listing of 'celebrity' school 'drop outs' <http://www.angelfire.com/stars4/lists/dropouts.html> also goes some way to indicating that there are clearly other ways and factors that contribute to success.

Total Names: 701 Males: 532 Females: 169

Billionaires: 18
Millionaires: uncounted
U.S. Presidents: 8
Astronauts: 1
Nobel Prize Winners: 10 (6 Literature, 2 Peace, 1 Physics, 1 Chemistry)
Olympic Medal Winners: 8 (7 Gold Medalists, one Silver Medalist)
Oscar Winners: 61
Oscar Nominees: 103 (includes above)
Other Award Winners: uncounted
Best-Selling Authors: 55
Presidential Medal of Freedom recipients (U.S.'s highest civilian honor): 13
Congressional Gold Medal recipients (U.S.): 12
United Nations Goodwill Ambassadors: 2
Knighthoods: 27
Damehoods: 3

Imagine that by 2025:

The educational renaissance has created an amazing explosion of learning at every level and age. Learners accredit themselves in a variety of ways. Some with the old style conventional accreditations such as certificates and degrees and other markers in the available catalogue curriculum. Some use credit-based systems that have been developed to track through the available catalogue curricula rather like patterns established with the Open University. Others however, have relied on their digital portfolios and evidenced their lives and learning and proven what they are capable of to prospective coaches, mentors, guides and employers. Yet others have just got on and done it...they have adopted the entrepreneurial spirit and made their own way through work and life. The removal of the 'one size fits all' educational experience has been accomplished.

At the end of the day who are the people who make the most impression on you? It's more than likely the passionate and driven

individuals you meet or hear about. We're not just talking about the entrepreneurs, the famous, or celebrities above. It's not those exposed to their fifteen minutes of fame and fortune (often followed by a lifetime of wreckage and emptiness!). It's about regular folk who contribute their work and beyond to the wider good. *Those who have rounded lives full of skills and interests, who are active in their communities, who raise caring and cohesive families, spread happiness and wrestle with the daily contradiction of their values and the world around them. They are the unsung heroes, the glue that holds families and communities together. Being continuously confronted by choice, rational argument, responsibility, independence and interdependence breeds people who are comfortable with change, consistently flexible, adaptable and able to take moral decisions. They are at ease with all the generations and able to work in teams. They are active and action orientated, conversant with current issues and their own personal needs. They relish challenge and are able to keep persevering to reach their goals.* These are the kinds of people that at a minimum are the substantive outcomes of education gained in a self-managed way.

It hardly needs remarking that *surely* these are qualities that are in short supply and consistently the qualities desired by employers and needed by society at large.

Learning Travel Agents and Guides.

New professional roles for the educational workforce are a pre-requisite for recycling schools and developing a personalised educational landscape.

If we recycle schools we must also consider recycling the roles of teachers and others in the educational workforce. Ultimately a *personalised educational landscape will need an expansive and diverse human resource to guide, support and challenge learners.* The existing workforce can migrate and develop into these roles but this will be a greater shift than is being undertaken in current remodelling, restructuring and modernisation agendas. For some who have been heavily socialised into the current authoritarian, didactic and transactional teaching / instructional modes the transition will be challenging. However, it is most likely that there would be roles to meet all capacities and personal aspirations. *Some would be able to act as the learning travel agents and guides - mentoring and coaching. Others would be able to be fully involved in co-constructing personalised curricula with learners. They would be the master educators or PEDAs (pedagogues – Meighan). Some would be concerned with working with learners on the existing catalogue curriculum.* Yet others would work across all functions. Whatever, their role their *central tenet would be that they would always be invited by learners.* Adcock (2000) investigates the implications for a whole new concept of the teaching profession. But again, models for these roles do already exist in some form or another within contemporary learning systems (mainstream and beyond). We do not have to reinvent these ways of working, we just need to share them more widely.

Meighan (2005) likens the recycled functions for teachers to a shift from 'miserable rule-followers' to learning travel agents. He maintains teachers are prone to describe themselves as 'miserable rule-followers' anyway. A recent happiness in employment study showed that only 8% of teachers found their work enjoyable, worthwhile and satisfying (City and Guilds Survey reported in the *Guardian*, 25th Feb 2005). Under the arrangements

for recycled schools, teachers would be more the invitational *'guide on the side' and less the imposed 'sage on the stage'*. Under these circumstances we might expect that their enjoyment of their work might increase.

When adults quiz parents about home-based education they often ask how one or two parents can replace the team of experts of a school staff. Apart from pointing out that we live in an information-rich society now, so that what the teachers know is available anyway, parents go on to describe themselves as 'fixers' or 'learning site managers' who help arrange the learning programme. They may also operate as learning coaches, or as fellow learners researching alongside their children, rather than as instructors. *John Holt* gives a useful summary of the qualities required:

We can sum up very quickly what people need to teach their own children. First of all, they have to like them, enjoy their company, their physical presence, their energy, foolishness, and passion. They have to enjoy all their talk and questions, and enjoy equally trying to answer those questions. They have to think of their children as friends, indeed very close friends, have to feel happier when they are near and miss them when they are away. They have to trust them as people, respect their fragile dignity, treat them with courtesy, take them seriously. They have to feel in their own hearts some of their children's wonder, curiosity, and excitement about the world. And they have to have enough confidence in themselves, scepticism about experts, and willingness to be different from most people, to take on themselves the responsibility for their children's learning.

John Holt (1982)

The *University of the First Age* details the dispositions and values required for deep learning. These relate principally to learner but equally they will also be a mantra for the recycled workforce.

UFA Dispositions and Values:

To encourage deep learning we believe it is necessary to value certain ways of thinking and acting:

Being ethical and responsible

Being open and generous

Being engaged with others

Being comfortable with complexity

Developing positive dispositions

Being able to transfer learning skills

Being able to accept challenge

Having an intrinsic enjoyment of learning

These dispositions and values shape and inform all that we do to encourage deep learning and they sit at the very heart of the organisation. They guide us and drive us. They create a context in which we develop all our processes, from learning teams to the National Network; acting as a filter for all that we deliver.

Taking Choice Seriously.

Choice is not 'anything goes' but responsible and informed decisions made with a framework of democratic values.

What is proposed is not a matter of 'anything goes' but it is rather about responsible choices being made within a framework of democratic values. The following *Declaration of Learner's Rights and Responsibilities and the Extension of the Learner's Rights and Responsibilities* are useful in this respect.

The Declaration of Learner's Rights and Responsibilities document was written by a group of 6 young people between the ages of 15 and 17 and was presented at a Rights of the Child Conference in Victoria, BC and to the Minister of Education in June 1995. It was again presented to the UN Conference Habitat II in Istanbul Turkey in 1996. It is the frontispiece to a federally commissioned document written on Virtual High - Learning a Living. It has also been published internationally by UNESCO and many organisations in countries around the world have asked permission to share it with their communities. The extension

followed the initial declaration and sits well with the *Learner's Charter for a Personalised Learning Environment*. Together with the *PEN Principles of Personalisation* they begin to describe choice and personalisation as we see it.

