

Challenging Transitions:
*reflections on 30 years plus of learning deeply
with educators and architects*

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Play on words ...

Challenging transitions...

Challenging the term 'transition'...

and

Acknowledging the 'challenges' we face...

Challenging...

Should our conversations be about ...

'transitions' ?

OR

'transformations' ?

OR

both?

Reflections and assumptions ...

As researchers, the **questions** you ask will influence what you look for and what you see; what you perceive in 'data'.

Questions and language reveal one's perspective.

What **perspective(s)** are you starting with??

What does your **language** reveal??

What shapes the perspective I bring to your conversations about spaces for learning and teachers' responses ?

Coming from the perspective of asking this fundamental question ...

What would learning spaces look like, feel like and sound like if they were **deliberately designed based on deep understandings of how we learn** (at all stages of life from birth to elderhood)?

The nature of the research

I have had the privilege of exploring and researching these questions with a **network of architects, interior designers, learners, educators and planners in Australia, New Zealand, and internationally**, through work with the OECD, for at least 15 years and for at least another 15 years researching learning alongside thousands of educators and learners.

With a deep, shared understanding of learning as our reference point, our intent has been to design places for learning – not simply teaching.

This action research has led to ways of knowing perhaps best thought of as a combination of *praxis* and *phronesis*.

Understanding the nature of learning

What is powerful learning?

How do we design for powerful learning?

How do we design environments that enable powerful learning?

Shifting mindsets

Given that the ILETC project aims to explore teacher change, a worthwhile thinking strategy to explore is analogical/metaphorical thinking.

Analogies and metaphors have the power to support mindset shifts, to change perspective and develop new understanding.

What is your personal theory of learning?

What do we know about the
nature of learning?

What do we mean by the term learning?
Can you put your response into words?

Learning is. . . .

Perhaps you can think of a **visual image** or **analogy** for learning.

Learning is like. . . .

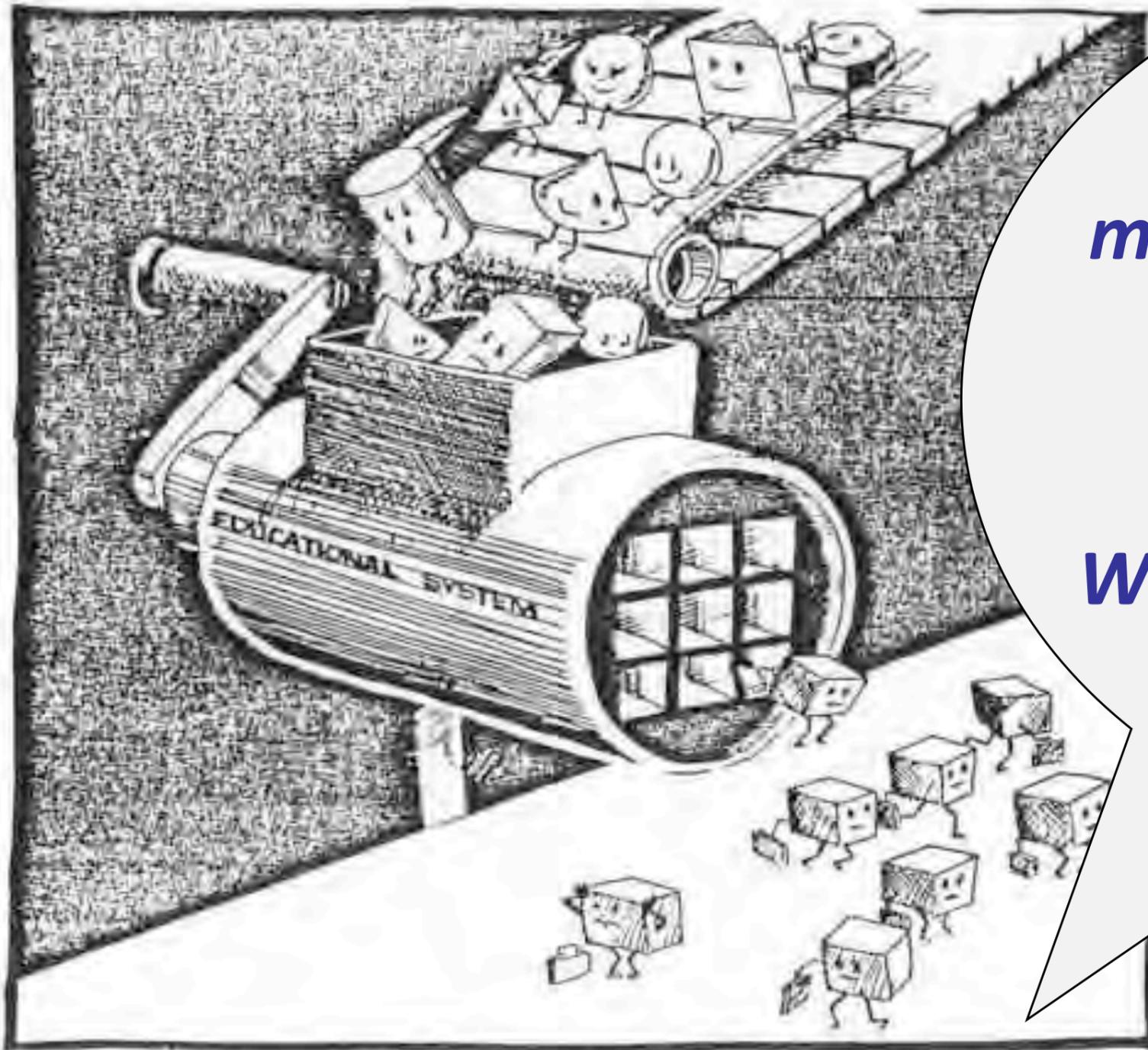
Analogies for learning

*And the **dominant analogies** that have emerged from asking >200,000 people: “What is human learning like – image or analogy?”*

- **journey**
- **growth**
- **construction- reconstruction
creation - recreation**
- **enlightenment**
- **empowerment**
- **enrichment**

