

# Exploring Creativity in Development, Achievement & Innovation

 **creative academic magazine**

Issue Number 4a April 2016

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## Jenny Willis Executive Editor



This fourth edition of CAM has been curated and assembled by Norman Jackson and myself as part of our contribution to 2016's World Creativity and Innovation Week. We are honoured to have received encouragement and a key article from Marci Segal, founder of WCIW.

We are also delighted to welcome Simon Rae as illustrator of CAM#4. He has brought to life so many of our articles with his unique style. Thank you, Simon (self-portrait below).



As always, we could not have produced this magazine without the support of our many contributors, whose thoughts and experiences of creativity will inspire readers, whether they are active in the world of Higher Education or planning their next creative endeavor. To them, too, a big thank you.

If you enjoy reading CAM#4a, please come back and read the annex, CAM#4b that we shall be producing after WCIW 2016 has been concluded. In it, we will update you on events that took place, participants' experiences and there will be some new articles to complement those which follow in this bursting edition. If you would like to contribute to CAM#4b, or to CAM#5 (which will be guest edited by Paul Kleiman), you will find details of the next theme and how to contact Commissioning Editor, Norman Jackson, on page 102.

*Jenny*



Commissioning Editor  
Norman Jackson

# Commissioning Editor's Introduction

## Exploring Creativity in Development, Achievement & Innovation

### World Creativity and Innovation Week

The fourth issue of our magazine is being published during World Creativity and Innovation Week <sup>(1)</sup> which sets out to encourage people to use their creativity to make the world a better and more interesting place and to make their own lives better and more interesting. WCIW is providing a type of global leadership by drawing attention to society's fundamental need for creativity and the fundamental right as a human being to be creative. By its presence WCIW tries to inspire people and organisations to engage in new actions and activities, create novel ideas, make new decisions. It calls on people and organisations who share its values to educate, engage, celebrate and open doors that help people experience freedom from suffering and open new possibilities for them. These values are also values that underlie the work of Creative Academic so we are delighted to be part of this global initiative.



While innovation is the buzz word of political and business leaders, development is the unsung hero as it embodies all the effort and ingenuity that connects our ideas with our innovations and achievements - the concrete representations and expressions that give our ideas meaning and practical substance. While Creative Academic might be seen as an organisational innovation it's all the hard work of developing ourselves, our projects and our relationships and resources that sustains our existence and enables us to achieve the things we want to achieve.

Development often gets overlooked as a vehicle for creativity. This magazine is a vehicle for exploring, developing and sharing ideas and it fits very nicely the developmental concept of creativity proposed by Dellas and Gaier<sup>(2)</sup> 'creativity is the desire and ability to use imagination, insight, intellect, feeling and emotion to move an idea from one state to an alternative, previously unexplored state'. If we manage to do this successfully then we have achieved something valuable.

personal creativity 'the emergence in action of a novel relational product growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life.' Carl Rogers<sup>(5)</sup>

But this concept of creativity gives little consideration to the developmental process, activities, interactions, relationships and the use of resources that enables ideas to be moved from one state to another. Our development process to produce this magazine involves searching for information, finding and developing relationships with people and persuading them to share their ideas, experiences, research and insights and other talents. It's a relational process like for example meeting Simon Rae our illustrator on-line during a twitter conversation and inviting him to create some wonderful cartoons to provide another perspective on the ideas being shared. Gradually through this partly organised but often emergent process we (the editorial team) change our understandings as we develop and personalise the knowledge that is gathered, produced and connected. It's a co-creative process involving all the people who contribute. In this way we make our own distinctive contribution to exploring and developing ideas in our particular context.

Creativity is all about having ideas that are new to us, and sometimes new to others, that interest and excite us to do something. Sometimes these new ideas seem to just come into our awareness but more often they form when we connect and combine ideas that have been around for a while<sup>(3)</sup>. Such hybrid ideas often form when we connect our imaginings to a context, a problem or situation that makes our thoughts useful. The idea Creative Academic is developing, through the slow collision of ideas, is the idea that creativity is integral to our ecology for learning, developing and achieving<sup>(4)</sup>.

A person's creativity only has meaning when it is developed and applied in the context and circumstances of the things they care about in their life<sup>(4,5)</sup>. One of the things we (the editorial team) care about is producing this issue of the magazine so it becomes, for a while, the purpose for our creativity and our enterprise is focused on connecting ideas and finding people who are willing to share their ideas and perspectives.



## 'Developing' our perpetual challenge

The perpetual challenge facing all human beings is fundamentally a *developmental challenge* focused on problems like 'learning to deal with and make the most of the situations and opportunities in our lives' and 'solving the most intractable problems and challenges facing society and the world we live in.' Exploring how creativity features in development is therefore worthy of exploration.

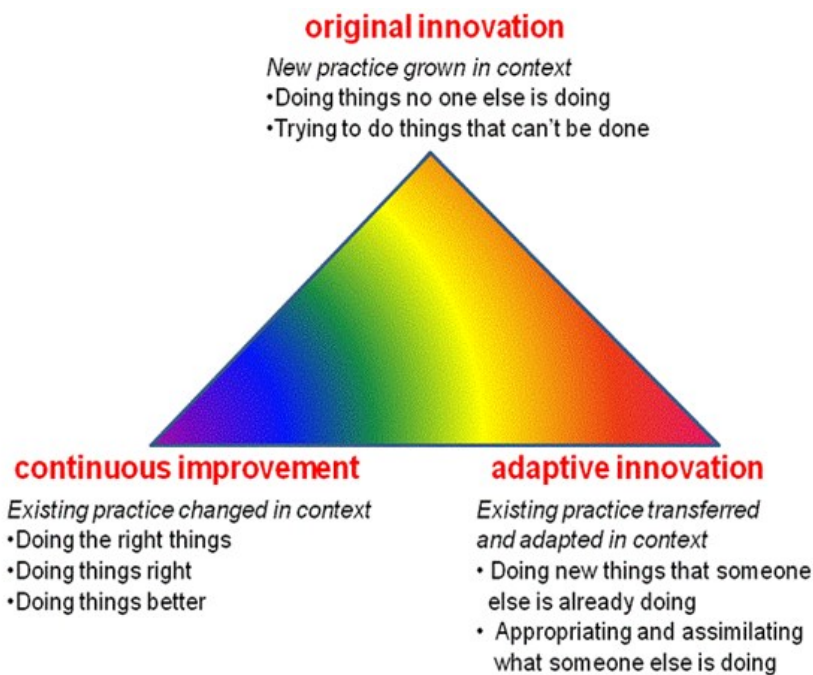


**Figure 1** Learning for a complex world wall picture drawn by Julian Burton <sup>(4)</sup>

The natural tendency is to develop from a child to an adult in ways that enable us to deal with greater complexity and uncertainty. The *development of a person* therefore involves progression or movement from a simpler or lower state of being to more advanced or complex forms of being. For the person involved in development it always involves the process of becoming different which invariably means learning new things by adding to existing knowledge or skill, or replacing something which I already have. In this way development is integral to our daily project of perpetually becoming. For most of our life development is a slow incremental thing but at certain points, either because we decide to abandon one life for another, or the life we have abandon's us, we are forced to move into a different and more radical mode of development

in which we have to not only renew recreate ourselves. Debra Adams' story is a good example or reinventing self in which our creativity serves to help us adapt to new contexts and create new affordances in our life and the innovation is the reinvention of ourselves. It is also interesting that when we embark on a process that involves us developing ourselves we often have no idea what will be important. Roger Greenhalgh captures this very well in his epic journey to Mongolia with his son. He says, 'The greatest personal development for us both came through dealing with the unexpected.'

The concept of development can be applied to ideas, processes, objects, enterprises, individuals, teams, communities and organisations.



Development is about *creating difference*. It involves change along a trajectory in which the amount of change may be the result of the accumulation of many small incremental changes or it might be the effect of one or more significant changes, or a combination of smaller and larger changes. But the end result of development is either that something is quantitatively different to what existed before and/or something new has been brought into existence

**Figure 2** Three broad fields in the developmental conceptual space



## We develop in order to achieve

We put time and effort, including our creative effort, into developing something or ourselves in order to achieve something which we and/or others, value. Achieving something difficult or challenging, something we have not achieved before, requires effort, skill, perseverance and perhaps courage and certainly our creative abilities to use our imaginations to envision things that only we can imagine.

As Bette Bondo and James Walker remind us in her article, we often do not have the resources, qualities and capacities at the start of our journey, neither do we know exactly what we will need until we are on the journey: we have to develop these things through the process of engaging with our challenge. Also we often have to find people whose skill sets complement our own in order to achieve the better world we are striving for.

Our motivation for engaging in development is driven by the innate human spirit to search for something better which improves what exists or does something which currently can't be done. In education, it's grounded in the moral purpose of making a positive difference to students' lives. It might also be driven by the desire to address a wicked educational problem - like James Walker's desire to encourage more young people to read. The desire to improve ourselves so that we achieve our ambitions and goals, and/or improve some aspect of the world we inhabit, are the universal motivational forces underlying our personal and professional development.

Development seems to provide a good conceptual explanation for many of the things we get involved in. We start with a problem or we invent one! and have to work with it or at it to understand and resolve it. All the stuff we do between the starting and end points can be called development although this seems to imply tangible and quantifiable things which might not be the case. To develop we have to be able to invent a process that will achieve our developmental goals which become intermingled with the vision of what we are trying to accomplish.

The challenge, when faced with complex and/or uncertain situations requiring new development needs, is to know what to do and in such situations we often don't know what we need to do beyond trying to move in a certain direction. Development is the space where imagination and critical thinking are integrated which to my mind is the essence of a creative process. Every new idea or possible solution is evaluated and judged in the search for possible right answers or inspiring ideas. Development also contains the space for play where we can tinker and experiment with ideas until we find or stumble upon possible solutions (see Chrissi Nerantzi's interview).

## Innovative forms of development

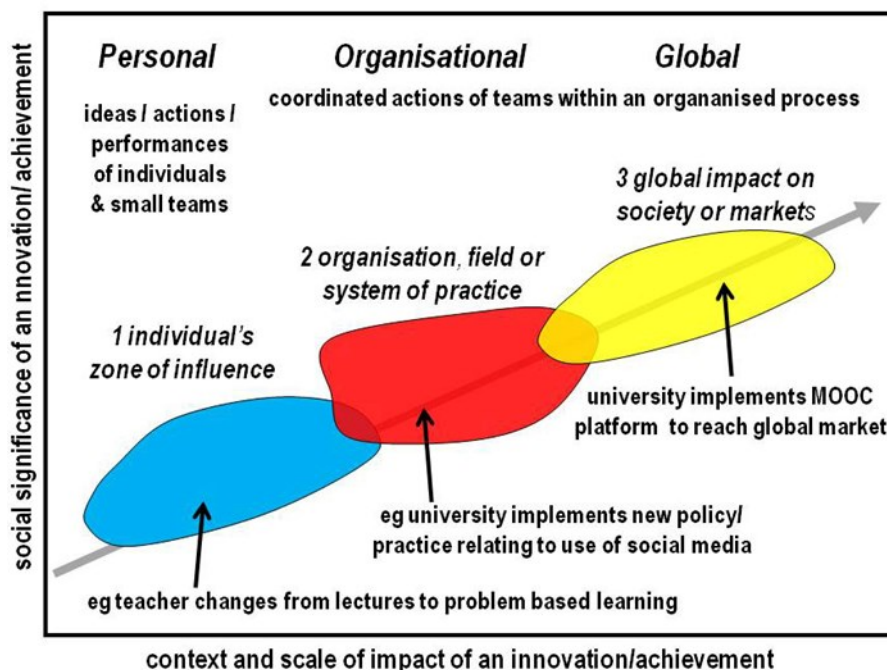
Some developmental processes deliberately set out to innovate - to change in a significant or radical way what exists or to introduce something entirely new. An innovation is something original, new, and important - in whatever field - that breaks in to (or obtains a foothold in) a market, society, organisation [or any other social structure]<sup>(7)</sup>. When we think of innovation in a business sense we tend to think of products and services and Tom Roston and Robin Roy provide examples of product innovation in their articles. The concept of social innovation is relevant to higher education as education is a social benefit, "a novel solution to an educational 'problem' that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues to both the individual learner and society as a whole."<sup>(8: p1)</sup> A 'problem' can be an issue, challenge or opportunity, or even a source of perplexity. This definition is particularly appropriate for the sorts of social justice aims that seek to meet the needs of new types of learner: learners that have hitherto been marginalised by higher education.

In higher education teaching, an innovation can apply to individuals' practice and the educational processes they create to enable students learning as well as to a university's products, systems or services. Because the continuous development of practice is considered to be normal for any committed and caring professional working in higher education, lecturers/teachers often do not see or describe themselves as innovators.



When the term is applied to teaching and learning research shows that innovation is conceptualised as being something that is new to particular a individual and their circumstances. 'An innovation is an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption.... If the idea seems new to the individual, it is an innovation' <sup>(9: p11)</sup>. 'An innovation in one situation may be something already established elsewhere, but .... initiative takers and participants see it as innovation in their circumstances. Such changes may be new to a person, course, department, institution or higher education as a whole' <sup>(10: p10)</sup>. Like the concept of creativity *innovation* can be visualised in terms of its context, scope, significance and social influence (Figure 3) mirroring the 4-C model of creativity proposed by Kaufman and Beghetto<sup>(11)</sup>.

Figure 3 Innovation can be appreciated in terms of its scope, significance and level of influence



At the global level there are innovations - like the world wide web - which have the potential to affect everyone on the planet. Individual organisations may develop a set of products and applications (like Apple for example) that are also global in their reach and effects. More often companies create and apply ideas that affect a specific market - for example a university developing and implementing a MOOC platform to serve a global market. The platform is not new to the world because all universities will have a platform for supporting delivery, but the way it has been developed to meet and support particular students, markets and applications is new to the organisation and to the learners it affects. Such innovations are normally created by teams of people working collaboratively with a shared vision of the product or service they are trying to create, but the groups themselves are open to ideas and influences from outside the organisation. In these situations, home grown innovations selectively assimilate ideas and practices from other organisations.

At the organisational level the definition of developmental innovation proposed by West and Farr <sup>(12: p9)</sup>, is appropriate. It captures four important characteristics of innovation: a) intentionality b) newness (c) application (d) intended benefit.

Many universities are currently developing policies and capacities to support the systematic introduction of social media across many different teaching and learning contexts. When implemented over several years it would bring about significant change in teaching and learning practices and would constitute an organisational innovation. Developers (educational, curriculum, technology) play important roles in creating conditions for university, faculty or departmental innovation to take place. They facilitate the sharing of ideas and practices between and across the numerous institutional barriers, introduce new ideas and practices and support development of new practices. They also help disseminate the results of such practices. Their innovations are often related to the creation and facilitation of processes to enable such things to happen and Rebecca Thomas and Joy Jarvis describe an excellent example of developers innovating their practice.

innovation is the intentional introduction and application within a role, group or organisation of ideas, processes, products or procedures, new to the relevant unit of adoption, designed to significantly benefit the individual, the group, the organisation or wider society <sup>(12)</sup>



Another means of extending beyond an individual's zone of influence is to create a platform which others can use. James Walker's Dawn of the Unread Project provides a good example, as does the example I describe in my Ecology of Innovation article, and Bette Bondo's imaginative project. Such projects grow from individuals own values and beliefs that they want to make a positive difference to the lives of others.

At the individual level we all innovate to varying degrees in our daily lives. It's all part and parcel of adapting and seeking better, quicker, more effective ways of doing things. It's also part of our need to feel fulfilled and live a life that is meaningful.

*personal innovation* - the intentional introduction and application by an individual of ideas, and practices that are new to the individual, which are intended to benefit the individual, and others, in the situations and contexts they inhabit <sup>(8)</sup>

The fact that teachers have a high degree of autonomy and control over what they teach and how they teach it, means that they are continually inventing and re-inventing the curriculum, learning resources, and teaching, learning and assessment practices. Changing in a deliberate and incremental way, is a way of life for the conscientious higher education teacher. But, the norming process in the professional environment means that most teachers tend to adopt similar practices to their peers so even though there is lots of invention it tends to follow the patterns of

behaviour already established in the local cultural setting - the department or school. Established practices like acceptable forms of assessment, rigid timetable structures, rooms with fixed seating, and students' expectations can all constrain innovation. But it is not uncommon for teachers to engage in more radical change or innovation for example when a new module or programme is being created, or an entirely new pedagogy (like problem based learning) or technology is being introduced for the first time. Some teachers create practices that are very different to local norms and these practitioners are perceived locally as the innovators or early adopters of new ideas or technology. Here we might adapt West and Farr's definition <sup>(8)</sup> to embrace this fundamental building block for organisational innovation.

The articles of new approaches used to facilitate students' learning by Birthe Lund and Maiken Pedersen, Tim McClellan and myself all describe innovations in teaching and learning that fit this concept of innovation very well. Without this personal level of activity in an organisation through which individuals experiment and through this learn to develop and turn ideas they care deeply about, into new innovative practices, it is unlikely that innovation in a strategic organisational sense, will flourish. Many educational developers served their apprenticeship as an innovative teacher.

## **Where is creativity in development, achievement & innovation?**

Any discussion of development with its intended purpose or unanticipated consequence of creating difference, transforming something that already exists or inventing something new, must involve creativity since creativity is the concept we use when we talk about bringing new ideas, material or virtual objects, or practices and performances into existence. But where is creativity in development, achievement and innovation? This is the question we have set ourselves to explore in this issue of Creative Academic Magazine.

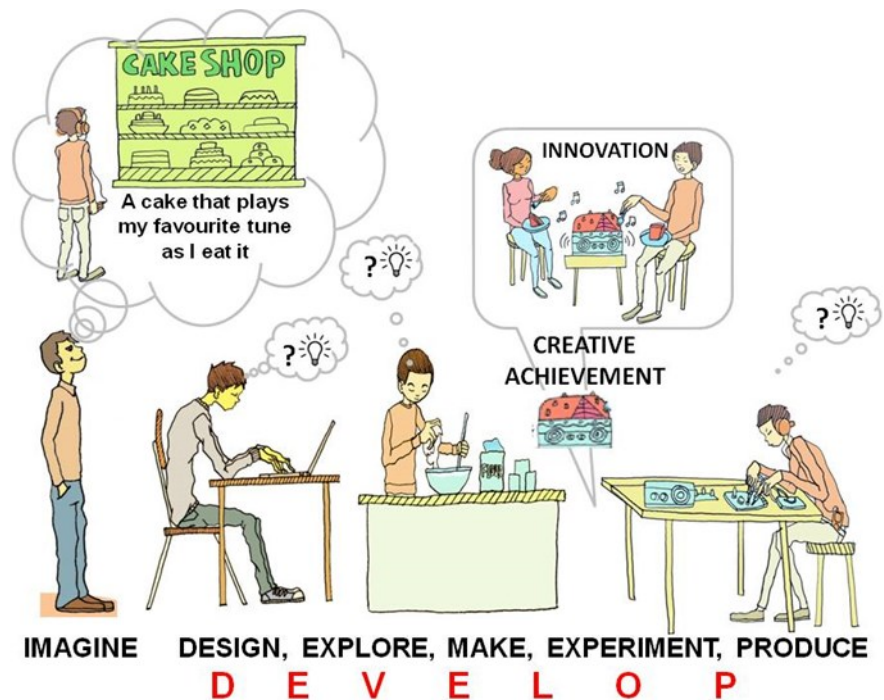
Is creativity a quality of persons, processes or products? According to Teresa Amabile (9:3) it is all three. Persons can have, in greater or lesser degrees, the ability and inclination to produce novel and appropriate work and, as such, those persons may be considered more or less creative. Processes of thought and behaviour may be more or less likely to produce novel and appropriate work and, as such those processes may be considered more or less creative. Products (new business plans, scientific theories, artworks, articulated ideas, dramatic performances and so on) may be more or less novel and appropriate and as such, those products may be considered more or less creative.

This proposition, that creativity can be everywhere, seems to offer a useful starting point for our examination of the idea and the developmental narratives and reflective commentaries offered in this magazine can seek to identify whether creativity resides within the person who is developing and becoming, within the circumstances of their life and the process(es) she/he orchestrates to develop their idea and/or achieve a goal, or within the product or service that is being fashioned through the developmental process.

We might illustrate the way creativity features in a 'well structured' developmental process which leads to an innovation through a narrative describing the imaginary invention of a musical cake (Figure 4). A young man who enjoys listening to music and eating cakes is standing in front of a bakers shop looking at the cakes while listening to his favourite singer on his ipod. As he looked at the cakes and listened to his music, he had the novel, idea of a cake that plays music while you are eating it. By connecting and combining two unrelated things, 'cakes and music both of which he liked', he had in his mind invented a new product. The idea is new to him and although other people may have thought about it before, no musical cake has ever been brought into existence. This part of the story illustrates the initial creative thought that emerges in the mind of person whose interests and circumstances cause him to not only have this thought but to become attached to it in such a way as to want to make it real. His love of cakes and music has been present in his mind for a long time but the thought of bringing them together in the context of making something was, in this case, a moment of conscious awareness rather than a slow dawning.

Figure 4 Illustrating creativity in a process of development that leads to innovation <sup>(10)</sup>

Our creative ideas are sources of inspiration that change our ambitions and our futures



The young man sees the value and opportunity in his idea and becomes excited by the idea of trying to make a musical cake with little regard for the technical difficulty of doing so. He is convinced that he could make such a cake and sell it. So he sets about *developing his idea* and investing it with practical meaning. Using the resources he finds on the internet, he explores the possible ways in which he might create the music mindful of the costs and the potential health risks of integrating electrical devices into a cake. He hits on the idea of putting a small edible chip which he has read about, in the base of the cake, which sends a pre-recorded message or tune to a mobile phone which then plays the tune.

He starts designing and making his musical cake. It requires much experimentation and involves many set-backs. He searches for resources to help him achieve his goal and enlists the help of the local bakery and a small electronics company. People in these businesses liked his idea and are willing to help build a prototype which can then be pitched to potential investors. The whole developmental process involves continuously solving problems, finding and using resources and seeing opportunities in which the young man's imagination (e.g. conceptualising and reflecting on the problem) and critical thinking (analysing, evaluating making decisions) are integrated throughout.

While the initial idea that begins a process of development might be original to him the hard work of creativity is to turn the idea that inspires him into something real that can be marketed and sold at a profit in the business context for development. He achieves many things along the way but it is only if he produces something that is valued and wanted by others that his invention will be publically recognised as an innovation.



This chimes with Carl Rogers<sup>(5)</sup> wonderful ecological view of personal creativity 'the emergence in action of a novel relational product growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life.' The idea of ecologies for learning, development and achievement provides us with a holistic perspective in which to view the way our creativity emerges through our interactions with our everyday world and past, present and future life<sup>(3,12)</sup>.

