

A Learning City Perspective

IFLL Sector Paper 5



promoting adult learning

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NIACE has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training, particularly for those who do not have easy access because of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities, or insufficient financial resources.

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Foreword

This is the fifth of the Sector Papers to be published from the Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning (IFLL). The Sector Papers will discuss the implications of lifelong learning for each of the sectors involved in providing learning opportunities: early childhood, schools, family learning, further education, higher education, private training providers, voluntary and community organisations, local authorities, learning cities, cultural organisations, and local learning ecologies. The goal here is to encourage innovative thinking on how these parts do or do not fit together, as part of a systemic approach to lifelong learning.

The Inquiry was established in September 2007 and will produce its main report in September 2009. It is sponsored by the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), with an independent Board of Commissioners under the chairmanship of Sir David Watson. Full details of the Inquiry can be found at www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry.

The overall goal of the Inquiry is to offer **an authoritative and coherent strategic framework for lifelong learning in the UK**. This will involve:

- articulating a broad rationale for public and private investment in lifelong learning;
- a re-appraisal of the social and cultural value attached to it by policy-makers and the public;
- developing new perspectives on policy and practice.

IFLL: principal strands

The Sector Papers are complemented by several other strands of IFLL work:

- *Thematic Papers*. These relate nine broad themes, such as demography, technology or migration, to lifelong learning. Each one reviews evidence submitted to the Inquiry, and then draws together strands from the debate into a synthesis of the issues, with key messages.
- *Context Papers*. These will provide a broad overall picture of expenditure on all forms of lifelong learning: by government, across all departments; by employers, public and private; by the third sector; and by individuals and households. The goal is to provide a benchmark for mapping future trends.
- *Public Value Papers*. These will look, from different angles and using a variety of techniques, at the 'social productivity' of lifelong learning, i.e. what effects it has on areas such as health, civic activity or crime. The goal is both to provide evidence on these effects, and to stimulate a broader debate on how such effects can be measured and analysed.

- *Learning Infrastructures*. Unlike the others, this strand consists not of a series of papers but a set of scenarios, designed to promote debate and imagination on what the infrastructure for learning might look like in the future. This challenges us to integrate the physical environments of learning, the virtual environments or learning technologies, and people's competences and behaviour.

Published papers are available from the IFLL website:

www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry/Publishedpapers.htm

Periodic updates on IFLL progress are to be found in our Bulletins.

(You can register for Inquiry Bulletins at: www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry).



Professor Tom Schuller
Director, IFLL



Sir David Watson
Chair, IFLL Commissioners

Executive summary

The learning city and lifelong learning systems

An exploration of the experience of the inception of Southampton as a unitary authority in 1997 with its bold declaration to be a Learning City and of subsequent national developments in extended schools, children's centres, and family learning and parenting programmes, would suggest the following assertions.

A learning city should:

- be explicit about promoting lifelong learning as an idea and encouraging people to recognise their learning and to develop a sense of themselves as learners;
- encourage organisations and institutions (whether formal or informal) to incorporate within their missions the city's vision to create communities of lifelong learners who recognise and value their learning;
- foster an understanding of progression and actively support networks of providers and other organisations involved in lifelong learning to collaborate in order to enable learners to pursue their learning pathways between institutions and in so doing to build on previous experiences and achievements;
- systematically secure inclusive policies, plans and practice and review progress annually to identify who is missing out;
- celebrate community and culture;
- secure an appropriate range of learning activities and opportunities across the life course;
- fund and support networks of learning development workers to encourage and support people into and through learning;
- embed positive leadership of learning in local government and institutional governance arrangements and secure genuine partnerships that create synergies by aligning resources for common purpose.

Lifelong learning systems need:

- grass-roots networks of learning champions, whose focus is on building relationships to support people into and through learning whose activity is supported by:
 - simplified structures easing engagement with other areas of public service – for example health, social care, community policing, welfare, employment, advice services;
 - complementary local government and institutional governance arrangements which engage across the local networks of learning champions;

- ITT and CPD which develops understanding of the core role of the lifelong learning workforce as being to create a society of lifelong learners;
- innovative learning infrastructures that combine the best of places, people and technology to encourage and support learning;
- a curriculum and qualifications framework, such as the Every Citizen Matters hierarchy, which supports both the breadth and the progression of lifelong learning, as distinct from the achievement of separate units of adult learning.

However, if the learning city, learning locality or learning community idea is predicated on making the idea of 'learning' explicit, how does the learning city:

- respond to the evidence that suggests the word 'learning' is off-putting for reluctant learners and that implicit, tacit learning is, for some, a more successful way of getting started?
- guard against over claiming for lifelong learning as the answer to everything – community regeneration, children's attainment, social cohesion, increased employment, better health and so on – so that it becomes something of everything and hence nothing of anything?

Those who might see opportunities for lifelong learning in extended schools, children's centres and in parenting programmes need to acknowledge that the core accountabilities within these activities point strongly towards outcomes for children. Although the best foundations for lifelong learning may be laid in childhood, intended adult or lifelong learning needs to be identified separately. The lifelong learning vision must be:

- sufficiently funded;
- supported by a central government that believes in local communities and local government; and
- driven by performance management arrangements of inspection and national indicators which give lifelong learning recognisable value as the means by which every citizen can generate economic well-being and can make his or her positive contribution.

