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Exploring Creative Pedagogies for Creative Learning Ecologies

creative academic magazine

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Exploring Creative Pedagogies for Creative Learning Ecologies

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Exploring the Role of the Body in the Process of Creation
Guest Editor Lisa Clughen Nottingham Trent University

There is no shortage of scholars advocating the mind/body unity and the importance of the body in all sorts of contexts and for all sorts of purposes. While we may take for granted that musicians and other performance artists embody their creativity, embodiment is rarely talked about explicitly in higher education teaching and learning practices. Perhaps it’s just taken for granted, alternatively we might not think of teachers as performing artists.

In this issue of Creative Academic Magazine we will explore the embodiment of creativity through a range of perspectives, paying particular attention to the relationships between embodiment and teaching, learning and creative processes. Of specific interest is the way our creativity emerges in and through our actions and interactions with our environment and the people and things in it. The idea of embodied creativity extends our exploration of the idea of creative ecologies we began in CAM5.
They seek them here ...

They seek them there ...

Those academics seek them everywhere ...

Are they in schools?

Are they in colleges?

Those damned elusive pedagogies.

March 2017
CAM7 is our first attempt to create an ‘emergent magazine’. By this I mean we are not finding, editing and organising all the content before the magazine is published, rather we launched the magazine in October 2016 in articles relevant to the topic we are addressing, Creative Pedagogies & Learning Ecologies. So far the hope and belief that every month we will be able to update the magazine with one or more this belief is well founded and CAM7A contains articles published between October-December 2017.

We believe that if you create the affordance for people, who care about and are interested in something, stuff will happen - ideas will emerge as conversations take place and people share their understandings and practices. Through our Creative Pedagogies & Learning Ecologies project we are trying to foster and facilitate new conversations about the importance of creativity in higher education teaching, learning and students' development and achievements. In the coming year we are trying to bring together and connect educational practitioners and researchers, educational development teams, networks, communities, universities and colleges who share this interest and concern for students' and teachers' creative development, through a partly planned / partly emergent programme of activities.

In 2016 we began to develop the idea of creative ecologies and our intention is to explore and develop the idea further by linking it to creative pedagogies - the imaginative ecologies that teachers create within which students learn and are able to use and develop their creativities. In CAM7 we aim to publish at least one article each month that describes an approach to teaching and learning in which the objective was to enable learners to use and develop their creativity either as a specific goal or as an ancillary outcome of other achievement goals. We also try to bring together research and surveys that cast light on the idea of creativity and what it means to the people involved in facilitating creativity or who are trying to be creative. By considering lots of different perspectives and approaches, in different disciplinary, pedagogic and institutional contexts we hope to develop our understanding of what being creative means and what sorts of practices and behaviours encourage and enable students to be creative and to understand their creativity.

We believe in collaboration and cooperation and we welcome the involvement of our readers in developing and creating this magazine. We believe in collegiality, openness and sharing and the knowledge we develop will be treated as open learning/open educational resources. The ecology we are creating to explore these ideas is open to new ideas and to people and institutions who want to contribute. We are particularly keen to connect researchers to practitioners so that educational practice can be informed by evidence from research in this area. We are also keen to engage with the enormous range of learning contexts within higher education institutions in which students’ are encouraged to use their creativity. If you would like to share your own thinking and practices by writing an article for the magazine please do contact me.

orman Jackson Commissioning Editor
normanjackson@btinternet.com

Creative Pedagogies & Learning Ecologies Project
http://www.creativeacademic.uk/2016-17-programme.html

March 2017
### Exploring Creative Pedagogies for Creative Learning Ecologies Project

Visit [http://www.creativeacademic.uk/creative-pedagogies.html](http://www.creativeacademic.uk/creative-pedagogies.html) for updates

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Exploring Personal Pedagogies
Norman Jackson

Introduction

March, quite unexpectedly, has turned out to be the month for exploring the idea of ‘personal pedagogy’: an idea that is emerging through our ongoing Creative Pedagogies for Creative Learning Ecologies project. I reasoned that each teacher is unique in their past history of experiences and their becoming the teacher they are, in their beliefs and values, in the knowledge they have developed from their readings and practical experiences of teaching and in their interests and willingness to try new things and take risk. All these things will affect the way a teacher thinks, senses and shapes what they do to help others learn. In other words, a teacher’s pedagogical thinking and practice has to be personal and individual, and out of this personal pedagogy emerges pedagogical thinking and practices that are creative because of the way they have combined, interpreted and integrated ideas, and practices that enable learners to use their creativity. So exploring the idea of personal pedagogy in higher education seems like an important stepping stone towards understanding the link between a teacher’s pedagogy, their creativity and the way learners’ creativity is enabled.

For me our March exploration began with a #LTHEchat, it continued with a presentation and workshop I made at Dublin Institute of Technology and finished with a week long discussion on the #creativeHE platform. All these processes encouraged other people to share their perspectives on the idea of personal pedagogy, including the other four contributors to this issue. We will be adding further contributions from the #creativeHE discussions in future issues.

What is pedagogy?

This is the question that underlies and confounds our inquiry because pedagogy is not a term that is commonly used by academics and even if we are familiar with the term it’s not something we think about very much. Furthermore, it is viewed by many as a bit of educational jargon and rejected on the grounds that it is ‘not part of my vocabulary’. I discovered this scepticism even amongst educational developers which surprised me.

The term pedagogy is applied to the discipline that deals with the theory and practice of learning and teaching. The word comes from the ancient Greek paidagogos, a compound comprised of “paidos” (child) and “agogos” (leader) ie ‘to lead a child’. The original Greek meaning applied to a servant who accompanied and cared for a child on their developmental journey.

Pedagogy has come to mean ‘the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept’s. Mark Smith provides an interesting, informative and authoritative article on the history, meanings and uses of the term. He summarises thus

A common way of approaching pedagogy is as the art and science (and maybe even craft) of teaching.

The commonest view is that pedagogy is about teaching, and in the context of the academic curriculum it is about teaching a subject. In fact, this view of pedagogy is essentially a didactic view, ‘the concerns of didactics are: what should be taught and learnt (the content aspect); how to teach and learn (the aspects of transmitting and learning): to what purpose or intention something should he taught and learnt (the goal/aims aspect).’

Viewing pedagogy in this way both fails to honour the historical experience, and to connect crucial areas of theory and practice. Here we suggest that a good way of exploring pedagogy is as the process of accompanying learners; caring for and about them; and bringing learning into life.

This deeply caring and relational view of a teacher’s pedagogy is recognized by Giles and McCarty ‘pedagogy.... is always relational in nature, and as such is central to our everyday teaching strategies’. It’s through these caring relationships and the teacher’s encouragement and demonstration that ‘we are making this journey together’, that a climate or culture of trust and respect emerges.
Pedagogy & culture

The idea that teachers, through their thinking, behaviours and pedagogical practices create a culture within which people are encouraged, helped and enabled to learn and achieve is often overlooked. We can learn about the dimensions of pedagogy that facilitate the development of a culture within which students’ learning and creativity can flourish from Amabile and Kramer's study\(^5\) of the socio-cultural work environment. They identified two types of event or condition which they termed catalysts and nourishers, that support what they term a person’s ‘inner work life’ - the constant stream of emotions, perceptions and motivations that people experience as they go through their work days\(^5\)\(^{29-38}\). Throughout the day, people react to events that happen in their work environment and try to make sense of them. These emotional reactions and perceptions affect their motivation for the work and have a powerful influence on their performance. When people have a positive inner work life, they are more creative, productive, committed to their work, and more co-operative toward the people they work with. When they have poor inner work lives, the opposite is true - they are less creative, productive, committed and co-operative.

The catalyst factor includes events that directly enable a person to make progress in their work. Catalysts include such things as: having clear goals (self-determined goals are more motivating), having autonomy to determine how to work, having access to sufficient resources when you need them, having enough time to accomplish the tasks, being able to find help when you need it, knowing how to succeed, being encouraged to let your ideas to flow. The opposite of catalysts are inhibitors; these make progress difficult or impossible. They are the mirror image of the catalysts, and include giving unclear goals, micro-managing, and providing insufficient resources etc..

Amabile and Kramer\(^5\)^{131-33} identified four factors that nourish a work culture in which people feel supported and positively influenced their motivation, productivity and creativity namely:

1 **Respect** - managerial actions determine whether people feel respected or disrespected and recognition is the most important of these actions.

2 **Encouragement** - when managers or colleagues are enthusiastic about an individual’s work and when managers express confidence in the capabilities of people doing the work it increases their sense of self-efficacy. Simply by sharing a belief that someone can do something challenging and trusting them to get on with it without interference, greatly increases the self-belief of those involved in the challenge.

3 **Emotional support** - people feel more connected to others at work when their emotions are validated. This goes for events at work, like frustrations when things are not going smoothly and little progress is being made, and for significant events in someone’s personal life. Recognition of emotion and empathy can do much to alleviate negative and amplify positive feelings with beneficial results for all concerned.

4 **Affiliation** - people want to feel connected to their colleagues so actions that develop bonds of mutual trust, appreciation and affection are essential in nourishing the spirit of participation.

These insights gained into the work place are likely to be true of educational environments where work effort is directed to learning and management of that enterprise is the teacher. A teacher’s modelling and pedagogical actions shape the climate or culture in the ecologies they create for learning which encourage or inhibit students’ creativity.

A broad working concept of pedagogy

A teacher’s pedagogy is fundamentally about relationships: relationships with the learners they are accompanying and caring for, with their subject which they often care passionately about, with the resources they prepare to help students learn, with the activities for learning they design and animate through their teaching, with the assessment tools they create, with the technology they use and with the spaces they create and their students inhabit. Affordance for learning is in all these things and the teacher’s role is to enable learners to recognize and act on these affordances. This broad ecological view of pedagogy, is similar to that adopted by Thomson et al\(^5\)^{10} in their investigation into the signature pedagogies of artists and other creative practitioners.
Pedagogy is more than teaching method, more than curriculum, more than assessment practice. It is all these things, but it is also how they are made into patterns of actions, activities and interactions by a particular teacher, with a particular group of students [in a particular context]. The concept of pedagogy encompasses relationships, conversations, learning environments, rules, norms and culture within the wider social context and may extend beyond school to community and public settings. It takes in the ways in which what teachers and students do is framed and delimited within a specific site, a policy regime and the historical context.

I am arguing that a personal pedagogy is all the thinking and practices that an individual higher education teacher develops and draws upon when designing and teaching a course and encouraging and facilitating learning, finding and preparing resources, supporting and giving feedback to learners and assessing their learning. An individual’s personal pedagogy reflects their unique personal history of learning experiences, and the unique set of circumstances, past and present, that influence their beliefs and values, their identity as a teacher and their educational practices.

A teacher’s personal pedagogy is not fixed. Rather we should think of it as a dynamic expression of their knowledge, skill and judgement and sensing of what is needed because they are deeply in tune with the learners’ interests and needs, and the contexts, circumstances and situations in which they practice. A teacher’s pedagogical thinking and practices are not fixed because they are influenced by the professional, institutional, social and technological world they inhabit.

Key questions to explore in any inquiry into a personal pedagogy are: ‘what have been the key influences on knowledge, beliefs and values in the formation and development of a teacher?’ and ‘what are the current influences?’

Figure 1 provides a conceptual framework for viewing important influences on individuals’ pedagogical practices in the contexts of their discipline, the educational needs of the programme and the learners on the programme, the strategic priorities of the institution, including the provision it makes for the development of higher education teachers, and some of the influences that are external to the institution.

This diagram is a conceptual aid to try to convey that there are many possible influences - past, present and future that are likely to impact on a teacher’s pedagogical thinking and practice. At the centre of this concept map are the learners who are participating in a module and a programme, it is their needs and interests that provide the most important context for the teacher’s personalised pedagogical thinking and practice. A module or programme might have a particular content, theoretical or practical orientation that shapes a teacher’s approach. Their pedagogical knowledge is formed and influenced from many different sources, here are just a few of them.
The teaching practices the individual has encountered as a learner in their disciplinary field and the *signature pedagogies*\(^{14,15,16}\) of their discipline which are core to the ways in which disciplinary practitioners think, solve problems, and develop and use knowledge.

The generic pedagogical practices learnt from peers within or outside the institution or from professional development activities within their work environment - they include such practices as a traditional lecture or seminar and the use of criteria to assess students’ work.

A teacher’s research interests, knowledge, practices and related resources and networks which can be drawn upon.

Institutional strategic policies that impact on teaching and learning - for example an institution might have a policy that encourages all graduates to possess certain qualities and attributes that might impact on pedagogical practices. Institutional quality assurance procedures may also require certain forms of practice such as curriculum designs that are based on learning outcomes.

Issues the institution is engaging with. For example an institution might be committed to social inclusion and widening participation, or to internationalisation or sustainability all of which can affect the pedagogical approaches used by teachers.

The other articles in this issue develop further the idea of influences on a teacher’s personal pedagogy.

**Generic pedagogical knowledge & practice**

Experienced and skilled teachers are likely to have developed a repertoire of pedagogic approaches, practices and orientations from which they can select depending on the circumstances of the educational context. McWilliam\(^ {17}\) captures a sense of this in her threefold characterization of pedagogic orientations - *sage on the stage, guide on the side* and *meddler in the middle* but there are likely to be many other metaphoric representations of complex pedagogic practice. Perhaps it’s more appropriate to think that every teacher has a repertoire of pedagogic practices and orientations that they chose from according to the circumstances, or the type of learning ecology, they want to create. In this way a complex ecology for learning and creative achievement might contain all three of McWilliam’s pedagogical stances.

**Signature Pedagogies**

Signature pedagogies are the modes of teaching, used in the preparation of people for a particular profession such as law, medicine, engineering, teaching or being an architect or geologist. The idea of signature pedagogies has been extended to the educational practices in non-professional subjects.

Lee Shulman\(^ {14:52}\) defines signature pedagogies as “*the types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions.*” Professional education involving close to real world simulations, and on-the-job learning in professional workplace situations are the main contexts for these pedagogic practices. These types of pedagogies comprise a synthesis of three apprenticeships—a cognitive apprenticeship wherein one learns to think like a professional, a practical apprenticeship where one learns to perform like a professional, and a moral apprenticeship where one learns to think and act in a responsible and ethical manner that integrates across all three domains. A signature pedagogy has three dimensions: surface structure, deep structure, and an implicit structure. Surface structures consist of concrete, operational acts of teaching and learning, while deep structures reflect a set of assumptions about how best to impart a certain body of knowledge and know-how. The implicit structure includes a moral dimension that comprises a set of beliefs about professional attitudes, values, and dispositions\(^ {14:34-35}\).
Gurung et al\textsuperscript{15} and Chick et al\textsuperscript{16} argued that signature pedagogies are not unique to professional/vocational education and training: academic disciplines also have distinctive habits of mind that are reflected in the pedagogic practices adopted by teachers in the discipline. These authors explore how 29 disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields foster deep learning and help students think like disciplinary experts. These “signature pedagogies” reflect the deep structures of the discipline and attempt to answer questions such as: “What does our pedagogy reveal, intentionally or otherwise, about the habits of head, hand, and heart as we purport to foster through our disciplines?” “Is there, or should there be, a consistent connection between a way a discipline creates or discovers new knowledge and the way it apprentices new learners?“\textsuperscript{18:xii}

Ecologies for Learning Created by Teachers in a University Ecosystem

The ecological conception of pedagogy proposed by Thomson et al\textsuperscript{10} and the conceptual framework proposed for the influences on a personal pedagogy (Figure 1) requires us to also think about the ecosystem within which teaching and learning takes place\textsuperscript{19}.

A traditional university course taught face to face is designed, organised and implemented by one or more academic teachers who have both disciplinary and pedagogic expertise, within an institutional socio-cultural environment that is full of support and resources to aid learning. There is a structure (timetable/lecture schedule/credit structure) and procedural framework (rules and regulations) within which learning takes place. Programmes are organised into units or modules with explicit objectives, content, resources and processes that engage learners in activities through which they learn, and some of their learning is assessed using one or more methods determined by teachers. The institutional ecosystem for learning includes people - learners, teachers and other professionals who help learners, a physical environment including classroom spaces, social spaces, resources centre and virtual spaces where learners and teachers interact for the purpose of learning, a bureaucratic environment of rules, regulations, policies and procedures, administrative and management practices all of which foster a culture.

Figure 2 identifies the components of typical course-based learning ecologies that are designed and taught by a teacher and are hosted by an institutional ecosystem which provides the physical, social-cultural and virtual environment. The teacher’s personal pedagogy both facilitates the creation of the ecology for learning and but is also an integral part of the ecology.

Affordance for learning within the context of an academic programme is everywhere. It is contained in the course, programme or module content, in the activities that teachers organise and facilitate for learners, in the physical and virtual spaces that are provided which support particular activities (both academic and social) and in the intellectual spaces that the pedagogic activities promote.

Affordance for learning and development is also found in the resources including books, journals, computers, software and other tools and mediating artefacts that are used, and in the teaching and learning processes and practices that are used to engage learners and encourage personal development is also found in the additional support and advisory services the university provides, and in the relationships and interactions between teacher and students, and student peers, and in learner’s own responses to all of these things. Furthermore, some academic programmes also contain affordances for learning in contexts and environments that lie outside the institution for example through work placements and internships, community-based projects, fieldwork and study visits and more.
Concluding thoughts

These are just a bunch of conceptual ideas which we are trying to explore and create meaning. They grapple with the complexity of what it is to be a higher education teacher whose purpose and role is to work with such complexity. All too often we simplify the role to simply one of standing in front of students to lecture them when all teachers know that this is a tiny element of the role they perform: a role that requires the complex balancing and judgements of many factors and situations. A role that requires the blending and enacting of knowledge derived from disciplinary and pedagogical sources.

At the moment these ideas mean something to me but if they don’t make sense to anyone else then it will remain only my meaning making. By discussing these ideas in various on-line and face to face forums, and presenting these ideas through our magazine we are encouraging readers to play with the ideas in their own professional contexts and explore whether they are useful, and more importantly develop them further.

Sources & References
(a) https://lthechat.com/
(b) https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041
(c) English Oxford Living English Dictionary https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pedagogy
1 Creative Pedagogies for Creative Learning Ecologies Project http://www.creativeacademic.uk/
Who has Influenced my Pedagogical Thinking?

John Cowan

John is an extraordinary teacher whose higher education career spans over 50 years during which he has championed and practised student-centred learning. His writings, including his book, ‘On becoming an innovative university teacher: reflection in action’ have influenced many teachers including the editor of this magazine.

As an engineer, I suppose I have always expressed theories and particular ideas in diagrams. But the influences in and the components of my personal pedagogy are stored and recalled in what I can only describe as “memory videos.”

After 70 years, I can still picture and hear the influential personality of the teacher whose almost languid tones infected me with his love for mathematics, and endeared to me the very mathematical concept of an “elegant” proof. I have clear video snippets in my mind from the evening conversations after dinner at the UMIST Summer School with the eminently facilitative Bill Morton, whose questions led me, and many lecturers at an early point in our careers, to think in terms of learning instead of teaching.

I often quote the eloquent Tyrrell Burgess from an occasion when he was asserting firmly to an audience, which included me, that: “I always tell my first-year students that, during their course, they must never read a technical book.” And, after a shocked pause: “They must use books.” I can hear him and see him, whenever I quote him.

I never met or heard Carl Rogers, but as someone for who Freedom to Learn had become my pedagogical bible, I recall being caught up short when I was privately reviewing plans I had made with a Third-Year Design class for student-directed learning in this important subject - “provided you do the assessing, JC”. Suddenly a challenging thought struck me. What would the great man would think of me, if he heard I was going to assess student-directed learning?” And of course, I knew immediately that he would have been ashamed of me. So, I went back next morning and re-negotiated for my first venture into truly and fully self-assessed learning. I can and often do play back that Damascus Road experience, almost second by second.