Importantly they contextualise and *articulate the relationships, rights and responsibilities of the learner to society, to resources and to educators*.

Some people find choice really hard to take on board... they instinctively believe *'nobody will do anything'*. Nothing could be further from the truth. We know this from the experience of those educated in current alternatives beyond mainstream and indeed from the very disengaged within mainstream reintegration projects.

What we need to understand here is that we all have hopes and dreams; we all eventually need to earn a living. None of this will occur without some form of learning and for many it means pursuing some form(s) of accreditation. The experience of education beyond mainstream is that learners do whatever they need to accomplish their goals. They will do it remarkably efficiently, when they are ready to follow those goals.

It is only reasonable that where a resource is made available and the learner makes choices, that the learner has responsibilities to funding, people or places. It is likely that this would be in the form of agreements detailing *personal learning plans*. These would become a prominent feature.

We must also keep in mind that many learners become bored with the pace, challenge and lack of connectedness of their school curricula progressions. They thirst not only for control over the content of their learning but the speed, depth and integration of it. Why should they be constrained? Morally and educationally we have no right to prevent them from truly reaching their potential.

It must also be recognised that there are those who would choose to learn under conditions and terms that exist now. Again, that poses no contradictions with our proposals. As *Meighan* asserts our vision is *'alternatives for everyone all of the time'*.

There are of course issues regarding choice and the kinds of educational experience on offer. Racist, religious fundamentalist or terrorist settings might wish to exert influence. However *our educational landscape, rights and responsibilities are positioned within the wider framework of democracy*. The democratic rights enshrined in United Nations Human Rights laws and European Conventions would hold the educational landscape to core values and protections.

This new educational environment actually sets up challenging expectations far beyond our current culture of compulsion, dominance, dependency and minimal competencies. It is anything but the kind of 'fluffy free for all' sceptics fear.

I can't understand why people are frightened of new ideas. I'm frightened of the old ones.

John Cage

Declaration of Learner's Rights and Responsibilities.

1. As a learner I have the right to allow my own experience and enthusiasm to guide my learning
2. As a learner I have the right to choose and direct the nature and conditions of my learning experience. As a learner I am responsible for the results I create.
3. As a learner I have the right to perfect the skills to be a conscious, self confident and resourceful individual.
4. As a learner I have the right to be held in respect. It is my responsibility to hold others in respect.
5. As a learner I have the right to a nurturing and supportive family and community. My family and community have the right and responsibility to be my primary resource.
6. As a learner I have the right and responsibility to enter into relationships based on mutual choice, collaborative effort, challenge and mutual gain.
7. As a learner I have the right to be exposed to a diverse array of ideas, experiences, environments, and possibilities. This exposure is the responsibility of myself, my parents and my mentors.
8. As a learner I have the right to evaluate my learning according to my own sensibilities. I have the right to request and the responsibility to include the evaluations of my mentors.
9. As a learner I have the right to co-create decisions that involve and concern me.
10. As a learner I have the right and responsibility to openly consider and respect the ideas of others, whether or not I accept these ideas.
11. As a learner I have the right to enter a learning organization which offers, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical support, and operates in an open and inclusive manner.
12. As a learner I have the right of equal access to resources, information and funding.

This document was created by a group of individuals (ages 15-17)
Serena Staples, Gregory Dean, Ilana Cameron, David Muncaster, Jesse Blum and Sarah Partridge,
with the help of Brent Cameron and other Wondertree mentors
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Box 74560 Kitsilano PO
Vancouver, BC V6K 4P4

Learner's Rights and Responsibilities.

- Extension of the Learner's Rights and Responsibilities Declaration – Brent Cameron

1. The Learning Process

1.1. **Every human is born with an inherent ability to learn.** Learning is integral to living. It is the awareness of change and development.

1.2. **Learning is a lifelong natural process.** Learning increases one's ability and choices in responding to, and being responsible for one's actions and thoughts.

1.3. **Learning emerges from an integral enthusiasm to understand and has inherent worth.** Learning is a desire to know, and characteristically has its own intrinsic reward.

1.4. **Learning implies growth,** and growth implies the realization of an inner pattern of design and harmony. Balance in growth is achieved by maintaining a harmony between one's conscious development and the underlying unconscious awareness.

1.5. **Learning is a mirroring process.** If an individual is respected then one will learn respect. It is a human need to create meaning and to be in a responsive loving relationship.

1.6. **It is essential to shift focus from teaching and expectations to learning and curiosity.** Meeting the needs of the individual is the best way to invest in society, as fulfilled individuals will make positive contributions to society.

2. The Learning Individual

2.1. **Learning is based on experience.** Patterns of experience form models for understanding one's role in the world. One naturally learns through modeling. Learning emerges from an inner desire and enthusiasm to understand and to form meaningful relationships in the world.

2.2. **Every individual has the right to determine the direction of one's own learning,** and correspondingly is **responsible** for one's learning.

2.3. **Every learner has the right to be treated as a whole and competent learner.** The responsibilities for the results are each learner's opportunity for growth.

2.4. **Natural learning is the unfolding of the infinite potential within.** Self-realization is a process of understanding one's potential as one's role in a dynamic between self and others.

2.5. **Learning is ultimately a self-design process,** therefore each individual has the right to follow their own inner wisdom.

2.6. **It is the right of every learner to be held in respect and it is the responsibility of each learner to hold everyone else in respect.**

2.7. **It is the right of every individual to live and learn from a sense of fulfillment,** and to set goals that increase one's sense of self-confidence and one's sense of oneself as a resourceful individual.

2.8. **One's self is ultimately not exclusive of others,** it is inclusive of others through a sense of love and compassion. The purpose of living from one's sense of fulfillment is that one's actions will naturally enhance the experience of others and maintain a balance in relationships.

