

Developing Personal Creativity through Lifewide Education

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A village square

Laurence Stephen Lowry's creative talent was being able to see and represent through his paintings, the extraordinary in the ordinary as people went about their everyday lives in the urban and industrial landscapes of northern England



Professor Norman Jackson is setting up the Lifewide Education Community Interest Company in order to continue to promote and support lifewide education in UK Higher Education, a concept that he helped develop in his previous role as Director of the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTe). This work is being disseminated through a book 'Learning for a Complex World: a lifewide concept of learning, personal development and education'(details at <http://lifewideeducation.co.uk>).

In 2001, while working at the Learning and Teaching Support Network the precursor to the Higher Education Academy, he facilitated the creation of the *imaginative curriculum* network which did much to raise awareness and share understandings of creativity in higher education and the ways in which students' creative development is supported and encouraged. Some of this work was published in a book by Routledge-Falmer, 'Developing Creativity in Higher Education: an imaginative curriculum.' More of Norman's work relating to creativity in higher education can be found at: <http://imaginativecurriculumnetwork.pbworks.com/>

The problem with creativity in higher education

Directly or indirectly, the problem of how we prepare people for a complex, unpredictable and ever changing world is the main force driving educational change in higher education and it will always be so. It goes to the heart of the moral purpose of education - to make a positive difference to students' lives. Helping students to recognise, develop and use their creativity is part of this 'wicked problem' (Jackson 2008) and higher education teachers and educational institutions have an important role in students' creative development, particularly within disciplinary fields of study.

But the problem of creativity in higher education is not chronic, in the sense that most teachers and decision makers believe there is an issue to be resolved. The problem is more a sense of dissatisfaction with a higher education world that seems, at best, to take creativity for granted, rather than celebrates the contribution that creativity makes to academic achievement, self-expression and personal wellbeing. The problem is not that creativity is absent but that it is omnipresent. That it is subsumed within analytic ways of thinking that dominate the academic intellectual territory (Jackson 2008). The most important argument for higher education to take creativity in students' learning more seriously, is that creativity lies at the heart of performing and learning in any context and the highest levels of performance involve the most creative acts of all.

But what institutions do in response to this challenge is only one part of the educational equation. Students are busy preparing, developing and actualising themselves through the many things they do outside formal education every day of their lives. I maintain that it is in these acts of self-actualisation (that include but go far beyond formal education) that individuals' personal creativities are revealed. The idea of lifewide education (Jackson 2011a¹) is both appealing and valuable because it enables institutions to adopt a broader concept of learning and personal development, with more potential to recognise and value students' creativity, than can be recognised within the boundaries of a study programme or research project.

Bringing ideas into existence is our most fundamental creative act and discovering other people's ideas, connecting them to our own ideas and transforming our understanding in the process is a profound manifestation of human creativity. Crystallising and communicating our thoughts and feelings in writing or/and other media is another creative act. All these things I recognise as being important part to my personal creativity.

In this article I try to crystallise my thoughts and connect them to the thinking of others around four propositions which I believe have important consequences for higher education. My first proposition is we all have unique creative capability and that being creative is integral to who we are and who we become. My second is that higher education should be concerned with students' developing as whole people, of which their creative development is a part, to enable them to realise more of their potential - to actualise themselves. My third proposition is that our everyday lives hold the promise and potential for our personal creativity. By this I mean the whole of our lives not just the part that is defined by study or work or any bounded space. My fourth proposition is that higher education could do much more to enable students to develop their creative potential and use their personal creativity if we adopted a lifewide concept of education. My belief is that if we act intelligently and creatively on these propositions we will ultimately create a more inventive, adaptive, resourceful and fulfilled society.

¹ Building on the earlier concept of a lifewide curriculum Jackson (2008)

'If I had to define life in a word, it would be life is a creation'
Claude Bernard²

Everyday - personal creativity

If we believe in and act upon Claude Bernard's wise words we can make higher education a better place for nurturing students' creative development. We are the creators of our own lives and much of our creativity is invested in the process of being and becoming who we want to be. My central thesis is that higher education could and should play a more significant part in facilitating and supporting this fundamental process of becoming a person.

Ruth Richards points out in the introduction to her book on 'Everyday Creativity', our personal creativity - that which we utilise day to day, is an integral part of who we are, how we live our lives and how we create meaning and purpose in our lives. To deny its existence is to deny our very being. But how do we identify everyday creativity? Any creative act must satisfy two fundamental criteria (Barron 1969) namely: *originality* - something that is new like an idea, behaviour or something we have made, and *meaningfulness* - the act or result has meaning and is significant to us.

We humans are often 'everyday creative,' or we would not even be alive. To cope with changing environments, we improvise, we flexibly adapt, we try this and that. At times, we change the environment to suit us - whether we are making a living, raising a child, feeding the family, writing a report, or finding our way out of the woods when we are lost. Far from being a minor or specialised part of our lives, our everyday creativity - our originality of everyday life- is first of all, a survival capability. It is also a universal capability. But,.....our everyday creativity offers us more: It offers a dynamic process and a powerful way of living. When developed, it can open all of us to new depths, richness and presence.

Richards (2007:3)

Vygotsky (2004:7) also believed that 'any human act that gives rise to something new is.... a creative act, regardless of whether what was created is a physical object or some mental or emotional construct that lives within the person who created it and is known only to him.'

In his theory of creativity Rogers (1961:350) describes the everyday process of creativity as 'the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other.' He places the locus of this action in 'man's tendency to actualise himself, to become his potentialities' (*ibid*: 351).

By this [creativity] I mean the directional trend which is evident in all organic and human life - the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature - the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, or the self.....It is this tendency which is the primary motivation for creativity as the organism forms new relationships to the environment in its endeavour most fully to be itself.

Rogers (1961:351)

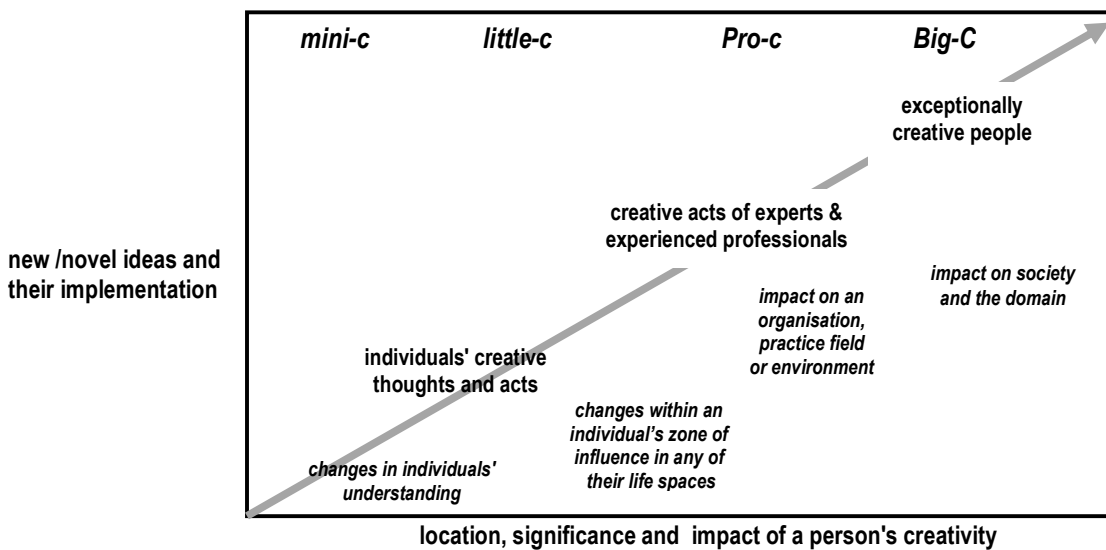
² Cited by Garisson F. H (1928) Medical proverbs, aphorisms and epigrams Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine IV, No10 979-1005 p.997

If we agree with Rogers (as I do) then we understand that a concern for students' creative development is fundamentally connected to the moral purpose of a higher education - to enable students to realise more of their potential. To actualise themselves to become their potentialities.