→ **transformation**

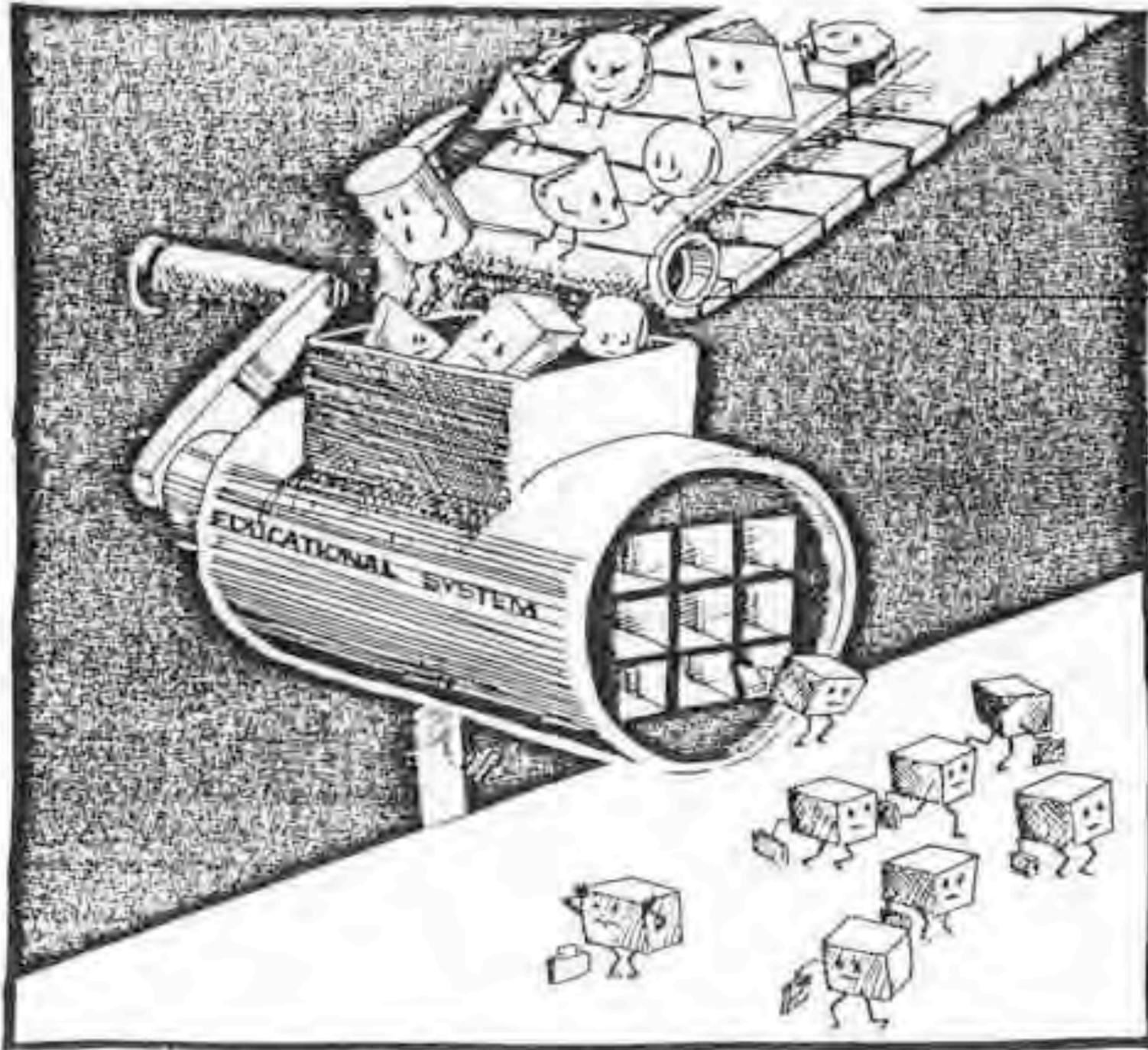
What constitutes quality in mass production?



The underpinning metaphor of industrial era education was a mass production metaphor.

What constitutes quality in mass production?

Underpinning metaphor Industrial Era Education



Measures of Quality

Efficiency

Uniformity

**Meets standard
specification, standardised**

No waste

Appropriate underpinning metaphors for human learning: - *organic, dynamic, holistic*

- **journey**
- **growth**
- **construction- reconstruction**
creation - recreation
- **enlightenment**
- **empowerment**
- **enrichment**
- **transformation**



*What constitutes
measures of quality
for a journey? ...
a garden? ...
a creation?*

Appropriate underpinning metaphors for human learning: - *organic, dynamic, holistic*

- **journey**
- **growth**
- **construction-reconstruction**
creation - recreation
- **enlightenment**
- **empowerment**
- **enrichment**
- **transformation**

What constitutes quality control:

journey? – *enjoyment, interest, enrichment, wonder, self-directed, excitement, adventure*

garden? – *vitality, beauty, diversity,*

a creation? – *beauty, uniqueness, individuality, aesthetics, self-expression*
Etc.

It is no wonder that educators rankle at the suggestion that leagues tables and standardised testing are key indicators of learning!

Changing the metaphor changes perceptions

*If learning is like a **journey**, what is the role of the teacher?*

*If learning is like **growth**, what is the role of the teacher?*

- *Do you 'prune'?*
- *Do you fertilise?*
- *Do you weed?*

*If learning is like **constructing and reconstructing**, who is doing the constructing?*

- *How do you facilitate the construction process?*



Instructivism

Telling = teaching

Teacher knows → learner 'soaks up' what teacher knows.

Information quickly forgotten.



Constructivism

Teaching – causing learning

Teacher designs & negotiates learning experiences to develop required learning outcomes.

Learner constructs meaning in their own minds → **DEEP LEARNING**

Teacher learns too!

Changing the metaphor changes perceptions

*While metaphors and analogies have their limitation, **exploring metaphors, and using metaphors that are congruent with the phenomenon being studied, can aid mindshifts and changes in conceptual understanding and hence the nature of an individual's responsiveness.***

Challenging the term ‘transitions’ is not simply the act of a pedant . In doing so, I’m challenging the appropriateness of the underpinning metaphor.

***We don’t need a faster caterpillar!
We need a total transformation – a
‘butterfly’ to emerge!***



Transition vs Transformation

Transition versus transformation: What's the difference?

Katharina Hölscher, Julia M. Wittmayer, Derk Loorbach

Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2017.10.007>

‘Transition’ and ‘transformation’ ... buzzwords in the political and scientific discourses ...science and policy for systemic societal change...**The ensuing calls for ‘transformation’ and ‘transition’ resonate the growing consensus that business as usual is insufficient for keeping humanity within a safe operating space.**

Etymology

Your thoughts on the difference?

Transition

Mid 16th century: from French, or from Latin *transitio*(*n-*), from *transire* ‘go across’.