3. The Learning Relationship

a.) The Family - Parents

a3.1. **The parenting relationship is the first and most significant relationship.** Each learning parent is responsible to respond to the learning needs of the child as expressed by the child. Every child has the

right to a nurturing and responsive family.

a3.2. **One's capacity or ability to learn is determined more by the quality of one's relationships than any other factor.** Given a meaningful and responsive relationship, every child makes appropriate choices for their level of ability.

a3.3. **All families have the right to equal access to funding available for learning within a society.** It is the family's right to decide how to best invest this funding for the lifelong development of learners.

a3.4. **Life is a challenge, living is maintaining a delicate balance. Children naturally model parents, and integrate their strategies.** It is therefore essential that parents are supported in taking responsibility for becoming optimum models for learners.

b.) The mentor

b3.1. **A collaborative learning relationship is designed around a mutual enthusiasm for learning.** The roles of mentor and learner shift and it is the responsibility of a mentor to share strategies and insights with the learner. The learner-mentor relationship is based on the principles of friendship and mutual respect.

b3.2. **Every individual has the right to choose to participate in a relationship that is essentially nurturing and caring.** Conversely, in achieving one's needs, one must be responsible to the realization of another's needs.

b3.3. **Each individual in a relationship has the right to choose to enter into a relationship that is based on mutual gain.** It is the right of an individual to end a relationship.

b3.4. **Learning is a self-evaluative process.** Learning is a collaborative process as it is important to include other points of view for an increase in self understanding. It is the responsibility of each learner to invite the point of view of others to gather information for further self-evaluation.

4. The Learning Organization

4.1. **It is the responsibility of every learning organization to remain open to redesign,** to include everyone in a process of consensus evaluation for ongoing openness and change.

4.2. **Each individual has equal access to the resources of the community to increase their learning through development.** Each individual is responsible to reciprocate the investment by the organization.

5. The Learning Society

5.1. **It is the responsibility of a society to provide equal access to resources and to invest in the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical growth of learners.** It is the right of every individual to develop to one's full potential and one's responsibility to share what one gains.

5.2. **It is the responsibility of society to encourage diverse points of view, and it is the responsibility of individuals in society to respect other view points.** A society has the responsibility to withdraw support for view points that are against individuals or groups.

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Box 74560 Kitsilano PO, Vancouver, BC V6K 4P4,
brentcameron@wondertree.org

The irony is that the writing was already on the wall in the early 20th century. In 1921 the Chief Inspector for Schools, *Edmond Holmes* wrote about *The Tragedy of Education* and saw as clearly as we do what the denial of choice and control leads to. If Britain wanted to have an education system fit for a new century, he concluded, it would have to stop telling children what to do and compelling them to do it, since this produced only passivity, lassitude, unhealthy docility or, in the stronger, more determined spirits, 'naughtiness'. Teaching had become a debased activity.

In nine schools out of ten, on nine days out of ten, in nine lessons out of ten, the teacher is engaged in laying thin films of information on the surface of the child's mind and then after a brief interval he is skimming these off in order to satisfy himself that they have been duly laid.

Edmond Holmes (1921)

The landscape of choice, rights and responsibilities is an environment disposed to learning and growth for the individual and society as a whole.

This is aligned and joined up thinking. A much more mature and developmental approach...an education fit for a sustainable 21st century democracy.

The Limitations to Change.

Aspects of the current system are found useful and even preferable by some people.

It is undeniable that some aspects of the current schooling system are useful to people. Our conference readily acknowledged the ability to have children looked after is attractive to many parents who work. The way we currently organise the majority of our work and lives makes this a virtual necessity. Even where learning was accessed freely from an educational landscape there would still be **demand for childcare**. In recycling our schools we do not have to lose such benefits. These would be available on request and in a variety of forms and settings and not by uniform compulsion.

Some would maintain that the schooling model was their preferred option. Our proposals would not stand in the way. Families and learners wishing to continue would do so... accessing 'off the peg' school curricula and organisation from settings offering the school-like structures. The difference is they would be clear in the knowledge that they had made the choice, that curriculum and assessment remained invitational and they had open access to the *personalised educational landscape* when they wanted. Over time we would expect that even these folks would begin to see the advantages of real personalisation, the outcomes of other learners, and opportunities to reconsider life patterns.

Some people fear the disappearance of qualifications if schools did not exist. There is no reason for this to be an issue. There would be a whole range of assessments and assessment possibilities available. Rather than a *one size fits all* imposed system a more thoughtful approach would focus on the **learner inviting assessments on the basis of their readiness and their desire to pursue accreditation for particular purposes**. The drivers for this are not just a matter of learner choice but the requirements of further study, jobs and careers. Many fields quite rightly will need proof of competences before they can accept candidates. None of us would relish being operated on by a surgeon without a form of assessment of knowledge and skills or being flown in an aircraft without a qualified pilot. An electrician who could not wire a plug would be little use! It's common sense that a whole range of evaluations, assessment and qualifications

will always exist. What is problematic is the crude and limited range of those which are imposed in school age-related curricula progressions. A personalised educational landscape will be **freed from the devalued factory testing assessment model**. It will be more able to exploit qualifications and assessments on a broader more authentic front. **Self and peer review, group evaluation, projects, portfolios, presentations** amongst others will sit alongside testing models in the toolkit.

Learning, Life and Living.

Recycling schools, CLCs and the Personalised Educational Landscape will have benefits for learning, life and living.

The struggle to integrate and align social policies has dogged governments and social planners. We rarely take a holistic view of the **qualitative aspects of life** and how individual aspects interact and impact on us. As a consequence flexibility and the long view seldom come into focus in a world where annual accounting and political expediency hold court.

The idea of developing a wide-ranging, funded and legitimated educational landscape and of recycling our schools within it provides a significant opportunity to begin to address such issues. We have already touched upon the arguments about effective learning and an individual's responsibility for their own learning journey. However, we can also begin to **confront the pressing problems of societal and family cohesion, ageism, active citizenship and the quality of our lives**.

The schooling model puts enormous pressures on families from the most obvious adjustments to daily structure, life and career made by parents, to the fracturing of families and the segregation of the community by age. The very basis of strong families and communities that learn and live together is undermined as the state appropriates the youngsters and their time. In the process, daily life is skewed. There are the **pressures on resources and environment of the twice daily 'schools runs', the artificial differences between weekdays, weekends and school holidays which impact the economic and cultural life of the community. Working adults wrestle with the guilt and consequences of being absent and worn out parents, of not being able to support the care of the elderly in their family or perhaps those in their neighbourhood. The old folk and adults rarely see or spend time with the youngsters and vice versa and lack of understanding grows**.

If education became more flexible and personalised as we have described it could be the catalyst for impacting the rigidity of our working days, and careers. **Is it not possible to conceive that the enormous public and personal pressures would be eased in communities who can make rational choices and prioritise the core needs and aspirations of their lives?** Would we not be happier, healthier, more productive? Instead of having lessons in citizenship, in caring, in relationships, in dealing with emotions, etc., we might actually explore these in the authentic realities of living and learning. In our model **societal learning capital** grows with every generation. With the existing system we would argue in many areas there is a generational decline.

Our vision rests on whether we can trust people to make rational, sensible, appropriate decisions about their own lives, learning and the communities they live in. The evidence is already there that we can. **People from all backgrounds and challenges can take responsibility, make choices and live in an adaptive and**

responsive manner. It is true for those who learn in self-managed contexts. The non-governmental organisations have also discovered this in the developing world. **Imposition doesn't work, empowerment and responsibility does.** This is echoed in the most challenging circumstances and with the most hard to reach and disengaged as the community and informal educators have discovered.