Nature, scope and influence of a person's creativity

Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) proposed a four-category model of creativity to explain the nature, scope and influence of individuals' creativity (Figure 1). These authors refer to '*Big-C*' creativity that brings about significant change in a domain; '*Pro-c*' creativity associated with the creative acts of expert professionals - when people have mastered their field; '*little-c*' creativity - the everyday creative acts of individuals who are not particularly expert in a situation and '*mini-c*' the novel and personally meaningful interpretation of experiences, actions and events made by individuals. Central to the definition of mini-c creativity is the dynamic, interpretative process of constructing personal knowledge and understanding within a particular sociocultural context.

Figure 1 Representation of personal creativity using the Four-C model of creativity proposed by Kaufman and Beghetto (2009)



Both mini-c and little-c forms of creativity are relevant to higher education learning and curriculum designs, teaching and learning strategies could usefully encourage and facilitate these. One might speculate that participation in these forms of creativity are pre-requisite for Pro-c and Big-C creativity in later life: if we want creative professionals then we should be encouraging our students to be creative. It is however important to note that 'everyday creativity can extend from mini-c to little-c through Pro-c. It is only Big-C that remains *eminent* creativity (ibid:6) beyond the reach of most of us. From an educational perspective it might be reasoned that by encouraging and empowering students to use, develop and make claims for mini-c and little-c forms of creativity, we are better preparing them not only for using these

forms in later life but for engaging in more expert-based forms of creativity that comes from sustained engagement with a particular domain or field of activity.

Situations - the focus for personal creativity

Our personal creativity is manifest in the way we deal with or create situations. This process is neatly summarised by Eraut (2007, 2011) in the contexts of dealing with situations in the work place, but the basic process is relevant to any context. It follows the pattern of

- *Assessing situations* (sometimes briefly, sometimes involving a long process of *investigation and enquiry*) and continuing to monitor the situation;
- *Deciding what, if any, action to take*, both immediately and over a longer period (either on one's own or as a leader or member of a team); [In complex situations this stage also includes *designing and planning the action*];
- *Pursuing an agreed course of action*, preparing for and performing professional actions – evaluating the effects of actions and the environment and adapting as and when necessary;
- *Metacognitive monitoring of oneself*, people needing attention and the general progress of the case, problem, project or situation; and sometimes also learning through reflection on the experience

According to Eraut (2007, 2011) these activities can take many different forms according to the speed and context and the types of experience and expertise being deployed. Although analytically distinct, they may be combined into an integrated performance that does not follow a simple sequence of assessment, decision and then action. There may be several assessments, decisions and actions within a single period of performance in dealing with the situation (Klein et al 1993).

Table 1 Interactions between time, mode of cognition and type of process (adapted from Eraut 2011:4). Nb the *intuitive* dimension of the deliberative domain (italicised) has been added for completeness and to reflect its relevance to the issue of personal creativity

Type of Process	Mode of Cognition		
	Instant/Reflex	Rapid/Intuitive	Deliberative/Analytic & <i>Intuitive</i>
Reading/ comprehending the situation	Pattern recognition	Rapid interpretation Communication on the spot	Prolonged diagnosis Review involving discussions and/or analysis <i>New, often sudden insights</i>
Decision-making	Instant response	Recognition- primed or intuitive responses	Deliberative analysis and/or discussion with others <i>sometimes mediated by intuition</i>
Overt activity	Routinised action	Routines punctuated by rapid decisions	Planned actions with periodic progress reviews <i>sometimes mediated by intuition</i>
Metacognitive	Situational Awareness	Implicit monitoring Short, reactive Reflections	Conscious monitoring of thought and activity. Reflective learning <i>with deeper meaning making derived through creative insight.</i> Group evaluation

Eraut (ibid: 4) developed a tool (Table 1) to explain the relationship between *time* and *mode of cognition* in dealing with situations dividing the time-continuum into three sections, Instant, Rapid and Deliberative. These terms attempt to describe how the time-scale is perceived by the performer, and should be interpreted differently according to the orientations of performers and the nature of their work.

In the domain of professional capability and expertise applied to the challenges and opportunities of work we are dealing with Pro-c creativity (Kaufman and Beghetto 2009). A concept that is consistent with the expertise acquisition model of creativity (Ericsson and Lehmann 1996) requiring prominent creators to have mastered their work, through immersing themselves in their role(s) for a considerable period of time.

According to Eraut (2007, 2011) the *instant/reflex* column describes routinised behaviour that, at most, is semi-conscious. The *rapid/intuitive* column indicates greater awareness of what one is doing, and is often characterised by rapid decision-making within a period of continuous, semi-routinised action. Typically it involves recognition of situations by comparison with similar situations previously encountered; then responding to them with already learned procedures (Klein 1989, Eraut et al 1995). Creativity emerges when the situation requires an adaptive or newly invented response. The *deliberative / analytic* column is characterised by explicit thinking by individuals or groups, possibly accompanied by consultation with others. It involves the conscious use of prior knowledge and its application to new situations, sometimes in accustomed ways, sometimes in novel ways or in a more critical manner. The *intuitive dimension* of this domain is related to the sudden insights one gains after considerable deliberation, insights that may come about through making a connection and interpretation to something that is quite distant to the problem in hand. An individual's creativity emerges when the situation requires an adaptive or newly invented response.

The processes described by Eraut for dealing with situations in the work place are fundamentally processes of self-regulation (Schunk and Zimmerman 1998, Zimmerman 2000). Self-regulation can be represented as a continuous process involving forethought (planning and decision making) – performance – self-reflection on performance operating within a context specific environment that is structured by the learner to provide resources to enable them to achieve what it is they want to achieve. If we accept this general theoretical model of the way we engage with the world then we must also be able to relate our personal creativity to the processes involved. Figure 3 illustrates how our creativity might be related to the way we deal with or create situations.

Covey (2004) offers another meaningful perspective on this fundamental situational focus.

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In the space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In those choices lie our growth and our happiness.

Covey (2004:4)

This *freedom to choose* space is rich in affordances. It represents the decision space at the heart of every situation we participate in – the fundamental building block of daily life. In this space where we have the freedom to choose what to do, we make decisions that are based on what we and others value, what we know and don't know, what we believe is right or wrong, what we think we can or can't do and how we feel about the different options we have.

