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Snowden, Michael

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Self-Determined Learning (heautagogy) and the Flexible Curriculum

Dr Michael Snowden

University of
HUDDERSFIELD

This presentation:

- Explores the notion of Heautagogy – self determined learning
- Offers a reflection upon a project that promotes the student as an <u>architect</u> of learning: Mentor Assisted Learning and Solution Focussed Teaching and Learning at the "course" level

Flexible learning driven by:

1. The increasing number of students who work alongside their study

2. The need for graduates to have developed flexible 'attributes' that will equip them to live and work productively and constructively in a fluid and complex world.

- Giving learners as many opportunities for study in ways that will prepare them for the future... puts *flexible learning* at the centre of the HE agenda.

See Barnett 2014

- Learning is increasingly concerned with what we do...the development of key skills and abilities in a fluid, changing and contested work place.

- The "21st century is calling for human beings who are themselves flexible, able to respond purposively to new situations and ideas" (Barnett 2014 p.9)

- Those curricula which develop graduates that are "inflexible, unable to respond to strangeness – to the challenges and new experiences that the world presents is short changing its students (Barnett 2014 p.62)

Flexible learning...

1. develops flexible learners who are equipped to manage the complexities, uncertainties and challenges of 21st century life and work.

2. empower learners through offering them greater choice in some, or all of the following:

- **How**
- **What**:
- **When**:
- **Where**:

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Heautagogy...key points:

1. Given the right environment people will learn and can be independent, adopting a humanist stance - e.g. Argyris and Schon; 1974, Knowles; 1983, Carr and Kemmis; 1984 and Stephenson, 1998.

2. An holistic approach to learning – developing new skills and knowledge in developing independent capability and the capacity to question self, values and assumptions...a prospective approach that looks to the future in which knowing how to learn is a fundamental skill (Snowden and Halsall , 2014)

3. Draws upon Heidegger...people make sense of the world around them and generalise form these perceptions, conceptualise and perceive invariance's.

4. People have the potential to learn continuously in real time through interaction with the environment...leading to the development of ideas rather than force fed knowledge – enhancing creativity

5. Accepts intuition an essential part of learning process – embraces action and reflective learning, values experience, draws heavily upon community and societal based learning.

6. Emphasis upon holism, self worth, capability. community and society, learning as opposed to teaching

Key concept

- Student as an **architect** of learning:

Where learning is arranged around activities rather than content – allows content to be context specific

An arranger, exploiter of "spaces." An individual pattern of spaces is created... technology/place/pace/modules/disciplines

Creates their own pattern of ideas and experiences relevant to their own mind and being...designing their learning

SO...began "our" journey

- At course level...A shift in thinking... towards heautagogy will enable the learner (with the support of **MAL** and **SFT**) to develop space - promoting the learner as an **architect** of learning, and a cultural act that enables students to learn about the nature of understanding and their role in making knowledge, that inspires professional and social change - SDL

Two Strategies...or the story so far!

- Mentor Assisted Learning
- Solution Focussed approach to Teaching and Learning

Mentorship

- Contribute positively to the undergraduate's experience in Higher Education

- Improves knowledge, performance and skills

- Identity and the notion of "community" of practice

- Emphasis upon mentoring "success and retention"

(Andrews, and Clark, 2011; McCary et al, 2011; Sanders and Higham, 2012; Snowden, 2013; Thomas, 2012)

What is **M**entor **A**ssisted **L**earning?

- A model of learning that applies the principles of mentorship to aid learning development and places the learner at the heart of the learning experience
- Adopts the principles of mentorship and heautagogical learning and the notion of "<u>learning spaces</u>"

Snowden and Halsall 2014

But...what about the affect upon Learning???

MAL:

- Third year student acts as a mentor to a first year student
- Third year "mentored" by graduate
- Matched – age, gender, interests, <u>employment</u>

Data collection:

- 1-1/Focus Group Interview
- Assessment and student survey data

Findings

1. The learning experience and assessment:

- Mentored students mean mark 63% (52%)

- Mentors mean mark 66% (61%)

- Mentors achieved a 0.8% higher VA score than those who did not act as a mentor

- Nil attrition in both groups – (15%/5%)

- 100% Student Satisfaction (80%/90%)

2...the important bit!