Imagine by 2025:

There is a synthesis of learning and life. Children have been reunited with their parents and grandparents; adolescents have been re-integrated with society. Personal value, esteem and standing as a learner is no longer abdicated to the accreditation bestowed by industrial homogenised schooling.

Family and community friendly policies in employment far from creating unworkable bureaucracy have increased efficiencies and quality of life. They have also attracted business and others looking for models of successful transformation.

Confident citizens make their own choices for their life and career patterns and adjust how they engage in learning. The traditional normative career and work pattern is a rarity. People enjoy flexible working, career breaks, time for family and learning. If they have a contribution to make it is common for young people to be working and returning to other learning at a later date. Some of the most exciting innovations and ideas have been developed amongst the teenage and adolescent population.

In our present system we are prevented from doing this in any meaningful way and fail to develop the dispositions and skills to make it happen. Unfortunately panic and fear eschew that it would ever be possible. As this happens regularly, the righteous and benevolent state intervenes and attempts to pick up the pieces. This is not only a depressing deficit model, it is inaccurate.

Ah but.....

Most 'ah buts' are firmly entrenched in the realities of the present system. There is a need to shift the perspective and move beyond the immediate horizons.

The common 'ah buts' go something like this...

This might work for teenagers and older but what about younger people?

There is reluctance by some people to consider this appropriate for younger people. Whilst we have quite happily engaged with educators who can see this working post-14 anything younger brings less certainty. Having said this we have talked with very significant educationalists who believe the schooling systems in most western democracies have a limited life span anyway. They maintain that schooling will be too expensive to sustain post-12 years-old. Haven't we been here before?! This is not the argument we would use. We turn once again to experiences of the home-based learners from all social classes and situations. These together with the experiences of enlightened early years educators indicate that very young children are more than capable to develop, become independent and learn to make rational choices. We should remember that many countries don't start formal schooling anyway until 7 or 8. What they need is the context of rich dialogue, varied environments and the exploration of all types of physical and social experience with a diversity of ages. A school setting as we know fails to meet these goals.

We couldn't afford such system?

Ultimately, if we truly believe in 'education, education, education' we cannot afford not to fund it. However, we shouldn't expect it to be more expensive. Just think of the current schooling expenditures that go on the bureaucracies of under-used plant, resources, assessment, target setting, policing and compulsion. There is massive uninvited teaching, superficial and inefficient learning. The system itself creates the vast special needs industry. It has a bottomless budget and fails to get to those who really do have significant need. The 'fall out' of schooling is costly and lasts a lifetime. We pick up the huge bill for physical and mental health problems, for crime, for the price of educational failure, lack of basic skills, and disengagement from learning and community. Our solution is real value for money.

Without schools social cohesion would disappear.

One is tempted to respond 'So you really think that schools provide social cohesion?!' From ageism, bullying (peers and teachers), segregation from family and community, messages of oppression, compulsion, labelling, social stratification, class division to fascist and anti-democratic behaviours...we fail to see where the cohesion is! As we have detailed social cohesion is actually more prevalent within the non-schooled population because they are far more used to being with the generations and community at large. We recognise that some communities and elements of deprivation and disadvantage can be problematic in a variety of ways. This is no different from how it is now. Current solutions are to do more of the same (e.g. USA - No Child Left Behind). But, for all the programmes, boosters and targets, 'progress' is marginal unless it's rooted in community development. Social cohesion remains pitiful and the community resource - human, physical and virtual - is barely involved. Those in real poverty, challenging circumstances and family deprivation need continuing additional support and resources beyond that available now. This still has to be underpinned by invitation and not compulsion. The learning centres and educational landscape that would emerge become a massive open and inclusive resource for the whole community. Far from reducing educational opportunities and standards, this would expand them, providing a learning system fit for the twenty-first century. We only need to look at the developing world and the operation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The shift has been to development based on empowering communities to construct their own solutions, and building up the social, cultural, learning and skill capital. This is nurturing, ground level community-based action, replacing short-lived misunderstood and misdirected top down directives. This is part of the glue of social cohesion.

What about political or religious fundamentalism / indoctrination?

Within an active democratic system with declared principles and values this really isn't a problem. Settings promoting such indoctrination would be breaking the law and wouldn't be funded, supported or permitted.

How could we possibly match learners to all these possible episodes, catalogue curricula, mentors and guides?

The issues of locating, booking and scheduling learning experiences are undoubtedly complex but nothing that our current technologies cannot resolve. We could envisage a number of formal and informal systems operating. The scalability of more formalised systems that work for the Open University, the travel business, hospitals / government could work alongside the more informal Google, Ebay, U-Tube type solutions.

It's too risky

Risk is not the issue here. It's not the accountability, the SATs, Ofsted or other arbitrary measure but the consent, agreement, commitment, responsibility of the community and essentially the learners. We claim to live in a democracy. Experience tells us a myriad of different approaches can lead to positive outcomes. We also know that success and happiness is most likely when people have responsibility for their own lives. This is not about forcing, compelling people to do what they are not comfortable with. This is about providing personalised education for those willing to take the responsibilities that go with it. This is about allowing those choices to speak for themselves. If we start to dismantle age-stage linkage and the one size fits all curriculum we start to remove our self-imposed constraints. We give learners the permission to take longer, go faster, take breaks, take non-conventional routes and approaches to life. What's important is that we keep open real learning and stop kidding ourselves that jumping through hoops is any substitute.

...we have a choice. We can continue to pour increasing amounts of money into a system that is delivering proportionately declining returns - and creating a generation of angry, frustrated people who aren't much interested in democracy. Or we can put our money into creating appropriate opportunities and infrastructures to help people learn in ways that do not require huge amounts of real estate and bureaucracy, ways that do not make people abdicate the responsibility for their own growth, ways that allow children and young people to participate fully in the lives of their communities - and get a good education at the same time.

Wendy Priesnitz

Centre for Personalised Education – Personalised Education Now Policy Recommendations.

Evolutionary development...letting it grow.

The recycling of schools will be instrumental in leading both the educational and cultural shifts necessary for the development of a *personalised educational landscape*.

Moving to such a landscape is beyond a simultaneous change. People and communities are at different stages. The capacity to deliver the required structures, informed and supportive communities and educational professionals will take time.

System transformation will also require us to look pragmatically, logistically and politically at the whole landscape continuum. Too many innovations and experiments have floundered and disappeared over the years with short-term thinking and inconsistent values and principles.

We require an *evolutionary approach*. This is about letting it grow and adapt. **In itself this is central to the solution and not a problem.** It's about moving as we have the commitment to build and put the capacity, systems and logistics in place.

