Becoming A More Critical, Autonomous, Reflective Learner

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Becoming a more critical, autonomous, reflective learner?

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Introduction

This handbook is for students in higher education, that is, in a university or in another institution which gives the highest level education in the country. We have written the handbook especially for ‘non-traditional’ students who enter higher education by alternative routes or are different from the student norm in other ways. This booklet helps to guide you to become a critical, autonomous and reflective learner.

As a ‘non-traditional’ student we mean ‘A new mature student entrant (by age in respective countries) with no previous higher education qualifications whose participation in higher education is constrained by structural factors additional to age’. We have met and interviewed several people in different countries who can be called ‘non-traditional’ students, like a plumber who started his law studies at the age of fifty, or a hairdresser and a child minder who became a Russian language major when her own children grew up, or a female pig farmer who started to study economics, or a male electrician who studied to become a nurse, or a male shop assistant who first acquired a Social Studies degree, then went on to become a PhD, and now works as a university sociology lecturer.

We hope you can use this handbook:

- to develop your ability to reflect and evaluate your learning
- to help develop more equal dialogue with teachers and fellow students
- to use your knowledge and prior experience as part of your learning
- to cope with the demands of higher education
- to get practical hints from students in similar situations
- to make your studies rewarding, creative and more personally involving

Your own role is vital in developing critical thinking, but you do not have to do it on your own. Institutions have systems and procedures which help adult students to foster critical reflection. Teachers and tutors are there to provide guidance and tools to develop your own thinking patterns and theories in action. Your peer students as well as student unions can also be very good source of support and help you to get most out of your studies. With the help of this handbook you should find out more about what critical reflective learning means. You can use this guide as a tool for bringing critical thinking into your studies.

This handbook is mainly based on the research project we conducted in seven European countries during the years 2004-2006. The project name was Promoting Reflective Independent Learning in Higher Education (PRILHE).

The aims and objectives of the project were to:

- identify the learning processes which enable (non-traditional) adult students in higher education to become independent reflective learners
- identify how this process could be better supported before, within and at the end of study
- examine the interface between learning from experience and academic learning – the overlaps and conjunctions – and how experience may help academic learning and future learning, including in the workplace
- identify models of good practice in higher education institutions across Europe
- produce resource materials for both adult students and lecturers.
The project involved the following partners;

- University of Barcelona (CREA), Spain
- University of Goettingen (Education Department), Germany
- University of Lower Silesia (Department of Education), Poland
- Universidade Nova de Lisboa (ISEGI), Portugal
- University of Stockholm (Department of Education), Sweden
- University of Turku (Centre for Extension Studies), Finland
- University of Warwick (Centre for Lifelong Learning), UK
1. What is autonomous learning in higher education and why is it important?

In this handbook we concentrate on a certain type of learning which can be described with words: reflective, autonomous, and critical. We believe that this kind of learning is very important in higher education. There are of course many other aspects in studying and learning in higher education, but the focus of the handbook is to highlight the process of becoming a critical, autonomous and reflective learner.

1.1. Theoretical framework underpinning this handbook

Early PRILHE project discussions identified the centrality of reflective biographical learning to the whole idea of reflective independent learning. Arising from this, three formative thematic strands were agreed where project partners made initial explorations of the available literature. The figure below represents these three strands and the involvement of the different partners in exploring the relevant literature.

Figure 1.

At a later stage, the Swedish and Polish teams added a further review of Transformative Learning which complemented and, to some extent, bridged the three strands above. After all these sections had been drafted and discussed, it was agreed that the term, “Critical Autonomous Reflective Learning” (CARL) was a more appropriate key concept than the original idea of ‘Reflective Independent Learning’. We have defined CARL as follows:

Critical Autonomous Reflective Learning is:

- **critical** in its awareness of the wider social conditions of learning
- **autonomous** in its understanding of the inter-relationship between learner dependency (on the one hand) and the potential for independent individual and group learning and action (on the other)
- **reflective** in the way it looks, from a certain distance, both at the learning process and the assumptions that underpin it.

Critical autonomous reflective learning thus links individual and social learning, seeing it as a transformative process which has the potential to change both individuals and social structures. This understanding seems to be particularly appropriate for the learning practices of non-traditional adult students in higher education.
1.2. Benefits of being critical, autonomous and reflective

Autonomous learning has advantages both for society and individuals. In higher education, especially in the human sciences, students’ own contributions and independent thinking have been a basic starting point of the curriculum. The idea of an academic student includes the notion of critical reflective thinking and the importance of becoming an independent learner. An autonomous person can evaluate, estimate or make judgments about knowledge. In other words, autonomous learning concerns attitudes to facts and ideas as well as to the connections between them.

Modern European education policy – the Lisbon strategy – connects the economic development of societies and the competences provided by educational institutions. In knowledge-based economies, continuous personal and societal development increases employability and makes the labour market function smoothly. Competitive economies need autonomous and flexible learners and workers, that is why increasing student autonomy must be one of the goals of every higher education institution in Europe.

Higher education should prepare citizens for the labour market - every worker should be open to a greater critical understanding and adaptability; the aim is to facilitate a greater ability to anticipate, trigger and take account of change. This requires from every worker the capacity to become a critical and autonomous learner, that is, to be aware of and be able to interpret the signs of change in a continuously evolving labour market.

One of the goals of the Lisbon strategy is to promote entrepreneurial activities. To foster an entrepreneurial mindset capable of creating businesses that can survive in the global markets, students must be trained to develop these independent/autonomous thinking skills and to be creative in applying them.

The non-traditional students we interviewed during this research project told us that they prefer autonomous learning to dependent and authoritarian learning. They tend to get more out of studies and feel more appreciated when the learning environment allows them to be critical and reflective.

“I am more critical in my learning, looking for different independent sources. I think that learning creates more new questions than answers. I can see learning in several more situations than before. I often use other people when I learn.”
(Student, Sweden)

“I learn best…when I can determine the learning objectives, learning content and way of assessment self-reliantly or collaboratively (in a group) and when the learning environment supports this very self-directedness.”
(Student, Germany)

“What I like most here is that you can be very creative during classes, that you can say something wise on the basis of your own experiences or on the basis of read literature, you can show your creativity, you can create a theory which will be adopted by the others or which can be discussed. We do not base our ideas only on a concrete bibliography and literature we have to read, the truth still takes place on the basis of a free discussion and this is the nicest as we learn most from this.”
(Student, Poland)

Practical experiences, for instance in working life, provide a solid ground for critical perspectives. Practical issues can offer you critical arguments when you reflect on a theory. In the same way, experiences can make more sense when you look them in the light of a theory. Practical implications and links to practice usually make learning easier and keep you interested and involved in a dialogue.

“Now that I have done work experience in various places I notice that I sort of think about my own actions more. And especially what are the good sides of an exam or a group work or something. So I do a lot of reflection all the time.”
(Student, Finland)
Nevertheless, students always need to understand why they are learning any of their courses:

“I think it is very important to explain how things appear and why.”
(Lecturer, Portugal)

Things must also make sense to the student:

“If things make sense to me I never forget them… If I learn memorizing, the following semester I remember nothing.”
(Student, Portugal)

In the development of critical, autonomous and reflective thinking, lecturers are also responsible for helping the student to develop such skills.

Not all students are used to the fact that critical thinking is encouraged at school or university:

“At my first course the teachers said ‘You should question everything.’ That made a great impact on me, because then I had to learn to think on my own and to analyse. In my home country the attitude is that the teacher is always right.”
(Student, Sweden)

Although students complain that essays and project work (with research) imply more work than a final examination, they also recognise that through these activities the learning is more effective and they do not forget so easily the content learned. This means that helping students to learn in a more autonomous way will improve their capacity to become more critical and reflective. Naturally, it will also promote better and deeper learning. Here is a lecturer’s opinion:

“I think that it is of added value that there are older people in the classroom, because they contribute a level of reflection which is more involved, in order to specify more content or to give different levels (…) while at the same time they contribute to myself and to my colleagues a great deal of knowledge and interesting issues.”
(Lecturer, Spain)

1.3. What do we mean by the term “autonomous learner”?

We can use the word “autonomous” in two basic meanings: in a narrow and a wide sense. In common everyday language we can use the notion of autonomous as equal with independent. It can be used to describe a person who can arrange and organise his/her learning environment without help, directions and guidance. It underlines the ability to create a supportive environment for learning based on the personal needs of a student: the choice of the curriculum, the methods and techniques of learning, the schedule, but also the ability to set goals and accomplish tasks and projects as parts of the courses.

In our project we are using the term “autonomous learner” in its wider meaning which refers to the intellectual ability to be confident and bold with one’s own ideas rather than to be well organised. We understand autonomy as a state of mind, in which you are able to perceive knowledge as a social construct and feel comfortable and confident choosing your own path, even if it collides with established authorities and a traditional way of thinking.

Being autonomous means that – as long as you have logical arguments – you are not afraid of crossing the conventional line, fight for the right to your own opinion and stand up for it. The benefits of not being afraid to oppose the authorities is not only the freedom of expressing your own ideas, but also flexibility and openness for novelty and otherness, for dialogue. When you are autonomous in your learning you can choose what is best for you from the supply of your institute and design your individual pattern rather than study in “a ready-made frame”.

Becoming A More Critical, Autonomous, Reflective Learner
The following examples illustrate various changes experienced by students.