Transformation

noun: **transformation**; plural noun: **transformations**

Fundamental change, change in shape and form

1. a marked change in **form, nature, or appearance.**

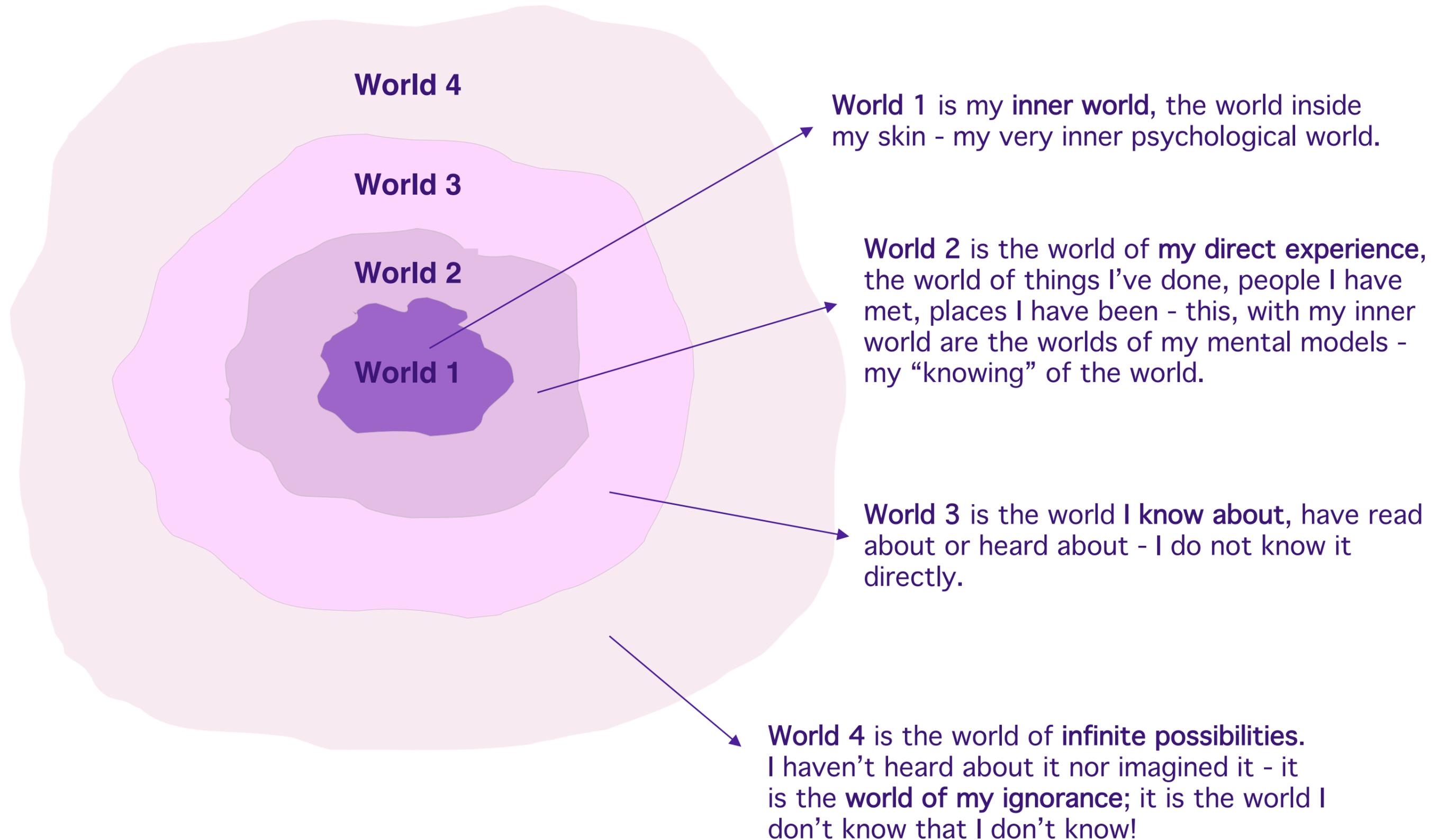
So what do we mean by 'deep learning'?

I contend that 'deep learning' is transformational. Deep learning changes the way we perceive the world, respond to the world, act in the world.

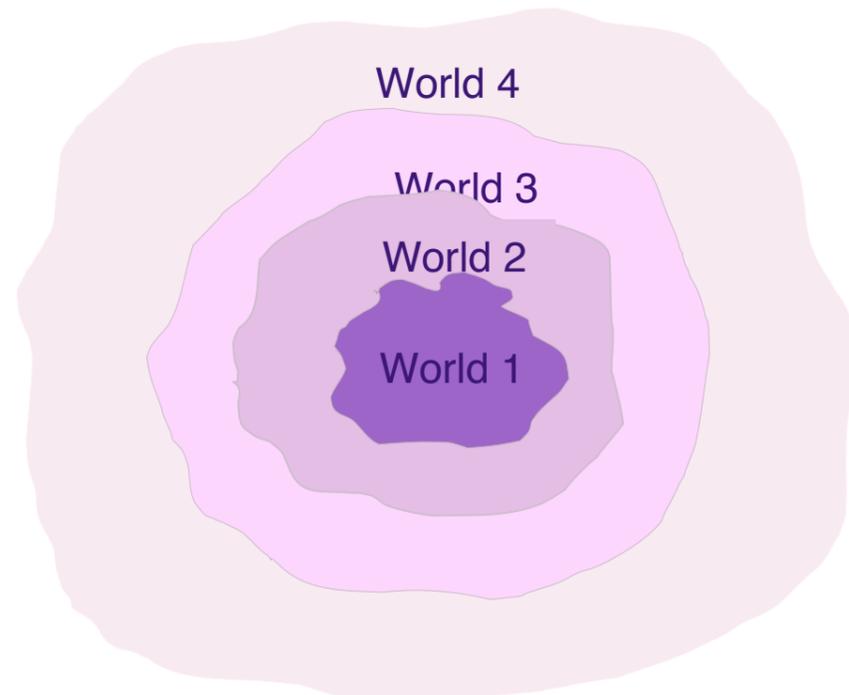
*It is also my contention that in order for teachers to maximise deep, enabling learning, for students in new learning environments, the teachers themselves need to learn deeply and teacher change is consequently transformational.
A 'transition' will not suffice.*

The Nature of Learning - John Holt's model of the worlds we live in

adapted from "What do I do Monday?"



