



The Open Learning Paradigm at Learnlife

Overview

What do you want to know? How do you want to get there?

These are simple questions, but the truth is that they are rarely (if ever) asked in traditional, mainstream education. The curriculum is set, learning goals preplanned, and lessons scripted out for the day ahead. So where, in all this, are learners supposed to express voice and choice? Where can they hone the skills to construct new knowledge, iterate and adapt, and reflect on their own learning? The world ahead is uncertain and we need future generations to understand how to learn when they are outside the traditional boundaries of a learning environment. Self-directed learning is when a person knows how to organise their own learning, set their own goals and find out important things about themselves as they work towards them. Imagine you could start again. Instead of tinkering at the edges of education, what would it look like if we started anew? How would we do this?

In a world of incredible advances in neuroscience, cognitive behaviour, learning design, psychology, well-being and so much more, the evidence and experience is there to co-create with learners the most effective environment for purposeful, engaging learning.

Aggregating this research and updating it through continuous reflection and feedback, has led to the development of the Learning Paradigm we use at Learnlife. This paradigm does not *belong* to Learnlife, but is both a product of and a service to our learning community.

The Learning Paradigm not only evolves based on rigorous research, but also as a result of the continuous input of learners, Learning Guides, and over 800 thought leaders from more than 80 countries in the [Learnlife Alliance](#).

The term *living roadmap* is an apt one to describe the Learning Paradigm, for while the destination is always the same - to support learners to become self-determined, purpose-lead and empowered- the route evolves, updates and refreshes. The world never stays the same, and any learning designed to meet that world should not be static.

The paradigm is made up of 21 elements of learning innovation; each of which supports a transition to a refreshed, updated approach to learning which can be sustained in the face of an uncertain and fluid environment. These 21 elements are

clustered in three phases: preparing the community to learn, implementing the model, and sustaining the model.



In this Article

- What is a learning paradigm and why do we need one?
- How the learning paradigm looks and works
- How we use the learning paradigm at Learnlife

What is a learning paradigm and why do we need one?

Words are very important, and should be carefully chosen. A word can reflect the nuance of our thoughts, the values we hold, and the way we frame the concept. Traditional education uses words like “curriculum”, which comes from the Latin *curre* meaning *to run*. The noun *curriculum* [literally means](#) *racecourse*.

This racecourse has a fixed start and end point, where learners are rated on their performance using static measurements. This approach to education has its roots in the industrial revolution and even in the Prussian military, where it was decided that learners should follow a set path through learning, and be obedient to instruction.



Change to this model has come, but they are all variations on the same basic principle of a predetermined learning pathway which fails to take into account an individual's passion and purpose. Fixed schedules, learning set content within four walls.

Many learners have come through this model and been told by grades and numbers that they are less than others. Many have failed to find support in exploring their passions, because this did not fit the model. The rich and beautiful diversity of a generation of learners often failed to find their place in a one dimensional model where we were all asked to run the same race in the same way.

A [new Learning Paradigm](#) is necessary because tinkering at the edges is not enough. A paradigm is not a racecourse, but is a *pattern* of elements which can be used when needed, adapted, updated and which coalesce around the learners as they determine their own pathway.

A learning paradigm is permeable, so rather than being set in stone, it is a living roadmap that learning communities can use, and can also contribute to. This symbiotic relationship is far more in keeping with a modern world of interdependence, where we do not strive to best others in return for arbitrary rewards, but to develop ourselves and to fall in love with the process.

How a learning paradigm looks and works?

The Learning Paradigm at Learnlife contains 21 elements in 3 clusters.

Because the learning paradigm is a living thing, it is essentially about growth and change. Before making change, however, we need to step back and consider what is important to us. This is what the first cluster is all about.

This is where we house our vision, values and purpose, and central beliefs around the importance of a growth mindset, and a positive learning culture with strong relationships. Here is the foundation to everything else, where we decide as a community what is important to us, and what we stand for.

