

DISCUSSION PAPER 4

Personal Manifestos

What are the important values, propositions, principles and actions that need to underpin a manifesto to encourage and enable learners in HE to use and develop their imaginations and creativity and gain recognition for their creative efforts and achievements?
How would you express these in your personal manifesto?

WHAT'S YOUR PERSONAL MANIFESTO FOR CREATIVITY IN HE?





STEPS TO A MANIFESTO TO ADVANCE IMAGINATION & CREATIVITY IN HE LEARNING & EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

<http://www.creativeacademic.uk/manifesto.html>

INVITATION TO CREATE AND SHARE YOUR PERSONAL MANIFESTO

This conversation aims to encourage discussion around the idea of a manifesto to advance thinking about the value of encouraging and enabling learners in higher education to use and develop their imaginations and creativity.

Manifestos are common in the field of education. They are a public declaration of aspirations for a different and better educational future. Such documents identify and justify concerns, new needs and interests and propose changes to current practice. They provide a platform around which interested practitioners and institutions can discuss what matters and what they care about.

So far in this discussion we have shared and discussed ideas relating to the reasons for why we need to pay more attention to these aspects of learning and achievement, to the assumptions we make about the role of imagination and creativity in higher education, and about the nature of the problem relating to these things. We have also shared some ideas about what these things mean and how they are perceived in the HE academy.

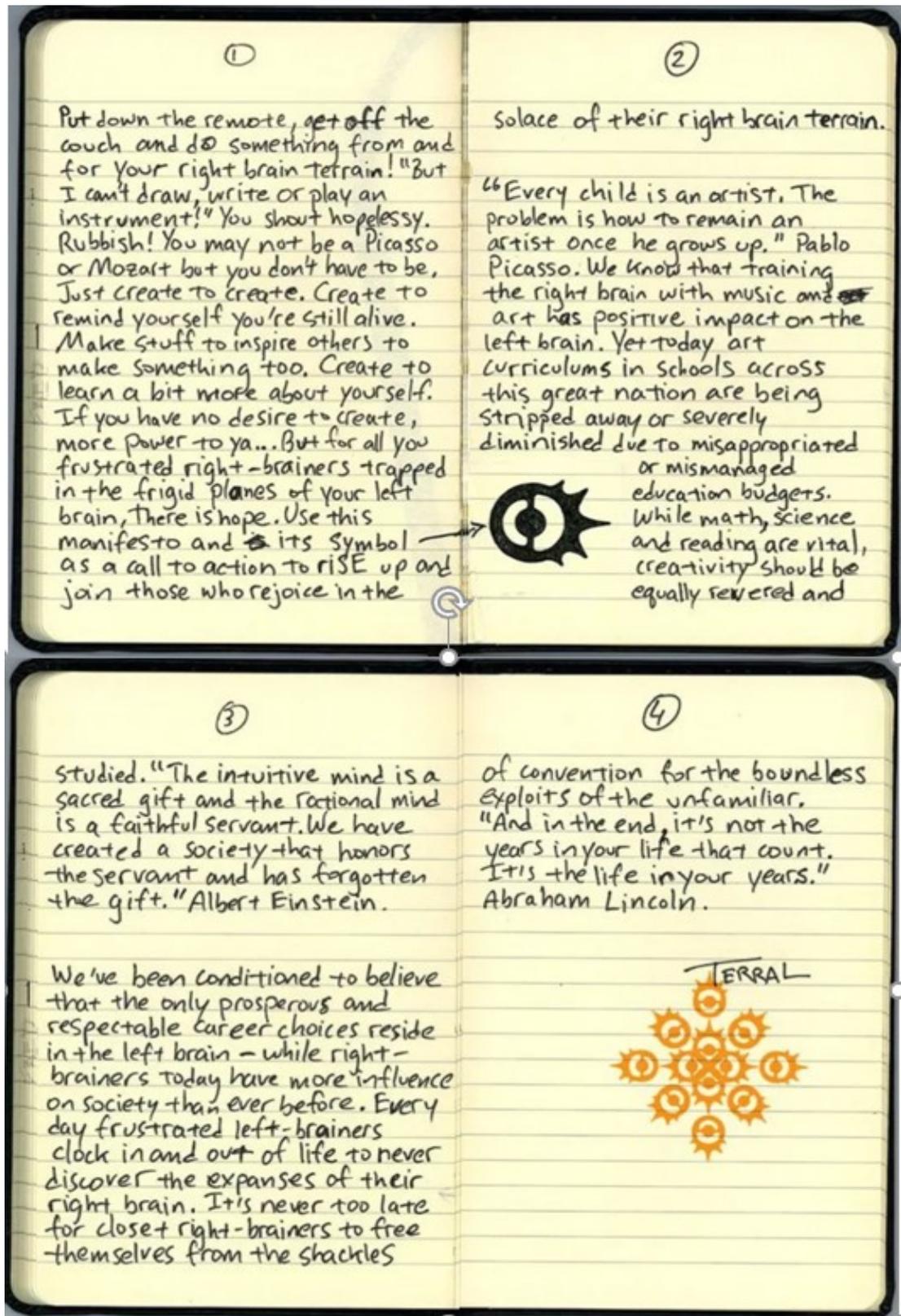
In this next stage of the process we invite you to share your views on the important values, beliefs, propositions and principles that might underpin such a manifesto and the concrete actions that might be undertaken to enable such propositions to be realised.