My memory videos do not only feature teachers. I have a moving memory of sitting alongside an excellent student in that self-assessed class. She had been extremely upset by certain fraught events in the sometimes-tense group inter-relationships. As she let the tears flow, in a gesture which was acceptable in those days, I put an arm round her shoulder and said comforting: “I know how you feel, Helen.” Even as I key this description, I have a vivid memory picture of an upturned, tear-stained face, and eyes almost spitting fire, as she sternly told me: Don’t you ever tell me that you know how I feel.” Since that day, I have had occasion to comfort students, colleagues and friends who have experienced disasters or tragic bereavements. Helen’s face and words often flash across my memory. Even when someone has just lost a child, the echo of her passionate words means that I never tell anyone that I know how they feel - although I may tell them how myself felt, when we lost our newly married son to cancer.

In particular, I have many significant memory videos of conversations with the charismatic Alan Harding, as we engaged with a range of difficult challenges in staff development in various countries in the Middle East. These are the keener in my memory because, on many later occasions when I was working on my own in Latin America, and wrestling with the emerging challenges there, suddenly I heard and saw part of a conversation from an occasion when Alan and I had gone for a walk in which to work out our plans. And that playback immediately made me realise: “That’s what Alan would have said”.

I find it difficult to describe any of these influences in words, but I can see and hear many powerful personalities, and their messages for me, in my mind and in my memory - as vital components of my personal pedagogy. It’s interesting that they feature wonderful people even more strongly than the important messages which I have taken from them - and often that those messages were expressed in one sentence, and sometimes as questions.
Using Metaphor to Make Sense of My Personal Pedagogy

Rebecca Jackson

I am a teaching fellow in English Language and Linguistics at the University of Sussex. I research how we understand repetition and emphasis in the field of pragmatics. I am passionate about innovative and creative teaching and I am delighted to be part of the facilitation team for this #creativeHE conversation. @chasing_ling

Why metaphor?

I am a linguist. I work on how we understand language and how we communicate. One of the concepts I teach is metaphor which can be understood as talking about an abstract thing in terms of something more tangible (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). With metaphor, the attributes of something we already understand are transferred cognitively to a ‘target’ that is more abstract and harder to make sense of (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Love is complex but journeys are not. If we say “our relationship is at a crossroads”, we use a less abstract domain to talk about something that is hard to conceive of. This is the essence of metaphor in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, and see Evans & Green, 2006).

Pedagogies are slippery beasts (itself a metaphor!). We can’t touch a pedagogy, or see, smell or hear it. But while a pedagogy is an abstract concept, we can perceive the traces and influences of a pedagogy in ourselves, in our students, and in our learning artefacts. However, since pedagogies are ever present in our teaching and learning thinking and practices, we need to understand what they are and what they can offer us, and metaphor can help.

I would like to tell you about my personal pedagogy, in part using metaphors. I see my pedagogy as a toolkit, as a lump of fresh, brightly-coloured play-doh, and as a good luck charm, like Dumbo’s white feather that helps him fly. I also see my pedagogy as something that can help me model creativity for students, and I shall explain how. But, first, I’d like to start by explaining why it became so important for me to develop and cultivate a personal pedagogy.

Who has shaped the way I teach?

When I was a graduate teaching assistant, I was expected to go into the classroom with virtually no training and assist undergraduate students in their learning activities. Before the first week of teaching, I prepared diligently. I read. I planned. I memorised. I printed things. I got to my classes, thinking I was ready to inspire young minds. But the students were quiet, disengaged, and, perhaps, even bored. I didn’t understand. I thought I had done a good job of getting ready to teach. I was replicating the forms of teaching I had enjoyed myself, and I had earned good marks, so I had just assumed I could carry on transferring knowledge and ‘delivering’ content in the same way that other people had taught me. But, something clearly wasn’t working. I hadn’t realised that I could teach in a different way, that I could change what I was doing to fit what would benefit the students as a group. I didn’t even think I was allowed to do this.

I was perplexed but as a result, I contacted the amazing Chrissi Nerantzi and signed up for a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice where I was encouraged to explore, experiment, play and be creative in my teaching - and to do so boldly and with confidence. I have never looked back. It was the best thing I have done, as a teacher. Students became much more involved in my classes, and started to take much more responsibility for their own learning. In my classes, we were asked to think about how we see ourselves as educators — to develop

Illustration by Simon Rae
metaphors for understanding our teaching and learning ethos. I found this so helpful, and that’s why I carry on using metaphors to explain my practice.

I understood myself as a gardener, setting up the conditions for fertility of the mind, and healthy growth and development, stepping back when conditions were right to let the ‘plants’ grow. In spite of this, I still didn’t know what a pedagogy was. I didn’t know I had recognised the need to develop one, and had set about doing so. I told you pedagogies were slippery beasts!

The ecological metaphor

Jackson (2016, 2017) uses the metaphor of ‘ecology’ to try to make sense of learning and teaching. In nature, an ecology is understood as the organism living in and interacting with its environment to achieve a particular purpose. In nature this purpose would be to sustain life and procreate. Organisms can and do shape their ecologies, and an ecology can shape an organism. Ecologies provide resources and nourishment for all that are inside them, and we could transfer this attribute of ecologies to make sense of pedagogies. When the environment changes, the organism must adapt (change its ecology) to survive.

In human ecosocial systems, people create and inhabit ecologies not just to sustain their life but to learn and develop, and achieve many other things. Teaching as a means of encouraging others to learn is an example of an ecology in an educational ecosocial system.

The elements of a learning ecology (Figure 1) which I find most helpful to think about, and which overlap with my own understanding, are as follows:

Pedagogies can change over time, and are influenced by the past, present and the future. My history as a learner, and as an academic in the early part of my career shape what I do now, and goals and future student needs shape where I am going. Framing pedagogies in time helps me reflect on my learning journey as an educator.

Pedagogies include our relationships to other students, and to colleagues and collaborators. I think we should see these relationships as resources. I learn more from working with and for my students than from anyone else. We explore subjects together.

You should be a whole person inside your pedagogy. This includes two important sub-elements:

- You should try to be creative.
- You should not ask your students to do anything that you would not do yourself. This embeds care and respect for the student, and enshrines a principle of modelling what you would like the students to do.

I interpret the idea of “being a whole person” as “being our authentic self”. Allowing our true self to be confidently and proudly seen in the learning environment helps students to be comfortable with and proud of who they are. I believe that sharing our own identity with our students is a vital way of supporting the diverse identities of our students. I like cats, bad pop music, and karaoke - unashamedly. My students know this, and I’ve been able to find points of commonality with students because of this, helping me to forge good pastoral relationships.

It is also important for us to think about the context when shaping a pedagogy. One way is to see context as institutional culture. Educators do have to consider institutional ethos and requirements about courses, teaching styles and standards. However, context can also include the physical environment of the classroom, the objects within it, and the affordances of these items. Part of a pedagogy might be taking the decision to move furniture around or display items differently to encourage students to move, interact, and think in new and interesting ways. By manipulating or accommodating contextual factors in a pedagogy, it is possible to deepen and widen what we can think about in learning situations. In my own practice, it was a light bulb moment when I realised
that I could move chairs and stand at the back of the room instead of at the front.

Let’s now build on these ideas by looking at the metaphors I use for my own pedagogy.

**My toolkit metaphor**

I see my pedagogy as a toolkit. What attributes do toolkits have that I can carry across to understanding pedagogies? I can take a toolkit with me. It is portable. If I prepare it, and think about it before I go “on the job”, I can set it up to have the tools I think I need. But there are also just tools lying about in my toolkit that I can use on-the-fly and unexpectedly. I can lend the tools to other people. I can show - or model how I use - my toolkit for people. I can teach my students how to use my tools, just like a plumber helps his apprentice learn his craft. In fact, we might see a toolkit pedagogy as a kind of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, 1987), where learning occurs not through didactic teaching, but through ‘coaching’ instead of hammers, nails, crowbars, gaffer tape and a screwdriver, my toolkit is filled with reflective knowledge, tips and tricks from other educators, and positive personal attributes such as a can-do ethos and a creative outlook. My toolkit features practical tools such as pens, paper, post-it notes, toys, props and technology. You never know when students will finish a task early, and you will need something else to do!

**My play doh metaphor**

My pedagogy is a fresh, bright lump of play doh. It is mouldable into whatever I and my students need it to be. It won’t hurt us - it’s non-toxic. The play-doh can be transformed creatively. It IS creativity itself. I can safely play and tinker with my designs for tasks and for courses, and with solutions for supporting students. If it goes wrong, no matter. We just start again. By visibly living my pedagogy as something that can be creatively shaped, and by openly accepting it can go wrong, I show students that it is safe to create, to fail and, indeed, we can only learn from this cycle of creation and development.

**My “lucky charm” metaphor**

Finally, my pedagogy is a lucky charm. I am not superstitious, but when I think of how I approach teaching for my students, I want to do the best for them at all times. I want ideas to work. I want students’ needs and interests to be met. I know that teaching can be high stakes for all involved. Tasks might not work. People - me included - might not prepare sufficiently or they might be derailed by something I have not considered. We might hit a roadblock in understanding that means we progress slowly. It doesn’t matter what challenges come along if you see your pedagogy like Dumbo saw his white feather, or Harry Potter saw his invisibility cloak.

With my good luck charm, I feel prepared, ready, pumped and motivated for whatever comes. Develop and cultivate your pedagogy, however you see it. Be open to filling your toolkit, to using and sharing it. Be open to moulding your pedagogy like putty to twist it into new shapes to make learning fun and engaging for all - yourself included. Grasp your white feather and enter learning situations with confidence, being yourself, and being visibly willing to create and fail. It can only help students to develop and grow.

By writing this article, I have come to realise just how important metaphor is to me in visualising my pedagogical toolkit. **What metaphors appeal to you when you think about your own pedagogy?**

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**References**


My Personal Pedagogy: A Constructivist’s Perspective - Not what but who!

Will Haywood

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First impressions

When I first saw the topic ‘Personal Pedagogies’ in the lead up to #LTHEchat [1] the first thought which came to mind was an ongoing joke that my ‘signature pedagogy’ consists of flipchart paper and coloured marker pens! My thoughts then moved on to when I had to create a ‘teaching philosophy’ statement or outline my ‘aims as a teacher’ where I’m not ashamed to admit when having to condense it down to three words I cheesily said I aimed to, ‘engage, challenge and inspire’ learners. But when the Twitter chat arrived, the chat itself delved much deeper than that and I think anyone who participated will agree it was one of the more thoughtful and perhaps even challenging chats we’ve had.

During the Twitter chat, I shared that prior to working in HE I was a science teacher and my practice as a science teacher was greatly influenced by the constructivist movement and it is around this that I was then invited to reflect and share here. But before considering constructivism I’d like to share another guiding principle. My first head teacher, inspired by Bill Clinton’s “It’s about the economy, stupid!” had a sign in his office stating, “It’s about the learning, stupid!” to act as a constant reminder that no matter what else was happening the students’ learning was what mattered most. This focus on learning is also a feature in the suggested stages in the development of a teacher put forward by Scaife [2] (Figure 1).

So perhaps this notion of a developmental journey would form a key part of my personal pedagogy; it is not about me as a teacher and how I am teaching - it’s about the learning, stupid!

Figure 1 Stages in the development of a teacher

![Figure 1 Stages in the development of a teacher](image)

The issue, however, is that how people learn is not a straightforward question. The concept map shown in Figure 2 [3] gives an indication of the many schools of thought when discussing leaning theories, along with their different disciplinary roots and how they interlink.

In science education the discussion of teaching and learning is often simplified down to that of transmission versus constructivism. Transmission refers to traditional didactic teaching or ‘chalk and talk’, where the teacher passes their knowledge on to the student. Constructivism can be seen as being a fairly ‘broad church’ which is home to several schools of thought (eg Figure 2) A key belief held by constructivists is that people construct knowledge to fit what they experience rather than acquire knowledge about an independent reality [2] While constructivism is not without its criticisms, some key ideas have influenced my practice as a science teacher and I would say still continue to influence my practice today, and therefore my personal pedagogy. I outline below some of the educational theorists who have influenced my pedagogical thinking so perhaps my pedagogical thinking owes a lot to this group of individuals, their ideas and writings and my readings and appropriation and application of their ideas.
Piaget

Constructivism began with Jean Piaget and although his ideas of maturation and staged cognitive development in children may not be so relevant now I’m working with adults in HE, however the idea of progressing from the concrete ideas through to the more abstract can be a sensible one. However the idea that learners construct their knowledge through interactions with the environment is still appropriate. Furthermore his notion that individuals can learn through the resolution of the cognitive conflict that can occur between their expectations and observations can be a powerful tool[4], one which I often use in deploying examples and scenarios which may challenge their expectations and trigger thinking and discussion.

Ausubel

Ausubel wrote about what he called meaningful learning and stressed the importance of learners being active, criticising passive learning in favour of discovery and inquiry[2] He particularly criticizes rote learning and suggests that in order to develop knowledge it should be well connected with other knowledge and not superficial or arbitrary. Ausubel stresses that “The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly.”[5] (apologies for the gendered pronoun!) This is a crucial point and links with the ideas of diagnostic assessment and assessment for learning. This establishment of what my learners already know has been important for guiding what and how I teach them.

Vygotsky

Social Constructivism is a movement stemming from the ideas of Vygotsky who regard the development of knowledge as a social activity where one can develop their understanding through joint activity and conversation with others. This is typically with ‘more knowledgeable other’ who in the context of the course could be a peer, colleague, mentor or teacher, but beyond that could be a friend or family member[2] These ideas have led to the focus on discussion and peer learning embedded within my teaching.
Siemens

Stepping away from constructivism but building on the social idea, a few years ago I saw a talk by George Siemens introducing the idea of connectivism - a learning theory for a digital age. Connectivism “uses the concept of a network with nodes and connections to define learning. Learners recognize and interpret patterns and are influenced by the diversity of networks, strength of ties and their context. Transfer occurs by connecting to and adding nodes and growing personal networks.”[6]

The idea of connectivism chimes with my own experiences of how I learn and develop, in the internet enabled world. I respond well to being part of a network (online such as #LTHEchat, or otherwise), learning from my connections, and looking to them when I have a problem. This has influenced me in finding opportunities for my students to collaborate and form networks within the class and stay connected through in between and my ongoing encouragement for them to increase their wider professional networks.

Recent example

Constructivism means that we are constantly evaluating and adding concepts to what we already understand. For example I was introduced, through the #LTHEchat to the idea of learning ecologies, a theory currently being developed by Norman Jackson. An ecology for learning includes the processes and set of contexts, relationships and interactions, and resources that provide an individual with the affordances for learning, development and achievement [7]. I work in Initial Teacher Education, teaching on the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) for secondary teaching in the UK. The nature of this course and the vast range of different backgrounds of the students make for a rather complex learning situation. All students are graduates so they are bringing their existing university experiences; many are career changes and so bring experiences of employment too in addition to their personal life and prior school experiences. The PGCE is a one year intensive course and is different to a lot of traditional university courses, after an initial induction at university our course is one day a week at university with the remainder of the week on professional placement in a school. So in addition to teaching at university and individual scholarly engagement with literature, our students have their school experience in their ecology. This includes their own practice as a teacher, their school-based mentor and other colleagues. There are also not only academic influences, in order to achieve QTS they must engage with the Department for Education’s Teacher Standards and there are influences of Ofsted, subject associations and more. On reflection, I have been pedagogically aware of the complexity of this learning situation, but until I was introduced to the idea of learning ecologies, I did not have a theory by which to explain it. The theory of learning ecologies fits with my observations and experiences and builds on what I already know and believe; and so my appropriation of the theory and assimilation into my own working understanding could be considered an illustration of constructivism in action.

Pajares

Frank Pajares[8] writes about the importance of understanding teachers’ beliefs due to the affect they can have on a teacher’s practice and how beliefs can be used to predict how teachers make decisions and can sometimes be considered more influential than a teacher’s knowledge. To this end, constructing a personal pedagogy could be a valuable exercise as it allows opportunity for reflection and to unpick one’s beliefs and consider how they influence your teaching.

In considering some of my own influences and through writing this article, on reflection perhaps my aims to engage and challenge were well grounded in my beliefs around constructivism and weren’t so contrived after all, and who as a teacher doesn’t want to inspire?

Finally, Shulman[9] describes the signature pedagogy of a teacher as consisting of surface structures (the concrete acts of teaching and learning), deep structures (assumptions about how best to teach a body of knowledge) and implicit structures (beliefs about professional attitudes and values). If this is the case then the implicit structures of discussion and reflection; deep structures of constructivist principles of students working together to construct knowledge; which can be realised through the surface structure of using flipchart paper and coloured marker pens then perhaps that is a principle driven signature pedagogy I can be proud of after all!

References

1. #LTHEchat 78: Personal Pedagogies | #LTHEchat.

CREATIVE ACADEMIC MAGAZINE Issue 7 From October 2016-2017 http://www.creativeacademic.uk
What does my personal pedagogy mean to me?

It's hard to define concisely but here is my attempt.

My personal pedagogy that I aspire to embody when I contemplate and act to help other people learn is drawing on my core knowledge around Person Centred theory, my belief that students have already within themselves the ability to flourish and my values around deep transformative learning coming from the inside than outside. I draw predominantly on experiential forms of learning and it has a strong relational and dialogical nature.

My personal pedagogy, that which I embody, is the result of an amalgamation of various moments of growth in my lifetime; gained through my interaction with significant /people (students, clients other educators and theorists) /spaces/ resources, experiences which I have symbolised to the best of my understanding as well as the learning I have gained through these experiences and in applying this to my own circumstances (including teaching).

Historic and current influences on my pedagogy

My pedagogical thinking and practice - my personal pedagogy, is very much influenced and shaped by everything which has contributed to make me the person that I am today. EVERYTHING - yet limited to the synthesis / meaning I give to this pedagogy in my here and now. This may (indeed is likely to) be modified as I am exposed to new influences - eg people, reading, experiences and circumstances. This belief stems from my closely held view that we see the world as we are. If we take this to be true, could we argue that we teach as we are ?. More recent influences are my core professional training as a Counsellor in the Person Centred Approach , my PGcap training and my involvement in ongoing “reflective spaces” ( eg: #CreativeHE community) my ongoing interest in mindfulness and self-enquiry as well as my transition to motherhood.

Below I will attempt to clarify how I feel those influences have shaped my currently perceived pedagogy.

The influence of theorists

Carl Rogers is one of the most important theorists in my professional world and his writings have certainly influenced my thinking, my beliefs about human nature (a man’s nature is a “trustworthy organism” change/growth, learning, my practice as well how I aspire to live in my own and relate to the world. In Rogerian theory, we are born into this world with a state of an “organismic process” where we are open to receive and symbolize all experience (conscious and unconscious) that are present in the moment without any inhibition or barriers biases or judgement . This process gets disturbed by “conditions of worth” which is our selective perception of our experience based on our innate need since babyhood for unconditional positive regard (I’d say love). It is this need that “gets in the way” of our optimal growth. As a consequence we develop a self-concept which is formed around that need and in order to get that regard. In other words, our self concept is built in order to keep us “sane” from the threat of absence of that regard/love. It is in fact our actualising tendency which always looks out for opportunities to grow, but not without consideration to the context in which we grow. Sometimes this tendency can feel at odds with our organismic valuing process, because the environment we are finding ourselves in does not nurture us in a way which feels to us like we are growing and so our growth is somehow always consistent with the view of self we have3. It is nonetheless the force which “pushes” the self towards optimas growth and oneness with experience (in a nutshell).
During my first lecture on my Msc degree on “love”, I recall thinking “This feels the right path/career for me OR is it that I am the right person for this job ? Am I ?”. I had the ability to enquire on my experiences with “shades of grey” from a very young age. Looking back I would experience the world intensely but I had not developed the “conception” or cognition to put words to it or symbolise my experiences with sufficient depth. I was feeling that I had a total absence of a guide (as in the original meaning of “pedagogos”) meant that I often felt I had to figure out my answers on my own. As a child it felt lonely and painful (what a gift to be given ,on retrospection). This form of personal enquiry was never encouraged or praised so it was often held in “secrecy” in my head, in my diaries; I was questioning everything and often feeling lost from the overwhelming questions in my head from: “Daddy, is there enough numbers for all cars in the world?” and how do we know they won’t repeat that number ? -(( I remember I was told each car had a unique plaque) deeply inconceivable in my little brain; I was just beginning to sense the concept of “infinity” ). I recall sending messages to myself in the future, notes towards the adult me to remember how the “child me” felt and not to “mock” or “forget” this experiences I had as “right now it feels real”. I always remember feeling on a very visceral level that this recognition was important but I didn’t know why. It was only through my MSc training that I began to develop my sense of conscious awareness and begin to slowly give it and my life deeper meaning. Looking back now, this is what I call my “observing self” which has served and is serving me greatly in my current profession and teaching. My ongoing interest and practice in mindfulness and the element of the transpersonal serves as another medium for me to help me answer the question “ why now” in anything I engage myself in ( this reflects my belief that our learning is relevant to the ecology of our life in that present moment).

