

Module 2 Topic 3: Encouraging the Individual to follow a Lifetime of Learning:

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Topic Description:

This topic provides a blueprint to encourage lifelong learning through the development of a lifelong learning action plan. The plan itself encourages the development of self-analysis and self-awareness through a series of exercises leading up to the development of the plan itself. Such methods are used widely in industry to foster and formalise the habit of learning in employees, but this plan has been adapted to suit a more general audience. It expands the potential learner's horizons into community, home, leisure and personal life. Before using it however the individual should have gone through the Learning Audit process described in Topic 2 lesson 2 of this module.

Its effect will vary widely depending on learner motivation, learner awareness, learner maturity and the skill of the learning adviser, even where or whether such a person exists.

Topic Objective:

To present a method by which learners can identify their own learning needs through a series of learner-focussed exercises and then draw up a learning action plan which will enable them to act upon those new personal insights'

Target Audience

There are a variety of target audiences for this module. Initially there are the local government professionals, elected representatives and decision-makers who will need to see the importance of learning as a generator of wealth and stability and implement plans to bring learning to the whole community. Secondly there are those members of the community, workers, educators and volunteers, who exist to activate and enlarge the educational process in ways that are not always in the book - Parents, Guardians, Doctors, Lawyers, Counsellors, Councillors, Scout and Guide leaders, Political and Religious Leaders and many others in the community. These are the people who will need to apply the tools and techniques described and move the wheel of education in a forward direction.

Lesson 2.3.1 Constructing a personal learning action plan

Lesson focus:

This lesson focuses upon the construction of a personal learning action plan through personal awareness exercises. These should normally be carried out by a trained Learning Counsellor, but the methodologies described below are shown for information sake and can be administered by a sympathetic educator.

For certain people eg those who are coming from a strongly non-learning background, they should also be preceded by a Learning Requirements Audit described in Topic 2, lesson 2 of this module. Please note that the processes described below cannot be rushed for many learners. Although these sequential exercise are given as examples, the process of putting together a successful personal learning plan for a learner can take anything from one week to several months. The learner should be ready to commit to learning by the end of the process. In effect this is the beginning of a process that will be carried out over several weeks in their own time and the purpose of this lesson is to initiate it.

Lesson Objective:

To show one model of how a Personal Learning Action Plan is put together.

Suggestions for Learning Leaders

NB the completion of these exercises will take well beyond the timeframe of one lesson. If all the exercises are completed one after the other, with discussion time there are between 4 and 5 lessons.

1. Ask the class who has a personal learning action plan. If some say yes explore what they mean by that. Does it give precisely what, where, when, who from and how they will learn specific things? Does it contain provision for non-career matters, home, life, leisure, personal development, family? Point out that the model about to be studied is a very comprehensive process aimed at reluctant learners.
2. Distribute item 1 of the toolkit and discuss in terms of where such a poster might be posted and how effective it might be.
3. Divide the class into pairs and enable them to carry out the instructions in toolbox 2 and 3 by distributing the paperwork.. Be sure to read them yourself so that you can offer help where it is needed.
4. In plenary initiate a discussion on this process.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL LEARNING PLAN?

| | A PERSONAL LEARNING PLAN WILL HELP YOU TO: |
|----------|---|
| 1 | MEET THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE |
| | |
| 2 | UNDERSTAND YOUR LEARNING NEEDS |
| | |
| 3 | DEVELOP YOUR OWN POTENTIAL |
| | |
| 4 | GIVE A FOCUS TO YOUR LIFE |
| | |
| 5 | SWITCH YOUR BRAIN ON |
| | |
| 6 | IMPROVE YOUR CREATIVITY |
| | |
| 7 | ENRICH YOUR SELF-RESPECT |
| | |
| 8 | RELEASE YOUR EARNING POWER |
| | |
| 9 | INSPIRE YOUR FAMILY |
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WHY NOT DEVELOP ONE THIS WEEK?