## Creative Academic Magazine

Each issue of our magazine is an achievement that draws on the creativity of everyone involved. In my role as Commissioning Editor I liken it to making a film. By bringing together and connecting the creativity and talents of many people to co-create something that is much more than the sum of its individual parts. The process might start with an idea drawn from the imaginations of the editorial team but the idea is only given meaning and substance through the imaginations, creative writings and illustrations of everyone who contributes to it. Every issue involves a development process through which we imagine, design, explore, filter, make, evaluate, produce and market our magazine. Affordance for creativity lies in the way materials are searched for, found and adapted, in the writing of new materials, in the acts of involving people in the process, in the creation of new illustrations which turn ideas into meaningful pictures, in the design of the layout and in the way that the final product is marketed and distributed. In other words, every stage of the process and every act holds affordance for creative thinking and action.

Producing our magazine is achieved through a development process involving significant individual & collective creativity

WCIW sets out to encourage people to use their creativity to make the world and their own lives better. Our hope is that you not only enjoy the creative efforts of our contributors but that you pick up just one idea that inspires you and to do something with it.

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# Celebrating the Creativity in All of Us: Introducing World Creativity and Innovation Week April 15 – 21

**Marci Segal**



*Marci Segal, MS, frees people's thinking so they can create new futures. She holds degrees in Creativity and Change Leadership from the [International Center for Studies in Creativity](#) the State University of New York College at Buffalo, beginning her studies in creativity in 1977. She has been active in the worlds of creativity and psychological type serving as senior faculty member at the Creative Problem Solving Institute, member of the Creative Education Foundation, Board member of the American Creativity Association, member of the [World Future Society](#). Marci wrote three books and in 2001, founded World Creativity and Innovation Week April 15-21.*

What kind of a world might we live in where new thinking, new ideas, new actions are considered rather than swat at as if they are pesky flies? What if people celebrated their potential to contribute to making significant differences in their lives and the lives of others? It was this way of thinking that drove me to imagining then creating World Creativity and Innovation Week - April 15-21 (WCIW).

## What is World Creativity and Innovation Week April 15-21?

WCIW is a dedicated time, worldwide, to inspire new action, create novel ideas, and make new decisions. It provides an opportunity to remind people they can solve problems in new ways, support new thinking, partner with new people, hold new conversations, and use a new pair of eyes. Since its founding in 2001, people all over the world have celebrated every year through activities, events, workshops and forums at home, schools, businesses, and throughout their community.

## How did WCIW start?

WCIW began as a response to a banner headline in Canada's National Post on May 25, 2001, "Canada in creativity crisis." I decided it was time to call attention to and celebrate the creativity in all of us. What began as World Creativity and Innovation Day April 21 lengthened to a week, beginning on April 15 (Leonardo da Vinci's birthday), in 2006. Today, World Creativity and Innovation Week April 15 - 21 is celebrated in over 50 countries worldwide.



## What is the goal for WCIW?

### Global Week of Celebration of Human Creativity and Innovation

One goal for WCIW is that it be a globally-shared time-bound observance that opens doors for new innovations, creations and growth, tangible or intangible. It's a do-it-yourself celebration where people are encouraged to participate in ways that are context relevant. Like Mother's Day, each family celebrates in its own way. WCIW is non-geo-political and non-denominational, it includes everyone.

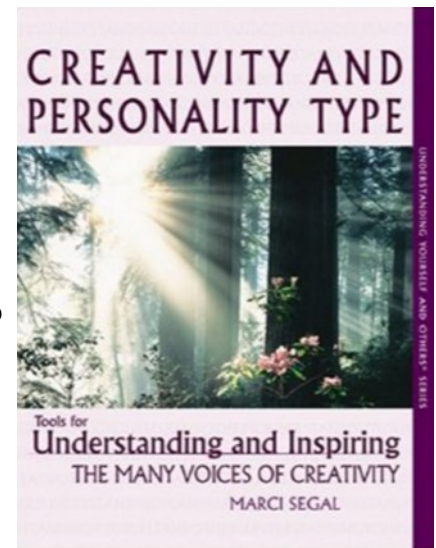
<http://www.biography.com/people/leonardo-da-vinci-40396>



Imagine WCIW giving people a specific time, greater than themselves, to strengthen awareness and provide support and encouragement to

- express themselves in new ways
- find new solutions to old problems
- create new opportunities
- overcome barriers
- open new choices
- make new decisions
- create new futures

The vision: WCIW provides a portal for leveraging potential to free thinking to create new futures. Accompanying that is the expectation this will occur. In this way, people can be ready to give and receive new ideas, share insights, restructure frameworks, establish alignments and provide new ways of ordering priorities, include new specifics, engage new partners and consider alternative potentials.



## How can people become engaged in WCIW?

What's special about WCIW is that it is a do-it-yourself celebration. Each person, organization, educational institution, community, family, and so on, can and does celebrate in ways that are relevant and meaningful to their context.

WCIW can be leveraged to

- engage colleagues
- strengthen dimensions of a culture of innovation
- get creative juices going
- inspire people with new ideas
- launch programs that build a climate to foster creativity and innovation
- reinforce that innovation is vital to success
- anchor innovation communication and activities
- bring people together in new ways
- give permission to let loose and have fun
- exercise and delegate creative leadership
- celebrate success and recognize innovative colleagues
- do something new, different
- connect with new people
- strengthen creative leadership and possibility making

Here are seven ways leaders and educators can celebrate World Creativity and Innovation Week April 15-21, 2016. It's a kick starter list, of course. Feel free to make up your own. What are ways you might create ways for people to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others, to tweak the system for context-relevant aspirations and plans?

- Hold an idea jam on a certain topic
- Share past successes with innovation
- Ask teams to design a remarkable experience
- Invite customers, constituents and/or students to hear a guest speaker
- Teach people how to inspire creativity in others
- Hold lunch conversations about what creativity means to each one present
- Take a break in new and different ways

Or, in the case of Creative Academic, producing a magazine that enables a number of people to share their creative ideas and experiences! I'm really delighted that Creative Academic has joined this global celebration and look forward to reading the rest of this magazine.

For further information: [wciw.org](http://wciw.org) @worldcreativity

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# Journey to a New Song

## Graham Morgan



*Graham is entering a new life after a long career in higher education. After leaving school I worked as a scientific assistant with the North Thames Gas Board. I then spent various a periods of year and a half touring Scandinavia with my brother playing music en route (guitars , banjo and washboard!). Afterwards I worked for social services before training as an NHS diagnostic radiographer. Inspired by teaching students I became a teacher of radiography students in the NHS and before transferring into Kingston University as a lecturer. Until recent retirement I was Head of School of Radiography and Associate Dean (Education) in the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education.*

Ever since trying to play the drums and then learning guitar playing in a 'pop group' at school in the 1960s I always had a desire to write songs like those performed by my favourite bands at that time, such as the Who, Beatles and Kinks, and of course have that 'smash hit'. So I formed a band with some friends and we messed around. Sadly, it was not to be although our bass guitarist, a guy called Andy Fraser, went on to write 'Alright Now' in the band Free - a song that you still hear on the radio from time to time. I did try to earn a living as a busker in Scandinavia at one point but soon realised that I was not going to make my fame and fortune so security beckoned with getting a 'proper' job.

The 60s was a long time ago and since then I've had plenty of time to practise. I have definitely put in my 10,000 hours so have earned the right to be creative - but of course it doesn't work quite like that.

*"Guess I'll never write songs and be another Ray Davies but I keep writing for myself, knowing it's probably the way it is"*

Although I had created a few songs along the way, it has not really been until into my late fifties and playing in a rather 'mature' rock band called FreeWorld (with a strap line - never too old to rock) and doing cover numbers, that I again really got the motivation to write songs that the band could claim as our own. So why did I bother? I suppose it was a mixture of things. Composing a song certainly gave me a sense of satisfaction and achievement (definitely), the vision of screaming fans? (in my dreams), and perhaps make my fortune with that smash hit (chance would be a fine thing). Well whatever the reason I'm an ordinary bloke and it gives me great pleasure to express myself by bringing a new song into existence - one that I am not aware of existing before. So ultimately, my creativity is about expressing myself and it gives me enjoyment and satisfaction at developing and achieving aspects of myself that I value.



One of the things that has rekindled my enthusiasm for song writing is Paul our lead singer with whom I am able to generate and bounce ideas around. Morgan and Westwood are hardly Lennon/McCartney or Jagger/Richards but having a companion to test, refine and elaborate the songs makes it more enjoyable - although there are of course the inevitable 'differences of artistic opinion'.

## Where do songs come from?

Inspiration for my songs has often arisen whilst on holiday, perhaps because of feeling relaxed and free from the usual more domestic thoughts. I recall a trip to Jordan and visiting magical Petra and being amazed to see the photographs that it had once snowed there. On a subsequent visit to Cambodia I unwittingly asked a guide if it ever snowed in Cambodia and the basis of the song 'Snowing in Cambodia' developed about a woman for whom it would be more likely to snow in Cambodia than to get her to change her mind (apologies if this sounds sexist). Added within the song is a line '*When you see her eyes under Petra skies*' - just seemed to flow.

Inspiration can occur at any time. I wrote a song called 'It Happened Suddenly' after seeing Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream' performed one night at the Globe Theatre in London. Strumming my guitar one evening soon afterwards the words and tune came to me :

*It Happened Suddenly  
Happened right in front of me  
Like some Shakespearian tragedy  
Or maybe murder mystery*

The song is about someone breaking up with their partner who goes on to become highly successful in life. Here is the chorus:

*So here you are just like a movie star  
So please you found your way  
And turned night into day  
You've really come that far  
The world is at your feet  
There's nothing left to beat  
Like Midsummer's Night Dream  
Where nothing's what it seems  
Your head held high in every street*

So not really a lot to do with Shakespeare but the inspiration came from an event I experienced that triggered ideas that inspired me to create words and music and bring a song into existence. It involved both thinking - imagining and connecting up ideas and doing inventing a tune that when combined with the words produced a tune that I found aesthetically and emotionally pleasing. I guess this illustrates the way my creativity connects things up in its own unique and disinterested way and creates new meanings from the circumstances of my life.

Many of the songs that I have written do have quite an emotional intensity and they are often dark or sad but that reflects my search for lyrics that are meaningful and emotionally rich and this is often further complicated by the co-writer. Perhaps this is not a good thing from a commercial aspect as many 'catchy' tunes in songs often seem to have limited, simple and repetitive lyrics.

Visiting arts and crafts called Artisan centre in Vietnam (same trip as Cambodia) gave me the inspiration that perhaps one could be an artisan just by having creative thoughts from which emerged the song Artisan:

*How can some people feel that they are so alone  
Where there's a world still to discover the unknown  
No need to follow all the crowd and all their sort  
Just be an Artisan and think creative thoughts*

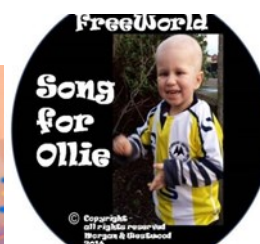
Because I'm not a singer and I often can't take the song through to completion I have to give up some of my autonomy and let the band's singer 'tweak' the song. But making changes to what I see as 'my concepts and songs' is not always easy for me, and occasionally the results are not as I had wished. Consequently, I remain rather protective of my original version but do accept (perhaps begrudgingly that changes are sometimes for the better). I suppose this is the role of what happens with musical arrangers and one wonders what George Martin's contributions must have been when the Beatles came up with new compositions.

## A Typical Journey

Creating a song is a journey- sometimes it happens quickly over a few days but it may last weeks or even months. It takes as long as it takes. A new song might begin with an idea an image or a line and then it has to be developed - so this is my personal reflection on how I create a new song.

I cannot write or read music so digitally recording is useful to remember tune ideas. I do not think I use any formula for songs - so what comes first idea, tune or lyrics?

This depends. I have often had moments of musical inspiration when on my own and able to play the guitar and warble without the embarrassment of any company. This has often brought the rudiments of a tune and a one line idea comes to mind. For example a time of tension within the household gave me a line '*there's an atmosphere in here and it ain't the kind you'll find in outerspace*'. More lines flowed and a chorus - but getting together with the singer changed the concept of the song that we adapted for an entirely different context. It became our 'Song for Ollie' a small boy who had terminal cancer and we used it to help us raise money for children's cancer charities. It's an example of how a song acquires meaning and significance well beyond what was originally imagined.



This was also an important song as we planned to have this as our opener for the charitable event we had organised. So the singer was on board with the song having made various changes to the lyrics and the tune over various practices together. His contribution was also partly made by us making a rough recording on his phone and making certain suggestions later. I've learnt that once I had agreement with the singer it is time to 'sell' it to the rest of the band. Fortunately this particular song was well received by the other lead guitarist, bass player and drummer. I know it's important for the other members of the band to shape the final sound. This will include the opportunity

for the lead guitar to have a significant input into an introduction and instrumental near the middle and end of the song and for the drummer to have some autonomy especially when he also harmonizes with me in the chorus! Also hearing a song for the first time means that members of the band sometimes spot something that just doesn't sound right or suggest dropping or adding a verse or changing a line. I recognise that this is an important process if the song is going to be successful.

In our song for Ollie 'we all' decided that we would have a 'Da Da Da' harmony introduction at the beginning and at the end of the song. This took a while to get right but we all ended up liking the final version and because we knew Ollie it always means something to us when we play it.



So this is a typical journey to a song. It comes from an idea which is usually a sudden insight for me as something strikes me or I make a connection that I find interesting. The idea gets worked through in words and a tune through lots of practice and experimentation. It then gets played with and tweaked by my co-writer and tweaked a bit more by the other members of the band until we are all happy with it and feel it's ours. Once we have agreed on the final version of the song we turn to faithful replication and the creative process ends and the effort is then focused on producing the best possible performance with the song.

## Be careful what you wish for .... tonight

Currently, there are lots of ideas floating around in my head and various half written lyrics and tunes recorded but the latest one has arisen from the well know phrase "Be careful what you wish for ...." to which I have added ...tonight. A period painting in my hotel bedroom on a recent holiday to Florence (yes I like holidaying abroad) of a lady looking over a balcony gave me the thought of her saying good bye to a friend, husband or son going off to war and them not returning. What might be the thoughts of someone in such anguish to make a wish for something to happen that they might one day regret. On driving back from a FreeWorld band practice I drove past a pub called the North Star .. so the chorus was born

*Be careful what you think of tonight  
The North Star is shining so bright  
It might grant you your wish to cure your anger and pain  
That one day you'll regret time and time again  
(but perhaps better to replace North Star with Full Moon?)*

Also on the airplane to Florence, in reading the company magazine was an article Letter from Bucharest .... And a verse to the above song

*An unfinished letter on the writing desk  
To an old friend remembered from Bucharest  
A cross word fallen on the kitchen floor  
No clue to the reason for an open door*

Well this is all raw at the moment and the co-writer has not yet had an opportunity to 'doctor ' it.

This is just a sample of how some of my songs have emerged. I may never get any recognition for them but I do feel a sense of pride, satisfaction and achievement in using my imagination and creativity to bring a song that means something to me, into existence.

What about a vision for the future? Reflecting on a number of songs I have written perhaps their slant is not within the pop industry. One song I have composed that I feel could be very powerful is called "*We don't see the world as others see it*". Probably reflects my view on life also but I wrote this with the idea of a man singing, first verse, the female second verse so on until a later crescendo with both together. No new concept of course but it did give me some enthusiasm of an idea to try and write a musical incorporating existing and new songs. Lloyd Weber beware!

In conclusion, what does creativity mean to me in my context of songwriting. It is being the right frame of mind that doesn't mean having time since what I consider my better songs have come about during very busy times. Having that thought, picture or line come to you. I noticed a company logo on a workman's jacket - Midgard - while walking to work one morning. I recalled a Norwegian folk legend of the Serpent of Midgard who encircled the world by holding its tail by its teeth - which inspired another song - The Serpent that we later added a sub-title Infidelity. But the motivation needs to be there to then play around with the idea and keep adding and subtracting as necessary. From my perspective - purpose is not any major factor. Yes it is good if others can appreciate your 'product' but for me it is seeing the completion of a song from having an idea, to performing it, beauty perhaps is in the ears of the songwriter, but it's in the journey that beauty is understood!

You can listen to a number of my songs played by the FreeWorld Band on the website that links to our Facebook page - <http://www.freeworldband.uk>. If you want to hear me live you can book the band at quite reasonable rates and we will even write a song for you or someone you care about.

**Editor's comment:** To develop something like a skill, involves us in a journey which connects our starting point (having no or little skill) to another point (having more skill) which is only beginning of another journey to improve our skill. So in this sense development is a never ending journey - it's always a journey in progress during which we are searching for new affordance to continue our journey. In this piece blogger Bryan Mathers explains a simple journey that his son took to develop not only his sketching skills but also the means of using his skills to produce a comic. His observation caused him to reflect on a parallel journey in his own life.

## 'The Monthly Meep': Deconstructing a Constructive [Developmental] Journey

VISUAL THINKERY

BRYAN M. MATHERS



*Bryan is a software engineer but describes himself as a visual thinker, learning technologist and entrepreneur @bryanMMathers*



### The process of creating Visual Thinkery

My process is simple. I'm always asking myself - "what does that thought look like?" I start out on paper, I draw assets using an ipad, and use a mac to bring it all together. Why not have a shot at it? It just takes practice, after all. Have a look at "[creating a visual thought](http://bryanmmathers.com/)" <http://bryanmmathers.com/>

In the beginning there was a thought. A *funny* thought. A thought about a guy called "Pants Man", which really needed to be a story—a *visual* story—a comic story.

Image courtesy of Bryan Mathers

The thought trickling its way through the lobes of my 10-year old son's brain, coincided with him getting his hands on a new set of Sharpies (permanent markers) and some very thick white paper. Tools that *demand* you to create—that feel so good to create with. You can't go back to blunt pencils and off-white paper now...

My son is very talented at drawing. Of course, I *would* say that - I'm his dad. And when I say talented, what I actually mean is that he's worked very hard at drawing (not that *he* would see it that way—he just thinks it's fun). He persists with an idea until he's happy with it.



I love encouragement. It's verbal sunshine. In teams I've run, companies I've created and friendships I've fostered, I see myself as someone who encourages; an *encourager*. And, of course, my wife and I (and his two younger brothers) encourage my son, and praise his hard work and creative effort.

Image courtesy of Bryan Mathers

And so, one funny visual story soon becomes two—and before too long, there are new characters, including "Mr Stoopid" and my personal favourite "The Spider who farts a lot".

So I do the things any father would do and say: "if you make a whole comic, I'll scan them in and I'll run off a few copies." My son thinks about this proposition for a nanosecond, and realising this could fund his chewing-gum habit for quite some time, immediately gets busy creating what he calls "The Monthly Meep". The title page (with a £0.50 price tag), a puzzle page and a competition page are added, and before long it is complete—all 14 pages of it.

After talking with my web-friendly comrade Doug Belshaw, he suggested that we (note the “we”, dear reader!) sell an e-version on Gumroad. At the time of writing we have sold 10 digital copies and five hard copies to uncles, aunties, grandparents, next door neighbours, kids at school and friends with kids of a similar age; and my 10-year-old son is roughly £10 richer.

But, more importantly, what before was just a funny thought somehow has turned into a *thing*. A *real* thing. And as a result of some sales, he also has the self-confidence to build upon it. Who knows where this might go?



The Monthly Meep: courtesy of Bryan Mathers

...meanwhile, back at the ranch...

So why am I telling you all this? Well, as this comic adventure unfolded, I couldn’t help but wonder about the parallel ingredients in my son’s creative journey and my own fairly recent experience of learning new skills.

I began to draw a few years ago, mostly out of idea articulation, frustration and also because I was curious. Someone exposed me to the iPad+Paper 53 combo, and I thought “That’s amazing! Now what can I do with that?”

But **curiosity** on its own isn’t enough.

I needed a **purpose** to start creating in a certain direction. At first, there was just one purpose—a presentation about the principles of corporate software development (I’m getting sleepy just thinking about it...) Later the purpose was articulating my idea for a youth centred social business. Now the purpose changes every day.

In the early days of my drawing, I found Twitter really helpful as a **feedback channel**. I realised that people (if they actually came across your creation) would either resonate and retweet, or simply ignore.

There’s a tipping point somewhere in a skills journey where you’ve mastered enough technique to be able to actually achieve something—and this somehow makes going further with the skill become more enjoyable. Let’s call it the “Look mom—no hands!” moment.

- In learning to play tennis, it’s regularly being able to get the ball back over the net.
- In learning to play the piano, it’s being able to play chopsticks (or in my family, being able to play “Oh when the saints”)
- In learning to code it’s the getting your first decent program to run (or inflexion point)

Yes, the creative journey certainly requires curiosity, purpose, encouraging feedback, and perseverance to get to the “look mom, no hands” tipping point. But in a creative journey you don’t know where the rabbit hole is going to take you, or where you’re going to end up—and you’ve *got* to be comfortable with that. In fact, when you have enough **confidence** you learn to *revel* in not knowing where an idea might end up.



Image courtesy of Bryan Mathers



In my own journey of setting up wapisasa - a non-profit focused on developing creative but credential-poor young people into digital jobs - I was struck by how important self-confidence was for a young person to be able to pick up new skills. Indeed, over the course of our first intake, our whole focus shifted from the skills our young people were learning to their self-confidence and the barriers and baggage that stood in their way. If I think back to school and the teachers I considered inspirational, I think each one understood this.



Image by Bryan Mathers

The way I work now is completely different to how I worked when I sold my last company almost five years ago. At the heart of my work now is what I call Visual Thinkery. And whether I'm thinking about technology in education for the Think Out Loud club, or apprenticeships or social startups, I'll be having a silent conversation with a sketchbook. I'm often trying to listen out for metaphors that will form the concept development or message articulation or indeed sum up the live keynote.

The reality is that without these same ingredients, my own journey in visual thinkery - which has given me so much fulfilment - would have petered out a long time ago, and not given a second thought. I am a Software Engineer after all, and we all know Software Engineers don't really draw...

After taking my kids swimming last night, I asked my son if he was planning to do a second issue. He thought for a moment and replied: "I think so... I think we might need a website. Dad—how do you make a website?"

*Connect with Bryan and see more of his work at: [@bryanMMathers](https://twitter.com/bryanMMathers)*

**Original Source:** posted on Oct 27 2015 [The Monthly Meep: Deconstructing a constructive journey](#) Bryan Mathers  
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[http://www.online-educa.com/OEB\\_Newsportal/bryan-mathers-visual-thinkery/](http://www.online-educa.com/OEB_Newsportal/bryan-mathers-visual-thinkery/)



# What Drives Invention?

Tom Roston

Tom is a Brooklyn-based author and journalist who freelances for *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and other outlets. He writes a *PBS.org* blog, *Doc Soup*, about documentaries



When Pagan Kennedy was writing her Innovation column for *The New York Time Magazine*, she and her editor would come up with intriguing discoveries or objects, and then she would look backward to figure out how they were created – and by whom. “I started noticing that a lot of the ideas didn’t come from professional inventors or engineering classes,” Kennedy says. “They came from people who were in a position to see a problem that needed fixing in a very personal way.” Kennedy collects some of those remarkable stories in her book *Inventology: How We Dream Up Things That Change the World*. We asked Kennedy to cull some of the fundamental traits and conditions that lead to brilliant creativity.



