

## Life-wide education: a new and transformative concept for higher education?

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### Abstract

If lifelong learning is learning that occupies different spaces through the lifespan – ‘from cradle to grave’ – lifewide learning is learning in different spaces *simultaneously*. Such an idea of lifewide learning throws into high relief issues precisely of spaciousness – of authorship, power, and boundedness; for characteristically, pursued in different places under contrasting learning conditions, the various learning experiences will be seen to exhibit differences in authorship, power and boundedness, as well as in other ways. In turn, such a conception of lifewide learning suggests a concept of liquid learning, a multiplicity of forms of learning and thence of *being* experienced by the learner contemporaneously. This concept – of lifewide learning – poses in turn profound questions as to the learning responsibilities of universities: do they not have *some* responsibility towards the *totality* of the students’ learning experiences? Does not the idea of lifewide *education* open here, as a transformative concept for higher education? In sum, the idea of lifewide education promises – or threatens – to amount to a revolution in the way in which the relationship between universities, learners and learning is conceived.

### Introduction

If a liquid age has arrived, perhaps too liquid learning has also arrived.<sup>1</sup> The tense is important – ‘has’ arrived; not ‘is arriving’ or ‘will soon arrive’. The future is already here. There is an understandable tendency to cash out such a thought in terms of e-learning, especially the new generations of interactive learning, of ‘virtual life’ learning, and multimedia learning, with the learner learning through various media simultaneously. Here is liquid learning in full measure, it may seem, with its pedagogical frames weakening, and manifold experiences running together beyond the boundaries of disciplines, conventional standards of communication and sure understandings.

Certainly, a narrative of liquid learning in those terms could be developed and such work is already in hand (for example, Bayne ; Gourlay; Savin-Baden; Webster and Robbins). *Here*, though, another narrative is proposed; a narrative of liquid learning in terms of multiple and simultaneous spaces. The two qualifiers are crucial: multiple *and* simultaneous. This form of liquid learning is the phenomenon of an individual inhabiting several learning spaces simultaneously and, in those spaces, experiencing not just contrasting learning experiences but even *contending* learning experiences. The phenomenon is not new: for one hundred and fifty years or more, individuals while at work might avail themselves of informal and learning experiences locally available (through, for instance, university extension programmes) and those extra-mural opportunities (outside the walls of the workplace) might even lead to revolutionary thoughts and activities. Today, in a liquid age, however, individuals inhabit simultaneously as part of their lives multiple learning spaces: work, non-work, family, leisure, social networks, occupational networks, social engagement and manifold channels of news, information and communication, not to mention physical and global mobility (actual and virtual), burst open the possibilities for learning.

In their medieval inception, right up to the middle of the twentieth century, universities saw themselves as total learning institutions. Their buildings – colleges – were turned inwards to

quadrangles. They were locked at night. Entry was severely restricted. They offered learning spaces secluded from the world. This situation was not dissolved but accentuated with the formation of the disciplines. 'The ivory tower' was a powerful and not unfair image, in its depiction of research as a socially secluded activity. But the last half century has witnessed fundamental changes to universities: now they are in the world and the world is in universities. There is mutual 'transgressivity' across their boundaries. (cf Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2001:21) Universities have become liquid institutions, a shift accentuated by the marketisation of higher education.

In these shifts, students are no longer entirely enfolded within universities but become customers engaging in market relationships with their universities. They have an independence from their institution: their market independence is mirrored by a new contractual relationship (they have legal rights which can and are increasingly enforced in the courts) and by a social and economic independence. Students have their own networks outside the university, virtual and physical. And they have an economic independence. Their very indebtedness aids this economic independence in a way. For being in debt (to banks, to the state, to the taxpayer, to private sector organisations and even to family members), they are now released from dependence on the university. In this regime, students become now just economic and social nomads but they become learning nomads, increasingly inhabiting all kinds of social and economic situations that afford different kinds of learning. In this milieu opens the phenomenon of *lifewide learning*.