Toolbox item 2 (2 sheets)

Your Personal Learning Plan

It's your life - Take Control of it

‘Learning is the most natural human condition’ (Written on the wall of a car plant)

By the Year 2000, everyone will need to be educated to the level of semi- literacy of the average university graduate. This is the minimum survival level of the human race (Arthur C Clarke (1963))

This Personal Learning Plan has been developed to help people, whoever and wherever they are, to create their own better future through learning,

Toolbox Item 2 (contd)

Introduction - some questions and answers

What is your Personal Learning Plan?

Your plan is a way for you to set your own personal targets and record your achievements. It is a practical tool to help you realise your dreams and achieve your ambitions in life, in leisure and in work.

There are Three parts to this guide

☒ Assembling your Learning Needs and Desires – Putting your personal learning goals into words

☒ Making Your Personal Learning Plan

☒ Making it Work – ideas to keep things going

What do I have to do?

You can complete a Personal Learning Plan with a Learning Counsellor (preferred) or on your own. As you work through this guide you will be encouraged to reflect upon your life, your work and your leisure, and consider any changes you may like to make. We have left spaces for you to jot down ideas or thoughts as they occur to you. You may decide to let these incubate in your mind or deal with them straight away. You might want to re-write what you have written several times.

How long this takes is up to you. You may complete part 1 in a day or so, and you may want to take longer with the other parts so that you get it right. For part 3 this can be as long as you like but it's better to have checkpoints - for example every birthday of a member of your family - to see how you are doing. You can share this with other members of your family or use the help of someone who can stimulate you to keep up with your schedule (a mentor or Learning Counsellor) - perhaps even several people.

But remember, your personal learning plan is not written in concrete to be slavishly adhered to. Other learning pathways may intervene or you may change your mind. But the only person who can make the decision to learn in the first place is yourself.

Learning can, and should, be enjoyable. So enjoy it! It can certainly be profitable, whether you measure

that in terms of finance or in the enrichment of you personally. It doesn't matter what age you are. Learning is something we can all do and something we can all benefit from.

Don't rush - there are no prizes for finishing your plan quickly. But there are great prizes for making a commitment to carry it out, this year, next year, in the years to come.

Why do I need a Personal Learning Plan?

Think about it - most things of importance that you have achieved in your life are because you learned something. - for example learning to talk, learning to walk, learning to make a meal, learning for earning, learning to drive a car, learning to pray – a hundred little things which make the big picture that is you.

Often these were not as a result of going on a course or in formal instruction - you have learned a lot through trial and error, or by experience, or by watching and listening to others. What you did was to take personal control of your own learning, usually without realising it.

Exercise 1

As a start, to get the mental juices going, Just jot down here four of the things which you personally have learned informally (ie with no formal lessons) during your lifetime.

Compare your list with a partner.

Exercise 2

From time to time you have had to build upon that learning to change direction or to achieve a new skill or to make something else happen. Can you think of a few examples of that?

Again compare with a friend or partner.

Sometimes the many things that happen in a busy life crowd in upon us and become a confused blur. Every now and then we have to take stock of where we are, what we are, who we are and how we intend to meet the future.

The Personal Learning Plan helps us to do that - to get some things into focus, to re-skill ourselves, to prepare for the next phase of our lives - or simply to develop personal confidence and give us a few ideas on how to spend our time profitably and with pleasure.

This plan will remind you of

- ☒ What you have learned and achieved
- ☒ What you have enjoyed learning
- ☒ What you have taken a pride in achieving
- ☒ What you can do now that you couldn't do before

By completing it you will be putting more into your life to get more out of it.

Starting the Process

In the rest of this section you'll be analysing some of things you have done in your life which have caused you to be who you are. Most of it is connected with learning. Think about it! We learn for a purpose - to achieve something we want to achieve. The more we want to achieve something the more effort we are prepared to put into our learning.

As children we learned easily and without even knowing that we were learning. It's a natural human condition. Later in life we get more claims on our attention and sometimes our will to learn more diminishes. It can be because of bad experiences in the past, a lack of time and energy or a lack of self-confidence.

But we never stop learning unless we choose to. And often the more we learn, the more we want to learn more, even if it's just mastering the instructions for working the video recorder. So here goes. - your

Personal Learning Plan starts here.