**Interviewer:** “Have you changed as a result of your ethnology studies?”

**Student:** “I suppose so. But that was a process which had started beforehand. That you simply begin to question certain things that you have taken for granted, somehow. And - - that you begin to question certain moral concepts and things like that. So this had begun before and - - of course has been increasing during my studies. Well - - you just tackle, you realize more easily that it is just one view on matters. And - - that this very view definitely need not to be the only right and true one, even if you are often told so. I really think (speaking louder) that this process has been strengthened through these studies. But if it hadn’t been there before, maybe I wouldn’t have begun studying ethnology, because it wouldn’t have interested me to break it open.”

(Student, Germany)

“My thinking has been transformed from rather simplistic one with a clear image of reality towards more critical thinking. Both lectures, seminars and my own work put together are functioning best.”

(Student, Sweden)

“Yes, you learn to see from other perspectives than just your own.”

(Student, Sweden)

**Interviewer:** “Has your approach to learning changed since you entered higher education?”

**Student:** “I am lacking the vigour and enthusiasm to take the ideas in (cramming) uncritically (as done in the first study course and as expected during the additional course of study). For me it is important to get an overview of the issue and to think about the possibilities of application.”

(Student, Germany)

“I studied philosophy, mathematics, education, administration, multimedia informatics, and now I study Higher Education. My approach is a trans-disciplinary one, with the integration of different patterns of thought.”

(Student, Germany)

**Questions for Discussion / Reflection:**

- According to your opinion, how autonomous are you as a learner?
- What are the main advantages of being autonomous in your field of study?
- What could be the practical implications of being an autonomous learner?
2. (Self-)Reflexivity – Not only benefits, but also risks?

2.1. Problems and risks of (self-)reflexivity

Until now, the benefits of being reflective in one’s learning have been discussed at some length – reflexivity is usually regarded as a (crucial) means that serves to enrich and deepen one’s learning in a positive way, reflective and autonomous processes appear to be closely associated with each other (at least in many cases) and so on. But there hasn’t been much talk yet about problems that might occur in this context. This reflects the general way of thinking and talking about reflective learning in the academic discourse: the emphasis is more on its positive role in learning rather than on possible difficulties it might bring with it. The ‘programme’ of reflexivity often pivots upon the idea of a learner who has his/her own learning process reflectively under control, i.e. who is able to plan and realise it systematically and strategically. However, neither are learning processes entirely controllable nor does reflexivity necessarily lead to autonomous processes.

Students often need and want guidelines or help to start the reflective and critical thinking process. Reflective process is not automatic.

“There are lecturers who want students to be more independent; they want us to reflect instead of participating with us, collaborating and accompanying our reflection. It is more comfortable for them to present the topic and say “now it is your turn” without any attempt to understand our difficulties.”

(Student, Portugal.)

At this point, it is by no means about questioning the benefits of reflexivity, but we have to remember some problems that may occur. So, what are the problems that may arise? Here is a German example of what can happen when you try to become more reflective.

“The midwives in hospital seem to be so ‘constricted’ in their thinking, I find that very disconcerting. Sometimes I think a lot of them don’t want to learn anything new. […] In discussion with a fellow student (who is employed and a student like me) I noticed that she has the same experiences with her colleagues. And I have similar problems with some friends of mine (midwives too); or have I been changing so radically, that I’m looking for other levels? I don’t know yet how I should/could handle my friends? At the moment I keep my distance; I feel the need to find myself, to find a course for me, but above all a strategy how to handle this situation.”

(Student, Germany)

Here are two levels where problems surrounding reflexivity exist:

- Reflection can turn in on itself and thus sometimes leads to a kind of action paralysis.
- Reflection can be socially risky when students become alienated from their social background as a result.

Social detachment

A disturbing and risky side effect of reflexivity is that you might become detached from your social contexts. As we can see in the above example, when you get preoccupied with and open up towards some challenging theories as well as confront unfamiliar and multiple perspectives during your studies, you may start to reconsider your earlier experiences, evaluations, beliefs and ways of behaviour which you have taken for granted until this time. If your social background is not flexible enough to accept and support these alterations in thinking of and dealing with reality, it might have a kind of alienating effect in two ways. You may not understand any more what is going on in your original context, you may become alienated from activities to which you or significant others (used to) attach high emotional importance and may no longer meet social expectations within this context; on the other hand, the original reference group - facing these changes - is likely to experience a similar feeling of strangeness and they might let you know it quite clearly.
This situation is downright painful for all persons involved and can lead to extensive doubts and irritations, if not to the endangering of relationships and a break-away from lifeworld contexts.

“It wasn’t easy for me to become a student, so I mustn’t allow failure to arise. Even if I must perform the hated job of telemarketer, I will always have the satisfaction that it was my choice and my will to study, executing my lifeplans and developing internally. In my heart of hearts I count on the fact that my studying will be used “for what it is intended” [work as a school counsellor] I hope that this is not just incurable optimism.”

(Student, Poland)

The Reflection Cycle

What does this mean? Reflexivity does not always help you to gain new experiences about and strategies for dealing with a situation you may repeatedly encounter: you may split from friendships and partnerships and change jobs again and again. Even though you might be aware of and reflect upon a cycle like that, you may get stuck in it and continue in the same way. The constellation is blocked or closed. Here, reflection does not help going ahead. There is no link between reflective processes and action, what we call here an autonomous process.

2.2. Possible way out: reflecting co-operatively – a control strategy

One possible solution is showing and receiving solidarity with students/peers who have a similar experiential background and speak the same ‘language’. It can be assumed that changes are more likely to happen through an exchange of experiences with others, rather than through a solo effort. When you are alone with your problem, entangled in a personally difficult and problematic situation you may not be aware of the limitations of your own perspective and you may not be able to develop an alternative set of ideas and strategies.

People who are not directly involved in the problem are more open to think sideways and to introduce new perspectives on a given problem. Therefore, to enhance an understanding of the situations they encounter – be it the experience of being trapped in never-ending reflection cycles without finding a way out or the experience of being alienated from your social background - and to help students gain new coping strategies it seems useful to establish a space for reflection, where students can share their experiences and evaluations continuously and, through this, arrive at new insights together.

Questions for Discussion / Reflection

- What do you think are the main disadvantages or risks in being an autonomous learner?
- What kind of practical obstacles have you encountered in an autonomous learning process?
- What could be the possible solutions for you to overcome the obstacles and manage the risks involved in autonomous learning?
3. Learning context

In this chapter we discuss the cultural issues which might effect your learning. For example, how belonging in a minority group and being a non-traditional learner in a majority group were experienced among the students we interviewed. We wish to show you how non-traditional students think of themselves as members of peer groups. As this handbook is meant for non-traditional students we hope the quotations here support your self-reflections and add value to the process of becoming a critical reflective learner.

3.1. Cultural aspects

3.1.1. Minorities / Majorities

Universities are now more diverse institutions in terms of the student population in relation to age, social class, ethnicity, gender etc. However, the majority of university students tend to be young, white and middle class, so that as an adult student you may find yourself in a minority situation in the lecture hall, seminar room, library, café and other areas of the campus. It is important not to find this situation off-putting otherwise your learning confidence may be undermined.

One student overcame his feeling of being a minority student (black and working class) in the following way:

“I came over to Warwick a few times before and checked out the place and got to know it and I got used to the feeling of being the odd one out. You know a lot of the students are younger so there is the age thing... Also I am not the ideal student in the way I look I suppose. I am the working class dodgy looking geezer and with respect quite a lot of people at Warwick are middle class.”

(Student, UK)

Many adult students find that the age difference is most noticeable in seminars as one student remarked:

“But those girls... they just made you feel thick. In the third year you do feel thick and you do feel that you shouldn’t be here and you do feel old and feel really on show and I don’t particularly like that.”

(Student, UK)

And another student adds:

“In my opinion, it is good to have students of all ages (in a group). I have noticed that when I’m walking in the corridors of my university, the younger students approach me rather easily and ask for advice like I was someone from the staff. They believe that I know everything and in practice it’s true... Therefore, being older gives you another role that you are like a tutor or advisor to the other students... I don’t mind having that role. I understand that the beginners have situations where they don’t necessarily know where to go and what to do.”

(Student, Finland)

A German student also notes:

“Yes, and with the other students - - I noticed, that they’ve finished school not a long time ago - - not very much responsibility. So, I would not describe myself as very old, inside of me not very old – but you notice, when you have worked many years, and you know what it means to have respite and to meet one’s deadlines - when you have held a little bit of responsibly.”

(Student, Germany)
However, other adult students find that lecturers like having adult students in their seminars as adults are confident to talk, discuss, ask questions and draw on their life experiences in their learning:

“When you go into the seminar you have got something valuable to say because you have read your stuff and you know what you are talking about.”
(Student, UK)

“I was the eldest person in the seminar group and I think because I was my opinion was valued…the seminar tutor always used to say how are your grandchildren. So not only was she interested in me as a student she was also interested in me as a person.”
(Student, UK)

“The younger students were probably quite nervous about me in the beginning and thought that there’s someone who’s going to tell them what to do, but I adopted a rather silent role. I let them to have their space because it was their learning opportunity. If I had started to tell a lot of stories the situation would have changed totally.”
(Student, Finland)

Others find that although they might be in a minority as adult students they get on well with younger students and that both groups learn from each other:

“You know in our group there are younger and older students than me but here the communication is very good. We all get on well – we all help each other, all of us lend each other notes, make copies, call each other, exchange materials, so there are no problems.”
(Student, Poland)

Most adult students support each other’s learning through peer group support as working in a group together can help to overcome the feeling of being in a minority. It is important to feel comfortable in order to develop critical thinking and express yourself as a member of the minority group. As a Swedish student states:

“By creating smaller groups it can be possible to push forward more students. In smaller groups people can become encouraged. Everyone must dare to hear his or her voice. Everyone must dare to hear his or her opinion, I think, and dare to confront what their opinions are and to see which one is a prejudice.”
(Student, Sweden)
3.1.2 Diversity, traditional student vs. non-traditional student

The characteristics of traditional students differ from those of ‘non-traditional’ students because they belong to different age groups. This means that they have probably followed different routes to arrive in higher education and have different objectives to attain. Usually non-traditional students work (or have already worked) and so they have some work experience. This means that they can more easily make the link between theory and practice. One can even say that they prefer practical classes or classes in which they can immediately see the practical application of what they are learning. Moreover, the fact that they pay fees also gives them the “right” to be more demanding of the lecturer.