### **Lifewide learning and lifelong learning**

*Lifewide learning*, it is surely already apparent, is fundamentally different from *lifelong learning*. '*Lifelong learning*' is learning across time, and ideally, as the term implies, more or less throughout a lifetime. It reminds us that learning can go on almost 'from cradle-to-grave'. In this context, university education is simply an experience at a moment in time in an unfolding learning journey through life. (It is possible that an individual may experience university education more than once in his or her lifetime; but then we simply see university education as a series of stages – and perhaps intermittent stages - in that lifelong learning journey.) In essence, lifelong learning is a series of learning experiences in successive time zones of a life.

*Lifewide education*, in contrast, is learning in different places simultaneously. It is literally learning across an individual's lifeworld at any moment in time. These places of learning may be profoundly different. These learning experiences will be marked by differences of power, ownership, visibility, sharedness, cost and recognition.<sup>2</sup> The idea of lifewide education, in other words, reminds us that learning occurs in – as we may term it – learning *spaces*.<sup>3</sup> In this context, university education may be itself seen as occurring in different learning spaces and may well have its place *alongside other learning spaces that the student inhabits* while taking his or her formal programme of studies. So, for 'lifelong education', we may read learning in time; and for 'lifewide education', we may read learning in space (or spaces).

Certainly, an individual's learning journey through life can be seen as involving both lifelong learning *and* lifewide learning. His or her learning will be moving forward through their lifespan (lifelong learning) *and* will involve many learning spaces (lifewide learning); and often, at any one time, the individual will be experiencing several forms of learning all at once. So the *timeframes* of lifelong learning and the *spaces* of lifewide learning will characteristically intermingle.

Through time and across space, the relationships between lifelong learning and lifewide learning are even more complex. For the learning experiences an individual undergoes simultaneously in lifewide learning will themselves be associated not only with different timeframes but with forms and spaces of learning that have different rhythms. Within a short period of time, as well as being committed to her course of study – itself a complex of learning experiences with different paces – a student may participate in a university sports team and its events, a weekly church service, some sessions in paid employment, and participation in a two-month charitable commitment in a developing country. Each of these activities has its own rhythm; fast and slow time jostle in her holding onto her learning spaces. From time to time, too, these commitments may overlap or clash; and so the student has to ‘manage her time’ and determine priorities as the various responsibilities are heeded.

Oakeshott (1989:101) spoke of university life for the undergraduate as ‘the gift of an interval’. It was time out, a spacious space into which the student stepped, outside of the mainstream of society’s structures. Now, much of that idea is passé. Higher education represents not an interval between stages of the press of the responsibilities of youth, but is rather a set of learning and developmental spaces *in addition* to those of the wider world in which the student is immersed and continues to be immersed. Now, the student is a person in society – whose age may range characteristically from 18-50 (and sometimes beyond that range, even among undergraduates) and his or her university education offers a set of learning experiences alongside many others enjoyed by the student already or that may be taken up while the student is enrolled at the university. Accordingly, if it is still to do work for us, Oakeshott’s idea of higher education as ‘an interval’ needs reinterpretation: in an age of lifewide learning, just what kind of interval might higher education offer?

### Places for a student’s lifewide learning

We may distinguish different forms and spaces of a student’s *lifewide* learning. While being a student, he or she may be involved in learning activities and learning processes (the examples offered are ‘real examples’, revealed in recent interviews at the University of Surrey):

- i *within a course*, some of a more *cognitive* kind (writing an essay, tackling computational problems) and some of a more *operational* kind (in a laboratory, in the creative design studio);
- ii *within a course*, *off-campus* and assessed (in the clinical setting; conducting a mini-survey);
- iii *within a course*, *off-campus* but *not accredited* (a field trip; even sometimes the work experience component of a ‘sandwich’ course)
- iv *on campus*, and *unaccredited* and *not linked* to the student’s course (writing for a student newspaper, working on a student e-journal, running a sports or social society, running a student bar, working in a student shop)
- v *voluntary* and *unaccredited* but *linked* to the student’s course (joining with a few other students and composing musical scores for each other’s assessment, but outside the students’ courses)

- vi *on campus, not linked to the student's course and accredited by a University (taking a language course recognized in some way by the University and separately from the student's degree)*
- vii *not linked to the course, off campus and accredited by an agency other than the university (taking a St John's ambulance course; taking a language course offered by an agency in the private sector)*
- viii *not linked to the course, off campus and unaccredited (singing in a choir; starting up entrepreneurial activities and trying to make some money in the process; engaging in voluntary work, perhaps in a developing country).*