Introduction

This paper covers rather a disparate set of themes which are pulled together in the context of the learning city. The Learning City is one way of characterising learning localities. The contexts for lifelong learning differ significantly and substantially from one community to another. So the approach taken in one city won't necessarily work in another; nor will the approaches used in urban communities be the same as those used in rural communities. Much of the experience on which this piece is based dates from the inception of Southampton as a unitary authority in 1997 and its bold declaration to be a Learning City. The spirit and vision which made it possible at the time for local authority politicians to make such declarations seem to have since dissipated. Nevertheless it is useful to reflect on what the conditions were that made such declarations possible; what impact the learning cities movement has made; and what got in the way of their sustained development. This paper will touch on some of those issues, whilst weaving in consideration of other relevant themes which have emerged since 1997.

The paper starts with a few key points about learning and lifelong learning before addressing the particular contribution of parent and family learning and extended schools. Essentially it argues that an effective learning city should:

- be explicit about promoting lifelong learning as an idea and encouraging people to develop a sense of themselves as learners;
- encourage organisations and institutions (whether formal or informal) to incorporate within their missions the City's vision to create communities of lifelong learners who recognise and value their learning,
- foster an understanding of progression and recognition and actively support networks of providers and other organisations involved in lifelong learning to collaborate in order to enable learners to pursue their learning pathways between institutions and in so doing to build on previous experiences and achievements.
- systematically secure inclusive policies, plans and practice and review progress annually to identify who is missing out;
- celebrate community and culture;
- secure an appropriate range of learning activities and opportunities across the life course;
- fund and support networks of learning development workers to encourage and support people into and through learning.
- embed positive leadership of learning in local government and institutional governance arrangements and secure genuine partnerships that create synergies by aligning resources for common purpose.

About learning and lifelong learning

This is not the place to explain in detail what learning is or how it happens. But if learning and lifelong learning are to be promoted and provided for successfully, then those involved need to have a proper and shared understanding of how people learn and what lifelong learning entails.

Fundamental to learning is a sense of personal identity – a firm footing from which to take off into learning. Learning involves risk, a stepping out into the unknown. This requires a level of confidence. Locality is an important part of personal identity; there is a strength in being well rooted in a place and its communities.

Lifelong learning is probably most easily thought of in terms of learning pathways. Each individual learner needs to be able to follow a route by which their learning can progress. The progression might be from one level to another higher level, if we are talking of skills, conceptual understanding or attitudinal commitment; or it may be a broadening – from one area of learning to another. But there are two critical requirements if there is to be any movement at all along the learning pathway: the individual must be able to recognise that s/he is in learning territory – and the individual must want to be making progress.

Recognition is fundamental to any discussion of learning and lifelong learning. Learning is invisible until it is recognised. As sentient beings, we have been learning since birth, but we may not always recognise this. We have learned a great deal, including our first language, without being formally taught. People have spent a lot of time debating the distinctions between skills and understandings that are caught, as opposed to taught; for example in reading, where there have been long arguments about ‘reading for meaning’ from ‘real books’, as opposed to the formal teaching of phonics and the use of books like the Dr Seuss stories. In this context, the important point about how people learn is that they often do so without realising that what they have done has been called ‘learning’.

Lifelong learning matters. Without it there is a huge wastage of human potential. Lifelong learners recognise themselves as learners and see the value of learning so that, intrinsically, they want more of it. So they develop their skills and broaden their minds. This adds to their potential contribution to the economy and the nation’s culture. Adult learners who are waiting on external incentives for their learning or who see learning as something that other people do, rather than what they do themselves, may nevertheless develop their skills and broaden their minds, but to a more limited extent.

We need to be clear that adult learning and lifelong learning are not necessarily the same thing. There are lots of different opportunities given for adults to learn – and lots of different ways of justifying expenditure on such opportunities. We shall not argue now between the merits of learning for a civilized society and learning for economic

prosperity although ultimately surely both are essential. Nor would anyone doubt the need to engage any adult in acquiring basic skills however long it takes and with however many false dawns. The critical point here, as we enquire into the future for lifelong learning is whether the adult, as well as learning new skills or concepts is also becoming a lifelong learner. This is about learning as a journey or pathway, rather than learning as an isolated event.

When we learned to drive, we swotted up for a written test and practiced various manoeuvres specifically for the driving test. We do use many aspects of these tests in our subsequent driving, but we also forget quite a lot of the points we learned. We undertook the learning exercise as a means to an end. Once that end was satisfied, we threw away much of what we had learned. Now that we have passed our driving test, to what extent do we want to become a progressively better driver?

In fairness, there is a point of functional competence and understanding in almost all of the subjects we might choose to learn. There is not a lot of point in setting out to be a lifelong learner of driving a car. We get to a good enough level and, providing we drive from time to time, we keep in practice and retain sufficient knowledge of the Highway Code. Some people do take advanced driving lessons but most of us do not. We have learned to drive as a means to an end – now we can use it to travel and learn about other things.

But there are also many subjects for learning where we might stop because we have qualified ourselves to meet a particular standard, but well before we have exhausted the possibilities within that subject. So, for example, many people stop learning things when they have passed their GCSEs, or stop learning their own language when they have learned enough to read a red-top newspaper but well before they have learned enough to gain access to literature, or even to the text books for GCSE or A level learning.

Again, this doesn't necessarily mean that we are not lifelong learners. The question is whether we have an awareness of the learning journey, by which our having passed our driving test opens up new possibilities for travel and thus for future learning; or whether the qualifications we gained at 16 or 18 gave us access to future learning, whether it was at university or in the workplace; and most significantly whether we stopped being aware of any kind of learning journey as we moved into our twenties and got away from the main sources of institutional learning.

