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ABSTRACT

A project at the University of Calgary attempted to find ways in which university continuing education units could intervene programmatically to enhance professionals' autonomous learning skills and attitudes. The format was a workshop-lab spread over a 5-week period, with the first session of 1.5 days followed by 3 follow-up meetings of 4 hours each, for a total of 24 hours of formal sessions. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Follow-up interviews were conducted 6 months after the workshop. Seven women professionals in human resource development and adult education participated in the project. Among the findings were the following: (1) the learners took charge of what they were going to get out of the program; (2) the seminar had the greatest impact on self-awareness; (3) some of the reported impact seemed to help participants change their behavior; (4) other effects were related to changed self-perception; (5) how much impact occurred could not be measured; (6) all members of the group valued the group climate; and (7) reflection and its role in learning were often referred to as one of the highlights of the workshop. (23 references) (CML)

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ENHANCING PROFESSIONALS' AUTONOMOUS LEARNING:

A REPORT OF AN ACTION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The authors of this paper are interested in continuing professional education, and in how professionals can be helped to develop their own skills as learners. These skills are particularly important for professionals, because they rely on knowledge, judgement and understanding as the major tools of their practice.

As reflected in the literature, the conceptualisation of learning in the professions has generally parallelled that of the study of adult learning. Learning was portrayed as linear and uni-directional, and dominated by what Schon (1987) has called "technical rationality". Only recently has there been recognition that professional learning is poorly understood, and rather than being linear in nature, is more likely to be interactive, developing and wholistic, involving constant reinterpretation of understandings and information, and a high degree of intuition and judgement. Much of this occurs not in formal learning situations, but, using Schon's words again, in the "indeterminate zones of practice."

There has been a growing interest in trying to understand professionals' learning in the workplace. Argyris, Putnam and Smith (1985), Schon (1987), Cervero (1988), and Marsick (1987), are amongst those whose inquiry has focused on such

learning. For those involved in Continuing Professional Education, however, most of these works, while contributing to our understanding of the dynamics of professional learning and daily problem-solving, do not help us understand what we might do differently and hopefully, more effectively, than the maintaining dependency on formal learning institutions for professional development.

The purpose of this paper is to share with other educators our experiences in attempting to find ways in which university continuing education units might intervene programmatically to enhance professionals' autonomous learning skills and attitudes.

The paper reports our preliminary understandings of our experiences. We are continuing our examination of both the data and the literature. We are also generating more data as we interact with our group of learners. It is our expectation that we will be able to provide further findings and implications at the Symposium.

2. DESIGN

2(a) Project Beginnings

The project arose out of a series of conversations between the authors in which we discussed ideas and issues related to

autonomous learning and professional growth. These common interests resulted in a proposal which was submitted to, and eventually funded by, The University of Calgary's Special Projects Fund.

A subsequent literature search revealed that while there was considerable material on self-directed learning, much less existed which linked self-directed learning and professional learning and even less was found which linked self-directed learning, professional learning, and planning and design.

We knew that we were in relatively uncharteded waters, but being acquainted with the works of Boud, Griffin, Argyris, Schon and others and having had previous experience in group facilitation, we proceeded to create our own design. The core of this design was the use of such instruments as Kolb's Learning Style Inventory, Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale, Hogan and Champagne's Personal Style Inventory, and a list of tools and exercises that appeared to be relevant to facilitating the autonomous learning of professionals. The list was drawn from our previous knowledge and experience.

2(b) Format

The eventual format consisted of a workshop-lab spread over a five week period. The first session was an intensive one

and one-half days, followed by three follow-up meetings of four hours each. In total, 24 hours of formal sessions were held.

Lilian Hill facilitated the meetings and Morris Baskett took the role of participant observer. Group members were aware of these arrangements. Urmil Chugh, the research assistant, also participated in the meetings as an observer so that she would be able to understand the context when she was analyzing the data later. From time to time, Morris intervened, primarily as a gatekeeper to ensure that issues were dealt with, and that the group concerns were being met.

Group atmosphere was regarded as important, and much was done to set the appropriate tone. This included books, slogans, music, flowers and candy during the first day. Coffee and tea was available during all sessions and a sandwich lunch was provided for the first meeting. Unfortunately, we were unable to meet in the same room, and the rooms varied in size and comfort. The first meeting was held in a small, cramped, but cozy room. This was also the day when the intensity and sharing seemed the greatest.

2(c) Lab-Workshop Activities

Introductory exercises were designed to mix participants and to alleviate anxieties people normally have when entering a

new learning environment. Following these exercises, our intentions and orientations were introduced, including our commitment to involving the group in jointly carrying out the program.

Participants were then presented with a list of possible activities in the form of a Resource Menu[1]. It was stated that these were the resources the facilitator was prepared to share. Group members were invited to add their own contributions to the list.

The resource menu consisted of the following:

- Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (L.S.I.)
- Personal Style Inventory (P.S.I.)
- Guglielimino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (S.D.L.R.S.)
- Image Learning
- Intuitive Learning, by Dr. Margaret Denis
- Strategies of Action
- Stress, self-concept, and learning
- Farquharson's (1983) Ten Competencies for Learning

Two participants volunteered to present materials with which they were familiar, and these were added to the resource menu:

- Stress, self-concept and learning (one of the participants had expertise in this area and agreed to facilitate this section.