Section 1 - Assembling your Learning Needs and Desires

Part 1 - Your Learning Experiences

a) Your working life - make a list of your current skills that enabled you to carry out your past and, if relevant, your present work or profession. If you have never had a job ignore this question.

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.....

b) Your non-working Life - make a list of your sports, hobbies and interests and the skills and knowledge you need to carry them out - include home interests such as bringing up children, household jobs
Hobbies, Interests, Skills

_____ - _____

_____ - _____

c) If you have a learning counsellor or mentor or even just a friend describe several of these with him/her, extracting the additional knowledge and skills you haven't remembered to put down.

Part 2 Becoming what you want to be

In this part we are examining the more specific skills, talents and knowledge which will allow you to achieve your quality of life. They may be related to

☐ personal development - a new language, a new skill

☐ home life - a new interest, a new skill

☐ work - a new competence, a new job

or any of the categories in the previous table.

And they may involve

☐ acquiring a new skill (e.g. cooking, computer literacy etc)

☐ acquiring a new subject knowledge (e.g. history, geography, maths)

☐ developing new attitudes and values (e.g. self-reliance, inner peace etc)

☐ acquiring new experiences (eg foreign travel, new relationships)

b) Making your list

Here is where you do some personal thinking. Doing a personal brainstorm

You'll see a Learning Planner on the next page. Just complete column 2 to begin with. On it make a list of the things you feel you would want to learn and the skills you would want to acquire in the next five years to enrich yourself in every way. It may not be complete.

Don't hold back - make it as complete as you can with all the things you have ever wanted to learn - we'll refine the list later, Inevitably there will be some overlap between the categories. Use the second column of the planner and use the categories in column one to guide you.

Include the things you are already learning and doing and which require further learning.

After you have completed your list - you may want to think about this a little more about these - so take a break. You may wish to discuss this with others - relatives, friends, workmates.

You need to make this as complete as possible for the next 5 years - and you need to get this right for the further planning process.

c) So think about it again and take into account the following - add to it if necessary.

☐ What other people have said you are good at

☐ Things you know you can do and always wanted to prove

☐ Things you've always wanted to learn but could never find the time

☐ Skills you've always wanted to acquire - personal, social etc

☐ Things which you feel you are not good at and need to improve upon. Try to add at least one of these to each section . If you need more space for some categories use that set aside for others.

Your personal learning Planner

| Category | Learning topic/skill | Type | Priority | time | how | Q | Mentor | Where |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|------|----------|------|-----|---|--------|-------|
| To enhance your family life | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| To improve work performance | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| For your own personal development | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Improving Sport leisure, hobby | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| To contribute to local community | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| For the world at large | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |

Toolbox item 9 (2 pages)

Part 3 - Analysing your list

You can of course add to or subtract the topics from this list as you wish but let's look more closely at what you have there. You may find the notes in Part 4 useful

a) What sort of learning is it?

First you'll need to decide whether this is something you want to learn to gain more knowledge as a topic or a personal skill or an experience. So in column three (type) write down

S - if this is a personal skill you want to acquire

K - if it is more personal knowledge you need

B - if it is both

E - if it is an experience you want to have or a service you want to provide (e.g become a learning counsellor or mentor, serve the community etc)

Doing this exercise may prompt you to add more topics - feel free.

b) Assigning Priorities

Not all of it will be urgent, so here is where we start to assign some priorities. Complete column 4 with a number under the following categories

1 = Urgent - I need to learn this as soon as I can

2 = Important for me and I intend to start soon

3 = Important but it can wait until later in the year or next year

4 = Something I'd like to learn to do, but it has low priority and may take up to 5 years to achieve

5 = Might be interesting but very low priority

Again, priorities change and you may wish to re-visit this later.

c) How long will it take?

Some knowledge and skills take longer than others to acquire - In the next column, under time?, write down your estimate (in months) of how long it will take to become proficient and/or knowledgeable in that topic/skill.

d) How can I learn?

There are many ways of studying in the present day. Some learning requires going back to school or college. In the next column insert your preferred method of acquiring this knowledge/skill/experience under the following codes. By this time you will know how you best learn and whether or not you need constant stimulation or are self-disciplined enough to do it yourself.