The influence of my own experiential learning

Another important influence on the way I think and behave as a higher education teacher was my own experience as a learner: I came to know the Person Centred Approach in a highly experiential environment. This has reinforced my awareness and emphasis on the experience of my learners. I believe we carry and perhaps transfer our “inner learner self” into our “teacher self”. I would extend this idea and say that we carry our inner child in every step of the way. As a higher education teacher, I see myself as a facilitator to help students turn their experiences into learning and develop more concrete understanding from their synthesis and more meaning for themselves. This has influenced massively how I approach my teaching. When I first began teaching I walked into a class and started the lesson without any outline of objectives or aims, I was even dismissive over them for a while as I felt that they somehow constrained the process. I wanted to rely on my student’s inner wisdom and knowledge (I believe that people hold in themselves their own answers). Something in me innately rejected the need to break down in advance what I would teach.

The influence of my PGCAP experience and community forums

But thanks to the learning I gained through my PGCAP experience I have shifted my perspective and embraced more the need to have an informed position about why I am teaching the way that I do. I aspire to be as transparent as possible to my students and explain, articulate my biases/agendas and where my ideas have evolved from. I want and aspire to offer them the space to explore in their own ways but knowing how my ideas have been influenced -I anticipate those ideas to keep changing ...

Adopting a creative medium and techniques is another way I feel helps me to achieve this aim. I see a real marriage between the psychotherapy (the Person Centred Approach), mindfulness practice and deep approaches to teaching and learning. Likewise with my clients, I want to be a fellow traveller to my students. I want to strive to trust their organismic process for growth by offering the right facilitative environment with empathy respect and unconditional positive regard. The environment in which we teach is crucial in influencing this creative force in each person to flourish.
Spaces that nurture and expand my pedagogy

I recognise the vitality of nurturing spaces to keep me inspired and alert to my own creativity. My involvement in my PGCAP training, connecting to and becoming involved in the lifewide education and creative academic communities, my involvement in the community group I have set up, my role as a mother and daily play, my yoga and mindfulness practice, my interest in transpersonal modes of healing, where do I stop?! all these spaces I inhabit everyday provide affordance for experiences that have influenced and keep influencing my thinking and practices as a higher education teacher and contribute to synthesis of my ever developing pedagogy.

Classroom ecology

But how do these influences translate or transfer into the classroom? There is no straight answer to this. The idea that educators create particular environments through their teaching in which they demonstrate particular behaviours and lay the foundation for a culture for learning, is overlooked⁴ I would also add that the facilitator’s voice is indeed overlooked and not often invited to be heard or encouraged to be expressed by the institutional structure(s). I am yet to see a policy that states “Higher Education teachers are encouraged to share their vulnerabilities and their growing edges with their students”. Whilst this is perhaps taking place informally, I am wondering what impact that would have on educators. What I allude to is that the context/environment in which we work feeds back into us and influences and affects the way we teach. It is this very intimate self which, I argue, shapes too and influences our teaching practice. This involves past experiences in life as a child, alongside our experience as learners.

As Armstrong⁵ says “As teachers teaching, it is a commonplace awareness that we need to ‘model good practice’, which is visible, experienced and open to scrutiny and judgement. But to lay bare our innermost thoughts and concerns - part of our very self and the construction of our own identity as a teacher is a far more risky business”… but I would also add, is far more valuable and enlightening, which prepares the ground for fertile discussions and dialogue, as hierarchies dissipate and more equal relationships emerge. Surely this honest declaration of self facilitates the types of relationship and productive interaction in the ecology of the classroom if our goal as a teacher is to shift from a pedagogy that is didactic to a pedagogy that is dialogic and seeks to co-create rather than impose the making of meaning.

Multiple selves - multiple pedagogies

I believe that we have many selves...(many masks) that we use to meet our different needs according to the context or situation. As teachers we might apply this idea to argue we have many “teacher selves”⁶. I like the idea of multiple pedagogies and I feel I can represent myself in this way (only synthesised and integrated within my own self ). But I also believe that a particular version of our self can get in the way if we don’t have deep awareness of our actions with our students. I use doubt and self-enquiry as my motivating force in my process... it allows me the space to hold any model loosely and question closely held assumptions. Because of the nature of what I teach, I not only need/ want to role-model congruence and authenticity I need ( want) to fully embody it. I am learning to take more and more “educating and informed risks” with my students in an attempt to help them grow. I am allowing myself to be vulnerable and real, if that supports their learning.

In my teaching I often encourage moment to moment access to feelings and thoughts...responding very much in the here and now. My mindfulness practice and ongoing personal development has helped me to become aware of intrapersonal responses I recognise during my teaching. I can then use these responses to help me shift and change my delivery or engage in appropriate dialogue with students to deepen their learning. I often invite my students to access their experience, “inner wisdom” and encourage them to share it. My students engage all aspects of themselves in order to learn. I see it as my professional duty to help them access and use all aspects of themselves in learning. In that way I hope my students learn from the inside as opposed to the outside. I hope they learn to connect to aspects of themselves that encompass all aspects of their consciousness⁶. This is quite relevant in my field of practice which often calls upon students to trust their intuition. Having said that, I argue that there is great value in our students’“inner experience”, feelings and senses. Experience is pre-conceptual and comes in contrast with the over-emphasis on “cognition”; could we argue that the role of emotions in Higher Education teaching has been perhaps slightly overlooked. If we are to embrace this concept what will change in the way we deliver our classes? and why?
An ecological concept of personal pedagogy

Having created this pedagogical synthesis I can see it is ecological in nature: it reflects my continuous development as a person and as a higher education teacher as I sense - observe, feel, think about and try to make sense of my material, social, psychological and intellectual world...Surely our students do too? If we agree with this, could we then argue that there is value in helping students to engage with all their senses in their learning and draw informed and explicit meanings through their involvement in learning in such a manner?

These thoughts are very much “under construction”...and I look forward to engaging in further discussions with colleagues and anticipate to see how my arguments will shift and change through these interactions. One could draw from the above that if we indeed can’t help but bring ourselves into our teaching maybe we need to also inform our research into teaching and learning in ways that includes our self/sense of self?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I want to say a big thanks to Norman Jackson for his ongoing enthusiasm and in helping me edit this article. As always my husband who has also afforded me with the time I needed in a busy life to formulate some of those ideas on a piece of digital-paper!

Sources

Image on previous page:
https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=b7o6BiEv&id=3B6ED614BD8FA4EA47188C51F1925231A5AC0BF5&q=pedagogies+of+teaching&selectedIndex=15&ajaxhist=0
Introduction

#LTHEchat (Learning and Teaching in Higher Education chat) was established by Chrissi Nerantzi and Sue Beckingham to provide opportunities for HE teachers and other educational professionals to discuss learning and teaching topics via the Twitter social media platform.

Inspired by the hugely successful #edchat, https://lthechat.com/, the weekly 1 hour chat is open to anyone interested in sharing ideas, practices, perspectives, resources and problems or issues and their solutions. The open learning approaches facilitated through #lthechat has made a significant contribution to the professional networking and social learning practices of higher education professionals and I was delighted to be invited to contribute a session on March 8th. I chose the theme of personal pedagogies as this was something I was exploring at the time and it could feed into Creative Academic’s creative pedagogies project.

#lthechat social pedagogy

The pedagogy of #lthechat is simple. Prior to the session the person leading the conversation, let’s call them the ‘Chief Instigator (CI)’, provides the facilitation team with a short introduction to provide a bit of context and outlines the scope of the conversation. This is posted on the #lthechat blog ahead of the conversation. The CI also provides 6 questions around which the conversation is formed. The questions might also have images or links attached. During the one hour conversation a new question is posted every 10mins. Questions are labelled (A1-A6) so that participants and the CI can see what is being addressed in the response. All posts are tagged #lthechat so that they can be assembled under the hashtag.

Given that there are lots of participants what emerges often feels quite chaotic and confusing with lots of parallel conversations as participants respond to things that interest them. It is most definitely a pedagogy for emergence, although the basic structure of the conversation is determined in advance through the questions posed. Once the conversation is set in motion the CI becomes a participant like anyone else responding to whatever emerges on a highly selective basis. The process is well supported by a facilitation team and also ‘regular contributors’ who help create an energetic environment and a culture that encourages and facilitates participation. After the conversation I spent some time going through the posts and responding to individuals - usually by asking more questions. After the event, one of the members of the community (Chris Jobbing) storifies the content so that it is easier for users to examine what was discussed.

So this synthesis is my attempt to make sense of / create meaning from the conversation. It’s also my way of honouring and partially curating the contributions for others to read. I include a small sample of the many hundreds of tweets to illustrate a number of emergent themes that I find interesting.

Q1 What concepts of pedagogy do you, and colleagues who you know hold? #LTHEchat

Sample of responses

A1: I’m still an amateur pedagogic after 32 years in the job. Is that bad? Should I be admitting that here? #lthechat Chris Jobling
A1 @LTHEchat no longer teaching under 18s, via androgogy and more recently heutagogy as better descriptions of self directed learning #LTHEchat Teresa MacKinnon
A1 I like the idea that the people learning should drive the teaching #LTHEchat Rober Jenkins
A1 Moi: Constructivism, enactivism, pragmatism Autres: everything from Steiner-Waldorf to fill-the-bucket #LTHEchat Rob Grant
A1 Bloody hell. *scratches head* #LTHEchat Elizabeth Ellis
A1 my mind has gone completely blank! I lack the vocabulary to construct a response #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A1 As a relative newbie to TEL and educational development related work I feel like I can't even answer this yet! #LTHEchat Rosie Hare
A1 Social constructivism main for online escapades. Diversified into a range of tutor-led and student-led pedagogies for blended #LTHEchat Matt Cornock
A1 Coming from a science teaching background, I have quite constructivist conceptions of pedagogy #LTHEchat Jenny Lewin-Jones
A1 I take on many trends, be it behavioral, constructivist, etc. while my team is mostly about socio-constructivism #LTHEchat Jules Tardy
A1 #lthechat I guess my personal preferences are approaches with lots of interaction and building on students’ knowledge (constructivist) Martin Rich
A1 @LTHEchat no longer teaching under 18s, via androgogy and more recently heutagogy as better descriptions of self directed learning #LTHEchat Teresa MacKinnon
A1 ummm….pedagogy informing praxis…. #LTHEchat Hilaire Graham
A1 Concepts of ‘active learning’ pushed at previous role, now scaffolding online courses with activity theory and social learning #LTHEchat Matt Corock
A1 @LTHEchat Rather taken with the Greek idea of the slave who accompanied the learner to the place where learning happened #lthechat Miles Berry

Etymology: < Middle French pedagogue, pedagogue schoolmaster (1370–2; French pédagogue), school (1421–30; also as petagogue ) and its etymon classical Latin paedagogus (also pædægōgus) teacher, schoolmaster, slave who took children to and from school, in post-classical Latin also source of instruction or guidance (Vetus Latina, Vulgate) < ancient Greek παιδαγωγός slave who took children to and from school, in Hellenistic Greek also source of instruction or guidance (New Testament) < παιδ-, maíg boy, child (see Pardo- comb. form) + ὁγούς leading (see dogous adj.). Compare Old Occitan pedagog (c1350; Oecitan pedagòg), Catalan pedagog (1411), Spanish pedagogo (mid 13th cent.), German Pädagoge (a1446).

A1 was this perhaps about caring? like the idea of accompanying the learner on a journey #lthechat Creative Academic
A1 Inarticulately, I think it would include the co-creation of knowledge, experiential learning and authentic assessment. #LTHEchat Elizabeth Ellis
A1 I would even say social constructivism, a bit like what we are doing right now! #LTHEchat Sarah Ney
A1 Good question. If you hold to one concept of pedagogy then you are likely to make the same mistake time after time. #LTHEchat Clive Buckley
A1 I’m a big fan (being from humanities) of pedagogy which challenges the learner to challenge the perceived “right” answer #LTHEchat Josh Clare
A1 Mix n match & keep an open mind…. lots of different influences and they just keep on expanding #LTHEchat Jenny Lewin-Jones @LTHEchat
A1. Wow look at serious answers to Q1 :-0 I was going to say I want to help develop well-rounded, responsible & fulfilled humans #LTHEchat Bev Gibbs
A1: I tend not to bother. Focus on the practice rather than theory (although they probably influence me subconsciously) #LTHEchat Lisa Kidger
A1 @LisaKidger #LTHEchat even if you do base your approach on theory it makes sense to adopt a practice which feels right for you Martin Rich
A1 Particularly use Conole et al 2004 “Mapping pedagogy & tools for effective learning design” 3D framework for mix of experience #LTHEchat Matt Cornock
A1 Ericsson’s ‘Deliberate Practice’, Dreyfus & Dreyfus ‘5 Stages of Skill Acquisition’, Vygotsky’s ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ #LTHEchat Daniel Belton
A1 @neilwithnell @willhaywood my best&most painful experiences of teaching have been fail, fall get back up & try harder! #LTHEchat Haleh Moravej
A1 Whilst ‘learning from experience/mistakes’ is incredibly valuable, having a theoretical l&t framework allows you to step back #LTHEchat Matt Cornock
A1 possibly #LTHEchat My approach, for what it is worth, is to become the student in my class. Clive Buckley
A1 Kolb learning cycle, I usually try to design learning sessions moving student through the four quadrants, starting at theory #LTHEchat Ann Northcliffe
A1 doing, reflection, learning, doing,. #LTHEchat @LTHEchat Dr. Hala Mansour
Some impressions

Pedagogy is not a term that is commonly used by many academics and it can fall into the category of theoretical edu-speak that is rejected on the grounds that it is not part of my vocabulary. The words of ‘I tend not to bother’, are probably true for most of us for most of the time. But, judging by the conversation, it’s also probably the case that most of the #LTHEchat participants believe that ‘pedagogy’ is an idea worth trying to understand and co-create shared meanings as we were trying to do in the #LTHEchat. Later in the conversation I tried to show the conceptual value in the idea of pedagogy: it has different conceptual value to ‘teaching’.

But pedagogy is certainly a word that we are not used to talking about and it’s not easy to articulate a response to what is pedagogy? Many responses to this question were formed around constructivist or social constructivism views of learning and educational practices that honoured and engaged with this concept of learning as a lived experience. For example, my best & most painful experiences of teaching have been fail, fall, get back up & try harder! Haleh Moravej

One respondent encouraged broadening the idea of pedagogy to connect it to androgogy and heutagogy (self-determined, self-motivated and self-directed learning) but the format does not encourage elaboration.

A few responses suggested that it might be ‘wrong’ to hold a single concept hinting at the importance of being open, fluid and agile in your thinking in order to respond (pedagogically) to new situations as they emerge. ‘I take on many trends, be it behavioral, constructivist, etc. while my team is mostly about socio-constructivism’ Jules Tardy

Q2 How does this representation of the idea of pedagogy compare with your own concepts? #LTHEchat

I deliberately wanted to expose participants to the broadest conception of pedagogy that I could find so I used a paragraph from Thompson et al’s study of signature pedagogies.

Sample of responses

A2 Too broad, but might be a cultural bias since we love to stick to strict definitions this side of the channel ;) #LTHEchat Jules Tardy
A2: Word “interaction” btwn everyone in the room is important I think. All very well if everyone is there but no interaction = bad #LTHEchat Kim Sum

A2 Most agree but not sure about policy regime. #LTHEchat Scott Turner
A2 pretty good….goes to process practice contexts… Hilaire Graham
A2 I like the idea of that representation but as colleagues differ in their pedagogies (I think) am struggling a bit with it #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A2 @LTHEchat cf ‘it takes a village to raise a child?’ #LTHEchat Miles Berry
A2 @LTHEchat this is a very broad definition, all encompassing. I’m less convinced about helpfulness of signature pedagogies #LTHEchat Teresa MacKinnon
A2 I like that but also think more a list of associated phenomena rather than my sense of ‘pedagogy’ itself? #LTHEchat Rob Grant
A2 learning environment, co-creation, relationships etc all vital #LTHEchat Neil Withnell
A2 Going to bleat about TEL - this definition doesn’t include the crucial role of mediating learning and scholarship with tech #LTHEchat Elizabeth Ellis
A2. Where is values in that? Subject values as well as pedagogical values #LTHEchat
A2 #lthechat I like the sense in the definition that it includes many aspects of the educational process & not just teaching Martin Rich
A2 Thomson et al 2012 quote resonates with me since I first got my head around engeström’s representation of activity theory #LTHEchat Matt Cornock
A2 @WarwickLanguage @LTHEchat that could be about anything - you swap out pedagogies for any number of topics. #LTHEchat Charles Knight
A2 I like Durkheim definition that is the reflexivity applied to educational objects > “a practical theory” <3 #LTHEchat Jules Tardy
A2 the description matches my Systems Eng' module with level 6 students been roller-coast one student's now seeing the benefits #LTHEchat Ann Northcliffe
A2 We often don't attend to rules, norms and culture when considering pedagogy, but need to - important #LTHEchat Ellen Roberts
A2 I view learning within a social context - you learn with others/environment/experience in/directly influencing you #LTHEchat Matt Cornock
A2 #lthechat I like the sense in the definition that it includes many aspects of the educational process & not just teaching Martin Rich
A2. I like that it foregrounds relationships, so much of 'personal pedagogy' stems from what people believe about students #LTHEchat Bev Gibbs
A2: It makes sense but do any of us really think that deeply and widely about our practice? Instinct and intuition are underrated! #LTHEchat Theresa Nicholson
A2 Pedagogy's old definition of 'teaching-led' edu is not relevant now, new definitions of approaches, scaffolding more effective #LTHEchat Matt Cornock
A2 if, like all aspects of l&t, we say that pedagogy doesn't happen in a vacuum for learner or teacher then yes this seems to fit #lthechat Josh Clare
A2: While it doesn't align with my understanding of pedagogy, I like it. Fits me better. #LTHEchat Lisa Kidger
A2 yup, fits quite well with the social aspect of learning Sarah Ney #LTHEchat
A2 Good alignment. Teaching approach depends on learners, teacher... and don’t forget: subject! 'One size fits all' does not work. #LTHEchat Dr Daniel Belton
A2 it is a learning process? #LTHEchat @LTHEchat Dr. Hala Mansour
A2 I would agree with this definition, Pedagogy is very personal and the learning happens in someone not to them #LTHEchat Santanu Vasant

Some impressions

I chose this quotation, the most comprehensive I could find, to try an open up thinking about the scope of pedagogy and to link the abstract idea to the concrete making of practices, in particular contexts, situations and environments. I was interested in discovering the extent to which this holistic ecological set of ideas was generally accepted within the group of participants.

On balance more participants seemed to view this comprehensive way of seeing pedagogy positively and a few connected to the idea of a person's pedagogy engaging with the whole system (or in my words the whole institutional ecosystem).