In many white collar occupations, staff continue to learn in a context of continuing professional development. Where this exists, and is well documented through appraisal and learning portfolios, we have a recognisable model of lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning needs some sense of managed progression, to ensure that it is more than an accidental chain of learning events for the individual learner. It is best if this progression is managed by the learner him or herself, but it will often require some kind of supervision or mentoring support. However, it is also indisputable that,

if lifelong learning is to occur, there must be plentiful opportunity for people to learn throughout their lives – through adult learning provision.

The autonomy of the individual lifelong learner will be even stronger if it includes an understanding by the learner not only of progression and learning pathways, but also of how learning itself works – learnacy. This relates closely to the arguments that Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas make in their paper for the Inquiry.¹

¹ Claxton and Lucas (2009).

A point about curriculum – Every Citizen Matters

This paper is not essentially about the curriculum for lifelong learning. However, if we are surveying what remains of the 1997 concept of learning cities and weaving in the significant developments of the subsequent 12 years, we need to touch on the importance of 2004 Children Act and its enactment of Every Child Matters thinking. Every Child Matters puts everything that is done for children and young people into a framework of five outcomes. These outcomes can be organised into a hierarchy that relates to Maslow's hierarchy but which also has relevance to a fully functioning society. The first outcome is 'stay safe'. This is a prerequisite and entitlement for every child and young person without which other desirable outcomes become difficult if not impossible. The second outcome is 'be healthy', and builds on the first. Both are essential to the 'enjoy and achieve' – the third outcome and the one that equates to learning and lifelong learning. These three outcomes then feed into the fourth – 'economic well-being'. The elimination of child poverty can be viewed along with safety and health as a prerequisite to achievement, but in a hierarchical view it builds forward from safety, health and achievement into the world of work and the economic health of the nation.

That could have been the end of the story; the legislation could have stopped at four outcomes. But it doesn't. It goes on to include 'make a positive contribution'. This is both exciting and visionary. The positive contribution leads us into active citizenship, contributing fully to community and culture, participating in an active local and national democracy, and well as into self-actualisation. If the five outcomes of Every Child Matters are transferred to adults – Every Citizen Matters – then the notion of positive contribution relates strongly to Bob Fryer's idea of 'belonging'.²

² Fryer (2009).

Reluctant learners

There are many people who are put off by the idea of 'learning'. They equate it with institutional learning – school, college and university. It can be very difficult for a learner to escape from a self-concept which says 'I failed at school, so I cannot learn.'

If we are looking for everyone to be a lifelong learner, we have to find ways of capturing those who do not see themselves as learners, and who may even be wanting to avoid learning. A lot of effort has been put into the capturing of reluctant learners. In many parts of England, between a quarter and a fifth of the adult population have difficulties with reading and writing.³ They may have a functional level of literacy, sufficient to read tabloid newspapers and labels in shops, but not the confidence to use language to access other learning – such as through books or the internet – which is still a very language dominated medium. There are other ways to learn – through images, the spoken word or by doing. We all learn in these different ways, but some learn much more by doing than through the spoken or written word. Unfortunately, these different learning styles can have different status. Generally speaking, learning which is linguistically derived has higher status than learning by doing or by pictorial means, and an elaborated linguistic code wins out over a more restricted linguistic code.

Elaborated code can frighten reluctant learners. Those who are promoting lifelong learning have to be very careful not to frighten off the very people they want to support by placing a linguistic paradigm over the whole issue of recognising learning and capturing reluctant learners. But at the same time, if they do not succeed in persuading people to adopt the (linguistic) word 'learning' to describe what it is that they are trying to foster and promote, then they may not be able to count them as lifelong learners – at least not without being patronising.

It can be an uphill struggle to work with adults who are reluctant to learn, particularly as many such adults find it difficult to acquire one basic skill or another. The last place that someone with poor reading, writing, numerical or IT skills wants to be is in a formal situation where these weaknesses are exposed. Some people have much more confidence to step out from what is known to what is not yet known. They find it so easy, they are hardly aware that they are taking any risk. They can laugh off their mistakes and quickly turn them to advantage. But for the slower learner, self-esteem can be a great deal more fragile and easily undermined by mistakes and failure. This can become a vicious spiral – with self-esteem sinking and the pace and progress of learning getting ever slower. The teaching of adults with learning difficulties requires great skill and patience; it is difficult and, because it needs to be done one-to-one or

³ DfES (2003).

in very small groups, it is expensive. But this is not where resources have traditionally been prioritised.

Those who have long been involved in basic skills teaching know all too well the different coping strategies that adults will use to compensate for their underdeveloped literacy, numeracy and other basic skills and how difficult it can be to bring the reluctant learner out from behind whatever screen they have used to hide their poor learning self-esteem. Of itself, the learning leap that is needed may not be difficult, but it usually needs to be pointed out or demonstrated – in a safe one-to-one or small group situation. This is why community development workers have grabbed the opportunity offered when an adult has learning needs as a parent.

Parenting

Becoming a parent provides a window of opportunity to engage adults in lifelong learning. This opens up three different areas of discussion: family learning; parenting programmes; and extended schools.