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[1] Available from the authors on request.

- A personal development system based on a synthesis of another participant's study and readings. This included graphic visualisation.

After consulting with the group, a tentative schedule was drawn up, with the proviso that deviations could occur any time the group wished.

In all but the first meeting, the first hour to hour and one-half was spent in discussion of what had gone on in the previous session, or what had been happening in the minds and lives of the participants in between sessions. Often, during these sessions, participants referred to their journals as prompts, and at times read sections from their journals to the group. The intent of this reflection time was to allow group members to integrate their various experiences in and out of the group as it related to their learning as professionals and as individuals.

The Action Demonstration Component.

Initially, we had envisioned that the project would involve a high degree of action research in which participants would participate in the initiation of research questions, data collection, analysis, and conclusions. To some degree, elements of action research remain, and inform the authors' future directions. However, time and energy on the part of

all parties did not permit a totally collaborative investigation as defined by the literature (Skau, 1987).

The collaborative components consisted of sharing resources amongst all members of the group, including the facilitator, the observer and the research assistant, and feeding back to the group data about the group. This latter involved sharing with each other the aggregate results of the Learning Preference Questionnaire, the aggregate scores on the SDLRS, and individual results of the PSI and LSI.

In effect, the result was more collaborative learning than collaborative research. In the end, the authors retained responsibility for data collection and analysis, the difference being that these analyses were shared with the group members in one final round in early 1990.

3. METHODOLOGY

3(a) Data Collection and Analysis

Several instruments were used for data collection. Qualitative data were collected in a number of ways. The workshops were audio-taped. Site observation notes were kept by both authors. Participants were asked to maintain a journal for the duration of the workshop. They were instructed to describe their insights, learnings and problems as they

related to their learning and their staff's learning. At the end of the five-week period, they were asked to review these journals, and to make observations about their learning processes in the right hand column, which they had been asked to leave blank.

These journal entries formed the basis of follow-up interviews which were conducted six months after the end of the workshop. The investigators shared in the task of interviewing, each taking three interviewees, and interviewing one jointly. The authors read each of their interviewee's journals in advance and noted instances where participants seemed to have an insight, commit themselves to future action, or indicated unresolved problems, or puzzles. At the interview, they were given their journals, and asked to read the noted passages. They were then asked "What was happening then?", meaning, what was going on in terms of their emotions, the context, etc., at the time of writing. In most cases, participants were able to recall the incident or the moment easily, and to describe the issue, condition, etc., more fully. Then, they were asked if any change had occurred as it related to the statement, and if a change was indicated, to then describe the nature of the change, and the conditions which brought it about. Thus, we were able to gain a before-after description around significant learning issues, and to ascertain to what they attributed the change.

Often, this method is criticized because subjects reconstruct past conditions in terms of their present perceptions. 'True' recall, it is contended, is not possible. While we acknowledge this possibility, it is worth noting that all participants remarked voluntarily on the ease with which they could recall the event or issue when using the journal as a prompt. As another indicator, at least five of the seven made statements to the researchers which were then discovered to be made later on in the journal (they had not read their journals since they completed the workshop because the investigators were in possession of them).

Examples of journal entries which were probed further are as follows:

Indications of insight:

Whoa!: I see it much better all of a sudden!"

Indication of a future action:

"Now, I'll go back over the decision and confirm it."

Indications of questioning:

"Yet, I don't see the connection."

Analysis of the journal entries and the follow-up interviews observed the normal procedures of coding, memoing, and propositions (Miles and Huberman, 1984) used for analyzing qualitative data. Categories and themes were tentatively developed during site observations and reading of the

journals. By going back and forth between conceptualisation and the data, these concepts and themes were confirmed or revised. Finally, sections of field notes and transcripts were assigned categories and then re-arranged manually under those categories, seeking examples to confirm, disconfirm or extend the conceptualisations.

Further analysis of the arrayed data led to conceptualisations at a more general area level. These are reported in the findings.

As part of the collaborative research approach used in this project, these findings and analyses were presented to the participants and they were asked to comment on the researchers' findings, that is, if these data and understandings 'spoke to' their experience. This not only permitted a validity check, but also served as another loop for reflection about autonomous learning.

3(b) Sample

Invitations were sent to 60 professionals in human resource development and adult education whom the first author knew were in positions to influence the learning of other professionals. Seven registered, and an additional four indicated interest but were unable to participate.

Of these 7, 2 were staff development officers in hospitals, one was a college continuing education department manager, one a senior instructor at a vocational college and chair of the staff development committee, two were private consultants and one a government consultant. All were female. Median age was 43, range 35 to 52. One participant held a Ph.D., three held masters degrees and three held bachelors degrees. Two of the three bachelor degree holders were enrolled in adult education graduate masters programs.

In describing themselves as learners, all descriptors were positive or neutral, ("excited", "auditory learner", "learn by doing".) Self-descriptions of learning weaknesses included "poor self-concept", "low motivation unless topic is perceived as useful", "emotions get in the way", "resent authority". Time, and workload were most often described as external barriers to learning.