This classification of a student's lifewide learning activities allows us to make five general points:

- That the student's learning often takes place in *a number of sites*
- That the student's formal course of study may constitute a *minority* of the learning experiences undergone by a student while he or she is registered for that course of study. (In some courses in the humanities and social sciences, after all, 'contact time' may amount to less than ten hours per week.)
- That much of the learning that a student achieves while at university is currently *unaccredited*, and involves unaccredited learning that is both *within* the course of study and unaccredited learning that is *outside* the course of study (either on or off campus);
- That much of the student's learning is *personally stretching*, whether it is on or off campus, and whether it is part of a formal course of study or not; it may involve situations quite different from anything hitherto experienced (across social class, ethnicity, language, nation, and other forms of social, cultural and economic differentiation)
- That much of the student's experiences outside the course of study is highly demanding, and may involve high degrees of responsibility (perhaps for others) and accountability such that it leads to major forms of personal development on the part of the student.

### Forms of lifewide learning

One might be tempted to try to categorise the forms of learning achieved by students – whether on their course or outside of it – in terms of skills and knowledge. A student who becomes a member of the university's horse-riding team will gain much *knowledge* about horses and will learn also the *skills* of horse-riding. One might want to stretch the notion of skills here to include, for example, 'team-skills' or even – if captaincy of the team is involved – 'leadership skills'. And the interviewees used the term 'skills' in reflecting on their learning. But the language of knowledge and skills is insufficient to capture the complexity of the learning processes that many are undergoing. Here are the voices of some of my interviewees at the University of Surrey:

(i) *'[I was working] with UNICEF ... for a month, and I was volunteering and I was working with internally displaced people, people affected by war. [And I was] educating them about the journey (back to their home countries) and also what they're going to find when they go back, like what to expect in terms of how the water is, how the schools were, how the land ... if there were any mines, or any other diseases ...'*

(ii) [a recent graduate]:

*'... it was quite an adjustment when I came out of an environment, first of all where I was given feedback and support all the time; where I had grades that I could measure myself against ... it was never a question of skills ...'*

(iii) *'I think I've probably grown up a lot as a person ... I've had a lot more responsibility and I've tried to push myself into doing things that I wouldn't have done before I came. [For example], last year, I created a new society for the University. That involved quite a lot of responsibility and taking control and I've never been in that, sort of, leadership position before.'*

(iv) [a captain of a University sports team] *'I used to be quite shy ... but coming here and having to work in groups of people. I like having something separate from ... my academic work. It definitely ... boosts my enthusiasm. Getting out there every week and doing something you enjoy.'*

(v) [a student with several interests and activities, including a part-time job]: *'You have to be different in different contexts because obviously it's not appropriate to be sort of completely yourself all the time. ... You have to sort of keep going ... amidst pressure. To me, it'd seem like you're sort of letting other people down ...'*  
*'... when I'm at work, [that] sort of gives you confidence with mostly with working with others ...'*

(vi) [a student involved in several societies involving different ethnic and religious groups]: *'so if you look at a person ... every star has a right to twinkle ..'*

In these quotations, these interviewees are reflecting on themselves and their learning and their development in ways that are not easily caught by talk of knowledge or skills. 'Enthusiasm'; keeping going 'amidst pressure'; growing in 'confidence'; believing that every person in the world 'has a right to twinkle'; overcoming one's 'shyness'; growing up 'as a person'; empathising with others so as to be able to help them; becoming self-reliant; and bearing the pressure of personal responsibility: terms, ideas and dimensions such as these might be caught in part by talk of knowledge (coming to know, say, more about oneself) or skills (learning, say, the skills of self-management) but those domains – of knowledge and skills – are ultimately inadequate to capture the profound forms of human development that are taking place through the students' varied forms and places of learning. Indeed, one interviewee (i) is quite clear: 'it was never a question of skills'. What is in question here in all of these quotations, surely, is the way in which each student is becoming more fully human.