Parental involvement raises their children's achievement. Schools have long recognised that there is a strong correlation between the educational attainment (measured educational achievement) of children and the extent to which their parents are involved in their children's education. If the parents understand what their children are doing at school – what they are being taught (the curriculum); how they are being taught; and how they can best be supported – then there is a greater likelihood that their children will do well. Unfortunately, although parents want their children to do well, and although they take great pride in their children's achievements, they do not always know how best to support them. The context in which schooling takes place may not be their natural setting. There are class aspects to this – essentially schools are more familiar and more comfortable to middle class families than they are to working class families; there is the same issue of linguistic approaches to learning dominating over pictorial or enactive approaches; and there is a lot about vocabulary – the size of the lexicon to which the young child is exposed at home; the extent to which conversation takes place; and the amount of reading that parents and their children do together.

So schools, particularly nursery and primary schools, have tried to find ways of engaging parents in their children's learning. Sadly, many of the workshop sessions that schools have arranged for parents over the years have not been attended by the very parents who need them. Instead, those who already have a good understanding of how to support their children's learning are the ones who come – equivalent to the 'worried well' who attend health provision that is really needed to counter disadvantage and ill-health. This ready attendance by articulate parents has the effect of frightening off the very parents who stand to gain most from such provision. Engaging hard-to-reach parents is difficult.

However, there has been some success through 'family learning' initiatives. The most basic context for family learning is the setting of homework. The homework which teachers set their pupils varies considerably in its learning value. Notwithstanding, there can be a genuine spin-off for many parents. If they take an interest in their children's homework, parents can learn a great deal; revisiting aspects of their own schooling which might have gone astray. So parents can learn to read and write through their children's learning to read and write, they can revisit their early numeracy skills and, if they stay with their children's homework as they move on to secondary school, they can move their understanding forward across the whole curriculum.

However, although the beneficial spin-offs for parents of their children's homework spreads across families of different classes and backgrounds, unfortunately this benefit is probably in inverse proportion to the real need for the parents to be re-engaged in their own lifelong learning. Those parents who did not have a good experience of schooling themselves or who are less confident in their own learning are less likely to involve themselves in their children's homework. Consequently their children get less help and support and may do less well in their overall school work.

To supplement a self-sustaining approach to family learning – when parents and their children work voluntarily together on homework – schools and nurseries have set up targeted family learning sessions. An early example of this is the 'Share' programme, originally developed by the former Basic Skills Agency and now managed by ContinYou. ContinYou offers consultancy at both strategic and operational levels to support the development of family learning provision and parental involvement. The organisation promotes learning as a means of achieving social justice. It focuses particularly on those who have gained the least from formal education and training. Through its Share scheme practitioners are trained to run programmes for parents and carers of children aged three to 14. The scheme supports adults as parents, educators and learners, to provide good learning experiences for their children. Importantly, the achievement of the parents themselves is accredited (recognised) by the Open College Network.

The particular significance of the Share programme and the two organisations associated with it (the Basic Skills Agency, now managed by NIACE and Tribal, and ContinYou) is that they are looking to balance adult learning with children's learning. This is distinctive. Most family learning programmes, perhaps because they are school based, are offered ultimately for the child's benefit. The adult focus is on the parent, where the adult is defined in relation to the child; rather than on the lifelong learning of the adult. This is not to say that an adult's lifelong learning cannot be energised by attending a family learning course or parenting programme – but, particularly since the strengthened emphasis on outcomes in the 2004 Children Act, this is not generally their primary purpose.

Much depends on who is responsible for running the family learning programme. If the responsibility for adult learning rests within a local authority's children's services – by dint of its being associated with 'education', then the focus of the family learning programme will be on the child. Conversely, if the responsibility for adult learning rests within a local authority's adult services – or its leisure or library services – then it is more likely to focus on the adults' learning.

For example, the family learning programme on the Isle of Wight, which sits within the local authority's Cultural and Leisure Services, introduces family learning on its website as follows:

'Family learning provides a second opportunity for parents and grandparents to return to learning whilst supporting a child's education.'

This is not to say that child outcomes are not considered to be important. Indeed the Adult and Community Learning Plan places great emphasis on the partnership between Adult and Community Services and the Parenting and Family Support Service that sits within Children's Services. But it does place up-front a significant commitment to adult learning, particularly second chance adult learning. Its aims are carefully balanced to favour both children's and adults' learning:

- to raise the profile of learning in the community of the Isle of Wight;
- to help raise achievement in schools by presenting learning as a family activity;
- to build the skills level of the local community to assist in regeneration;
- to provide opportunities in schools and community environments on the Isle of Wight for families to learn together;
- to provide professional parent support in the areas of behaviour management, drugs awareness and parenting skills;
- to build confidence and self esteem within the family.

There is more to be said about family learning in the context of two significant developments in national education policy since 1997 – Extended Schools and Sure Start Children's Centres – but before exploring these, we should look more closely at parenting programmes. The National Academy for Parenting Practitioners, a charitable trust funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to increase the quantity of parenting practitioners and to improve the quality of their work, has recently relaunched a web-based database which carries the details of over 100 parenting programmes which are available and in use in England. In the preparation of this database, there has been much debate within the parenting practitioner community about the Parenting Programme Evaluation Tool, by which programme developers and Academy researchers can include ratings of the effectiveness of the programmes alongside the entries on the database. Essentially, it is not possible to gain the highest possible rating without extensive trialling of the programme, including independent randomised controlled trials. This level of evidence for the effectiveness of a programme may be relatively straightforward for those programme developers with a background in clinical psychology; things look rather different for those who have developed a course whose objectives are rooted much more in community development than in children's cognition and behaviour.