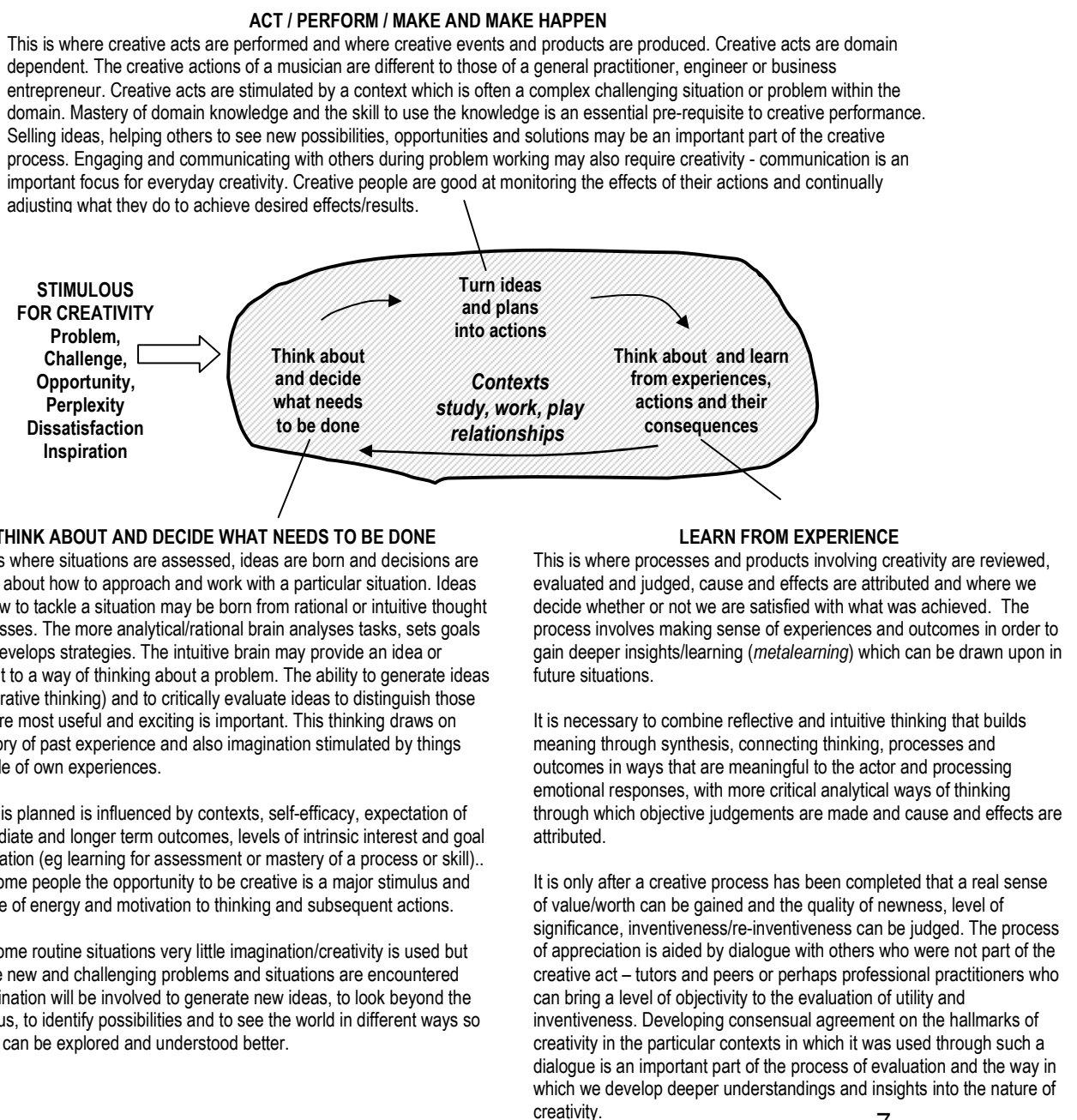
Rogers (1961) places this process at the centre of being and becoming a person.

[when a] person is open to all of his experience, he has access to all of the available data in the situation, on which to base his behaviour. He has knowledge of his own feelings and impulses, which are often complex and contradictory. He is freely able to sense the social demands, from the relatively rigid social 'laws' to the desires of friends and family. He has access to his memories of similar situations, and the consequences of different behaviours

in those situations. He has relatively accurate perception of this external situation in all of its complexity. He is better able to.....consider, weigh and balance each stimulus, need and demand, and its relative weight and intensity. Out of this complex weighing and balancing he is able to discover that course of action that seems to come closer to satisfying all his needs in the situation, long-range as well as immediate needs.

Rogers (1961:118)

Figure 3 Ways in which personal creativity might be involved in dealing with and creating situations that involve bringing new things into existence. Source Jackson (2010), based on the model of self-regulation (Zimmerman 2000)



It seems reasonable to infer that our creativity must be integral to this complex decision making space. A process that involves combining and integrating imagining, generating, reconstructing and playing with ideas, and critically evaluating possibilities and the potential consequences of actions.

Rogers (1961: 353-55) identified three conditions³ which he believed to be associated with an individual's preparedness to engage in constructive (positive) creative acts namely:

1 An openness to experience. This boils down to a lack of rigidity in the way experiences are perceived and permeability of boundaries in concepts, beliefs, perceptions and hypotheses. It means tolerance for ambiguity where ambiguity exists and the ability to receive and assimilate conflicting information without forcing closure upon the situation. It means balancing critical reasoning with a healthy imagination.

2 An internal locus of evaluation. Rogers (ibid:354) argues that this is perhaps the most important condition for creativity. It means that the value of the product or action for the creative person is established not by the praise or criticism of others but by him or herself. The question that really matters to a person who has chosen a creative pathway is, does what I have done express a part of me? If the person feels he/she has actualised the potentialities which hitherto have not existed and are now emerging into existence, then it is satisfying and creative and no outside evaluation can change this feeling or belief.

3 The ability to play with elements and concepts The ability to play with ideas, relationships, to juggle elements into improbable juxtapositions, shape wild hypotheses, express the ridiculous and translate from one form to another are uses of the imagination that enable the *creative seeing of life* in a new and significant/meaningful way. In whatever relational context, out of the many possibilities there emerges new forms that the individual values and acts upon (ibid 354-55).

But in order to engage in the course of action we have 'invented' to deal with a new situation from the range of possibilities we have imagined and evaluated, we need both the *will* and *capability* to do it.

The ways and means we accomplish what we value

Our creativity cannot be separated from the capabilities that enable us to invent, improvise and adapt in the situations we encounter and create for ourselves. Capability is the power or ability to do something or to perform a certain role. It is an important concept in education and human development; it refers to 'the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that [a] person can achieve'. It also reflects a 'person's freedom to lead one type of life or another ... to choose from possible livings' (Sen 1992:40). Our capability represents 'the *real opportunity* that we have to accomplish what we value' (ibid. 31). Capability is a complex phenomenon, according to (Eraut 2009:6) it embraces 'everything that a person can think or do'. It is

³ The first two of these conditions also feature in Rogers' synthesis for *becoming a person* (Rogers 1961: 115-120) showing that he believed how central to 'being' an individual's creativity is. It might also be argued that his third condition for becoming a person. *trusting self* as 'a suitable instrument for discovering the most satisfying behaviour in each immediate situation (ibid. 118) is implicit in an individual's attempts to be creative.

complex because it requires the integration and utilisation of different sorts of knowledge, practical and intellectual skill, dispositions and qualities in specific situations in order to accomplish something. It enables us to choose from a repertoire of responses and to adjust our response if we judge that it is necessary.