In comprehending students' lifewide learning, therefore, we need to supplement the domains of knowledge and skills with a sense of a student's *being* and, indeed, their continuing *becoming*. Here, a language of (a) dispositions and (b) qualities may be helpful. In the quotations above, for example, we can see (a) the *dispositions* of:

- a a willingness to learn about oneself
- b a preparedness to put oneself into new situations
- c a preparedness to be creative in interpersonal situations
- d a preparedness to move oneself on, into another place
- e a will to help others

- f a willingness to adjust one's approach and self-presentation, according to context
- g a will to keep going, even in arduous settings

We also see the *qualities* of:

- a enthusiasm
- b confidence
- c empathy
- d care (for others)
- e energy

(NB: *These two lists – of dispositions and qualities – are by no means exhaustive and could easily be developed further by drawing on the full extent of the interview data.*)

All of the students *were* developing their knowledge and their skill sets. For example, the students I interviewed were developing *skills* for managing the many demands on their lives, for juggling the complexities of their lives and in analysing situations to determine how best to be effective; and some of the interviewees were quite explicit about how they were developing such skills. They were also developing their *knowledge* in different ways (such as gaining knowledge of first aid, of commercial practices, of national and even international organizations). So the domains of skill and knowledge remain important in understanding the learning achievements of students in their lifewide learning.

However, in addition to developing their *knowledge* and their *skills*, all of my interviewees were developing their *dispositions* and *qualities as well*. And in developing their dispositions and qualities, they were developing as persons. In developing their *dispositions*, they were developing a greater preparedness to go on, to engage with life, and to throw themselves into and to engage with strange situations. In developing their *qualities*, they were developing their own personas, and a way of imparting their own stamp on the activities into which they threw themselves. The totality of the student's learning experiences, we can see, is altering their *being-in-the-world*. This being is not fixed but is now in a process of perpetually becoming as the students engage with a continuing interplay with their environment, moving this way and that, and so unfolding in often unpredictable ways.

This set of considerations implies, perhaps, in developing any kind of self-profiling among students – for example, for any new 'Record of Achievement' or University Certificate alongside their course of studies – that students should be encouraged to reflect on how they have developed as *persons*. Whether the language of 'dispositions' and 'qualities' could be operationalised in any such initiatives on the part of the University would have to be subject to a kind of action research. Perhaps at least the idea of 'qualities' might be found to be helpful in students' self-monitoring processes (even if the idea of 'dispositions' turns out to be somewhat too abstract a notion for practical purposes).

### **Some intermediate questions**

These reflections raise some challenging questions and reflections for any university.

1 *What is or should be special about the student's course of study, if anything?* One student interviewed was a member of a small group of students who met regularly and produced for each other's scrutiny artistic creations that were intimately linked to the purposes of their degree course but which were entirely independent of the course in that they were unprompted and were invisible to the tutors on the course. Students may be *more* active intellectually and imaginatively in the learning spaces outside their formal course of study. What then should be the aims of the student's course of study?

2 *What implications arise for the university, if any, from the students being in receipt of income from some of their learning activities?* Both on campus and off-campus, students are often in receipt of income. This income takes many forms: salaried (from an employer for regular work); wages for occasional work; self-earnt, from entrepreneurial activities. Might students feel *more* involved in and committed to such activities (generating immediate income) than to their university studies? They may also be accorded considerable degrees of dignity, autonomy and responsibility in some of their experiences outside their course.

3 *What is the value, if any, of a student's lifewide learning for their academic studies?* Is there a relationship here or are their wider learning achievements held separate from their experiences on their academic programmes? (I return to this matter below.)

4 *To what degree should the university take an interest in the student's informal and extra-mural learning?* It may be that, for some students at least, its value lies precisely in its *not* being formalised and in the student retaining learning and developmental spaces that are their own, independent of the university. For many students, however, some positive stance on the part of the university towards students' achievements, learning and development outside their course would be valued. (I return also to this matter.)

In short, taking all of these questions together, what is the learning value of a student's informal, non-accredited and extra-mural learning and what stance should the university take towards it?

### **The University and lifewide education**

*Both* lifelong and lifewide learning put challenges the way of university education but they are different challenges. If a student's university education is going to be succeeded, as it will be, by yet further forms of learning later in life, then that is one set of considerations. The university has then a responsibility to consider how it can help in enabling students to be effective learners through the rest of their lives. To that extent, a university would then be deliberately contributing to a student's *lifelong education*. The student's university experience would be designed to enable him or her to make further progress in their later learning experiences.