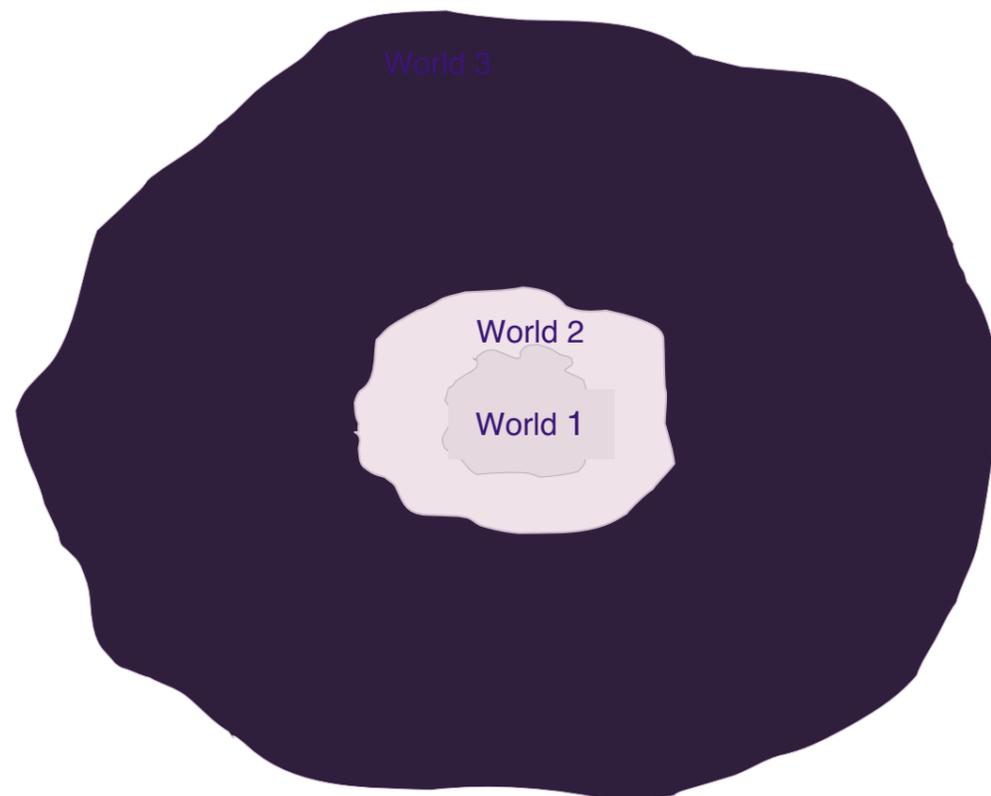
What is POWERFUL learning?



transformative

- *personally meaningful, significant*
- *integrated*
- *coherent*
- *transferable*

NOT



non-transformative

- *non-meaningful*
- *disconnected*
- *incoherent*
- *non-transferable*

Factors which promote meaningful, transformative learning:

Intrinsic motivation

- learner purpose not teacher purpose
- relevance/interest
- challenge
- curiosity

Direct experience

- practical application
- vicarious experience; simulation; role play

Crisis/catastrophe

Sharing, having to teach someone else, dialogue

Teacher/mentor passion

Strategies which **connect at the point of personal experience**

Strategies which **stimulate emotions**

Strategies which **connect with, or challenge, inner belief system**

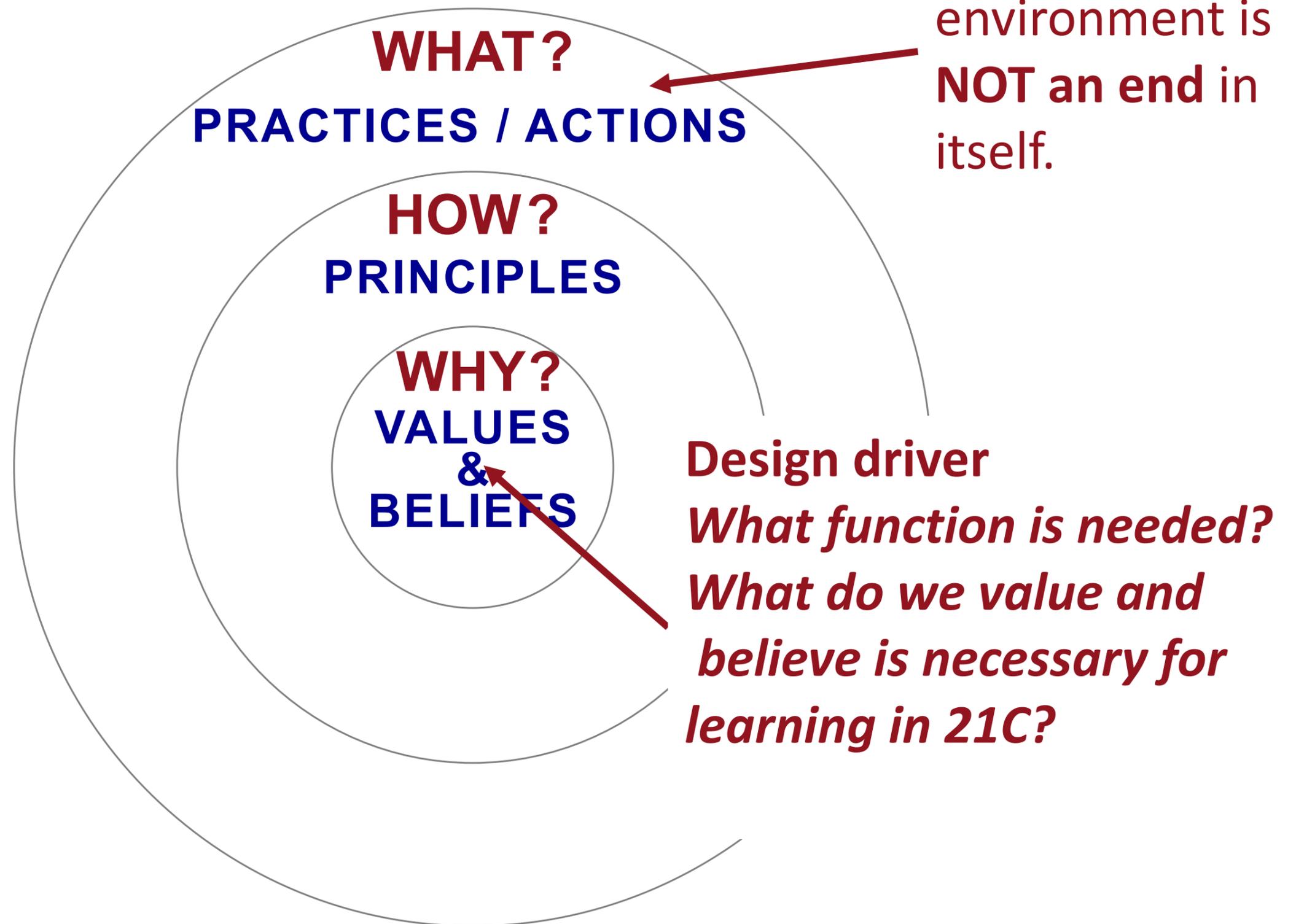
Metacognition - self knowledge as learner; repertoire of learning strategies; disposition to make meaning