Some of these students have similar life stories:

“From my students’ tales emerges a specific pattern: many of them are women after maternity leave, who decided to have a baby just after graduation, then they did not work and at some point they decided to do something with their lives. Very often a kindergarten is a place where it is relatively easy to get a job for a woman, and when they succeeded they wanted to stay and needed further education as a condition to keep the job. So, even though they were somehow ‘forced’ to study, some of them made huge progress while we were working together during seminars. It is a pleasure to look at them, how they are developing, I’m much more pleased and satisfied with them than with the full-time students.”

(Lecturer, Poland)

A traditional student often prefers to discuss with a ‘non-traditional’ student in the classroom, instead of discussing with the teacher (maybe because they have similar problems and interests). In the context of the interviews carried out for the PRILHE project, some teachers identified that non-traditional students may employ different learning strategies in class. For instance, a non-traditional student may take no notes while the lecturer is speaking, because he/she is listening and making connections with previous knowledge.

A Polish student adds:

“The main difference between those who have had a break and the young ones is the potential of life experience and one can see it during the classes, for example during the “social policy” course – their professional and life experience is huge here, because when we discuss issues like taxes or unemployment they are able to talk about their own reality based on their experience, it is much more real to them than to those who only have heard about unemployment from the stories of their distant uncles or aunts. They don’t have academic skills, so they participate in a different way; using their background, their activity is rarely based on papers and articles which I’ve given them, but it is interesting for me to observe how they perceive what reality brings to them…”

(Student, Poland)

These two kinds of students may also attend courses for different purposes. For instance, non-traditional students enroll on a course (for example, theCurso de Especialização Tecnológica post-secondary education, in Portugal) usually for professional advancement, career progression and career reorientation. This kind of student is more demanding because he/she already has experience. They see the course as an opportunity to update what they already know. They bring their work experience reality to the classroom; they are a challenge for the lecturer as they want to obtain results. They are more critical because they are tired and they have left their family to attend classes. So, classes must be appealing, enticing and motivating. The lecturer must meet their expectations. In comparison with traditional students, they are more concerned with finding a job.

Some students prefer attending classes to other learning.

“I dedicate myself a lot to the classes and I don’t study outside it. I try not to miss classes and I keep focused in what teacher is saying (…). I try to understand how the reasoning works instead of learning by heart (memorizing) formulas.”

(Student, Portugal)
As one lecturer said:

“A non-traditional student wants to learn to enjoy the learning… She/He only sees interest in the content if he can see that it has a present or future practical application, or if he can see that this is the way it has to be done.”

(Lecturer, Portugal).

During their course students prefer less theory and more practice. Moreover, although non-traditional students have some difficulties, they also have more experience. They also tend to have great enthusiasm. They are rather critical because they have experience. They look for better and deeper explanations. They have an idea of how the exercise should be solved and so they do not accept straight away what the teacher says. The teacher must prove that what he/she is saying is correct. Traditional students are different from non-traditional ones as they tolerate strategies focused more on theory (instead of practice).

Traditional students can be good students because they already have some good study habits, have more time to study, and are more dedicated. They interact more with each other to solve problems. However, they are immature. For some of them, school does not make a lot of sense. Some do not have objectives and so they are lost, distracted and can disrupt the class. They tend to use the library less than non-traditional students or even not at all. On the other hand, non-traditional students miss some classes, have not enough time, arrive late at classes, usually are already tired and generally are impatient. However, they are also engaged because they make a big effort to go to school after work. This means that a traditional student can be a better student because non-traditional students do not have so much time to study. However, those non-traditional students working directly with the subject being taught learn more easily.

“[I select the topic]. When I see how and where I can apply what I am learning, it is easier to learn. When I don’t see how I can use that, it is very difficult to study and learn.”

(Student, Portugal)

Some adult students feel that learning must be done during the working life and get benefits from that as often professional / vocational courses can be more interesting and usually more practical:

“Enterprises are always at risk and if we don’t progress, the enterprise does not progress too. I have already learned a lot of things in the marketing course and have applied a lot of them in my enterprise. Classes are interesting when I can see how I can apply and change the way I work in my enterprise – this is the advantage of the evening class student – he knows the real life and has practice (and the traditional students do not have this).”

(Student, Portugal)

Classes with both ‘non-traditional’ and traditional students can be more enriching than those with only ‘non-traditional’ or traditional students because the former can help the latter to learn through their experiences, histories and cases. For example, at the University of Warwick (UK) there are degree modules that enable adult students to talk about their learning experiences and compare these to research findings (Module on Adult Learning & Teaching, Module on Family Law).

One lecturer in Portugal said that separating non-traditional from traditional students would not improve the learning process, as he could no longer use the experience of non-traditional students to help traditional students by making the bridge between the theory and practice.

As for the relationship between non-traditional and traditional students, a British lecturer adds:

*When you have mature students and school leavers together I think it does raise particular issues about dynamics partly because mature students are more likely to intervene and have their say. They also bring in more varied agendas and the school leavers tend on average to be reticent. Often it’s because mature students are really engaging and bringing their life experience to bear with the material.*

(Lecturer, UK)
And a German lecturer complements these remarks:

“With regard to some of these students (non-traditional) I notice an excessive impatience towards their fellow students which they hide very well. … They have to engage in work groups… you hear: ‘They waste the prime of their lives.’ … ‘Here is somebody who sat his/her A-levels (‘Abitur’) via the first wave of education, sits here - does a lousy job, doesn’t participate in the seminar, doesn’t come along during the study trip and misses the whole lot. And does not realise – that s/he could build his/her – personality - through this experience. Well…’ these - people are plainly aware of what they are gaining through being here, because they are aware that they are paying for it. That is they are paying a complicated everyday life, a juxtaposition of an occupation that you maybe still have to have - to be able to finance your studies – and sitting exams – developing seminar papers – fitting group work into all this, somehow, that is a difficult juggling act for a lot of these people.”

(Lecturer, Germany)

A Portuguese lecturer presents the following viewpoint:

“In the last class I had to talk about security in networks and I had 3 or 4 people working with computers, doing some processes. And those students didn’t know why they had to do what they do. So, I picked up those examples and asked everybody to say why they were doing what they were doing. And after that I explained. They realised that the topic I was explaining was not something theoretical without application. This is what the enterprise is doing”.

(Lecturer, Portugal)

For non-traditional students it is important to explain how the things taught are related to the real world. After that the theory is explained. The order of topics to be taught can also change. That is how it can be shown that things are dynamic.

Questions for Discussion / Reflection

- What do you think is the impact of cultural aspects on a critical learning process / environment?
- How do you think life experience could be best used in a learning environment?
- How could lecturers use your life experience to help you become more critical and autonomous?
- What do you feel about diversity in the classroom?
3.2 Learning environment

3.2.1. A supportive learning environment

There are a number of ways in which a higher education institution can offer institutional support to students to help learners become independent and autonomous. For example, the institution can provide special spaces for workgroups, discussions and preparation of group work with the necessary facilities (computer, whiteboard, resources).

The Warwick Learning Grid

The Learning Grid at the University of Warwick, UK, is a learning facility for students which is open 24 hours a day seven days a week only closing on Christmas Day. The aim of the Learning Grid is to provide students with a facility that actively supports the development of study, transferable and professional skills.

The facility provides an exciting, innovative, integrated, flexible space that supports students by facilitating independent learning in new and changing ways. It, for instance, supports individual study, group problem-solving activities, team working and presentation work, including an emphasis on facilitating the development and delivery of student presentations and supporting students in the use of digital multi-media for their assignments. It provides a wireless network, capacity for up to 10,000 reference use student texts, and careers resources. A wide range of equipment is also provided, including scanners and document visualisers through to electronic whiteboards, video-editing facilities, networked personal computers, video cameras with playback capability, etc. These facilities are located within study environments ranging from rooms for formal presentations to soft seating.

The service model for the facility is informed by a dual strategy of supporting students through a mix of primarily web-based resources and personal interactions. The latter is provided by permanent staff working with, and alongside, student advisors (as well as, of course, by fellow users of the facility). There is an emphasis on informality of approach, which is reflected in tolerance with mobile phone use and limited eating and drinking within the facility.

3.2.2. Supportive environments

Supportive environments involve:

- **Institutional support**, such as flexible study schedule, web facilities and study skills support
- **Teacher and tutor support**, such as good dialogue with teachers
- **Peer groups and tutoring/mentoring groups**, such as interaction and discussions with peers
- **Home and partner support**, such as help in managing the everyday life and deep understanding of the learner’s situation
- **Work and other social network support**, such as financial help and allocated resources from the employer

**Institutional support**

A study schedule (timetable) and its flexibility is one way to support learners. For learners who combine work and studying, time management seems to be an important issue. It is vital that an institution takes account of the restrictions learners have e.g. their ability to attend daytime classes if in employment or if they have children and cannot attend outside school hours.
“We work till 6 or 7 p.m. I have employees working till 8 and 9. So, I can’t go out just to attend my classes. I finish my work at 19h and even if I managed to leave at 19h, I would never be able to arrive at 19h”.
(Student, Portugal)

As a student it is important to access e-journals and information on the WWW in order to assist you in your learning and assessment. Many university libraries offer training in how to use those facilities.