If a parent attends every session of a ten-week course, the programme developer may well consider this to have been a very successful course, particularly if the parent is a reluctant learner. Whether this means that this parent has been hooked into lifelong learning which looks likely to continue is another question altogether. This view of success means that the course is being evaluated from a community development or adult learning perspective, using 'parenting' as a hook to engage the adult learner rather than to improve outcomes for the parent's child. This is a very different set of expectations from those with the child's interests in mind, where the curriculum of the course should be offering parents clear strategies for their dealings with their children

which are evidence based, which are known to work effectively, and which are targeted correctly to the parents' and the children's needs. For example, a programme which provides good strategies for managing the behaviour of children who act out will not be appropriate for children who are callous and unemotional. This expectation of effectively targeted outcomes for the child, as well as the parent, is fundamental to the quality of parenting practice being fostered by the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners.

Extended schools

The tension between intentions for adult learning and for child outcomes in parenting programmes is also present in extended schools and children's centres. The idea of the extended school has several sources. There have long been community schools and community colleges. Among the finest examples of these were the 'village colleges' in Cambridgeshire, which set about providing learning opportunities for everyone living in and around particular village communities. Around a conventional secondary school was built a wide range of community provision, including day and evening classes for adults; sport for all ages; social facilities for all ages; youth services and community services such as libraries and health clinics. Henry Morris, who founded the village colleges in the 1930s, argued that: 'Adult education is the major part of education. The centre of gravity in the public system of education should reside in that part which provides for youth and maturity.'⁴ The colleges were significant for their architecture, which gave equal space for school use and community use. Sawston Village College was the first school in the country to have a separate sports hall.

The community school concept has had its ups and downs since Henry Morris started the village colleges. The Leicester community schools, such as Countesthorpe, became particularly well known in the 1970s for their strong emphasis on community led education and for treating their school-age pupils as adults. This approach has resurfaced in contemporary schooling under the name of student voice.

Many of the characteristics of the community school can be found in the contemporary concept of the 'extended school'. But there have been other drivers too. There are anxieties from time to time about the availability of school places and this has given rise to the idea of using schools for much longer hours, so that pupils can attend in shifts. At the same time, people have realised that it is very inefficient to have expensive buildings lying empty and unused for school holiday periods and, in many schools until comparatively recently, between 4pm and 8.30am the following day, let alone at weekends. This is a particularly salient issue for local authorities looking for efficiencies. They see the possibilities of putting libraries and other community facilities inside the school, so that they become 'one-stop shops' for a range of local authority and health services, intended as much for the elderly as for school-aged pupils.

In the context of the educational underachievement of children from deprived communities, a particular driver behind the development of the extended school has been the provision of homework clubs where young people have space and support to do their homework which may not be available to them at home. This is ironic in the context of our earlier discussions on the potential learning that their children's

⁴ Ree (1984).

homework offers for parents. But this compensatory intention is part of a whole raft of social provision offered by the extended school, including breakfast clubs which offer a solid breakfast to the school pupil and after-school childcare which makes it possible for young people to be away from home for ten to twelve hours each day.

So the extended school is being extended along several different dimensions. The school day, week and year may be being extended so that schools are open for many more hours per week and days per year. At the same time, the range of activities being offered to young people may be being extended, sometimes along with an earlier start and finish to the formal time-tabled day. It is now common practice for schools to run their timetable from 8.15am to 2.15pm, with only the shortest of breaks for lunch, and then to start a whole programme of extra-curricular activities, including sport, the arts, youth club activities, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and a range of community service activities.

These dimensions of extension are particularly focused on the school age pupil. But the current government's concept of the 'full service extended school' will also include a range of facilities for younger and older people. Childcare facilities may be part of this – of which more anon. But so might healthcare facilities – clinics and surgeries of all sorts, including sexual health and family planning and mental health – and daycare facilities – which can make use of the school's kitchens. Community sports facilities – indoor and outdoor – may also feature, along with libraries, arts centres, community theatres, letting facilities for meetings.

This very broad kind of extended school is still mostly a concept rather than a reality. There are good examples where each of the facilities mentioned can be found sharing a site with a school, but the complete campus which includes them all has yet to materialise.

There is a good reason for this. The headteacher of the extended school, however enlightened and however broadly his or her remit might have been defined by the school's governors, will still be looking to the core performance indicators of GCSE and A level or diploma attainment, and other key indicators such as school attendance and inclusion. If there is no demonstrable link between the learning outcomes for the school's pupil population and a particular dimension of extension, then it will be harder to justify among competing priorities for resources – unless it is a resource that has been ring-fenced by local or national government. So a headteacher will build stronger links with feeder schools, or encourage sixth formers to work in the on-site youth centre, or host social workers, health workers or the police to work with pupils and their families. Other activities, which may be socially worthwhile but do not make the same direct impact on outcomes for the school's students will have to take second place and are more likely to be arranged on a lettings or tenancy basis. So a co-terminus daycare facility, or a children's centre, will be managed as an independent entity, albeit that the school's childcare curriculum may well involve placements for pupils in the children's centre, or the citizenship curriculum be enhanced through links with the daycare centre.

Extended schools and lifelong learning

So where does lifelong learning sit in all of this? Not forgetting Guy Claxton's and Bill Lucas' important assertion that lifelong learning starts for most people while they are at school – and that it is important that learning is talked about as part of the taught curriculum – is lifelong learning for adults being included as a deliberate objective of the extended school?