3(c) Instrumentation

Four instruments were used during the workshop; a learning preference questionnaire, Learning Style Inventory (Kolb, 1976), the Self Directed Learning Readiness Scale (Guglielmino, 1977), and a Personality Style Inventory (Hogan and Champagne, 1987). These are referred to as LSI, SDLRS and PSI in the following text.

The instruments served a dual purpose. The first was to collect data on the subjects. The second, and equally important to the investigators, was as a tool to assist in the learning of the participants through an action research approach. The use of the instruments for feedback is addressed in the design section of this paper. Here, the absolute results are reported for the reader's scrutiny.

Table I contains the participant scores on the three instruments. The Mean of the first SDLRS testing was 243.00, and the range was from 229 to 257. A second application of the SDLR scale resulted in a mean of 248.33 with a range from 231 to 264. One respondent did not complete the second application. The mean score was aggregately at the 85th Percentile for the first and 88th for the second testing. These scores place all participants in the 'above average' category according to Guglielmino's reported norms. Our notion that this group was self-selecting, and tended to be highly autonomous learners seems confirmed.

Table 1

Participant Scores on SDLRS, LSI, and PSI

Participant	First SDLRS Score	Second SDLRS Score	PSI Type	LSI Quadrant	First Degree
1	229	258	ENFP	Diverger	Nursing
2	234	253	ESFJ	Accommodator	Nursing
3	256		INTJ*	Assimilator	English
4	241	231	ESTJ	Assimilator	English
5	240	249	ENFP	Diverger	Sociology
6	247	235	ENFJ	Diverger	Education
7	254	264	ENFP or ENFJ**	Accommodator	Arts

Mean SDLRS Score: April, 1989 - 243.00
Feb. 1990 - 248.33

* On border of E-I and N-S. After reading the descriptions of types, she selected INTJ.

**On border of P-J.

The above notions were further confirmed in analysis of the learning preference questionnaire which attempted to gain self-descriptions of participant's learning and their learning issues and problems. Their self-descriptions as learners were all positive and reflected the descriptors found in the literature to be associated with characteristics of self-directed learners, for example, "curiosity", "compulsive learner", "get excited", "inquisitive", and "ideas energise."

Kolb's LSI was used both as a descriptive measure of the participants, and as feedback data for the group's learning. As indicated in Table 1, all but the converger quadrant was represented. Three were divergers, and two each were accommodators and assimilators. The results seem fairly consistent with the nature of the participants. (1(a)) It would appear that the tendency toward the concrete or humanities end of the vertical axis was well represented. All of the participants held first degrees in Education, Arts, or Nursing.

Because neither of the authors were licensed to use the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator the PSI was selected instead. PSI parallels MBTI, and uses Jung's (1935) personality types as its base, as does MBTI. No data on reliability or validity were available on PSI, however, because its use was experiential, and absolute scores were not essential, we

decided its use would be the best substitute. The results of the PSI suggest that all were either extroverts or on the border. Again, this seems consistent with the nature of autonomous adult learners.

4. FINDINGS

Three different sets of findings are reported here: data relating to impact of the course; results which inform about the facilitation of the workshop; and insights into the learning dynamics and processes of the participants.

4(a) Impact

Within the paradigm of program planning, it is assumed that the designer of learning events sets learning goals and develops a set of learning activities which will achieve those goals. Even though the authors were cognizant of the flaws of such an approach, and in fact designed the program for flexibility to meet the learners' emergent goals, we were still surprised with the results. As one participant put it during the follow-up interview,

> "...I got a real sense that although you had designed the project and indicated that the learnings would be applied to a work setting...taken back to be shared with other people...it became abundantly clear that people were there for their own purposes and they were going to make sure that their purposes were met."

In effect, this workshop was part of the participants' design, rather than they being part of the program planners' design. Not only did it become clear that the learners had taken charge of what they were going to get out of the program, but also, it became apparent that the Enhancing group was only one of a number of learning experiences which were part of the totality of each learner's experience:

> "Last year, generally there were a lot of things that happened to me in coursework, in my worklife, in my personal life...that came altogether at one time..."

> "I had a course previous to this, and that really started the ball rolling. I was ready for that ball to roll, too."

Given that the workshop was one of a number of experiences in each participant's own learning journey, it would be difficult to assume any direct relation between the course and their own learning and development. However, most did report that the course had an impact on their own learning process. In some cases, the impact was highly utilitarian, and direct. This was the case when participants observed various interventions or heard of new approaches which they could use in other workshops, seminars, or training events.

> "I've tried to adopt some of (a participant's) principles in actually designing (my) learning."

"I used (Kolb) this summer. I was teaching a research course."

Much of the impact of the seminar was around self-awareness. In reading these comments, it should be remembered that the workshop was one of a number of activities in which participants were engaged, all of which converged on the issue at hand. Because these matters are dealt with in more detail in succeeding sections, the quotes are provided to give a flavour typical of the expressions of the participants.

"I now understand my reaction to the learning process a little bit more."

"I've learned that I facilitate better than I teach."

"Because of the course...I am more aware of learning styles and an individual's needs to approach learning from his own perspective, not mine."