We have some indications about what the *personalised educational landscape* may look like but rather than pre-judging and looking for instant blueprints it would be best to **co-construct the landscape building on those elements aligned with the values and principles which prove successful.**

Society needs to robustly and imaginatively evaluate the real benefits that accompany elements of the *personalised educational landscape* and work towards developing its sustainability. It is eminently scaleable. It can and does emerge from small beginnings.

We can begin by learning from, valuing, legitimising and funding existing elements and innovations for the longer term. We already have examples of what can work with the disenfranchised and the pioneers who operate at the margins of the landscape. We firstly need to listen and learn with them and not impose the current sets of assumptions on their practice.

It is possible then to build on the current agendas with the CPE / PEN values and principles:

- Personalisation
- Every Child Matters
- Building Schools for the Future
- 14-19 Provision
- Extended Schools
- Remodelling and Restructuring the workforce
- Technology in Learning
- Curriculum Debate
- Science of learning

They may be narrow and limited in scope at the present time but these are the kinds of areas where mainstream educators are beginning to think 'out of the box'. On that basis they can be starting points for a wider dialogue.

Logic would dictate we legitimise, extend and include other learners who would welcome the deeper personalised choice. We need to let the settings and experiences within the *personalised educational landscape* prove themselves. The foundation principles have already been described.

The Personalised Education Now 8 Principles of Personalisation underpin these well...

Learner-managed and co-constructed learning - to meet learning styles and preferences and supported by a range of others

Shift from dependency to independence and interdependency, based on the principles of subsidiarity, personal responsibility and choice

Invitational learning and assessment within convivial institutions, contexts, settings and experiences

Learning from an educational landscape of opportunities within physical and virtual places and spaces

Re-integration of learning, life and community because life is not necessarily lived to a pre-determined linear pattern. This implies interweaving learning with all aspects of living and community

Democratic values, organisation and practice since democracy is not pre-determined and has to be cultivated and developed

Catalogue and natural versions of curriculum and assessment with no imposition and choice from pre-existing curriculum catalogues or developing the learner's own natural preferences

De-coupling of age-stage progressions and assessments with learning linked to readiness and the principle of real life-long learning

Despite limitations our current landscape has amazing wealth in resources which can be recycled and re-aligned with such values and principles. We have to make the same attitudinal and cultural shifts that are being attempted in the environmental and food movements. In terms of learning this means *cultivating 'edversity'*. The learning methodologies, strategies, educational structures, systems and settings are the educational *'genetic pool'*. Educational ideas and practice need to be diverse, strong and healthy. We need to learn from each other and cross-fertilise these. This will also open us up to a *process and methodology which permits co-production and solution assembling of ideas that we cannot even envision at this time*.

We can begin the shift to basic mass-customisation from where we are and begin to win hearts and mindsets of both the educators and learners. Some basis for this movement exists as the current silos begin to look more and more outwards into the landscape and into new constituencies of learners.

Schools lie at the core of what most people consider as education and learning. When their basic assumptions are challenged and other models examined then the landscape will emerge as an achievable concept. *Recycling schools can be the catalyst for the current learning systems to reposition and recycle themselves*.

With movement from 'school focused' solutions to learner focused solutions we can set about recycling schools. Every community deserves dynamic world class facilities at its heart. Invitational, all-age learning centres would be at the core of social and learning policy and form an integral part of the wider personalised educational landscape.

Personalised Education Now is working on a set of recommendations for action.

The 25 points below are a basis for these recommendations and we invite you to comment on them:

1. A wide-ranging debate about education, outcomes, life and society is essential.
2. The debate should establish democratic values and principles and define how learning, living and community are aligned.
3. There is a need to establish the right to educational diversity, invitational learning and assessment, and the natural and catalogue curricula.
4. The rights and responsibilities of learners and educational settings should be established.
5. Major innovation projects where people are ready to move towards a personalised education landscape (PEL) should be conducted. Diversity should be explored, legitimised and funded.
6. Schools should be recycled into community learning centres (CLCs) with the finest facilities. It may be necessary to build new CLCs in communities that have

- lost facilities or in response to the growth of new communities.
7. Non-schooled pathways, for those who prefer to explore other learning episodes and journeys, should be promoted and enabled.
8. The wider landscape of settings, as a life-long societal learning resource, should be funded. This funding should support the ubiquitous networks and access to technology to enable the virtual landscape to play its full role.
9. The educational resource of community volunteers and expertise should be harnessed.
10. Funding models for learners and settings, and how these might relate to tax, social security and benefits systems, should be explored. Credits, vouchers, public, private, charitable and voluntary sources should all be investigated.
11. The development and training of a wide-ranging body of pedagogues, facilitators, guides, mentors, teachers, instructors, and informal and formal volunteers should be supported. This should be seen as an investment in the educational capital of society.
12. The diversity of learning journeys and episodes, and people's careers and lives, should be researched and celebrated. There should be investment in longitudinal research over lifetimes.
13. The development of learner-centred tools - personal learning plans / agreements, digital portfolios, personalised learning environments and social software - should be supported. These should be used to illustrate how learners can self-manage their learning and learning journeys.
14. Government-managed and teacher-directed learning should give way to learner-managed learning.
15. The National Curriculum should give way to, and be absorbed into, the catalogue curriculum.
16. Uninvited teaching should give way to invited teaching.
17. Formal instruction should be used sparingly and give way to a main method of purposive conversation.
18. The model of the teacher as 'Sage on the Stage' should give way to the model of the 'Guide on the Side'.
19. Parents, friends, community members, mentors, facilitators, teachers and instructors should be encouragers / supporters / guides, co-constructing with learners, rather than decision makers.
20. Learners should be seen as researchers not passive receivers.
21. The habits of domination should give way, not to 'anything goes', but to a democratic value system of power-sharing and participation.
22. The model of key stages undertaken in a 'day prison' should give way to non-ageist learning in community learning centres and the wider personalised educational landscape.
23. The review and celebration of learning should take precedence over endless imposed testing.
24. The model of appointed authoritarian leadership should give way to self-leadership and co-operative shared leadership.
25. Assessment should be only at the request of learners, not imposed by others.

End Quotes

Use every letter you write
Every conversation you have
Every meeting you attend
To express your fundamental beliefs and dreams
Affirm to others the vision of the world you want
Network through thought
Network through action
Network through love
Network through the spirit
You are the centre of a network
You are the centre of the world
You are a free,
Immensely powerful source of life and goodness
Affirm it, spread it, radiate it
Think day and night about it
And you will see a miracle happen:
the greatness of your own life.
In a world of big powers, media and monopolies
But of 6.4 billion individuals
Networking is the new freedom
the new democracy
A new form of happiness.