- "the best bit about having a mentor was that he really helped me to realise what was important"
- "I liked the way she helped me choose what it was I needed to learn and that her experiences counted"
- "Simon... "made things real"...he explained what the job was all about much better than you (*lecturers*) did"
- "He's really helped me plan what I need to do next year.."
- "The sessions were OK, but I really learned stuff that mattered on my work experience"

- "it was great "cos" I learned what I wanted to learn not what you lot (lecturers) wanted us to learn"
- "It made me who I am, I'm much more decisive and know what it is I want to do"
- " "y" understands what its like to be a student and showed me what was useful for me to learn"
- "my mentor was brilliant, "x" really helped me to understand things at the Centre, she made me feel good about myself"
- "I learn a lot in class, and I enjoy that but what I really like is learning from "N" she really knows her stuff as she's done the job before"

So???

- Promotes reality
- Engaged community focussed learning
- Multi and inter-disciplinary…cross???
- Provides the opportunity to utilise "space" – draw upon the experience and engage within it…harnessing the energy/experience to develop self learning
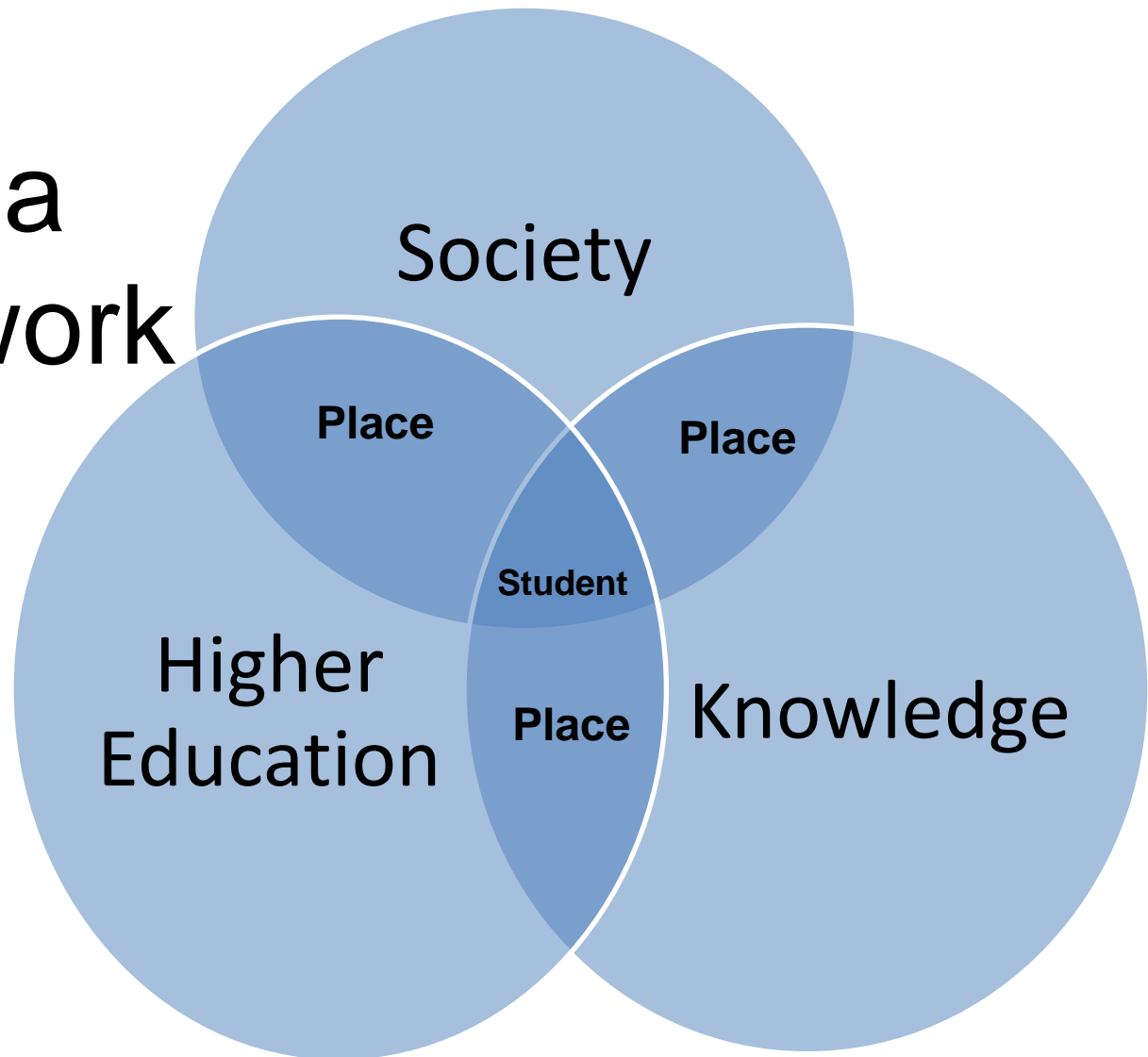
But?