“I think they’re very supportive. They spend a lot of time doing tutorials and extra study skills support. The library staff are really supportive. I think they spend a lot of time over and above what we’re supposed to really.”
(Lecturer, UK)

On entering higher education you may be anxious about writing your first essay (assignment) specially if you have been out of the education system for a long time. Many institutions provide special sessions on study skills support. These will cover topics such as reading skills, taking notes, essay writing, revision and taking exams.

Departments are also an important infrastructure for creating a support learning environment. This includes both support from lectures and administrative staff. If you feel that the infrastructure and the staff are not facilitating your learning, make your voice known.

Find out what your institution offers in terms of learning support and guidance. If you feel that the learning environment is not adequate why don’t you raise the issues through your students association or staff student committees? Here is an example of institutional support at The University of Warwick, UK.

**Warwick Skills Certificate**

The Warwick Skills Certificate is offered to undergraduates and postgraduates but is not compulsory. The programme is modular and students receive credit for their work extra to their degree credit. The aim of the Certificate is enhance students’ academic, communication, IT, development skills. Students can also choose other areas for skills development such as employability skills, enterprise skills, creativity and personal development skills. All students have to produce a portfolio and are also encourage to have a student blog.

**Teacher and tutor support**

Mature learners seem to appreciate a good and fair relationship with their teachers. It is important that a teacher or a tutor appreciates the life experience of learners and treats them with respect in every situation. The teacher can also be a significant person in helping to discover new approaches, views and possibilities. The role of the teacher or the tutor is more extensive than merely teaching or facilitating learning. For mature and other non-traditional learners, dialogue with the teacher is the basis of a supportive and fruitful relationship.

Many lecturers in our research stated that they like having adult students in their seminars because they are willing to discuss and can relate life experiences to the topic. Also several lecturers pointed out that they find it easy to relate to adult students because of the age similarity.

Lecturers should take into account the reaction of each student – look at every face to see what they are feeling:

“When I think I am losing a student because he is talking to a colleague, rather than me, that is because I wasn’t able to get close to him. So, I’ll try to be closer and start talking to him, so he can understand that I care and I am there. I compel him to hear me.”
(Lecturer, Portugal)
There are also lecturers that like to explain how things work and happen; stories help the student to learn:

“There is always a reason for everything. I try to teach them this. When I ask them to solve an exercise, when they ask me the solution, I say – what do you think? And so I might be some kind of a teacher or a facilitator.”

(Lecturer, Portugal)

“They are not more independent and reflective because we don’t provide them with the conditions to be so. Moreover, they are not all the same. People need to be stimulated, motivated and that kind of learning must be learned”.

(Lecturer, Portugal)

To create a sympathetic relationship between a teacher and a student requires efforts form the student as well.

“I warn them… I say that we have to work but then comes the time when I warn them no longer. And that is it!”

(Lecturer, Portugal)

“Positive environment is important with a lot of encouragement from the supervisor as well as from the other students.”

(Student, Sweden)

**Peer groups and tutoring/mentoring groups**

Most of the students who were interviewed during this project liked group work and interaction with peer students. Interaction is seen important and beneficial for learning itself as well as for motivation, moral support and sharing. Studying with peers who have to tackle similar situations in work, family and studies helps and motivates you to get over difficult times. Learners who are middle-aged (over fifty years and so) find it fun to study together and live away from the pressures of work.

“The only reason why many of us did not break off our studies after the first year was our study group… The group gives us strength and supports us.”

(Student, Finland)

“Monday 23.01.06, I met a fellow student after work, who is my age. We talked about our studies as we have already done quite often. We can help and support each other very well and I like being with her. Private and professional matters as well as issues around our studies are mingled. Our common “study experience” plays the leading role in our friendship. I like keeping in touch with her, because she knows all sides of my life and we can talk about it.”

(Students’ learning diary, Germany)

“I met my best friend in my first semester at the university. It has worked out very well in the first semester. And the funny thing about it is that her biography is nearly like mine, which means we had a common level from where we started. She also had problems with learning. And I have had the same personal subgroup with me since the beginning of my study. Of course some new people came to our group too and some left the group. But it was a circle of three, four, five persons, all with same subjects and related experiences. And we helped and encouraged each other. I would have been over-extended in my basic studies. Although we go different ways — we pull each other along. And if you have a bad phase, a crisis, someone will be there to help you out. And we can encourage each other. Someone knows something, another one gives a good hint, and this has helped me a lot.

(Student, Germany)

Interaction and discussions with fellow students also form a set of resources which promotes reflectivity as well as fostering independence and critical thinking. Exercises and practices where students can exchange opinions and experiences in an equal and friendly atmosphere are seen to be very efficient for in-depth and quality learning.
Non-traditional and adult students appreciate peer discussions but can feel isolated among young students maybe not in a classroom situation but especially free time activities.

Most of the teaching approaches use group work and many institutions also encourage informal interaction with students by supporting student unions.

“It’s like there’s study buddy ing going on all the time. They seem to sort of end up in little groups where they’re supporting each other. Within weeks they’ve usually set up an email circle and they talk to each other all the time. So there’s a lot of support going on – they’ve got a network – hugely supportive of each other. We’ve found that quite a lot of third years give small tutorials to first years to help them through an essay if they get stuck or whatever.”

(Lecturer, UK)

**Home and partner support**

A supportive partner or family can be an invaluable resource for a learner. A non-supportive and negative attitude of the nearest and dearest can even cause a termination of studies. The support can simply mean that the learner gets help in managing everyday life or that there is deep understanding of the learner’s situation. To get the support the learner needs to tell the family what is required for an effective learning environment.

In higher education there is also a question of family attitudes towards academic life. The family may have expectations for the learner to achieve and do well. On the other hand, the family can have doubts or reservations about higher education and the culture linked to it.

“At home my studies are fully accepted and no-one has the idea of being sceptical. Anyway, but the kids do not help more than usual at this age. My burdening is sometimes an argumentation help, when I am worked up and demand more help. But this strains me most of all.”

(Student, Germany)

**Work and other social network support**

Especially for students who connect study and work, the support they can get from employers is very meaningful. Some employers even support studies financially and by allocating other resources in the learning process. The work place can offer substantial support by providing materials and case studies for learning.

Similarly, the social network of the learner can form a platform for discussions, examples, reflections and insights. The network can function in the same way as a partner or a family either supporting or discouraging the academic studies.

Sometimes work may not be enough to fulfill the need for learning and knowing more.

“I didn’t have a formal curriculum [experience] and also because I really missed studying. I went to the job market and I was not satisfied. I arrived home, had nothing to do and missed the times when I used to arrive home and had homework, reading and research to do”.

(Student, Portugal)

### 3.2.3 Guidance, interaction and dialogical learning

The scientific community highlights the relevance of taking into account interactions in learning processes. Different authors like Vygotsky (1986), Bruner (1996) and Rogoff (1994, 2003) point out that interactions among peers, teachers and all the educational community are a way to assure the improvement of the students learning process. On the other hand, Scribner (1988) considers that it is also necessary to recognise the validity of those skills acquired in informal contexts, for example in the labour market.
The results of the PRILHE research support this theoretical approach because they indicate that non-traditional university students prefer to work collectively. They consider that with the help of lecturers and classmates the learning process can improve. They also support the idea of including their life experience in the teaching procedures and assessment methodologies.

Dialogue is another aspect that non-traditional students point out; promoting it is a way to assure critical thinking in students who learn to share their knowledge with peers and lecturers. For example the Spain PRILHE quantitative report shows that near 42% of non-traditional students interviewed find it crucial to exchange different points of view in their learning process (CREA 2006). In this sense, the role of the lecturer is a key one in assuring the effectiveness of the class organisation.

“Well, I think that it would be better to have some classes...which include more participation from the pupils you see? Well, in the sense that I think that it would be a class which would be richer; that if each of us brings our knowledge together as a group then between the teacher and the pupils more issues come up you know? Equally with regards to the content of the material, and with regards to the experiences, I don’t know, maybe there are classes which work like that.”

(Student, Spain).

There is a pedagogical approach that studies in depth the role of dialogue in learning: dialogical learning (Flecha 2000). Dialogical learning considers the main theoretical contributions in education and social sciences and the practical experiences recognised worldwide. Dialogue in the educational field is a way of assuring the democratic values and the transformation of exclusion situations (Freire 1997, Habermas 1984). On the other hand, dialogical learning does not forget technical knowledge and emphasises the role of instrumental dimension in education (Elboj et al. 2002) which includes the skills that are needed in order to obtain more complex ones later on. At the same time, the acquisition of these skills guaranties a continuance in the educational system, and also, the development of a high quality education. Dialogical learning believes in a curriculum of competencies that prepares students for the information society.

As one lecturer states:

“And it might be that this experience motivates me nowadays to take individual students seriously, to approach some of them and to establish relationships to all of them, somehow. That is I support them in this very respect so that they do not have the impression to be left alone. They can get everything from me, they get – when they come to me and say: ’I don’t know and this and that’*, then I sit down for three hours and say: ’Let us think about what we do. ’ Because I experienced how it is if you do not have this. In this traditional sense: ’My children shall be better off than me.’, er I am doing differently nowadays: Er and with regard to the structures – being responsible for the faculty - I see to it that there are supervisors, tutors, that there are supporting systems and something like that.”