If we stay with the extended school's likely emphasis on improving the learning outcomes and life chances of its school age pupils, then the most likely link with adult learning is family learning. Many, if not most, extended schools will offer family learning opportunities of different kinds. Some courses for adults and young people together, many more for adults as parents. Most, and eventually all, extended schools will have trained parent support advisers, working with parents to strengthen the family context for learning.

Unfortunately, the extent to which adults and young people learn together in the same classrooms is still limited. There are some schools who are pushing the limits of 'stage not age' thinking, whereby they put people at the same stage of their learning together in classes, rather than sticking to the current conventions of year groups, grouped by age into Year 7, 8, 9 and so on. Where this is happening, it is not so remarkable to include adults as well as differently aged teenagers. But this remains rare. Adults learning with their children is more usually limited to a few after-school and Saturday morning activities – and, significantly, to the community language and community culture classes among minority ethnic groups.

In recent times, the Big Lottery Family Learning programme has opened up the range and scope of family learning activities in extended schools. There is a strengthening involvement of the third sector and of private providers on school sites. The emphasis is on life skills and basic skills; family learning only rarely extends into the sciences, humanities or liberal arts.

This emphasis on basic skills is also reflected in national initiatives like learndirect; UK Online; and Neighbourhood Learning Centres. These initiatives will be found in many extended schools, along with some signposting to other learning opportunities, particularly in the local Further Education (FE) Colleges. For young people, this signposting has become a great deal more ubiquitous and often more sophisticated through the development of Connexions information points in every school; but, despite learndirect, this kind of universal information, advice and guidance service has not been as available for adults – and may unfortunately prove difficult to sustain even for teenagers, now that the Connexions services have been returned to local authority control.

In addition to the range of family learning and basic skills learning opportunities offered in extended schools, there is the full range of recreational activities and

health activities which have been traditional to community schools, ranging from sports, through dance and music, to facilities such as hairdressing and cafés where the workers are often school pupils earning both money and credits towards their courses. There will be extensive adult learning within these more informal learning opportunities, some of which will be captured in accreditation, whether it be through agencies like the Open College or through particular awarding bodies such as the Royal Lifesaving Society.

But the distinction between adult learning and lifelong learning turns on these two key concerns of signposting and accreditation. If adult learners are to be sustained as lifelong learners, they need to know where to go to find the next learning opportunity. They need to know their options and to be supported in their choices. This information, advice and guidance for adult learners does exist, particularly when it relates to finding a job, but it is not always easily available, particularly to those who are less confident about looking for and finding it. The extended school that supports lifelong learning needs to offer a reasonable level of accessible information, advice and guidance. This is true of any setting that sees itself as a provider of lifelong learning.

Equally, if learning is to be progressive, it needs mileposts along the pathways, showing what has been learned and to what level. Accreditation is often offered as part of a course, although the plethora of different agencies and awards must be confusing for all but the most doughty of learners. The advent of a curriculum and qualifications framework which relates all qualifications to a standard scale from levels 1 to 8 is a real advance; it allows learners to plot where they have been and where they have got to as they progress through a particular subject area; to be able to recognise the different levels they have reached in different parts of their learning; and to map where they might go next. So if an agency, such as an extended school, is serious about lifelong learning, it needs to find ways of accrediting the learning that is offered so that the learners are able to recognise themselves as learners and see their progress.

Sure Start Children's Centres

Much of what has been said about extended schools also applies to Sure Start Children's Centres. Children's Centres have evolved from children's day care centres and nursery schools and classes. The original Sure Start centres were focused on areas of particular deprivation and often found that they were catering particularly for young and teenage mothers and single mothers. As such, they were particularly significant in building the self-esteem of young mothers – and sometimes young fathers – who had not always had felicitous dealings with their schools and who needed their learning to be rekindled. There was a particular focus on supporting mothers into, or back into, paid work, whether part-time or full-time, as a means of breaking out of the benefits trap. This has often entailed basic skills and life skills classes – leading on to the same variety of family learning opportunities as we have already discussed.

Although much of what happens in children's centres is focused on the parents as potential wage-earners, the core focus is on the development and learning of the young child. All those involved in early years education and care have strong convictions about the positive impact of early learning on people's life chances and success in later life. There is plenty of evidence to show that the quality of learning experience that is enjoyed in the first years of a child's life is a significant predictor of their subsequent levels of achievement. Ironically, as the number of children's centres has grown, the extent to which they are focused on more deprived families has become more variable. However, just as with the extended schools, there is much variation in the extent to which children's centres focus on the sustained lifelong learning of adults – particularly learning that goes beyond parenting skills and family learning.

The three-legged stool – the infrastructure for lifelong learning

We are still skirting round the difficult question of how we are meant to engage reluctant learners and encourage them to become self-sustaining lifelong learners. When we were exploring ways of regenerating the more deprived communities of Southampton in the latter part of the 1990s, we focused particularly on using community culture as a means of building the self-esteem and self-confidence which are essential to learning and then looked to provide easy local access to learning opportunities.

Perhaps the most successful example of this approach is community carnival – an idea which has worked very effectively in the Thornhill New Deal for Communities project in Southampton and with similar success in the Ryde area of the Isle of Wight. By engaging people in all the necessary preparations for a colourful and exciting community event, people found themselves learning a whole range of new skills, some of which they decide to take forward to new levels and into new domains. It is through this kind of process that community capacity is built, so that the energy and skills that have been devoted to mounting a carnival are transferred into community development.