Your aching back, or that pinch in your neck, could push you to greatness. Bernard Sadow, a luggage company executive, was toiling through an airport in the early ‘70s lugging two suitcases. He noticed airport workers pushing a machine on a dolly, giving him the idea that he could ease his load by putting wheels on his suitcases. But his solution – a sort of leash that pulled a bag – was still clunky, especially if you had to go around a sharp corner. About a decade later, pilot Robert Plath, who also spent much time huffing through airports, came up with a better solution – wheels on one edge of a bag, with a rigid handle that could be extended.

Keep an open mind and you just might stumble on to something. In her book, Kennedy cites a study that found that more than 50% of patent owners credited a serendipitous event for their invention. In other words, inventors were not aiming to create what they ended up creating. But because they were open to what was around them, they made great discoveries. In the early ‘80s, NASA engineer Lonnie Johnson was tinkering to see if a heat pump could use water instead of freon when he tested a nozzle and noticed that it projected water in a “cartoonish” way, which reminded him of a child’s water gun. The Super Soaker was born.

Love conquers all. Kennedy noticed that passion was a key component in the discoveries made by many inventors. “They fall in love with it. And the love is what keeps them going,” she says. Often, a discovery becomes a “favorite party trick,” which the inventor shows off to friends. They think about it day and night. “It doesn’t feel like work. They see the possibility and they are motivated.” Love drives them all the way through the arduous process of developing their idea and eventually, certifying a discovery.

**No inventor is an island.** Kennedy found that an essential ingredient to many inventions was that they were forged through communication with a community. Serial inventor Dick Belanger kept a book he called, “Dick’s book of dumb ideas,” which included a fogless bathroom mirror, a tennis ball inflater and a hot dog-shaped hamburger. He bounced the ideas off friends and family. Eventually, they helped guide him toward pursuing his idea for a no-spill sippy cup that used an air vacuum to trap water inside. Fellow parents helped fine-tune his cleverly designed cup. “For Belanger, feedback was most important in helping him avoid ideas that were likely to fail or fizzle,” Kennedy says.

**It’s easier than ever to get your new product made.** We are living in an era when the barriers to innovation are disappearing. “You have more inventive tools on your phone than what the top engineers at Bell Labs had in the 1960s,” Kennedy says. China’s manufacturing city of Shenzhen has become an accessible hub where inventors can find factories primed to produce new electronics and objects – like those myriad variations on the selfie stick. 3D printers make prototypes affordable and accessible. And, like never before, manufacturers and pop-up factories around the world are motivated to work with individuals and small companies that can get financing through crowdfunding and venture capital. “My job used to be so hard,” independent inventor Chris Hawker told Kennedy. In the 1990s, when Hawker was working on an algae scraper for fish tanks, he spent days on research, writing down phone numbers and then calling factories. Now, he said, “I can just get on Alibaba,” and look up articles on Wikipedia and talk to people in minutes to research and source component parts. “Invention is being reinvented,” Kennedy says.



*Adapted from a blog post made on [IDEAS.TED.COM](http://IDEAS.TED.COM)*

#### Reference

Kennedy, P. (in press ) Inventology: How We Dream Up Things That Change the World. To be published December 2016

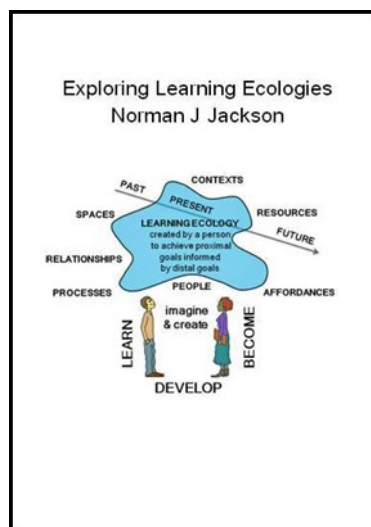
**Editor’s comment:** Tom Roston tells a story about an inventor called Jake Stap who was having a heck of a time getting the kids to pick up tennis balls when he ran camps in Wisconsin in the 1960s. The onus fell on him, causing severe backaches. He was feeling desperate. He needed to solve the problem. “A key to Stap’s invention is that the frustration had to be of long duration,” Kennedy says. “If it’s short, then a half solution would do fine. But the dread of the next summer forced him to think past half-solutions.” Stap put a tennis ball on the passenger seat of his car and spent the winter looking at it, playing with it, and considering solutions to the problem, including a retractable arm, until he came up with the now-ubiquitous metal-basket tennis ball hopper. I think this gets pretty close to what inventing a book is like. Your core idea for the book sits, metaphorically , on the seat next to you for a long time and you are always conscious of its presence. You wake up in the morning with the idea in your head and it pops in and out of your mind all the time. You play with it, connect other ideas to it, try to understand what it means, imagine how it can be applied and used, you might even draw it to see what it looks like and you continually write about it until you have written your book and explored it to a point where you are happy to leave it alone, at least for a while.

It is undoubtedly a labour of love in which you care so much about the ideas you are exploring, that they become, for a while, the most important purpose in your life. And then like a parent nurturing a child, you let go and hope the book will be able to sustain itself and spread your ideas and fertilise the imaginations of the people who read it.



# Exploring Learning Ecologies

Norman J Jackson



This book explores the idea of learning ecologies: an idea that has grown from the author's interest in and support for lifewide learning. In nature an ecosystem comprises the complex set of relationships and interactions among the resources, habitats, and residents of an area for the purpose of living: this applies equally to human ecosocial systems where learning is an essential purpose of interaction.

Our self-created learning ecologies grow from the circumstances and contexts of our life. They are established for a purpose that is directed to accomplishing immediate goals connected to more distant goals. A learning ecology comprises ourselves, our environment and the things we use in our environment, our interactions with our environment and the learning, development and achievement that emerges from these interactions. A learning ecology provides us with affordances, information, knowledge and other resources for learning, developing and achieving something we value. It includes the spaces we create to think and our processes, activities and practices for acting. It includes our relationships,

networks, tools and mediating artefacts and the technologies we use. A learning ecology enables us to connect and integrate our past and current experiences and learning and provides the foundation for our future learning.

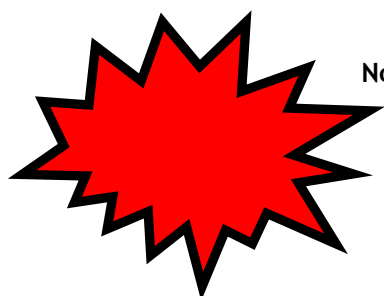
The idea of learning ecologies developed through this book, provides a more comprehensive and holistic view of learning and personal development than is normally considered in education. The book will be of value to anyone who is interested in developing their understandings of the way we learn, develop and achieve. The book will be of value to teachers and other education professionals who are helping learners prepare for the complexities, uncertainties and disruptions of their future lives.

*"there are large implications of this book for formal educational institutions. The idea of learning ecologies, as worked out here by Norman Jackson, turns out to be a radical concept. If taken seriously, it would call for a fundamental reappraisal of the curriculum so that it promotes an ecology for learning"*

## Content

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# The Magic and Madness of the Creative Process

Suzanne Labarre

This infographic by Virus Comix uses the metaphor of a street map to show the many routes, stops, loops, and warning signs we encounter on the bumpy road to creative brilliance. It's a picture of development!



Note what's going on here: Everyone starts out at the same place, with an idea. From there, you can make a few different moves. You can take the scenic route, maybe zooming past laziness, stopping over in the details shop, then heading down the gauntlet of editing, reconsidering, reworking, revising, rewriting, and redoing, before eventually landing on the presentation stage. (On the way, be sure to mind the overthinking labyrinth and the endless loop of comparing yourself to others.)

If that's too laborious, you can always take the express route, though your idea better be damned good lest you smash headlong into a brick wall. Oof.







# Creativity in Development: Educational Developers' Perspectives

Jenny Willis



*Jenny is Executor Editor of Creative Academic Magazine and its companion, Lifewide Learning, of which she was a founder member. Her career in education has spanned teaching in all levels of the public and private sectors; her research interests include pedagogy, personal and professional development, creativity, wellbeing and identity. She has a special interest in mental health and the destigmatisation of mental illness.*

## INTRODUCTION

This article summarises some of the findings of research conducted by Norman Jackson and Jenny Willis, in 2013, into educational developers' perceptions of personal creativity, its enhancers and detractors in the workplace. Expanded accounts of the research may be found in *Creativity in Development: a Higher Education Perspective*, chapters 2 and 3, (free to download at <http://www.creativityindevelopment.co.uk/e-books.html>).

## Background to the research

Creativity is important both to an individual's self-realisation and to the workplace, hence economy. This dual focus has been central to our research for more than a decade e.g. Jackson, 2006 (1), *Developing Creativity in Higher Education: An Imaginative Curriculum*, and Willis, 2010 (2), *Becoming a Creative Professional*.)

In 2013, we conducted an online survey, *Creativity in Educational Development*, using a questionnaire delivered via ValuesExchange software (3). We sought the views of people working in an educational developmental role (anyone who participates in creating and developing educational practices across the disciplinary and other learning contexts of an institution or organisation), in order

- To aid personal reflection on how creativity features in personal developmental practices;
- To enable the community of educational developers to better appreciate the role of creativity in developmental practices within their field.

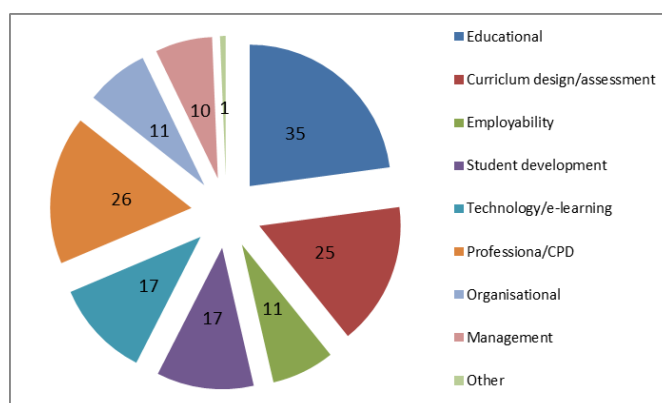
The findings of this initial survey were first used to inform Norman Jackson's keynote address at the Macao Polytechnic Institution's conference on Cultivating Students' Creativity in Higher Education in November 2013, and later that month were presented at the annual conference of the Staff and Educational Developers Association (SEDA). Following these events, the survey was reopened and publicised e.g. via Linked-in networks, with an expanded scope so as to include those not working in an institutional/organisational context. A total of 43 responses was finally achieved.

## Respondents (n=43)

There was a significant gender imbalance balance, with 30 female respondents to 13 male. The majority (n=23) were from the UK, 7 were from China, 3 from Ireland, 1 each from Australia, Cyprus and Italy, and 7 people did not declare their nationalities.

Respondents' ages were also skewed: 79.1% were aged 41-60+ years, representing workers in the senior stages of their careers. Most (n=36) were employed by a single organisation but 3 worked for more than one, and 4 were self-employed. The nature of their work as educational developers was multi-dimensional and variously described: for 35 (81%) it was educational (predominantly related to curriculum planning/assessment (n=25=58%) and professional development/CPD (26=60%); student development, including both academic and study skills (n=17=39%), and teaching (n=17=39%); organisational and employability (n=11=25%) and managerial (n=10=23%). One

Figure 1, Respondents' professional roles



person stated was responsible for supervising reflective practices during student placement. It is therefore acknowledged that the research group may not be typical of a random sample of the population.

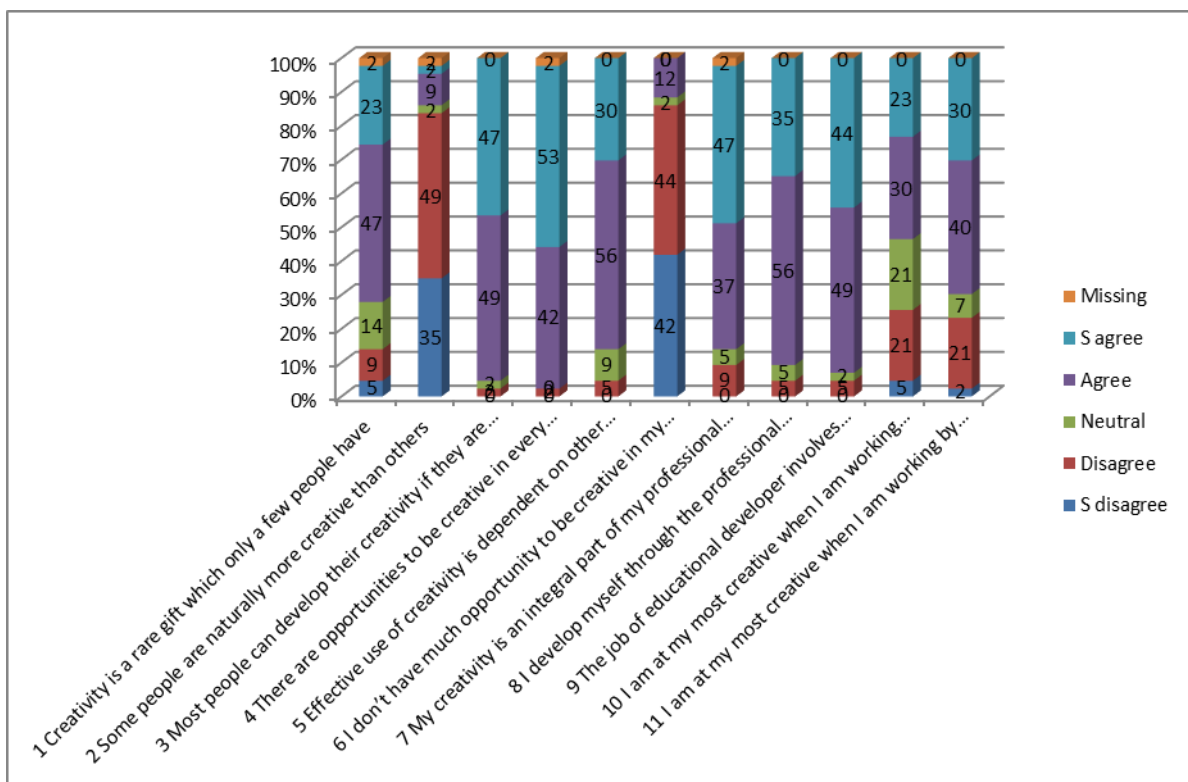
## GENERAL BELIEFS ABOUT CREATIVITY

Respondents were invited to indicate their level of agreement with each of a 11 statements about creativity, using the scale strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree. The statements were:

1. Creativity is a rare gift which only a few people have
2. Some people are naturally more creative than others
3. Most people can develop their creativity if they are given the opportunity to do so
4. There are opportunities to be creative in every aspect of life
5. Effective use of creativity is dependent on other factors such as personal agency, disposition and having context relevant knowledge
6. I don't have much opportunity to be creative in my work as an educational developer
7. My creativity is an integral part of my professional identity
8. I develop myself through the professional development work I do
9. The job of educational developer involves considerable creativity
10. I am at my most creative when I am working collaboratively and productively with others
11. I am at my most creative when I am working by myself on something I care deeply about

Figure 2 shows their scores by percentage for each level of agreement/ disagreement. The statement scoring highest agreement was #4, *There are opportunities to be creative in every aspect of life*: 53% strongly agreed and a further 42% agreed. Other areas of significant agreement were #3 (*Most people can be creative if given the opportunity*), #7 (*Creativity is integral to the individual's professional identity*), #8 (*The individual develops themselves through their professional development work*, and #9 (*Educational developers require considerable creativity*).

Figure 2 General beliefs about creativity



The statements with which respondents most dissented were #6, *I don't have much opportunity to be creative in my work as an educational developer* (42% strongly disagreed, 44% disagreed) and #2, *Some people are naturally more creative than others* (35% strongly disagreed, 49% disagreed).

In other words, responses indicate that creativity is seen as potentially present in all aspects of life, and respondents do not see it as a special ability possessed by only some people. They appear to be happy with the opportunities they have to be creative in their professional roles.

## RESPONDENTS' BELIEFS ABOUT PERSONAL CREATIVITY

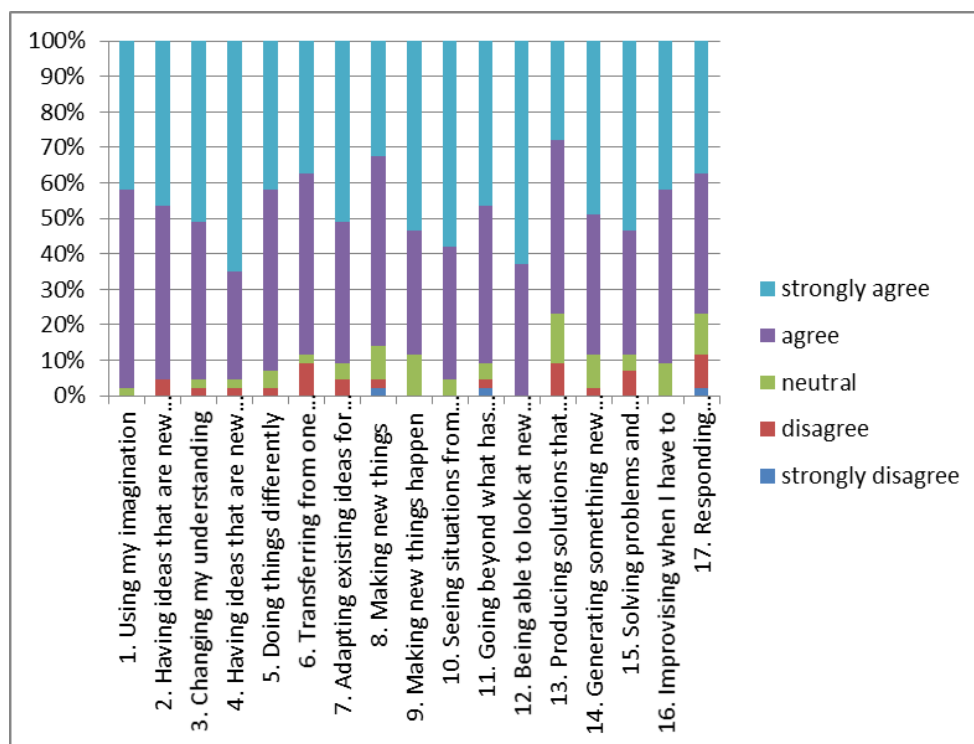
### Perceptions of what creativity entails

Perceptions of what creativity comprises were explored next. A series of 17 possible activities was put to respondents, who scored each one for its personal significance, using the scale strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree. The activities were:

1. Using my imagination
2. Having ideas that are new to me
3. Changing my understanding
4. Having ideas that are new to the contexts I am working in
5. Doing things differently
6. Transferring from one context to another
7. Adapting existing ideas for the contexts I am working in
8. Making new things
9. Making new things happen
10. Seeing situations from different perspectives
11. Going beyond what has been done before in a particular context
12. Being able to look at new concepts and ideas and put them together in different but personally meaningful ways
13. Producing solutions that are new to my client
14. Generating something new in response ....
15. Solving problems and overcoming barriers
16. Improvising when I have to
17. Responding spontaneously to things

Figure 3 collates responses, by percentage of the whole group who voted for each option.

Figure 3 Personal definitions of creativity



We find that the activities most strongly supported are:

- 12. *Putting together new concepts and ideas* : 100% agree/strongly agree
- 1. *Using imagination*: 98% agree/strongly agree
- 2. *Having ideas new to oneself*: 96% agree/strongly agree
- 3. *Changing own understanding*: 95% agree/strongly agree
- 7. *Adapting existing ideas*: 91% agree/strongly agree
- 16. *Improvising*: 91% agree/disagree



No activities were strongly disagreed with, the least support being registered in respect of #13, *Producing new solutions for a client* (14% neutral, 9% disagree).

Together, responses confirm the impression that respondents thrive on change and are self-directed rather than driven by external expectations. These quantitative data are reinforced by comments many added, such as:

- As Ken Robinson said recently, 'life is *improvisation*' and I agree with that. Creativity underpins everything and is enabled through being *open to and looking for new possibilities*
- Facing challenges with *confidence* and being prepared to *experiment and occasionally to make mistakes*
- I see creativity as more than just a response and reaction to a work context, to me it is *a way of being* and demonstrated through *humour, attitude, skills and adaptability*. I see *catalysis and openness to change* as being part of that creativity.

## CONTEXTUALISING CREATIVITY

### Examples of personal creative development

Creativity may be described as belonging to one or more of the following categories:

- Original - having your own ideas, inventing new practices
- Adaptive - being inventive with someone else's ideas or practices. Re-creation - adapting things that have been done before in another context or differently
- Combination - mainly adapted from ideas and practices elsewhere but containing some original features developed in your own context
- Incremental - building on what already exists in your own context perhaps drawing on ideas and practices from elsewhere

Respondents gave examples of each from their own experience, and emergent themes were extrapolated. Figure 4 draws together the 9 themes found across the four contexts. Shaded cells indicate citation e.g. personal learning strategies were found in creativity types (a) and (b).

Figure 4 Comparative contexts for types of creative activity

Emergent theme	Type of creativity			
	a. original	b. adaptive	c. combine	d. incrm.
1 Designed for practical need/ purpose design				
2 Ethical dilemma: personal vs others' expectations				
3 Personal learning strategies				
4 Developing students, support, teaching				
5 Using technologies				
6 General principles/comment				
7 Changing attitudes				
8 Research process				
9 Management process				

If we compare the breadth of innovation registered in each context (by reading down the columns), there appears to be an equal range (5 types) in categories (b), (c) and (d), though with different emphases, but category (a), *originality*, is the most wide-ranging. This would imply that respondents prefer to create entirely novel practices and ideas. When we look back to figure 3, agreement/ disagreement with statements on creativity, we find that there is consistency with 3 of the top 4 agreed statements (#1 *Using my imagination*; #16 *Improvising when I have to*; #9 *Making new things happen*).

