

The Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI)

1. Introduction

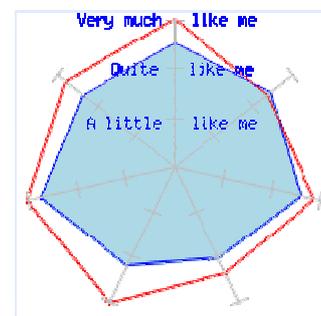
The ELLI research, initiated by Professors Broadfoot and Claxton and led by Dr Ruth Deakin Crick at the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, set out to identify the characteristics and dispositions of effective lifelong learners. Seven dimensions of 'learning power' emerged, via factor analysis, each with elements of 'thinking, feeling and doing'.

The seven dimensions are as follows:

Dimension	Description
Changing and learning	A sense of myself as someone who learns and changes over time.
Critical curiosity	An orientation to want to "get beneath the surface".
Meaning making	Making connections and seeing that learning "matters to me".
Creativity	Risk-taking, playfulness, imagination and intuition.
Learning Relationships	Learning with and from others and also able to manage without them.
Strategic awareness	Being aware of my thoughts, feelings and actions as a learner, and able to use that awareness to manage learning processes.
Resilience	The readiness to persevere in the development of my own learning power.

A seventy-two item questionnaire was created and validated through further research. Available online, this instantly produces a profile of each learner, in the form of a 7-spoked spider diagram. A frequency chart is also produced for the whole class. This feedback then becomes the starting point for mentoring conversations and strategies for developing learning power, individually and collectively.

One of the most widely reported benefits is of learners and teachers becoming confident with a whole new language for learning. Many find their profiles motivate them to improve their learning. When managed effectively across a Year Group, significant gains have been achieved in learning power. Individuals can achieve particularly significant improvement in the dimensions they target and work on. If a second survey is taken, it superimposes a new profile on the original, so any gains made can be seen graphically.



To use ELLI, organisations need at least two 'tutors' trained as 'ELLI Champions'. The training takes two days, enabling the tutors:

- to understand the concepts and why they are powerful,
- to manage the online registrations and surveys,
- to interpret individual and class profiles, and
- to plan strategies or 'interventions' to build learning power across the area involved, equipping the Champions to brief and train students and colleagues.

ELLI has been tested in many education settings, from foundation stage through primary, secondary and higher education, with 'NEET' learners, (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and convicted young offenders. ViTaL and the University of Bristol are also working with major clients in the corporate sector investigating the human resource implications of learning power.

In support of the ELLI Research programme, ViTaL Partnerships, a charitable social enterprise, has managed ELLI projects in the UK, Bahrain, Madrid, Malaysia and Australia and more are planned for the USA.

The outcomes are invariably extremely positive, illuminating and exciting.

*"It's changed what I think
I can do!"
August 2006
A NEET learner in his evaluation*

“The research findings emanating from ELLI were central to a presentation given by Dr. Ruth Deakin Crick that was regarded by a large audience of 400 or so academics, teachers and educational leaders as groundbreaking.”

November 2008, Professor Terence Lovat, The University of Newcastle, Australia



2. The Values and Purposes of ELLI

The values of ELLI are in why and how it is used. Well-deployed, it is about emancipation and empowerment, enhancing life through effective learning, for individuals, organisations and communities.

ELLI is:

1. *a well-researched set of ideas about how people learn most effectively*
2. *a self-assessment instrument to aid self-analysis, diagnosis and strategy*
3. *a tool to empower people to bring about change, individually and together*

1 How we learn

ELLI is a well-researched set of ideas about how people learn most effectively. These ideas are:

- holistic and relational, about integrating and connecting (not just splitting things up for the sake of analysis)
 - they are about us as ‘whole people’ – thinking, feeling, doing (not just about cognition or behaviour or skills)
 - they balance attention to both the ‘person’ as the learner and the ‘curriculum’ that is being learnt. We need to see each of them as inseparably linked
 - the Seven Dimensions (of effective learning) are inter-connected aspects of a complex but single concept, that of learning power – so you can use the ones that are your strengths, to help strengthen the others
 - they include ‘meaning making’ and ‘learning relationships’, that depend upon linking up and relating to other people and new ideas
- developmental: seeing learners as ‘on a learning journey’, not defining or ‘fixing’ them for the sake of analysis or assessment
- drawn from research that consulted widely, amongst learners and practitioners as well as experts and research literature
- still being tested and developed empirically through further research, with findings about:
 - the teaching and leadership that lead to higher levels of learning power
 - how learning is affected by a sense of place, identity and cultural roots
 - relationships between:
 - learning power and achievement (and under-achievement)
 - learning power and the emotional literacy of organisations
 - particular learning power profiles and behaviour
 - learning power and how the curriculum is organised
 - learning power, personal development and employability skills