But if there is to be progression from the specific, extrinsic, motivation of carnival to more engaged, intrinsic, learning, there need to be obvious pathways and good accessibility to new learning opportunities. To support this, a community needs a physical network of linkages between accessible satellite learning centres inside the local community to well-defined hubs – such as the larger secondary extended schools. Learning opportunities can happen in lots of different local places – such as in local pubs, the smaller extended primary schools, children’s centres, community halls, churches and church halls, sports halls, health clinics, and libraries. There needs to be good signposting so that people who develop an appetite for more learning know where to go to get it. The physical network is the first leg of a three-legged stool.

The network of linkages between physical learning centres can be strengthened by the network which exists through information technology (IT). This is the second leg of the three-legged stool. The internet will provide signposts for those who want more learning, or it may provide the next, progressive, learning opportunity itself – for example through the learndirect website. The IT network is really only effective if the learner has direct and easy access to a computer. This is the thinking behind putting publicly accessible computers in libraries and into UK Online centres. The growth in internet access via broadband has helped to close the digital divide, between those who have ready access to an IT network and those who don’t, but we should be careful not to assume the divide is fully closed.

It was our contention in Southampton that there needed to be a third network to support the physical network and the IT network – a network of learning development workers. Reluctant learners need someone to support them towards their becoming self-sustaining, intrinsically motivated, lifelong learners – hungry to enhance their skills, knowledge and understanding and so to enhance their contribution to the economy, community and culture.

We were not successful in establishing a network of learning development workers in Southampton but it was fascinating to see how our thinking emerged at much the same time in the advent of the Connexions service. The Connexions service focuses on teenagers, but its principles could easily apply to adults. It is particularly aimed at the 10 per cent or so of young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs). It set out to make a 'personal adviser' available 'to every young person who needs or wants one'. At a universal level, the personal adviser is likely to be the young person's form tutor at school or college. At the more specialist levels of need, personal advisers are highly trained and carefully targeted, often having to provide a lot of support in areas such as housing and social skills, before being able to support the young person back into education or into training and employment.

This is what is needed for the reluctant adult learner – a personal adviser who is able to build their clients' confidence and to help them find and take the first difficult steps along their learning pathway. Of course there are lots of people who fulfill this role for lots of people, but there needs to be a much greater recognition of their significance and a systematic development of their credentials as learning mentors. This needs to include some kind of certification in 'learnacy' – the curriculum that Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas describe in their paper. As well as leading the reluctant learner back to learning and supporting them along the first part of a learning pathway, the learning development worker needs to be able to model lifelong learning skills – learnacy – to move the learner to full independence as a lifelong learner. Think of how young readers start off as dependent readers – being read to – and gradually learn what the expert reader does so that they can read for themselves – as independent readers. The difference with learning is that we all do it anyway, despite ourselves; we have to learn to recognise that in the meta-language of learnacy.

The learning locality and its governance

If we want lifelong learning to happen, we have to decide how it is to be made to happen and by whom. One of the problems endemic to the lifelong learning agenda is territoriality – different people and agencies thinking that the agenda is theirs. It might be the further education colleges, or the universities; within the local authority, it might be the responsibility of the children’s services department – which usually has education and schools within its remit; or it might be led by adult services, or by leisure services, or by the library service. In the third sector, there are lots of different agencies who make it their business to promote adult learning, whether it is training for employment or employability; or for more recreational purposes. In the commercial sector, different aspects of learning are often included in the marketing strategy as with, for example, the hour long classes that are offered free of charge in Apple shops to support the sales of their computers.

The Connexions model has another important side. The personal adviser is meant to provide a one-stop shop service to the ‘NEET’ client, ensuring that the work of all the support agencies involved are joined up. Hence the word ‘connexions’, albeit misspelt. This connecting function brings us to the idea of a learning forum or partnership. If all the agencies involved in offering learning opportunities to adult learners are talking to one another, there is a greater likelihood that they will be able to help emergent lifelong learners plot their learning pathways across the local learning terrain. There is also a greater likelihood that they will be able to breathe life into a shared vision of lifelong learning, by which their community can grow and prosper.

When Southampton, along with several other local authorities, declared itself to be a learning city in 1997, a critical part of its strategy was to convene a lifelong learning partnership forum to which it invited all those with an interest in promoting learning from cradle to grave. In a recent Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning (IFLL) Bulletin (November 2008),⁵ Tom Schuller suggests that the lifelong learning agenda should aim at those who are over 25, on the basis that those under 25 are still inside the remit of formal educational agencies. This makes good sense, but it is a mistake to leave out all those who are engaged in fostering learning up to the age of 25, where many will establish learning habits and develop the essential understandings of learning how to learn – learnacy – which they will carry into later life. In their IFLL paper, Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas illustrate all too clearly how important school can be as a foundation for lifelong learning,⁶ although this leaves us with the significant problem of re-engaging those who have become disaffected as a result of their formal schooling.

⁵ See www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry/docs/IFLLBulletin4.pdf

⁶ Claxton and Lucas (2009).

In recent years, most publicly funded adult learning opportunities have been focused on the skills for work. The Learning and Skills Council offers six headings under Adult Learning on its website: Careers Advice Service; Adult Learning Grant; Offenders Learning and Skills Service; National Skills Strategy; Career Development Loans; Information, Advice and Guidance. Although progress in a career will almost always involve learning, there is a lack of emphasis on the awareness of themselves as learners that lifelong learners need to have; and it often feels as if little value is given to learning that is not directly related to work.