In utilising our capability in a particular situation we are increasing opportunities for learning: learning that is not just relevant for dealing with that situation but learning for potential future situations. Jean Piaget placed the creative act at the heart of learning, 'to understand is to invent' (Piaget 1972). His concept of epistemology was that we obtain knowledge by *assimilating* new information, so that we can bring it into our cognitive structures and then we *accommodate* that knowledge by changing our cognitive structures and understanding in response to the new information.

Constructivist epistemology has much to say about creativity.... Its basic premise is that knowledge is created by the individual. Knowledge is literally a construction of understanding. Often the constructive process provides an original interpretation of experience. This process is a creative one, at least when the resulting interpretations are both original and effective.

Runco (2007:91)

This is the fundamental generative process that is at the heart of our everyday creativity.

Capability is demonstrated through both the action (what is done and how it is done) and the results (were actions appropriate, effective or inspiring). It is not judged through a single action over time but through performances in a range of contexts and situations. We develop our capabilities for particular contexts and some of these capabilities are generic and others are not since they rely on domain specific knowledge and cultures for their appropriateness and effectiveness. To illustrate what capability means we might turn to Greene (2004a) who describes '32 capabilities of highly effective people in any field' and distills these down to just eight general capabilities.

Highly effective people have eight general capabilities. The first four such capabilities are ways of using liberty they make for constructing, establishing, and founding enduring changes in lives and the world. They have ways, when encountering difference and otherness, of keeping what is new, difficult, and unknown or challenging from being absorbed and assimilated to their existing models and preferences. They have ways of preserving the otherness of what they encounter. Second, they have ways of unearthing the most buried, subtle, intimate, and vital forces and things inside themselves and examining them for possible use or improvement. Third, they have ways of bringing order to their own selves and to the selves of those in groups around them. Fourth, they have ways of turning insights, ideas, experiences, and the like into impacts on society, actual changes in how things are arranged and done. The second four general effectiveness capabilities are ways of protecting novelty from erosion by large, traditional, already established powers of the world. Fifth, they have ways of doing things with style and verve rather than doing them perfunctorily. Sixth, they have ways of upping the performance of all dimensions of their selves, work, and lives, not just some or a few. Seventh, they have ways of influencing people, in many channels, modes, and means. Eighth, and last, they have ways of operating with new commonsenses, they borrow or invent, that make their automatic reactions up-to-date and future-looking.

(Greene 2004:5)

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/2162334/32-Capabilities-of-Highly-Effective-Persons>

Greene's rich and insightful account of the capabilities of high-performing people who are particularly effective in their field provides a comprehensive, explicit and inspiring vision for human development. Several of these general capabilities make explicit reference to the creative acts of turning ideas into impacts, protecting novelty, bringing about change and inventing new common sense. But it is likely that people who are effective and successful in what they do are able to draw upon their creativity whenever they need or want to.

It is not an exaggeration to say that effective people excel in working with ideas in every context of their work and lives. They use, invent, apply, revise, fuse, improve and inspire ideas.

(Greene 2004a:5)

Through his research involving 150 highly creative people from 63 diverse stratas of society, Greene (2004b) identifies at least 60 personalised models of what being creative means. These models reflect what is in the minds of creative people when they create - their ways and means of bringing things into existence! This way of representing creativity as personally constructed perceptions of creative practice in the situations in which people have been or tried to be creative is the most authentic way of understanding what creativity means. However, it also means that there is no simple way of defining what creativity is because it is 'the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other' (Rogers1961:350).

Greene's research on the capabilities of highly effective people (Greene 2004) focuses on the high achievers in their field, and it might be argued that the capability characteristics he has developed for exceptional people cannot be applied to individuals with more modest achievements. However, Greene's powerful way of framing capability – '*they have ways*' – points to the repertoire of strategies, skills, ways of thinking and behaving that people possess and can adapt and deploy in new situations in order to achieve the things that they (or others) value. I believe that these repertoires can be recognised in the lives of some of the students who I have been privileged to know and the final section of this article I include a story told by a final year undergraduate student.

The important lesson from Greene's work is the need for higher education educators to encourage learners, through well designed thinking tools and facilitated conversation, to reflect up on and develop their own understandings of how they are creative when they participate in their everyday experiences. Such self-knowledge is likely to be valuable to individuals in all sorts of ways.

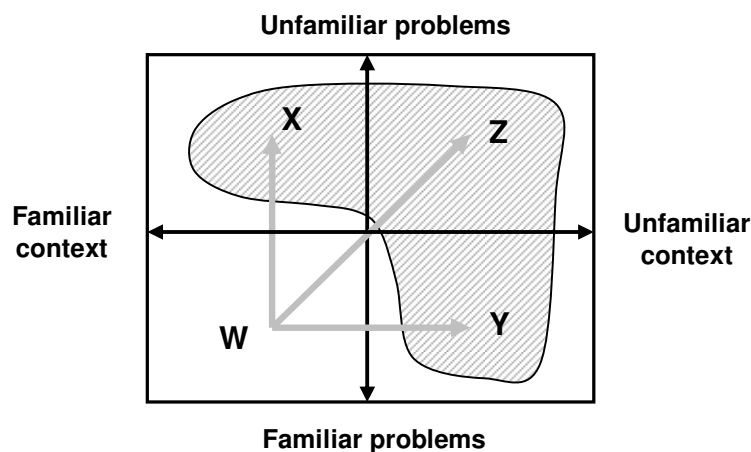
Seeing personal creativity in the ways outlined above, has important implications for education that purports to help and enable students to realise more of their potential - to actualise themselves, to become their potentialities. If we want to embrace all the contexts in which students are creative in their everyday lives then we need a concept of curriculum that embraces all these contexts and a concept of education that values students' learning and development in these different contexts. My proposition to achieve this goal is that higher education should adopt a lifewide concept of education (Jackson 2011).

The importance of context

Before we look at the educational consequences of these ways of thinking about creativity it's worth considering one more set of perspectives. The contexts within which we deal with or create situations can be categorised according to whether they are within a familiar or unfamiliar context and whether the problem (challenge or opportunity) is familiar or unfamiliar. Stevenson (1998) developed a simple 2x2 matrix to explain how we utilise our capability (including our creativity) within this conceptual framework.

Much of our life is spent in familiar situations where we don't have to pay much attention to what we are doing and we can reproduce our responses without really thinking deeply about our actions (position W, Figure 2). Stephenson considered this space to be one in which we practised dependent capability and he related this to traditional teaching approaches adopted in higher education. We can, if we choose, adopt and perform the routines we have learnt in these situations with little or no need to invent.

Figure 2 Relationship between context, capability and creativity (adapted from Stephenson 1998:5, Jackson in press). Letters refer to scenarios described below. The shaded area represents situations that have the greatest potential for personal creativity because we have to invent/adapt/improvise in them.



Position W can apply to the work-place, the home, community activities or artistic pursuits. Good performance in position W may require technical skills and knowledge of the highest order, or at the simplest level. [In higher education] We give students information about the context; the more complex the context, the more information we give them. We give them information about the kinds of problems they will meet, and details of the solutions which have been found to be effective. We might even give them practice in the implementation of the solutions and evaluation of their effectiveness. We seek to develop student capability in position W by passing on other people's experience, knowledge and solutions ... the resultant capability is essentially a dependent capability.