Some of the reported impact seemed to help the participants change their actual behaviour, as these quotes suggest:

"There's been some change in how I proceed in my work life..."

"I need to please others less than I used to, and to begin to look after me."

"I'm changing my way of teaching...becoming very aware of what I'm doing...trying to be...learner-centred..."

"That's what I've done (calm down, let go)."

"I still have difficulty (allowing time for reflection), but I'm much more in control now."

"So, I'm not so impatient with (learners) now."

Other impacts seem to relate to the changed self-perception. For example, several spoke of being more comfortable with an issue, or themselves:

"...based on my experience with the workshop and also with some other readings...(I)...feel more comfortable with myself as a learner."

"I'm much more confident about a lot of things."

"...it opened it up for me so I wasn't afraid of looking at it."

"I learned to say I was like that, and now I'm like this.. and not feel foolish."

4(b) Facilitating

Some of the data relate to the manner in which the workshop was designed and facilitated. One of the most apparent issues has been addressed previously. To the participants, the course was a means to pursue a number of their own issues and agendas - both personal and work-related. The focus of the planners, however, was on the course objectives of enhancing professionals' autonomous learning through a two-step process of working with those able to influence other professionals.

In addition to this issue, a number of specific facilitation interventions were commented on by the participants. One was on the climate, which was designed to be as non-threatening, and conducive to open discussion, as possible.

> "...it was the kind of environment where I feel very, very comfortable."

> "Part of that has to do with the way the course was run - the openness of it. The ease of the people. Despite the diversity and style differences."

> "The enhancing group was small enough...and free...there was no mark to it. It just went to my own knowledge about myself."

"There was something about the atmosphere and the listening to everybody...the discussions we had...that was somehow part of the permission-giving..."

The climate, and especially the focus on introspection which occurred in the workshop, was not conducive to all people. For at least one, the post-workshop meetings instituted by some of the group members themselves did not serve the purpose she had hoped for.

"Eventually it (the energy) got wearing. The first couple of times was probably the most exciting, and then there didn't seem to be as many new ideas. So from there on, it tended to go somewhat downhill."

By her own admission, the above individual was more interested in ideas which she could use for her other courses and workshops.

"I was disappointed, because nobody really wanted to talk about ideas...they weren't in that wave length."

Modelling of good facilitative practices was noted by several members.

"This class helped me to accept the fact...that others were learning like me, and that...is O.K.. They looked in control of themselves, had good jobs...all of these good things were happening to them. I thought 'I can be just like them."

"I was giving more credibility to these people and their reflections on their learning. I was consciously listening...because it was subjective and very real that I seemed to absorb a lot from that exchange..."

"Then, listening to what other people did...it was like I needed some models for what to do and where to go."

The facilitators were also modelling certain behaviours which were seen by the participants as useful.

"You were good role models. You didn't take over the class. Kept it going. I never felt there was a lack of framework. You would say, "I have some things here and this is what they are. Will they add to your discussion or not?"

"You did keep watch so that nobody took over. You kept plumbing the group feeling."

"Then I saw the model that you gave. What I've been doing since is refining...continually asking myself...'Am I directing this, or am I allowing the students choices?'"

"That was another thing that happened in our class...you did very little articulating. (You) were summarizing,

referred to the research, so I felt...it wasn't just all our own intuition..."

"You shared how you learn...you walked through how you learned something."

The impact of the modelling seemed to be related to the degree of credibility which the members gave to others. This was best summed in the words of one group member:

"I could have read a variety of these things in a book...but it was almost like a testimonial. You had a real life person who was able to give details and examples about how their head worked."

For at least three members of the group, a spillover was the "unbelievable number of connections", as one member put it. In addition to the post-course support group which continued for a period of time on its own steam, three members also met separately. They continue to keep in touch.

An integral part of the course was the journal writing which participants were asked to do. It is difficult to assess the impact of this exercise on the participants inasmuch as it was all part of a total process. Some of the participant's comments may, however, give a flavour as to the various ways in which the journal served to facilitate their processes.

"By writing it, it forced me to articulate it. I have a lot of questions...they roll around in my head. But if I can write them down, even though I don't make sense a lot of times at the beginning, just that writing somehow helps me to organize it...to clarify it."

"When you told us we had to do this journal, I thought I'd just write whatever came to my head ...because things come out on paper for me..."

We asked specifically about the manner in which reflection time was built into the workshop. All participants except one felt that it was critical. The exception, who defined herself as task-oriented, may have felt that too much time was given to reflection.

"I tend to be task-oriented, so eventually I'd think 'Well, I guess we've had enough of this, so let's get on with it'."

It is interesting to note that this individual (participant 3) was an Assimilator in the Kolb scale (abstract conceptualization and reflective observation) and strong on the "T" (Thinking) in the PSI.

4(c) Learning Processes

The final set of data arising from the journals and the subsequent interviews relates to the processes by which the

members of the workshop learned. It is not claimed here that all of the processes involved have been identified. Some processes may remain unrecognized or unnamed. Nor is it claimed that all of these processes are of equal order, level, or in sequence. Some may be epiphenomenal. The purpose here is to portray as faithfully as we can those processes either perceived directly by the participants or those which appeared to the investigators to be operating.

