How Personal Pedagogy Emerges through the Entangling of Beliefs, Relationships and Interests, Acting on Affordances, Adapting to New Circumstances & Coping with Failure

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It started from a belief

Almost 20 years ago I started working on a new policy at the Quality Assurance Agency called Programme Specification. Over about 18 months I worked with many programme leaders in different universities across the UK. Through the process of examining lots of intended outcomes from academic programmes in many subjects I formed a belief that the outcomes-based approach to learning, that policy was encouraging, did little to encourage and recognise students' creative development.

In 2000 I joined the learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN Generic Centre). It was a brand new organisation and I was given a decent budget to do something and the autonomy to develop a programme of work to complement the other projects we were working on eg assessment and employability. After a lot of thought and discussion with colleagues, and driven by the belief I describe above, it was agreed I would develop a programme of work relating to curriculum and more specifically to curricula that encourage students' creative development. I set about finding other people who shared my interest and started building a network called the imaginative curriculum network which still lasts as a JISC maillist 16 years later. We did a lot of collaborative work with members of the network and commissioned several research studies much of this work is published in a book in 2006.[1]

Affordance, People, Relationships, Methods, Contexts and Resources

Having got the budget to develop this project, one of my colleagues in the LTSN, Dr Caroline Baillie who was well known for her work in the creative education field, persuaded me to put some of my budget (actually quite a big chunk!) into organising a weekend workshop on creative thinking techniques. I didn't fancy giving up my weekend with my family but in the end I felt it was my 'duty' so I participated in the workshop.

One of the participants was Fred Buining, a charismatic Dutch facilitator, and he introduced me to a group creative problem solving technique that I had never encountered before. I liked the technique and saw the potential for using it in our imaginative curriculum network meetings and institutional workshops, which we did over and over again. Some of these sessions went well and it was a joy to facilitate but others did not go so well and were a real struggle. I remember doing two sessions back to back at the University of Portsmouth the first involving a large cross-disciplinary group went well, the second was a with a department that I was told, 'was quite difficult' which turned out to be an understatement. When facilitating this type of process it requires academics, who are generally a critical bunch at the best of times, to suspend their disbelief and not

criticise ideas during the generative stage. Well I failed miserably with this lot and it proved to be a challenging experience for me. But somehow we got through.
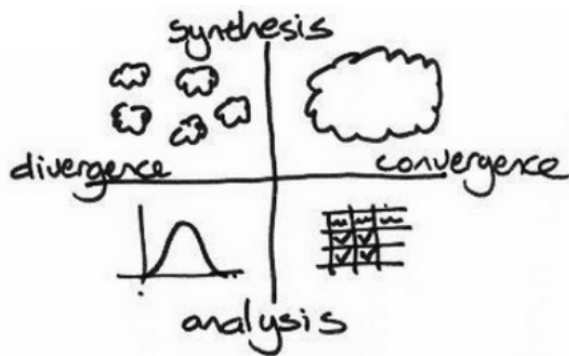
In 2003 (now a member of the HEA) I was given the job of developing and leading Change Academy and I decided to involve Fred Buining who trained our small team in his facilitation technique and we incorporated a 90min version it into our four day Change Academy event and had all the institutional teams using the technique in their own work spaces. In this way the technique was adapted and propagated into many institutions.

New context - new pedagogical development

In 2005 I moved to the University of Surrey to lead the SCPTrE CETL. In this new pedagogical context we developed 'Creative Academy' for both students and staff. I adapted the group creative thinking process that Fred Buining had introduced me to, to include an individual design and presentation element where participants designed/ redesigned a module or learning experience

in line with the challenge we had worked on as a group, and then got participants to share their designs through a poster using 2 minute pitches. The individual challenge worked well and seemed to have real impact on the staff who participated. Such was the level of ownership for the ideas that emerged, I remember one colleague in the business school who stuck his poster on his door and had colleagues knocking on his door to find out what it was about. In addition, we ran facilitator training workshops for academic's who were interested in introducing the approach to their project and inquiry-based teaching.

Fred and I theorised this work as 'design thinking pedagogy'[3]. We also produced and published on-line a Creative Academy handbook[4] together with videos to share our practice[3].