A few participants felt the definition was too broad or expressed some other form of disagreement.

One participant said it didn't fit his current understandings but it was an actually better fit.

One telling comment by Theresa Nicholson was of the so what type. 'It makes sense but do any of us really think that deeply and widely about our practice? Instinct and intuition are underrated!' While not denying that we do not think deeply on this matter - that was the purpose of the conversation! I guess the follow-up question would be and where do these come from if not by being immersed in and in tune with the whole as the definition suggests.?

Q3 Does the idea of ‘personal pedagogy’ have meaning for you? If yes, how would you define or describe it?

A3 Yes because it sounds like I can get away with making it all up as I go along. #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A3 experiential learning... Hillaire Graham #LTHEchat
A3 all the talk about the inclusion of values strikes me as being very important and that’s definitely personal #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A3: from a cognitive psychology perspective there are strategies that work for a range of individuals so no differentiation needed #LTHEchat Dr C Kuepper-Tetzel
A3 personal implies own approach, not a bad thing but collaboration key - recognising learning in others #LTHEchat Neil Withnell
A3 Personal pedagogy: recognising the assumptions that we bring to teaching and learning #LTHEchat Ellen Roberts
A3 #lthechat comes back to what’s right for me (and my students) and can change over time and with context
Martin Rich
A3 @MartinRich106 yep…everyone is different & things should be targeted for both sides & not replicating same thing over & over? #LTHEchat Kiu Sum
A3 As a student soon-to-be graduate, is scary. Thinking about pedagogy is another chapter. Our views differ from academics? #LTHEchat Kim Sur
A3 A way of approaching learning that is relevant to a person’s own background, values, systems, etc? Sarah Ney #LTHEchat
A3 As someone who doesn’t teach, but supports L&T and TEL, is it wrong to think of personal pedagogy as personal L&T strategy? #LTHEchat
Elizabeth Ellis
A3 @liz_isabella Oh, I like that way of thinking of it. More comfortable with word strategy than pedagogy #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A3 @brtjnknns we can make it personal… through ‘living’ it? #LTHEchat
Chrissi Nerantzí
A3 @CliveBuckley I hope so because I’ve been making it up for a whole career! #LTHEchat Chris Jobling
A3 I have to admit to ‘retrofitting’ theory onto stuff I do after the fact…particularly when I realise it worked fairly well #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A3 @LTHEchat teaching as craft - we learn from how others do this, but then develop our own approach / style? #lthechat

A3 At first ‘personal pedagogy’ made me think of personal learning environment, then I tutted to myself. An attitude to learning? #LTHEchat Matt Cornock
A3 aren’t they all personal? #LTHEchat Robert Jenkins

@LTHEchat A3 personal approaches to teaching does, I’m just not in love with the P word any more Teresa MacKinnon https://www.slideshare.net/teresamac/sharing-practice-in-the-open-telecollab2016 … #LTHEchat
A3 So much of what passes for learning theory has been dreamt up by well-meaning but deluded enthusiasts anyway. #LTHEchat Simon Lancaster
A3: does it depend on POV? Who’s the subject for whom the “pedagogy” is being made “personal” … the teacher or learner? #LTHEchat

A3: If we adopt an ecological pedagogy then it will almost certainly be personal as well because we (our ‘self’) are in it. #LTHEchat Theresa Nicholson
A3 Is the whole holistic approach & not just focusing on education. Is all emotional + physiological + education knowledge #LTHEchat Kiu Sum
A3 @LTHEchat Just asking. Is it possible to be a good teacher without knowing classic texts on pedagogy? Clive Buckley
A3 Actually no, because pedagogy is a theoretical framework, different from personal praxis #LTHEchat Jules Tardy
@LisaKidger @chrissinerantzí @MartinRich106 Beliefs rather than knowledge of theory can be a more significant influence on practice #LTHEchat Will Haywood
A3 @mattcornoack perhaps we move from abstract concepts of pedagogy to personal interpretations when we include ourselves #lthechat
A3 bringing alive the theory has its personal touch #LTHEchat
A3 @cpjobling @KiuSum I guess it is all about the dance of learning let it be tango, line dancing or dad dancing! #LTHEchat Haleh Moravej
A3 @KiuSum I was just about to put something about emotions, and you got in first! Agree that this is important to acknowledge #LTHEchat Jenny Lewin-Jones
A3 How closely does ‘personal pedagogies’ map to ‘meta-learning’ @LTHEchat #LTHEchat Matt Cornock

Some impressions

Jules Tardy thought it was not meaningful because ‘pedagogy is a theoretical framework, different from personal praxis’. To counterbalance this view Matt Cornock suggested that ‘perhaps we move from abstract concepts of pedagogy to personal interpretations when we include ourselves’.

Most participants do not say directly that the concept has value, rather they pick up on what sorts of things would make the idea meaningful implicitly suggesting that it did have value as a concept. The sorts of things they recognised in a personal pedagogy included: experiential learning, personal approach, involves collaboration, recognising the assumptions that we bring to teaching and learning, what you believe & value, as well as what you’re aiming to achieve, decoding and demystifying, what’s right for me (and my students) and can change over time and with context, approaching learning that is relevant to a person’s own background, values, systems, we can make it personal… through ‘living’ it, we learn from how others do this, but then develop our own approach, Reflection on action. Reflection in action. Reflective practice, emotions, the whole holistic approach.
Q4 The diagram shows a personal pedagogy in relation to various influences. Does it make sense? How might it be developed? #LTHEchat

I used a diagram to help stimulate thinking about the influences on a person's pedagogy.

Sample of participants responses
A4 @dawniotes You got there before me, I was still trying to work out why I couldn't relate to it very easily!! :). #LTHEchat Bev Gibbs
A4. My 1st assessment on PGCertinHe looked like that diagram as I planned whole module LTA around a deaf student, I was told off #LTHEchat Ann Northcliffe
A4 Reasonable list of stuff, could add more but devil in detail of how stuff interacts & changes in diff contexts.? #LTHEchat Rob Grant
A4 YES @drrwgrant agree devil and craftsmanship in the detail of how situations are interpreted and acted upon #lthechat Noman Jackson
A4 #lthechat would expect to see personal preferences in there, also level of course and motivation for doing it Martin Rich
A4 @LTHEchat seems quite, well, institutional. Much of 'personal pedagogy' may be more cultural? #lthechat Miles Berry
A4 @dawniotes @HalaMansour I agree. Our culture and our values play a big part. #LTHEchat Alic Lau
A4 @neilwithnell Merci Neil! Looks like it's more about pedagogy in practice than proper pedagogy but need to read more! #LTHEchat Jules Tardy
A4 the trouble with big diagrams is that there are always important things missing. I like small diagrams!! Phil Race @RacePhil
A4: wondering if there is enough breathing space in this model? Where is the individual and their own personal ecology? #LTHEchat Chrissi Nerantzi
A4. Also seems to treat teaching in isolation and doesn't acknowledge individual drivers to research first (which impacts T&L).
A4 Reasonable list of stuff, could add more but devil in detail of how stuff interacts & changes in diff contexts.? #LTHEchat Rob Grant
A4 It's a bit mixed up to me: individuals, professional bodies, materiel (tech); it'd be more readable in several diagrams #LTHEchat
A4 I would like to see a bit more partnership between pedagogy and student exp, although I like the central influences very much #LTHEchat Elizabeth Ellis
A4. Extraordinary absence of the educator, what shaped them and what they bring #LTHEchat Bev Gibbs
A4 @LTHEchat Is this missing sth about own past learning experiences/ background/ cultural upbringing? #LTHEchat
A4 I would be tempted to reverse the whole thing and have box 1 encompassing everything else #LTHEchat Robert Jenkins
A4 then again those under 'Other Influences' are becoming more important, is it not? Is all about getting employed once graduated #LTHEchat Kiu Sum
A4 Strategic influences are due to HE global strategy, professional bodies > they influence institutional influences #LTHEchat Jules Tardy
A4. I don't understand what 3 Signature pedagogy is? Anyone? Charles Knight
A4 Neil Withnell provided this link @Charlesknight https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/definitions/signature-pedagogies ... #LTHEchat
A4 focus on influences, no mention there of assessment practices etc #LTHEchat Neil Withnell
A4 makes sense to me, deals with the complex maze of influences in which we act as teachers #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A4 The model covers a lot, but I'm not sure it accounts for the after lunch/ late afternoon slump ;-) #LTHEchat Will Haywood
A4: The missing, and in my view, vital element, is US. Our values, skills, personalities, style - have a huge effect on pedagogy #LTHEchat Theresa Nicholson
A4 @drrwgrant indeed! I'd like to remix the diagram :) #LTHEchat Teresa MacKinnon
A4 doesn't make sense to me. How would you extract concrete learning and teaching strategies from this. It's just big words. #LTHEchat Dr C Kuepper-Tetzel
A4 I’d include attainment of learners in there, not sure if it’s covered in needs/interests #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A4: found that difficult to follow. Cognitive overload. #LTHEchat Lisa Kidger
A4 Why is generic a subset of discipline in the diagram? #LTHEchat Rob Grant
A4 Makes sense all right. #Graduate #Attributes stood out… but then again that is the main thing in my head these days! #LTHEchat Rob Grant
A4 seems to imply that institution has greatest influence, in my experience more the case in schools than HE #LTHEchat teresa MacKinnon
A4 Where does ‘how teacher was themselves taught?’ feature in diagram? #LTHEchat Rob Grant
A4 haven’t heard about signature pedagogy before, any info please? #LTHEchat Jules Tardy
A4 Neil Withnell Retweeted Jules Tardy and added the link https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/definitions/signature-pedagogies… #LTHEchat
A4 is this complex enough? #LTHEchat @LTHEchat Hala Mansour
A4: first reaction … when shown like that, there doesn’t seem much scope for the learner to have agency. #LTHEchat Chris Jobling
A4 Arrows could be two way? Esp in institutions where the personal pedagogy of the instructor influences curricula/dept approach #LTHEchat Matt Cornock
A4 Similarly arrows could be two-way if the personal pedagogy of the student is influencing curricula/strategy - partnership model #LTHEchat Matt Cornock added,
A4 Does the word pedagogy need replacing with something more intuitive? #LTHEchat Sue Wattling
A4 It looks great! And complicated. Could you add references, hyperlinks to further info? More explanations to allow reflection? #LTHEchat Daniel Belton
A4 Yes, I think so but would need examples of each (case studies?) #LTHEchat Santanu Vasant

Some impressions

The diagram looks complicated and I knew it would put some people off. But I think in pictures and as a former geologist (an field of pedagogical practice long before I moved into the field of education) my learning process is to create a map so I can begin to comprehend not only the components of complexity but their relationships. What I didn’t do was provide any explanation so it was deficient in a number of ways that some of the respondents highlighted.

Is this complex enough? commented Dr Hala Mansour. Well it is complex and pedagogical thinking is about thinking with complexity at all the things that need to be thought about in order frame learning in the most appropriate way (given all the influences and requirements) to teach in a way that engages and achieves what the teacher wants to achieve. Others felt it would be better to develop several diagrams to represent the complexity ‘bit mixed up to me: individuals, professional bodies, materiel (tech); it’d be more readable in several diagrams’.

A few participants felt that the influences that had been identified were the sorts of things that might be involved in a personal pedagogy. ‘Reasonable list of stuff, could add more but devil in detail of how stuff interacts & changes in diff contexts? Rob Grant

One general comment was that there needed to be more emphasis on the partnership between teacher and students and the teacher’s own past experience. Robert Jenkins provided an observation that I found particularly helpful, ‘I would be tempted to reverse the whole thing and have box 1 encompassing everything else’. In fact I used his insight to create a better representation (right). Similarly, Theresa Nicholson felt that ‘The missing, and in my view, vital element, is US. Our values, skills, personalities, style - have a huge effect on pedagogy’. This element is embodied in the ME in the updated version of the diagram.
Matt Cornock made another useful observation. ‘Arrows could be two way? Esp in institutions where the personal pedagogy of the instructor influences curricula/dept approach’ and ‘Similarly arrows could be two-way if the personal pedagogy of the student is influencing curricula/strategy - partnership model’

Q5 What have been the most important influences on your pedagogical thinking and practices throughout your career? #LTHEchat

Sample of responses
A5 concepts of usability design ... put yourself in the perspective of the user (i.e. the learner) #LTHEchat TELmenot
A5 Kolb learning cycles, Boyd students teaching & supplementary teaching, flipped, patchwork assessment, assessment for learning #LTHEchat Ann Northcliffe
A5 #lthechat lots of my influences comes from studying reflective practice Martin Rich
A5 meeting @chrissinerantzi being pushed by @MetMUnch students to do better, being invited to @UniWestminster to meet @KiuSum #LTHEchat Haleh Moravej

A5 I have met colleagues who have hated PGCAP - but if done right and value explained/demonstrated, it’s invaluable. #LTHEchat Rebbeca J
A5 The feedback from student and assessments going well or not #LTHEchat Santanu Vasant
A5 Increasingly important for me to keep in touch with case studies, journals and blog posts from #LTHEchat types Matt Cornock
A5: Royce Sadler's work on assessment, about needing to develop students' capacity to assess their own work #LTHEchat Ellen Roberts
A5 Freire and visual impairment introduced me to education as social justice #LTHEchat Sue Watling
A5 I wonder if anyone would say it is their PGCert in HE! #LTHEchat Alice Lau
A5 @amslau to a point I probably would, but didn’t appreciate it at the time, only now. #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A5 Reading T&L papers. Writing. Conferences, workshops, staff dev. Running T&L workshops. Evaluating my practice & publishing. PLN #LTHEchat Dr Daniel Belton
A5 @dawnitoes yes, agree with this. I teach in a way that would suit me very much as a learner, but never realised how much till now! #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A5 @WarwickLanguage spent the last decade removing barriers from maths learning, words like “we” can distance students so easily #LTHEchat Robert Jenkins
A5. Increasingly, social media playing a big role. Always someone with an idea, or who's tried it or to make me think #LTHEchat Bev Gibbs
A5 Lest not forget opportunities & experiences gained & (finally) meeting professionals e.g. @HalehMoravej from here! #LTHEchat Kiu Sum
A5: Theories, training and conferences all useful, but personal experience of being a learner is probably more influential #LTHEchat Theresa Nicholson
A5 a talk I saw about peer instruction: cut content, cover the basics better, build difficulty. Took me 8 years to ‘get the idea’ #LTHEchat
A5 Professional over passion. #LTHEchat Charles Knight
A5 @LTHEchat Default is that I teach how I was taught. Papert. Mayer. The shift to evidence based practice. #ltethechat Miles Berry
A5 @kjhaxton I love conferences. I especially love conference backchannels. So useful #LTHEchat Elizabeth Ellis
A5 #LTHEchat it's a good example of learning from practice...becoming aware of different perspectives Hilaire Graham
A5. All the artists I have worked with in HE - no formal pedagogical 'training' but an innate ability to inspire & communicate #LTHEchat music dance academy
A5: most important influence for me and my personal hero: Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850-1909) #LTHEchat
A5, my PhD supervisors, experiencing L&T in different countries, working with colleagues from different disciplines and culture. #LTHEchat Alic lau
A5 Awesome Laurinda Brown of Bristol Uni School of Edu #LTHEchat Rob Grant
A5 Biggest influences: Working with awesome colleagues at @spswonlineyork @spsw @UoY_Yorkshare, students I spoke to, OU course #LTHEchat
A5: my experience as a teacher and learner, and listening to students #LTHEchat Lisa Kidger
A5 especially learning about learning theories from antiquity > now, and a course on the thory of action & activity #LTHEchat Jules Tardy
A5 seeing people struggle to understand what the hell maths is has been driving force #LTHEchat Robert Jenkins
A5 @rbrtJnkns @irene_Biza I agree its who. And I nominate @tinaovert and @RossKGalloway latterly @Anna-kwood @anortcliffe #LTHEchat
A5 attending conferences and seeing what others are up to, particularly the presentations that spell out the pedagogy #LTHEchat  Katherine Haxton
A5 my action research with students and colleagues that helped us all to reflect on our practices #LTHEchat @Heflections1  Hala Mansour added,
A5 A hodgepodge of praxis, social learning, networked practice, learning environments and tech, human centred design, engagement #LTHEchat Elizabeth Ellis
A5 @Heflections1  now that I understand :) #LTHEchat  a melting pot with lots of external influences, pulsing away - needs a gif! Teresa MacKinnon
A5 Way to start a twitterstorm! Jane Donaldson ‘Childrens Minds’, Brenda Crows ‘Play is a Feeling’, William James, Wittgenstein #LTHEchat Rob Grant
A5 to make it simple: own experience as learner. Trying to put myself in the shoes of my students made me + aware of own approach Sarah Ney
A5 #LTHEchat influences come from a range of sources - pick n mix of the best bits - delivery styles, topic, student group so on.. Claire Ashworth
A5 Funny enough, writing a presentation sharing my co-create experience for Monday. Is emotional to met so many at uni #LTHEchat Kiu Sum
A5 Therefore, important influences are the people within a H.E institution from academics to students. Is a lasting memory. #LTHEchat Kiu Sum
A5 My 2nd year of Master in Ed sciences. Loved it and acquired many theoretical tools to inform my praxis (and play around) #LTHEchat Jules Tardy
A5 Finding out what works and doesn't work for students who are combining work and study #LTHEchat Ellen Roberts
A5 working memory theory, screwed up & figuring out how to do better, remembering that students are human beings, being respectful #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A5 who not what: @S_J_Lancaster and @Irene_Biza made me realise what I do was actually something worth sharing #LTHEchat Robert Jenkins
A5 own experience and student feedback, #LTHEchat Neil Withnell
A5: Is it too sycophantic to state that #LTHEChat has been my biggest and best influence? (Long may it continue.)
A5 Are we guilty of debating whether baking powder is better than self-raising flour or not, when there are people waiting to eat? Clive Buckley
#LTHEchat A5 just listening to students, and watching them learning, and learning from them. For a very long time now!! Phil Race
A5. (1) My own education (2) Experience good & bad (3) @ElenaRF!!! (4) talking to - and getting to know - students (5) space to try #LTHEchat Bev Gibbs
A5 The students, colleagues, the curriculum, my training, personal experiences as a learner #LTHEchat Will Haywood
A5 experience (so old!) critical incidents (teaching business folk), raising son with communication disorder, and lit! #LTHEchat Teresa MacKinnon
A5: Research in cognitive psychology: understanding how human memory and learning works. #ltethechat
A5: Having a hearing impairment and ADHD has made me much more aware of the role of inclusive practice for effective engagement #LTHEchat

Some impressions
What is interesting is the enormous variation in responses to this question. It includes:
1) Own learning experiences/education
2) Family
3) Students - and their feedback
4) Colleagues
5) Training eg PgCert / further study eg Masters, PhD
6) Curriculum
7) #ltethechat
8) ‘I teach how I was taught’
9) experimenting - finding out what works/doesn't work
10) action research
11) social learning/ networked practice
12) ‘not what but who’ - specific people
13) theorists
14) attending conferences/presentations

This feedback helped me construct an on-line questionnaire which was then used in the #creativeHE conversation at the end of March.
Q6 What have been the most important influences on your pedagogical thinking and practices in the last 12 months?  #LTHEchat