*However*, if a student's university education is, *at the same time*, being accompanied by all manner of other learning and developmental experiences, then that is another set of considerations. Here, the university would recognize that the student is engaged in a process of *lifewide learning during the period of their registration as a university student*. Then the question arises: what is to be the stance and approach of the university towards the student's wider learning experiences? Does the university ignore them or does it take them into account in some way? Does the university see its

offerings as part of the student's lifewide learning? Does it thereby take on the role not merely of higher education, or even of lifelong education, but now of *lifewide* education? That is to say, in some way, the university comes to understand that it has a responsibility of *contributing to the enhancement of the student's lifewide learning that he or she is experiencing while studying at the university*. In this way, the university may come to play a deliberate part in contributing not only to the student's intellectual and professional development but to the development of the student's *lifeworld*. As Pollard puts it:

'... higher education courses have to become more meaningful in terms of students' lives-as-lived and in relation to development through the lifecourse.'

(Pollard, 2003:178)

There are a number of forms of possible university response in recognising students' lifewide learning and so developing the university's role in *lifewide education* (and they are *not* incompatible):

- i Encouraging and facilitating students in gaining worthwhile experiences beyond their programme of studies;
- ii Accrediting students' wider lifewide learning experiences;
- iii Offering opportunities for systematic reflection on those learning experiences such that the learning and personal value of those experiences are enhanced. Here, the university would be attending to and enlivening the 'biographicity of [the student's] social experience' (Alheit and Dausien, 2002: :17).
- iv Shaping the University's own courses so that they offer the student the best chance of maximising the learning potential of their lifewide experiences (and, in so doing, bring about a greater positive relationship between the students' learning experiences both on and beyond their courses and enhancing the students' total lifeworld).

These forms of possible response on the part of the university are, in a sense, *levels* of response, for they denote increasing levels of engagement with the student's extra-curricula learning and development.

### **The academic value of lifewide learning**

Here, I want to pursue question 3 above: *What is the value, if any, of a student's lifewide learning for their academic studies?* To what extent is there a relationship between the experiences and the personal development achieved by students in their lifewide learning and their academic studies? Here are some student voices on the matter:

Q: 'So, do you think that that side of your life is separate from your degree or does it help you would you say?'

A: 'I think it helped me in a way ... because when I'm there I'm relaxed. ... It's separate in a way and it's associated in a way because there you see people from class as well. They'll help you as well with your course.'

Q: 'Do you think [that these different kinds of experience] help each other?'

A: '*... well, especially the society stuff definitely helped my degree – if for no other reason than just feeling more accessible to the lecturers and the tutors ... [in] being more confident in talking to them.*'

Q: '*You're being exposed to quite different kinds of setting. There are some links here, do you think?*'

A: '*I suppose that when I was at work I'd have to talk quite professionally to sort of senior people to me and then that would ... apply [to my interacting] with staff within the University.*'

In these quotations, and the earlier quotations, we see that students' learning and personal experiences beyond their courses:

- Offered a space in which students can meet informally but in collaborative experiences and so develop more collaborative relationships *within* their courses
- Helped students to gain more confidence in themselves that *carried over into the courses*, not least in their relationships with their tutors and lecturers.
- Developed a kind of generalised enthusiasm for learning which enhanced the degree to which they engaged with their formal programme of studies.

In other words, the idea – already suggested – is reinforced that, *in the university's own interests*, it makes sense for a university to acknowledge and to respond to, in some ways, their students' extra-curricula learning. Here, the idea is reinforced via the voice of the students themselves.

### **Towards a classification of learning spaces**

If higher education is to respond to students' lifewide learning, then a classification of learning spaces becomes more than a theoretical exercise but of potential educational value. Learning spaces may distinguished – it is already evident - by means of a number of dimensions:

- a) *Authorship*: what degree of ownership does the learner have in the activity in question? To what degree can the learner author her own activities? Where does the power lie in the framing of a learning space?
- b) *Accountability*: To whom is the learner accountable? What form does that accountability take?
- c) *Responsibility*: For what range of activities is the learner responsible? Is the learner responsible for other people?
- d) *Framing*: How bounded are the activities of the learning space? To what degree are they regulated by formal and tacit rules and conventions?
- e) *Sociability*: To what degree is the activity of the learning space personal and to what degree is it a matter of interaction and even possibly collaboration?
- e) *Visibility*: How public is the activity?
- f) *Complexity*: What is the level of the intellectual demand? How complex is the activity?
- g) *Money*: How is the activity financed? What are its costs? Is there an income stream attached? Is the learner responsible for managing the income?