***For a more rigorous analysis of what is
required for transformative learning, see:***

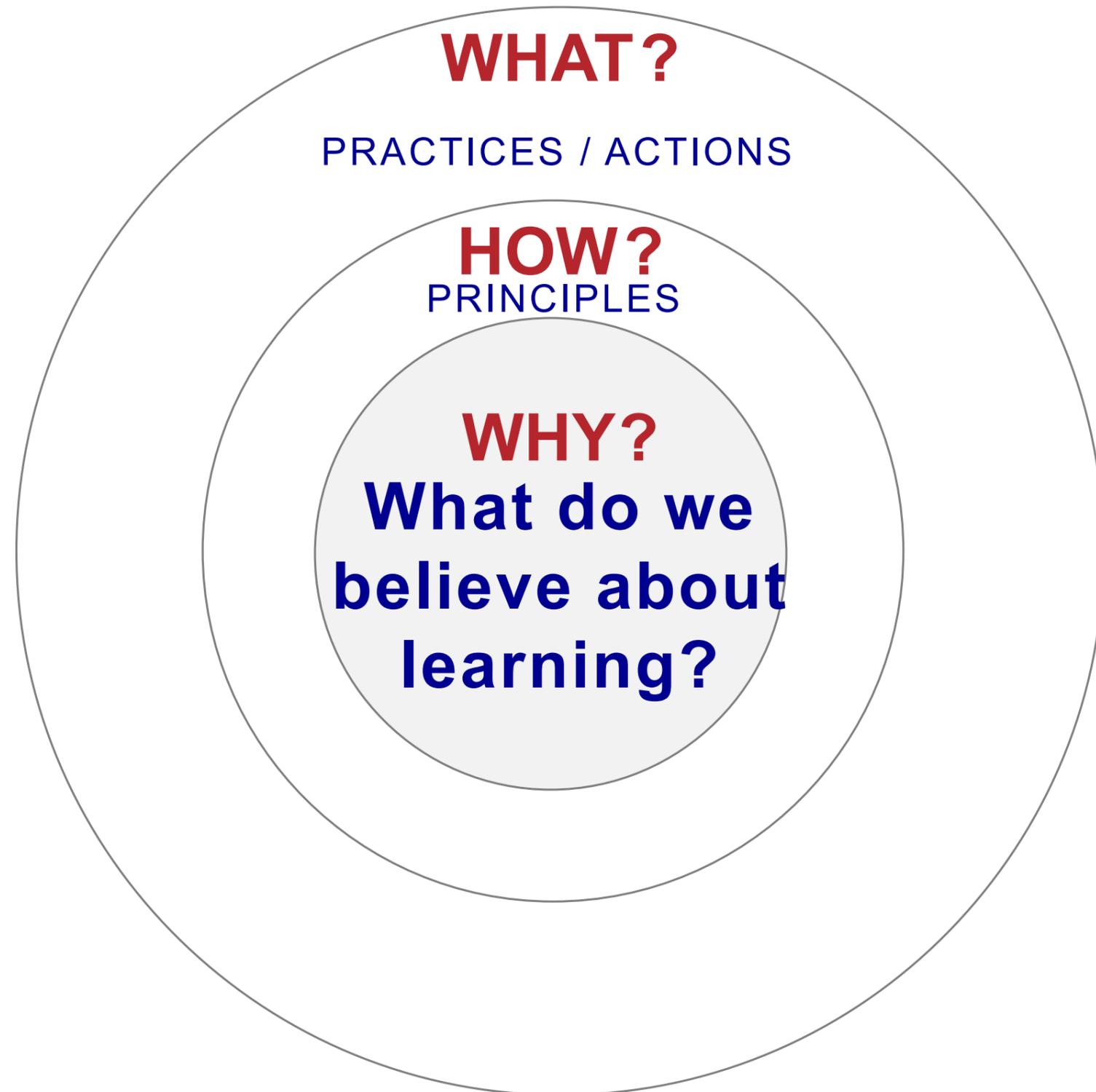
*Musings and Reflections on the Meaning, Context, and Process of
Transformative Learning: A Dialogue Between John M. Dirkx and
Jack Mezirow. **Journal of Transformative Education** Vol. 4 No. 2,
April 2006 123-139, Sage Publications DOI: 10.1177/1541344606287503*

WHAT we are transforming is
complex and **challenging.**

Values and vision driven development



Values and vision driven development



Scaling up – reflections!

WHAT?

PRACTICES / ACTIONS

HOW?

PRINCIPLES

WHY?