Sample of responses
A6 @WarwickLanguage @LTHEchat schools & #FE perhaps the biggest influence is the Government and their agencies e.g. OFSTED #LTHEchat Chris Sweetman
A6 @patlockley and the pedagogy of the o-GiFfed #LTHEchat Peter Matthews https://twitter.com/LTHEchat/status/839579226659516416 ...
A6 @patlockley and the pedagogy of the o-GiFfed #LTHEchat Peter Matthews
A6 Research by @john_hattie and reading @RacePhil books, plus taking risks in workshops I run, not all staff can/do #LTHEchat Santanu Vasant
A6 Research by @john_hattie and reading @RacePhil books, plus taking risks in workshops I run, not all staff can/do #LTHEchat Santanu Vasant
A6 use of complexity theory & process philosophy have become v important to conceptualising practice Phil Wood
A6 TBH probably the skeptics like Birbalsighn who made me question & defend what could be easy adherence to 'progressive' pedagogy #LTHEchat Rob Grant
A6 More recently, reviewing online courses - helps assess my approach against others, reflect on what works/doesn't #LTHEchat Matt Cornock
A6 #lthechat revisiting the need to personalise learning and thinking how this could happen in a large-scale course Martin Rich
A6 #LTHEchat @LTHEchat Not doing any f2f now... But I guess #Brexit must feature large? Not to mention #fake-news & austerity cuts? Simon Rae
A6: Working with distance learning students, as it brings communication into sharp relief #LTHEchat Ellen Roberts
A6. First graduating cohort of mature online learners who refused to stand on the shoulders of giants and challenged everything! #lthechat music dance academic
A6 #LTHEchat that a lot of good learning design is a lot like user experience design (((patlockley))) added, Neil Withnell
A6 nobody mentioned TEF yet...#LTHEchat Neil Withnell
A6 @neilwithnell surely TEF is not worth mentioning in this context. A bad influence at best. #LTHEchat
A6 @cpjobling but [TEL] an influence ?? #LTHEchat Neil Withnell
A6 sharing in @LTHEchat, initiating MOOC for DBA students all over the world, do, reflect, learn, reflect ... #LTHEchat Dr. Hala Mansour added,
A6 replacing “model answers” with plainly written “commentaries” hard work but worthwhile @Tommybiscuits #LTHEchat Robert Jenkins
A6 Always welcome for future project collaborations @HalehMoravej :) #LTHEchat "seeking opportunities here and there..."
A6 Also new approaches to student partnership in curriculum design and edtech development. # LTHEchat Simon Lancaster
A6 Also new approaches to student partnership in curriculum design and edtech development. Elisabeth Ellis
A6 being reminded by @ArmenianJames that learning should be fun, and can be fun. Phil Race
A6 Spending time talking to lecturers and students about learning and teaching in their discipline (what works for their subject) #LTHEchat Matt Cornock
A6 Very honourable mention to Prof Carol Evans, who tries to clarify the muddiest pools in Higher Education. #LTHEchat Simon Lancaster
A6 Also new approaches to student partnership in curriculum design and edtech development. Elisabeth Ellis
A6 #LTHEchat Principles of learner autonomy+implementation of peer feedback strategies. (Hi, joining your cool chat from Johanna Vaatovaara
A6 flexible learning, creativity, risk taking, students (and #lthechat) #LTHEchat Neil Withnell
A6 realising that questions asked need to be clear and understandable and that replacing “we” with “you” is simply amazing #LTHEchat Robert Jenkins
A6 Last twelve months specifically? @FabioArico #LTHEchat I've started to think about self-efficacy. #LTHEchat Simon Lancaster
A6. I think the emergence of the concept of Scholarship of Teaching & Learning is important #LTHEchat Paul taylor
A6 actually some negative influences, seeing how others do stuff and being repelled so trying to find another way #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A6 Undoubtedly the amazing #codesign16 and #codesign17 consultations on #ngdles by Jisc. Helped me synthesise a whole approach #LTHEchat Elizabeth Ellis
A6 Colleagues trying new activities when they could’ve stick to their routine, spending time doing so and sharing their experience #LTHEchat Jules Tardy
A6 discussions, mostly informal w/ fellow LTs, also teachers, ed devs, students. On the + formal side case studies, reports, etc. #LTHEchat Sarah Ney
A6 I shared #LTHEchat on our PGcert tonight. I wish someone from my cohort is on here and say it is the course. I wonder… @Turing2014? Alice Lau
A6: @chrisinnerantz @suebecks @anortcliffe @RacePhil @ProfSallyBrown and @bonni208’s excellent “Teaching in HE” podcast … and #LTHEchat Chris Jobling
A6: A desire to make learning more relevant to students’ experience and aspirations, to make it more personal to them #LTHEchat Theresa Nicholson
A6 Student feedback. MOOCs. Reading more about assessment theory. #LTHEchat Miles Berry
A6: #LTHEchat in the last 12 months, the best resource for pedagogical practice is http://www.learningscientists.org AceThatTest Dr C Kuepper-Tetzl
A6. Thinking -> @Jessifer @DigPedLab for an emerging fundamental re-think Practice -> Sheffield @TELshef team and annual TELFest #LTHEchat Bev Gibbs
A6 @pimpmymemory #LTHEchat personal preference = eg learning in depth v last minute cramming, active v passive participation in lectures Martin Rich
A6 changing institutions! #LTHEchat Sue Wattling
A6 - disasters! Trying things, and learning from my failures - has been a big factor; and observing colleagues practice! #LTHEchat LTHEchat david webster
A6 this one is simple. My students! #LTHEchat Claire Ashworth
A6 teaching via distance learning methods to students in China and UK, supporting students without face-to-face contact #LTHEchat Katherine Haxton
A6 #LTHEchat certainly use of lesson study to understand learning and adjust approaches Phil Wood
A6 It’s got to be @LTHEchat #LTHEchat, reading more papers/studying for my MSc and being more reflective in my own practice Will Haywood
A6 Being involved in student led projects has opened heart + eyes + experiences + opportunities + finding identity #LTHEchat Kiu Sum
A6 without doubt the changing political climate and thinking on open educational practices #oep #LTHEchat Teresa MacKinnon
A6 @LTHEchat can we have a “who” rather than a “what”? #LTHEchat Chris Jobbing

Some impressions

Again what is interesting is the enormous variation in responses to this question. Responses clearly represent the particular things that individuals are doing while recognising some of the changes that are taking place in the system including:
1) Changing political climate, changing institutions
2) Trends in education like OER and OEP
3) Being involved in projects
4) Reading
5) Studying for MSc
6) Use of particular techniques eg distance learning, lesson study, flexible learning,
7) My students - student feedback, new approaches to partnership, desire to make learning more relevant to students’ experience and aspirations,
8) discussions, mostly informal with colleagues
9) MOOCs
10) reviewing online courses
11) negative influences - trying to avoid and find a better way
12) experimenting - trying things out and learning from failures, plus taking risks in workshops I run, asking clearer questions,
13) certain people
Concluding remarks

#LTHEchats are a great way to gain quick feedback from many participants about an idea and this was why I took on the challenge. From the responses above you can see that participants engaged with the ideas and I am really grateful for the thoughts and perspectives they shared. My brief synthesis cannot do justice to the conversation but I hope it captures a sense of what unfolded. The feedback I gained enabled me to create a better version of my visual aid for explaining the potential influences on a personal pedagogy. It also enabled me to design a questionnaire that reflects the diversity of influences on individuals pedagogical thinking and practices which I used a few weeks later in the #creativeHE chat.

Such conversations are a way we can develop new relationships the most important outcome for me was forming an on-line relationship with two of the participants (Will Haywood and Rachel Jackson) who then made significant contributions to the next stage of our exploration. Their articles on what a personal pedagogy means to them are included in this issue.

The idea of pedagogy not easy to elaborate and I was not surprised that some participants admitted to struggling with the vocabulary, or admitting that they lacked an appropriate vocabulary to describe the ideas. This was articulated by Ann Northcliffe ‘Think I need a glossary of terms from this thread, lots of new ones for me already!’ To which Chrissi Nerantzi replied ‘perhaps a group would like to work on such a glossary for the website?’ And that is the way new things emerge from such conversations.

Finally, I will leave the last word to Paul Taylor

pedagogy would be a fine word if we actually espoused what it means #LTHEChat

Acknowledgement

A sincere thank you to the organisers of #lthechat for the opportunity to lead a conversation and to all the participants who generously shared their time and opinions.

Image credits:
http://blog.undr.com/2010/03/flying_twitter_700.png

My evolving conceptualisation of pedagogical practice
April 2017
What does it mean to use Creativity in Problem solving?
Have your say

Email from Marci Segal

April 21st was designated World Creativity and Innovation Day by the UN following representations my Marci Segal (right) who leads World Creativity and Innovation Week which Creative Academic has been involved in for the last two years. In this email Marci invites Creative Academic to help show how creative problem solving might be used to help advance the UN’s sustainable development goals.

It was an honour and a privilege to meet with Ambassador I. Rhonda King, Permanent Representative to the United Nations from St. Vincent and the Grenadines last week, on Thursday, April 20, 2017, to discuss the upcoming resolution to include World Creativity and Innovation Day among the UN Days of Observance. Ambassador King is the champion of this resolution.

Ambassador I. Rhoda King. Permanent Representative to the United Nations from St. Vincent and the Grenadines with Marci Segal, Founder, World Creativity and Innovation Day, April 21. 4/20/2017 Ambassador King is championing that all levels – government, public sector, and civil society – use creativity in problem-solving to make the world a better place and to make our place in the world better too, to reach the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. [Please use the comment section below to include the questions you have.] A fuller report on the journey to the United Nations will follow in the next few weeks.

What does it mean to use creativity in problem-solving?

Would you like to contribute to the understanding of what it means to use creativity in problem-solving? I am preparing a document to submit to the UN describing what to expect when creativity is used in problem-solving at the government, private sector, and civil society, and welcome your voice, your additions. You will, of course, be given credit for your contribution and will receive a copy of the document for your files.

Marci Segal
marci@wciw.org
What influences the Pedagogical Practices and Thinking of Teachers?

Jenny Willis

Jenny Willis’ career has involved many dimensions of teaching, educational management and research. She first worked with Norman on aspects of professional and personal development, creativity and lifelong learning as a Fellow at the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. She is a founder member of Lifewide Learning, conducts research and writes for its publications. She edits Lifewide’s quarterly magazine and is also executive editor for CAM. Jenny has a PhD in socio-linguistics and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. For more information about her go to http://no2stigma.weebly.com.

Introduction

Context of the survey

In March 2017, Creative Academic hosted a 5-day google community exploration of personal pedagogies. A preliminary on-line survey led participants into reflection upon their own development. It posed the question ‘Who or what has influenced your thinking, your beliefs and your values, so that you help other people to learn, develop, create and achieve in a particular way?’ The aim was to develop the ‘big picture’ of participants’ influences, but simultaneously began the process of targeted individual reflection.

This article examines the findings to date. The survey remains open and anyone who has not yet responded is welcome to do so at https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/personalpedagogy.

Structure

The questionnaire began with an open-ended question, inviting respondents to list the 3 most significant influences on their development as a teacher. This was followed by 4 questions which asked them to rate a series of factors on various scales of influence: these included people and experiences, the contribution to individual thinking and practice, the focus of recent professional development and the influence of social media.

Respondents

Minimal biographical data were collected, simply the role of participants, their years of experience and gender.

As noted above, the survey remains open. To date, there have been 60 responses, of whom 60% are female (figure 1).

![Gender of respondents](image)

Figure 1, Respondents by gender

It was anticipated that most, but not all, would have experience of working in Higher Education. Responses (figure 2, overleaf) confirm that the highest proportion (38%) were teaching in this sector, followed by 19% who had a developmental role in HE.
In addition to the specified roles, 15% of respondents offered a narrative description of their role. These included:

- I am a university ESP teacher and teacher trainer involved in EFL teachers’ CPD
- Librarian
- Creative practitioner
- Facilitator (on-line and face to face); assessor, coach
- I am currently in the process of seeking a doctorate; my teaching is offered in other venues and it is not yet formally in an academic setting
- Retired academic
- Independent educational consultant (x2)
- Higher Education facilitator
- Teacher and researcher

The final biographical question asked how long respondents had been working in Higher Education. As figure 3 shows, nearly half (43.3%) had more than 15 years’ experience, whilst 25% were in the first 5 years of their career. 13.3% were not currently employed in the sector. From responses to the previous question, we can assume that these were a mixture of retired people and others working in a different educational sector.
**Findings**

**Question 1, What have been the three most important influences on your formation and development as a teacher?**

This question preceded examination of specific potential sources of influence, thereby producing a picture of participants’ own views which could subsequently be compared with their assessment of the influence of specific people or contexts.

Each respondent’s replies were given in 3 separate lists to this question. Responses they identified in list 1 were:

- Personal/professional experience
- Role models
- Experience as a learner
- Family
- Students’ responses
- A mentor
- Formal training
- A personal characteristic or disposition

Some sample comments relating to these were:

- My own experiences as a student on creative courses (R25)
- Lifelong experience of observing teachers (R50)
- Being allowed to try something different (R57)
- Newspaper article about a teacher in a short list for a prestigious award - his approach (R31)
- My international on-line peer group (R59)
- Remembering kind teachers who made me feel valued and wanted (R19)
- Burning curiosity (R44)
- My faith (R43)
- My own passion for learning (R58)
- Interaction with students across sectors in 30 years career (R33)
- Grounded cognition (R53)

Despite the diversity of these comments, they nevertheless cluster around some key themes: self-motivation and personal experience are highly significant, as is the impact of a role model, who might be someone known personally, or a leader in the field of education who has inspired the individual. Commonly cited names were Ken Robinson, Paulo Freire and John Dewey.

Responses in the second list of influences mirror those already mentioned, though in differing proportions as we shall see (figure 4):

- Role models
- Personal characteristic or disposition
- Student response
- Formal training
- Experience
- Family
- Experience as a learner

Some typical comments here were:

- Motivation from a passionate educator (R15)

  Someone I worked with who saw something in me, passion that I hadn't recognised in myself when I took time out of teaching (R37)
My CPD both formal and informal (R30)

Continual self-reflective practice and the chance to discuss ideas with colleagues, including through observations (R31)

Unlearning (R42)

In this second list of influences, the importance of formal, pedagogical training scores highest, followed closely by personal experience, role models and personal disposition.

The third list of influences cited in response to question 1 is largely similar to the first two, but there is evidence of respondents having to think more widely, hence we find the inclusion of ‘technology’, ‘sharing ideas’ and ‘subject’. The sources were:

- Personal characteristic or disposition
- Experience
- Formal training
- Role models
- Technology
- Sharing ideas
- Student response
- Experience as a learner
- Subject

These themes are illustrated by comments such as:

- The positive feeling to help others learn (R4)
- My own satisfaction and expectations (R27)
- My talent to motivate others (R44)
- Personal experience of connected learning online (heutagogy) (R33)
- Literature, blogs, news (R22)
- My peers and colleagues with whom I can discuss ideas (R25)
- The subject that I am teaching at the time (R26)

The three subsets clearly focus on a small number of themes. Figure 4 compares the responses in each list, to highlight those that are dominant.
If we combine the sets of answers, we can see which influences are most important. The total number of responses given by the 60 respondents was 180. Figure 5 shows the overview for each of the identified 11 themes. We find that the greatest influence comes from role models (44 mentions), people both personally known as practitioners and others known only through their work as theorists or academics.

The second most significant influence on respondents is their personal life and professional experience (35 mentions).

Individual disposition such as motivation or the desire to help others comes third, with a score of 29, implying that teaching continues to be a vocation of choice.

Joint fourth in importance, with a score each of 22, are student response and formal training. So, whilst teachers are alert to the impact they are having on their students, and are responsive to this, they are also cognisant of the need for them to have formal instruction, both initially and as ongoing CPD, to maximise their pedagogical skills.

![Figure 5, Overview of perceived sources of influence](image)

This, then, is respondents' instinctive view of the influences on their development and thinking as teachers. We turn now to their responses to the remaining questions to see how consistent their perceptions are.

**Question 2, Which of these people or experiences have made a significant or very important contribution to your formation and development as a higher education teacher over the course of your career?**

Question 2 offered a set of 18 potential sources of influence, and asked respondents to rate these on a 4-point scale No contribution/Small contribution/Significant contribution/Very important contribution. The set includes the themes already identified by respondents, but is more wide-ranging. Totals for each theme vary between 58 and 60 as some respondents did not score all themes. The results are set out in figure 6 on the next page.

According to these responses, the most significant influence is L, Experimenting with your own teaching, with a mean score of 3.6. R, Own experience as a learner is fractionally less, at 3.59.

Gaining and using student feedback scores 3.32, teachers worked with in the past score 3.29, and reading about teaching and learning scores 3.27.

These influences are all consistent with high scorers in question 1, with the exception of personal disposition which was not included in question 2.

It must also be noted that all 18 potential influences were recognised as significant, with none scoring less than 2.22. This, the lowest score, was awarded to the influence of people outside education, suggesting that such sources of influence may be under-valued.
Quantitative data were complemented with some narrative responses which seem to allow individuals to ‘let off steam’ e.g.

I could gain much more from student feedback were it not based in a consumerist model. The current surveys offered students online at the end of a term provide little worth knowing for a true teacher. I make it my business to ask students periodically how they are doing in my classes. I find they are quick to identify areas where they are having problems. But by discussing it with them personally, it is possible to ferret out where their own behaviors play a role in those problems rather than merely seeing this from a supply-side ideological beginning point and presuming that the producer must somehow satisfy the consumer. I see the current practices of student consumer surveys as a squandered opportunity.

I've learned from other innovation professionals inside and outside of academia (like Jeanne Liedtka at the Darden School at UVA, folks at Stanford's d.school, local start-ups, and people employed as innovation managers in corporations), my own reading on how to promote creative confidence, books and articles on creating an innovation-centric culture in organizations, and my friend David Helfand who invited me Quest University in Canada while he was president after I watched his TED talk on Designing a University for the New Millennium.
Question 3, For each item please indicate the contribution it has made to your thinking and practice as a teacher during the last 12 months.

Question 3 listed 21 possible experiential contributors to respondents’ thinking and practice, and asked them to rate each one using the same scale as for question 2. Most of the descriptors are lengthy, so the results do not easily lend themselves to graphic representation. Instead, the scores are shown numerically, in Table 1.

As previously, some respondents did not answer this question, presumably because they may no longer be teaching or practising. Even those who did respond sometimes omitted certain responses, hence totals vary from 51 to 53.

Table 1, Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No contribution</th>
<th>Small contribution</th>
<th>Significant contribution</th>
<th>Very important contribution</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in a formal face to face or blended learning professional</td>
<td>35.29%</td>
<td>21.57%</td>
<td>13.73%</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development programme ie for a qualification like a PGCert or Masters</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Participation in on-line courses</td>
<td>28.30%</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
<td>22.64%</td>
<td>11.32%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) Participation in teaching and learning events/ workshops/ conferences</td>
<td>13.21%</td>
<td>32.08%</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
<td>16.96%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) Participation in research related conferences</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>28.85%</td>
<td>26.92%</td>
<td>21.15%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E) As a contributor (eg presenter or facilitator) to a professional development event</td>
<td>24.53%</td>
<td>13.21%</td>
<td>47.17%</td>
<td>15.09%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F) Reading (any sources)</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>7.55%</td>
<td>41.51%</td>
<td>49.06%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G) Informal conversations with colleagues</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
<td>36.54%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H) Experimenting within own teaching / student development practices</td>
<td>5.66%</td>
<td>7.55%</td>
<td>30.19%</td>
<td>56.60%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I) Designing/ redesigning a module, programme or support service</td>
<td>13.21%</td>
<td>18.87%</td>
<td>33.96%</td>
<td>33.96%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J) Disciplinary research</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>21.15%</td>
<td>44.23%</td>
<td>11.54%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K) Pedagogic research focused on teaching and learning</td>
<td>15.09%</td>
<td>26.42%</td>
<td>41.51%</td>
<td>16.98%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L) Collaboration with one or more colleagues on a teaching and learning project</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
<td>31.37%</td>
<td>27.45%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M) Participation in an on-line forum or special interest group mailing list</td>
<td>11.32%</td>
<td>41.51%</td>
<td>28.30%</td>
<td>18.87%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N) Use of social media like Twitter, YouTube, Blogs</td>
<td>16.98%</td>
<td>28.30%</td>
<td>24.53%</td>
<td>30.19%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O) As a member of a project team</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>26.92%</td>
<td>17.31%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P) Working with people from business, industry or local community</td>
<td>40.38%</td>
<td>28.85%</td>
<td>21.15%</td>
<td>9.62%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q) Receiving and using student feedback</td>
<td>9.62%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>36.54%</td>
<td>28.85%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R) Completing an annual or periodic review of a module, programme or support service</td>
<td>40.38%</td>
<td>26.92%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S) Participation in external examining or other peer review process</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
<td>28.85%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T) Applying for a teaching fellowship or other form of recognition</td>
<td>49.02%</td>
<td>25.46%</td>
<td>15.69%</td>
<td>9.80%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U) Responding to institutional policies or priorities (eg employability or internationalisation)</td>
<td>39.02%</td>
<td>35.29%</td>
<td>19.61%</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An immediate observation is that the mean scores for this question are lower than those for question 2, implying that the contributors were less significant than those included in question 2. They range from 1.86, Applying for a fellowship, to 3.38. Two experiences shared this top place, Reading and Experimenting with own teaching.
A few complementary comments were added, e.g.