There is no template to guide or constrain the design of a personal manifesto other than a suggested length of about one page. If we can generate a sufficient number of these personal manifestos we can use them to identify the beliefs and values we share and some of the actions we believe are necessary to evolve higher education towards a future in which learners are encouraged, enabled and empowered to make good use of their imaginations and creativity alongside the many other aspects of their learning and development.

To get us started we are delighted that five people have provided their manifestos. We will keep developing this document over the next three weeks as others contribute. Please extend this friendly invitation to anyone you feel might be interested in sharing their ideas.

What are the important values, propositions, principles and actions that need to underpin a manifesto to encourage and enable learners to use and develop their imaginations and creativity, and gain recognition for their creative efforts and achievements? How would you express these in your personal manifesto?

Frederick Terral the creative visionary behind design studio



Towards a personal manifesto for creativity: Professor Sally Brown, Independent consultant



The ludic principle has served me well over nearly half a century of teaching: I started playing to learn when I first taught English and Drama in schools in the Seventies and has continued through all stages of my career as an FE teacher, drama teacher in prisons, university lecturer, educational developer and ultimately Pro-Vice-Chancellor in a large, metropolitan university. I continue to play within my work nowadays, both in my work as an independent consultant for universities in the UK and internationally, and as a volunteer at my grandchildren's Primary school, where as 'Granny Sally' I read and make up stories as well as listening to children learning to read: being a bit silly reduces stress for them!.

A key influence on my thinking and practice was renowned educator Dorothy Heathcote, whom I encountered while doing an in-service teachers' Associated Drama Board Educational Diploma, who used drama as a tool to promote holistic learning in schools. Heathcote used the term 'play' in educational contexts to describe how novices can become experts by adopting and exploring roles through role play. In a dialogue with Gavin Bolton¹. Heathcote said:

"I consider that mantle of the expert work becomes deep social (and sometimes personal) play because (a) students know that they are contracting into fiction, (b) they understand the power they have within that fiction to direct, decide and function, (c) the 'spectator' in them must be awakened so that they perceive and enjoy the world of action and responsibility, even as they function in it, and (d) they grow in expertise through the amazing range of conventions that must be harnessed..."^{1p18}