- Mentor selection
- Mentor/mentee matching
- Academic "loss of control" Scary!!!
- Labour intensive
- Recognition

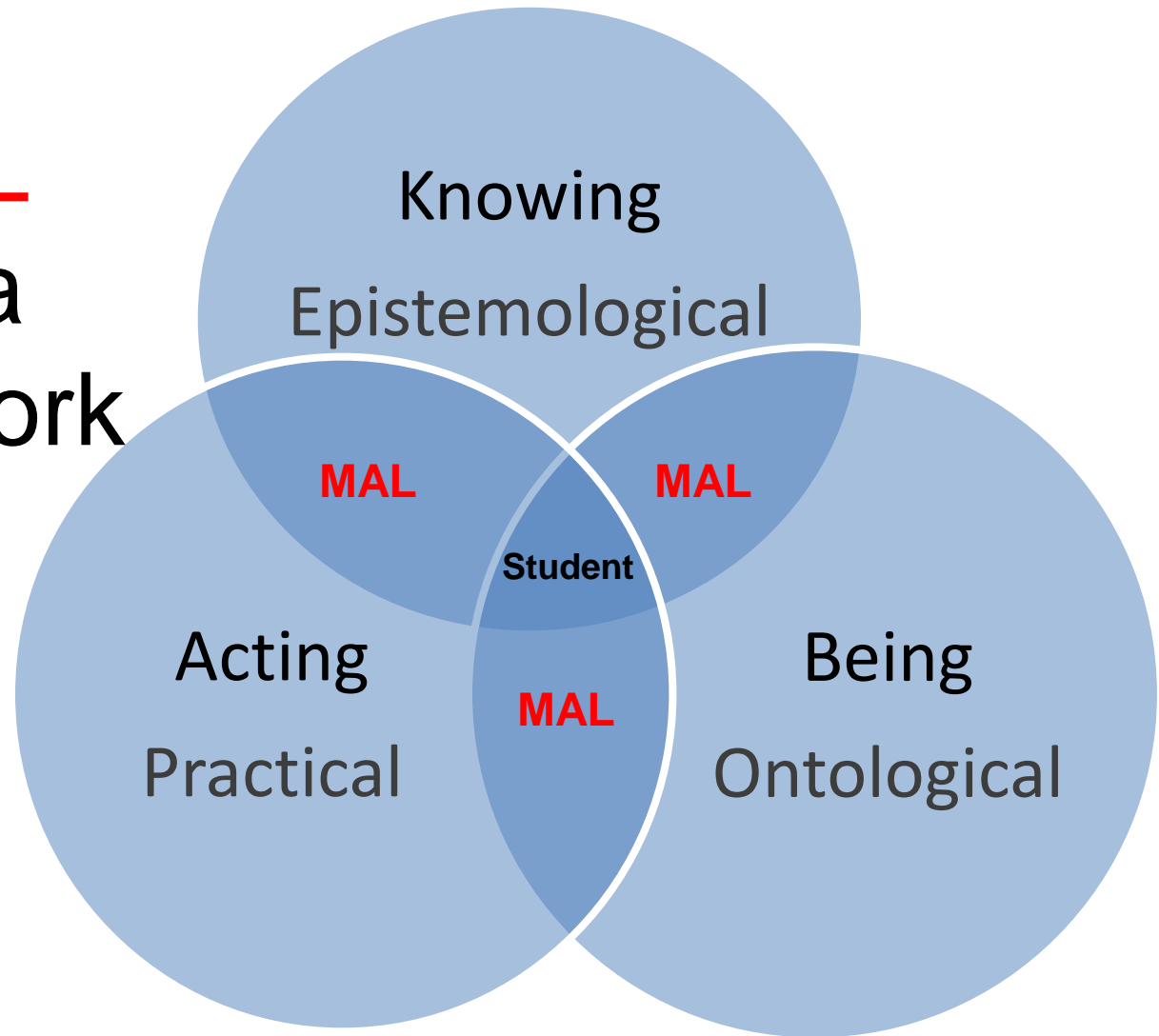# OK...so what goes into this curriculum?

