

SYMPAB - (16750) - A TOUCHSTONE AND A TRIBUTE: HOW BEST TO HELP OTHERS TO LEARN

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Short Abstract

The book entitled *Supporting Self-directed Learning in Science and Technology Beyond the School Years* (Rennie, Stocklmayer, & Gilbert, 2019) is testament to John Gilbert's ever-inquiring mind and persistent pursuit of ways to help people to learn. Having already made significant contributions to school science education, John fell to wondering about people who had left school but found that they needed to know something about science and technology to help them in their daily lives. What did they do? Where did they start? But most importantly, how could they be supported in that specific learning?

Led by John, we set about identifying the knowledge and skills individuals needed to engage in self-directed learning, and determining how education providers beyond school could best meet the learning needs of such self-directed learners. We drew on relevant theories of learning and perspectives on motivation to devise a theoretical framework of self-directed adult learning and tested it by analysing diverse case stories of adults' learning. We set out the essential skills adults require for self-directed learning and the personal attributes they needed to learn effectively. We evaluated the material and human resources self-directed learners found to be helpful in supporting learners' development of knowledge and skills. Finally, we could then explain how best other people could support self-directed learners in their learning needs.

This four-year task, managed by three people in three locations, succeeded because of John's commitment to helping people to learn. We devised an empirically-based model of adult self-directed learning, and determined how best other people can support self-directed learners. It was a learning experience for us all, and the result is a touchstone to helping people to learn, and a tribute to John's love of learning and desire to support others to learn.