Since leaving SCEPTrE in 2011 I have used both short and extended (4 hour) versions of this process, the most recent time only last week. I have now accumulated a lot of experiential pedagogical knowledge about the technique, I know when and when not to use it and the optimum group size and the group dynamics I want to try and achieve. I know how to get out of the way to let individuals focus on their designs and how to help when I
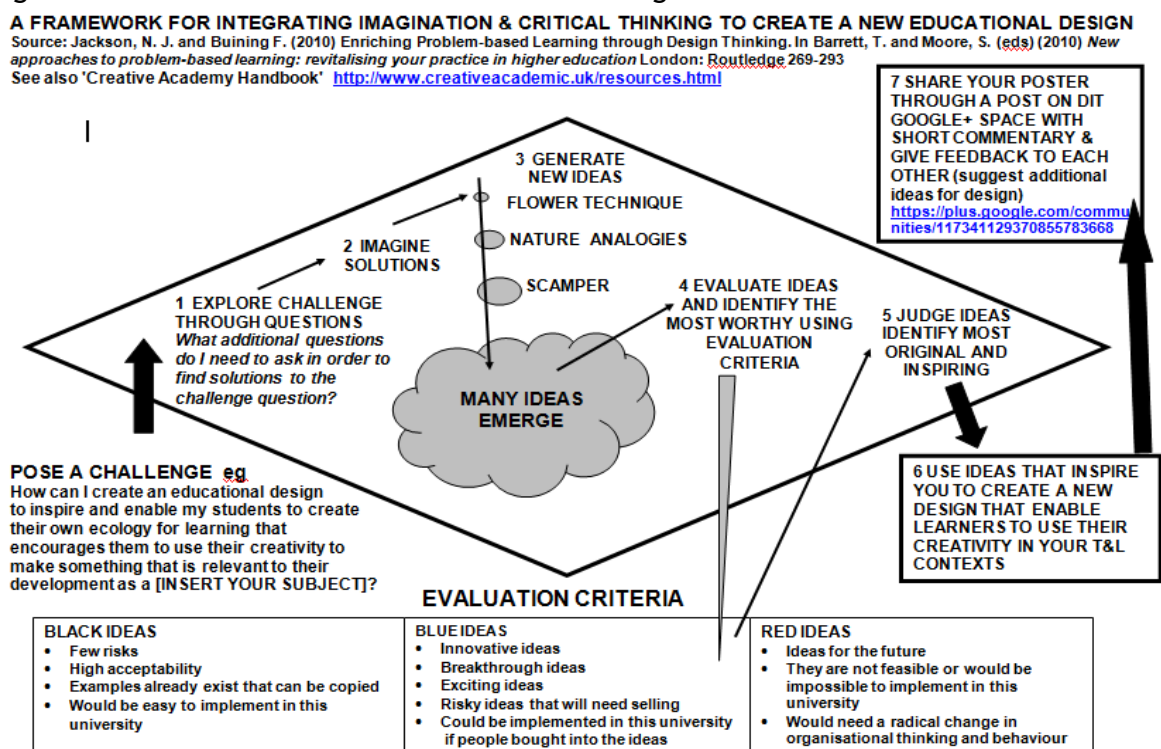
sense someone is struggling with their design. I know how to keep the whole group engaged when their colleagues are presenting their designs. All these things are learnt through the experience of trying to do it.

I have been fortunate over the years to be invited to present and work in universities across the UK and also overseas. This has enabled me to try out my ideas and practices in cultural settings that are radically different to my own, for example China and Saudi Arabia. In these countries I needed the help of a translator which was a novel experience to say the least - BUT IT WORKED. And so these experiences entered my stock of experience grown pedagogical process knowledge.

Thanks to Chrissi Nerantzi and my growing experience of Google+ and other technologies I have developed the SCEPTrE version of the process by adding a Google+ Forum to which workshop participants can post their designs and audio/visual animations. The forum also provides a space for further conversation and interaction beyond the workshop. The current version of the facilitation process is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 The latest version of the educational design

A FRAMEWORK FOR INTEGRATING IMAGINATION & CRITICAL THINKING TO CREATE A NEW EDUCATIONAL DESIGN
Source: Jackson, N. J. and Buining F. (2010) Enriching Problem-based Learning through Design Thinking. In Barrett, T. and Moore, S. (eds) (2010) New approaches to problem-based learning: revitalising your practice in higher education London: Routledge 269-293
See also 'Creative Academy Handbook' http://www.creativeacademic.uk/resources.html

Reflections on the development of my own pedagogical thinking & practice
Some personal pedagogical practices have a long history - in this example my thinking and practice has evolved over 16 years and has travelled through many different contexts.