How do we decide??? Or...who decides???

Curricula Framework

Society

Higher Education

Knowledge

Place

Place

Place

Student

Based upon Barnett, 1994; p12

The MAL Curricula Framework

Knowing
Epistemological

MAL

MAL

Student

Acting
Practical

MAL

Being
Ontological

Based upon Barnett and Coate 2005

Successful **M**entor **A**ssisted **L**earning:

- Helps the student inhabit and navigate the various systems and structures of HEI and the community

- Helps the student inhabit their own internalised patterns of reasoning

The "architect"

Promotes the student to become an **architect** of learning:

Where learning is arranged around activities rather than content – allows content to be context specific…

An arranger, of exploiter of external spaces. An individual pattern of spaces is created…

Creates their own pattern of ideas and experiences relevant to their own mind and being…promoting "knowing" and "acting"
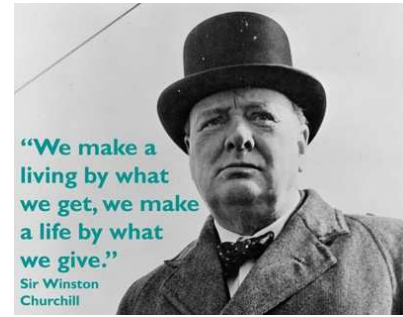
Who Translates this?

Achieved by...

- Constructing solutions rather than dwelling on problems.

- **Solution Focussed** approach - solution-focused rather than problem-focused.

What is **S**olution **F**ocussed **T**eaching and **L**earning?

- Transformative Learning experience (Mezirow)
- Cognitive, affective skills competence
- Conscious competence
- Situated reflection in/on action
- Real World Approach…focussing upon strengths, ability, hopes and thinking in possibilities

How?

- Modelling and meta cognition in action – real world; authentic work based learning; simulation

- Scaffolding – complex solution focussed exercises

- "Unfreezing" affective management

Solution Focused Teaching

- involves three phases:
- joining (*assessing*)
- building *(planning and collaboration)*
- extending *(adaptation and engagement)*

Learning strategies include

- Work based learning
- Mentor assisted learning
- Peer mentorship
- Case study (wiki's)
- Role play
- Solution pursuit exercises
- Risk taking
- Data utilisation

Towards a conclusion:

Tentatively…a shift in thinking towards heautagogy is enabling the learner to develop space - as an **architect** of learning creating their own pattern of ideas and experiences relevant to their own mind and being… promoting the "knowing," "being" and "acting" of an engaging student centered curriculum as part of a distinct community

Is it all rosy???

- Assessment
- Choice
- Conflict
- Motivation
- Preparation
- Demands upon mentors
- Demanding
- vle

Is it worth it?

Yes....

"educators need 'to give serious attention to the potential for radical *educational* innovation, concerned with students who have to make their way in a challenging world.
And for that, space for imaginative educational experiment – and failure – should be opened' (Barnett, 2014, p. 9).