Nevertheless, since the incorporation of further education (FE) colleges took them outside local authority control in the early 1990s, much of the emphasis on lifelong learning that does exist is within the FE colleges. The FE colleges are probably closest to the client group which concerns those with a particular interest in promoting lifelong learning. Such a statement might upset the universities, but the reality is that most of those who go to university will have a concept of themselves as learners; an expectation that they will engage in learning that goes beyond what they need for their current or next job; and some recognition of what learning is, at least to the extent that they will not equate it with school in the way that a 'failed' learner might.

FE colleges serve students who may have struggled at school; they support students who need particular support in basic skills; and they offer a progression from basic skills all the way to foundation degrees. They often cater for older learners, particularly those who are keen to learn outside their working hours; alongside their part-time work; or on day-release training. It is often the FE colleges who co-ordinate other training providers to ensure that there are managed progression routes for learners within a particular area. However, the step from provision for adult learning to provision for lifelong learning is not one that every FE College has taken or would even recognise.

This leaves the future for lifelong learning in the context of any one local area with a problem of leadership. Who is meant to drive the lifelong learning agenda in any particular community, district, city or county? Where should the leadership come from? Leadership is strongest when it is distributed across a network. So it is desirable that there should be vision and leadership within each of the constituent partners of the local lifelong learning partnership. Every agency involved needs to be a learning organisation – setting an example by fostering the lifelong learning of its own staff; demonstrating that it is always learning from feedback and from whichever market it is operating within; and promoting lifelong learning in all its dealings with clients, customers and partners.

The local authority is democratically elected to lead and govern its local community. If the community is to thrive, it needs a vibrant economy and a distinctive living culture. Both of these depend on a strong learning culture – and, as has already been argued, a lifelong learning culture, with its intrinsic energy and motivation, is stronger than a learning culture that is extrinsically energised. So the local authority should have the responsibility to convene the local lifelong learning partnership and to assign clear roles within it so that the learning map is effective and efficient.

It was significant when Southampton set out to be a learning city that it had strong political leadership which saw lifelong learning as a core value in the city's overall vision. High aspirations for learning achievement were put at the heart of plans for the economic, social and environmental regeneration of the City, underpinned by:

- a public commitment to learning, which went hand in hand with a focus on making learning explicit;
- an emphasis on encouraging local people to recognise their learning and develop a sense of themselves as 'learners', linked to the importance of place in shaping one's sense of belonging;
- a focus on learning pathways with progression seen as a crucial element of the lifelong learning concept – with encouragement and mentor support for people to manage their own learning;
- an expectation on providers that their aims would include something about creating lifelong learners, whose interest in and motivation to learn would be sustained beyond a single institution, becoming intrinsic to each individual.

Within the local lifelong learning partnership, different learning establishments and learning centres need to understand their particular contribution to the greater whole. In a network of hubs and satellites, across which learners need to find coherent and convenient learning pathways, thought needs to be given to how the emergent lifelong learner is meant to travel from an initial learning experience close to home to higher level learning experiences which may need more specialised facilities. The extended school may have a wide range of learning opportunities for adults, but it is right that schools and children's centres should focus on their core school-age populations first and foremost. This means that the FE College, with its older population, is more likely to be the right place for more specialised, higher level learning. As many properly trained learning development workers as can be afforded need to be active across the whole learning community, seeking out reluctant learners and turning them on to lifelong learning.

These learning development workers need to be seen as a grass-roots network of learning champions, whose focus is on building relationships to support people into and through learning. Their activity needs to be supported by:

- simplified structures easing engagement with other areas of public service – for example health, social care, community policing, welfare, employment, advice services;
- complementary local government and institutional governance arrangements which engage across the local networks of learning champions.
- initial teaching training (ITT) and continuing professional development (CPD) which develops understanding of the core role of the lifelong learning workforce as being to create a society of lifelong learners.

- innovative learning infrastructures that combine the best of places, people and technology to encourage and support learning.
- a curriculum and qualifications framework, such as the Every Citizen Matter hierarchy, which supports both the breadth and the progression of lifelong learning, as distinct from the achievement of separate units of adult learning.

Conclusion

It should now be clearer what a learning city needs to do:

- be explicit about promoting lifelong learning as an idea and encouraging people to develop a sense of themselves as learners;
- encourage organisations and institutions (whether formal or informal) to incorporate within their missions the City's vision to create communities of lifelong learners who recognise and value their learning,
- foster an understanding of progression and recognition and actively support networks of providers and other organisations involved in lifelong learning to collaborate in order to enable learners to pursue their learning pathways between institutions and in so doing to build on previous experiences and achievements.
- systematically secure inclusive policies, plans and practice and review progress annually to identify who is missing out;
- celebrate community and culture;
- secure an appropriate range of learning activities and opportunities across the life course;
- fund and support networks of learning development workers to encourage and support people into and through learning.
- embed positive leadership of learning in local government and institutional governance arrangements and secure genuine partnerships that create synergies by aligning resources for common purpose.

However, this vision must be sufficiently funded; supported by a central government that believes in local communities and local government; and driven by performance management arrangements of inspection and national indicators which give lifelong learning recognisable value as the means by which every citizen can generate economic well-being and can make his or her positive contribution.

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