

# Personalised Education and Co-operation – Connections

**Peter Humphreys**

I am a keen proponent of self-managed learning and will reflect on co-operation in this context.

At the Centre for Personalised Education, Personalised Education Now (CPE-PEN), we consider an education in the broadest terms. We critically distinguish between ‘education’ and ‘schooling’. The former is all-embracing, lifelong and made up from formal and informal learning programmes, experiences and engagements of all sorts. It does not rely on prescribed programmes or curricula, or any particular assessments or accreditations. Schooling on the other hand is founded on a rigid, age-stage based progression of teaching and assessment through prescribed curricula. We accept that schooling and formal programmes can be part of an education but would argue that the learner should maintain control in making their own choices and managing their own progression throughout their learning journey with the support of family, friends, teachers and mentors. We talk about this in terms of personalised education. It is derived from the philosophy of autonomous education and centres on learner-managed learning, invitational learning institutions (convivial, non-ageist, non-coercive), the flexible catalogue versions of curriculum, invited rather than uninvited teaching, and assessment at the learner’s request. Its slogan is, “I did it my way – though often in co-operation with other” and it operates within a general democratically-based learning landscape that has the slogan, “alternatives for everybody, all the time”.

Within this context our understandings of co-operative and co-operation are at the heart of our vision of a learning system. At the most fundamental level learner-managed or self-managed learning is actually a co-operative endeavour where the learner agrees, co-operates and ‘co-creates’ his or her learning pathway / learning experiences with those who offer to or who are engaged to support. Agreements and responsibilities may be drawn up. These supporters shift from the current model of teacher ... from “Sage on the stage” to “Guide on the side”.

A learner can of course choose learning with other learners (not necessarily age peers). Learning can be a co-operative exercise where learning and teaching responsibilities are pooled and the group defines its own measures of progress and success. It may or may not invite conventional assessments and accreditation.

At the institutional and setting level, co-operation rather than competition needs to respond to learner needs and aspirations and not the custom and practice of the organisation itself. Competition between settings is an irrelevant distraction. Within the context of learner-led learning, settings need to adopt extremely co-operative and collaborative positions. Examples here might include the necessary accommodations to ensure that Flexischooling can operate. Co-operation between elective home educators/learners and schools/teachers are vital to ensure success.

## The Author

Peter Humphreys is Chair of the Centre for Personalised Education – Personalised Education Now (PEN). He spent 25 years as a Primary teacher and 10 years as Headteacher. Since that time he has worked as an educational consultant covering roles in local authority advisory service and the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency. He currently works for Birmingham City University with teacher trainees, is an Associate Researcher with Futurelab, a member of the West Midlands Coalition for Global Learning Liaison Group. He researches, edits, writes and publishes in the PEN Journal, PEN website and blog.