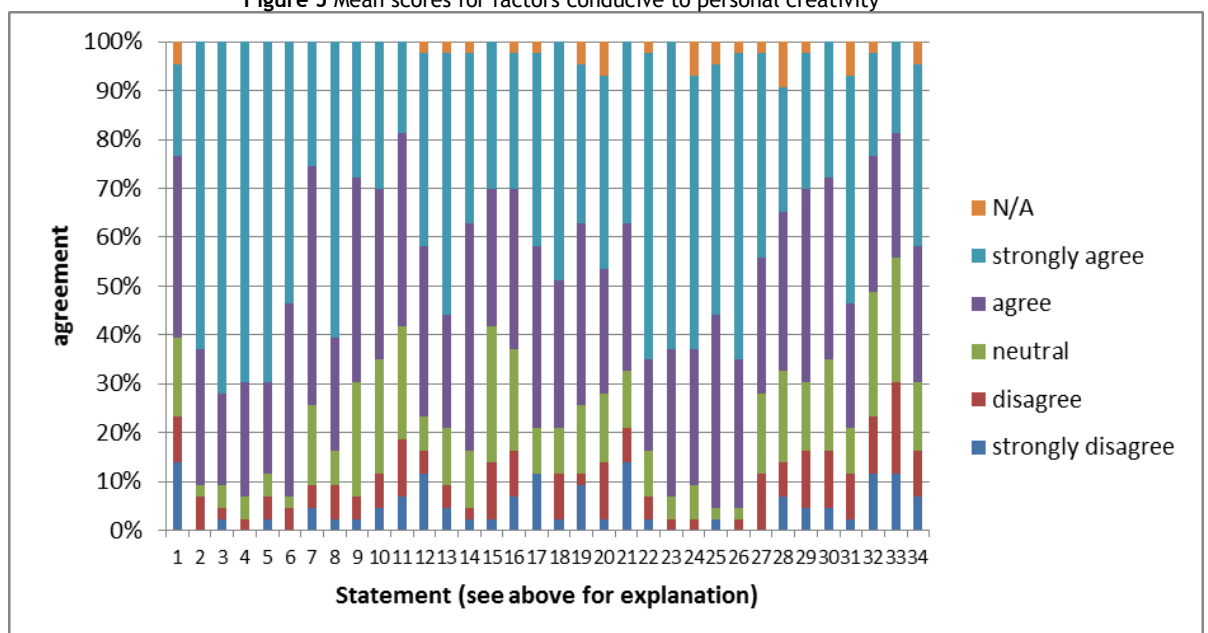
However, the statement with which greatest agreement was expressed was #12 *Being able to look at new concepts and ideas and put them together in different but personally meaningful ways*. That would correspond with creativity type (b) or (d).

## Factors conducive to personal creativity in development

A series of 34 characteristics that might have impact on one's ability to be creative were put to respondents, who were asked to rate each one on a scale, 1 = of very little personal relevance to 5 = of very great relevance. The 34 characteristics are listed here as a reference for figure 5, where the mean scores for each are shown.

1	A clear vision of how the university/ faculty/ school saw its future and how my developmental project contributed to this	18	Being able to collaborate with other people
2	My vision of what I wanted to achieve	19	Forming new productive relationships with colleagues elsewhere in the university
3	My readiness to get involved in this piece of development work	20	Forming new productive relationships with students to test and gain feedback on ideas
4	My will/motivation to succeed with something I cared about	21	Forming new productive relationships with people outside my university
5	My imagination to see possibilities and generate new ideas	22	Having the determination to complete the project
6	My enquiring disposition - curious, willing to explore and experiment	23	Learning through the experience - from problems as well as success
7	My knowledge and expertise	24	Being open to new opportunities and taking advantage of new situations as they emerged
8	My resourcefulness in overcoming obstacles and meeting challenges	25	My ability to improvise as situations required
9	Having the resources I needed when I needed them	26	My ability to combine, connect, synthesise information, ideas, situations to create new possibilities
10	Having realistic work plans to achieve my objectives	27	My ability to lead and facilitate change
11	Having the time I needed to complete the job	28	Feeling trusted and supported by my manager
12	Being allowed to get on without interference	29	Feeling that I made good progress within the time available
13	Having the autonomy to implement the project as I wanted to	30	Feeling that what I was doing was valued by my colleagues
14	My willingness to take risks	31	Feeling that what I was doing was valued by students
15	Believing I could take risks without feeling I would be unduly criticised if I wasn't completely successful	32	Feeling that what I was doing was valued by my manager(s)
16	Being able to find the help I needed when I needed it	33	Feeling that the environment encouraged and supported me throughout the process especially when things did not go as planned
17	Having good communication with the people I needed to talk to	34	Feeling my contribution to the further development of education at my university/college has been recognised and appreciated

Figure 5 Mean scores for factors conducive to personal creativity



The statements with which respondents agreed/strongly agreed most were:

- #4 *My will/motivation to succeed with something I cared about* (93%)
- #6 *My enquiring disposition - curious, willing to explore and experiment* (93%)
- #23 *Learning through the experience - from problems as well as success* (93%)
- #26 *My ability to combine, connect, synthesise information, ideas, situations to create new possibilities* (93%)
- #25 *My ability to improvise as situations required* (90.7%)

These suggest that personal disposition and motivation are paramount for creativity, allowing respondents to be able to improvise and make new uses of existing ideas. Experience is central to their learning.

The statements with which respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed most were:

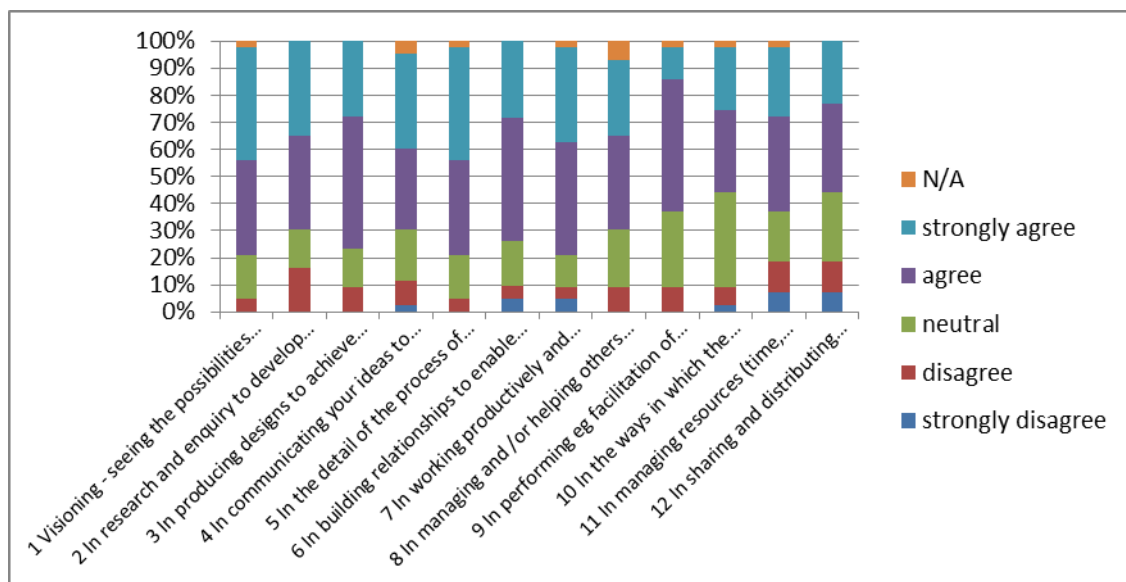
- #33 *Feeling that the environment encouraged and supported me throughout the process especially when things did not go as planned* (30%)
- #1 *A clear vision of how the university/faculty/school saw its future and how my developmental project contributed to that vision* (23%)
- #32 *Feeling that what I was doing was valued by my manager(s)* (23%)
- #11 *Having the time I needed to complete the job* (18.6%)
- #16 *Being able to find the help I needed when I needed it* (16%)
- #15 *Believing I could take risks without feeling I would be unduly criticised if I wasn't completely successful* (14%)

These dimensions indicate independence on the part of respondents: they are not deterred by practical constraints such as time or lack of external approval, implying that their own values are their prime (intrinsic) motivators.

### Distribution of creative effort

Respondents evaluated the effort they had applied regarding 12 aspects of creativity, in the context of the project/development that they had described. The collated results for each aspect are given by percentage of the whole group in figure 6.

Figure 6 Comparative use of creative effort



We can infer importance from the level of agreement. The dimensions of greatest significance to respondents were are:

- #1 *Visioning - seeing the possibilities in the opportunity for development (may involve others)* (76.7%)
- #3 *Producing designs to achieve desired objectives* (76.7%)
- #5 *Detail of the process of turning ideas into new concrete practices, products and or policies* (76.7%)
- #7 *Working productively and collaboratively with others* (76.7%)
- #6 *Building relationships to enable change to happen e.g. forming alliances, persuading, negotiating, engaging and enthusing people* (72%)



These aspects include a mixture of individual creativity and interpersonal collaboration (co-creation).

When the least important factors (as indicated by disagree/strongly disagree) are examined, they emerge as:

- #11 Managing resources (time, financial, other) to enable the project completion (18.6%)*
- #12 Sharing and distributing information about the development to members of the institution (18.6%)*
- #2 Research and enquiry to develop new knowledge and capability (16.3%)*
- #4 Communicating your ideas to lead thinking and gain buy in and commitment from other people e.g. managers, team members, academics and students, teaching and learning committees etc. (11.6%)*

This once again indicates that respondents are not interested in administrative and management issues, and prefer to meet their own intrinsic expectations rather than those of others.

## **CREATIVITY IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In the final part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked open-ended questions about their creativity as educational developers.

### **What is the relationship between your creativity, your professional development work and your own development as a professional?**

The most common response was that creativity in each of these domains is integrated, interdependent or, as several expressed it, 'symbiotic' e.g.

*I cannot separate the three. Especially I think because my field is so rapidly changing (technology/ computing) I constantly try to find new examples, new practices, new ways of sharing and creating knowledge.*

Other common themes were that creativity is integral to respondents' work and that it is part of individual identity e.g.

*Creativity is part of me, not an add-on and as such it is a building block of my identity, personal and professional. Does this make sense?*

Several themes relate to the impact of having/not having resources such as time and funding, and the issue of managerial support is raised e.g.

*Creativity is important for my professional development work and my own development as a professional. To make great contribute to the development of teachers' ability in educational reform, especially in the field of teaching materials and methods, I must work creatively to get more resources and develop different ways to support teachers. In doing these, I become more and more creative.*

Related to support, the importance of individual empowerment through creativity is posited. Self-belief is also important to some e.g.

*'Academic innovation' is the fulcrum that allows me to think and work creatively. It's in my job title (because I made sure it was valued) and this means I 'have permission' and I'm even expected to take risks to ensure the institution is fit for the future. My responsibility for the University's professional development means that I am able to influence creative thinking amongst across the institution. I am told this is quite empowering.*

Other themes refer to circumstances such as the rate of change, the context of a project, and anticipated outcomes such as bringing improvement.

Several comments give examples of how aspects of creativity are linked, predominantly through the learning process e.g.

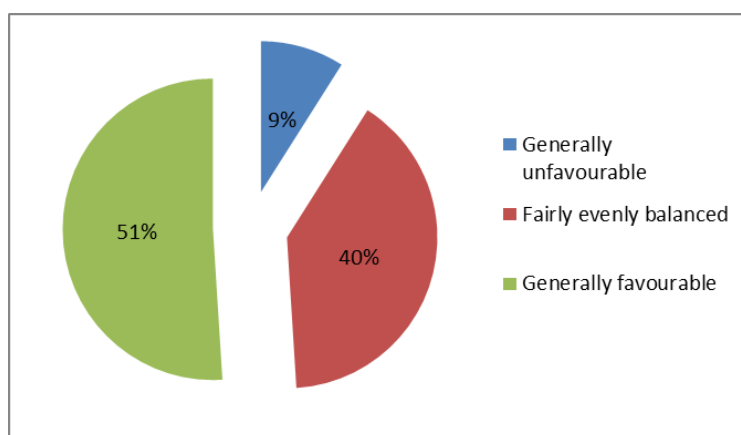
*My creativity enables me to come up with interesting ideas and to persuade others that the ideas have value. It's in the implementation though that I have to exercise my will, use my expertise, capability and develop new knowledge and capability in the process. So it might be argued that imagination leads to creative ideas which drive motivation to implement them regardless of the cost and its learning through the experience that leads to my continued development as a professional.*

## Favourability of working environment to personal creativity

Finally, respondents were asked to rate, on the scale generally favourable / fairly evenly balanced / generally unfavourable, the degree to which they are able to use their creativity in the ways they would wish. Figure 7 shows that the majority (51%) were positive about their working environment, with a further 40% being neutral. Only four respondents (9%) stated that their working environment was generally unfavourable to their creativity. These four individuals were all working as educational developers and had indicated in response to earlier questions the probable reasons for this negative reply e.g. the conflict between their own values and the expectations of others.

We conclude that most of our respondents found their need for creativity satisfied in their professional roles.

Figure 7 Favourability of working environment to creativity



## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This was a small scale study, so the findings must be read with caution. Nevertheless, assuming our respondents are typical of educational developers, they raise some important issues:

- Creativity is available in every aspect of life, and most people can develop it given the right opportunities
- Personal disposition and motivation are paramount to creativity
- Motivation is internal, preferring to meet their own expectations
- Quality of performance means more than conforming with expectations and 'doing the right thing'
- Innovators seek challenge and often need personal courage and humour to persevere
- Practical constraints such as time or lack of external approval are overcome through personal motivation
- Perceptions on working collaboratively (co-creating) were divided
- Creativity means and putting new concepts and ideas together in different but personally meaningful ways; using imagination; improvising when necessary, and making new things happen
- Least satisfaction comes from simply recycling ideas and adapting them to new circumstances
- Fabricating new things is less important than conceiving new ideas.
- Creativity is mostly seen as integrated, interdependent / 'symbiotic', often an integral part of individual identity
- Experience is a central learning means
- Developers have a strong need to support and develop other people
- Little interest in administrative and management issues
- Empowerment may be achieved through creativity, calling on self-belief

These findings inspire us with hope that the current generation of HE students and teachers are in sound hands with such creative and motivated developers to support them.

## References

- 1 Jackson, N.J. (ed) (2006) *Developing Creativity in Higher Education: An Imaginative Curriculum*, Routledge
- 2 Willis, J. (2010) *Becoming a Creative Professional*. Full report available at: <http://creativeinterventions.pbworks.com/w/page/27822835/Becoming-a-Creative-Professional>

**Editor's comments:** One of the challenges for teachers and others who support student development is to devise ways of engaging learners in processes that encourage them to think creatively about their own development. In this article Tim McClellan describes the results of action research he undertook to encourage students to think in more creative ways.

## Creative Learning Approaches for Undergraduate Self-Development

Tim McClellan

*Tim is a Senior Lecturer in Communication and Marketing at Southampton Solent University. He has recently completed a PhD in Creative Approaches to learning for undergraduates. He was formerly a senior radio journalist in the UK commercial radio sector and teaches on undergraduate programmes in radio production, public relations, advertising and music promotion.*



### Background

This article draws on my doctoral research relating to creativity in the undergraduate curriculum<sup>(1)</sup>. It tells the stories and experiences of individual students who completed a set of experiential workshops covering creative thinking through two modules - Creativity in Action and Creative Personal Development as part of their university studies. This work also identifies some of the problems involved in introducing a creative curriculum into undergraduate courses and makes suggestions for delivering this type of course.

Creativity in Action was a first year undergraduate module which sought to introduce students to creative thinking through examining personal learning styles, theory and a range of creative techniques. Creative Personal Development was a final year undergraduate module with a focus on student reflection and reflexivity using creative means to both learn within the module and to translate that learning into a 'personal reflective document' as a final assignment

As part of their learning journey in both modules students were encouraged to draw in order to access and represent thoughts and ideas, to write and draw in a creative learning journal and to attend the weekly experiential workshops. These workshops explored a range of approaches to promoting creativity such as random stimulation, gameification, writing, poetry, listening to music, applied reflection and structured approaches to problem solving. Students were required to submit their assessment in a creative form with all sorts of possibilities. Assignments submitted included a scroll, a silver box with letters to that individual from their 'wiser' self, annotated photography, an A0-sized jigsaw and many more over the years. The decision to submit in a particular form was the student's alone but following discussion with the tutor. In each case mentioned above, the choice of artefact was not random. It reflected the intentions of the student and the type of material often served as a metaphor for the content within and of the student themselves.

**VISUALIZING  
& DRAWING  
THINKING &  
FEELINGS**

**ACTIVITIES TO  
STIMULATE AND REFLECT  
ON THEIR CREATIVITY**

The modules were taught in a post-1992 university based in the South of England where the degree courses are largely practice-based. The modules sought to open students' minds to different possibilities of thinking and new methods to access their own creativity. The application of lateral thinking strategies and approaches to problem solving formed most of the curriculum within the module. Students were also asked to reflect and report creatively on their own personal development as part of their assignment.

One particular set of workshops centred on guided imagery and visualisation as a means of reflection, idea generation and personal development. Visualisation and guided imagery are novel and, prior to this research, largely untested means to access undergraduate creativity. There is no published research on the use of these approaches in higher education with minimal reference elsewhere to the primary and secondary sectors. Below are profiles of some of the students who successfully completed the modules and they illustrate the difference in experience of each individual. The names of the students have been altered for reasons of anonymity as well as the name of the module, but the gender of the student has not been changed.



## Angela: Living the creative life

In her journal, Angela used a few lines to express her growing self-awareness following the first week of the visualisation and guided imagery sessions and her feelings towards what she was doing in her course. She acknowledges that not everything is clear cut or can be planned for. The capitals and underlining in the text below are as Angela wrote in her journal

*'Imagining, but not only imagining, **BELIEVING!** Believing through imagining myself achieving. **ACHIEVING** what I want to **ACHIEVE**...I just thought about how I want to feel. The feelings I want to feel every day. Being proud of myself because I have achieved something'. (Angela's journal).*

Angela's obstacles were all centred on herself and her perceived abilities, or rather inabilities

*I am not good at studying (clumsy)  
I often fail  
I am afraid to fail  
I am bad at English  
(Angela's journal)*

She turned these round to positive affirmations, written in capitals in her journal

*I AM INTELLIGENT  
I NEVER FAIL  
I AM GOOD AT ENGLISH  
I AM NOT AFRAID TO FAIL  
(Angela's journal)*

For this student, the use of affirmations appeared to be a challenging but beneficial experience.

*These affirmations, produced by myself for myself, made me feel good, relaxed and powerful at the same time. They made me want to start now ... getting on with my work to achieve my visualisation. The barrier between potential and achievement was getting thinner and thinner (Angela's reflective paper)*

Angela's 'treasure map' is a representation of her aims and goals and how she links to them.

Figure 1: Angela: Treasure Map

In her own words, Angela explained that the treasure map helped her stay focused on her studies and helped her move towards her goal of a good honours degree

*I've painted it in a way that it would help me to study and concentrate more on what I want because sometimes I forget about why I'm studying (interview)*

Angela hung up her treasure map in her bedroom as a reminder of her goals and as a motivator. The module helped Angela question her self-doubts. Using the treasure map and affirmations, she was able to put her personal stamp on this motivational tool. Angela obtained the qualification she was seeking and is now a senior advertising executive living on the coast in Australia, as she had as she had imagined in her drawing made years ago.



## Sarah: Growing through creativity

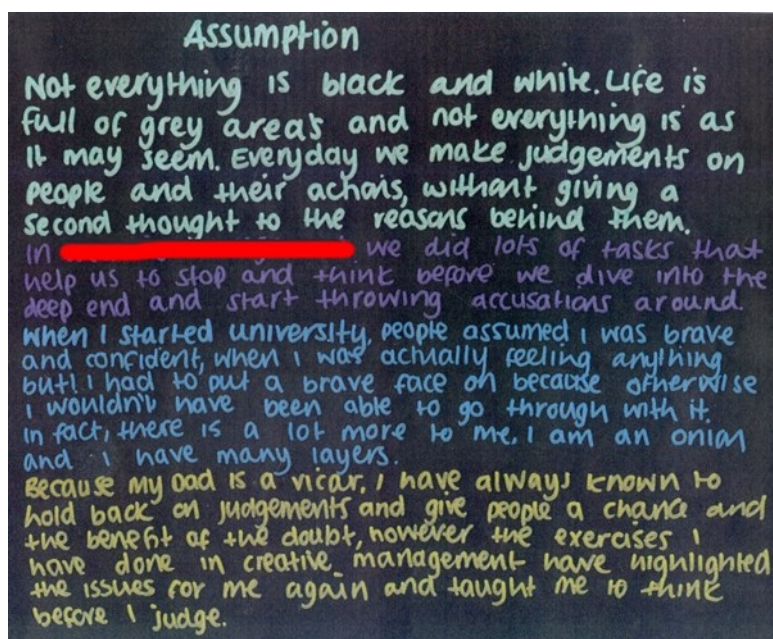
Sarah's story is one of self-discovery. Coming to university, Sarah's A Levels were at the basic threshold to be admitted to the course. She was happier with modules with clearly delineated boundaries of content and specific parameters of assessment.

*'I was quite apprehensive about [the module] at first because I'm not really that creative ... I have a lot of barriers I was a bit worried about how they would come out'* (interview)

One aspect that drew Sarah to the module was the way the curriculum was delivered

*'In these lessons, it exercised your brain and it wasn't just writing essays it was drawing pictures, listening to things ... rather than just sitting in a lecture theatre and, you know, just being spoken at'* (interview).

Figure 2: Sarah: 'Assumptions' page from her assignment



Sarah recognised that one of her hurdles in the past had been to view academic concepts in very concrete terms. Through reflection and participation in the module activities, she modified her view. 'Not everything is black and white. Life is full of grey areas and not everything is as it may seem' (Sarah's assignment).

Sarah particularly enjoyed drawing both as part of the work in class and in compiling her assignment, or Creative Personal Document for assessment. She said that she wanted to 'do myself proud' and used images of the sun shining down onto a flower as a metaphor for her own personal growth and positive qualities.