I passionately believe well-managed games and role play can engender creative thinking. For example, a game I co-originated for Anglia Ruskin University,² building on an earlier idea by Paul Kleiman to foster assessment literacy through the metaphor of biscuit evaluation, has been played to serious effect in at least 40 universities in the UK and internationally since it was developed. As another example, Shan Wareing and I³ (used role-play productively at a Staff and Educational Development conference and subsequent webinar to encourage productive thought about how educational developers and senior managers to work together effectively (creating much learning fun for both us and participants). I conclude this manifesto with seven personal principles for engendering learning creatively:

1. Trust that creativity can be cultured: it isn't sufficient to wait for inspiration to strike. Instead activities, tasks and drills can prompt inspirational outcomes as individuals and teams work sometimes serendipitously towards shared goals;
2. Avoid jumping to answers too fast. Much seemingly futile or left field activity is sometimes necessary prior to creative solutions and approaches being found;
3. Embrace the ludic: learning difficult and challenging matter often works best when some of the associated anxiety and uncertainty is minimised through playful activities;
4. Question everything: We need to learn like young children through what may seem like endless 'damn fool questions' or naive ranging round an issue from many sides leading to multiple perspectives;
5. Work in spirals rather than straight lines: Logic and structure have their place, but creativity can be closed down by seeking straight and conventional pathways towards solutions: it can help to start in the middle and work forwards and backwards from there;
6. Choose collegiality above lone hero approaches: it's fine to work autonomously but creativity requires ideas to be tested, probed and challenged by others who can often take ideas much further together than an individual can alone;
7. Trust intuition but support it with rationales: creative responses aren't always derived from systematic, well-judged thought-processes but can stem from snap responses and instinctive insights, tempered with considered judgements of outcomes.

Citations

1 Heathcote, D. and Bolton, G. (1994) Drama for Learning: Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert Approach to Education. Dimensions of Drama Series. Heinemann, 361 Hanover St., Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912.

2 Morris, E., Brown, S. and Price, M. (2016) Anglia Assessment Album 'The biscuit game' Downloadable from: [file:///C:/Users/Sally/Downloads/AAA%20workshop%20activity%20sheet%20-%20Fostering%20assessment%20literacy%20FINAL%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Sally/Downloads/AAA%20workshop%20activity%20sheet%20-%20Fostering%20assessment%20literacy%20FINAL%20(2).pdf)

3 Brown, S. and Wareing, S. (2017) 'Can we find five minutes for a chat?': Fostering effective dialogue between educational developers and leaders of learning and teaching in universities' in Educational Developments, SEDA Birmingham Issue 18.1

A personal manifesto for creativity: There should be fun Dr Phil Race, Independent Consultant



There should be fun

Learning should be fun. Our ability to learn is what distinguishes us from other species. We all started our learning by playing - and indeed if the new present was boring, playing happily with the box it came in. We can also play with ideas. Some ideas are much better than others, and we find out which are best by playing with them. Therein starts creativity.

“I’m going to tell you a story”

Ruth Pickford, NTF, can use this lead-in to calm an audience of hundreds into hushed expectation. Much better than “here is 35-minutes’ worth of background detail”. As children, we all were calmed and soothed by being told stories. We still want them. We were creative then, we don’t grow up. The stories of creativity having happened can delight us much more than just reading about what the results proved to be.

“We’re now going to do an experiment!”

How those words gladdened me at school - I liked experiments so much I became a scientist for the first third of my life, then discovered teaching, learning and assessment - even more opportunities to do experiments. ‘Experiment’ is much more exciting than ‘practical exercise’. There’s a chance of it working - or not. It doesn’t really matter if an experiment didn’t work, it was after all an experiment. The experiments that do succeed are the breeding ground of creativity. Some experiments don’t work, but we will never really find out what does work without an experiment involving finding out what doesn’t.

