Book Review

Colin Calleja & Christine Johnston (Eds.) (2015), A Learning Paradigm Informed by Knowledge of the Learning Self: A Compendium of Applied Research on the Let Me Learn Process®,
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This research compendium was compiled to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Let Me Learn Process®, Advanced Learning System and the US and Malta researchers who over the past two decades have conducted the researching and implementation of the Let Me Learn Process in the US, Australia, Malta and seven other EU member nations. The text was released during the International Learning Summit: Unlocking Learning Potential held in Sliema, Malta, July, 2015. It is edited by Dr. Colin Calleja, flag bearer for Let Me Learn- Malta and Europe, and Professor Christine Johnston, originator and lead researcher of Let Me Learn-USA.

To the Reader

If the Let Me Learn Process (LMLP), an Advanced Learning System is new to you, and you find its conceptual base inviting, read on to discover some of the multitude of its practical applications. If you already know and use LMLP, the research chapters will spark new ideas and excitement. However, whether new or a subscriber to the LMLP, it is implicit that unless you, the reader or researcher—**learner**, understand yourself **as-a-learner** and **intentionally use** that understanding to the level of **metacognition and intentional learning**, you will not fully realize LMLP's transformational potential. The Foreword explains the basis upon which I make this statement. It contains the first person account of one man's dogged, faithful pursuit of implementing LMLP in a US urban school system. In his seventh decade, never licensed as a teacher, and working alone, Joseph Coleman has dedicated 15 years to improving the lots of kids by assisting them and their teachers to know themselves as learners. Colin Calleja wrote: "he tells forthrightly how he…struggled to cope with his own learning issues. Joseph's struggle is most probably the struggle of each one of us, a passage from

knowing about LMLP to *doing and living LMLP."* Joseph is metaphorically Everyman/Everywoman. I am he: present soon after LML's birth, I did not make the passage from *knowing about* to *doing and living* until I later experienced transformational learning in a course led by Christine Johnston. The compendium of research—certainly this review—is a place where you can begin understanding your learning self, and it serves as an invitation to do so.

Content Description

The book is divided into four parts. Part I "A Theoretical Perspective" begins with a chapter by Christine Johnston, LMLP originator and editor, in which she describes learning and diagrams LMLP processes. Here is a very short version: Taking in the world begins with our five senses sending stimuli to the brain. Neuro-receptors and electro–chemicals receive sense stimuli and code them. Making sense of the world's stimuli begins when coded stimuli pass from the brain through the brain-mind interface to the mind's working memory. There the brain's coding is translated into various symbols as they pass through four filters called Patterns. The Patterns are named Sequence, Precision, Technical Reasoning and Confluence. Each Pattern has three mental processes that come into play: cognition (thinking); conation (acting); affectation (feeling). Making sense of the world is accomplished by interplay of the symbol encoding Patterns, each with their three active mental processes. Responding to the world appropriately occurs through our focused intention, metacognition, or self-regulation of our Patterns and their mental processes. The Let Me Learn Process (LMLP) provides the means for us to understand and control our Patterns and their mental processes, thus control our learning.

This personal understanding reveals that we have ways of using our Pattern Processes to make sense of the world, but that by intentional focus on our own Pattern operations (metacognition) we are able **temporarily** to alter our use of Patterns so that our response to the world is appropriate. We also observe and come to understand that other learning selves around us have different preferences for Pattern use but the same ability to control their responses on a temporary basis. LMLP provides all learners with a lexicon of specific terms that allow all of us to communicate what our learning processes are doing while they are at work.

LMLP is a new learning paradigm of internal agency. Conflicting with LMLP is the old, still dominant paradigm resting on the assumption of external agency. It is commonly called the transmission or delivery model of teaching and learning. It is top-down, outside-in and assumes external control. Most readers were likely acculturated under the old paradigm; the reviewer certainly was. In Chapter 2, editor, Colin Calleja, differentiates LMLP from