(Stephenson, 1998:4)

Our personal creativity in this domain is not focused on mastering new contexts and difficult problems, rather we can choose to use our creativity to transform the ordinary into something which has extraordinary meaning for ourselves. Indeed our capacity to see, value and utilise the ordinary in new or unusual ways is a feature of our creativity in all domains of this conceptual territory.

Moving to the other domains in Figure 3 we can appreciate that if we are confronted with a problem, challenge or opportunity, or we enter a context that is unfamiliar we have to develop new contextual understandings and / or invent and try out new practices and ways of behaving. Through this process we are creating new understandings and new ways of performing or producing. These are the situations in which we develop (invent) new capability.

We can use this framework to encourage students to think about the sorts of situations they are using to develop themselves and invite them to reflect on whether they are restricting themselves to contexts and challenges that are familiar and comfortable, or are they involving themselves in unfamiliar problems and contexts that will require them to engage their creativity, be resourceful and invent new forms of independent capability. We might also use this framework in our teaching to help us reflect on the creative potential of the situations we design and implement within our courses.

Seeing the possibilities in a situation

In their book 'The Art of Possibility', Zander and Zander (2000) highlight the importance, in living a fulfilled and successful life, of seeing *life as an invention* and approaching situations positively with a view to seeing and sensing the possibilities and opportunities they hold. They outline, through stories, a number of practices that can help us shift our perspectives in ways that have profound effects on our ability to live an inventive/creative and fulfilled life. It is these sorts of ways of thinking and behaving that highly effective people have internalised in the ways and means they use to accomplish what they value.

I love the story of the priest who came across two stonemasons chipping away. He turned to the first and asked him what was he doing? He replied he was cutting stone to make a carving. He turned to the second stonemason and asked him what he was doing ? His face lit up as he said, 'I'm building a cathedral'.

Our personal creativity is energised and given meaning by our ability to see and believe in our own 'cathedrals'. To see and create the extraordinary in the everyday ordinary things we encounter. And there is rarely only one 'right answer' in whatever we are doing, only a multiplicity of possibilities that we can choose from and bring into existence. So much of education is about providing the one right answer that the teacher thinks is right, and not encouraging students to search for many possible answers that they believe are right. Perhaps the creative purpose of higher education is to nurture the dispositions that motivate learners to search for and discover more than one right answer in whatever situation or context they inhabit, so that they see the potential, maximise possibilities, and recognise and act upon the answers as they emerge. The promise of lifewide education is that it offers opportunity for learners to discover and gain recognition for the many right answers they need to live productive and fulfilled lives.

To illustrate the wisdom in this proposition I refer you to a memorable story told by

Dewitt Jones, one of the world's leading nature photographers who you will have seen if you are a reader of National Geographic. In the video clip he illuminates his own creative process which blends his experience and expertise as an eminent photographer with his passion to discover more than one right answer. It is this passion, coupled to the development of relevant capability that will enable and empower learners to be inventive in whatever contexts and situations they choose to inhabit.

YouTube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sPYApmrJ48&feature=player_embedded#at=18

'the whole of life is learning therefore education can have no ending.'
Eduard Lindeman (1926)

A lifewide concept of education

So what are the possibilities of these ideas for the way we might shape higher education so that it provides more opportunity for students' creative development - adding more value to the potential outcomes from what is now becoming a very expensive experience for learners.

In my examination of the wicked problem of creativity in higher education (Jackson 2008) I offered *one possible right answer*, by suggesting that we could do much to honour and encourage students' creativity and creative development by adopting a lifewide concept of education that values learning and personal development gained in all the spaces and places in a student's life while they are studying in higher education. A lifewide curriculum was considered by Jackson (2008) to afford the best opportunity for students' creative development, since the intrinsic motivations that drive creativity are more likely to be present in the spaces that individuals choose to inhabit and to which they devote time and attention.

A lifewide curriculum honours informal/accidental/by-product learning in learner determined situations as well as formal learning in teacher determined situations. It embraces learning in the physical/emotional social spaces that characterise the work/practice environment and it honours formal and informal learning in all other environments that learners chose to be in because of their interests passions and needs. Because of this a lifewide curriculum is likely to provide a better framework for encouraging, supporting, recognising and valuing learners' creativity and self-expression, than a curriculum that is solely based on academic or academic and professional practice experiences (Jackson 2008:24).

A lifewide curriculum could facilitate students' creative development in three ways in the forms that are necessary to be successful and innovative in the academic disciplinary or interdisciplinary domain, in any professional/work domain and in the domains of activity that learners chose for themselves in their lives outside formal education. This domain is particularly rich in affordances and possibility spaces and it is this domain that is currently most difficult to honour and recognise students' learning and creative enterprise.

Lifewideness is a simple idea. It recognises that most people, no matter what their age or circumstances, simultaneously inhabit a number of different spaces - like work or education, running a home, being a member of a family, being involved in a club or society, travelling and taking holidays and looking after their own wellbeing mentally, physically and spiritually. We live out our lives in these different spaces and we have the freedom to choose which spaces we want to occupy and how we want to occupy them. In these spaces we make decisions about what to be involved in, we meet and interact with different people, have different sorts of

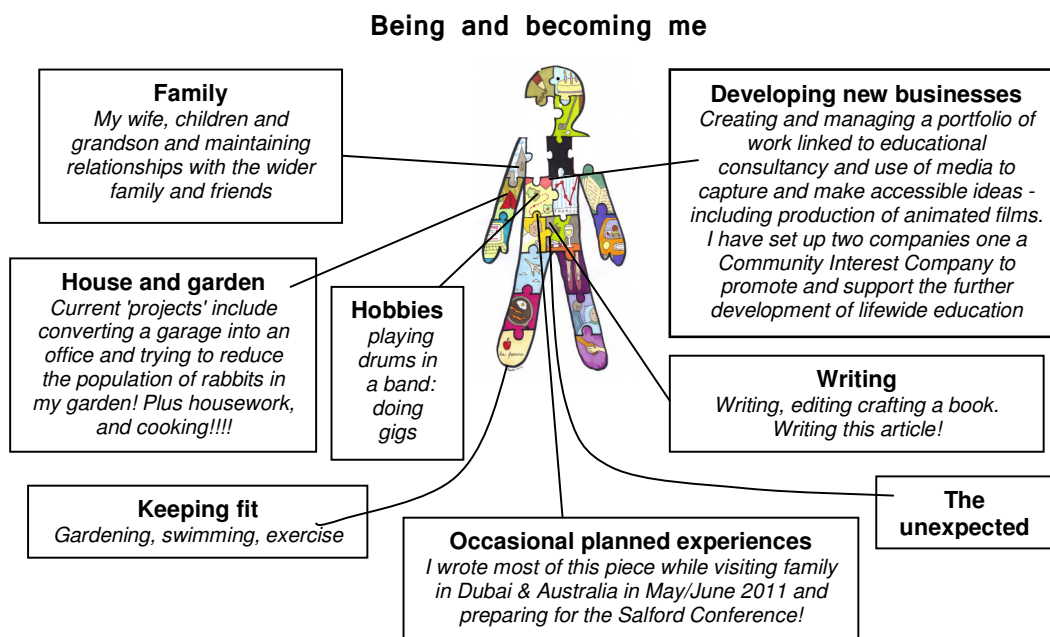
relationships, adopt different roles and identities, and think, behave and communicate in different ways. In these different spaces we encounter different sorts of challenges and problems, seize, create or miss opportunities, and aspire to live and achieve our ambitions. It is in these spaces that we create the meaning that is our lives (Jackson 2011a & b).