*The sun, you know, how the sun encourages things to grow, what I wanted to put across*

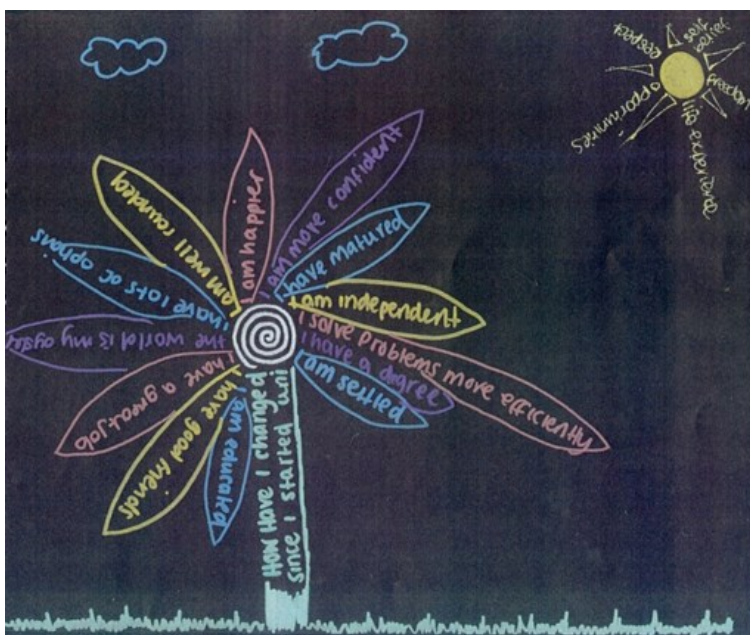
*there is that those are the things that I wanted to achieve more of and those are the things that I wanted to achieve more of.* (interview)

Figure 3: Sarah: 'Positive Flower' page from her assignment

Sarah's story is one of self-discovery and, in many ways, a battle with her own self-belief and self-confidence. What is clear is that it must have taken courage for her to choose the module as an option which focused on her own self and demanded the development of mature introspection. Sarah's experience of the module was positive and she concluded that undergraduate programmes should demonstrate a focus on creativity and reflection

*[The module] was completely different to anything else that we'd been doing and that's why ... I thought it should be made a compulsory part of the course because it's your brain's opportunity to be free and wander around and not be constrained or confined at all.* (Interview, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009)

Sarah completed her degree and achieved the 2:1 she was seeking. She is now working as a Marketing Executive.





## Simone: The power of the image

Simone was an international student from Spain. She described herself as a creative person: she enjoyed the activities in the module which she was easily able to apply to her studies elsewhere on the course.

*I realised ... here it is, creativity is imagination, invention, endless thinking, freedom, risk, style and a way of letting your mind stream through its hidden possibilities.* (interview)

Simone liked to draw. As time progressed, she started to become more expressive with her drawings, carry these out independently and decoded them. The first exercise in illuminative art at the very start of her first year was to do with how she felt at the beginning of her university studies

Figure 4: Simone: Illuminative Art, start of module (from in-class work)



Simone admits that this was a 'rough and ready' drawing which she was originally going to ignore but then she reflected on what she had produced and began to draw out and articulate a deeper meaning.

*'I've learned that even the most insignificant things can hide secrets'* (Reflective Journal)

Simone analyses the explosion in the picture as what she feels that moment as a student. The stick people are symbolic in that she does not feel alone. The face on the far right symbolises, to Simone, happiness and the bus and scribble on the left represents confusion.

Figure 5: Simone: Illuminative Art at end of second year (independent work)



Simone continued to explore her experiences through images in an ERASMUS study placement at a university in the south of France in her second year. She was apprehensive about the placement, despite having lived in several countries before. Her nervousness about starting the course in France was not only that it was a new programme with new students but that it was delivered in a fourth language for her. On her own initiative she drew on the concept of illuminative art that had been covered in the first year of her course in England and used this to express her emotions as she embarked on her course in France. She analyses the drawing as being

under the sea within a protective bubble. Above the water is the Spanish word for hope whilst next to her, underwater, is the Spanish for 'I am free'. She described herself as 'drowning' at the beginning of her stay but perceived the bubble that surrounded her as an energy, invigorating her and pushing her on to succeed. Simone produced several further drawings for interpretation during the course of her undergraduate studies.

It is clear from Simone's drawings, writing and interviews that she had furthered her learning, self awareness and understanding through drawing and reflection. She found drawing as a positive way of expressing her thoughts and feelings and showed a positive engagement with this creative approach to learning and understanding. Simone went on to gain a Master's degree, worked for a number of European governmental and non-governmental agencies and is in a senior communications position in a European non-governmental organisation.



This is just a snapshot of some of the students who took part in the research and a brief overview of their experience. Inevitably, some students had a less positive experience or disconnect with the approaches and their stories and possible reasons for their responses are explored in the full thesis available online.

## Student journeys

Essentially, the make-up of student attitudes towards creative learning falls into four main categories:

- **Active Positive Engagement:** students who actively and enthusiastically participate in class and report a very positive overall learning experience to all, or virtually all, the creative learning sessions held.
- **Active Engagement:** students who actively participate in class and report a generally positive overall learning experience to more than half of the sessions held.
- **Passive Engagement:** students who participate in class but report a generally negative learning experience, or their positive reports relate to less than half of the sessions held.
- **Non-engagement:** students who have poor attendance and therefore have limited experience of the experiential learning sessions

Characteristics of students in the three engagement groups are illustrated in Table 1

Student Engagement in Creative Learning			
	Active Positive	Active	Passive
Participation	Active and very enthusiastic	Active and largely enthusiastic	Actively participate in task but approach task mechanistically
Reported learning experience	Very positive overall 80-100% positive	Positive overall 50-80% positive	Some positive aspects but generally negative 0-50% positive
Attendance	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Stated belief in own creative capabilities	Explicit in verbal and written statements. Confident in execution of tasks	'Not creative' verbal statements but inherently keen to display and capable of displaying competent creative work	Say they are creative and don't need additional methods to help them
Attitude to taking creative risk	High risk takers	Moderate risk takers	Low risk takers
Independent application of creative learning methods	Frequent	Moderate	Low to nil
Level of tutor support requested/required	Low	High	Low
Sees connections between creative learning methods and degree course	Easily	Needs explanation then can recognise connections	Difficulties in seeing connection
Visual output and pleasure in drawing	High	High	Low
Motivation	Intrinsic	Intrinsic/Extrinsic	Extrinsic

Table 1: Chart to illustrate student engagement with creative learning methods

Students who demonstrated an 'active positive' and 'active' engagement with the creative learning approaches tended to have a specific approach to the module and associated tasks.

Often there was an element of fear which needed to be overcome with scaffolding through tutor and peer support, reflection and encouragement and development of student self-efficacy as illustrated in the diagram below (Figure 7)

Figure 6 Student journey of self-discovery ('active engagement' and 'active positive engagement' students)

Not all students reported a positive experience with the creative, experiential approaches. The chart below (Figure 7) represents the pathway of students who demonstrated passive engagement. The approach here tends to be mechanistic and motivation is instrumental and extrinsic. For these students, there is little inherent excitement in the learning which they perceive as being in conflict with their educational beliefs which are largely didactic and lecture-based. These students often prefer learning individually and reported that they did not enjoy group work unless it was with an individual who had a similar perspective on study. These students did not report any fear in studying the module as their aim was not to excel in this area but to merely pass.

PHASE	TOPICS & ISSUES
Unusual	Innate creativity Positive perspective of module
Excitement	Discovery Feeling they will enjoy module Positive to collaborative learning
Fear	Pre-module, during module or both. Ambiguity. Different from the norm Questioning own ability
Overcome Fear	Peer support, tutor support, reflection, self efficacy, link task to own motivation, confidence building, create own structure
Strategy Development	Self-efficacy, independent acquisition of skills and knowledge to complete task, taking control of learning and task, organic.
Intrinsic Learning	See task as pleasure, self-actualisation

Figure 7: Student journey with negative view of creative approaches to learning ('passive engagement' students)

The visualisation and guided imagery scenarios themselves provide a base of new knowledge when applied in undergraduate courses. Whilst the basic concept of imagery is not unfamiliar with programmes in drama and creative writing, the use of these techniques in courses based in creative industries and business is not reported in the literature. For these students such approaches can provide the stimulus for creative thought and action in a student's academic and professional life and space for meaningful reflection and action with regard to personal development. The limitations are acknowledged, as shown by the negative responses to imagery by some students with passive engagement.

PHASE	TOPICS & ISSUES
Unusual	Not a positive perspective of module Prefer logical and structured problems and approaches
Not excited or ambivalent	Feeling they will not enjoy module
Conflict with own educational beliefs	Prefer working individually or with like-minded individuals. Logical and structured thinking is best
No Fear	
Strategy Development	Pragmatic approach to pass or reach appropriate standard. Mechanistic.
Extrinsic Learning	See tasks as necessary to pass module.

## Implications for teachers and university educators

This final section of the this article considers the research implications for teachers and university educators.

Calculated, positive risk-taking by tutor: Higher education can present a conservative approach with regard to new approaches to learning in the classroom. The results from this research show that some students will have difficulty in engaging with less orthodox creative approaches to learning. There is an issue for the tutor of whether to ignore the more unusual and to concentrate on more mainstream approaches that provoke a less polarised response.

Tutor support and scaffolding: A related issue in this regard is managing the expectations of the students and the range of engagement within the class. It is important to support students in determining their own stance in relation to the creative learning methods and to encourage them to reflect on their position. Referring to the categories identified earlier in this article, a low level of tutor support was needed for students whose engagement was described as Active Positive. These students were able to apply the module elements independently and effectively. They were happy to work outside their existing comfort zone and therefore to extend this. A high level of tutor support is needed for students displaying Active Engagement. This is because these students would like to move outside their comfort zone, but have limited confidence in doing so. Tutor scaffolding and formative feedback can support these students to engage more fully with creative learning and visualisation.

Students who display Passive Engagement may not actively request tutor support. Instead they may display a generally negative view of the approaches and articulate this, for example in a reflective journal or class discussion. The issue here is whether the tutor should actively intervene to isolate issues and to 'draw them back in' or devise another method of letting these students change their views without loss of dignity. One of the aspects of creativity is that it is experienced differently by each individual. It is more important for the student to reflect and to determine why they do or do not find a technique useful than merely stating that they like a method or describing a workshop activity. All the students in the research included in the category of Passive Engagement recognised how the approaches could be useful for other students. Asking these individuals to reflect on this aspect is a tangential way of engagement that could lead to them taking a more positive approach.

Calculated, positive risk-taking by students: The research shows that some students can find it difficult and problematic to move outside their comfort zone and this can lead to Passive Engagement and Non-engagement. The formative feedback scaffolding already mentioned can support students who have issues in stretching their comfort zones to provide them with the necessary confidence to apply the concepts and creative learning methods in a meaningful context.

Creative visualisation and guided imagery in the undergraduate curriculum: The visualisation narratives have been used in the classroom and are effective for many of the students. Such methods are of particular relevance to higher education practitioners concerned with student personal development and in courses with a specific creative focus. Whilst visualisation is used in a different sense in engineering and science, practice of the fundamentals of creative visualisation and guided imagery may also be of use in these fields.

This research reinforced my commitment to creative learning approaches and their value in the undergraduate curriculum. It also allowed me to understand more fully the student experience of these techniques from diverse perspectives. I have been able to refine and develop my own practice and influence that of others. Above all, the research has enabled me to think more creatively in my own work. It is my hope that more undergraduates experiencing creative learning approaches and creative visualisation will be able to incorporate these profitably into their own studies while at university and enrich their future personal and professional lives.

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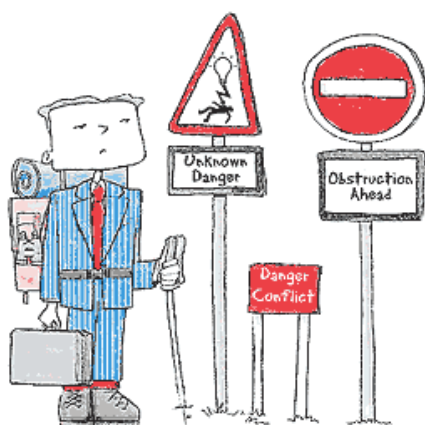


Image: [http://www.jigsawatwork.com/Admin\\_uploads/Personal\\_development\\_small.gif](http://www.jigsawatwork.com/Admin_uploads/Personal_development_small.gif)



**Editor's comment:** When we talk about innovation in the context of professional development, we are usually talking about the invention of new processes. Processes that enable groups of people who teach, or who support students' learning in other ways, to share their understandings and practices, and enable them to learn from each other and or introduce them to new ways of thinking. In this next article by Rebecca Thomas and Joy Jarvis we have an excellent example of two creative developers who imagined and then implemented a process that connected with the practices in the professional field to successfully engage their colleagues in productive inquiry and professional conversations. They make the important point that professional development activities that tap into and recognise staff creativity are a way in which universities can recognise and value the creativity of their own people.

## **Learning to Talk About Learning: A Novel Approach to Professional Development in the Creative Arts**

**Rebecca Thomas & Joy Jarvis, University of Hertfordshire**



*Rebecca is Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader in Photography at the University of Hertfordshire. She is currently Studies Abroad Tutor and is also responsible for co-ordinating Learning and Teaching across Creative Arts. She has a particular interest in facilitating educational contexts through experimental, creative teaching methods, utilising her personal art practice as a spring-board for this open approach. Rebecca is an active member of the Land2/Place International practice/research group, and has a special interest in cultural diversity, visual representations of otherness, and the development of extra-curricular educational forms*

*Joy is Professor of Educational Practice at the University of Hertfordshire and a UK National Teaching Fellow. She teaches on a wide range of courses in the School of Education, from foundation degree to doctorate level. She works to create enquiry spaces in which both students and the teacher are learners. She is interested in creative approaches in learning, teaching and research and uses narrative and arts-informed approaches to enquiry.*



### **Introduction**

The problem this project was designed to solve was how to engage staff and students in talking together about learning in a School of Creative Arts. This was because we had experienced students finding it difficult to understand the ways in which they were expected to learn when they arrived at university. Students are likely to find learning in the creative arts challenging because of the particular pedagogical approaches used in this field.

*[There] 'is often the unspoken requirement that students experiment, take risks, learn to assess the appropriateness of solutions according to context and engage in a longer and more open-ended process of enquiry than they may previously have been used to.'* <sup>(1)</sup>

At the same time members of staff may not be articulating their teaching processes and practices or their expectations of what the students need to be doing to learn. Staff may have tacit but not articulated knowledge of their own teaching practice, which makes it difficult to talk with students about their learning. This professional development project was designed to support articulation of practice so that it could be shared between staff and students, particularly during transition into university.

We aimed to draw on creative processes to achieve our aim because we wanted to connect with creative arts practitioners' own creativity. We were aware that while members of staff were all 'creatives', they were not used to a creative approach to staff development. We aimed to harness their creativity to build from our starting point. As leaders we had an original starting point (for us) but we wanted to facilitate a process through which staff colleagues could develop the work.

### **Facilitating the sharing of understandings & practices**

We set up a morning session before the start of term to which all staff members were invited, of which about 60 attended. We employed a graphic facilitator (Joel Copper) to create a cartoon-style picture of a country scene into which arts students were depicted walking (Figure 1).

Figure 1 A country scene into which arts students were depicted walking created to stimulate professional conversations about teaching and learning ©Joel Cooper



In the scene these students could see people doing a range of activities that they would associate with learning in the creative arts. We invited colleagues who were participating in the workshop to suggest verbs that should be part of the scene and these were drawn by the graphic facilitator. 'Making' was illustrated by a group building a wooden construction, 'risk taking' by an aeroplane wing walker, and 'gathering' by people having a picnic.



© Joel Cooper

These illustrations acted as stimulants and metaphors to facilitate the sharing of conceptual understandings. The picture was coloured, digitised and sent to all colleagues in the School.

We then began to create contexts for this initial idea to be developed. We arranged a series of sessions where colleagues could come and share ideas about the ways they used these processes in their teaching. We cut out each illustrated verb and suggested that colleagues choose one and share how it is used in their own teaching. Colleagues, however, selected 2 or 3 verbs and connected and combined them, drawing lines between them and sharing different ways in which these learning processes worked in their teaching and learning contexts. This suggested to us that people wanted to use their creativity to play with ideas arranging learning processes in different patterns such as sequences, parallel processes, those which were difficult to develop, and so on.

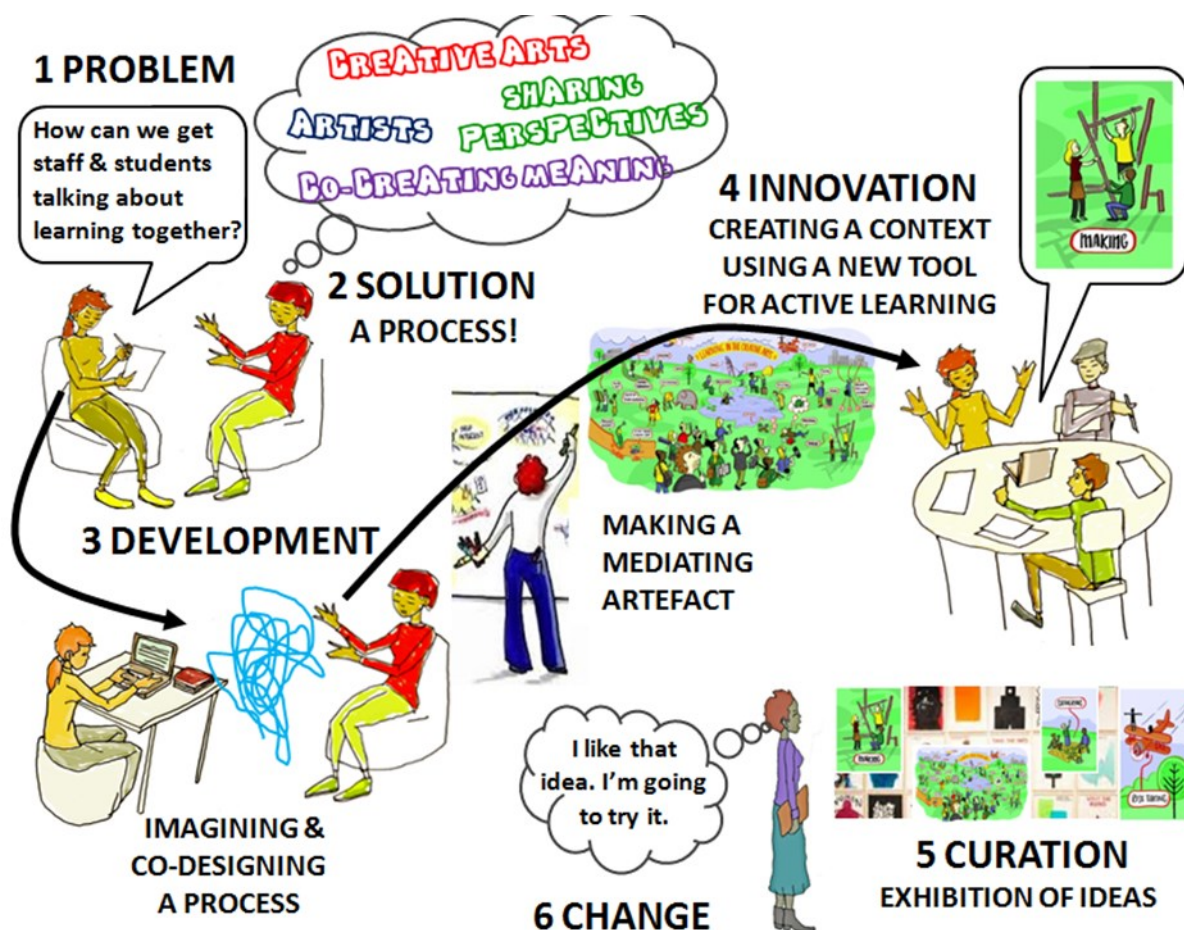


To facilitate this playful and creative process, we decided to make a pack of playing cards in which each card displayed a separate verb. These were fun to play with, to put into sets, to organise in relation to where and how they might work in an academic year, in a module, in a programme. We realised that, in response to the unfolding process, we had made a tool to facilitate participants' own creative thinking and processes.

Some colleagues gave the cards to classes of students and encouraged them to make their own cards with different representations of these methods and

other techniques they identified that they used to learn. They created these new representations in a range of media such as film and photography, sparking the idea for a student competition which will take place later in the academic year to create new learning process cards in a range of different media. These can then be used to stimulate discussion with the next group of students. People have also shared the cards outside the institution and one community group responded to them in material collage and embroidery. This encouraged us to develop an exhibition to showcase the work, leading to a catalogue and now the development of a website to share what we are doing.

Colleagues are also moving away from the original materials to talk about learning with students with a range of other materials such as Lego. They are taking the idea of talking about learning and the learning process (using metaphors) into new directions. Another group decided that learning was more than verbs and have started to collect student and staff ideas about what sparks the imagination.



## Reflections on the project

What we found was that creativity emerged through the process of bringing people together, providing a context and purpose, and a simple mediating artefact or tool that everyone understood - the picture of a country scene. This set of circumstances, together with our guiding prompts, enabled individuals to think imaginatively and associate the metaphors in the picture with their own teaching and learning practices. Creativity also emerged through groups of people interacting with the materials and developing the ideas in various ways.

Whilst we created resources and materials it was the process that mattered; the creativity was sparked by initial ideas and fuelled by people working together - the connections of minds, the sharing of experiences and imaginations. Participants developed their own ideas and contributed to the learning of others. This wouldn't have happened if we had stopped after creating the initial picture. We found that if the development process was to happen in this context of staff development it had to be nurtured and facilitated. We had to 'make it happen' by bringing colleagues together, creating conditions that were hospitable and conducive to productive purposeful conversation e.g. providing food and interesting practical activities and responding to what emerged by creating new resources.

Our role as facilitators also involved capturing and documenting some of the creativity that emerged through an exhibition and website to recognise and value what had been achieved, and to consolidate the connections that had been made and sustain enthusiasm.

Creative development is hard work! It is also great fun and engages people in ways that they do not normally experience. The feedback we got from the enthusiastic and joyful way our colleagues engaged with the process created a great sense of pride and professional satisfaction. We were working with people who found this type of work connected in a profound way to their discipline. One could argue that all disciplines involve creativity, imagination and making in different ways<sup>(2)</sup> and it is the role of the professional/educational developer to find the ways that are most engaging. Perhaps if we could build staff development approaches that link to disciplinary creativity this could lead to more creative problem-solving approaches within universities and a workforce that believed their university recognised the importance of their creativity in the educational processes they helped create.

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Matthew Crawford argues that manual work often contains deep intellectual value. In his paean to this sort of work, "[The Case for Working With Your Hands](#)," he says "A good job requires a field of action where you can put your best capacities to work and see an effect in the world." For some, this is trade-craft. For others, philosophy. What is education if not helping others develop their best capacities? What is teaching if not showing how those capacities might have an effect in the world?

*Nakia Pope 15/03/16 Welding and the Meaning of Life*

*Hybrid Pedagogy*

<http://www.digitalpedagogylab.com/hybridped/welding-and-the-meaning-of-life/>



**Editor's comment:** CAM#2 explored the idea of play and how it featured in higher education and creative processes. Since its was published last June it has been accessed on line over 1500 times showing that there is considerable interest in the idea and practice of play. Play can also be an important aspect of developmental processes. How often do we say we have been playing around with an idea as we move from a vague idea to something more concrete and practical? In this interview, Chrissi Nerantzi who guest edited CAM#2, discusses the idea of playful learning with reporter Michelle Pauli at the JISC #digifest16 conference in March 2016.

The shortened version of the above interview was published by Jisc at <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/inform-qa/learning-to-play-playing-to-learn-the-rise-of-playful-learning-in-he-25-feb-2016> The complete version follows with Jisc's and Michelle's kind permission.