Mistakes are useful

Few things are perfect first time round. Actually, nothing is ever perfect - fit for purpose is about as far as we get. Creativity often happens as a result of trial and error. Sadly, our culture has things the wrong way round - when folk get things wrong they may be put on trial - no encouragement for trying again. There’s something vindictive about that word ‘error’. Slip, gaffe, mistake are more friendly. ‘Fail’ should stand for ‘first attempt in learning’ and not disaster. We can improve something when we get it wrong - we can’t if we don’t! Much creativity is born through our attempts to improve things.

Keep telling folk what you’ve tried

Verbalise it. Use the most primitive form of human communication, including tone-of-voice, eye-contact, facial expression, gesture and body language. All of these existed long before written or printed words. Every time we tell folk things, we deepen our own learning of what we’re talking about. It is true that we can deepen our thinking by just writing about what has happened, but we do so much faster by telling it as well. We get much more feedback that way - the expressions on folk’s faces, their responses, their rolling eyes, their yawns, their sighs - all that is useful feedback. Feedback on what we’ve done - and how we’re telling it - both useful.

Keep challenging and questioning

Creative problem-solving is addictive. Think of questions and search playfully, looking for answers. It often even helps to consider what would make a problem worse. Challenge what’s available already and think of better alternatives. Don’t take things for granted - better things are always possible (and that applies to models of learning too). Knock down the walls, and use the bricks to build more-interesting edifices. Didn’t we all do this as kids? Getting students to compose banks of short, sharp questions is one of the most efficient and effective ways of getting them to equip themselves to answer *any* exam or interview question. ‘If you don’t know what the question was, you won’t recognise a creative answer’.

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My Creativity Manifesto Dr Robert Nelson



I denounce the contemporary academy in all anglophone countries for its structural aversion to creativity. In our learning and teaching culture, coursework programs are set up according to the doctrine of constructive alignment, where delivery and learning activities must align with stated learning outcomes and the assessment is solely designed for students to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes. Although logical and well-intentioned, [this formula discourages imagination and is only good for uncreative study](#). The reasons are not simply that learning outcomes incline us to definable and measurable terms, unlike creativity and imagination. Even if definitions and measurement tools lay to hand, the reason that constructive alignment kills creativity is this straitening chain:

- Learning outcomes must describe capabilities that the lecturer effectively teaches
- We can never accept a learning outcome for something that we do not actively teach
- It is difficult to [teach creativity](#) (though it can be fostered, just as it can be discouraged)
- Because we cannot claim that we teach creativity, it is shameless to include it as a learning outcome
- Creativity can be included as a learning outcome only by stealth or in defiance of constructive alignment
- Creativity is a liability for teachers, because they can be accused of assessing something that they have never effectively taught.

Alongside this constrictive demand only to assess the things that are taught and only to teach the things that are assessed, the reign of learning outcomes entails a ministry of criteria, resources and marking rubrics that encourages students to see their studies as a set of checklists, which they mechanistically scope and strategize toward the highest marks. Deviating from the learning outcomes by imaginative narratives or metaphoric or image-rich language is a risk that few students are foolish enough to take.

This stifling regime is relatively recent in the history of education. Many of us can remember the time before constructive alignment took hold. Instead of a single focus on learning outcomes shared by student and teacher, there was a twin focus: first, an ambition on the part of the teacher to say something or demonstrate something or set up a discourse; and second a desire on the part of students to respond, to try out something analogous and work with whatever is at their disposal. Only twenty years ago, coursework offerings were framed in terms of teaching objectives, what the teacher sought to cover or contemplate. They were replaced with the learning outcomes that acknowledged the student's share, given that 'learning is what the student does', as John Biggs famously put it. But paradoxically, collapsing the teacher's narrative with the student's narrative has locked both into [a monofocal paradigm](#) where imaginative behaviours on the part of both student and teacher are unwelcome and transgressive. Before this monofocal tyranny of the learning outcome, a bifocal stimulus and response flourished: this is my narrative that I'm going to relate as a teacher and now it's your turn to come back at me with a narrative of your own in response. The one narrative is not strictly measured against the other. Creativity is free to try its hand and examiners are allowed to recognize it without restrictions.