The significance of a lifewide concept of education for personal creativity is that it enables individual students to feel that even if they believe that there is little opportunity for them to be creative in their academic course they can gain recognition for creativity that is being expressed in other parts of their lives. It also encourages students to see that creativity can be manifested in different ways in different parts of their lives.

One way of raising learner and teacher facilitator awareness of the potential for creative development in an individual's life is to encourage them to create a life space map. A life spaces map (Figure 4) reveals the life we are choosing to lead. It shows spaces and places we inhabit, the things we do in those spaces and places, the significant relationships we have and value, and the ways in which we maintain our physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Every space we inhabit has its own routines, challenges and opportunities, each holds the potential for us to exercise our will, harness what we know and can do, develop new knowledge, be creative and resourceful, behave ethically and use and integrate many of our capabilities. My claim is that in every life space there are opportunities for learning, relationship building and the development of capability that ultimately can be transferred and utilised in other life spaces. Our life spaces can be related to the Stephenson's conceptual map (Figure 2). Many of our spaces will contain situations that are familiar. In these spaces though the contexts and challenges may be known we can still utilise our creativity in what we choose to do. But some of our spaces may lie in unfamiliar territory and here we will need to utilise our creativity in order to invent, adapt and improvise.

Figure 4 My life spaces map (May-June 2011)



To illustrate the concept of a life spaces map, I include my own in Figure 4. It summarises the life I am choosing to lead at the time of writing this piece - how I am trying to realise my own potentialities and within this the opportunities I have for expressing myself in ways that I value as being meaningful and creative. Having just 'retired' I recognise I am in unfamiliar territory and making the transition to a different sort of life. While I have my well known established spaces with my family, friends and home, I no longer have my job to consume so much of my time everyday and I am, with others, inventing and adapting to a new way of life through a business and trying to promote what I value (lifewide education) by forming a community interest company. I'm finishing a book and writing this piece (like most academics writing is a major creative outlet) and I play in what on a good day might pass as a band (at the back playing drums! <http://freeworlders.pbworks.com/>). I feel privileged to have so much opportunity to use my creativity.

A holistic model of learning within which creativity can be recognised

The value of a lifewide concept of higher education lies in its capacity to embrace and celebrate a richer and more holistic view of learning and personal development. A lifewide concept of education values and recognises learners' attempts to develop and use all their senses and embraces the full range of physical, intellectual, spiritual and emotional experience. Beard and Jackson (2011) argue that a lifewide concept of education should be supported by a comprehensive model of learning. They present a useful framework to help us understand how our whole being is involved in learning. In this representation of learning there are three components to a learner's world – his inner world, his outer world and the sensory interface between these worlds. Learning is represented in six dimensions: *sensing, belonging, doing, feeling, thinking* and *being/becoming*. A creative act may (is likely to) involve all of these dimensions and by adopting such a comprehensive model of learning this can be recognised.

An educational design to promote lifewide learning and personal creativity

When designing educational experiences teachers usually begin with *their* purposes and the outcomes *they* want to promote, and then *they* think about the content, and process, create and organise resources to support learning. *They* decide what counts as learning, and finally *they* evaluate the standards and quality of learning, as demonstrated through one or more assessment methods and tools that *they* have designed guided by criteria *they* create to assist them in making judgements. In such a curriculum the scope for personal creativity is always limited by the teacher's requirements for conformance and standardisation and the teacher's desire for specific learning outcomes. This is the way we generally do things in higher education.

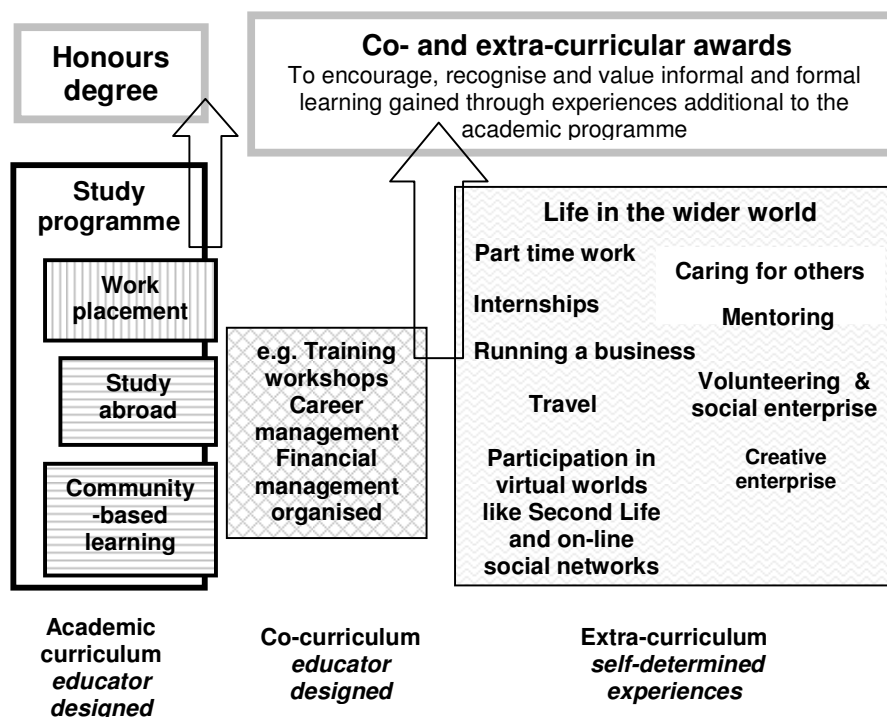
But what if we were to take heed of Rogers' conditions and dare to suggest that we might begin our educational designs from the perspective of a learner's life, and see the learner as the designer and implementer of their own integrated and meaningful life experience? An experience that incorporates formal education as one component of a much richer set of experiences that embrace all the forms of learning and achievement that are necessary to sustain a meaningful life. *A personal curriculum that provides ample scope for acts of personal creativity.*

The concrete expression of this idea translates into a curriculum map (Figure 5) containing three different domains, all of which have the potential to be integrated by a learner into their personalised higher education experience and be recognised and valued by the institution. It comprises:

1. academic curriculum, which may by design integrate real-world work or community-based experiences
2. co-curriculum: educator-designed experiences that may or may not be credit-bearing and for which learners may or may not receive formal recognition
3. extra-curricular experiences that are determined by the learners themselves and constitute all the spaces that lie outside of 1 and 2, above.

Such a curriculum can be created by either designing lifewide dimension into an academic programme (Cowan 2011) or by adding an Award Framework to validate the learning and personal development gained from experiences that are not included in the credit-bearing programme structure (Jackson, et al. 2011). Betts and Jackson (2011) have shown that over 60 higher education institutions in the UK have implemented or are implementing schemes to recognise learning, personal development and achievements gained outside the academic curriculum and that this is an emergent phenomenon.