## Play as a Medium for Learning and Developing

**Chrissi Nerantzi is interviewed by journalist Michelle Pauli for #digifest16**

Michelle: What is playful learning?

Chrissi: Playful learning is using play activities to immerse ourselves and learn, either on our own or with others in a space we feel safe and where it is ok to make mistakes when experimenting with new ideas - where we challenge ourselves and others, doing things we normally wouldn't do, which can lead us to surprising discoveries. We might use low tech resources, everyday objects, games and materials or high tech such as specific software tools, social or mobile media and mobile apps. Often we don't need anything and play happens based purely on our imaginations and we become play resources ourselves. Playful learning can happen anywhere, in the digital or physical world as well as in between.

Michelle: How well-known is playful learning as a concept?

Chrissi: The importance of playful learning is widely recognised for child development. Recently the University of Cambridge established a Research Centre for Play to further study children's play funded by LEGO®. We all learn through play when we are children. This is seen as normal. However, in a higher education context, things are very different. I think that some people don't want to hear about play, to be honest. It is largely alien to higher education and often seen as inappropriate and childish.

When we grow up and go through the different stages of the education system, we just seem to be using less and less play. Play is ironed out from our learning lives. I think this is a very sad reality. I feel that we are missing out on the real benefits of play and playful learning which actually stretch far beyond childhood and across our whole lives. Play is what keeps our brain fit and makes us happy. Play challenges us too. I am sure there have always been playful practitioners in higher education. The rebels are those who go against the grain, who have that playfulness and curiosity within them and who are perhaps a bit more fearless than the rest and share it openly with their colleagues and



students to stimulate their imagination and creativity. But it is not always well received. And there can be resistance. There is resistance. From colleagues and students. But then there always is when we are doing something that is very different from the norm, from what everybody else is doing. Should this stop us? Things are changing. They always have, of course. Perhaps change is now more visible and spreads quicker thanks to digital and social media as well as open practices, and thanks to the plethora of professional networks and communities we can join and interact with. It is now definitely easier for playful practitioners to come together and feel less lonely. This can boost their determination and confidence. It also gives them opportunities to share ideas, collaborate and carry out research in this area. And this is really important. After all, higher education is about new knowledge generation, research and sharing this back with the wider community and society for the social good.

Experimentation and playfulness are vital ingredients of research. This is something we need to remind ourselves of more and perhaps this will help us see play in higher education in a new light, in a much brighter light.

Michelle: Why should we be interested in playful learning?

Chrissi: Why shouldn't we? Play helps us go back to who we really are as human beings, full of life, curiosity and wonder, genuine. Perhaps play transforms us into childlike creatures and enables us to live richer realities. We become creatures that are curious, imaginative and fearless. Creatures who are not afraid to be different, silly at times and try different things. Who are not afraid to be judged by others. This state gives us, I think, the

freedom to explore, play, experiment and fail in that environment, in that safe space, but also helps us pick ourselves up again and move forward. To learn. To make discoveries. Failing is a valuable vehicle for learning and progress. We often forget this. I don't think a lot of things happen without failure. Failure helps us grow ideas, often ideas that failed before. Through failure we make new discoveries if we engage with it. This is why failure is so important, I think. Instead, what often happens is that failure is something that we sweep under the carpet, we try to forget about. In a playful situation failure is part of what naturally happens together with success and celebration, joy and happiness, but also sadness, anger and disappointment at times. All emotions are part of the play process and all play a role for learning. Learning doesn't just happen in our heads! Perhaps the suspension of judgment and the safe environment and community help us live these out in play situation and make the most of them.



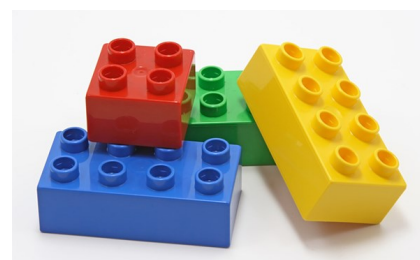
Michelle: How possible is that suspension of judgment within an academic environment where you could argue that judging, in the sense of applying a critical eye to work, critical thinking, is so much a part of what higher education is?

Chrissi: Yes, I agree it can be challenging... Playful learning however, is a creative way of learning and while we talk about critical engagement we seem to forget that creative engagement is equally important. How can we be critical without being creative? The two go hand in hand for me. We shouldn't really separate them. Perhaps what I was trying to say before about suspending judgement, is more about being open to judgement, to different perspectives and viewpoints and this happens much easier, quicker and more naturally in play situations. Higher education as I mentioned earlier is about making new discoveries through rigorous research, playing with ideas, possibilities and impossibilities and sharing the outcomes for the social good. Discoveries are shared through publications and conferences as well as teaching and "infecting" others. If we would accept that research is a playful process, how can teaching not be? Transforming our teaching into stimulating learning experiences can have a real impact on our students and the wider academic community and society as a whole but also on us as individuals.

Michelle: Can you give me any examples of playful learning in action, where it's happening, how it happens?

Chrissi: In my own practice I can't stop being playful. It's part of who I am as a practitioner. I think I am one of those rebels I mentioned earlier... I take risks. How else can we push the boundaries? Playing it safe is not an option if we want to learn and make discoveries, I think. I am an academic developer, so I work with academics and other colleagues who teach or support learning to help them enhance their teaching practices. For me it is very important to model practices that are less common or novel in their disciplines and open their eyes and minds to new possibilities. This means trying new things, experimenting; playing with ideas and creating safe spaces for these things to happen within a community. I think we all become more adventurous when we feel that it is ok to do so and when we feel safe. So creating supporting relationships is really vital and encouraging playful experimentation.

About two and a half years ago, I joined Manchester Metropolitan University and I introduced the use of LEGO® on one of our modules as part of a teaching qualification for academics. It triggered both vivid interest and some opposition. Of course we don't do things intentionally to upset people, but when we do things that are very different, we can generate acute reactions. However, if you are convinced that something is of value and can work, I think you need to persist and continue. You take criticism on board, of course, to refine your approach and find ways to bring people in. Research into our own teaching practice is a really powerful strategy to get the evidence of how a specific intervention worked and was experienced but also the value it had for students or colleagues. And as research is peer reviewed when disseminated this will strengthen the validity of what we do. It might even change colleagues' minds, at least some of them. I would suggest considering adopting an evidence-based approach when introducing playful learning so that the body of evidence can grow and we can all learn from it and make playful learning more effective. We do need to acknowledge also that playful learning is not going to solve all our problems. It is really one of the many strategies and pedagogical tools that academics could have in their toolkit. Variety is the spice of life, we say. It is also the spice of learning. It is also useful to remember that playful learning is not just about play and having fun, it also opens our mind to new possibilities and helps us make surprising connections, it helps us problem-solve but also identify problems. It can, and will of course, make us also feel quite uncomfortable and challenged at times and bring us to an imbalance. Play takes us out of our comfort zone and we let it happen. We feel free in a way and this alters the way we think, act and interact with others but also the way we generate ideas and share them with others.



[http://igem.org/wiki/images/b/bc/Zju\\_persp\\_4.png](http://igem.org/wiki/images/b/bc/Zju_persp_4.png)

Michelle: So with LEGO®, for example, how would that happen? How would LEGO® be used in that way?



Chrissi: LEGO® is quite versatile - anybody can build something with LEGO®. and it is widely used in different contexts to achieve a wide range of educational outcomes, especially in schools. Who hasn't got some LEGO® at home? Many of us grew up with LEGO®. There is also a specific method called LEGO® Serious Play®. It started as an ideas generation method in the Business world from within the LEGO® company and is used widely for team building, strategy development, decision making and other areas but it has also entered higher education in the last few years as we have started recognising the potential of using it within learning, teaching and research as it is really versatile. The opportunities are really endless and I have used it with staff and students for learning, teaching, evaluation and research but also as an assessment aid.



The method builds on the idea that building models with our hands is actually thinking with our hands. The models we create are visual representations and rich metaphors of our ideas, thoughts, feelings and understandings. It all depends what we are trying to achieve through using these methods. We build and we share. Everybody participates and it is therefore a very democratic approach to manage participation and give everybody a voice. I am using it since 2013 at Manchester Metropolitan University and previously at the University of Salford, with staff and students.

An example from MMU comes from work I have done with my colleague Haleh Moravej, a senior lecturer in Nutritional Science from the Hollings Faculty, who asked me if we could evaluate the Nutrition 21 module in a way that would help her get rich information and deep insights about the student experience so that the outcomes could inform her module evaluation and future developments. I suggested that we could give LEGO® Serious Play® a go and she said yes. I was really happy as this enabled us to try LEGO® Serious Play® in a different educational context I had not used before and also put the method to the test. Students loved it and found it extremely valuable. The lecturer who was observing the session I facilitated also participated. The students felt that they connected with their peers so much quicker and suggested that similar activities should be introduced at the beginning of the course as well, to build community and a sense of belonging. Students often struggle when they arrive at university, and feel lonely, so introducing playful approaches like this can help them open-up and connect with peers and their tutors - I have seen that LEGO® Serious Play® really helps to share quiet personal stories and experiences that can help students get to know each other better. We have evaluated this approach with the lecturer and one student from that group and published a joint paper which you might find interesting. Since introducing LEGO® at MMU we have applied it in many different contexts and offer courses to help colleagues develop in this area. We also plan to offer external facing LEGO® for Learning workshops later this year. See [http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/cpd/external/lego\\_for\\_learning.php](http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/cpd/external/lego_for_learning.php)

Michelle: Moving beyond LEGO®, what else do playful approaches involve - art or music or what sort of things?



Chrissi: As I mentioned earlier. I can't stop being playful and am trying new things all the time. I would be bored otherwise. I use new and old technologies including everyday objects. Wool, play dough, toys, newspapers and magazines, silly hats, clothing, even pasta and many other things. Things that often lie around and we wouldn't really consider using for learning and teaching, even pots and pans. I like to recycle and upcycle stuff and use freely available resources. For me it is important to model ways of playful learning that others could easily, quickly and inexpensively adapt in their own practice. We don't all have access to expensive toys and tools so finding sustainable ways for playful learning is really important. Less is more! This is what can empower others to give playful learning a go together with experiencing the power of play as a learner first before using with their own students. You asked about music and art. I am using both. I often use music in the background during play activities. My colleague Dr Peter Gossman is passionate about using music and I would like to explore this area further. Art can be valuable for visualising concepts. I have done this with



our Creativity for Learning module and it has worked really well and colleagues felt that it helped them better understand some of the theories we looked at collaboratively and co-constructed as visual artifacts. For this we used old newspapers, balloons, crayons and other objects and the end products were really impressive visualisations of shared thinking that emerged through an iterative playful creative process. I have developed a mixed reality game called Sell your Bargains that takes place in different locations and opens up a different world of new opportunities for academics to look at their practice in a completely fresh light. Too often they are in a dull lecture theatre or seminar room and feel trapped in there. But learning happens everywhere. Even changing the surroundings can be refreshing and revitalize what we do and how. Just open the door and step outside!

The game enables them to experience multi-location playful learning and collaborative problem solving at the same time during which we also use smart devices to communicate and capture snippets from the process and journey. It works really well and I think colleagues are often surprised at what they actually get out of it and what changes playing this game triggers in their thinking and where this leads them. I have seen this happening and it is wonderful. (You can find images that could be used at [this link](#)— last pages in this album include images from the art installations mentioned above).

To view a slideshare of #creativeHE, [click here](#)

To see how technologies have been used [click here](#)

Michelle: What about digital technologies, how are they used?

Chrissi: Digital technologies are useful tools for me that we use as part of what we do. I don't say, now we are going to use our phones for examples, like I wouldn't say, now we are going to use our pens. We just use them because it makes sense to use and will either extend opportunities or create new ones and this is exciting. Especially, digital tools as we can be creative in a different way, share with others but most importantly connect with others and have these conversations and exchanges about what moves us but also challenge and be challenged and collaborate. And this is what academia is all about. Or, this is what learning is all about. And of course be playful too I think when technologies blend into the background or the fabric of learning then we really maximise on what we can achieve through these. Simple things work best, I have found. It is when we try and over-engineer things that they fall flat but, it is not easy to know what will work so again being playful and trying new things is important and showing students that we are all learning and that we can learn from each other. We all have something to contribute. For some time now, with colleagues from my own and other institutions, I have been experimenting with creating openly licensed courses and development opportunities for academics using freely available social media and learning and teaching approaches that build on collaboration ([#TLCwebinars](#) [@openfdol](#) [@byod4l](#) [@LTHEchat](#) [@fos4l](#) [#creativeHE](#)). In March this year, we offered again the open course Creativity for Learning course ([#creativeHE](#)), an informal collaboration with colleagues from different institutions Sandra Sinfield, Sue Watling, Prof. Norman Jackson and Dr Nikos Fachantidis. The 5-day version is a taster into more playful learning in a higher education context and this is why I am mentioning it here.

Michelle: What's the buzz around playful learning at the moment?

Chrissi: I think that social media has helped to spread the bug of playfulness in higher education. Many creative and playful practitioners are also open practitioners and share their work using creative commons licenses, social media and publish their research in open access journals. If education is for the public good, I think this should be default, but not sure how many would agree with me. The open education movement more generally, and how it is practised and lived really helps spread playful practices too and infect others so to speak. We all know that often innovators feel alone in their immediate surroundings and marginalised, but digital technologies, open and social practices are creating exciting opportunities to connect with others across the globe and I see this happening a lot. We are reaching out and others reach out for us. Many of the colleagues I work with and first connected in the digital world, I wouldn't perhaps meet otherwise. I really feel fortunate to have made these connections as they have led to many learning opportunities and fruitful collaborations and enrich my perspective on life, every day. Sue Beckingham is an example who has become a valuable collaborator.

Creativity used to be cool or in for many years and it still is, but I think playfulness in higher education is gaining momentum. Last year we published a [Creative Magazine around play](#) with my colleague Alison James and the help of Prof Norman Jackson. We were amazed by the volume and range of contributions we received. We had to publish the magazine in two issues. I think this says something about the current appetite for playful learning and as a result of this we set-up a [Play in HE group](#) to continue the conversations and there are further related activities in the planning stage. At MMU we operate something we call the [Greenhouse](#) since January 2014 which brings creative practitioner from across the institution together.

Michelle: What sort of research is out there on this?

Chrissi: Currently, there is not much around play for learning and teaching in a higher education context, but as I said before practitioners are emerging and share their work via social media channels and open practices. Some have started writing about their playful practices and the magazine mentioned earlier is one such example. A [Playful Learning Conference](#) will take place at MMU in July this year and the Association of National Teaching Fellows has picked a theme around Play for their [annual symposium](#) in March this year. So plenty of opportunities to find out about emerging practices, connect with others and share playful learning practices and related research.

Michelle: How do you see playful learning developing in the future?

Chrissi: Play opens new possibilities and it can invigorate learning and teaching. We often talk about the student experience but the staff experience is equally important. Could play revitalize our interest in teaching? I think the potential is there as it opens new windows into the world of learning and teaching that are definitely worth exploring. If we feel empowered and have the freedom to play with ideas and apply playful approaches in

our practice, I think that will transform how students and staff experience university and what they get out of it. But, I often hear that academics don't feel empowered to innovate and teach using less common approaches. This saddens me. We need more leaders that empower us to innovate and be bold. Our Vice Chancellor at Manchester Metropolitan University, Prof. Malcolm Press, has communicated this exact message to staff recently which I found very refreshing. I just hope that we will seize this great opportunity.

Additional question

Commissioning Editor: How does play feature in the process of developing and innovating?

Chrissi: Playing is developing, we just need to remind ourselves what helped us grow when we were children. It was play, on our own and with others. Using toys, everyday objects or nothing. Adventures in our back gardens, a little box or outside in the fields, or the playground. Often with others. But also on our own through imaginary play.

What evidence is out there that tells us that something changes fundamentally inside our brains when we become adults and that play becomes redundant or inappropriate for lifelong development? Are the barriers biological ones or do we create them ourselves? Are we confusing childish with childlike?

I would argue that play is a vital ingredient for human development. It has motivational powers and frees our minds and actions from fixed ideas and practices. We play with ideas, act them out, make mistakes and get up again and continue. Play helps us grow emotionally and socially as well. Play can bring people together, just like food, music, dance and art. Play is fuelled by our curiosity and imagination to experience and experiment that accelerate learning and development. It is a human capability and there is now a great opportunity to acknowledge this for lifelong and lifewide personal and professional development.

Through play we can also innovate as barriers become possibilities and opportunities where unconventional connections and combinations are made that we wouldn't allow ourselves to make outside the magical play circle. This free flow of ideas in multiple directions unzips our mind and boosts our confidence and capacity to innovate.

#### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank JISC for allowing publication of the transcript and Michelle Pauli for the interview.

A shorter version has been published by Jisc and is available at <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/inform-qa/learning-to-play-playing-to-learn-the-rise-of-playful-learning-in-he-25-feb-2016> I would also like to thank Prof. Norman Jackson for his interest in my work, his collaboration as well as supporting the publication of the Play Issue of Creative Academic and publishing this extended interview.

#### Lego campaigning for a mindset change in education

The 29-year-old Lego Foundation, generously funded with a quarter of Lego's post-tax profits, is beginning to flex its muscles...it has set its sights on campaigning for a mindset change in education around the world. "Our contribution to the world is to challenge the status quo by redefining play and reimagining learning," says the foundation's mission statement.

The Lego Foundation has put £4m into a play professorship at Cambridge University. The first incumbent will be chosen in April

Part of their mission involves putting £4m into a new "Lego professorship" at Cambridge University - the first incumbent will be chosen in April - and supporting an accompanying Centre for Research on Play in Education, Development and Learning (Pedal). There are more links with Harvard, MIT and other prestigious institutions. The aim is to provide an incontrovertible academic underpinning to the educational value of play, and to define more clearly what works and how to measure it, arming Lego with more evidence to support its campaigning.



Source Guardian 15/03/16

[http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/15/children-learn-play-age-eight-lego?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/15/children-learn-play-age-eight-lego?CMP=share_btn_tw)



**Editor's comment:** Coincidence is amazing and the coincidence on this occasion is having two articles from the world of fashion education. In this article Bette Bondo, a Danish fashion designer and educator provides some great insights into the way in which creativity, development, innovation and her passion feature in her ongoing life project to bring a new educational social enterprise into existence.



## Starting a Company: My Story of Creativity, Development, Achievement & Innovation

**Bette Bondo**



*Bette is the founder of The Fashion Crowd; a recent community for the fashion industry, which is still in its developmental phase. She has a PG Cert in Academic Practice (Distinction) from Manchester Metropolitan University, and used to work as visiting lecturer and programme leader in Istituto Marangoni in London, Milan and Shanghai. She's currently based in Copenhagen.*

### My sense of what creativity is

A lot has been said and written about creativity, and it is normally agreed that it's 'the use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness'<sup>1</sup>. This means that creativity is, at the same time, the initial idea and ability of imagining the future, the process itself, and the end result. This makes it something very dynamic, where process is implicit, and where development is both part of the first phase of an initial idea, as well as the journey to get to an outcome. What makes the creative process interesting and different to other processes, is the developmental and discovering nature of the experience once you embark on the journey without knowing where it will take you.





If I was going to describe with my own words, what creativity is, I would say, it's a steam engine, where the steam has to be channelled into a form in order to be let out so that the engine doesn't explode. This is essentially, how I've always experienced creativity. What has changed, though, in the arc of my 35-year life, are the motivational drivers behind the desire to create and the understanding of the many forms a creative outcome can have.

## My Pathway through Life

In 2000, after graduating from high school, and at the age of 20, I went to study Fashion Design in Marangoni, Milan, as I perceived myself to be a 'Creative' and had discovered my love for fashion. I had spent my childhood dressing up; in Kindergarten, at home, and when visiting my grandmother, and otherwise, like most other kids, I would draw, read and cycle.

In 2009, at the age of 29, I was offered a teaching job in Marangoni, London, teaching Fashion Design. Back then, I was very inspired by writing, and remembered another childhood passion of mine: reading. I discovered that designing a collection and writing was very similar in its creation. You find a mood with a message that you want to transmit, build the complex constellation with little snippets of input - voice, characters, plot for the writing; and colours, styling and mood for the collection - and make it into a whole. That was an interesting discovery, as the formats and tools are different, but a written piece is also a physical outcome and something tangible.

But back to the teaching job I got offered. At first, I accepted it, as it was an opportunity to try new things and challenges, as well as moving to vibrant London. When I think back, that was my aspiration. It proved to be much more, though, and it has actually been one of the biggest eye-openers in my life so far, as I discovered how hugely creative working with other people can be. Somehow, I had just never thought about that, as, being a Fashion designer, I had always been very focused on the end product, even when I was making it with others. With teaching, the focus was on the actual interaction and collaboration between teacher and students, which is not a tangible outcome, and it challenged my paradigm of creativity, as I had come from a different, more one-dimensional understanding.

From being a tutor, I became a Programme Leader, and then an Academic Coordinator. Five years passed working in the same school but in various campuses in London, Milan, and Shanghai, and then I had an idea. More accurately, an idea didn't just come into my head, rather, I gathered many little experiences, impressions and information from over the past years and put them into a constellation that ended up in an idea. The idea had developed slowly over a long period of time in a similar way to what Steven Johnson calls a 'slow hunch'<sup>(2)</sup>. This taught me that 'having an idea' is a process rather than a moment of bright inspiration, and it isn't very different from the creative process of writing and designing described above. The university, I used to teach in, is one of the best in the world, but during my travels in countries like Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, China and Korea, I had met many hopeful, young designers, who didn't have the same access to high-quality education as I had experienced. I thought that there had to be a better way of providing good quality fashion education that was accessible to young designers anywhere, and I slowly began to see how I might make a difference to the lives of young designers.

## Where Good Ideas Come From

Steven Johnson

One pattern is what I call the 'slow hunch', that breakthrough ideas almost never come in a moment of great insight and a sudden stroke of inspiration. Most important ideas take a long time to evolve and they spend a long time dormant in the background.



It isn't until the idea has had 2 or 3 years, sometimes 10 or 20 years to mature that it suddenly becomes accessible and useful to you in a certain way. And this is partially because good ideas normally come out of collisions of smaller ideas so that they form something bigger than themselves.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NuGRZGDbPFU>

## Turning Point

This realisation became a trigger for me to make a fundamental change: I had discovered a new purpose that now inspired me. In 2014, I moved back to my native city Copenhagen, and decided to pursue my dream of building a platform, where good education with a community feeling, like that of being in a fashion school, were accessible to young people interested in learning and improving themselves - regardless of their financial background. 'The Fashion Crowd' was born (<http://www.thefashioncrowd.com>), and was launched in May 2015 as a blog. This choice of format was based on the ease of setting it up, the global reach, and quickly 'going-to-market' to test the idea.