Upon that foundation is our second cluster, which houses 7 elements related to implementing the model. Personal learning is at the heart of this, where we design an environment that supports an agile dynamic between learner-directed learning and group learning. Where do we come together, where do we create more personal space for individuals, and how do we do this while supporting and celebrating diversity?



To answer these questions, we also bring in research and input on the most appropriate and powerful learning methodologies, ensuring that well-being is always a priority, and that the model adapts to online, blended or home learning environments.

In the implementation cluster we set out the competencies that can be developed to help learners flourish in an increasingly uncertain world, and build in rigorous 360-degree feedback to ensure a healthy supportive culture of reflection.

Our final cluster addresses how we can sustain this model. The focus of this cluster falls largely on building change into the heart of our approach, so there is no single point of failure. For example, if we build learning around a specific technology which then becomes obsolete or redundant, the learning itself can be adversely impacted.

Instead, the 7 elements in this cluster help to build this adaptive and sustainable culture of learning. This includes how we support our learning guides to develop their skills and experience, how we support learners to evidence their learning in a way that fits a modern world; through a learning vitae. We also address how our model connects to wider societal and interpersonal contexts; ensuring learners are prepared to contribute positively to the world as the best versions of themselves. How do we resource this learning, and how can technology play a supporting role?

How we use the learning paradigm at Learnlife?

At Learnlife the 21 elements that form the Learning Paradigm are used to inform, reflect, benchmark and challenge our thinking and practice. Learning is complex, because the world and the people who inhabit it are complex, and so we need to find ways of understanding and communicating that complexity.

Our learning community has co-created the learning paradigm to show how all the elements of learning fit together, in a visual and coherent way. This helps us work effectively with parents, learners, thought leaders, employers and many others, to zoom in on the areas and aspects that most concern them.

Because the learning paradigm is responsive to up-to-date evidence, our learning community can use it with confidence, to shape learning, develop approaches, design projects, launch initiatives and stimulate discussion.

The beauty of a co-created learning paradigm is that everyone is authentically part of its creation, and can therefore see themselves represented within it. This is as close as we come to a shared sense of understanding of what matters to us in our learning journey, without crossing the line into fixed and static thinking.



There is a strong sense of supportive structure without excluding some and favouring others. There is a pattern to what we do, without hemming learners into a space where they cannot explore who they are and what their ikigai is.

In Summary...

A learning paradigm is a living roadmap to better learning, which is resilient to change by virtue of its inbuilt adaptive structure. By responding to evidence-based research practice, and supporting our broad learning community to shape our approach, we ensure room for everyone.

A learning paradigm is not a curriculum because life is not a race, and our objectives are personal and not fixed static points determined by others without our voice and choice.

By learning in an adaptive environment, learners experience the joy of the process of lifelong learning, as well as finding out who they are and that what they have to offer is of value to the community around them.

Perhaps most importantly, the learning paradigm provides a clear vision to unite a learning community around the best way forward. Within this model, learners can direct their own learning, to help develop the competences they really need for a world where we need empathetic, creative, resilient and purpose-driven individuals to help us face the challenges of automation, climate breakdown, population growth and so much more.

Our Blogs on Learning Paradigm

- [A New Learning Paradigm](#)
- [Change in our Education System Begins on Day One](#)
- [Time to Think Differently](#)
- [Learning Alliance: A Movement to Deliver Educational Change](#)

Our Programmes

- [Primary Programmes](#)
- [Secondary Programmes](#)
- [Home Hub](#)
- [Community Programmes](#)



Elements of the Learning Paradigm

- [The 21 Elements of the Learning Paradigm](#)

Sources

- [20 Steps Towards More Self-Directed Learning | InformED](#)
- [Education and the Fourth Industrial Revolution | by Graham Brown-Martin | regenerative.global | Medium](#)
- [A culture that promotes learning](#)
- [Integrating 21st century skills into education systems: From rhetoric to reality](#)
- [Framework of Competencies/Subcompetencies | Center for Curriculum Redesign](#)