Figure 5 Lifewide curriculum map. Source: Jackson (2008, 2010, 2011b)



Nurturing students' creative development through the academic curriculum

The academic curriculum – is focused on learning about a subject with heavy reliance on explicit knowledge mediated by teachers whose embodied knowledge and epistemology of practice are appropriate to 'being an academic in a particular disciplinary field'. Students'

experiences in the academic curriculum tend towards mastering theory-rich knowledge through transmission, self-study and sometimes small group study. The emphasis in teaching is on instruction – the transmission of existing explicit knowledge mediated by the teacher. Creative self-expression is heavily constrained by the norms of the academic discipline, creativity is valued in disciplines (see below) and the emphasis here should be on facilitating discussion within discipline communities to reveal the forms of creativity that are valued and the educational designs and forms of teaching, learning environments and assessment that promote such creativity. In general a more process-oriented curriculum that promotes enquiry and problem or project-oriented learning, moves away from a knowledge transmission model towards a discovery model of learning that holds more potential for creative development and creative self-expression. These approaches to learning become even more powerful vehicles for personal and group creativity when they are combined with techniques that encourage design thinking (Jackson and Buining 2010). John Cowan (2006, 2011) offers two *possible* pedagogic answers to the challenge of teaching for creative development.

Through surveys of teachers in a range of disciplines Jackson and Shaw (2006) identified a number of personal qualities, dispositions and capabilities which appear to be associated with creativity regardless of disciplinary, pedagogic or problem working context.

Table 1 Qualities, dispositions and capabilities which academics and practitioners working in particular disciplinary fields associate with being creative (Jackson and Shaw 2006)

Being imaginative – generating new ideas, thinking out of the boxes we normally inhabit, looking beyond the obvious, seeing the world in different ways so that it can be explored and understood better.

Being original. This embodies:

- the *quality of newness* for example: *inventing* and producing new things or doing things no one has done before;
- being *inventive with someone else's ideas or products* – recreation, reconstruction, recontextualization, redefinition, adapting things that have been done before, doing things that have been done before but differently; in performance this is improvisation;
- and, *the idea of significance* – there are different levels and notions of significance but utility and value are integral to the idea.

Having an enquiring disposition, being curious – willing to explore, experiment and take risks i.e. the attitude and motivation to engage in exploration and the ability to search purposefully in appropriate ways in order to find and discover. It is necessary to work in an uncertain world and often requires people to move from the known to the unknown.

Being resourceful – using your knowledge, capability, relationships, powers to persuade and influence, and physical resources to overcome whatever challenge or problems are encountered and to exploit opportunities as they arise.

Being able to combine, connect, synthesise complex and incomplete data/situations/ideas/ contexts in order to see the world freshly/differently to understand it better and solve problems.

Being able to think critically and analytically – its not enough to generate lots of ideas we also have to be able to evaluate them in order to distinguish useful ideas from those that are not so useful and make good decisions about how to act.

Being able to represent ideas and communicate them to others – the capacity to sell ideas and show people possibilities, opportunities and solutions in ways that make sense to them and capture their imagination.

I have invited audiences of higher education teachers on numerous occasions to consider whether these attributes are relevant to being creative in their disciplinary fields and it is clear that the vast

majority of teachers believe this to be the case. My contention is that we can do more to support students' creative development by adopting a wider perspective on the meaning of curriculum: one that also incorporates the Co- and Extra-curricula dimensions of the student experience, one that encourages the integration of learning and personal development across these domains.

Propositions for an imaginative lifewide curriculum

Recently, (Jackson 2010, 2011b) I set out a series of propositions (reproduced below) for an imaginative lifewide curriculum that would help learners develop the multiple forms of knowing, skills, capability, qualities and dispositions necessary for being successful, effective and creatively fulfilled in a complex, uncertain, changing and sometimes disruptive world. These propositions take account of all the potential domains of experience embodied in Figure 2.

An imaginative lifewide curriculum:

1. gives learners the freedom and empowers them to make choices so that they can find deeply satisfying and personally challenging situations that inspire, engage and develop them
2. enables learners to appreciate the significance of being able to deal with situations and see situations as the focus for their personal and social development
3. prepares learners for and gives them experiences of adventuring in uncertain and unfamiliar situations where the contexts and challenges are not known, accepting the risks involved
4. supports learners when they participate in situations that require them to be resilient and enables them to appreciate their own transformation.
5. enables learners to experience, feel and appreciate themselves as knower, maker, player, narrator, enquirer, creator and integrator of all that they know and can do, and enables them to think and act in complex situations
6. encourages learners to be creative, enterprising and resourceful in order to accomplish the things that they and others value
7. enables learners to develop and practise the repertoire of communication and literacy skills they need to be effective in a modern, culturally diverse and pluralistic world
8. enables learners to develop relationships that facilitate collaboration, learning and personal development
9. encourages learners to behave ethically and with social responsibility
10. encourages and enables learners to be wilful, self-directed, self-regulating, self-aware and reflexive so that they develop a keen sense of themselves as designers/authors and developers of their own lives appreciating their learning and developmental needs as they emerge.

Revealing personal creativity through lifewide education

A curriculum that is founded on these principles will provide lots of scope for personal creativity. In the final section of this article I provide a humbling example of a student's attempt to create a more meaningful life : to actualise herself by pushing herself into entirely new contexts with unknown and significant challenges (Figure 2). When you read this account you might consider:

- the will and capabilities required to accomplish what this student valued
- the opportunities for, and manifestations of, her personal creativity

- the holistic concept of learning that can be inferred from the descriptions of multiple rich experiences
- the ways in which she used her creativity embedded in her capability
- the extent to which her personal experiences might be related to the principles for an imaginative curriculum to promote personal creativity
- the potential value of a lifewide concept of education which could encourage, value and recognise these forms of learning and development.

Creating a cathedral!

The volunteer trip I organised was to a small town Mukono in Uganda. This was something I had thought about for years and finally had the means to do. I approached the student's Union and asked whether there was a programme already set up. I was referred to a local non-government organisation called Experience Culture. After contacting the organisation for details, I emailed the entire university asking who wanted to come with me and soon realised just how much I had bitten off! The response was overwhelming and I tried to be as fair as possible while only being able to choose five other students. Once the group was assembled I started to organise the next steps and fundraising. I soon found that while students are generous to causes, it is difficult to stir up enthusiasm towards raising money without pitching the idea in an incendiary manner. It took a lot of planning and long hours often through the night to try and make our fundraisers enticing and fun, while maintaining the focus on the cause itself. We came up with ideas such as the sale of sweets at student events, a decorated bake sale, a pub quiz, a giant dodge-ball tournament and a music concert at the university, all of which spanned over six months. Any money raised was to be a donation towards the Children's home and medical centre we would be working at. This was also a huge challenge to me as I am not naturally outgoing, and I had to really pull myself out of my shell in order to achieve the results I needed. Being the organiser and perceived leader of a group was new to me and extremely daunting; this proved to be one of the most marked times of my life, during which I grew immensely as a person, and developed my confidence through a comforting sense of achievement.

We started work immediately upon our arrival in Uganda, and soon became immersed in a life wholly separate and unique to our own back home. Working so closely with the students, teachers, hospital workers and volunteers was a wonderful experience, and we soon came to view the world through their eyes, with emotional and profound results. The humble and earnest attitude they brought to all aspects of their lives, and the courage they showed in the face of extreme hardships were true testaments to the strength of the human spirit.