the prior and essentially failed movement of "learning styles". He first distils critical evaluations of over 70 "learning styles" models. The "styles" analytic instruments individually and as a group lack strong psychometric properties. They also lack a common conceptual framework or theory. Each is a one-off conception with its own system of measurement and conceptual base. Calleja reports that their failure was one reason Johnston and colleagues began working on the brain-mind connection that eventuated in LMLP and its instrument, the Learning Connections Inventory (LCI), which possesses strong psychometric characteristics (Johnston & Dainton, 2005). The LCI begins the LMLP process by providing learners with information on the presence and strength of the four Pattern filters described above. The validity of the learner's LCI Pattern scores rests not only on prior validation studies. Rather, while engaging in LMLP, each individual's LCI scores are compared for validity against evidence from the individual's behaviour, work products and artefacts of his or her learning going back to the earliest years. Calleja concludes that LMLP possesses a robust theory, valid and reliable instrumentation, and practical application.

In Chapter 3, Patricia Maher follows up on Chapter 2 by describing how and why from the wide variety of learning conceptions, she, as Director of the University of South Florida Academic Success Centre, chose the Advanced Learning System, LMLP, as the basis for the work of her academic success tutors and mentors.

The remaining three Parts of the compendium constitute 87% of the work's 538 pages; they address the final phrase in the title "a compendium of applied research". Part II contains eight chapters that address the LMLP "applied to professional development, reflective practice and leadership." The first chapter is one of the earliest applications of LMLP to "staff development" in an US elementary school. The next three chapters are contextualized in Malta. One examines how professional development via LMLP results in moving managers and teachers in a single school through "transformational learning". Two chapters examine LMLP as a means of altering the current practice of continuing professional education and developing teacher social networks. Another chapter investigates LMLP as a form of reflective practice for both teachers and students. Three chapters study the application of LMLP to the preparation of school leaders in the US. The first of these last three chapters in Part II examines how the implementation with graduate students builds "relational space" and changes the whole orientation and dynamic of leadership preparation. The next two chapters investigate using LMLP as the basis for constructing and facilitating leadership teams.

Part III presents six chapters examining the LMLP "applied to higher education". Four chapters are in the US context. One chapter examines

LMLP applied to undergraduate academic advisement. Another concerns teambuilding. One is an experiment examining how a short introduction of LML Patterns among engineering students resulted in improved performance, especially writing, and attitudes. One chapter examines a broad range of outcomes for a subset of faculty, students and the institution resulting from the implementation of LMLP in a very large community college. Malta is the setting of the final two chapters in this third part of the book. One examined combining Concept Mapping, Vee Heuristics and LMLP as a model for teaching and learning in higher education. The other investigated LMLP related to learner autonomy in language learning.

Part IV contains eight chapters that address the LMLP "applied to pedagogy of difference and student achievement". These chapters are more multinational than previous Parts: three are Maltese, three US, one English, and one Australian. The first is a correlational study of Pattern preference differences among general students and students having two specific special education classifications (grades 6-12 in New Jersey). Another is a Maltese study examining a particular multisensory reading program used with early primary children to ascertain whether it addresses all four Pattern preferences identified by LMLP. An English study examined the motivation and learning of young children diagnosed with Developmental Coordination Disorder and found major conflict between assumptions of professionals and student Pattern preferences for learning. A US study posed the question of whether LMLP countered the finding that teachers unconsciously marginalize and put at risk students they perceive as "problematic". A Maltese study examined how recognition and honouring of learner Pattern preferences enhances the development of intercultural communication training. An Australian multi-year study of one teacher and her low SES students investigates using LMLP to change pedagogy and student outcomes. A Maltese chapter examined using Vee Heuristics, Concept Mapping and LMLP to understand metacognition in very young children. The final chapter examined how learners and teacher-learners using LMLP to the top level of metacognition and intentional learning were able to combat increased standardisation of learning in the US.

Research Methods

For this reviewer, minimal criteria for "research" include: (1) a question to be answered through (2) systematic collection and analysis of empirical data. "Applied" connotes research for practical use. Of the compendium's 25 chapters, 18 present empirical research. The remaining seven chapters are theoretical or literature based or advocacy positions based on personal experience and/or literature. Of the 18 empirical chapters, 13 (72%) fit one or more categories of the qualitative/naturalistic research tradition; three (17%) fit one of the categories of the quantitative/positivist tradition. Two (11%) are

mixed methods studies, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. Considering the 13 qualitative studies, 12 are case studies and of those 11 claim to be action research, a subset of applied research.