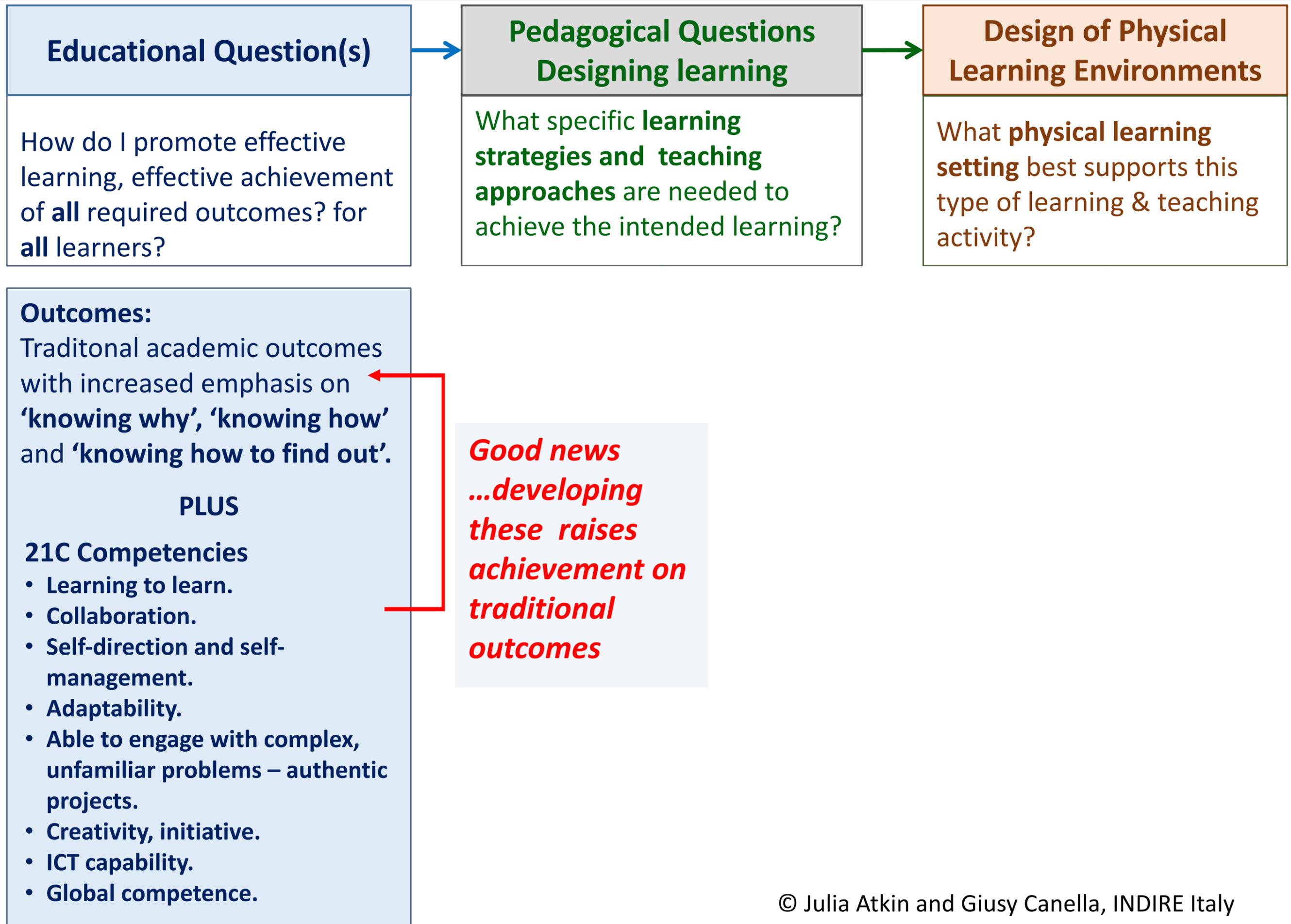
What do we believe about learning?

One of the big challenges we face, is how do we 'scale up' the required changes?

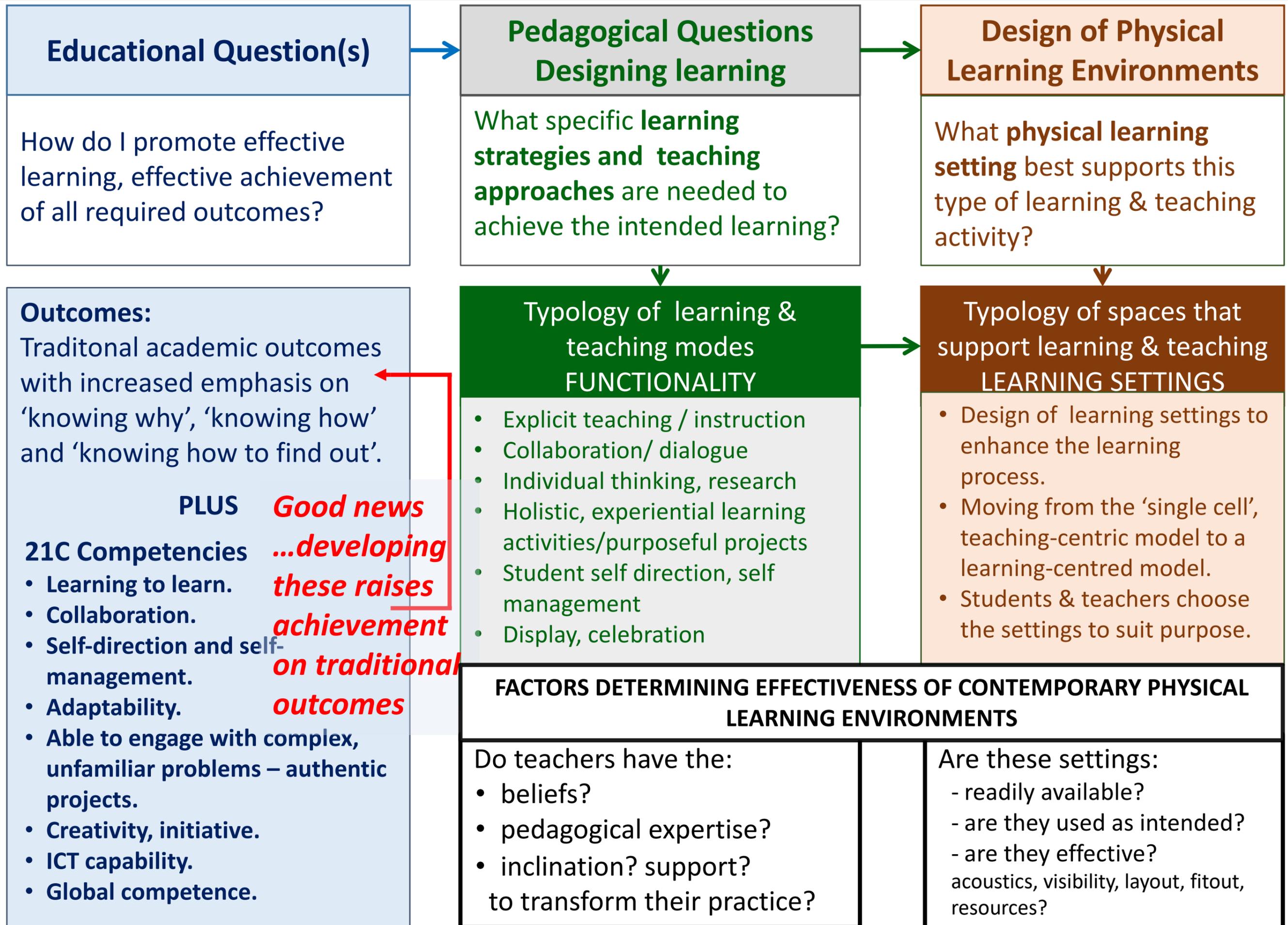
Again, it helps if we consider the appropriate underpinning metaphors. Scaling up will not be effective if by mandating **practices** or telling teachers what works.