For the record, while I teach three courses per semester for the local state college, I am retired from the university system and teach part-time. Hence the lack of participation in conferences, training et al.

These was also my first year and the UK (sic), and I must say that institutional and market pressure on teaching and research is utterly ridiculous. Were this to happen in Italy, the least that could happen would be mass civil resistance, if not actual riots (like happened a few years ago when Berlusconi tried to fully marketise Higher Education)

Once again, some respondents use this opportunity to express their political views on educational issues.

**Question 4, Over the last 12 months, what areas of your work have provided the focus for your professional development? Please tick all the boxes that apply.**

In question 4, respondents were asked to rate 16 possible areas of professional development, using the scale 1 = small to moderate focus, 2 = significant focus, 3 = major focus. 53 people answered the question, but were asked to tick only those boxes which applied to them, hence totals vary from 48 to 52 checks. The results are collated in figure 7.
The dimension which had greatest CPD activity was teaching (mean score 2.33). Given that the survey was completed mainly by members of Creative Academic, it is not surprising to find that creativity was a major focus. Creating new resources scored 2.26. The third most active area was disciplinary research (mean 2.17) followed by pedagogic research (2.14). This would indicate that CPD is closely related to respondents’ everyday roles.

As before, respondents do not reveal an interest in business, which scored 1.39, nor in management (mean 1.42) or administration (1.29). These findings do not bode well for future administration of HE institutions by experienced academics.

A small number of narrative comments expand on the quantitative data, all of which centre on the disciplinary interests of the writer and show the personal initiative taken:

I constantly seek to inform myself about both discipline-related scholarship and pedagogical scholarship. I seek it out on my own using library resources and online sites. I do participate in some online sites discussing these subjects as well. I have successfully competed for a week long seminar at the US Holocaust Museum and Memorial this summer, as preparation to teach two new classes next fall in peace and justice studies and Genocide studies.

My own continuing professional development in my specialist area of interest (theatre and performance)

Disciplinary and pedagogic research is the same in my case

So, whilst no explicit mention is made of the individual qualities revealed as significant in question 1, these words demonstrate those same qualities of motivation and dedication.

**Question 5, What forms of social media help you learn and develop your thinking and practice as a higher education teacher?**

The final investigative question asked respondents to report on their use of different forms of social media. There was no attempt to quantify the degree to which they used these so the findings are mere indicators of resources used. 49 people replied to this question. The results are summarised in figure 8.

![Figure 8, Question 5, developmental use of social media](http://www.creativeacademic.uk)

The figure shows us that Teaching and learning forums and networks are utilised most (score of 35) but Twitter is employed almost equally (score 34).
Other special interest mail lists and Linked in come next, reinforcing the disciplinary focus of respondents.

9 respondents added alternative media. These were:

Discussing with others

Blogs

#creativeHE Google+ Community; MMU_TicWebinars; ALDinHE International Webinar

Tutor public blog

I’m a creative practitioner rather than an HE teacher, so I find Pinterest and other creativity blogs useful. Also reading around the subject has helped develop my understanding, both personally and for my work.

G+Community - CreativeHE and the ones from my alma mater which include larger public group and private smaller groups

Teacher/teaching blogs

I have an account with Mendeley which often suggests further readings according to the articles I have saved offering pointers to new research produced. Google online discussion forums, in conversations I recently engaged with (e.g. creative academic!); such inspiring areas and my thanks goes to Prof Norman Jackson, Jenny Willis, Chrissi Nerantzi and all involved.

Comes under twitter but specifically #LTHEchat Google+ communities Slack communities Google+ hangouts, interactive webinars

These detailed responses show that media are a significant part of respondents’ professional lives, so it is surprising that they did not feature more prominently in replies to question 1.

It is encouraging to read that some of the work Creative Academic has been leading is having an impact on current, and hopefully future, generations of teachers.

Towards an interim conclusion

If the responses to this survey are typical of teachers in HE, we can begin to identify the areas which they perceive to be of significance to their professional development (question 1). Detailed disaggregation of themes in questions 2-4 enabled us to compare responses, and we found a high degree of consistency, allowing us to consider the responses reliable.

I have found that role models are very important sources of professional development. This may be colleagues or others observed teaching, or may be renowned educationalists or theorists. Those mentioned by name span over a century, dating back to Dewey and Vygotsky. Given the importance of such models, we can understand the popularity of modern media as a means of sharing views and learning from like-minded professionals.

Second to this, personal and lifewide experience is recognised as helping professional development. Closely related to this is personal disposition, including the motivation to enquire and persevere. I have suggested that teaching continues to be a vocation for most of our respondents. Perhaps for this reason, they are discipline and pedagogy focused, showing little interest in moving into administrative or managerial roles.

Responses will also be reassuring to those involved in the formal training or CPD of teachers. They clearly appreciate having had a sound formation and are enthusiastic about sustaining their professional skills.

Finally, respondents demonstrate that, with experience and training, they are responsive to their learners and rely greatly on the feedback received, whether informal or formal.

Together, these finding reflect the complex process by which teachers are inspired, trained and ever-evolving in their practice as the environment changes or individual contexts demand.

Acknowledgement

I am most grateful to Norman Jackson for allowing me to make this analysis of the survey he devised for the Google community event.

References

1 https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041
2 https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/personalpedagogy
3 R1, R2 etc refers to Respondent 1, 2 etc. They are named in the sequence in which they responded.
'Who have been the biggest influences on your pedagogical thinking and practice and why? #creativeHE conversation

The question on DAY 1 Monday March 27, was 'Who have been the biggest influences on your pedagogical thinking and practice and why? Participants' responses reveal the complex and personal ways in which they have been influenced as a teacher and a person. Teaching experiences and interacting with learners, and being taught by particular teachers who inspire seem to be the main influences, together with upbringing.

David Andrew
Influences (possibly too revealing :-))
Having to understand why I was underachieving at school
teaching myself in context of that
Engaging with learning communities ie WEA when at school
being a yippie
independent study while at university
thinking a lot
playing a lot - pranks
The 1924 Congress of Soviet Psychologists
More fun
Barrie Stevens, gestalt and radical/humanistic psychology
Anthony Wilden
Physical - embodied learning and exploration

Dee Vyas
Who influenced my pedagogy is a good question to start with. I was not a teacher or having taught until the Dean of my old faculty informed me I would be training him and the Faculty Sec. Wow?? How do you teach, what even was pedagogy? As I taught more I realised that the best way to help people learn was how I wanted to be taught. By doing and not as had been in my experience just told to learn. The second person to influence me mostly was my mother. She believed that being honest and open when talking to others and trying to understand others was important. This was an important part of my belief to develop as a teacher

Helen A
There have been some vignettes or pivotal moments for me throughout my career but the one that has stayed with me and influenced me as a learner as well as a teacher is this one. When I began working in a Conservatoire with dance students, I took on responsibility for revising and then convening the final undergraduate dissertation module, which could take a number of forms as is typical at many institutions (e.g. wholly written, practice-based etc).

What most surprised and excited me was the way in which the young artists engaged with theoretical ideas and used them as a springboard from which to develop new work, new knowledge, new ways of thinking and knowing. It was refreshing to see such playful minds demonstrating a degree of disregard for the rules and norms of what I considered to be 'traditional' academic and practice, and having the confidence to challenge and critique long-held ideas without agonising for too long about justifying their thinking before actually starting to handle and work with the materials. Many new understandings and mis-understandings were stumbled upon from this very 'hands on' approach to artistic practice and it occurred to me that at times the reverence with which I approached my scholarly research and teaching held me back, whereas swapping to my other hat of ‘practitioner’ actually freed me.

I have always been in awe of that cohort of students - instead of standing on the shoulders of giants, they clambered all over them, and often leapt off to reach new places above, behind and adjacent. It has significantly influenced the way in which I think about hierarchies and ownership of knowledge since.
Paul Kleiman

I had plenty of time, on a long train journey, to think about this question: “Who or what has influenced your thinking, your beliefs and your values, so that you help other people to learn, develop, create and achieve in a particular way?” So here goes….though it’s more in the form of a set of postcards or vignettes rather than a neat linear narrative (I can already hear “there’s no such thing as a neat linear narrative when it comes to learning!”). I can think of many really important influences and instances…so here's just a couple of early ones.

Vignette 1

Studying theatre design at a UK art school in the 1970’s (a time of genuine ‘edge of chaos’ learning), I was having a tutorial with the Head of Department Richard Negri - a wonderful designer and teacher (he designed the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester). Engraved in my memory bank is Richard saying to me “The trouble with you, Paul, with all your various talents, is that you do this…” And he walked his fingers to the edge of the large table that served as his desk and work space. “But when you get to the edge, you look down and around, and you do this…” And he walked his fingers gingerly back from the edge. “….when what you really need to do is jump!” And his fingers ran up the edge and jumped off…and he started flying them around the room. “You’re afraid of falling - which is natural - but what if it means you actually can fly creatively?”

I took that lesson to heart.

Vignette 2

Also involving Richard, but this time he was assessing a scale model I’d made for the musical Hair. I had decided to set it on and around a gigantic scrap heap of Americana, and had spent weeks making 1:25 scale models of cars, jukeboxes, telephone booths, old neon signs, etc. Above the scrap heap I’d placed a giant swing with a Stars and Stripes seat.

The ‘assessment’ consisted of Richard pacing around my model muttering “You don't need this, and you don't need that....” and pulling out and chucking at me to catch virtually every piece I’d made.....except the swing. At which point he stopped and said “Ah, you DO need THAT!”.

What he was trying to show in his inimitable way, was that creative design (and, as I was to discover much later, undertaking research or designing a curriculum) always starts with identifying the essential element, question or problem. You can't really start designing anything properly until you do that. That's another lesson I've tried to put into practice my whole working life.

Simon Rae

...influences.. I've had to think about this.

One primary teacher I remember used to carve faces out of big bars of carbolic soap, but that's not a pedagogy really is it? (Although innovative use of available resources is good practice!) One teacher taught me to hate favouritism; all the kids knew he had favourites to whom he gave more stars than other kids, which counted towards the house prize. His house usually won . And at the same school I did learn (the hard way) that recourse to the cane is not good pedagogy.

I had an art teacher who I admired, and at Art College I was lucky enough to have a week with Bruce Lacey (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Lacey). His personal pedagogy seemed to be 'Anything goes', a 'Just do it' approach to life that is very attractive for the few it works for but one that can leave a wake of broken dreams for those for whom it doesn't.

That was all before I, or most people I suspect, had heard of pedagogy. Even in the 70s doing Teacher Training I never heard the word, although I did pick up a couple of tricks - but you can never go from soft to hard). (That one kept me out of face to face teaching...I couldn't do it.)

By the time I got into online teaching I was at the Open University. The pedagogy I picked up was largely from the Masters in Open and Distance Education (MAODE) I did, the EU projects I was involved with researching into Networked Learning, and OU colleagues. ConversationalFrameworks, Formative Feedback and Assessment for Learning featured large.

My own personal pedagogy is to do with helping learners know what they really, really want to learn and helping them to understand that unless they really, really want to learn something then even the best teachers in the world can't help them ... and that learning isn't everything.
Mike Wride
My personal pedagogy is influenced greatly by two things; growing up in Somerset in the 1970s and 1980s and being immersed in nature and a rural community, in which the processes and cycles of nature were appreciated and participated in.

And secondly, my training as a developmental biologist. To study embryonic development one has to have a great appreciation of movement and change and processes including transformation and differentiation and the relationship between parts and wholes (incidentally, I am now using this way of thinking (and feeling) in my new role as an academic developer).

In an embryo, the genome is present in the fertilized egg. Thus, the idea of the fully formed organism is already there. Similarly, the potential for creative development remains in all of us; staff and students alike.

Relating this to teaching (and learning), I realise that I have always preferred a process orientated, iterative approach in my teaching. I've never been as ‘hung up’ on purveying the ‘hard facts’ to the students as I have been of trying to reveal the creative processes involved - whether it is a scientific discovery or indeed the development of form.

In terms of curriculum, I've always felt it good to have an idea of where we are going at the beginning. The idea of the whole curriculum should be there in the first lecture - not so much in an outcomes-orientated way but in trying to get across a feeling of what it means to be led by the whole from within the parts. Where the parts are both the students and the fragments of knowledge we are trying to imbue in them; to help them see the whole. Isn't this, after all, the idea of a coherent curriculum?

I had the pleasure of teaching on the MSc in holistic science at Schumacher College and tried out an experiment where I asked the MSc students to imagine themselves as cells in the organism of their class departing on a journey at the beginning of the period of teaching. It was cell biology as social constructivism! We all grew as the two weeks of the teaching period advanced, but it was an organic and creative developmental process.

I feel that this process-orientated and organismic approach is truly creative and truly transformative. It moves our thinking away from mechanistic, linear and reductionist thinking. And the feeling of wholeness is also associated with creativity.

However, challenges remain. As Charles Birch said in 1988 in a pivotal article about Whitehead and Science Education "It is one thing to call for a science and its teaching that is organic, ecological and relational rather than mechanistic and compositional. It is quite another to put it into practice"

Russ Law
Two themes seem to run through a journey through my “personal pedagogies”, as I reflect on how things have developed in the course of my career as a teacher, then school leader, then tutor, facilitator and coach. The themes are, first, the changing professional emphasis in teaching, in which learners who engage in their own improvement make better progress; and, second, the pathway of my career from fairly directive teaching to roles in supporting others in their own learning and development.

Early in my teaching career, I noticed with interest that a class I “inherited” from a colleague with severe restrictions on his own mobility came with a whole set of independent skills, habits and competencies. These included routinely dealing with classroom organisation, such as handing out and collecting up books, or cleaning up after artistic activities, as well as wider responsibilities, especially during physical education activities. I see now that this sowed a seed in my pedagogical thinking about the capacity of learners to manage themselves and each other.

Over the years, there has also been a growing realisation, supported by research and practice, that self-driven, self-managed improvement such as feedback, self-assessment and pupil reflection and ownership of strategies, is the most effective factor in learning and progress.

Later, as I stepped into leadership and away from the classroom, I had no option but to rely on the abilities of other adults, as well as children, to bring their own creativity and skills to bear, within a framework of expectations, curricular materials and a sharing ethos, in a system with several parallel classes in each year-group. This provided very good conditions for shared learning by adults, with the exchange of numerous ideas, practices and values. Although we didn’t know the term then, we were using strong professional learning communities that were highly self-motivated.

Fast forward to the present, and I have found myself able to embrace the concept and practice of facilitation, with no expectation of having all the right answers (although some background knowledge of the relevant topics and fields is a must). In parallel, as a coach on different school leadership programmes, I’ve discovered the amazing power and satisfaction of supporting others by eliciting from them their own capacity to address internal and external challenges, issues and aspirations.
**Isobel Gowers**  
Personal pedagogy - who or what has influenced me?

My first memory of thinking about teaching was when I was doing my A levels and comparing my two maths teachers. My mechanics teacher was undoubtedly an excellent mathematician but he could never get why I couldn't understand new concepts so he couldn't help me to learn. In contrast, my pure maths teacher didn't seem so mystical, took it in his stride when I couldn't understand explained things in multiple ways with endless patience and hence I learnt a lot more pure maths than mechanics. I think back to this when students are struggling, I try to be patient and find alternative ways to explain things but I do sometimes have sympathy for my mechanics teacher when students ask me about something I cannot remember not understanding and I struggle to connect it to something they can understand.

Another person who has influenced me is Professor Neil Jones who taught me genetics at Aberystwyth. His teaching certainly had an effect on me as I went on to do genetics in my PhD and for 5 years as a post-doc. There are a few things that I remember positively, one thing was how he made it relevant, I was doing equine science and he included horse examples in his lectures. I think there were about 200 in the cohort and we are talking in the time before clickers, in fact it was acetates not PowerPoint but those lectures were great, they made me think for myself and problem solve, I spent much of the lecture confused but by the end of it I had understood, but not only that it seemed to stick.

I suppose some of my negative experiences also have influenced me. I have no idea what I studied in the ecology module, this a topic I am interested in but the lecturer used to turn the lights down to show slides, I vaguely remember pretty woodlands and a slightly monotone voice and then I dozed off. Equally during my MSc I remember being taught by two internationally recognised cardiologists who used their paper photocopied onto acetate as their visual element, I cannot remember much about cardiology either. Both these experiences have altered how I teach, I paid particular attention to my voice coach whilst doing my PG Cert (and have now followed her example and introduced many of my students to Hairy MacLary) and also to the visual resources that I use.

More recently I have been more interested in the social aspects of learning, everything from learning in a group during my PhD, discussing ideas with my peers and post-docs to seeing my students learning whilst developing their own communities. This has been further emphasised as I have got involved with initiatives like #BYOD4L and #CreativeHE, I have taken part of that sense of community and tried to encourage the same ideas within my own institution as well as networking beyond the institution.

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**Chrissi Nerantzi**  
Who or what has influenced your thinking, your beliefs and your values, so that you help other people to learn, develop, create and achieve in a particular way?

I have been a foreigner all my life. I am Greek, born in Germany, living in the UK. In between I was living in Greece. I suspect that this life adventure has somehow influenced who I am, how I have become who I am and who I am becoming, if that makes any sense.

Learning to survive, learning to adapt, learning to be resourceful, learning to connect with others, learning to thrive has always been part of my journey and still are. Often it has been and is a struggle, a struggle of a creative spirit that sees opportunities in obstacles and is positive about the future.

To love learning is fundamental. The desire and passion to learn will help us see the world around us and within us in a fresh light. Sharing this passion with others is so valuable for our personal and collective growth, to inspire and be inspired. My children have that bug for learning and I have managed to infect others too, people I work with, just through being me.

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**REMEMBER** If you have not already taken part in the survey, you are still welcome to do so. Just go to [https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/personalpedagogy](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/personalpedagogy) and follow the instructions. All responses are anonymous and no-one will be identified in our analyses.
Tony Dias and Julius Dobos Interviewed by Norman Jackson

**Anthony Dias** is an Instructor in the Digital Audio Technology (DAT) department at Cogswell College and serves as the Visual Director for Cogswell MediaWorks. He is a DAT Cogswell Alumnus. Before transferring to Cogswell, he studied computer arts and animation at West Valley College.

Since 2001, Anthony has produced work for clients largely in the Hispanic market. Early in his career, he gained experience at SpanishMasters Creative Studios, where he contributed to advertising campaigns and edited local and nationally broadcast television commercials. Later, he was production manager for IDIAS Production where he helped produce a beginner’s English learning program.

**Gyula Julius Dobos** is an award-winning film- and music industry professional-turned-educator, active in the fields of music- and audio production. As a speaker, Dobos’ interests include technology’s effect on society and culture, and the relationship between creativity, art, culture and technology. As a consultant, his focus is on bridging industry and education, creating professional learning opportunities in education, and building collaborative learning environments. As a Distinguished Professor, Dobos teaches courses ranging from electronic music production to sound design, and advises large media projects and student portfolio projects at Cogswell College in Silicon Valley, California. He also serves as the Music and Audio Director for MediaWorks, a 2013 initiative, created to fill the gap between professional- and soft-skill development in collaborative environments in education.