The second phase of building the actual community was initiated in January 2016, after meeting my business partner in IT. It's still in the developmental phase, and we're very far from being ready to launch the platform. Every day, we work very hard, and pray we will make it. Being in the middle of it, I sometimes forget, how every single day is great - despite the hard work and insecurity, it's fantastic having such a strong purpose.

## My Developmental Process for Starting my Company

Again I'm astonished to discover the similarities of building a company with the creative process of fashion and writing. Doing a start-up is a developmental journey, where you're not 100% sure of the outcome, nor how you will get there. Identical to the creative process - no difference at all. As an entrepreneur starting a new company, there are an incredible number of things you need to know and learn and then apply. Among others, I've had to learn Wordpress for my blog, SEO for a good ranking on search engines, how to make budgets and financial planning, and how to pitch your idea to an investor just to mention a few. In order to be more prepared, I enrolled in a part-time BA two years ago in Business Administration. I'm a firm believer that everything can be learnt, and I have become much more comfortable with the business side of things. But, when I get up in the morning, or feel my mind wandering off, it's still a visual lay-out, an interesting post or a technical feeling of belonging on our platform that I ponder. My mind is still naturally drawn to certain things, but in trying to build a company, I would literally get up in the morning, and tell my brain and creativity what we would be working on for the day, and apply it to revenue models, marketing strategies, and what else was on the program. That's a quite mechanical way of working, and less playful and careless compared to how I've previously used my creativity.

There are of course also certain things that I don't know as it's impossible to learn everything, this is where partnership or external people come in. When I set out on this journey I knew I wanted a business partner in IT, and I spent a couple of months and many coffee dates finding him. What I learnt from the first time of having my own company was that I would never do it alone again. Quite simply, it was too boring, and I didn't have all the necessary skills to make a successful company. My net-

work has provided other important contacts, and I've benefitted from help with SEO, legal advice, backup of database and many other things. The number one key skill, I need to master now, is how I spend my time best, and what issues are life-death matters in our company and have to be done first. This is the messy, complex and never ending nature of development. It's not the neat and tidy execution of a plan on a piece of paper, as described above, and here I could best describe my mind as 'a confused chicken running around in circles'.

The purpose, I feel doing The Fashion Crowd, is exactly the same as I felt, when I did my own menswear brand at the age of 26. It was everything I dreamt of and cared about, and this sort of 'call' felt almost religious. Today, with a more multi-directional view on life, there are other things, I care about too, but I would still die to see The Fashion Crowd succeed and bring unique value to users around the world making life-long learning in fashion accessible and connecting people in a supportive networked community celebrating talent and creativity. This is today my motivational driver, and my goal is once again a physical outcome in the shape of an IT platform that enables people to connect and share. But it's also a relational outcome in the form of growing and facilitating a vibrant sharing community with incredibly many benefits, which are born, when people come together and find themselves on a mutual journey. This is when the magic happens, and today I find inspiration in making something useful and valuable, which, in a certain sense, is also very beautiful, though not only aesthetically but in a set of relationships and in the ability of the enterprise to improve the lives of people.



Hey,  
what are we working  
on today??!!

## My Perspective on Innovation

Bringing anything into existence is an achievement but is it an innovation? In my view innovation is a sophisticated variant of creativity. What they have in common is that they are both inventive and novel, but Innovation exceeds creativity in its requirement of having to be useful. Creativity doesn't have to meet this specification, which makes it less serious and more playful. Usefulness is of course a matter of perspective, and with six billion people in the world, it's likely that your creation, whatever it is, is useful to someone. There's still a long way to go, though, in creating something that's truly meaningful and valuable to society, and where you normally speak of innovation.

So, in building an IT platform and network to deliver and support these forms of education and social learning poses the question, are we actually being innovative? Well, it's much too early to say: in any case it's for others to say whether what we accomplish is an innovation. Achieving something meaningful is the most important thing and achieving the scalability that would justify the claim of an innovation is not so important to me, although it would of course be an immense accomplishment. What I can say is that we're trying to make something different to what currently exists so hopefully one day it will be useful, a part from being just novel. Let's wait and see.

## Importance of creative education

Entrepreneurs are highly praised in today's society and if we really do think that entrepreneurship and fostering those skills and traits is essential for economic prosperity in the future, then I would like to point out the importance of creative education in its various forms, as a very useful preparation for tomorrow's Start-Ups. Learning the creative process is about becoming comfortable with an uncertain journey, and knowing you have the skills to find a solution. When you've done it many times, it's no big deal anymore. You simply know, there's always a solution, you know you will find it, and you also roughly know how, and how long it's likely to take. I don't know anything about IT and Tech, and I will rely on other people for co-creating something, but it's important for me to identify what I don't know, and find the snippets in the shape of people, skills, connections etc.

As a teacher, which is just as noble a job as being an entrepreneur, although much less valued, I will never tire of speaking about the importance of education as the backbone of our society and individual happiness. Education should be a human right, but there's still a long way to go in achieving this aim, though new shapes of cheaper offers are seeing the light of day and in new and shorter formats. Information and communication technologies offer incredible opportunities and creatives are drawn to it, regardless of their background, as a fertile place for creation and their creativity.

1 Google search, creativity

2 Stephen Johnson Where good ideas come from  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NugRZGDbPFU>

### Where Good Ideas Come From

Steven Johnson

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# Ecology of Developing an Innovative On-line Course

Norman Jackson



*Norman leads the Creative Academic network and resources hub and is Commissioning Editor for Creative Academic Magazine*

Over the last few years I have begun to see learning, development, creativity and achievement as the product of individuals tussling with the problems, challenges, perplexities and opportunities that emerge through living their lives. It's a highly contextualised and situated view learning in the world a person inhabits and it is very much in tune with Carl Rogers' wonderful ecological view of personal creativity as, 'the emergence in action of a novel relational product growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life' (Rogers 1961). Where the achievement, or product, brought about by an individual's creativity can be many things for example - physical or virtual objects, processes, performances, or their own learning and development as a person. I am developing a conceptual tool formed around the idea of a learning ecology to help me understand and explain my understandings of the way it works<sup>(1)</sup>.

A few years ago I had the good fortune to be invited to study how a university had tried to change through a three year strategic change programme that sought to engage many of its teaching and support staff to engage in innovation<sup>(2)</sup>. This article is based on interview transcripts of two colleagues working together to try to bring about an educational innovation. Linda (not her real name) a senior lecturer, with expertise in the fashion industry, works collaboratively with Mike (not his real name), an instructional designer from the university's central e-Development Centre (EDC) collaborated over about twelve months to develop an innovative on-line course comprising 12 Professional Development Units (PDU's) for people working in the fashion industry. Linda had never designed an on-line course before so she was venturing into entirely new territory as all pioneers do.

## *Linda's story*

I obviously used the [market] research that we had done. Discussed with the head of school and the other school management what the outcomes of this research were and the headings that we would put together to begin to develop the short courses. Then I had to find external people to help with writing content. Obviously I had to start somewhere. My strongest feeling was that I needed to provide a framework for the people to work with. So I began to think about that before getting anyone external involved. I worked with Mike in the e-Development Centre quite extensively on trying to develop this effective way of delivering taught modules online and trying to put together a framework for the externals to use when putting together their teaching material. Basically I wrote most of the unit descriptors, the sort of bible for how these would be developed in terms of teaching material and then provided that usually to the external [person].



I found these [external] people [using] my own contacts and appealing to people's better nature because I think the payment that they were receiving wasn't necessarily equivalent to freelance pay that they would normally... But I worked very closely with them. They came into the university at certain strategic times throughout the development and a

lot of email communication took place with them sending me materials and me checking it and going back to them with feedback. Really, really resource heavy actually. Really time consuming for me in terms of head space and having to pull myself out of my daily operation, job, my normal responsibilities and doing this on top of that.





I was getting six hours relief from my normal duties. Six hours doesn't reflect in any way, shape or form the amount of time that I put into developing these twelve short courses that were to be accredited by the university all at once with externals helping for some of them and not for others. I was doing a considerable amount of reading through materials and feeding back during my own time in the evenings and weekends. Without that, it would not have happened. But I felt very, very strongly at the time that these are winners. There is a market for them and if we can market them in the right way I always felt they would be successful. I believed in the framework that I developed and that it was an effective, clear and understandable way to go through a short course for anyone who is working and [wants learning] that is relevant to their industry.

It was a constant battle because I always felt as though I was having to push other departments and other areas of the university to give me answers to questions that I had. It always felt as though the answers didn't exist at that point in time, but I needed them. I needed to know answers to certain questions and I needed sometimes some kind of framework for me to be working within and none existed. I eventually got a hold of the guidelines for developing professional development units from our quality department, but I had no knowledge of that prior to poking and pushing and constantly asking for that information. I was actually quite aggrieved at the time that that existed and I hadn't been alerted to the fact that it existed before I began to develop the courses, because surely that would have helped. Some staff development for me would have been highly appreciated.



Once I had actually got past that initial stage of how do I put these first drafts of the units together, things began to roll and I began to discover who I could at least go and say 'Look I have this question, who can I ask? Who is going to answer it for me? I need answers.' I think I probably began perhaps to become a little bit annoying for some people because I kept saying 'I need an answer' and 'I need to know.'

Once I had actually got past that initial stage of how do I put these first drafts of the units together, things began to roll and I began to discover who I could at least go and say 'Look I have this question, who can I ask? Who is going to answer it for me? I need answers.' I think I probably began perhaps to become a little bit annoying for some people because I kept saying 'I need an answer' and 'I need to know.'



Some of the most difficult issues, I would say, were managing the externals because some of them didn't have a huge experience of teaching.....it was very difficult to find people that could actually do this with me. I chose them based on their expertise in the areas that I wanted the content developed around. So I was having to sort of almost coach them in learning and teaching as we were going, plus trying to help them understand how their material was

going to be used online and the amount of discussion on text that was required of them rather than just bullet point teaching. So that was another challenge that came later.

I was having to be a subject person - most of these [PDU's] are in an area that I can apply my expertise to. I was having to be a learning and teaching person and an online education person, working with Mike and others from the EDC. Initially it was a couple of conversations that I was going to be doing this and understanding that a really clear framework would need to be put in place and how online teaching and learning would be different

to in-class teaching and learning. They, I guess, explained to me the most important aspects to consider in on-line leaning. Then I gradually spent more and more time with the people from EDC, particularly Mike, and asked for their feedback on what I was developing and what the externals were developing with me. They got more and more involved in it because they really believed in what I was doing once the momentum got going. They sort of started to understand what I was trying to achieve from my perspective and then they saw the potential in that and gave me more and more time. Their time was then really important to the success of the project because without them helping me so much, I wouldn't have achieved the outcomes. Basically I felt like I had made some friends there and they were going to help me get through this if no one else was. So they were incredibly supportive. It wasn't uncommon for Mike and I to both be online at 11 o'clock at night talking back and forth and looking at the units online and discussing areas of the unit that were strong or not so strong, that needed a bit of work, a bit of development, changing things, 'What do you think of this?' It wasn't uncommon for us to be doing that in the evenings because of our own personal motivations.



That does it. I've had enough!!



[The development project] was a huge learning curve for me and because at certain times I was quite vocal about the fact that I wasn't getting answers and I was quite persistent and tenacious about sorting things out and getting through this project. I was just tenacious in the fact that I will get this done and I will find the help somewhere and someone will give me the answers I need because I have to do this... and there were I think two occasions when... and I am being really honest now. Two times in the year when I said 'I have had enough. No one else is as driven as I am about completing these PDUs so I give up.' You know, those moments of kind of this is just so frustrating and no one else seems to be as bothered as I am so why am I doing it. You know? Actually this is only my own personal motivation that is making this happen, so why am I so worried? But the next day was a new day and I continued to work on it because I

know I am not really going to give up on doing this. I was venting frustrations and trying to I guess not get attention but get people to respond to me and find a way through. But yeah, there were two occasions at which I got to that point.

### *Mike's story*

I worked with a number of academics to help them develop their on-line courses targeted at the professional market - the concept is for entirely distance and entirely online professional development units, short 12 week credit bearing units. One of the people I worked with was Linda in the Fashion Department. She had a fairly good idea of how she wanted to structure the units in terms of how the content would be delivered and also in terms of some of the learning activities that the students would participate in. Where I came in was then to look at how that actually translates into online content, how you get it online, how you guide the students through the materials, how you make it accessible, how you stage and present particular events. Because on-line units have events such as web conferences that happen two or three times during the duration of the twelve weeks, and there's points where the students are asked to then communicate with a peer partner and they might have a one-to-one tutorial with their tutor.

So I went into discussions with Linda particularly at first over the unit that she wrote herself. She was at the forefront of this area of development: she was the first person [in the university] to actually get a unit developed. I looked at what originally was a word document map of how she wanted the activities to occur, and sat down and discussed with her how that might be better structured in terms of the activity points that happen throughout it, where you might place the assessment tasks, like the formative and final assessment tasks. And then, because what we'd worked on as a team was getting a look and feel and format for how the content goes online, I worked with her word document plans and putting that up online, putting the content in the correct places. Together we created the detailed design and content Linda typing directly the stuff online or I took ideas

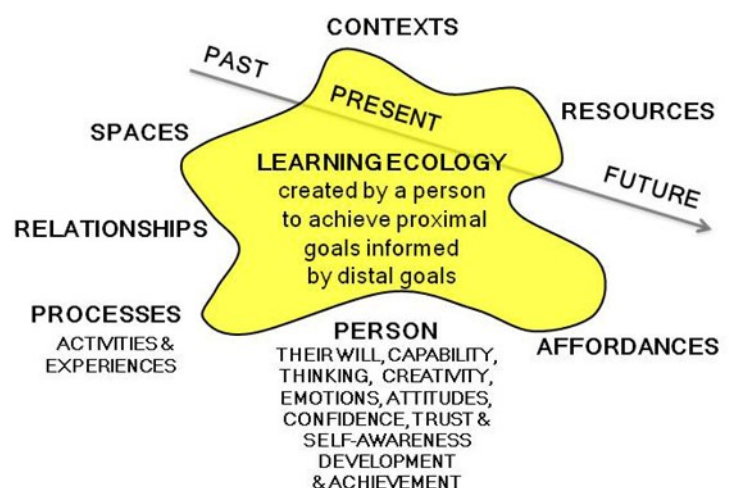
of hers and put it up for her, putting the online tools into the correct place. And between us, moving things within her unit until it felt like there was a structure that would actually guide the students through structured study. And the work on Linda's unit kept going on for a long time because that was the one we were really trying to refine down as an exemplar. So it was a highly co-creative process and the work we did then helped us to establish a template and a guide for how other PDUs could be developed and written ...which has proved very useful.

### Ecological perspectives on learning & creativity

The first point to make is that the two people involved were experienced educational professionals working in a work environment that was familiar to them. Their collaborative learning project was to not only learn how to change their own practice in line with the goals of their project, it was also to learn how to bring about change in their university's systems and practices. This dual purpose is typical of the more significant work projects that people undertake in universities. They receive institutional support in order to develop new ways of working that can then be implemented in other parts of the organisation. They act as pioneers and pathfinders challenging assumptions about 'this is the way we do things here' and finding ways around, under and over the barriers to progressing their ideas.

The narratives of the two most important people involved in this particular developmental project, reveal the wonderfully productive and supportive relationships between colleagues from different parts of an organisation who share the same vision. They formed a team of two although other colleagues from the EDC were also involved and both interacted in their own ways with the university and the world outside the university.

**Figure 1** Diagram summarising the essential features of a learning ecology<sup>(1)</sup>.



Using Figure 1 as a descriptive framework we might elaborate the main features of Linda's learning ecology. The project lasted about 12 months. During this period of *time* Linda created *space* for herself, with the help of additional *resources* provided by the university (funding to buy out her teaching time), to engage in a developmental process. She had no prior experience in designing on-line courses so this space required her to explore, research, problem solve, design and experiment. It was clearly a space that was betwixt and between her past (non-existent knowledge and expertise) and her future capability in the area of on-line learning developed through the project.

The university provided the key *affordance* through its strategic development programme which set out a strategic vision for change and also provided funding for staff who wanted to contribute to this change. There were also other affordances in the environments of the two participants for example, Linda's network of professional expertise and the research that Mike and his team had undertaken to create a framework for the design of on-line learning.

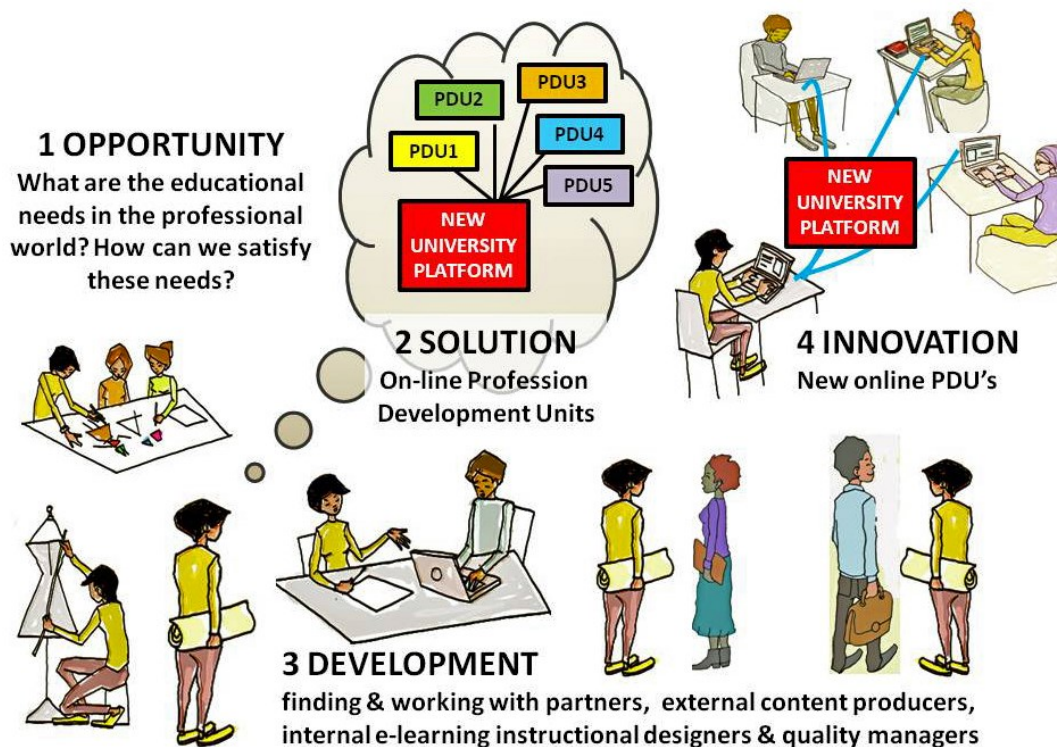
While Linda had the vision and experience to see the value in developing a suite of on-line courses for professionals in her industrial sector, she lacked the expertise to be able to achieve this goal by herself. Mike's organisational role was to help staff who wanted to develop new forms of e-learning. By combining their expertise and interests both participants in this developmental project were able to contribute ideas,



knowledge and expertise to the process that enabled the new on-line courses to be produced together with the knowledge and capabilities necessary to help other members of the organisation achieve similar goals in future. In other words, development gained through the project resulted in enhanced capability at the individual and organisational levels.

The narratives are grounded in the contexts of two people involved in the project: *Linda's work context* and her desire to bring about change in her professional field and *Mike's work context* and desire to help colleagues across the university to adapt and develop their practice in order to enable the organisation to change. Both of these contexts are situated within departmental and organisational contexts which at that time, were highly supportive of staff who were attempting to innovate in line with the organisation's strategic objectives.

**Figure 2** Summary of the process involved in bringing the new on-line course into existence



Both Linda and Mike had clear proximal and distal goals. Both wanted to develop the best possible on-line course. In Linda's case her proximal goal was set in her distal goal of developing her professional skills as a higher education teacher. While Mike's distal goal was to develop himself as an e-learning professional. Both were intrinsically driven by the interests and beliefs in the value and potential of what they were trying to accomplish.

Although the *process* was task-oriented significant new learning and personal development were gained in the process. Linda's *learning trajectory* shows that she knew little about designing for the on-line environment at the start, but with the help of Mike and other colleagues she designed and later facilitated an on-line course that became a model for best practice within the institution.

Linda's narrative reveals important *relationships* some of which enabled some of which hindered or mediated the innovation - but all had to be accommodated and worked with. The most important relationship was with her colleague Mike and his colleagues in the EDC. This provided her with access to the expertise she needed to learn how to develop a high quality on-line course. Learning was a bi-product of a collaborative design process.

Her relationships included people in her professional network with knowledge and expertise (*resources*) who provided her with content for the on-line courses. She developed tools and frameworks (*mediating artefacts*) to enable other people to contribute to what she was trying to achieve. She in turn made use of the tools and frameworks (*mediating artefacts*) that the EDC had developed to support the design of on-line courses.

The narrative reveals something of the dynamics, messiness and emotion of developing new social practice that is significantly different to what has been before. Anyone who has tried to bring about significant change in a university will recognise the elements of the story. Linda highlights a number of tensions as she encountered resistance or barriers to what she wanted to achieve. In some areas of organisational practice her innovation conflicted with current practice. Such areas of local contentious practice are common where bottom-up innovation encounters structures and procedures that were never designed for new practice emerging through innovation. These areas have to be resolved often with the aid of independent brokers who have the power and authority to overcome the barriers to change. Such people helped Linda to complete her work and without their help she might not have succeeded.

The narratives also reveal the wonderful effects of creative collaboration by talented people who trust, respect, support and understand each other. Their relationship did more than simply combine knowledge and expertise - it stimulated ideas and helped Linda sustain her motivation particularly at difficult times.

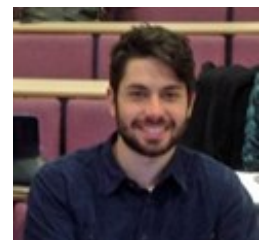
**Linda:** I think due to the fact that I was doing something new allowed a level of creativity yes, I think when you are developing any aspect of the curriculum you are being 'creative', you have the feeling that you have the opportunity to 'shape' what is available for people/students to learn and you are 'creating' that learning experience. I personally find that a creative process. It isn't entirely without edges though, there are boundaries and quality considerations to work within but still, there is room within the set frameworks to create the richness of content and the teaching and learning strategies that encourage an inspirational learning process. I am a creative at heart and maybe that is something else that is a driver for me when doing the types of projects that I involve myself in!

**Mike:** I definitely think there was creativity in the work I did. This creativity was applied in different ways. For the development of the platform, there was a collaborative creative process in coming up with a combination of design components that would make the VLE both attractive and useable. This was a process generated out of looking critically at what other providers do for similar provision and deciding what aspects or changes we would like to apply to our own work. There is also a creative process that goes into looking at classroom teaching practices and re-imagining them as online learning events. Again, this is usually a collaborative process between myself and the academic subject expert such as the work I did with Linda.