At the children's home we taught lessons in and out of the classroom, sports and games, and sex education.At the medical centre we attended and helped out at aids clinics, helped with filing, and went on 'field trips' out into rural communities to teach about HIV/Aids, sex education and health and nutrition. Our donations were spent on a library for the children's home, which we painted ourselves, shoes for the children, and mosquito nets for those in the communities. Seeing families actually living in conditions of extreme poverty and illness exposes a helplessness in a form so raw it takes your strength and composure away more swiftly than you could ever expect or prepare for. To shake the hands of someone who has lost their family, their health, and their independence, while knowing there is only so much you can do to change this, changes you irrevocably. And yet, their strength, and their composure remain not only intact but more strikingly dignified than anyone you would meet under better circumstances.

One particularly draining day of work involved us going out into a community far away to try to obtain support for an 11 year old girl who was HIV-positive, and had walked 41km barefoot to the medical centre to ask for help. We negotiated with her family for four hours to try to get them to provide shelter and food for her in order for her to receive drug treatment from the medical centre. It was entirely surreal to be sitting under a tree in the African sun, fighting for someone's chance of survival, with the desperation and urgency of the conversation all too apparent. This drawn out and highly strung affair was absolutely worth it when they finally agreed, ultimately saving her life. I have since been co-

sponsoring her schooling fees and trying to ensure her welfare from a distance, which requires careful budgeting and communication with our contacts. The knowledge that we can help at least one person in this way is something I cling to when it feels that we are just one drop in an ever-present ocean of suffering that often threatens to overwhelm us.

These experiences we had in Uganda spurred me on to try and make a bigger difference, and to sustain what we had started. I began compiling an education pack which would include information on sex education, HIV/Aids, health and nutrition when possible, and simple translations from English to Ugandan as well as simple maths sums such as calculating monetary transactions. The idea was to make these packs durable and simple, so that one literate worker or volunteer from the medical centre could go out into the communities and teach it to large groups.

Upon arriving back in England I organised a book drive parallel to one being held by the civic council, to try and gather suitable children's books for the new library at the Children's home. This required good advertising, such as printing and putting up posters around the campus, promoting it before lectures, arranging pick-ups and drop-offs and setting up boxes around the university. I plan to raise more money to send to trusted contacts at the school so that they will be able to buy local books for the children, but by sending books from England I hope to help introduce different perspectives and ideals to the children, and lend a new realm of imagination to their learning.

In my second year at university I set up the volunteering society with my sister. Pioneering this society was daunting to say the least, with every step unpaved, and layers of bureaucracy to manoeuvre past. We held an AGM to elect a committee, and soon began planning events and ways to draw students in and promote volunteering. Our original goal was to keep raising money for different communities in and around the town in Uganda, organise local volunteering opportunities for students, and send another group out to Uganda in the summer in addition to a volunteer trip to Thailand to work with children in slums and on an anti-trafficking project. This proved extremely trying, as restrictions disallowed us from raising money for any charity or organisation ourselves, and also as there were insurance restrictions on overseas university trips. As a result, we concentrated on local volunteering, and brought students together to participate in events such as 'Swim for the children', 'Tree O'Clock', and various YMCA overnight events among others. We planned the overseas trips on our own without the support other societies were able to lean on, and tried to prepare the students going on them as best we could by creating information booklets. These contained details on the respective languages and cultures of each destination, the projects they would be undertaking, helpful phrases and tips, and health and travel advice.

I had not anticipated the immense amount of time required to run a society and plan events on this scale, and it is a credit to key members of the committee whose hard work and encouragement are really appreciated. Getting students involved in events that are purely voluntary is no easy task, and the skills I learnt through attempting this are truly invaluable. It took perseverance and optimism to make many of the events happen, and an incredible amount of committed time. Though there were numerous moments when I felt disheartened or burnt-out, the knowledge that we have started something to benefit others, which will carry on even after we leave university honestly makes it completely worth the effort.

I cannot fully explain the feeling of wholeness that accompanies helping someone in a significant way. Every new experience adds to my person, and expands or alters my perspectives. I feel that it has helped me to grow in so many ways, especially in terms of confidence and my capabilities for dealing with unfamiliar situations and to create new opportunities for myself and others. I feel spurred on to continue what we started and more, and truly believe that I am now much better equipped to achieve these goals. Through the various activities I have undertaken while at university I have shown an improved understanding and insight into myself, and others. I have also acquired skills such as time management, the ability to communicate ideas to other people, and very importantly, the outlook that while an idea may start as just an idea, or may seem like just a drop in a vast ocean, it can manifest itself as a wonderful compilation of events; a tidal wave whose ripple effects extend continuously outwards.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gECPBQ3J_PU&feature=player_embedded

A story of self-actualisation through contribution and invention

This very personal story reveals the value in adopting a lifewide concept of education to enable the recognition of complex learning, personal developments and achievements that learners gain through experiences beyond the academic curriculum. The story shows how one student has connected the lifewide experiences she has created (which includes but extends beyond her formal education) in a meaningful way to create her lifelong journey. The story illustrates the powerful synergy between an individual's lifewide learning and their development as the person they want to be and ultimately become. The choices she has made about how to live her life have not only helped her become this person, they are helping her achieve her ambition of becoming a doctor. In short she is actualising herself to become her potentialities (Rogers 1961).

This story also reveals how the choices made are strongly influenced by the individual's own values and how the individual's experiences and their interpretations of situations in their experiences reinforce these values. Through the choices she has made she has found 'deeply satisfying and personally challenging situations [to] inspire, engage and develop herself'. Indeed, within this story we can see all the principles outlined above for an imaginative curriculum being enacted.

The story illustrates that creative acts often involve collaboration: an individual's power to make a difference is amplified by the people they are able to persuade to join them in their enterprise.

The student's willingness to put herself into new and unfamiliar even risky situations where neither the contexts or the challenges are known, results in an environment where she cannot simply replicate what she already knew and understood. She had to learn quickly to create new understanding (mini-c creativity) through her lived experience and be inventive and adaptive in culturally unfamiliar contexts in order to achieve the things she valued (little-c). The power of this set of learning experiences manifests itself in this person's preparedness to engage with complex uncertainty, making informed, insightful, and sometimes emotionally engaged choices about what to do or try to do next.

We can see in the outcomes, many opportunities for her creativity and resourcefulness which brought new and meaningful things into existence including: organising the volunteering trip to Uganda and raising the funds to go; participating in the day to day work in Uganda and dealing with complex situations which emerged such in helping the young HIV-positive girl and starting up a new student society when returning to University in order to continue to make a difference and have an impact on the lives of the people in Mukono and the students at the university.

Her personal little-c creativity was undoubtedly embedded in these acts and it might be argued that the net effect of her work on the people of Mukono and students at the university who are continuing the work that she had begun, contained elements of creativity that were significant in influencing others. Her legacy is tangible and sustainable. Since establishing the volunteering society four other groups of students have visited Mukono and made their contributions to this community. If the Mukono project is considered to be a domain of activity then perhaps we might justifiably say that the scale of significance of her inventive creativity is equivalent to the Pro-C impact of Kaufman and Beghetto (2009).

Finally, this very personal story reveals her commitment to contributing and giving so that others may benefit in doing so she added value to her own life and became the person she wanted to be. This story, and many others we have encountered should fill us with optimism that our students are **creating their own education** in order to become the people they want to become and in doing so they are making a positive and creative contribution to the world around them. Surely, it is within the means and moral purpose of our higher education system to support, recognise and value this most fundamental and useful human enterprise?

Visit <http://lifewideeducation.co.uk/> for copies of this article and more information about lifewide education.

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