The corollary is that all subjects (or modules or units) that are identified as uncreative should stick to the current convention of learning outcomes. But for all subjects that earnestly seek to foster creativity among students, learning outcomes must be abolished and replaced with teaching objectives.

Australia invented constructive alignment and convinced the world of the wisdom of learning outcomes. Australia must now undo the damage and ask the world to isolate this pedantry to strictly uncreative fields, if such purely uncreative fields are deemed still to have a place in a university at all.

Bibliography

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My Creativity Manifesto Professor Alison James

Creativity is

- in us all. Not just the gifted, quirky or chosen.
- kaleidoscopic; so many forms, facets and sources
- still and subtle as well as exuberant
- the familiar and the different. 'Other' is not wrong. Strange can be beautiful.
- at the heart of teaching and learning, not a distraction
- sourced from, and reveals, the hidden
- where surprises come from
- found or comes out of unexpected places
- open to nurturing, but is not always bidden
- emotional - questioning, challenging, absorbing, satisfying. Joyful.
- about opening out and looking in
- growth and extension
- not always understood or understandable
- well served by freedom to emerge. Allowing time and space for creativity does not mean a waste of either.
- Expressed by trying, not by criticising. To try is to do.
- Visceral and vital; part of our energy and flow. Individual and collective.



A Manifesto Statement for Creative Tactics and Alternative Pedagogical Practices in HE

Dr Craig A. Hammond



We should begin to reconceive and shift our meta-understanding (of pan-associations) of creativity and creative initiatives in Higher Education, especially in relation to everyday practice. It is important to acknowledge that we are entrenched within, and on a daily basis bombarded with, bureaucratic pressures - to conform to a powerfully policed array of production outputs. Whether academic research or publication initiatives, or pre-specified learning outcomes, aligned with detailed grading criteria, (all devised and honed, allegedly, in the interests of objective standardisation), we are confronted, strategically enrobed, and professionally measured by these pressures.

We cannot and should not underestimate the administratively ubiquitous and autonomy-debilitating pulses and pressures associated with these systemic and localised policy scaffolds. For these reasons it is important to begin to natalise, or breathe new life in to philosophies, concepts and alternative ideas, with a view to reinvigorating the everyday practices associated with our own pedagogical frameworks. In sum, it is important to think about, imagine and conceive of alternative ways of practicing pedagogy, prior to practically exploring - in specific and micro teaching contexts - innovative ways of Détourning the power and performative expectations endemic to institutional policy. To détourner, in this sense, is to take the existing parameters of a legislated policy statement, and wrestle with the elasticity and gaps between its the words and bureaucratic assumptions - with a view to experimenting beyond established and typical ways of acting.

I have developed the notion of the pedagogical tactic here, and adapted it to promote the idea of satellite practitioners, or tacticians, scouring the debris of potential that slumbers between the gaps of institutional legislation. The idea of the tactic is also important, as it relates to operating within the parameters of institutional policy (if not within the 'spirit' of it). As Michel de Certeau notes, this is a powerful form of creative resistance, as it means that we can operate as maverick satellites using the strategic might of the monolithic institution against itself. This is easily said, but in the context of everyday academic and teaching practice, the notion of developing an experimental praxis is increasingly problematic and difficult. Space for taking pedagogical risks, getting things wrong, inviting vulnerabilities and (by implication) jeopardising consumer-student grades, pose powerful obstacles. It is still possible though, I have started to experiment with an array of everyday pedagogical tactics as practical techniques for recognising, harnessing and affording space to the creative cacophony of nonlinear student voices. These techniques - creative autobiography, peer assessment, the student détournement of concepts in personally creative ways, collage and bricolage (see my forthcoming chapter, 'Folds, Fractals and Bricolages for Hope') - have operated, so far, to elicit inspirational and creative serendipities. Importantly, these techniques have become part of validated modules and contribute as part of summatively assessed activities and grades.

Citation

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