*Dr Robert Muller, Chancellor,
'World Peace University' Costa Rica, Central
America*

The future is ours for us to create. But creation requires knowledge, imagination, and perseverance. Will we generate these qualities in sufficient measures to change the world? If we fail to do so, the destruction of the human race is certain; if we should succeed, none of us has sufficient imagination to perceive the potentials of our future.

Robert Theobald

If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work; but, rather, teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

Anon

Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.
If a child lives with pity, he learns to feel sorry for himself.
If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.
If a child lives with jealousy, he learns what envy is.
If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.
If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident.
If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.
If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.
If a child lives with acceptance, he learns to love.
If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
If a child lives with recognition, he learns that it is good to have a goal.
If a child lives with sharing, he learns about generosity.
If a child lives with honesty and fairness, he learns what truth and justice are.
If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith in himself and in those around him.
If a child lives with friendliness, he learns that the world is a nice place in which to live.
If you live with serenity, your child will live with peace of mind.
With what is your child living?

Dorothy Law Nolte

I have seen what others can only dream...I know these descriptions are true...for I have been there

Gulliver (Jonathan Swift)

Suggested reading and links

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Websites to broaden the mind

- **AERO** <http://www.educationrevolution.org/> The Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) is a non-profit organization founded in 1989 by education expert Jerry Mintz to advance learner-centred approaches to education. AERO is considered by many to be the primary hub of communications and support for educational alternatives around the world.
- **Alfie Kohn** <http://www.alfiekohn.org/> Kohn's criticisms of competition and rewards have been widely discussed and debated, and he has been described in Time magazine as "perhaps the country's most outspoken critic of education's fixation on grades [and] test scores."
- **ARCH – Action for the Rights of Children** <http://www.arch-ed.org/>
- **British Educational Research Association (BERA)** <http://www.bera.ac.uk/index.asp>
- **Booroobin School** <http://www.suncoast.com.au/Maleny/BooroobinSchool/start.html> Australian democratic place of learning in which the following principles apply: equal status is given to students and staff; a curriculum which is determined by the interests of students and staff with equal status being given to all learning pursuits: individual responsibility; and that learning is best fostered by self-motivation, self-regulation and self-assessment. This is based on the successful Sudbury Valley School model of education
- **Campaign for Learning** <http://www.campaignforlearning.org.uk/aboutus/whatwedo.htm> Working to build motivation, create opportunities and provide support for learning in families and communities, workplaces and schools. Key elements of our work are national promotion campaigns, project partnerships, policy and advocacy, publications, events, research and award schemes.
- **Centre for Self Managed Learning (CSML)** <http://www.selfmanagedlearning.org/> was established as a non-profit organisation in 1994 to develop and promote the wider use of Self Managed Learning (SML) and provide a network giving advice and support to people involved in SML.
- **Centre for Personalised Education Trust / Personalised Education Now** <http://c.person.ed.gn.apc.org/> CPE / PEN 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.
- **Coalition For Self-Learning** <http://www.creatinglearningcommunities.org/etcetera/selflearning.htm> The Coalition for Self-Learning envisions and co-creates a world of cooperative life-long learning communities.
- **DEMOS** <http://www.demos.co.uk/aboutus/default.aspx> Demos is the think tank for everyday democracy. We believe everyone should be able to make personal choices in their daily lives that contribute to the common good. Our aim is to put this democratic idea into practice by working with organisations in ways that make them more effective and legitimate.
- **ECSITE** <http://www.ecsite-uk.net/index.php> ecsite-uk represents over 80 science centres, museums and discovery centres in the UK. Ecsite-uk's purpose is to raise the profile of science centres, and to establish their role as a forum for dialogue between science specialists and the public and as an informal learning resource for learners of all ages.
- **Educational Heretics Press** www.edheretics.gn.apc.org We are a small press that exists to question the dogmas and superstitions of mass, coercive schooling, with its roots in totalitarian thinking, with a view to developing the next modern, humane, flexible, personalised effective public learning system – one fit for a progressive democracy.
- **Education Otherwise** <http://www.education-otherwise.org/index.htm> Education Otherwise is a UK-based membership organisation which provides support and information for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to uphold the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children.
- **Efterskole** <http://www.efterskole.dk/Top%20menu/English.aspx> The efterskole is a unique Danish independent residential school for students between 14 and 18 years old. Presently some 25.000 students attend one of the app. 250 schools throughout Denmark
- **Fédération Internationale des Mouvements d'Ecole Freinet** <http://www.freinet.org/> Fédération Internationale des Mouvements d'Ecole Freinet
- **Free2be.com** <http://www.f2be.com/about.htm> This website hopes to help challenge current perceptions about what education is all about. It suggests that the old systems are no longer relevant to today's technological society and that education should increasingly be about valuing learning, thinking and feeling abilities over the simple acquisition of knowledge. It brings together the work of people worldwide who are actively exploring the nature of human consciousness and potential and it calls for a new way of learning that is about the freedom and fulfilment of the individual. Massive links listings <http://www.f2be.com/organisations.htm>
- **Friskoler** <http://www.friskoler.dk/> Danish private schools. Generally they are small. Vary ideologically and in practice but the majority were established on the theories and principles of Grundtvig and Kold. Friskoleforening
- **Futurelab** http://www.futurelab.org.uk/about_us/index.htm Futurelab is passionate about transforming the way people learn. Tapping into the huge potential offered by digital and other technologies, we are developing innovative learning resources and practices that support new approaches to education for the 21st century.
- **HESFES** <http://www.hesfes.co.uk/index.html> The Home Educators' Seaside Festival is the World's biggest gathering of home educating families. Children who are in flexi or full time school are also very welcome.
- **Home Education UK** <http://www.home-education.org.uk/menu1.htm>
- **Human Scale Education** <http://www.hse.org.uk/> Human Scale Education is an education reform movement committed to small scale learning communities based on the values of democracy, fairness and respect. HSE works directly with schools and parents to promote human scale learning environments where children and young people are known and valued as individuals.
- **Informal Education and Lifelong Learning - infed** <http://www.infed.org/> Our aim is to provide a space for people to explore the theory and practice of informal education and lifelong learning. In particular, we want to encourage educators to develop ways of working and being that foster association, conversation and relationship
- **International Democratic Education Network** <http://www.idenetwork.org/> This site includes a data-base of people, schools and organisations dedicated to non-authoritarian education, and has up-to-date information about the annual International Democratic Education Conferences (IDECs).
- **Institute of Democratic Education** <http://www.democratic-edu.org/> Democratisation for schools.
- **Institute of Ideas** <http://www.instituteofideas.com/index.html> is committed to... Enlightenment values: scientific and social experimentation, intellectual ambition and curiosity Embracing change and making history Art for art's sake, knowledge for its own sake, and education as an end in itself Freedom. To think, to act, to say what needs saying - even if it offends others Challenging irrational social panics Open and robust debate, in which ideas can be interrogated, argued for and fought over Civil liberties, with no ifs or buts
- **Institute for Learning Innovation** <http://www.ilinet.org/abouttheInstitute.html> Established in 1986 as a not-for-profit learning research and development organization, is dedicated to changing the world of education and learning by understanding, facilitating, advocating and communicating about free-choice learning across the life span. The Institute provides leadership in this area by collaborating with a variety of free-choice learning institutions such as museums, other cultural institutions, public television stations, libraries, community-based organizations such as

scouts and the YWCA, scientific societies and humanities councils, as well as schools and universities, striving to better understand, facilitate and improve their learning potential by incorporating free-choice learning principles