Reflection was remarked upon often by the interviewees, and, as well, was noted in their journals.

> "...hearing other people talk about it, I was able to scrutinize my own learning."

> "I do not recall a time in my life when I have been so reflective..."

> "...when she said that, it...catalyzed me. Before, I was afraid of it. I hadn't given any, I hadn't articulated what was happening to me. I just had the fear". (of becoming paralysed in front of a class)."

Another participant reflected about reflection in this way:

> "...this past year has been that reflection time after the previous three years (of degree course work).

"I'm even more impacted by this reflection role."

Reflection was often commented upon in the context of time:

"We built reflection time into the workshop. What emerged was their conclusion that they needed time for reflection."

"I needed time to get my own thoughts together."

"Maybe I've had more time for reflection. I've called a moratorium to a lot of things. I'm drifting... that frees me up, makes time free."

Several participants spoke of a process of 'freeing up' or 'letting go'. Sometimes this had to do with a change in life situations. One referred to her recent divorce as instrumental in allowing herself additional time to think and reflect:

"there was an incredible turnaround there...there was that initial freeing up...when I left a marriage."

Some of it had to do with being locked into a number of activities and demands. This same person reported on her continued involvement in a masters degree.

"...but I was still locked into the tightness and structure of being in the program...when that was over, that was a separation too. The calmness and peace that

> I felt after I left my marriage...wasn't complete because I was still caught up in the chaos of course-taking."

The above individual also spoke of freeing up in another sense. One of the participants had explained how one could plan one's own learning by developing a grid that reflected responsibilities and desires and filling in the squares with various tasks that related to those.

> "I didn't do my boxes. I guess I thought, "You're getting too tight again...I resisted it in the freeing up sense..."

Finally, 'freeing up' was used in the sense of letting go of a sense of responsibility over another's learning:

> "...I've learned to back off and let things happen. It's the recognition that there's nothing I can do or say that will change that person other than creating the environment."

Another aspect of this freeing has to do with comparing how one learns to how others learn and giving oneself permission to learn in their own best manner.

> "...being involved in other people's feelings about how they learned and about learning in general...I realized we learn very differently. Although I can gain from another person's description of how they learn, or I can

see similarities, we are different learners, and what is good for someone else isn't necessarily good for me..."

During the five weeks of the workshop, some of the participants had the opportunity to attend a workshop by Stephen Brookfield at a local conference. Brookfield introduced the concept of the 'imposter syndrome', whereby learners in new situations felt that they were imposters in the class, that the other members were f ~ more articulate and capable and it was only a matter of time before they would be revealed as imposters. Discussion of this concept in the Enhancing workshop had a considerable impact on some participants:

"...hearing someone like him say it (imposter syndrome) happened to him was an 'Ah-Hah'. There's part of me for years that felt like an imposter in terms of learning."

Several participants referred to the role experts play in giving legitimation to their thoughts. One of those experts which seemed most powerful and meaningful were the authors of Women's Ways of Knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, Tarule, 1986).

"Women's Ways of Knowing was another milestone. It gave me permission to be the kind of learner I am."

"The book, Women's Ways of Knowing...has been very instrumental in myself beginning to look...at...myself."

"I still need to read it in a book and then I feel like,...my idea is OK...because somebody else said it."

Another context in which freeing up is implied is in association with the confusion surrounding new learning.

"Yes. And the importance of confusion...there is a stage in the learning process where everything is confused, and sometimes you have to wait and let things sift through and fall together, and have patience that it will happen."

The planners of this workshop had intended that participants would gain insight into themselves as learners, thus, the use of such instruments as the SDLRS, LSI, the PSI, and reflection time. The journals and follow-up interviews revealed that for some, these insights were indeed occurring.

"If I can write them down, even though I don't make sense a lot of times at the beginning...just that writing...somehow helps me to organize it, to clarify it."

"Now, I'm probably more aware of why I diverge. Since my involvement with this project, I now understand my reaction to the learning process a little bit more.

"Really wild moments of insight and clarity...making sense of your own learning...really, that's what's happening..."

"As I learn more about Kolb,...feeling (end of the scale)...is so strong in me, and I'm so low on that other scale, the abstract, that it's really difficult. The abstract style is hard work."

Not only were there evidences of insight into self, but there were also indications that participants had gone through a process of thinking about their own thinking and learning processes.

"In the past, I've said I lack discipline...or focus. I gave myself a lot of negative feedback about the way I approach learning. Now, I say nothing's going to change...I accept it and try to make the best of it."

"That's my learning style. I try out new ideas. If they work, I incorporate them. If not, I toss them out and go on to the next one. I have to try it. It's a very hands-on kind of approach."

"I'm able now to pull myself away from what I'm doing and to look at myself from the outside."

"I started to analyze my own thinking. I wasn't afraid of analyzing it any more."

For some, the very act of talking out loud to others, or 'verbalizing' was credited with helping them think through their processes.

"I'm learning over and over how relationships and discussions with people is my strongest and most valuable form of learning."

"I feel so confirmed that I learn through talking...that it's not a waste of my time."