It's **deep learning that has to be mandated** – and that is all about the process of engaging in thinking deeply about **WHY?** change – what do we value about learning and how can our practices, including learning environments be designed to achieve this?

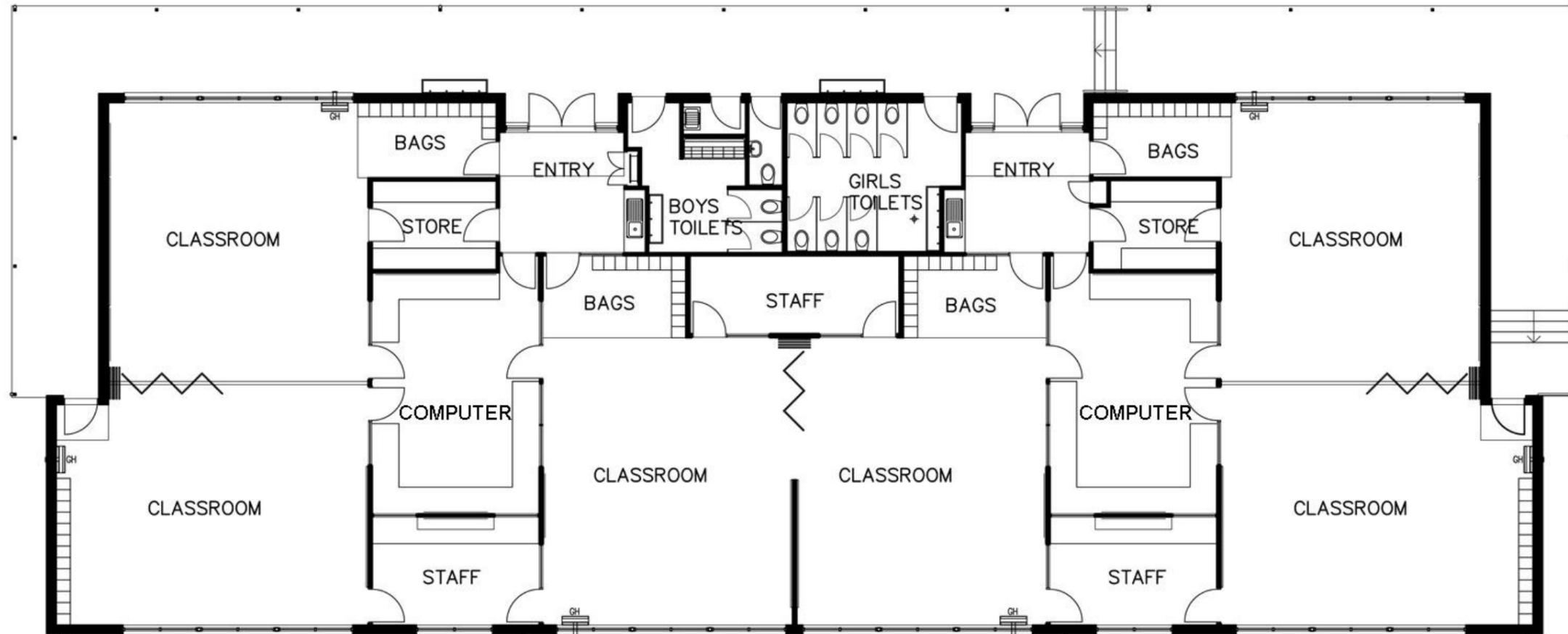
Development of the framework for EFFECTIVE contemporary learning environments



OECD - framework for EFFECTIVE contemporary learning environments

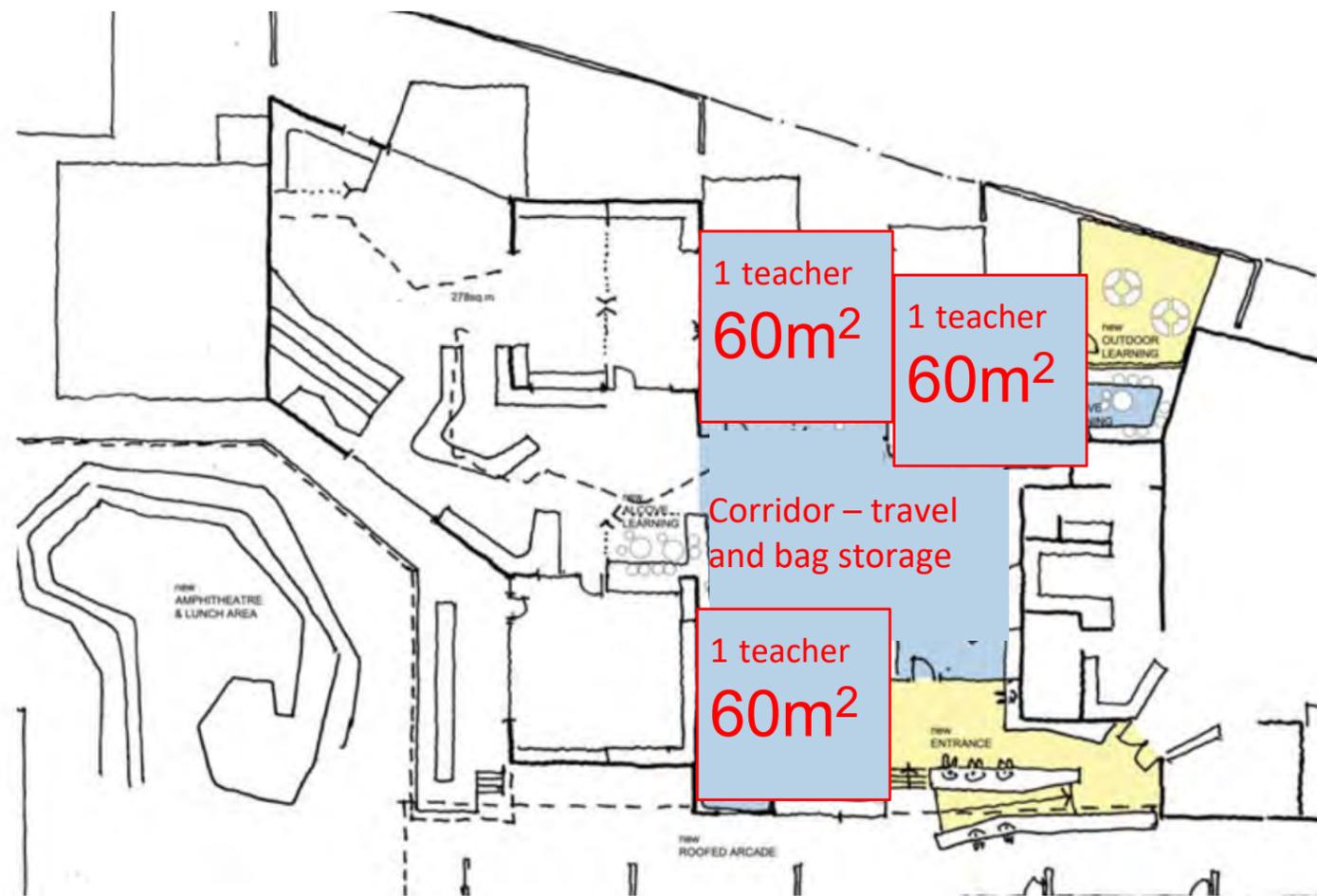


Compare the old industrial teacher and teaching-centric design with many diverse integrate learning settings. Coatesville Primary as it was...