- **John Taylor Gatto links** <http://www.johntaylorgatto.com/> <http://www.preservenet.com/theory/Gatto.html> <http://www.spinninglobe.net/gattopage.htm>
A former New York teacher of the year, Gatto is the most interesting writer on education today. He shows that our bureaucratic schools and our bureaucratic society get in the way of learning, and he often contrasts modern America with 19th century America, where family, work, and democratic self-government let people educate themselves
- **Lib-Ed - Libertarian Education** <http://www.libed.org.uk> is small independent publishing collective, which for the past quarter of a century has been campaigning for the development of non-authoritarian initiatives in education. It also publishes occasional collections of articles on the web.
- **Life Learning Magazine** http://www.lifelearningmagazine.com/vti_bin/shtml.exe/enews.html Life Learning is a bimonthly, reader-written magazine that is a forum for trustworthy, inspiring information and intelligent discussion about self-directed, life-based learning. This type of learning is also sometimes known as "unschooling", "unstructured homeschooling" or "natural learning" when it refers to the education of children, but also includes adult learning. We do not discriminate about the age of learners, believing that a learner-directed philosophy of education is valid at any age.
- **National Association of Alternative Community Schools** <http://www.ncacs.org/> A US non-profit coalition of schools, groups, and individuals committed to participant control of education. Our mission is to unite and organize a grassroots movement of learners and learning communities dedicated to participant control, liberation from all forms of oppression, and the pursuit of freedom
- **Notschool** <http://www.notschool.net/ns/template.php> Notschool.net is an on-line virtual learning community of teenagers who find themselves outside of traditional learning institutions in the long term. It offers them a community of learners, teachers, and experts who share some innovative learning tools.
- **Paths of Learning** <http://www.pathsoflearning.net/> This website features the work of Ron Miller one of the leading pioneers in the field of holistic education, and provides connections to other resources that are available to parents, educators, researchers and policymakers
- **Parent Directed Education** <http://www.parentdirectededucation.org/> Contains a variety of opinions and information on various aspects of education -- all designed to assist parents in making informed choices. In parent-directed education, there usually isn't a "right" answer that fits everyone because it all depends on one's personal thought process.
- **Performing Arts Labs** http://www.pallabs.org/what_we_do.php PAL (Performing Arts Labs Ltd) began in 1989, in a Jacobean manor house in Kent, with three ten-day residential laboratories for writing for theatre, film and opera. PAL was founded by Nicky Singer and Susan Benn. Each year PAL has grown to become a crucible for cross-fertilisation of ideas and talent in film, media and technology, the visual and performing arts, architecture and in education and science.
- **Personalised Education Now** <http://c.person.ed.gn.apc.org/> 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.
- **Sands School** <http://www.sands-school.co.uk/> A democratically run secondary school in Ashburton, Devon, UK
- **Schoolhouse** <http://www.schoolhouse.org.uk/html/about.html> Home Based Education in Scotland and good links.
- **SCHOME** http://schome.open.ac.uk/wikiworks/index.php/Main_Page The education System for the Information Age. Wikiworks is the collaborative information space for folk interested in schome. Help us design the education system for the Information Age - to replace the current school / college / university / life long learning divide.
- **Stephen Heppell** <http://www.heppell.net/weblog/stephen/> one of the key gurus of learning in the digital world
- **Sudbury Valley School** Mass USA <http://www.sudval.org/> Much lauded American Free School.
- **Summerhill School** <http://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/> Much lauded UK Free school
- **The 21st Century Learning Initiative** <http://www.21learn.org/> Led by John Abbott their essential purpose is to facilitate the emergence of new approaches to learning that draw upon a range of insights into the human brain, the functioning of human societies, and learning as a community-wide activity. 'We believe this will release human potential in ways that nurture and form local democratic communities worldwide, and will help reclaim and sustain a world supportive of human endeavour.'
- **TheCademy** <http://www.thecademy.net/> Linked to Notschool. The charity exists to advance learning opportunities for people that are excluded, or disengaged, from traditional education systems. In doing so we aim to make learning more accessible and engaging, but without upper limits.
- **The AAPAE Australasian Association for Progressive and Alternative Education** <http://www.aapae.edu.au/> is for all those interested and involved in progressive, alternative and democratic education. It is for learners and educators regardless of age. It is for all in the community who wish to share and extend their experience and knowledge of such education. AAPAE provides a forum for discussion, debate, and research, a network for sharing and support and an incorporated association of likeminded individuals, schools, learning centres and education institutions working together on common issues.
- **The Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning** <http://www.learningbenefits.net/> (WBL) was established by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 1999 to investigate the full range of benefits that learning brings both to the individual learner and society as a whole.
- **The encyclopaedia of Informal Education** <http://www.infed.org/encyclopaedia.htm> stunning resource
- **The International Association for Learning Alternatives** http://learningalternatives.net/html/about_us.html IALA's mission is to lead, promote and support learning alternatives and choice options. This mission signals our interest in seeing that parents and students have choices of educational programs to meet their needs, interests, learning styles and intelligences. We believe that one-size education program does not fit everyone and that education is best served by having choices for all
- **The Planned Environmental Therapy Trust Archive** <http://www.peltarchiv.org.uk/> Archive, research library and study centre with a specialist interest in progressive/alternative/democratic education
- **The School of Everything** www.schoolofeverything.com If you want to teach (or learn) astrophysics or assembly language, bike maintenance or blues guitar, the School of Everything will be the best place to find the people to do it with.
- **The Tomorrow Project** <http://www.tomorrowproject.net/> The Project is an independent, registered charity undertaking a programme of research, consultation and communication about people's lives in the next twenty years.
- **Ultralab** <http://www.ultralab.anglia.ac.uk/> To research, apply and disseminate the benefits of new technologies, seeking to develop an empowering, creative and delightful learning environment that knows no boundaries.
- **UNESCO Thinkers on Education** <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/Publications/Thinkers/thinhome.htm> An A - Z of Educational Thinkers.
- **University of the First Age** <http://www.ufa.org.uk/main.php> The UFA is a national educational charity, that works in partnership to develop the confidence, achievement and potential of young people through extended learning opportunities
- **Wondertree Foundation** <http://www.wondertree.org/> / Natural Learning
- **World Prosperity Limited** <http://www.world-prosperity.org/index.html> is to determine how to make social systems such as education, healthcare, government, and families work more effectively. We do this by examining basic, underlying causes and their solutions