(Lecturer, Germany)

A student tells about learning with peers:

“At the Christmas market in the evening I explained my paper on “motivation” to a fellow-student. The one-hour-talk about this is a kind of reflection for me. Such discussions in pairs are consistently very useful for me.”

(Student’s learning diary, Germany)

Interaction in teaching and learning is needed:

“In my case, during the weekend I have my wife, my 2 daughters and the baby born recently. Sometimes, there are also enterprise problems [requiring attention from me]. (…) there could be group work but completed during classes – for instance, reserve half a hour (of a 2 hours class) to do the exercises / group work. How else can I find time to meet my colleagues to do the work?”

(Student, Portugal)
“Lecturers could also send a resume of the content by email to all students (instead of providing 500 photocopies).”
(Student, Portugal)

“Lecturers could also meet students outside class or answer their questions by email.”
(Student, Portugal)

The role of the lecturer is very important. He or she has to be motivated and enjoy his/her job. Some lecturers just do not have the necessary pedagogical skills:

“They can be very good in their profession but do not know how to teach. Maybe there is a pedagogical component missing in their training. (…) All of them should do some ‘trainee training’. (…) I think that is awful being a teacher just because they cannot find a job elsewhere. I understand that it is in the university’s interest not to be too close to the real world; even so the professional must have the necessary skills to teach.”
(Student, Portugal)

Lecturers also need to be demanding enough:

“We were scared, probably because we were not used to that level of pressure. Maybe it was the first time that I was forced to reflect and when I arrived at the university it was not hard for me to understand and accept the level of exigency of lecturers. (…) [we did] several essays, we had objectives, we did individual and group work, a lot of work every week. We complained, saying that it was too much but she replied ‘if you managed till now that is because you can. You must know what you want’. She was a demanding kind of person. At that time, we complained but now I recognize that she was right and that kind of work, organisation and research is very important.”
(Student, Portugal)

3.2.4. Student’s emotional experience of critical reflection

Ted and Karl who are both studying to become nurses, experience higher education as really developmental and they do enjoy the stimulation to learn as an adult. Critical autonomous thinking is according to them to grow as persons and see reality and knowledge from different angles. To value different aspects and critical examine them is something they did not do in the same way earlier. Reality was more or less black and white; everything was judged as either true or false. Both estimate highly this personal development but Karl also emphasises another side of the coin.

After one year in higher education Karl experienced that he had changed. It came up suddenly when he visited some friends and his female friend showed him a publication which she was really inspired and impressed by. Karl had a look at it and rejected it rather brutally as he estimated it as neither scientific nor reliable. His female friend became rather disappointed and he felt that he had hurt her feelings and also that he took her enthusiasm away. From this experience but also from other similar experiences he draws the conclusion that

“Reality is tedious, when you have learned to reflect reality critically the reality becomes a little bit more tedious [---] even now (almost two years later) when I talk to her I still feel guilty that I tore it to pieces.”
(Student, Sweden)

Before starting studying he had noticed the same development with a friend who studied at higher education.

“I noticed this the first time when a male friend had become more tedious through studying. We were often taking a beer together and earlier he always accepted what I said. After he started to study he also started to question me. It was terribly unpleasant. He always wanted to know more, irrelevant facts in my opinion. My friend was earlier a storyteller as myself but he had given up to tell stories and instead become critical. I noticed how he was changing.……. you probably have to say that he developed. But I experienced it for a long while as a negative change but of course it is development.”
(Student, Sweden)
Karl described also a changed relationship with his parents, “they have also noticed that I have developed and become more tedious, despite the fact my parents are educated”. He concludes his experiences with an ironical glint in his eyes and formulates it as follows:

“You start your education happily and end it embittered, it is almost like that. The relationship with my male friend is not the same anymore, we are not the fun guys any longer but now we can sit and talk in telephone and complain together”.

(Student, Sweden)

To face this change or development might be an emotional experience that is not always pleasant. Rather it is impregnated by contradictory emotions, where the individual sometimes feel stimulated, happy and safe and sometimes feel unhappy, guilty and frustrated. To develop critical autonomous reflection is therefore also an emotional journey that must not be neglected or underestimated. Brookfield has given experiences like Karl’s a name that is a little bit brutal but also illustrative; cultural suicide,

“Cultural suicide is the threat critical learners perceive that if they take a critical questioning of conventional assumptions, justifications, structures and actions too far they will risk being excluded from the cultures that have defined and sustained them up to that point in their lives.”

(Brookfield 1994, p. 208).

To a student this can mean becoming a foreigner in his or her own family or together with his/her old friends. The things they were laughing about together before is maybe not any longer commonly appreciated and a gap between them might be felt by one of them or maybe by both of them. Marriage might end up in divorces and friendships might fade away. One important way to handle those emotional aspects of reflective learning is to share it with other students in communication. When talking to each other, students discover that they are not alone experiencing those emotions. This discovery is often relieving to them and to put words on what is difficult can play down some of the difficulties experienced.

Another connected concept by Brookfield (ibid.), Lost innocence, describes education as a journey into ambiguity and uncertainty. The belief in one truth is abandoned as well as a dualistic thinking by the learner. This personal development is well described in many of the interviews and often it is experienced as a positive development¹.

Here is a German lecturer’s viewpoint:

“I would say you can distinctly observe here, that especially mature students, even the postgraduate students, face massive biographical problems they have to cope with and that you cannot really call this study. Simply due to the fact that they are studying here something is stirred that then is messed up and so they have to reconcile all this somehow. Of course this works only by means of an increased theoretical effort that you reflect upon and that then allows a new view on the things. In so far it is not that easy if you are studying here at an older age. I myself experienced this and have to admit to myself that this was my greatest problem. If you really let this happen to you, you have to alter attitudes and opinions showing through biographically. And then you are having a big problem, since you do not only have to learn this about yourself, but you really have to change yourself and maybe to alter your whole idea of your life. And this is not too easy.”

(Lecturer, Germany)

Questions for Discussion / Reflection

• What are your own supportive environments and resources?
• How do you see your role in your study group, what does the feeling of belonging to the group mean to you?
• What can you do to help others feel as part of the group?

¹ In the PRILHE literature review Brookfield’s concepts are described more in depth.
4. Some tools and activities to promote autonomous learning

In this chapter we describe briefly some learning and teaching methods which are useful for critical reflection. We focus on explaining how these methods are linked to critical reflectivity. Here you find examples of practices which students find helpful for their own reflection and insights into the process of becoming critical and active learners. We have highlighted the benefits of autonomous learning.

4.1 Group activities

4.1.1. Group work

Co-operative work in university education is a method that non-traditional students claim to like. Non-traditional students find that peer group work is a good way to share knowledge and promote solidarity. As is highlighted in PRILHE research, in some cases non-traditional students prefer classes organised in seminars where they can learn better through a dialogue with classmates and teachers.

Group work is an activity that benefits non-traditional students, not only because it is a more dynamic and entertaining way of learning, but also because they acquire more knowledge and skills, and their learning process becomes more useful. In quantitative and qualitative PRILHE analysis, students and lecturers contributions have confirmed this reality.

“So what we have done and tried to do is to meet as a group, outside the classroom or at the weekends, or in the evenings after class to study together you see? And so I think that that helps you a lot, or in other words that you learn better when you are with other people because if someone doesn’t understand something then another person can explain it and vice versa.”
(Student, Spain)

“The group and the team sort of draws you in. As it’s quite sad to work alone. Even though you had the motivation to study you are still alone.”
(Student, Finland)

The compilation of the groups can have an effect on the learning. Here is a comment from a Finnish lecturer:

“The students find it very important to learn from each other during a course. Therefore, it’s important that when we plan a course we take students who, at one level, are heterogeneous and, at another level, homogeneous. Homogeneous in a sense that they can find other people who are in a same position, such as managers or experts. And heterogeneous in a sense that people come from different lines of business so that they can see different points of view.”
(Lecturer, Finland)

In some situations group work is carried out as a single work task. However, this is not what group work is about. As one student points out:

“Rather often group work turns out to be an amount of individual work that is put together.”
(Student, Sweden)
Interactive groups

In Spain there is a pedagogical activity based on group work that has been developed in some secondary, primary and adult education schools. This activity is called Interactive groups. The interactive groups are mixed groups of 4 or 5 students that are formed by giving emphasis to different gender, cultures and learning levels. Each group works in an activity for 20 minutes, mentored by a person of the educational community (volunteer, neighbour, family member, etc.). This person is in charge of assuring that students follow the activity with the help of their peers and promoting the interactions between them. (Elboj et al. 2002).

“The way the lecturer conducted his classes forced me almost to get out of my hiding. Exactly till the moment of starting the studies I had been a very shy and quiet person, who couldn’t express her own opinion. Thanks to the exercises which we do in groups and the discussions we had, now I can say aloud what I think, I don’t care what others think about me, I do what, according to me, is good for me and if someone appreciates my actions I have extra satisfaction that I do mean something in other people’s lives.”

(Student, Poland)

The interactive groups achieve two goals. The first one is related to being and learning together, because students of different cultures, gender and academic levels learn to help each other, and this is a way to promote solidarity and open dialogue. The second one is related to instrumental skills because thanks to interactive groups the learning process is to improve or strengthen learning and students acquire more knowledge.

“But otherwise – we have less – moments of discussions or special lectures to work reflexively about this. Mrs K. offers this course about writing and speaking. In principle this is a reflexive course. Indeed, it is specific, but it helps us to realise that there are different modalities of speaking, and you can practice them, especially for your own subject, and that there are different modalities of writing. She holds this course for the second time and I think it’s well accepted. Sometimes students tell me they would like to have such a course more often because firstly it is fun, and secondly it gives you the feeling of: how to evaluate your competence? How to advance?”