"...this is what helped me...the verbalizing and because I'm so much a reflective observer, don't verbalize enough."

Not only were the participants gaining insight into themselves as learners, they seemed to also positively value their learning approach, or style.

"I now think that I'm a good learner. Before I always felt I was a mediocre learner who just lacked a lot of discipline."

"I'm much more confident about a lot of things."

"I wasn't less than, inferior. I was different. We all were learning."

"...I can trust myself. The way I see things is just as valid a knowledge as the way other people see things."

"I now see I'm more creative because I'm not so disciplined."

"I used to think that nothing I did was credible. But over the years...(I)...recognize that I can do things which can be credible."

"...based upon my experience with the Enhancing group and also with some other reading that I've done...makes me feel more comfortable with myself as a learner."

"...I've always felt there's a level at which I can learn...there's certain things I can learn, and others I can't...this group started doing for me...was making me question when I said 'I can't learn that'. (The Enhancing workshop) made me realize that if there's something I want to learn, I can."

"I'm starting to feel comfortable and confident with my learning style and its strengths."

In some cases, the validation process that was going on involved a re-valuing of an old behaviour, or seeing it in a different, often more positive, light. The behaviour itself wasn't changed.

"...I now can say, well, this is alright, this is a normal part of the learning process, particularly for me."

"In the past...I gave myself a lot of negative feedback about the way I approached learning. Now I accept it and try to make the best of it."

"I'm learning to say I was like that, and now I'm like this...and not feel foolish."

"I always felt that there were learners that were the 'right' learners. This class helped me to accept the fact that others were learning like me and that...is O.K."

"Nothing's changed about my thinking process, but what has changed is about how I feel about it. It's O.K. now."

"I know I'm in a completely different stage from what I was (when she wrote in her journal). I know I feel more comfortable waiting...I can be relaxed while I'm waiting."

"...I'm more comfortable with not (having all the answers).

The process of reaching a different, often deeper, level of understanding about a phenomenon was commented upon by several.

"...sometimes you say 'Well, I knew that'. But, you didn't. You hadn't made sense of it...internalized it. It's the two kinds of knowing."

"As I sit here, theory is becoming real to me. It was a more concrete experience of process. Like I was feeling the process."

The feeling dimension which seems to accompany deeper understanding was also noted by another participant. She wrote in her journal:

"I used LSI in teaching (before). But, only (now) did I really understand the significance."

Asked to elaborate on that statement six months later, she replied:

> "It's when I'd experienced it in this class...that put the extra dimension in it that gave the understanding...It was the dimension of feeling. I had the information. But I didn't have the understanding that comes from adding that affective part of it."

Reflecting, gaining insight into oneself, and validating oneself and one's learning processes did not occur solely because of the Enhancing project nor did it occur in isolation. Participants brought with them their outside experiences and activities, and carried their experiences in the Enhancing group back. In fact, one of the real values seemed to be that people were dealing with real-life experiences in and out of the Enhancing group, and this added the concreteness necessary to gain deeper meaning and understanding.

> "I also talked to other people outside the project while it was happening, and since...and some of the reading I've done, and hearing Brookfield."

One of the participants indicated in the follow-up interview that she had been involved in several work groups during the time the course was going on:

"What I was trying to do was look critically at my participation in groups. Also, to see if the things I was learning from the one could be applied to the other situation."

"I was taking one class (the Enhancing group) and also giving one. That's why I was analyzing so much. Where I'm the facilitator tomorrow night."

"That's the personal and the courses. Every course I teach, I'm learning about either myself and a problem I'm having in my personal life...or with my family. And, I come to some answers every time I teach a course...learning is not school. Learning is life!"

Another participant recounted how a group which she was facilitating helped her to gain deeper understandings about learning:

"Again, it was another visible demonstration of what was happening to a group of people...An awful lot of things became apparent in terms of people learning. So, I was still going through that...and it was one flash after another...of seeing the dynamics of this group, and trying to make some sense of it...but in a very real-life way. I'd only been exposed to theory before."

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5(a) Implications of Impact Data

It is apparent that the project did have some effect on the participants. We cannot measure how much impact occurred, and given that this was one of a number of experiences which were contributing to the participants' own, unique learning agendas, it would probably be impossible to provide any quantitative measure of the impact of the Enhancing experience.

The results do remind us, however, that even though the authors espouse a learning-from -the learner's perspective, to some degree our theory-in-use reflects a program planning mindset. This mindset, we contend, is not only ours personally, but one which pervades e conventional wisdom of Continuing Professional Education. For example, Houle (1980) gives little press to developing professional learning from a mathetics perspective, and still portrays professional learning as a programme planning problem. The classic Tylerian model of curriculum planning continues to dominate the field of adult education (Apps, 1979). We are further reminded that attempts to facilitate professionals' autonomous learning need to take into account the real-world networks which adult learners experience in any learning context. Thus, in the case of the Enhancing group, learners were not

only developing insights and understandings in the workshop, and taking them to other settings, but they were also bringing their experiences in these other settings into the workshop. Each was contributing to, and possibly at times conflicting with the other. Attention needs to be given to ways in which these learning processes can be raised to a conscious level, and utilized in professional learning.