When I reflect on how I came to include this practice in my pedagogical repertoire I think because of my policy work at QAA I had already made my mind up that some aspects of

students' learning were being neglected - creativity being one of them. So perhaps I was prepared to accept new ideas and practices relating to creativity before the opportunity actually arose. Perhaps I was fortunate in then moving to a new organisation soon after where the affordance was available for me to act on my belief. Timing is often very important and even three years after I joined LTSN, I would not have had this affordance.

I did not go looking for the idea or practice, in a sense I did not have an explicit need for it. Rather the idea and practice found me thanks to a colleague who was interested in promoting the idea (more specifically she was making a difference to the pedagogical practices of engineering teachers which was her mission). Once I had been engaged and I recognised the value in the practice then my interest took over and I found a use for the practice and I'm still finding a use for it 16 years later.

I learnt the technique from the master (Fred Buining) he was a good teacher: tolerant and patient with my fumbling. He seemed to facilitate effortlessly but, as a professional facilitator, I knew he had undertaken considerable training. He embodied the very idea of facilitation and provided me with a great role model.

 I found it quite hard at first and quite stressful when I used it with groups of senior institutional managers. But like most things, the more you practice the more confident and skilful you become. I became more relaxed and in the right settings I positively enjoy this way of engaging people and introducing them to the technique. In some respects I feel like an ambassador: "here is a simple technique that you can use with your students".

I have used the practice many times in many different contexts. Each new context has its own challenges, characteristics and constraints on timing, suitability of spaces, numbers of participants and resources and these constraints affect the way the basic design is adapted and facilitated. Like many teachers I don't really want to just replicate what I already know so I try to vary the detail of what I do and what participants do in the process.

As I have developed the facilitation technique and my experience of using it, I have also developed my thinking about creativity and what it means in higher education teaching and learning. In 2001 when I first encountered the technique I had very little knowledge about this subject, since then I have accumulated and developed a lot of knowledge much of it through my own research and codified it in many articles and several books. Now when I facilitate or introduce participants to the subject in a talk prior to the workshop I draw on this pedagogical content knowledge. In this way I am now able to connect ideas about critical and creative thinking to a process that I now position as a means of illustrating to learners how we integrate imagination and reasoning in complex problem solving. In other words through my pedagogical journey I have been able to support and animate the technique with richer and more sophisticated conceptual and research-based understandings.

My involvement in using social media in the last few years has enabled me to connect to this workshop process other aspects of my pedagogical practice. In particular, it has enabled me to extend the process of interaction and learning beyond the workshop. I know include the opportunity to use spaces like Google+ for exhibition, explanation and peer to peer interaction. Furthermore, the resources that are developed in the new designs (poster

presentations) can now be captured on video and uploaded to YouTube and then exhibited through the Google+ space thus ensuring a lasting legacy for participants. This development is at an early stage and it's something that I will continue to develop in the next few months.

Motivation is a very important aspect of pedagogical practice and these also change as contexts and circumstances change. I have always used the technique and my associated knowledge to encourage and help people learn (students, colleagues and educational professionals in lots of different roles from across the sector). Because of my own interest the technique also generate knowledge about teaching and learning problems that I am interested in. When the technique works well it is enjoyable, engaging, challenging and affords participants the opportunity to use their creativity. These are all things that I care about in learning and so this pedagogical practice is aligned to my own desires and ambitions.

Sources of information
1 Jackson, N. J. et al (eds) (2006) Developing Creativity in Higher Education: an imaginative curriculum, London and New York: Routledge
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3 Jackson N J (2010) Creative Academy NTFS Project Case Study
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4 Jackson, N. J. and Buining F. (2010) Enriching Problem-based Learning through Design Thinking. In Barrett, T. and Moore, S. (eds) (2010) *New approaches to problem-based learning: revitalising your practice in higher education* London: Routledge 269-293
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