The qualitative action research case study is clearly the dominant format of empirical research in the compendium. Critical reading indicates this dominance makes sense and is appropriate. The focus in all of these case studies is the **process** of LMLP: how it works; how individuals experience it; how it is made available for individuals to learn; how engaging in it changes perspective, belief, understanding, self-perception, motivation, academic achievement, behaviour, social interaction, professional action; how it affects specific contexts like work groups, advisement, organizational culture; and how it supports metacognition. The researchers in these case studies are able to present external descriptions, but beyond description they are seeking explanations that require the internal perspectives of the actors they are observing. Such access is critical in studies were the important questions go beyond "what" to "how". Working with a relatively new and evolving process, most researchers of LMLP have been more concerned with understanding than generalizing across large populations. In addition, the specific lexicon of LMLP, an integral component of the Advanced Learning System, allows researchers to capture real time data on learning in action. Thus, for the researchers' primary purposes, qualitative/naturalistic, small sample, case studies have proven to be a good choice.

Of the three quantitative/positivist studies, two of them are clearly also case studies performed for practical reasons. One was a true experiment. The practical problem was that engineering students as a group have high Technical Reasoning Pattern scores and prefer "doing" over writing. But for future employment, writing is a required skill. The experiment resulted in the finding that a relatively short time investment in providing students with their LCI scores and interpreting how this information might be useful in addressing anticipated problems resulted in higher scores on projects requiring written material. The other study used correlation analysis to determine whether teachers of very young children perceived a structured multisensory early literacy programme to embrace the four learning Patterns. Teachers did perceive balanced use of all four Patterns. Thus, quantitative research methods were also used appropriately in small sample case studies to address practical problems.

Authorship and Prior Publication

Considering authorship across *all* chapters by occupational categories, of the 23 total authors, ten were academics, six university administrators (some former academics), two ministry officials, and five single representatives of other occupations. Five authors produced seven chapters that were directly derivative of their doctoral dissertations in which LMLP was central. Of the

25 chapters, 19 (76%) were previously published or peer reviewed papers presented at conferences. The breakdown is: seven journal articles; four book chapters; two yearbook chapters; one monograph chapter; five referred conference papers. The remaining six chapters were written specifically for the compendium. Overall, three quarters of the chapters had passed through peer review in other contexts before being included in the compendium.

Looking Across Chapters, Reading Deeply, and Finding Gems

To this point, the review describes the research compendium's contents interspersed with interpretive and evaluative commentary. Beginning here, I take a different tack. For transparency, the reader needs to know that I have studied, researched, facilitated, published and used LML in my own teaching with graduate students in educational leadership and administration and in doctoral dissertation advisement over most of LMLP's 20 years. In this section, I introduce a number of concepts, theories and themes not specifically researched in the various studies, but which appear to me as closely related to research studies of LMLP. In fact, future researchers could easily convert these elements into variables or foci for new research. The ideas I perceive woven through LMLP research studies are grounded in my specific background containing a mix of organizational theory, sociology, reflective practice, both qualitative and quantitative research, and nine years of high school teaching. The reader approaches this research, indeed LMLP itself, with his or her own perspective, which may be similar to mine, but more likely quite different. I find LMLP to be a powerful and useful lens through which to perceive and pursue all of life. I experience it as very elastic, valuable in almost any circumstance.

Language: Moving from Prescriptive to Descriptive   Using LMLP moves language away from prescription (judgemental, critical, and evaluative) toward description (factual, non-judgemental, and without untested assumptions). Prescriptive language puts the recipient in a defensive position, raises the emotional state, and shuts down rational discussion. Descriptive language opens up listening and reasoned, unemotional dialogue. Examples in several chapters show how pejorative references to people such as "annoying", "anal", "uptight", "withdrawn" can be replaced with LMLP lexicon terms like Pattern use descriptions: "highly precise" or "high in technical reasoning". Prescriptive language "problematises" learners; descriptive language deproblematises them (Chapter 21). The scourge of bullying is an example beyond the compendium. It thrives on prescriptive language; LMLP based descriptive language discourages and reduces it and other negative student interactions (Dawkins, Kottkamp & Johnston, 2010).