(Lecturer, Germany)

Attending classes is a very important issue for success. It is like a ritual:

“It is more dynamic. We arrive here already tired after a long working day. If I don’t participate, after a while I do not pay attention any more. I am almost asleep. If I participate it is different. I am more attentive and memorise better. I remember a class where the teacher asked us questions and it is us [the students] who defined concepts following the questions asked. She asks a lot of questions. Intrinsically, we know the topic (…). With the questions, the teacher helps us to conceptualise the topic and at the end she puts the names to what we try to express”

(Student, Portugal)

Peer group supervision

To give a quick example how a co-operative reflection/learning process could be organised, a method of peer group supervision is briefly presented below:

The starting point for the common work within this counselling setting are concrete experiences and problems the participants are concerned with and worrying about in their professional/study life. These are discussed systematically in a group composed of 5 to a maximum 10 persons who, in terms of professional and lifeworld issues, are relatively close to each other (they don’t have to be literally colleagues) so that a similar experiential background exists. The participants advice each other mutually and autonomously, i.e. they work without help from a professional supervisor. Thus, all persons involved are equally responsible for the reflecting and learning process.
Peer group supervision serves to develop new perspectives and opportunities for action with regard to a certain case provided by a participant seeking advice. Here, the basic characteristic is that the so-called case presenter takes an active role in this process; s/he can be enabled to cope with his/her problems on his/her own. Peer group supervision considers itself as challenging help for self-help in the course of which existing resources are activated and the case presenter is encouraged to think ‘outside the box’.

It is organised according to a course structure (see below), which is meant to guarantee a systematic and effective process. Here, different models are suggested which vary slightly with regard to the amount of phases which are undergone during a session. One session takes about 30-45 minutes (not including a warming-up phase) so that more than one case can be discussed during this time.

**There are different roles taken by the participants:**

- **Case presenter:** S/he describes a situation s/he experiences as difficult. Here, s/he focuses on the external circumstances and on his/her feelings, viewpoints, coping strategies as well.

- **Moderator:** S/he conducts the session.

- **Counsellors:** The remaining participants bring their difficult perspectives, experiences and competences as resources in the process and hence try to encourage the case presenter in gaining new perspectives:

  “You come more easily to a modified perception of yourself through this kind of outside perspective and through appropriately given feedback; it facilitates a versatile and multilayered consideration of your own ways of acting, your own opinions and the responses which arise from this among interaction partners. By this, scopes for decision-making and action are extended and the participants are enabled to cope with difficult situations on their own.”

  (Tietze 2003, p.22)

- **Process observer:** S/he gives the group feedback about the consultation process. This serves as a means for quality assurance.

From session to session the different roles are allocated to other participants so that each one is enabled to fill in all roles with its respective responsibilities.
Table 1. Course structure of peer group supervision according to Tietze.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Casting</strong></td>
<td>Which cases are there? Who takes which role?</td>
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|                               | (5 minutes without the warm-up round, 45 minutes including warming-up round) | • Warm-up round if necessary  
|                               |                                                                      | • Selection of a moderator   
|                               |                                                                      | • Course of practice is discussed, additions and agreements are made if necessary  
|                               |                                                                      | • Participants present theirs requests  
|                               |                                                                      | • Additional role allocation: Selection of a case presenter, the remaining participants are the consultants  
|                               |                                                                      | • Defining the order of the supervisions  
| **Spontaneous Case Presentation** | What is it all about? How does the case presenter experience the situation? |
|                               | (5-10 minutes)                                                        | • Organised as a conversation between case presenter and moderator  
|                               |                                                                      | • The case presenter sketches his/her problem on the basis of a concrete situation / key scene  
|                               |                                                                      | • The peer consultants listen to the narration attentively without interrupting  
|                               |                                                                      | • The moderator supports the case presenter in his / her description – activates experiences and ideas – by asking questions  
|                               |                                                                      | • The consultants may ask questions for a better understanding at the end  
| **Key Question**              | Which question/need has the case presenter with regard to the situation s/he is in? |
|                               | (5-10 minutes)                                                        | • The case presenter puts his/her key question supported by the moderator  
|                               |                                                                      | • Consultants make suggestions how to put the key question if necessary  
| **Method Choice**             | Which method?                                                         |
|                               | (5 minutes)                                                           | • Dialogue between case presenter, moderator and consultants  
|                               |                                                                      | • Selection of a consulting method from the method pool (rather solution-oriented, sympathetic or geared to an alteration of perspectives)  
| **Consultation**              | What do we tell the case presenter with regard to his/her key question? |
|                               | (10 minutes)                                                          | • Consultants put ideas and suggestions according to the style of the chosen consultation module  
| **Conclusion**                | What did the case presenter learn from the peer group supervision?   |
|                               | (5-15 minutes)                                                        | • Case presenter sums the contributions of the consultants up and states which suggestions seem helpful/not helpful to him / her  
|                               |                                                                      | • Planning of initial measures if necessary  
|                               |                                                                      | • Evaluation on the part of the consultants  
|                               |                                                                      | • Feedback to the moderator  
|                               |                                                                      | • Feedback of the process observer  

Becoming A More Critical, Autonomous, Reflective Learner
4.1.2. (Ethnographic) case studies

Case studies can help you engage actively in the learning process. They are a useful tool to help you understand the theoretical and conceptual issues in an applied situation. Fry et al. (1999) define case studies (as used in higher education teaching) as ‘complex examples which give an insight into the context of a problem as well as topics that demonstrate theoretical concepts in an applied situation’. According to Mustoe and Croft (1999) the use of case studies in teaching increases the motivation and interest of students.

**Davis & Wilcock (2006, p.2) maintain that case studies:**
- Allow the application of theoretical concepts to be demonstrated, thus bridging the gap between theory and practice
- Encourage active learning
- Provide an opportunity for the development of key skills such as communication, group working and problem solving
- Increase the students’ enjoyment of the topic and hence their desire to learn.

Our research and experience tells us that adult students often like to have a practical reference point or context in which to make sense of theory. Relating back directly to personal experience can be productive but it also raises problems about how this experience should be used. For example, some students can become trapped in their own experience to the extent that they do not question their underlying assumptions and cannot see other perspectives clearly.

In this context, the use of ethnographic case studies can be a useful approach. It helps give students a practical context in which to develop their ideas but avoids being focused exclusively on one particular experience. It also helps students to get different perspectives on key issues.

“I think trying to get people to find material which is close to them in some ways in their experience and yet perhaps challenges some of their assumptions – it’s no good just representing another point of view in the abstract or from a long way away. In the Sociology of work for instance there’s a whole range of quite rich ethnographic case studies. I think these can be very fruitful for mature students to engage with. – They’re entrenched as it were. It’s very difficult for them to step back. An obvious truism is that mature students vary tremendously in both their areas of interest and their abilities. Engaging with their experience is not all straightforward and positive.”
(Lecturer, UK)

4.1.3. Use of role-play / simulations

Role-play and simulations unlike seminars and lectures are quite unusual methods in higher education. But when used they can become a stimulating setting to promote independent reflective learning for both students as well as teachers.

Role-play can simulate real situations and create a context where the students have the possibility to try out their knowledge. The purpose of the role-play is to give you an opportunity for experiencing and acting in situations which are realistic even if they are simulated or fictitious. This is similar to case-studies or problem based learning but unlike those, role-play enables you to experience emotionally what the situation might be.

Often it is stressed by adult students that real experiences or cases are important and make learning more meaningful and easier.

“I think I learn better with that kind of situation [discussions and examples of prior experience].”
(Student, Portugal)
“If all the classes were as interesting as these ones, I wouldn’t for sure have to leave them. I liked these classes, because they were very “lifelike” and performing dramas, I saw myself. I learnt a lot from these classes – I got to know that I could be a good advisor.”

(Student, Poland)

For a student, the role-play implies that you have to improvise and be creative with what you have learnt in real situations. Conflicts might occur and interaction situations in the cases become more real to the students when acting.

**Example of a case conducted in Sweden**

The role-play in a course in planning societal technical system for engineers is constructed as an imitation of a municipal open meeting with community which intends to consult citizens. The students themselves are going to participate in that kind of consultation meetings later on in their careers as Masters of Societal Engineering. In the community meetings, people analyse difficulties, possibilities and consequences.

The municipal plan is to fill a residential area with single-family houses and set up some apartment housing as well as a group house for people with special needs. The houses are planned to be built in a big green space that is used for recreation and especially organised football training for children. The residents in the area are making protests towards the planning e.g. writing letters-to-the-editor column and letters to the decision makers in the municipality. The residents have also made a list of names of people who wanted to express their disagreement. According to Swedish rules, the municipality invites citizens to a consultation procedure meeting, a meeting with the purpose of consulting the public before executing a plan.

The role-play is based on a real situation that occurred some years earlier. The students are told to read all documents like list of names, correspondence between the public and the civil servants as well as a letter to the editor. A role-list is prepared beforehand with fictitious names but they correspond to real persons from the real case. There is one municipal politician as well as one politician from the opposition party, an architect, civil servants, residents from the area who were the most active in the protest actions and finally a chairman of the sports association. The groups of about eight students prepare their own individual roles beforehand so they can take part in the meeting actively and get ready to argue pros or cons of the compression of the residential area from the selected perspective. The teacher takes the role of the chairperson and two other teachers act as residents prepared to give fuel to the discussion if it ebbs away.