2 The self-assessment instrument

ELLI is a self-assessment instrument to aid self-diagnosis and strategy. As a self-assessment tool, it:

- is a 'self-report' inventory:
 - i.e. it reorganises what we say about ourselves into a profile on Seven Dimensions
- is contextual:
 - its outcomes will be affected by a learner's perception of herself at a point of time, in relation to a learning context (or contexts)
- can be repeated to reflect and report on change in self-perception and/or the learning context
- appears to have high 'face validity' – learners tend to agree with it
- has been tested and validated in school-based and Higher Education contexts, in UK and abroad
- should be capable of adaptation to any age group or culture, subject to re-validation
- creates numerical raw 'scores' invisible to the individual learner but stored in a database that makes the aggregated data available for interrogation and analysis (about 50,000 cases already)
- can contribute usefully to institutional self-evaluation

3 An empowerment tool

ELLI is a tool to empower people to bring about change, individually and together. As such, it:

- has been found to play a significant part in helping people to:
 - engage in reflection and become more self-aware
 - communicate meaningfully about their learning
 - develop confidence and self-reliance, becoming less dependent on teachers/others
 - decide on change strategies
 - recognise, monitor and report on change
 - manage transitions, such as between key stages, schools, school and university, work and formal learning and from one culture to another
 - mentor students and support their personal development towards employment
 - move towards a learner-centred, non-didactic teaching style
- is likely to vary in its impact, because it:
 - depends upon 'buy-in' to the validity of the Seven Dimensions – which is usually strong once they are explained
 - requires learners and change agents to know how to apply them in their contexts
 - works best when used to inspire creative, personal, tailored, local solutions
 - informs and inspires change but still depends upon change being managed well
- is difficult to measure scientifically because change can usually be attributed to many factors
- is reported as having high positive impact by many learners, teachers and leaders, from nursery (kindergarten) age to adults, in both formal learning and work settings
- has inspired many highly imaginative and effective learning strategies and teaching ideas
- works at an individual, group, institution or whole system level.

3. Frequently Asked Questions

How can I work with ELLI in my organisation?

ViTaL Partnerships, the Charity to which the rights in ELLI are assigned, can design and run a bespoke 'ELLI Project' with you and your staff, to suit your needs and your budget. ViTaL also trains and accredits ELLI Practitioners based throughout the UK, for education or business contexts. If you contact Sue Woodhead, Administration Manager at ViTaL, she will put you in touch with someone who will be happy to talk through the options with you. Her email address is: Sue@vitalhub.org and there is more information at www.vitalpartnerships.com.

What does an 'ELLI Project' entail?

There are several components to an ELLI Project. Some are essential, like the initial two-day 'Champions Training' which ensures that you have at least two members of staff to lead your project and 'champion' the ideas for you. The most important pre-condition is commitment by institutional leaders, both to the ELLI values and to adequate resourcing of people's time to 'do it properly'.

The training equips your ELLI Champions to brief and train other staff, arrange for learners and leaders to access the ELLI questionnaire, explain the Seven Dimensions to them and support them in understanding and responding to their ELLI profiles. Champions also know how to scrutinise and analyse the learning power characteristics of selected groups. All the staff involved can then use ELLI as both a diagnostic and developmental tool, working with individuals and groups on strategies to build learning power in the dimensions they identify as most needed.

After this programme of 'interventions' led by your own Champions, you can arrange for people to do the questionnaire again, receive their second profile and see what difference they have made to their learning power.

Optional extras apply if you are interested in using ELLI as a research tool for action enquiry or self-evaluation. ViTaL's Research and Development Team, in partnership with Bristol's Graduate School of Education, supports action research with advice and guidance, gathers qualitative evidence (such as by running focus groups and semi-structured interviews) and commissions and reports on data analysis from the research team at the University. This can yield valuable evidence for institutional self-evaluation. The 'Rolls Royce' is a bespoke ELLI 'R&D Project' with its own Research Questions, designed with you, managed by ViTaL, culminating in a full written report, printed and on disk. In completely new settings or cultures this is a necessary first step, to ensure validity in the new context.

What does the 2-day Champions' Training involve?

The training asks participants to 'wear three hats': first, as learners in their own right; secondly, as ELLI Practitioners; and, lastly, as prospective project leaders. It is facilitated, interactive and intensive and engages participants in creative, collaborative activity. It uses metaphor and story to bring concepts to life and is often described as 'inspirational'. Quality materials, in both printed and electronic format, are supplied. Internet access is normally needed for all participants. If you want to host the training yourself, you will need to provide online access as well as food and drink and training accessories, such as data projection. Alternatively, ViTaL can arrange for your staff to attend a training event run by ViTaL in Bristol or at any hosting institution with the facilities needed.

For further information, see www.vitalpartnerships.com