Reduced Isolation   LMLP reduces teacher and learner isolation by providing a shared descriptive language (lexicon) for skills, processes and tools, which

allows real time shared discussion of ongoing learning. Shifting language from prescriptive to descriptive also reduces isolation. Lortie (1975) found that teachers practice mostly alone and lack a common technical culture (including language). LMLP's lexicon breaks that norm by building a shared culture of learning and meaning. Several chapters include teacher quotations describing direct sharing of curriculum ideas, craft knowledge and watching each other teach, leading to an open and sharing culture.

Inherent Linkage with Other Concepts and Processes The Advanced Learning System is conceptually and operationally consistent with and can be placed in a linked network with other major contemporary theories and conceptions: Transformational learning (Mezirow, 2012); reflection and reflective practice (Argyris & Schon,1974; Brookfield, 1995; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004); systems thinking (Senge, 1990); constructivist learning and pedagogy (Brooks & Brooks, 1999), social capital development, community building (Putnam, 2000). These theories and concepts are mentioned in various chapters. In others the presence of them is seen in the overall flow of description and particularly in some of the quotations from those using LMLP or going through facilitation to learn to practice it.

A Trove of Curricular, Pedagogical, Group/Social and Facilitation Processes, and Research Ideas In various chapters, the alert reader may spot ideas, examples, or processes which are not the central elements of the chapter but which nonetheless might be grafted into the practice or research in which she or he is engaged. Many of these may be found in the descriptions of what was done or how it was done, especially in quotations from research participants. Specific research ideas excited me. In Chapters 16 and 24, Jacqueline Vanhear uses Concept Mapping and Vee Heuristics, both previously unknown to me, as means for making thought public. As she argues, they make possible study of metacognition and specific changes in metacognition. Surprisingly, they are applicable all the way from university students to very young children. In Chapter 19 (p. 387), Falzon and Calleja provide a list of 20 descriptive statements (5 statements for each of the four Patterns) which they use to assess whether a particular multisensory early reading program makes available to students means of engaging each of the LMLP Patterns, thus supporting the ways in which every student prefers to learn. Seeing this, I was excited about generalizing this idea into an instrument that might be used to ascertain the organisational or classroom environmental "press" in terms of the LMLP Patterns. Uses for such an instrument range from evaluating curricular materials to measuring a specific teachers' classroom practices in terms of supporting or not supporting learners with various Pattern profiles. Other readers may find other particulars that excite them.

Fostering Transformation, Empowerment, and Liberation For many educators, LMLP at first glance looks to be just another "styles" gimmick or

simply too much work, "another rock to carry around in my backpack". When engaged totally—all the way to an operative metacognitive state—LMLP is exceedingly transforming, empowering and liberating. Transformation is large change that often comes as a surprise. Empowerment brings a sense of increased efficacy and courage. Liberation occurs when we get loose from burdens we have struggled with a long time. LMLP, when fully engaged, can result in all three changes. Some chapters provide glimpses of one to all change states. Some chapters make these changes focal, some of these even without using the words transformation, empowerment and liberation (Chapters 4, 5, 8, 9, 15, 21).

Whither Research on the Let Me Learn Process, an Advanced Learning System? An Untapped Opportunity

This compendium is the largest aggregation of LMLP research available in print. The entire content relates to formal educational organizations. It is rich and diverse in what it contains, but one hole is total absence of studies during the span of the adolescent years, secondary education in the US. This discovery sent me to the LMLP website: www.letmelearn.org. I found four full text secondary based dissertations. Further, the website contains the largest easily available collection of LMLP full text research. There are 11 doctoral dissertations (two are the origins for compendium chapters); two masters papers (one is a chapter);13 conference papers (two are chapters); and 15 articles (four are chapters). Thus, seven compendium chapters (28%) are duplicated on the LMLP website. This search led to the conclusion that the amount of publicly available and easy to find LMLP research is not large[i]. With this realization, I thought about unpublished research my students and I have done. Scrutinising reference lists in compendium chapters resulted in finding four citations of my papers presented at national and LMLP conferences. These are unavailable unless one contacts me directly. That led to thoughts of the trove of research in my computer backup files.