Afterwards the meeting is analysed by students and teachers, both in content and method, i.e. how people in their roles acted in the situation e.g. angry acting, knowledge-based acting. The group discussion is about how to react to people and handle them in this kind of meetings. Another issue to analyse is the form of a democracy that this kind of meeting produces. When is it a democratic meeting and when is it a societal information meeting, what does democracy demand and how can different conflicts of interests be handled/approached?
4.2. Personal activities – what you can do by yourself

Even though social activities are crucial for developing reflective skills there is also an individual and very personal side to autonomous learning. This chapter is about the methods which are used to encourage students to form their individual insights and reflections as well as to take control over their own learning process.

4.2.1. Learning log

The learning log is a focused academic journal – a diary of your learning process. It combines the learning of previous and ongoing experiences and reflective reports on the learning content with the process itself (including time taken, sources used, etc.) You can also use a learning log as a tool to help you develop your confidence and extend your learning.

You can think it as an ongoing laboratory notebook for learning. With the help of the learning log you become more aware of your learning skill at identifying strengths and weaknesses as a learner. While writing the learning log you can observe, evaluate and criticise your own learning.

“This kind of individual reflection is very important for the learning process because it allows the development of self-assessment and the conception of a critical sense in relation to ourselves. It also helped to establish concrete objectives regarding learning”
(Student, Portugal)

“I think that these individual reflections are a good idea. They helped me to acknowledge what I learned and how my learning evolved this semester.”
(Student, Portugal)

“I have now written a learning log more regularly than before and made comparisons between the issues that I have learnt on my course and my working life and tried to find the things I could use in my job…I don’t know if that is of any use in my work but I have many ideas.”
(Student, Finland)

“Once a month I have one contact teaching day with a group of adult students. It’s very informal, sort of very free. It’s based on the fact that the group really does a lot of studying. We go through their learning logs, they write, the learning logs are based on themes and teaching theories and so on. But in my opinion, it entails different kind of freedom and confidence in the fact that the students study when they are able to set their own goals.”
(Lecturer, Finland)

You may initially find the diaries and logs difficult or meaningless, but in the course of time you might find it very useful for your learning as well as for your abilities to be critical and aware.

Furthermore, the fact that you have to write about new information or ideas enables you to

“better understand and remember the topic, and that articulating connections between new information or ideas and existing knowledge secures and extends learning. (…) When the learning journal [or log] is an active, experiential self study aid, it can help students move from surface to deep learning both within and across modules.”
(O’Rourke 1998, p. 404).

As one Portuguese student explained:

“This log helped to reflect and analyse our work, what we did in the classroom, our work method and the value and importance of the subject for us and for our future.”
(Student, Portugal).
To sum up, the learning log provides you with an opportunity to become aware of what you are learning and the learning process. When this happens, you know that what has been learned and you can communicate to others. It provides a pathway to continuous improvement and helps you to keep up to date your competencies and be comfortable with change. You are able to learn equally well from both success and failure, applying your knowledge of one specific situation to a broader range of other similar situations, learning even from the most unremarkable routine experiences (More about learning logs in Chapter 5).

Honey (2000) suggests the following questions to be answered in the learning log:

1. My description of what happened
2. My conclusions / lessons learned
3. My plan to do something better / different

Other questions can include:

1. What did I do in class today?
2. What did I learn?
3. What did I find interesting?
4. What questions do I have about what I learned?
5. What was the point of today’s lesson?
6. What connections did I make to previous ideas or questions?

Questions for Discussion / Reflection

- Have you ever filled in a log? What is your feeling about this approach to learning as a form of assessment?
- Did you find it difficult to get started?
- If you have experience of writing learning logs can you give any advice to your colleagues so they can start it?

http://cuip.uchicago.edu/schools/gearup/chicago/archive/2005-06/gy-avid/docs/log.htm
4.2.2 Portfolio

A portfolio is a collection of items organised in a notebook, file or a similar format. Collecting this information can help you to recognise the skills and abilities you possess in relationship to a career. As a method of learning, a portfolio can be understood as a sort of evidence of the road the individual has been through during the self-development process.

What can be included in a portfolio? Everything that is crucial or significant to your learning and development:

- Questions raised while studying some theories, reading articles, discussing with peers and teachers.
- Individual comments on texts, lectures and any kind of class activities.
- Any paragraphs and quotations you have found relevant, inspiring, meaningful or - on the contrary – controversial.
- Any visual forms of your ideas and issues, like graphs, schemes, icons or photos with comments explaining their importance and meaning for your development.
- Your own reflection on how you are changing and why you find this particular direction the most suitable for you.

“I’ve finally understood what it means to learn. Thanks to working on my portfolio I started to think about myself – how I am, what do I know, what I am comfortable with... and compare with other people. I’ve noticed the differences between people and I’ve realised that even the smallest event or trivial situation in my life is a potential source for reflection.

(Student, Poland)

According to the Quality Assurance Agency of UK, a portfolio is intended to help students to

- become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners
- understand how they are learning and relate their learning to a wider context
- improve their general skills for study and career management
- articulate their personal goals and evaluate progress towards their achievement
- encourage a positive attitude to learning throughout life
- improve and encourage dialogue between learners and teachers.

Questions for Discussion / Reflection

- What are the reflective methods you find most useful for your own learning?
- What could be the other methods or ways of supportive reflective learning?

4.2.3. How to tell/write your own story?

What does it mean ‘to tell a story’?

‘Telling’ seems to have a familiar ring: Fairytales are told. Grandmother tells a story. When we compare the sound of the word with ‘saying’ or ‘reporting’, we notice that telling is more emotional. Telling is a way of reliving the past. This is what makes it so interesting. But the form of telling is also something rather special. Telling follows different rules from those of reporting or arguing (Kallmeyer & Schuetze 1977). If we get the chance to tell something to other people, if a circle of listeners or even a single listener gives us his/her undivided attention, then we must also have something to tell. We join in a kind of ‘contract’ and have to do our bit to make sure that this ‘contract’ is held.
However, even the storyteller him- or herself profits from the chance to tell. He/she uses the opportunity to be in the focus of an audience. Every storyteller appreciates the atmosphere of interest and attention. Storytelling creates a friendly interactive situation (see Quasthoff 1979), rather different from analysing or arguing.

Nevertheless, each storytelling, in particular a narrative on your own biography, is a fruitful reflection on your life. It gives you the chance to link earlier experiences to the feeling of identity you may have built up in the presence. Or it makes you understand the problems you are currently confronted with. Biographical storytelling is always an experience of meeting yourself (Schuetze 1984), of reconstructing how and why things happened and may have opened doors for future plans or, in contrast, did exclude you from the outset.

**How can you use storytelling in your study experience?**

Therefore, use the chance to tell your story – both informally and formally. Tell it to people in the same situation. You will see that your problems will be shared by others and your plans and dreams will be enriched by plans and dreams your co-students will bring in. Biographical storytelling creates friendships and co-operative actions (Alheit 1992). Biographical storytelling opens doors.

But there is also an ‘analytical’ chance in it. If you have a tutor you trust, tell him/her your story. He/she will understand a lot more of who you actually are:

- from where you come and which obstacles hindered your educational career,
- which particular life experiences led you to higher education,
- which plans and dreams you have and which ideas may be not that realistic,
- which opportunities you should reflect on and which resources in yourself should be strengthened.

You are an autonomous individual, however, you experience this particular autonomy if you confront it with the autonomous experiences of others. ‘Learning difference’ makes you accept difference and, at the same time, also accept yourself as a learner. You are an important person among others. Telling your story gives you the feeling: that is true.

**What makes it useful to write your own story?**

Of course, you are not a writer (maybe, not yet). However, to write down your own experiences, to reflect on the way you have gone, the problems you have solved, the people you have lost, new friends you have gained – this is part of an extremely important learning process. Fix it, just for yourself. It will be more than a ‘portfolio’ of recently achieved qualifications and certificates. It is like a ‘treasure’ for reflections-to be. Don’t be afraid of it. Actually do it.

Telling and writing about yourself is the best way to get an idea about who you are. This idea will change over times – which is normal and okay. But you will understand why it changes and why the changes are legitimate. We are lifelong learners. It is good to know not precisely **what**, but **why** and **how** we have learnt.

**Tasks & questions:**

- Remember the situation when you last told about your life.
- What prevents you from telling your story to co-students?
- Is there a tutor you would like to talk to and explain who you are?
- Try to write down your life experiences. Be very honest about it. It’s just for yourself.
5. Methods of evaluation and assessment

5.1. Introduction

Both evaluation and assessment have key roles to play in encouraging critical, autonomous and reflective learning amongst students. However, although they are often linked, their purposes are significantly different.

Evaluation is a way of estimating the value of a particular learning process or experience. Thus, learning logs or reflective diaries can be valuable ways of reflecting critically about what you have been doing, if it has worked well or badly, how it relates to theory, how you can improve your practice, how you can become more autonomous etc. Similarly, peer evaluation can give you very useful feedback about how a particular presentation has gone, what others think about it, how you can improve it.

However, assessment is different. It is usually more formal and, most importantly, is judged against an external standard or benchmark. If assessment is introduced into the keeping of learning logs or reflective diaries it means that the whole process is different (see Chapter 5.2.). For example, it can be more difficult for tutors (or your peers) to help you develop your own reflections as they are also having to judge them against some external standard. In addition, as you are now focused more on assessment, it may well mean that you take fewer risks in your learning and hence are less reflective as you become more concerned about getting the right answers, meeting the right criteria or impressing the assessor. Similarly, when peer evaluation is translated into peer assessment, it becomes more difficult to be open in both your feedback and reflective in your learning as these are now being formally judged.