The same area transformed to a learners and learning-centric model . Coatesville Primary refurbished building.





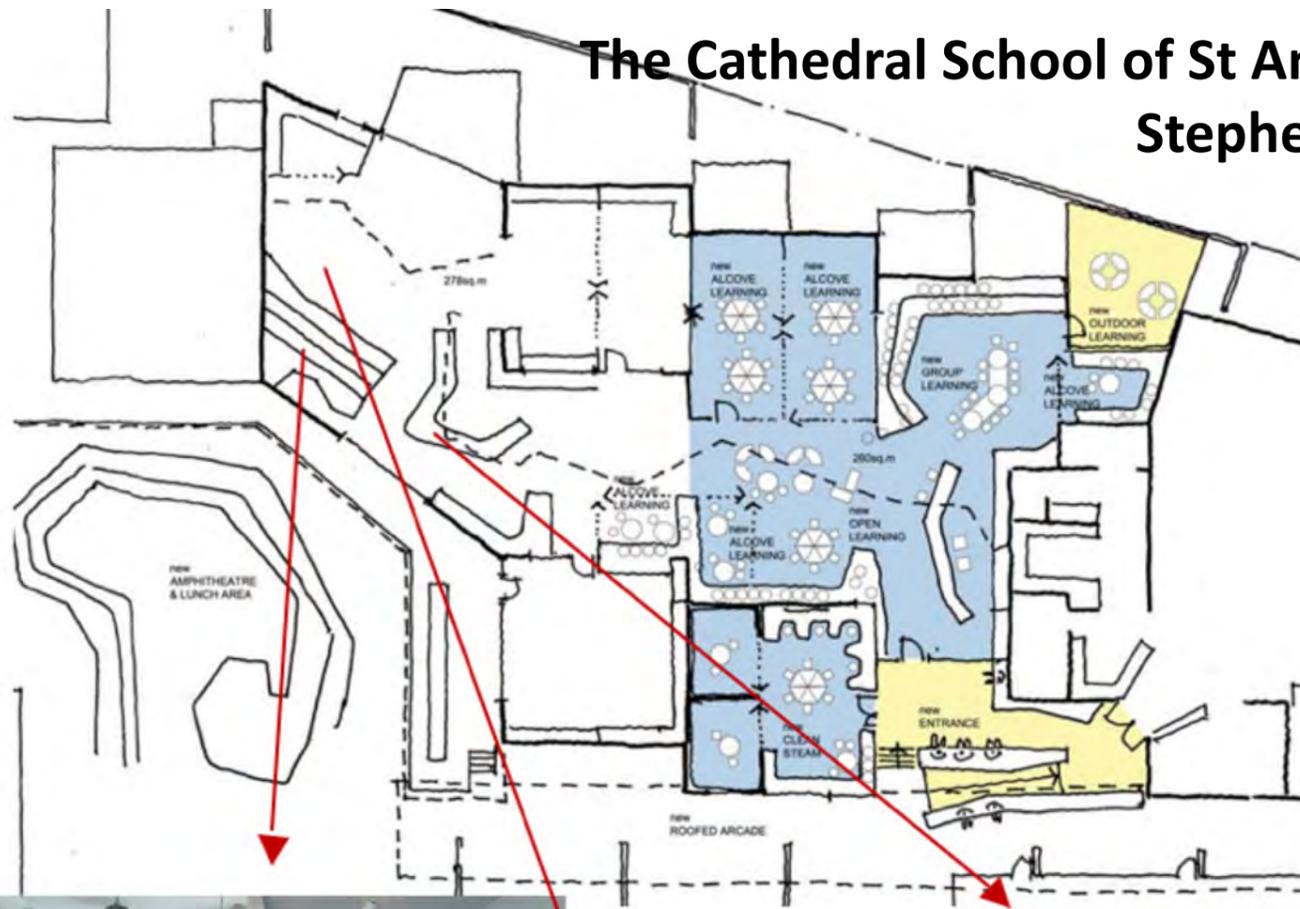
The Cathedral School of St Anne and St James – Townsville, Queensland
Stephen de Jersey Architect

Redesigning the **same area to create learning settings**, instead of **classrooms**, that support the development of:

- **teacher collaboration** 3 teachers – 75 students
- **students learning how to**
 - collaborate
 - self direct
 - self manage
- **ready movement** between different learning activities

The Cathedral School of St Anne and St James – Townsville, Queensland

Stephen de Jersey Architect



Reflections and assumptions ...

Returning to my contention...

As researchers, the **questions** you ask will influence what you look for and what you see; what you perceive in 'data'.

A few years into your research, how would you now write your questions?

The one day symposium will feature presentations by PhD and ECR on the following topics...

What are teachers doing (well) when transitioning from traditional classrooms to innovative learning environments?

1. What **strategies** are teachers using that are working in ILEs?
2. How do **teachers adjust to changes** in learning spaces?
3. How might we **enable people, practice, and place** when transitioning from traditional classrooms to innovative learning environments?
4. What examples are there of **effective learning environments** in schools?
5. What are the **challenges for teachers/students in adapting** to new spaces?

From 30 years of deep learning with learners, educators, and architects I'd reframe your questions as...

What are teachers doing/~~thinking/feeling~~ when transforming from traditional classrooms designed for teaching to innovative environments designed for learning?

1. What strategies are teachers using that are enabling collaboration, self-direction and deep learning in these learning environments?
2. How do teachers ~~adjust to~~ respond to changes in learning spaces?
3. How might we enable people, practice, and place when transforming from traditional classrooms designed for teaching to innovative environments designed for learning?
4. What examples are there of effective learning environments in schools?
5. What are the challenges for teachers/students in adapting to new spaces?