**Interviewer:** What’s your background? What was your journey to become a teacher at Cogswell Polytechnic?

**Tony:** I coasted through the American educational system and after high school I took off to North Africa for a year. I lived with my parents who started a school out there. Then I came back to study in the United States again. I went to a Junior College and I took a bunch of art and animation classes. There was a period during which I worked retail followed by a stint as a security guard which convinced me that I needed to finish my degree and I ended up a transfer student at Cogswell College.

It took me roughly 10 years to graduate from college (from start to finish) but all along, I was working doing things like graphic design, video production and some audio. They used to call it multimedia when I was a teenager and I was doing it in what’s known out here as the Hispanic market, which is fairly large. I got quite a bit of experience editing commercials and adding motion graphics titles, doing advertising stuff that got on a local TV and some on national television.

As soon as I graduated with my Bachelors of Science, I started teaching a Freshman level class where I introduced Desktop Production Fundamentals for Audio and Video. Even though I did not go through any formal training to become a teacher, I was able to draw from many sources to inform my teaching such as; my industry experience, having grown up in an educator’s household, youth work, retail sales, and having gone through the same program as my students.

**Julius:** I was born and grew up in Hungary. I studied film score composition in Germany, I studied classical composition in Hungary. I ended up getting a degree in electrical engineering which I didn’t do anything with. As a matter of fact, I had a pretty bad opinion about education in general. I was studying piano from quite an early age of five and by 14 I was composing, and soon after I was running my own business working on radio commercials, TV commercials for different markets in several countries in Europe. I got more and more interested in scoring. I started scoring TV shows, then movies and also released several albums. I ran a music production businesses and when I was 24 I ended up moving to the United States: I felt that the market wasn’t big enough in Europe. I had to restart everything in the US, but throughout the whole experience I felt like I wasn’t using much of what I had learned in school, despite of having studied at several institutions. But I wasn’t really using much of that. However, what gave me an advantage was that I was 24, still very young but I already had 10 years of experience of doing practical, professional work.

**THE PROBLEM WITH HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Julius:** When I was studying in general education classes, I felt it was really a one-way information stream, like pushing past experience-based information on to students... in ways that was either black or white: you are right or you are wrong, so if you memorise things and then recite what’s in the book, you must be correct... This is seriously limiting. I also felt that not enough of “what’s happening today in the real world” was taught. There was a disconnect between what I learned in the classroom and what I needed to know in the real world outside. I learned music theory, music composition, I learned how to write music for movies, but when I got my first serious feature film scoring project with an even more serious deadline, not much of that knowledge was useful, aside from knowing the history, the standards and the specs. But how to get in contact with the producers, how to actually be selected for the movie, how to invent new approaches... how to deal with people, work under pressure, how to use soft skills... no one taught me that. These are things I had to learn on my own over the years.
I had to re-start everything from scratch and I grew my business in the US again from nothing, to working with Grammy-award winning artists in the studio and becoming a freelance composer and audio producer. I was based in Dallas, Texas but I travelled to everywhere from New York to Hollywood - wherever I had to work.

After a while I felt that it became a bit of an assembly-line type of work, where every day is the same: even though the projects were different but the expectations from directors and from the industry were pretty much the same, especially in the areas that I specialize in, which is film scoring and electronic music production. In a way, the industry kills true creativity. Then I saw a posting on a bulletin board of the Audio Engineering Society from Dr. Timothy Duncan, the Program Director of Digital Audio Technology at Cogswell. It said the college is looking for someone with an industry background and not so much with an academic background. I thought that it could be interesting, if I could sort of disrupt the system and change the way things are taught, and teach students based on my experience, instead of based on text books and theory. So I went to give a master class, we connected well… this was four and a half years ago.

**Interviewer:** It looks as if you were both attracted to Cogswell and Cogswell found you attractive as teachers because of your practical experiences. Can we move on to Cogswell College - what type of institution is it?

**Tony:** The school was founded in 1887. It came from a trade school tradition and along the way it became very much an engineering school. However, it still maintained the practical trade side of things. Because of this, students are highly employable and one of our problems is our best students get snatched away straight into the industry because of their skill set and their ability to work on teams.

One of the things that’s been true, at least since I started as a student in 2006, is that there’s a huge emphasis on projects. They aren’t always formal and they are almost always messy, but we are small enough as a college, and our leadership is flexible enough that we can try lots of things and still get some support. Some are projects fully envisioned and executed by students and other projects are led by us, the faculty.

Project based learning is such an integral part of the way we do things at Cogswell that faculty are expected to use these sorts of practices in the classroom as much possible. We’re a digital media college and the emphasis for these projects is bring students together from the different disciplines to produce great work.

**Julius:** In our fields, we need audio professionals to work with somebody who is creating an animation, a film or a video game. With MediaWorks, we try to erase some of the disciplinary lines to make this collaboration seamless. One might think “I have to draw this picture”, or “I have to play this note” - but how do those two things fit together? Through real projects for real clients with actual needs, we can take students coming from our visual and audio disciplines, and have them work together to generate the concepts, develop ideas and interact with the clients.

**Interviewer:** So how did MediaWorks begin?

**Julius:** I was teaching a Summer class in digital sound design where we build sound effects for film and television, and work with them. That was my first sound design class I taught in my life since I hadn’t had any previous experience in education. I did some research online and I found a media library for education: movie clips that teachers can use in their classes, and students can replace the sound effects of a movie. This is all great, but I felt it was only one slice of the real process. It was only the production slice. It didn’t take it into consideration how you actually get the audio job, how you work with a client, how you interpret a director’s vision, how you critically and creatively think at the same time, distilling all the available information, how you present your work, etc. Not to mention, if students watch a movie clip for Star Wars and they want to replace the sound effects, they already know what it sounds like because they have heard it before. I felt it was important not to just reuse existing assets but to create brand new ones from scratch.

That’s when I told Tony, “we have to put something together because it would be more fun for everyone, and most importantly, that’s how things are actually done in the professional world!”. He also understood the need and the potential impact of the idea for students.
We tested many different approaches during the first couple of projects, and the idea worked out really well. The students had to develop the concept and of course they had to work together. We created one piece which was the final project in my Digital Sound Design class, and the students delivered a nice presentation, just like you would in a business situation for your client - all this were the part of the original concept - all that I was missing from traditional classes. The College’s President and the Chief Academic Officer at that time saw the presentation, the results, and loved the concept. They said, "This is really great, let's do this more formally!" - and that's how MediaWorks was born.

Initially, MediaWorks wasn't in the curriculum, it was just a project that students could choose to participate in, so for a while we had many volunteer students in the teams. Then we started working with external clients because that was the whole point of the idea, as I call it, "the real deal". The program became an elective course, it was added to the degree plan, and a year later it was offered for all students as a required class; now it's not even an elective but a mandatory class for most audio students.

**Tony:** One of the things that it points to I think is flexibility. In a small organization there is a willingness to try things and that can also have its drawbacks because we’re not the only ones that are trying to do new things. So one of the problems is when too many people are trying to do too many new things at the same time, then I guess in an organization would be human capital and here it’s a student capital, the number of humans that can physically participate in all these different programs is reduced and that has become an issue.

**Interviewer: What do you do as teachers to facilitate MediaWorks? What are your roles?**

**Tony:** My title is Visual Director and Julius is the Audio and Music Director. We like to try to operate as equals and we tend to defer to each other's direction decisions based on our respective areas of expertise, and often, which of us has the closer connection to the client.

I will generally have the visual students in one classroom and Julius will be with the audio students in one of the sound studios. However, at the start of each project we always start together for the research, concept and script generating sessions. We try to keep as much of the process as organic as possible. We’re bringing our own experience, and the greenness of the students and letting them discover as much as possible with as little hand-holding as we can get away with. One of the nice things about MediaWorks is that because of their lack of experience, they don’t know what’s not possible, and they can come up with some crazy but good ideas and things that can lead on to other things that Julius and I would have never come up with on our own.

In large part, I see myself as a facilitator. Hopefully I’m not misunderstanding the word, but facil, in Spanish means easy, and that’s what I tell myself it means. I try to make things easier for my students, but I don't necessarily give them the answers. In certain cases, there might be an issue they are faced with where even if I don't know the exact answer, I might be able to give them hints on what to type into a Google query so that they can then find the answer themselves.

I think in the old days it might have been the job of a librarian to help a student researcher figure what to look up given a certain topic. But in our world, new apps or even new features come and go in the blink of an eye and our students need to be able to find the information they need and filter out that which they don’t, quickly, so they can focus on finishing the project and not get lost looking for the proverbial needle.

**Julius:** I think facilitator is a good word, but the way I like to see myself is more of a ‘challenger’ or a ‘disrupter’. I tend to push students outside their comfort zones. I try to make them do things that they would never think of trying, they're hesitant to do or they don’t know if it’s even possible. I like to initiate things that are very unexpected and watch what happens. Like putting students in situations in which they are forced to come up with a solution on their own, not a technical answer that’s easy to find on Google or learn from YouTube. I don't pose “how has it been done before?” kind of questions, rather generate situations that even I might have not encountered during my professional career. And then I wait and see what happens, see what they do with that situation, see how they approach it and come out of it on top. Of course, I offer approaches, points of view, feedback and guidance during this process. So, as a teacher, I tend to push them outside of the comfortable envelope.

My other role in MediaWorks is to keep things relevant to the client. We apply an REE philosophy, which stands for relevant, efficient than effective. Everything that we do has to be relevant. I think relevance is most important for students. Everything that they do has to be done towards the completion of the project goal: the requirements of the client. It has to express what the client wants not what they feel like doing.
This isn’t an easy task for anyone, as students aren’t allowed to come up with just any solution that doesn’t obey the rules of the game play. For example, if you’re in a difficult situation in a universe of Jurassic Park, and want to escape, what would be your solution? A student might say, “well, to get away from this place, I’m going to use magic and vanish”. But, this doesn’t work in Jurassic Park because there’s no magic in that movie universe; you can’t just disappear like that. It would be easy for students to come up with solutions that don’t really play by the rules of that situation, but just like in real life, they will start thinking in terms of client expectations, and find the solutions that are not necessarily the easiest for them, but the most effective for the project.

When students are immersed in these really hard-to-solve or manage challenges, it’s not enough that they come up with a solution that solves the problem. The solution has to work for the project, for the client, for the other MediaWorks team. It’s difficult to explain but there are two pulling forces. On one hand, it has to relate to exactly what we need to accomplish, but on the other hand, we try to not follow the traditional ways but work in a very different way every time. Basically we try to be practical yet inventive at the same time.

Tony: A classic example is, just because you create an amazing looking and sounding dragon, doesn’t mean you should put it (or even consider putting it) into the story or project. What’s more you’ve wasted a ton of time by going off in that direction. So we have to guide the students to stick to getting the stuff done for the project at hand. How do we teach them to stay focused? I guess we don’t really tell them how, we just give them the expectation: “This is what you need to do, this is how it’s going to be in the real world!” and a high percentage of them take it to heart.

Other than facilitator, some of my roles as a teacher are those of being a broker and a coach. Sometimes, I have to deal with intense emotions and get students to understand that what we’re doing is almost like the difference (to an English Literature Major) between writing a book that you consider to be your life’s work and writing an article for a journal that has a tight deadline. In this case for my animation students, MediaWorks is the journal article, it’s very practical and deadline driven. You can’t fall in love with what you’re creating, or invest an enormous amount of time doing it, because it might get cut out or changed drastically.

As a coach, I encourage the students to truly work as a team and always be ready to help each other out, especially when a team member gets discouraged or the unexpected happens. As cliché as it might be, communication is key and it is often one of their biggest takeaways at the end of the semester.

Going back to the book vs. article idea, I believe that the fact that our students start completing portfolio pieces almost immediately, is extremely valuable! The finished piece might not be the most amazing looking, most beautiful, pixel-perfect animation that you’ve ever seen, but it is a collaborative project, finished under a tight deadline, and it was made for a client.

Julius: For both the visual and the audio students, we’re not trying to grow software users or specialists. The most important and valuable skill that students get from MediaWorks is actually the ability to adapt. When they’re given different expectations, not something that they know how to reach, but something they’re not used to work with, or for that matter, have never done before, they must figure out a way through the “process of figuring out” itself to succeed. Each semester they pick up a different set of unique skills that they need in that semester’s unique situation. This is the kind of adaptability that MediaWorks students develop, and they will apply this ‘figuring out’ process in future unexpected situations.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you have old students and younger students working side by side. I wondered whether there any sense of apprenticeship in your project-based approach?

Tony: On the visual team, currently I also have two senior level students who are employees. We also have a student who helps on our projects as our official tutor. She comes in and helps them set up some of the organizational stuff. To that extent, I would say that we have apprentices but it’s been more of been a happy accident than an intended outcome from the beginning. However, it’s something that definitely works. Those students that we hire, are usually the ones that have helped us and are the most experienced. Their job is not to do the projects. Their job is to help and make sure that the students in the class can finish the projects.
Interviewer: That sounds very interesting. You pay them and do they get any more training from you to fulfil their role?

Tony: Our approach to project-based learning involves creating two teams. The first role that I try to fill in my team is that of a student project manager. I've had one semester where I had a project manager who was a student in the class. But all the other semesters, it's been a student worker. They're still students. They're still learning. I guess the fact that we were paying them is a little bit different than giving somebody a grade. Beyond the grade I am able to fire them if necessary. The project manager basically helps to make sure that everything is running smoothly. It takes some of the burden off me. That allows me to worry about higher order things as opposed to the daily - who's going to do what - part of the pipeline.

That said, the project manager is also tasked with making sure that the visual team is communicating with the audio team; that they're giving them the right files and updates on a regular basis, that sort of thing. In terms of other roles, I try to look for what we call 3D generalist who is someone that knows a little bit about all the different aspects of 3D. A sort of jack of all trades. Then there are a few specialized roles. I guess you could call them the finishers. People who help with the finishing touches. Because most of our students are not coming in to MediaWorks with Senior level experience. They potentially haven't taken the classes or haven't just enough experience to be able to produce a visual that's got the final touch.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the typical process you go through with MediaWorks?

Tony: The first step in any project is the concept stage. The students have to do research on the client. Most clients that we work with will have a website where there's usually an abundance of information on what they do. We want to make sure that the client feels like the students already know them to a certain degree. We typically have really good results where the clients will be happily surprised that the students know so much about what they do.

In that first stage, we prep our students and we tell them once you're with the client we want you to ask good questions. The main point there is they need to figure what the client needs and how we can fulfil it.

Even though we are told growing up that there's no such thing as a dumb question, we don't want students to ask questions that they could easily answer by going through the client's website or reading the material. Our role as teachers at that stage is to make sure they're properly prepared for what to expect when they meet face to face with the client.

A concept can be executed a thousand different ways but the important thing is that the client is going to choose one. We send these concepts along with short scripts to the client and they pick the one that they like the best. Sometimes the client will merge one idea from one thing to the other and we have to go back and forth a little bit to make sure that we are on the same page.

Speaking of being on the same page, one of the biggest outcomes for students is that they learn how important communication is because in MediaWorks, communication is essential to a successful, finished piece.

Another part of the process is that we often introduce competition between sub-groups in the team. We might say, "here are the teams, generate different concepts and the client is going to pick the best one."

Sometimes we might tell students, "Each group can go off and do their own thing secretly without letting anyone know." Other times we might say, "Everyone needs to share all the information and work from each other's ideas."

Because MediaWorks is not necessarily following any pattern that was laid out for us, we do feel that we can experiment quite a bit. Each semester Julius will throw in some surprise for the audio students, some experimental element where one semester it might be, "For this project, we're going to break up into three teams and each team is responsible for their own audio." Then for the next project, everybody is an individual and everybody is competing against each other.

Once the client has picked a concept we develop a full script with actual ideas of how things are going to sound and look and we try to get that approved as quickly as possible. And at the same time the visual students start developing a story board. The audio students start coming up with questions like, "Does this thing need music? or a voice over?" Our response, and what we want them to think about before committing to any work is, "Does my idea support the concept? Is it necessary?". And if it's not necessary, we try to avoid it.
Interviewer: So during this stage now - formulation of concepts, and this moving to a full script and story board, and so on - you’re acting as a facilitator then, is that your role?

Tony: Yes, I guess in some ways we act as the sounding board. We will pretend to be the client. We will play devil’s advocate in some cases. But I guess we’re also like referee and coach at the same time. Making sure that the students are staying on task and I hear Julius all the time asking “Why?” And a lot of times it will put students in a very nervous position because they have to explain themselves, “Why am I doing this? Why did I choose to use this thing, or to take this approach?” I think we’re constantly trying to remind our students to stay relevant, effective, and efficient.

Another important thing we do is emphasize how important it is to manage time. I often say to my students, “It’s a nice idea, but can you do this in six weeks?” Because a lot of artists are very optimistic in the amount of work that they can do, when it usually takes them two or three times longer than they thought it would. They’ll get these grandiose ideas of how to create the next Pixar animated film. And, I don’t know if you’ve ever seen the behind the scenes for these films, but, they take years to finish. And we have six weeks or so with only a small group. So, I guess one of the hardest things I have to deal with in project-based work is maintaining a high level of expectation but then also trying to be realistic about what can be achieved in the time available.

Interviewer: So coming back to the project manager then. I guess they’re critical at this stage - keeping people focused to task.

Tony: Yes, we give the project manager a timeline. Basically, milestones that they should hit. They know the amount of time that they have to complete the project. So yes, the project manager becomes vital in ensuring a rapid information exchange between the directors and the team members, and between our two teams.

I don’t think I ever learned about working relationships in a class. Typically, if I worked in a group of five people, there was always one person that didn’t do any work. There are always two people that had good intentions but, you know, something happened, or they had to go somewhere else, so they did a little bit of work. And there is usually myself or one other person that really did 90% of the work. And in a project like MediaWorks that just can’t happen or things will get really bad, really fast.

Interviewer: So how do you make people accountable?

Tony: By having these deadlines and by having people have specific things that they’re supposed to be working on. I think there’s an intrinsic value of trying to get things done and that’s part of the reason why I try to vet students ahead of time. I warn them that this is going to be a project that’s going to consume a large portion of their life. And I try to get their buy-in before they sign on the dotted line that says, “I’m going to enrol in this class.” Because nobody’s compelling them to join the class. But conflict does happen and I might have two students who hate each other. So, I have to deal with some of those things.

I think at that point there’s no formula. It’s communication, and talking, and trying to be understanding and empathetic. I don’t know how much of this happens in the real world where you can fire people. I try to have students, “Think of it as a family dynamic, where you’re on the same team and everybody has different temperament.” Sometimes it’s literally it’s just conflict management. I think that might be one of the key differences compared to a typical class project where some students can be irresponsible while others pick up the slack. There are no real consequences to the outcome of the project because if somebody stops doing their work, others will fill in the gaps.

In MediaWorks, we try to scope out the work so that it’s possible and doable only as long as all cylinders are firing. We try to make some space, so for example there have been times where a student had to come to me and say I’m having some family issues or something, you know tragedies happen and we make sure to make space for that sort of thing. But we try to minimize just regular classic student excuses and not allow those to really don’t validate those types of excuses and while we don’t shame people in front of the whole group or anything like that, I think it’s clear that you don’t want to be the person that causes something to break.

Interviewer: Media Works is clearly more like work than a typical academic study environment and you’re obviously working to tight schedules. How do you encourage students to be aware of what they are learning as they are learning it? Is part of role as a facilitator to try and draw this out?

Tony: Yes, we constantly have a white board in the classroom, so as we are learning certain lessons I’ll start writing things up on the board. But every team for every project (and when I say team right now I mean the whole team in general, the whole large group), is required to present to a larger body, a group of students or faculty, not only the projects that they completed but also what they learned in the process. We also debrief at the end of each project, sometimes at the end of the semester.