It follows that, in theory, a profile could be developed for any learning space: each such learning space could be interrogated as to how it stands in relation to each of these eight dimensions.

Alongside such a profile, each profile could also be assessed as to the degree it helped to develop the kinds of dispositions and qualities identified earlier. The temptation might arise here to employ the term 'matrix' – that each learning space be analysed both against the dimensions of learning space and the dispositions and qualities that it might engender. Such a temptation should be resisted, for the idea of learning space now developing here is too messy and too inchoate to be caught adequately by such a regimented term as 'matrix'.

### **The straight and the smooth**

In their book, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish smooth and striated spaces. Striated spaces are characterised by walls, enclosures and roads between enclosures; smooth space is 'a field without conduits or channels' (409); it is nomadic, 'marked only by "traits"'. 'Smooth, or nomadic, space lies between two striated spaces ...' Are these not helpful metaphors for us here? Lifewide learners, we may say, are precisely nomadic learners, comfortable in moving from one learning space to another, even if those learning spaces are themselves bounded and subject to laws and procedure. Lifewide learners inhabit both striated spaces (the spaces of their different learning experiences, each with its own rules of procedure, however informal) and smooth spaces, the spaces of transition from one space to another, the spaces in which they can take a view of their learning and gather it into themselves. It is smooth space that is crucial for it is in smooth space that the learner moves; is not held in a particular learning spaces but always has the potential to move to another learning space. 'Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels'. (409) In smooth space, the learner decides on her own map and makes up her own territories. Smooth space is iconoclastic.

Of course, there is no sharp break between such smooth and striated spaces (as Savin-Baden (2008) observes). Striated spaces have their own space for movement, for the learner's spontaneity, daring and adventurousness. Smooth spaces are always in danger of being taken over and subjected to rules and procedures and become striated spaces.

Are there here student-types; those who love the freedom of smooth spaces, who will not be confined by any space, and those who prefer to reside in striated space, not necessarily content with the offerings of their course, but rather lacking the courage to voyage onto the slipperiness of smooth unbounded space? On the one hand, the nomad who hangs onto open space, even at the risk of overload of experience and missing appointments; on the other hand, the hermit who clings to his or her course as the only source of learning nourishment. The nomad is always wandering in and across learning spaces; and always preparing for new learning voyages.

There is a problem here. Does not the formal recognition of lifewide learning experiences and even achievements on the part of the university represent the sequestration of smooth space by striated space? Deleuze and Guattari observed that:

'One of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which it reigns, or to utilize smooth spaces as a means of communication in the service of striated space.'

(425)

After all:

'Each time there is an operation against the State – insubordination, rioting, guerrilla warfare, or revolution as act – it can be said that ... a new nomadic potential has appeared, accompanied by the reconstitution of a smooth space or a manner of being in space as though it were smooth. .. It is in this sense that the response of the State against all that threatens to move beyond it is to striate space.'

(426)

Is the university not acting in the same way when it seeks to recognize lifewide learning? Is this not a process of corralling the unconfined into the confined? To bring it under control? Not necessarily. The educational value of the university's response to lifewide learning depends on the character of the learning space that the university opens up. As noted, there is no firm division between smooth and striated spaces. The challenge to universities, therefore, in responding to students' lifewide learning is to optimise smooth learning spaces. That is to say, to open spaces to the student that are both in themselves open and that encourage the students concerned to roam across their manifold learning spaces and so enhance the smooth properties of those learning spaces. The smooth and the striated both need each other. Here opens the need for and the value of systematic reflection.