These searches resulted in the question: Whither research on the Let Me Learn Process, an Advanced Learning System? Further thought broke this question into two.
1. Is it time to do a thorough search to locate and compile existing research on LMLP that is known but inaccessible unless one knows the right person to ask and research that is not known to the LMLP research community?
2. Is it time to gather active and vitally interested researchers into a learning and research community to consider developing a research agenda that might focus energy, effort, and purpose?

Academics often form research networks. Simple network analysis locates three nodes in the larger LMLP network, each with an academic at the centre.

The three nodes are: Rowan University, NJ with Christine Johnston, LMLP originator and lead researcher, at the centre; University of Malta with Colin Calleja at the centre, and Hofstra University, NY with Robert Kottkamp (me) at the centre. All but two compendium authors are easily identified with one or more of the nodes. The compendium overwhelmingly contains research by members of all three nodes simply because the network exists. I do not know how much research exists beyond the reaches of these three nodes. I do know that the content of the compendium contains but a small portion of the total LMLP research produced at the Rowan and Hofstra nodes. The nodes are clearly the places to begin gathering the known research. New nodes of research continue to develop: Dr. Patricia Maher, Director of the Academic Success Center, University of South Florida, Tampa; Dr. Lisa Webb, Executive Director of Academic Affairs, Health Sciences, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond; and Catherine Kerrey, Director of Academic Services, New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

Moving to the question of developing a LMLP research agenda, there are some places to begin. For example, there is a ready research agenda available through connecting with the LMLP Compass Academy Charter School, an LMLP grounded charter school, in Vineland, New Jersey, now in its third year. Importantly, the utility and societal contribution of LMLP has not been tapped. Are there LMLP concepts that apply to your field of expertise? Better yet, is there a research study you would like to see done? The LMLP research community invites you to make contact with us through contacting Christine Johnston (cjohnston@letmelearn.org), LML originator/lead researcher or Colin Calleja, Head of the Department for Inclusion and Access to Learning and European coordinator for the Let Me Learn Process, University of Malta, Msida.

LMLP is truly a gift with utility for all dimensions of life. It has been applied with very positive outcomes in the academic, corporate, and business worlds. Some school applications have extended it to parents, who as a result understand their children (and themselves!) better, support homework more effectively, and become generally more involved. In the US and Europe it has been applied to workplace development and related programs. In at least two locations, it has been applied in medical schools and related health care preparation to support students and to facilitate the internal workings of the departments which support health care students. The next twenty years hold great potential for the furtherance of research on the LMLP learning paradigm. Who knows what the next 40th anniversary compendium of LML applied research will contain? A revised version of the compendium with a full index to assist researchers in finding specific topics will be available as a pdf downloadable at the LML website or through Amazon February 1, 2016 @ $29.95.

Notes

[1] There are five LMLP books available. None of them are, strictly speaking, empirical research; all have a practical application orientation. They are listed in chronological order. Johnston, C. A. (1996). *Unlocking the will to learn.* Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin Press. This work introduced LMLP and the LCI and is oriented toward K-12 application. It is richly documented and contains more of the original library research on the brain, mind, and cognitive science than subsequent books. Johnston, C. A. (1998). *Let me learn.* Thousand Oaks, CA; Corwin Press. LMLP was not static; the second book includes evolutionary elements and is streamlined with specific focus on classroom application by K-12 teachers. Johnston, C. A. (2010). *Finding your way: Navigating life by understanding your learning self.* Glassboro, NJ: Let Me Learn, Inc. This volume is addressed to a general adult and business audience and uses nautical metaphors. Its purpose is to uncover an individual's learning processes for direct application to "navigating" all of life. Dawkins, B. U., Kottkamp, R. B., & Johnston, C. A. (2010). *Intentional teaching: The Let Me Learn® classroom in action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. This book is a first person account of Bonnie Dawkins' year-long implementation of LMLP in her sixth grade classroom. It is thoroughly grounded in her 561 page doctoral dissertation but is not "research" per se because it lacks formal research components of the question, literature review and methods. Her full text dissertation is on the LML website. Johnston, C. A. (2015). *Finding your way: Navigating your future by understanding your learning self: Collegiate edition.* Glassboro, NJ: Let Me Learn, Inc. The focus is on college students and helping them to use their Learning Patterns to navigate the college classroom and enter full time employment as empowered adults.

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