5.2 Continuous assessment is important.

“There are good days and bad days. There are days in which students are more nervous, when everything goes wrong. It is not right to cram everything the student has learned in only 2 hours examination. I prefer continuous assessment because, in this way, lecturer knows what the student learned.”
(Student, Portugal)

With continuous assessment, the student receives continuous feedback which will enable him/her to see his/her progress towards the objectives. As a matter of fact, one student said that:

“With continuous assessment no one can leave anything behind”
(Student, Portugal)

Many students prefer this because:

“There are a series of smaller objectives, instead of one big one at the end of the semester .”
(Student, Portugal)

Many students feel more motivated and interested in their work with continuous assessment compared to exams:

“Last year I had a final examination in English. I never went to a class. I only did the test and I have the feeling that I learned nothing. I didn’t attend classes. I studied grammar alone. I prepared myself for the examination. But I didn’t speak English, I didn’t participate, I didn’t hear, I didn’t discuss. Now that I have continuous assessment I attend classes, I participate. I have the feeling that I learn and I am more interested .”
(Student, Portugal)
Some students prefer essays because this means “research” and it allows them to work in an autonomous way.

“We must work more but as we are obliged to do so, we manage to find time. If we are not forced, we don’t do. But as the essays are compulsory and if we don’t do them we cannot do the final examination, we find time. It is harder for us that are working, we sacrifice weekends, however I think it is [worthwhile]. In France I couldn’t work and study at the same time even if I wanted to do because they are much more demanding than here, in all aspects. We had a test every week in each subject. We had to study continuously. Here we do not have a test every week. We can read but this is different. When there is a test we really study. (..); there are small tests. The first time is only chapter 1; the next time is chapter 1 and 2. And at the end of the semester we are already prepared to do an examination with all the chapters because we have already studied”.

(Student, Portugal)

There are several forms of assessment, e.g. essays, assignments, examinations, oral presentations, etc., each of them contributing to the development of different skills. In this particular case essays and dissertations will equip you with a higher level of critical reflection and autonomous skills even if it demands more of your time. These skills will be useful to you in the future.

Questions for Discussion / Reflection

• Which type of assessment do you prefer? Why?
• Have you ever been assessed in a continuous way or by a final examination? Did you feel the difference in how you learnt and the skills you have developed? And if so, in what ways?

5.3. Diaries / Learning logs in assessment

Earlier in this handbook (Chapters 4.2.1. and 5.1.) we have already discussed the possibilities of learning logs. Here we take a more intense look at them as methods of assessment.

Diaries and learning logs can be seen as an assessment per se. They also encourage learners to reflect on their own learning (Friesner and Hart 2005b).

Learning logs “are structured in many ways, often dependent upon the topic being studied, the level of a qualification and the length of time over which logging continues” (op. cit:117).

The analysis of the log is usually carried out by an audit (e.g. SWOT analysis) and after that, the student decides on “which weakness to overcome and which strength to develop further” (op. cit: 117). Objectives are set according to the acronym SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed (op.cit.)

Learning logs are a formative assessment 3 so they are written during the learning period. This will help the student to reflect on the extent to which the learning objectives have been achieved. At the end of the learning period the student can reflect on the whole learning process as well as on the role the log has performed in it.

Some students when asked for the first time to fill in a log do not feel it is real academic work. But this perspective changes once they have experienced it. They see the value of diaries because it helps them to reflect critically not only about what they have learned but the way they have done it. The most suitable approaches for analysing data of logs would be a combination of content analysis, case study analysis, narrative and storytelling analysis or even the blend of them (Friesner and Hart 2005a).

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3 Formative assessment is a self-reflective process that intends to promote student attainment (Wikipedia, 2006).
Questions for Discussion / Reflection

- Have you ever filled in a log? What is your feeling about this approach to learning as a form of assessment?
- Diaries may involve personal reflection. How would you feel about this being used as part of your assessment?

5.4. Portfolios in assessment

Portfolios are a good method of assessment for combining theory and practice. For instance, they can be used in subjects such as communication, business studies, work based learning, applied social sciences, etc. As part of the assessment process you may be asked to do an oral presentation on the content of the portfolio. This type of assessment process will be useful in future work roles.

At the end of the assessment process, in some subjects, the lecturer might give the portfolio back to the student and it can constitute a good starting point to help performing a task in a profession.

The diagram (Figure 2) illustrates the benefits of using portfolios as part of your assessment.

Figure 2.
Fenwick (1996) suggests a series of steps to follow when beginning to use portfolios:

- Decide first – what is to be collected, by whom and when?
- Spend time introducing portfolios to learners.
- Work with learners throughout the portfolio process.
- Hold periodic conferences with learners.
- Grade portfolios holistically.
- Spend time responding to learners.

Fenwick (1996) also suggests a format for holistic grading portfolio. It would include themes such as a) preparation of portfolio, b) documentation and growth, c) evaluation of selected items and d) quality of reflections / self evaluation demonstrated at closing conference. For each theme there will be some statements and the assessment would be made using a Likert scale of 5 points. (For more information please look at the Tara Fenwick paper available at http://www.ualberta.ca/~tfenwick/ext/pubs/print/portfolio.htm)

Questions for Discussion / Reflection

- Have you ever prepared a portfolio as part of your assessment process? If so what were the difficulties in doing it? What did you learn in this process? How would you advise a colleague who is preparing one?
- If you have not prepared yet a portfolio do you know how to start one? If you don’t, do you know how to look for information to start one?
- In which areas do you find it could be useful?
5.5. Peer evaluation

In Sweden and Finland there is a strong tradition of peer evaluation in higher education. In a very early stage during the academic studies, students evaluate the work of each other in seminars and group sessions. The procedures are normal practice and are included in the curriculum. The evaluation framework, objectives and practices are discussed with students prior to the actual act of evaluation. The underlying objective is to develop academic argumentation skills.

The peer evaluation is formative which means that it has a developmental approach. Adult or mature students tend to enjoy the discussions and reflections with their equals. Usually it is fruitful to hear fellow students’ comments on their own ideas in a free and trustful atmosphere or environment.

In practice this kind of evaluation is often organised as a pair or a group exercise which includes writing a paper or/and giving a presentation. The role of the evaluators is to look the work of the fellow student very closely and in depth. The actual evaluation consists of asking for the rationale behind the work, commenting the output, giving feedback and putting the work in context of the topic they are focusing on. The peer evaluation resembles a referee process used in academic journals. The key difference in peer evaluation compared to referee practice is to communicate openly and have a face-to-face dialogue.

“Well, in a group exam there are usually three persons and they can switch, that is, there is one question from each setbook and you can switch the writer so that each person writes the answer in turn. But then the answer is discussed and the right answer is decided together and the group gets a joint grade.”

(Student, Finland)

Fenwick (1999) suggests an evaluation guide comprising a series of questions for each member of the group / student assess the cooperation in the team. Each question would be rated between 1 (Weak) and 4 (Outstanding). Examples of the questions are:

- all members shared their ideas freely
- we offered support and encouragement to each other
- we tried to explore alternate ideas before we settled on a solution

(For more information regarding peer assessment in groups please look at Tara Fenwick paper available at http://www.ualberta.ca/~tfenwick/ext/pubs/print/peereval.htm)

Questions for Discussion / Reflection

- How do you feel about assessing another colleague and / or being peer assessed?
- What qualities and skills would you need to assess another colleague or being peer assessed?
- What might be the advantages and disadvantages of this type of assessment?
5.6. Self-evaluation / Involvement

Another specific method of evaluation that can be developed in university education and is very useful for non-traditional students is self-evaluation. This methodology implies the involvement of students in the evaluation process, and that signifies taking into account their opinion about their learning progress. During an academic year non-traditional students and adult learners have to be aware of the aims and learning outcomes of the subjects and then analyse if they have attained them. This self-evaluation is carried out in a dialogue with lecturers or teachers.

L’Escola de Verneda Sant Martí is a Spanish adult education school where the process of self-evaluation is based on the dialogue between students and teachers. In La Verneda Sant Martí the exam is not used as a method because the priority is that students decide their progress through an egalitarian dialogue with teachers. In this sense, both students and teachers try to arrive at a consensus about their further studies in order to ensure what is best for them. This kind of evaluation is possible thanks to the school organisation which is based on democratic participation. Each contribution of any person who attends the school (teachers, volunteers and students) is taken into account in the decision making process (Sanchez 1999).

Questions for Discussion / Reflection

- Do you think you would find it easy / difficult to do this? Why?
- What kind of skills would you need in order to undertake self-evaluation?
- What do you think about self-evaluation as a form of assessment?

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4 See more information at webpage: http://www.edaverneda.org
### 6. References and links to the websites

#### Chapter 1


#### Chapter 3

**Interaction in learning processes**


**Dialogue**


**Emotional experience of critical reflection**


#### Chapter 4

**Interactive groups**


**Peer group supervision**

### (Ethnographic) case studies

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### Learning log

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<td>The learning log</td>
<td>In An Introduction to WAC – Writing Across the Curriculum [online]. WAC Clearinghouse.</td>
<td>Available at: <a href="http://wac.colostate.edu/intro/pop5h.cfm">http://wac.colostate.edu/intro/pop5h.cfm</a> [Accessed 15 September 2006].</td>
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### Portfolio

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### How can I introduce reflective practice into my teaching?


### Storytelling


### Chapter 5

#### Diaries / Learning logs


#### Portfolios


#### Peer evaluation


#### Self-evaluation / Involvement