But basically we sit down with the students and we ask the students what did we learn that we could do better for the following semester? as a part of the process. One of the things that came out recently was; “Wouldn’t it be nice if we did a mini project before we tackled the big ones?” So we did that this semester; sort of throwing them in the water without a flotation device but only for a one weekend project, so trying to get them to do as
much as they can in one weekend. And then out of that a lot of the dynamics and a lot of the things that would
normally happen over course of the semester can be forced to happen right away, week one. I think it has been
really nice because for this semester we’ve avoided certain headaches.

But we encourage students to reflect on their experience and to present their reflections at the end of the
semester. They outline the process of what we did from start to finish but also what they call their takeaways.
The biggest takeaway is always communication. Again I think it’s one of those things where once you are in the
professional world, once you are doing things and getting paid to do them, you take communication for granted,
especially when there is good communication and things are clear and there is good understanding between you
and your collaborators. But I’m sure at some point we all come back to a point where something gets miscommu-
nicated and it becomes a big deal, but hopefully at this point we’ve learned how to handle it.

Media Works Team

Interviewer: Our Creative Pedagogies project is trying to explore how higher education teachers encour-
age students to use their creativity. Our readers will be interested in your perspectives on what it means
to be creative in your project-based learning environment and how you encourage your students to use
their creativity effectively.

Tony: I believe that humans are inherently creative and at a digital media college, you will find a higher concen-
tration of people who tap in to their creativity on a regular basis. I think one of the selling points for MediaWorks
is that it allows people in the “real world” to take a chance with students is that they are roughly 22 years old
and they’re going to naturally bring a bunch of new ideas or creativity or just trying things that those of us that
have done this before will not try because we think it’s not going to work.

So it’s not so much that we’re trying to get the students to be creative, it’s more about trying to get them to use
their creativity in a way that is useful. One of the first things we really try to get across to our student is what
Julius and I call the REE method.

Julius: The REE idea came from the Chief Marketing Officer of Bank of America. I got to work with her in 2007
and I learned a lot of cool approaches. But my most practical takeaway from that collaboration was that when
there’s a client, if there’s a task at hand to accomplish that requires creativity in order to achieve the goal, then
you have to follow these three things: the relevance, the efficiency, and the effectiveness. She was applying this
thinking on a multi, multi-billion dollar business and when I thought about it I realized that was the exact same
thing that I was doing with my small business. Counter-intuitively, the REE philosophy actually makes people
better creative thinkers, but this is a lengthy subject that’s probably outside of the scope of this interview.
Tony: So how do we apply the REE criteria? Well we spend a lot of time focusing on the concept, because if we can nail the concept, then we can always take any idea that comes up and compare it to the concept and the student will have to justify how their submission is relevant, effective and efficient or else it gets thrown out.

Let’s say we have a concept that is world peace. If a student comes up with the idea of including a fire breathing dragon as a part of their execution, they might be able to explain why it fits, we can maybe accept, “Okay, it might be relevant because it’s representing bad people or the bad guy who is transformed. However, is it effective? Maybe if the story line is good, or maybe it catches people’s attention. But is it efficient based on the time and resources we have available?” No it’s not efficient, In our context, to produce a fire breathing dragon, which might take 12 months when we only have 6-8 weeks. So, the answer is pretty much no fire-breathing dragons, so far.

As facilitators, our role is to challenge the students to keep thinking and keep refining everything they’re doing. But a large part of what we do ends up just becoming training students to work. Because once you have the concept and once you have the storyboards approved, then everything is based on those storyboards. I don’t think it’s so much creativity anymore. At that point, it’s execution. We have accomplished the 5% creative inspiration and the other 95% is the perspiration as they say.

Julius: The way I look at creativity in the context of MediaWorks is not the same as the way artists think of creativity: they use their imagination to just think outside the box, try something that hasn’t been tried before, even though usually end up building on previous works. In traditional classes, teachers often come up with exercises and assignments for students to do just that.

For the kind of work we do in MediaWorks this approach doesn’t work. I like to think of the problem as if there were two boxes, one box within the other box. The small box, the inside box is what you have to think outside of. But the large box around it is what we would like to stay inside of. That’s basically what the client defines, and is the message for the piece. That’s the universe of the project, to refer back to the Jurassic Park example.

Students have the advantage that they do not take the same approach as an experienced professional would; they do not use the cookie cutter solutions that everybody in the industry sooner or later defaults to – simply because they don’t have that past experience. So it’s actually quite easy to work with creativity as these students are naturally creative in the traditional sense of the word. What I found was hard, at least on the audio and music side of MediaWorks is to stay inside of the big box which is where the REE criteria are very helpful.

That’s really hard to do with students. So I let them loose basically so they can come up with anything they want to, but I always tell them they have to stay with the message. Then we have a review session the next class or the next week, and they bring in their sound design work or compositions or whatever the case is. We do this with the Visual Team too, with animators and arts people when they come with certain cool ideas, we always give them a chance to present.

But at the end of these presentations, we challenge them, “Explain how this is relevant to what the client wants!” If they come up with really good connections between their piece and the client’s work, then that’s great and I let them proceed.

There have been a few times we have been surprised, not very often to be honest, but a few times we have been surprised about the relevancy that was working in their minds, and we didn’t even realize it during their presentation, how that was relevant to the client. But at the end, when they explained, it actually made sense.

Most of the time, the student idea is outside of the small box but inside of the big box. But in some cases they just go too far, and so we have to kind of pull them back into the reality of the client. I would say this is at the heart of the MediaWorks philosophy on creativity and it is different from your typical arts school where you do whatever you want to do or a technical school where students learn to apply the technology but they are told what to do and they are basically only applying blueprints or using software to get from point A to point B, with both points given to them. What we do is, we say: “We’re standing at point A. Now you come up with how you will walk from point A to any point that you define between points F and P.” But not beyond that and it shouldn’t be too close either, because anyone can get from point A to point B or C. So we push them far but not too far. I hope that makes sense.
Interviewer: It looks like not only are the students creating meaning for themselves but they’re creating meaning that is relevant to the client. It’s all about meaning making but meaning making as you say within constraints.

Julius: Absolutely. It’s very true that the students are creating meaning and sometimes even our clients are finding additional layers to the meaning or brand of their own business, which is pretty astonishing.

The other part of this process of finding and creating new meaning is that students have to also understand the meaning behind a business or a brand, what that really stands for. Sometimes it’s not easy for them to gain this understanding about a field they know nothing about. Students have to learn to ask the right questions so it’s really important that they do the research to come up with those questions to ask. These are not just any questions but the kind of questions that they can’t find an answer for on the client’s website, or questions that promise not just nice-to-know answers, but answers that actually matter and can be applied to the production work. I believe this process is a really good brain exercise for them, as a matter of fact for us directors as well.

Interviewer: Julius, do the students see this as a meaning making process and a process for understanding other people’s other organizations’ meaning?

Julius: I think they see the first phase of the process as meaning-making: let’s make some sense out of all this, the client and the project, and come up with a way to tell this story to the audiences. I believe that’s what they see as the meaning making process, they become interpreters between a brand and its audience.

During the middle phase of their MediaWorks experience, students see the process as a “let’s take the meaning that we’ve just created, let’s use our skills and do what we studied to do, let’s have fun with it and with what we enjoy doing in our life: art”. The third part is the business practices putting all this to work. This puts the whole experience into a different type of game for them and it has consequences and expectations and deadlines and standards. I think when you merge all this, part of it is the meaning that they see but part of it is also the professional work that satisfies the client - and most of the students embrace each element of the whole experience.

Interviewer: This has been a fascinating interview, by way of a conclusion, what are the most important things that you have learned through your experiences of facilitating MediaWorks?

Julius: What I have learned is something that I always knew was important, but I didn’t realize the extent of: the huge gap we have to bridge between students’ preparedness to communicate in a professional way when they interact with clients. I would put communication as the number one issue. You can have the best skills, you can be super talented, but you won’t even get your first client if you can’t communicate and present yourself properly. It all goes back to the basics, to general education, and that’s what I see as the main challenge and takeaway from MediaWorks: soft skills.

Tony: One thing I’ve learned is to remember every semester that not all the students have worked this way before. I’ve learned to start each class without making assumptions. I have to reiterate some of the same lessons every semester. In a normal class you might have an outline of every lecture showing “this is what we’re going to do”, but in MediaWorks, because of the experimental nature of it, the client’s needs, and the varied experience of the students coming in, I have to remember that I may have to have to teach them a lot of things they’ve probably never done before and quite frankly, things I haven’t done before either.

Julius: We have also learned how big of a difference we can make with MediaWorks because it’s such a different way of working with students. The reason I’m saying this is because we have graduates who have let us know that they got the interview or they got the job because of their portfolio, which featured several MediaWorks pieces. That’s the experience they talk about the most in interviews, and those are the aspects which make them stand out from other applicants. In some cases we can actually say that that’s the main reason why they’re getting hired. It’s not just because these productions look and sound good, it’s also their experience of working with clients, their professional experience that counts most for employers.

20 years ago what mattered to getting a job was the diploma and the GPA, 10 years ago the question was whether an applicant has had any hands-on training, and today employers want to see and hear the evidence of professional experience even from a fresh graduate. MediaWorks students have shown that not only they have the skills, creative ideas and technical expertise, but they can put these things together with soft skills and the ability to work with others, to satisfy even a demanding client or employer. They have been properly prepared to face the challenges of the professional world.

In the following complementary article, Jenny Willis examines one recent MediaWorks project.
CAM 7 is exploring the idea of creative pedagogies for creative learning ecologies and we are always on the look-out for examples to inform our understanding of the ways in which students’ creativity is encouraged and enabled to flourish. In January, as I was editing an issue of Lifewide Magazine, my attention was drawn, by one of the contributors - John During, to the project-based learning being undertaken at Cogswell College, in California,

> While fostering creative thinking is at the core of what happens at Cogswell (see http://www.cogswell.edu/about/about.php), creativity itself is often driven by constraints, such as time, talent, tools or other resources. So, we try to design courses that include real-world constraints.

John helpfully included several links to his college and their projects and suggested that one, MediaWorks (http://www.cogswell.edu/student-work/mediaworks.php), might be of particular interest in terms of learning ecologies. I duly logged on and found myself instantly revising my previous perceptions of creativity in the context of group projects.

In this article, I shall outline the nature of a MediaWorks project focusing on the activities undertaken by students and the outcomes they achieved. Companion articles will consider the pedagogy used to encourage and facilitate learning and achievement (see Norman Jackson’s interview, above) and an interpretation of this example from a learning ecology perspective.

**Cogswell College: a living laboratory**

Cogswell College is proud of its historical roots:

> Dr. Henry Daniel Cogswell, born in Tolland, Connecticut, March 3, 1820, was a man of both vision and distinguished heritage. The Cogswell family was descended from Alfred the Great and Charlemagne and immigrated to America in 1635 from England. Dr. Cogswell cherished his family crest and motto, “Nec Sperno Nec Timeo,” which means, “I neither despise nor fear.”

The sense of adventure and cutting-edge development is captured in a recent newspaper account of Cogswell:

> Designed as a “fiercely collaborative, living laboratory,” Cogswell College is located in the heart of the legendary Silicon Valley in San Jose, California. The school is a WASC accredited, four-year institution of higher education with a specialized curriculum that fuses digital arts, audio technology, game design, engineering and entrepreneurship.

The college’s vision explicitly links the use of new technologies to preparation for the workplace:

> Cogswell Polytechnical College’s mission is to be a leader in providing practical education in the combined disciplines of technology and entrepreneurship with an emphasis on leadership, and a strong focus on new technologies and business models to prepare graduates for careers in the global economy.

So how does it achieve these educational goals. This article focuses on one of its projects, MediaWorks.

**What is MediaWorks?**

Through media works, students work with a ‘real’ client on a ‘real’ project, in order to develop the experience, skills and competences and understanding they will need to work in the media industry after graduation.

The ways in which students experience this form of real world project-working is captured in a series of You Tube videos created and presented by the students at the conclusion of one such project, their work with AC Transit to produce promotional material designed to ‘sell’ their new concept to the public.
MediaWorks AC Transit project

Just watching their slick, 42 minute video, I was impressed by the professionalism of the students. They each spoke confidently about their individual role and team, illustrating their work with enthusiasm and immaculate slides of the processes involved, followed by insightful ‘take aways’ from their learning experience. The presenters were inclusive but sensitive to the different competencies of their team members: whilst 6 spoke live, others, such as Tyce, who has a speech impediment, was able to contribute through a recorded piece.

No wonder this project won the annual award for excellence!

But what was the AC Transit project all about?

The student team explain how, in June 2016, AC Transit announced that it planned to construct a Bus Rapid system (BRT) in East Bay, California. This would revolutionise public transport, but naturally have some opponents: as one of the students explained frankly, there were fears of ‘gentrification’ of a traditional working class area. AC Transit is California’s third largest bus company, and carries a daily average of 200,000 passenger trips, using 151 bus routes across an area of 364 square miles. The company researched potential organisations who could work with them on this important project and gave ‘overwhelming approval’ to Cogswell College’s Media Works programme. A team of 25 students worked closely with AC Transit staff, under the guidance of two tutors, one in the digital art and animation department, the other in the audio department, to produce the promotional material.

The students’ presentation [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=860LqtknBx4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=860LqtknBx4) describes in detail how they had only two months from start to finish to produce the material for what was an 80 million dollar construction project for AC Transit.

They explain how they met with the client in order to fully understand their brief, then divided into subgroups to identify key elements for potential inclusion in their product. They repeatedly interacted with the client, asking questions, sharing and pitching ideas until they were both clear what was required. One of the team summarises this as “Be experimental, be realistic, be true.”

Their video presentation teases out key learning points at each stage and in each domain of the project. Here we find:

- Working as a team member
- Recognising the abilities of individuals
- Communication skills
- Listening carefully to the brief
- Analysing what it required
- A ‘real life’ task has real life constraints
Next, they devised a story board, into which they built the specific scenes, sounds etc that would need to be researched and created. Producing these was not always straightforward, and they quickly found that what might have appeared the perfect element fell way short of the standards anticipated. One of the composers, Nick, describes how he had to rethink his composition, comparing it to when you have your first boy or girlfriend, and “you think they’re awesome” until you are disillusioned by your friends! Another warns “Expect the unexpected!”

![Figure 4: Starting the project](image)

Key learning points from this stage:

- Organisation
- Resilience, willingness to start afresh
- Experimenting with new ideas and resources
- Perfectionism, always seeking to improve the product

![Figure 5: A conceptual map of the project](image)

The audio and video sub-teams each had their own tasks to complete, and two project managers were responsible for keeping everyone on schedule and informed of each other’s progress. The planning was meticulous; each member of a team knew precisely what was expected of them and when. Sometimes they had to apply their creativity to problem solving, as happened when they realised that they could not achieve the technical requirements in the time allocated without subdividing their work further as illustrated in the adjoining slide.

One person explains how he went into a meeting as a sound manager, but had to learn on the spot how to be a tactful script adviser as he led the writer of the voice-over script through a process of condensing his text to meet the time limit.
These were all relevant experiences for professional development and would have been difficult to simulate in a classroom, let alone anticipate. Key learning points the students cite here are:

- Time management
- Efficiency
- Team work, liaison with sub-teams
- Versatility
- Learning on the job

By the end of the 2 months, the students had produced a 3-4 minute video, with bespoke music and sounds to accompany bespoke animations. In their YouTube presentation, they summarised their learning as ‘takeaways’.

In addition, the students articulate in turn aspects of the project that have impacted on them personally. Their comments include:

- Everyone in the team is different so you have to get to know everyone. (Lindlay)
- It’s very hands-on and it’s intensive. Everyone’s relying on each other. (Kiefer)
- It’s the closest to real life experience that you can get. (Nguyen)
- It’s kinda like a footstep into the real world ... You’re reacting ... a feeling of like I’m part of this company and everyone’s working together. (Taylor)
- Where deadlines are involved, I find myself making critical decisions a lot faster. (Kiefer)
It challenges all of us; it gives us all something that we can take away. (Taylor)

And it is not only the students who have gained from this MediaWorks project: the client has supported a learning experience for a team of 25 students and their 2 tutors without paying a cent for their work, but knows that they have offered a unique experience to these undergraduates. Robert, AC Transit’s representative, is fulsome in his praise. In response to a question from the audience, he says that, 9 years previously, they engaged an outside agency to produce a media resource. It cost them $65,000 dollars, nevertheless, he continues:

I have to be honest: this (MediaWorks) project is leaps and bounds ahead of the original project we put together.

The third prong of the team, the college tutors, are equally euphoric about their collective creativity. One of them sums up the qualities that underpin the whole concept, and that reflect his flattened role:

I like to learn. We can learn together. I’m thankful for the opportunity here, at Cogswell.

References
1 http://www.cogswell.edu/about/about.php
2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=860LqtknBx4
3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=860LqtknBx4
4 http://www.actransit.org/brt/

#101openstories: Sharing learner, practitioner and researcher stories about openness

Dear colleagues,

We recently launched the #101openstories project to celebrate openness together. Members of the team are from six different continents with a shared vision to collect 101 open stories from around the world that illuminate how open learners, practitioners and researchers have discovered openness and what this means to them and their communities. We welcome open stories in any format or medium, in any language. To find out more about #101openstories and submit your story, visit http://www.101openstories.org/add-your-story/.

We are really looking forward to your contribution.

The #101openstories team
http://www.101openstories.org/
The #101creativeideas project is a fantastic opportunity for YOU to share your creative ideas on how to encourage, support and/or assess students' creativity. Ideas can be big or small but we are looking for concise descriptions of no more than 50-80 words.

It is envisaged that the #101creativeideas will be a valuable resource to refresh teaching and support further creative projects. Have a look at the contributions so far at https://101creativeideas.wordpress.com/

So if you are doing something that is interesting or novel in your practice, please click here and share your idea.

All ideas will be credited and made available through an online OER collection under a CC BY NC 4.0 licence.

Thank you for your contributions,
Eleanor Hannan, Chrissi Nerantzi and Elizabeth Walshaw
#101creativeideas team 2016/17

NEXT #CREATIVEHE COURSE 22-26 May 17

The next #creativeHE course will be run by Chrissi Nerantzi in partnership with Sandra between May 22-26 2017.

The unit is offered free as an online 5-day block using the Playground model (Nerantzi, 2015). The daily topics are:

Day 1: Introduction to creativity in HE, enablers and barriers, theory and practice
Day 2: Learning through play and making
Day 3: Using story for learning and teaching
Day 4: Learning through making
Day 5: Sharing learning and next steps

Within this unit, enablers and barriers to creativity in higher education will be explored together with related pedagogical theory and literature. Participants will experience learning through play, games, models and stories and actively experiment with such approaches. This will help participants to further develop their understanding, knowledge, skills and practices in these areas and become more adventurous in their teaching. Participants will be able to critically reflect on their practice and identify opportunities to design, implement and evaluate an imaginative and creative innovation that fosters curiosity, maximises motivation and meaningful active engagement and discovery learning. The teacher is challenged to be creative in order for creativity to be developed in the students.

The unit is available for free to all practitioners who would like to participate informally in the open online version of this course. You can join the #creativeHE community at https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/110898703741307769041/

The open #creativeHE course is directly linked to the MA unit FLEX [Creativity for Learning] at Manchester Metropolitan University and credit can be gained towards this qualification. To find out more visit https://celtmmu.wordpress.com/2016/09/20/flex-1530-creativity-for-learning-201617-join-us-creativehe/
Creative Academic champions creativity in all its manifestations in higher education in the UK and the wider world. Our goal is to support a global network of people interested in creativity in higher education and committed to enabling students’ creative development. Our aim is to encourage educational professionals to share practices that facilitate students’ creative development in all disciplines and pedagogic contexts, and to connect researchers and their research to practitioners and their practice. Our ambition is to become a global HUB for the

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