In some cases, one could trace the direct transfer of an experience in the Enhancing group to some other setting. This most often occurred with group exercises which participants noted and experimented with in classes or training seminars which they were leading. In terms of facilitating future groups such as this, we are reminded that attention could well be given to ensuring that the transfer was effective, and to help participants discuss this issue in the group. To some degree, this did happen naturally, however,it was not part of the initial considerations by the workshop planners.

A considerable amount of energy, as evidenced by the journal entries, went into self-awareness activities. Given the orientation of the designers, and the introspective nature of the interventions, this is understandable, although we were not as conscious of this bias as we now are. In terms of facilitation, however, we are reminded that this reflective focus was regarded by most of the participants as one of the

most helpful aspects of the workshop. Facilitation of self-awareness requires particular skills, orientations, and sensitivity and is not something which can be done by individuals with no training and background.

Another point which arises from the findings is that much of the learning, especially where modelling was involved, occurred because there were others of like experience and interest present in the group. Any attempt to design similar programs should capitalize on the built-in strength of the group members. Although this is an assumed convention in adult education, it is one not always observed.

The method by which we examined impact requires a brief comment. By using journal entries as baseline data, and examining each individual's change from that base-line, we were in effect assuming that changes would be unique and particular to each individual. Had we attempted to measure impact by an instrument which assumed group changes, or which were criteria-referenced, we would most likely have come up with quite different results. We contend that we would have missed many of the changes which were highly significant to each individual. In effect, we moved what evaluators sometimes refer to as 'unanticipated outcomes" to the centre of our evaluation methodology, and attempted to incorporate a learning-from-the-learner's perspective.

5(b) Implications of Facilitation Data

Implications for facilitation arising from the impact data have been discussed in the previous section.

The information received in the journals and interviews suggests strongly that all members valued the climate which had developed.

There are a number of possible reasons why such a comfortable climate developed early. One had to do with group size. Initially, we felt that the group of 7 participants was too small. It should be recognized, however, that with the three staff (facilitator, observer, and research assistant), who also participated in self-disclosure and providing support, there were a total of 10. Also, with the exception of one, all participants were known to the first author. The exception was aware of Morris as an instructor and graduate supervisor of the program in which she was enrolled.

Other than Morris, all the participants were female, and most were involved in some way in adult education. Members were from a few professions, such as education and nursing or social sciences/humanities. There were no mathematicians or engineers for example. Most fit the upper two of the Kolb quadrants, being either accommodators or divergers. According

to their PSI most were extraverts, five of the seven were intuitive as opposed to sensor types and five showed a preference for feeling.

From the point of view of facilitating, it is apparent that the presence of individuals who are seen as acceptable and credible in the class is important. This allows others to identify with them and to more readily learn from them. To some degree, this comes about by the way facilitation is carried out. On many occasions the observer noted that the facilitator self-disclosed her own learning patterns, issues and behaviours. Similarly, when participants self-disclosed, there was little or no attempt to judge the content. They were simply accepted and often, built upon as each group member came to identify personally with the issue. From the facilitator's notes, this passage helps reflect the flavour of the facilitation:

> "It is important to be affirming, validating and believe in the power of the learners. One must be willing to share about oneself as a fellow learner in order to model what you are expecting of the learners, yet...not use this as an occasion to be on stage."

Throughout the sessions, and especially after the first intensive meeting, the facilitator was observed to say little but gave appropriate non-verbal and supportive cues for long

periods of time. The group members had virtually taken charge of the meeting. Again, drawing from her notes;

> "...the group became self-regulating quickly and (I) occasionally felt that (my) major role was to get out of the way."

Time for reflection about their concerns, to make connections between learnings, or simply to speculate silently or out loud were highly valued interventions by the designers, and especially the facilitator. She reported that on several occasions she struggled with how much time to allow for reflection. Our data suggests that all participants felt that sufficient time was devoted to reflection, and that this was a highly valued part of the program. Schon (1987) and Brookfield (1986) are among those who have argued for the power of reflection in adult learning. Our experience would suggest that this facet is often the most ignored, yet most crucial part of the adult learning process. When planning a learning event such as this, it is important to allow sufficient time -at least an hour each session - and to be flexible in scheduling so that if need be, reflection time can be lengthened. This, of course, runs counter to the institutional practices which tend to be focused on 'covering the curriculum', rather than the processes of learning.

5(c) Implications of Learning Processes Data

Reflection, and its role in learning, has been commented upon quite often, and was referred to often as one of the highlights of the workshop. The term reflection, however, is really an umbrella for a number of behaviours, attitudes and sub-processes.

Time, and quality of time, seems to be central to reflection. Time is referred to in comments by participants as points where one's mind is not focused, or engaged in a specific task. Driving, for example, was mentioned by several as a time for reflection. In another study, Baskett and Garrison (1989) found that adult education researchers reported reflection often occurred during jogging, cutting the lawn, or other "mindless" activities.

The journals seemed to play an important role in the reflection process, at least for some. By writing in their journals, their vague concerns, feelings, ideas or discomforts, became concrete, real and something with which they could then deal. Not all used the journal in such a manner. Nonetheless for those who are at certain points in their life or stages in their development, and who are inclined to reflect, this method seemed highly useful as a tool to facilitate the reflective process.