A student observed that:

*'... I've sort of looked and sort of maybe reflected more on things that I have done that I wouldn't really [have considered] an experience until now. Sort of swimming and part-time work – I would just not really [have] related them at all until [I started on the SCEPTrE Learning through Experience Certificate]'*

Here, we glimpse the possibility that the benefits of students' lifewide learning can be *enhanced through structured reflection*. Enabling students to come into a space in which they can draw out of themselves the learning that lies within them as a sediment of their wider experiences, and of which they are unaware, itself is a valuable experience. The multiple learning spaces of lifewide learning become landing points from which other learning spaces can be viewed. This is not merely a process of reflecting on the student's lifeworld but is a process that helps to make sense of and so bring into focus the student's lifeworld. No wonder that so many interviewees say, when invited to reflect on the value of their manifold learning experiences, that they grew in confidence. How are we to comprehend this non-specific idea unless we bring in a sense of a person gaining a sense of themselves as distinct human beings engaging in a lifetime's work of continuous becoming, having multiple learning experiences and growing through those experiences? This is not to say that all those learning experiences are seen in a positive light. To the contrary: some experiences, subjected to the gaze of critical self-evaluation, will be seen as unsatisfactory. But that is often ultimately a positive experience, for the student can then turn in another more satisfactory direction:

*'I came to uni wanting to be a clinical psychologist ... but working ... with children with autism (and) by going to work at Broadmoor, it's kind of led me to realise that I don't want to be a clinical psychologist. ... At the moment, I'm thinking that I want to go into animal behaviour ... rehabilitating captive animals back into the wild and breeding and things like that. So quite a strong focus.'*

Experience, assimilation, reflection, accommodation: these are complex processes of personal transition and the universities can assist this process by opening spaces for systematic reflection. Such a movement on the part of the university begins an inversion of the university's educational function for here, the university would be orienting itself towards the student's lifeworld.

## Conclusions

For two hundred years, the university has built its educational mission around knowledges that it has sequestered unto itself. The student was held in the university. Gradually, the student has been released back into the world (with sandwich years, clinical experience and real-world projects and acceptance that students will take employment during vacations and increasingly often work while learning). Now, in an age of liquid learning, students are as much as if not more in the world than they are in universities; and many of their extra-curricula experiences are yielding experiences of significant learning and personal development.

The university is, therefore, faced with the challenge of its stance in the face of such extra-curricula learning. Facilitating such extra-curricula learning, recognising it by some form of accreditation and opening spaces for systematic reflection on such lifeworld learning are the makings of a new pedagogical function for the university. Now the university turns itself outwards and shifts its pedagogical purposes from a concern with the intellectual growth of the student to a concern with his/ her lifeworld development; his/ her total lifeworld indeed. This is a university that frames a mission for itself in part around lifeworld education. Here, there is a journey not only for the individual student but also for the university, the ultimate endpoint of which is a yet further transition in which the university begins to consider the implications of lifeworld learning for the character of its *own programmes of study* and the student's pedagogical experience therein. This would be the ultimate revolution.

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<sup>1</sup> I take the idea of the 'liquid' from Zygmunt Bauman. To my knowledge, Bauman has not actually employed the term 'liquid learning' but he has observed the implications for learning that arise from a 'liquid life' (Bauman, 2006: 118-19, 123).

<sup>2</sup> There is the makings of a literature on the idea of 'lifeworld learning', for example, Skolverket (2000), Pollard (2003), Slowey and Watson (2003), Alheit and Dausien (2003) and Clark (2005). Two variants of 'lifeworld learning' seem to be present: on the one hand, a sense that learning should connect with and is dependent upon a learner's wider life and, on the other hand, a sense that life-wide learning includes the informal and experiential. The concept being suggested in this paper – that of lifeworld learning as *simultaneous* learning across *multiple* learning sites overlaps *both* of those variants but is somewhat distinct from them.

<sup>3</sup> This paper has been written alongside a reading of Maggi Savin-Baden's (2008) book, *Learning Spaces for Knowledge Creation in Academic Life*. Although the conception of learning spaces there seems somewhat different from that adopted here (a sense of learning space as offering spaciousness as against, here, a view of learning space as a space in which learning may be spacious *or* congested), that book ranges across many of the issues raised in this paper – and many other issues besides – and offers a brilliant resume of the matters it raises. It also adeptly draws on the categorization of striated and smooth cultural spaces advanced by Deleuze and Guattari (to which this paper also refers). The book should be seen, I believe, as essential reading on the matter of learning space and the responsibilities upon educational institutions raised by modern scholarship thereupon.

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