T = signing up for a formal course at a learning provider

D = finding a distance learning self-study course from a distance learning provider

C = buying a course to study on a computer at home

L = Learning by doing - either by yourself or with another person

S = Self-study yourself - making your own course and doing your own reading

O = One to one paid private tuition (if possible and you can afford it)

G = In an informal group of people doing the same thing

SC = In an electronic study circle networking on the computer

M = a mixture of several of the above

e) Do I need Qualifications?

Now complete the column headed Q - which means do you want a qualification or certificate for this or not.

Use the codes below

D = degree or post- degree level qualification

B = qualification needed but below degree level

C = Certificate of Attendance to say I completed the course

N = No qualification or certificate needed

f) Who can help me learn?

Many people need the stimulus of someone who can help them keep up with their plan - a mentor or a counsellor. Children need the support of parents and teachers. Adults may need the encouragement of family and friends – or even someone unknown to them. A mentor for instance is someone who can provide personal support and encouragement. You would choose him or her depending on the sort of support you want. It doesn't have to be a teacher or even someone knowledgeable about the subject area. It's more important that the mentor knows and cares about you and your learning plan. It should be someone you are comfortable with, respect and someone committed to the idea of lifelong learning.

M = I would appreciate having someone available who I can speak to about general learning matters

T = I would need someone to ring me every now and then to ask me how I'm doing with implementing my plan.

S = I can find my own mentor or counsellor

N = I don't need help for this

g) Where can I find out?

There are a variety of sources of information depending on your location and the country you live in. These are listed below - so look at the list and write down where you think you can obtain the information for the learning you wish to follow.

L = Local library

LP = Local Learning providers

I = Internet

C = Careers Office

J = Job/Employment Centre

E = Your employer

J = The Jamat

P = Newspaper

A = Adult Guidance Centres

CC = Community Centre

CAB = Citizens Advice Bureau

O = other (give it your own code)

There will be others. But in this column write in beside the code where you think you would like to carry out this learning.

Section 4 - Keeping to your plan

Keeping to your plan is of course your responsibility and no-one else can do it for you. But it's also important that you give yourself some support and that you are not afraid or embarrassed to use it.

1. Use your mentor or Learning counsellor frequently - make contact with him/her at least once a week. If you don't ring give him/her permission to ring you to see how you are getting on. Mentors and counsellors are trained to ask the right questions.
2. Review your plan regularly. Take a checkpoint say at least once a month. If you're falling behind it could be for a variety of reasons.
 - a) Your goals were unrealistic - You expected too much of yourself
 - b) Your motivation was low - You couldn't be bothered or you lacked personal will-power or you c) You lacked confidence in yourself - I need more help.
 - d) You didn't have enough time - my time options closed down or I became ill, or I had to see to something else.
 - e) There wasn't the opportunity - the courses weren't there or my family or my manager wouldn't let me f) Your circumstances changed - you got a new job, a new baby, a new house etc
 - g) It was too difficult for you at this stage - you need to start at a lower level.

Whatever the reason, do something about it as soon as you can.

3. Keep your plan updated. If you fall behind amend the end dates. Remember this is not a rigid timetable to be adhered to come what may - it's a guide to help you achieve learning goals which will improve you as a person.
4. Always be at peace with yourself in your learning. If you regard it as a competition you are competing against yourself. Instead try to cooperate with your inner self. There are no prizes for finishing first. There are enormous personal prizes for finishing.
5. Set yourself short-term checkpoint goals to keep an eye on your own progress. Small achievements lead to bigger ones and the cumulative effect is to increase your capacity to learn.
6. Incorporate faster learning techniques into your plan - for example accelerated learning, using the techniques devised from Professor Howard Gardner's research into multiple intelligences, has a proven track record.

7. Never underestimate yourself or your power to learn. You have the most remarkable instrument for learning sitting on your own shoulders. It's yours to use or to ignore.

YOU CAN DO IT! - YOU WILL DO IT! - YOU CAN AND WILL ENJOY DOING IT!

Learning Can be Fun. But only you can make it so.

If you need help contact your Learning Counsellor or Mentor, They are there to support you._