PERSONALISED EDUCATION NOW STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The vision of *Personalised Education Now* is grounded upon a legitimated and funded *Personalised Educational Landscape* that includes:

- a focus on the uniqueness of individuals, of their learning experiences and of their many and varied learning styles
- support of education in human scale settings, including home-based education, learning centres, small schools, mini-schools, and schools-within-schools, flexischooling and flexi-colleges
- recognition that learners themselves have the ability to make both rational and intuitive choices about their education
- the re-integration of learning, life and community
- advocacy of co-operative and democratic organisation of places of learning
- belief in the need to share national resources fairly, so that everyone has a real choice in education
- acceptance of Einstein's view that *imagination is more important than knowledge* in our modern and constantly changing world
- a belief in subsidiarity... learning, acting and taking responsibility to the level of which you are capable
- adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in general and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in particular - recognising current limitations on educational choice.

PERSONALISED EDUCATION NOW

Maintains that people learn best:

- when they are self-motivated and are equipped with learning to learn tools
- when they take responsibility for their own lives and learning
- when they feel comfortable in their surroundings, free from coercion and fear
- when educators and learners value, trust, respect and listen to each other
- when education is seen as an active life-long process

What is meant by 'Personalised Education'?

Personalised education as promoted by *Personalised Education Now* is derived from the philosophy of *autonomous education*. This centres on learner-managed learning, invitational learning institutions, the catalogue/natural versions of curriculum, invited rather than uninvited teaching, and assessment at the learner's request. Its slogan is, '*I did it my way – though often in co-operation with others*' and operates within a general democratically based learning landscape that has the slogan, '*alternatives for everybody, all the time*'.

We already have institutions that work to the autonomous philosophy within a democratic value system. A prime example is the public library. Others are nursery centres, some schools and colleges, museums, community-arts projects, and home-based education networks. They work to the principle of, '*anybody, any age; any time, any place; any pathway, any pace*'.

Such institutions are learner-friendly, non-ageist, convivial not coercive, and capable of operating as community learning centres which can provide courses, classes, workshops and experiences as requested by local learners.

These are part of a long, rich and successful but undervalued personalised learning heritage, from which we draw strength and which we celebrate. Our urgent task now is to share the benefits of personalised learning and to envision a *Personalised Educational Landscape* that really attends to the needs of all learners and to the greater good of society at large.

Personalised Education Now seeks to maintain '*Edversity*' and the full range of learning contexts and methodologies compatible with Personalised Education, our latest *understanding about the brain*, and how we *develop as learners and human beings* throughout our lives.

Personalised Education operates within a *framework of principles and values* resulting in learners whose outcomes are expressed in their character, their personality, in the quality of life they lead, in the development and sustainability of our communities and planet and in peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution. Performance indicators are measured as much in their physical and mental health, in peaceful existence, freedom from crime, the usefulness of their contributions and work, their levels of active citizenship etc as they are in the existing limitations of the assessment scores and paper accreditations.

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*'.



The Centre for Personalised Education Trust (CPE)

Personalised Education Now (PEN) is the trading name for The Centre for Personalised Education Trust (CPE), a charitable company, limited by guarantee. (Charity number: 1057442). It emerged from Education Now in 1996 as The Centre for Personalised Education Trust (CPE). In 2004, after 17 years pioneering work Education Now transferred its resources and membership to PEN.

What can you do?

Don't let the Journal and enclosures end with you or just share with the converted... distribute widely. This is a message for everyone. Enter a dialogue with as many people as you can. Engage them in the issues and encourage others to join PEN. We find kindred spirits in all sorts of surprising places and those who just need a little more convincing. Often people partly understand but cannot conceptualise solutions. This is not an issue of blame... We need to engage the present system, not alienate it. Some have never thought at all and need deep engagement. One of our roles is to explain and show how it is and could be different. Within a developing personalised educational landscape solutions will evolve according to localised possibilities... including ways of learning that we have not yet imagined. It's all too easy to take the moral high ground and believe we have all the answers because patently the enterprise is challenging and far from easy. But even now we can share the rich history and current practice of learning in all sorts of institutions and home based situations and we can assist in the 'Futures' thinking that can envision and give rise to its evolution. Together, the debate can be aired throughout grass roots and the current learning system, with the general public, media, and politicians and decision makers. The one certainty is that although the road is not easy it is more solidly founded than the one we have at present. Circulate our PEN leaflet (copies from the general office). Bring the strength of PEN to succour those currently engaged in personalised education, and provide vision to those who are not.

Find out more visit our website: <http://c.person.ed.gn.apc.org/>

Contact Personalised Education Now

Enquiries should be made via Janet Meighan, Secretary, at the address in the next column or on Tel: 0115 925 7261

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- Alan Clawley

Journal Publication Team

Peter Humphreys – Managing Editor
 Email: personalisededucationnow@blueyonder.co.uk

Christopher Shute – Copy Editor
 Tel: 01827 705 073

Roland and Janet Meighan
 Contact via the General Office (see next column)

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Contributions for consideration for publication in the journal are welcomed. Authors should contact any of the Journal Publication Team to discuss before submission.

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Newsletter

Contributions for the Newsletter are also welcomed. Contact Janet Meighan.

Membership of Personalised Education Now

Personalised Education Now welcomes members, both individuals and groups, who support and promote its vision. Its membership includes educators in learning centres, home educating settings, schools, colleges and universities. Members range across interested individuals and families, teachers, head teachers, advisers, inspectors and academics. PEN has extensive national and international links. Above all the issues of personalised education and learning are issues with relevance to every man, woman and child because they lie at the heart of what kind of society we wish to live in.

E-Briefings

- Monthly

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Newsletters

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- Issue 7 – Autumn / Winter 2007/8

Learning Exchange:- TBA

Conference

Personalised Learning: Taking Learning Seriously

25th June 2007. Staffordshire University (Stoke on Trent Campus).

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/humanities_and_soc_sciences/ccu/conf.htm

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Membership Includes:

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- The support of a diverse network of learners and educators.

Your membership supports:

- Ongoing research and publications
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Yes, I would like to join *Personalised Education Now*

Subscription:

£25

Send cheque made payable to the Centre for Personalised Education together with the details below:

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The Centre for Personalised Education Trust
 Personalised Education Now General Office
 Janet Meighan, Secretary
 113 Arundel Drive
 Bramcote
 Nottingham
 Nottinghamshire
 NG9 3FQ

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