It was apparent that the reflection process involved periods when one seemed to be doing nothing. Group members could be observed gazing off into space during presentations or discussions. Sometimes, they would give evidence that something was happening to them internally by joining the conversation later with remarks such as, "When you mentioned unlearning a while ago, I got to thinking...", or "You know, I was just thinking...".

The assumption that adults are learning only when they are talking and observably active needs to be re-examined, a point made also by Brookfield (1987). Blank looks, far-off gazes or silences do not mean that the learner has necessarily opted out. In fact, those may be the periods when the greatest learning is occurring.

On the other hand, "verbalizing" is, for at least some, an important aspect of reflection. Many group members remarked on the value of talking out loud. Just as writing in the journal gave substance to their thoughts, "verbalizing" seemed to function in a similar manner. Somehow, their ideas, issues, or whatever they were dealing with could be objectified and thus, more easily recognized and accepted as real.

The presence of others who can be an appreciative, attentive, and non-judgemental audience to "verbalizing" is a critical component as well and several of the remarks by participants pointed to this. From the point of view of program design small groups which permit adequate 'air time' for participants to reflect through talking should be built in.

Affirmation of self, and confirmation of the rightness and normalness of both the participants and their learning styles and approaches was a major theme in the journals and the interviews. Some of the accounts suggest that some of their learning about their learning was almost transformative, in a Mezirownian sense. (Mezirow, 1985). Several reported that they had come to see themselves, or their way of learning, in quite a new, and more positive light. Sometimes, this involved re-valuing or relabelling aspects of their learning. Just how this process worked is not clear, but it seems to have involved self-reflection, the absence of some pre-established prescriptive or 'right' ways of learning some data about themselves as learners or personalities and examples of alternate ways of seeing themselves and their learning styles and approaches.

We do not think that these changes in self-perception as learners could have occurred had we only taught instrumental strategies such as 'sleep learning' or 'superlearning'. It

appears to us that these changes involve something much deeper, having to do with self-concept. It is surprising to us that such able, accomplished individuals should have doubts about their capabilities as learners. All held university degrees, some held two or more, and others were working on a second or third degree. We did notice that several held notions about what correct learning was all about, and often it involved deference to experts, an issue which Belenky et al. (1986) addressed. This raises a number of important issues around professionals' autonomous learning. Of special note here is the possibility that we need to pay far more attention to the affective and self-perceptive aspects of professionals as learners than we have heretofore. McKinley (1979) has commented on this in regards to what he calls "teacher-led" groups on learning-how-to-learn:

> "Very little time is given to helping an individual learner discuss how and why her or his views differ from those of others or from some accepted view; such a process is viewed as requiring too much time and preventing the teacher from covering the prescribed material."

The issue of experts as validators of one's own knowledge arose several times in the discussion and in the journals and interviews. There appeared to be for some group members, an other-directedness which involved self-validation through authority. We had tried to introduce Hunt's (1987) notion of

developing one's own theory of practice, and validating one's own knowledge. We are not sure if this was especially an issue because the group was composed entirely of women. Certainly Belenky et al, would seem to suggest this was the case. It does sensitize us to the probability that much more processing of the concept that one can be one's own owner and creator of knowledge and theory is needed in such a group. We also suspect that this expert-as-validator phenomenon may be more pronounced in this group because they have had extensive socialization in universities, the very crucible of the notion of expert-as-knower.

The process of thinking about thinking was much in evidence in this group. Although we are not familiar with the literature in this area, this process was so obvious that it should not be ignored. Those facilitating such groups should, we believe, be aware of the power of this activity, and its pervasiveness. We feel we need a better understanding of it in order to improve our own facilitation skills.

"Really knowing", or what we interpret to be deeper levels of understanding, seemed to be a theme expressed by several of our members. The need to visit and revisit an issue seemed to accompany this process. One group member described it as 'spiralling', and that "really knowing" incorporated a feeling dimension that was beyond cognition. Again, we have limited

understanding of this process, but feel it should be singled out for comment. It also reminds us that when dealing with deeply ingrained attitudes and values, such as those about learning, facilitators need to recognize that some issues will have to be revisited many times by participants. In fact, any learning-how-to-learn group, be it for professionals or any one else, should be facilitated to recognize that members will have entered the group with many learning issues, and will continue to process them far after they leave such workshops. The need for follow-up workshops and the need to help learners establish their own support networks to continue the process in a constructive manner are noted here.

6. CONCLUSIONS

We already know much of what we have discussed here. But, just as our colleagues in the learning group spoke of 'really knowing', we too have come to understand these processes at a deeper, more personal level. And, like our fellow learners, we too will have to revisit, restructure, and re-value our understanding of the learning processes involved with developing autonomous learning time and time again.

We are deeply indebted to the participants of the Enhancing group. We have been privileged to know them as human beings first, and learners second. They have contributed much to

our learning. We know that together we have contributed much to each other's learning. We hope, that as we review our perceptions with them, that the cycle of mutual understanding about the learning process, and the means by which we may all enhance our own and our colleagues learning will continue.

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