Engaging in innovation can be a very lonely business and it's clear that Linda was on the point of giving up on more than one occasion but she didn't. With the support of her colleague she continued. The narrative reveals her will to succeed and her agency to imagine, implement and manage a strategy to achieve her goals with the help of people who were more knowledgeable than she was about some aspects of the project. In the process of achieving her goal she developed her capability and performance. At the end of the process of development Linda could demonstrate that not only had she achieved her goal to create an innovative new course to engage entirely new markets, she had also developed herself in the process: she now knew how to design a high quality on-line course, which she couldn't do at the start of her project. Innovation not only leads to achievement it fundamentally changes us - we innovate ourselves and through our new found abilities and confidence we are not afraid to do it again.

## Acknowledgements

The wonderful cartoons were drawn by talented illustrator Andres Ayerbe



## Source:

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# Innovating through Role Play: enabling students to be more creative

Birthe Lund and Maiken Lykke Pedersen



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*Maiken Lykke Pedersen is a freelance teacher at University College Nordjylland. She is passionate about creating new and useful education materials and motivated to construct creative learning settings, where students use their own voice in the classroom and are able to imagine, develop, think and act on ideas to create*

## Pedagogic challenge

Educating students to become skilled and competent professionals at universities and colleges means acquiring systems of knowledge that formalizes the skill on which their work depends, as professionals are expected to develop abstract, formal knowledge, linked to their professional field. Academic knowledge legitimizes professional work, and this is often linked to the values of rationality, logic and science <sup>(1)</sup>. Such academic abstract knowledge might be universally important, although the academic level varies within professions. In Denmark, learners who are seeking admittance to a profession by law are expected to be *innovative, creative and entrepreneurial*, besides having *cross professional skills*. The students are further expected to become learning professionals in order to continue to develop their professional skills and competences during their future career. These demands provide distinctive pedagogical challenges to the educators belonging to different professions!

The expectation that professionals will be *innovative, creative and entrepreneurial*, challenges established understanding of professional's knowledge and skill base and its mono disciplinary cultural perspective. Professionals are characterized by occupying jobs that need specific skills guaranteed by their diploma, and traditionally it has been the professionals and their societies who - to a high degree, have defined the skills that are needed to tackle problems and create solutions in the domain. Inter-professional relationships have generally been absent from the ideology of professionalism, when it comes to "assert the supremacy of the 'true' professions of the newcomers" <sup>(2 p.4)</sup>.

Several newly formed professional disciplines either do not have a strong *professional identity* (being newcomers) or a specific professional knowledge base. Educating students to be a part of a new profession which does not yet have a strong professional identity is a challenge faced by educators in all emerging professional fields. How are such students to recognize the need of others professional knowledge in common problem-solving? From a theoretical pedagogical point of view this is intriguing, but how is the pedagogical challenge to be addressed in an educational context, when educators must fulfill these new expectations?

This article is based on an experience in which the authors were invited to lecture a class in which these pedagogic issues and challenges were present.

## Challenging students' folk pedagogy

By being a researcher in the field of innovative pedagogy (Birthe Lund) and then being faced with 25 students from a professional high school it was clear, from reading the students' body language, that the subject did not interest them. Students did not think much of the idea of 'professional identity' and even less about the 'development of inter- professional skills'. The idea seemed to be very abstract and the majority did not understand why it was relevant to them. Birthe and Maiken (a very skilled teacher assistant and graduate student) soon realized that the planned lectures did not achieve what was expected. This created a strong motivation to re-think how we could make the subjects meaningful and interesting to the students?



We had several disadvantages, from a pedagogical point of view - we did not know the class, the profession or the learning environment. But we also thought that our lack of knowledge might also be advantageous as it gave us the courage to try a more radical pedagogical approach. As guest teachers we should not worry about grading the students or deal with “disturbing” pre-understanding of students giftedness, personalities or life history, and felt we were free to explore the “beautiful risk of education” <sup>(3)</sup>.



Traditional methods and forms of education maintain the assumption that the theoretical aspect of learning is a main priority; where new knowledge is developed by transferring it from the teacher to the students. Such approaches also exist in Denmark and such ways of thinking might still be deeply rooted in both students and teachers, referred to as: folk pedagogy as J- Bruner <sup>(4)</sup> states: “For any innovations that you, as a “proper” pedagogical theorist, may wish to introduce will have to compete with, replace, or otherwise modify the folk theories that already guide both teachers and pupil”. So introduction of an innovation in teaching practice will necessarily involve changing the folk psychological and folk pedagogical theories of teachers and students. Any choice of pedagogical practice implies a conscious or subconscious conception of the learner and this may, in time, be adopted by him or her as the appropriate way of thinking about the learning process. A choice of pedagogy inevitably communicates a conception of the learning process and the learner. What would a pedagogy look like if one intends to create lectures that challenge students' existing folk pedagogy and lets students explore a new pedagogical style in order to create interest in the subject, at the same time evoking the courage to experiment with creating knowledge in new ways to explore the unknown phenomenon

and develop professional knowledge and cross professional skills?

## Pedagogical methods and goals

Professionals often learn on the job, as their work entails engagement in a succession of problems or projects they have to learn about. We decided to transfer this everyday experience into the class room, by inventing a kind of role play - without having much experience of this field. Our intention was to engage students to acting out the problem they were supposed to learn about. How could we then teach the students to experience how and why professionals might benefit from collaborating and knowledge sharing? We had several meetings to discuss the formality and didactics of role play in order to develop to a more inventive way of learning

During participation in a role play we expected the student to experience the contrast between theory and practice, public knowledge and personal knowledge as well as the different types of knowledge and modes of cognition and emotions involved in their performance. We set up the following theoretical principals for the innovative pedagogy to evolve:

- \* **‘Learning by acting out (doing)’**, Students must gain knowledge of other professionals and develop a kind of cross professional knowledge by being *involved in problem-solving* by taking the role of a professional or a client, and exploring new ideas and knowledge from their world perspective. This experience would stimulate reflective thinking, when trying to solve a relevant demanding problem (defined by us). Consequently the student might then recognize they lacked the knowledge they needed to solve the problem, thereby stimulating them to define, seek and acquire the knowledge they needed .

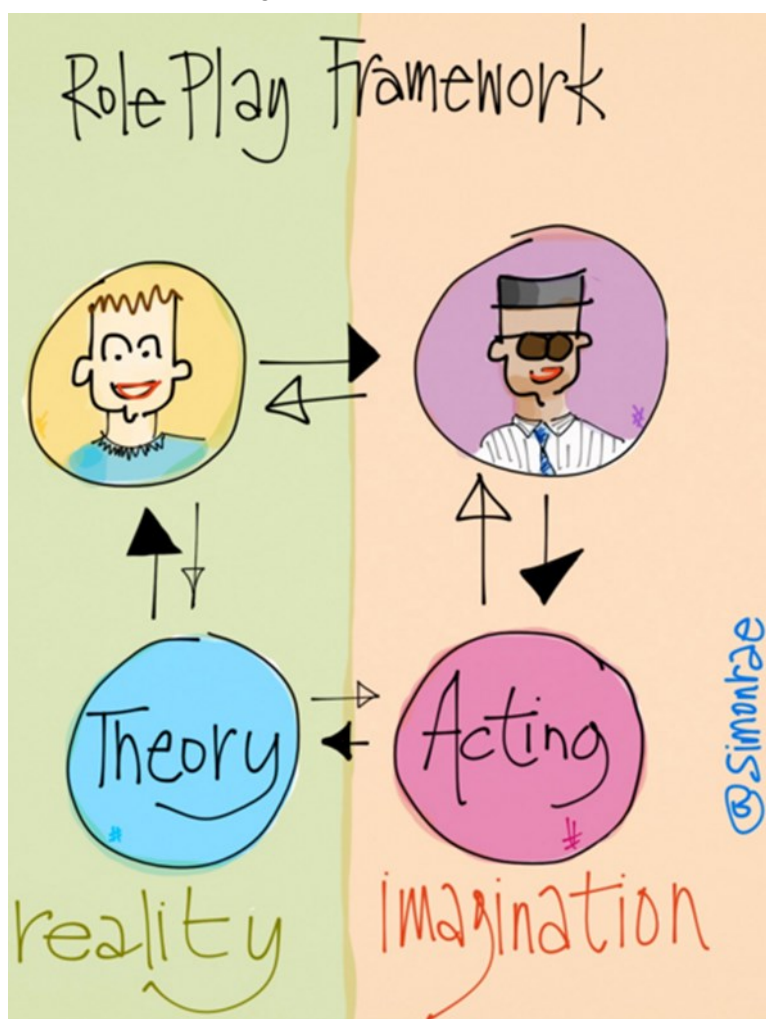
- \* **An accommodative learning philosophy, referring to a restructuring of already established mental schemes, in order to stimulate creativity.** Accommodative learning consequently is demanding, as it breaks with established habits and understanding. Accommodative learning is often characterized by anxiety, bewilderment and confusion, and requires a certain amount of strength of the participants <sup>(5)</sup> When the new schemes are established, the character of the learning changes in a decisive way. What is needed of the students is then to let go of the knowledge already established. (This might include transformation of knowledge schemes referring to students concepts of learning and understanding of what count as is relevant knowledge)
- \* **Awareness of emotional learning theory,** assuming that students need to be emotionally challenged in order to be engaged and creative <sup>(6)</sup>. Participating in a role-play may challenge some students mental schemes and understanding and the method itself might lead to resistance or anxiety.
- \* **A social perspective,** that prescribe the students' skills to perform in teams, interact, and collaborate and share knowledge, both within their teams and by other team members as well. (If they could or were not willing to collaborate the role play was at risk of failing).

So, we were theoretically fully aware of the risk we were taking by adopting this experimental approach to learning, in which a big challenge is related to the teacher's willingness to run this risk of being prepared to fail. We decided to accept the risk and set about creating a learning environment that was explorative and based on collaboration - a setting which gave the students the courage to experiment and change established roles as students.

## Role-play

The students agreed that a new pedagogy was needed in order to motivate them to engage with the subject, and they willingly agreed to participate in the creation of a new learning environment in order to solve the problem. We pointed out the experiment would require their willingness to act and play, and the openness to be challenged by their peers. We were fully convinced that participation in role play would be both entertaining and educational, and we adopted the role of play managers: a role that was not to be questioned in order to minimize students' insecurity.

Our point of departure in the role play was the case of a boy who had committed a crime at the age of 15. We prepared a journal, based on a real case, containing statements made about the case by different professionals involved and this was provided to the students. We intended students to visualize how the different statements created a holistic picture of the boy's situation in order to communicate and create an understanding of his problems so that decisions could be made and actions taken that were more likely to prevent further criminal actions. This is a normal procedure in a welfare state where most professionals are employed and educated by the state. We allocated roles to the students like the boy and his parents and organised the remaining students into different roles, each with their own professional identity and functional role i.e. doctors, teachers, lawyers and social workers.



As preparation for the role play students in groups of four selected a specific professional role in order to understand the knowledge base, expectations and privileges of that particular profession. For example four students examined the role of the lawyer. They were not informed that the knowledge they developed later would be used in the role play. When some of the students took on the role of judge, they had to seek more specific knowledge of a lawyer in the role of a judge. Being called to court, they had to be actively involved in the proceedings and therefore prepared themselves for their role in court.

In the context of the specific problem we had set, each professional team, had to:

- \* **Explore the professional knowledge of “their” profession** being able to answer the question -What characterizes the professions occupation and the professions knowledge?
- \* **Collaborate with other professionals.** For example, could the teachers call the social workers into a meeting to access the topic about the boy’s family issues?
- \* **Take the role of a practising professional and act on solutions** to how they as professionals in the roles could contribute to the solution of the boy’s problems from this profession’s knowledge base and juridical rules?



The role-play was performed over several hours. As play leaders we delivered a formal letter informing the boy, his parent and other professionals, that they had to attend a court hearing. We then transformed the classroom into a court room, and following the procedures of a real court, all stakeholders in the case were called to give evidence and opinion. The students were given time to prepare their case and each professional team was called to give evidence in order to clarify the boys role in the crime. By the end of the role play, the boy was judged. Some students got so emotionally and intellectually involved in this process, that they afterwards continued to blame themselves, that they were unable to defend the boy in a professional way, which caused the boy to be convicted.

After the role play had finished we had a whole group discussion and a lecture in which we combined the theory of inter-professional collaboration and professional identity within the context of the scenario. We shared reflections of the benefits of role-play and this way of learning and the students’ own experiences of the process.

## Responses and challenges

Our involvement as observers and teachers demonstrated to us that the role play was a relevant and worthwhile education experience. We experienced a stimulating atmosphere, where students were engaged and involved, they participated in appropriate dialogue and intense collaboration, and they were immersed and interested in the proceedings. Some students expressed the view that it had been an enjoyable and rich learning experience and they preferred this way of learning to listening to a presentation. Furthermore, participants believed that the learning outcome of developing knowledge and understanding of professional practices and processes had been addressed. The students stated that they had gained new insights in how many different professionals were involved in this type of real-world problem solving exercise. They also experienced how difficult it is to define professionals’ key knowledge, and they were challenged in performing and creating their role-play in court, especially in arguing their point of view from a professional perspective. Students experienced a kind of flow and a desire to contribute and continue in the role-play and it was difficult to get them out of the role. We also witnessed students contributing to the learning process by adding their own experiences to the real-life problem of the boy. This caused ethical reflections afterwards, as it came very close to some students’ real-life experience of the court room. Moreover it was apparent that all the students engaged with the problem and contributed to the professional role in the teams and the development of a qualitative solution to the case.

Role-play is one of many possible solutions to bringing more creativity into the Danish education system and to develop a classroom in which students’ creative as well as their critical thinking is appreciated and valued. Through the simulation of a court and role play we managed to awake students’ curiosity about the theory and practice of the case, the professional knowledge required and inter-professional collaboration. The simulated court setting demanded factual evidence and qualified counter arguments, but it also required a level of emotional involvement that made the experience memorable and interesting for the students.



The theatrical techniques employed and allowed many issues to be brought up in a short space of time. What was not expected was the strong emotional responses when students introduced their own experiences from real-life. The whole process and learning environment created motivation and engagement and called for (unpredictable) emotional responses in the role, as well as outside the role. Pedagogic risks can be minimized if the setting is far from students' personal experience, but the students' motivations are on the other hand enhanced when the problem is not *too far* from their own life experience. Thus, we learned through our own experience, the importance of being aware of ethical concerns, as role-plays are experiential and emotive. Experience from this role-play indicates that educators must be prepared to deal with students' emotions when introducing this approach.

For role-play to be successful students must enter the role of the fictive "other professional", setting aside their own assumptions in order to take on another perspective. Role play in a safe, simulated setting offers learners the opportunity to feel what it is like to be a lawyer, doctor, teacher or social worker performing in such a situation. This embodied view of learning rather than simply a cognitive view is not something that learners normally encounter in higher education. The role-play provided students with embodied knowledge in accordance with cognitive, emotional and experience learning theory. When students who experience a 'know how' kind of learning combined with a basic theoretical knowledge might have better chances to develop useful knowledge of other professions knowledge and competences.

Students' motivation, participation, collaboration, interaction, innovative and creative skills is needed far more in a role - play, than in other learning settings. During these sessions students experienced their class room and class mates as a knowledge sharing community, as they became dependent on each other's knowledge in order to grapple with and resolve the problems. And that's also the risk of role-plays, if some students do not embody the role.

## Innovative and creative pedagogy

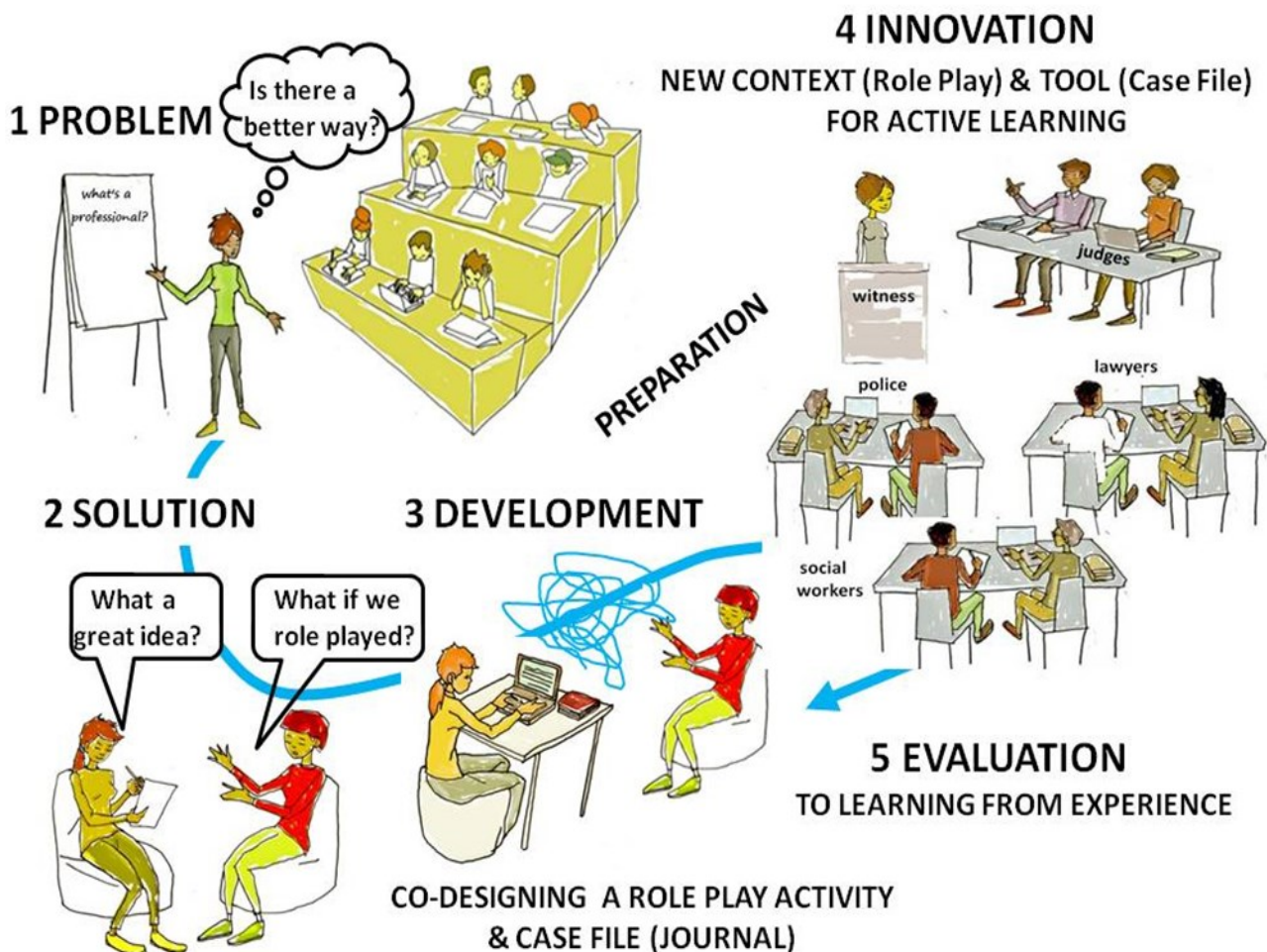
As we dive into the theory of innovation from a learning perspective, teachers' skills and ability to create and to address educational challenges demands a new understanding of educational problems and challenges, but the ability and resources *to act* on behalf of this understanding is the biggest challenge as we have to consider how the students can create meaning within the pedagogic context and goals we create. Teaching that invokes the students' ability to think 'outside the boxes we have put them in', to create, to perform and to develop new skills in practice, requires particular facilitative skills, as the students mindset to a large extent is formed by the educational experience they have been through. Consequently educators must be given the opportunity to experiment, and experience a creative learning environment for themselves.

There seems to be a contradiction, on the one hand regulators and politicians demand more explicit outcome-based learning designs, and more individual assessment and grading, while also requiring educational goals, such as the need to produce graduates who are innovative, creative and able to work collaboratively in cross disciplinary teams. In this climate of ever increasing professional accountability it takes courage to be an educator who is prepared to take the risk to experiment in the classroom. But, as our experience shows, the risks are worth taking.

## Appreciating our own creativity

This thematic issue is exploring the nature and relationships of creativity in processes of development and innovation. We have attempted to capture and analyse our developmental process in an illustration (Figure 1 overleaf).





Our own creativity was stimulated as we realized the lecture-based teaching procedure did not engage students in the way we expected. It's a problem that many teachers encounter. Instead of ignoring this fact, which would have been less troublesome, we simply asked the students *how* they learned and how they preferred to learn. But because of the deep-rooted beliefs about learning students' held (their folk pedagogy) students is not expected to learn by "playing"! We explored the students' perceptions and their difficulties and eventually came to *change our perspective* as we realized we ought to challenge their folk pedagogy. We had to challenge their expectation about learning and education and risk trying something completely different to anything they had experienced before.

After much discussion in which we considered many ideas the *creative solution* to our problem emerged. We *invented* a role play in which students had to take on the identity of a particular type of professional and perform the role they would play in a close to real world problem-based scenario. We also created a mediating artefact - the journal of a real case around which the role play was formed. Together the activity and case provided a new case for active learning.

Throughout the process of pedagogic development and classroom implementation we experienced ourselves as risk-takers, running the risk of losing professional authority by choosing a new medium which both peers and students might perceive as being "childish" or "playing when learning". Our creativity developed during our analysis of the situation, which tricked *our imagination*, what if we did....? The scenarios that emerged were partly grounded in our pedagogical knowledge and partly in our knowledge of the way the professional world functioned. Our ideas were also influenced by our institutional culture. We are graduated from a problem oriented university which expects students to come up with critical reflections or solutions to a problem. In this sense we, as teachers, are trained to be "problem finders and solvers", unlike the students we were teaching who were only expected to solve the problems they were given.

## Theoretical considerations

The underlying theoretical understanding of creativity is related to culture, tradition, and knowledge in a domain and context, as well as personal creativity within a field <sup>(7,8,9)</sup> Creativity is linked to habits, and creativity is often stimulated when people can't continue doing what normally works 'necessity is often the mother of invention'. Such situations force us to stop and then change our habits by realizing we have a problem and have to change our habits, and imagine new possibilities. John Dewey<sup>(10)</sup> stated, that thinking itself can't escape the influence of habits, its influenced by the physical environment, the way we structure education: *"Intellectual habits like other habits demand an environment, but the environment is the study, library laboratory and academy. Like other habits they produce external result, possessions."* p 69) What is needed is then flexible and sensitive habits that grow through practice and use in order to stimulate and create innovative learning environments. From a pragmatic point out view creativity is then connected by doing and experimenting - trying out, exploring and wonder. Such learning processes creates insecurity and even ambivalence so educators may need support and collaborating by colleges in order to deal with the mixed emotion change processes creates, when challenging one's own as well as students concepts of folk pedagogy.

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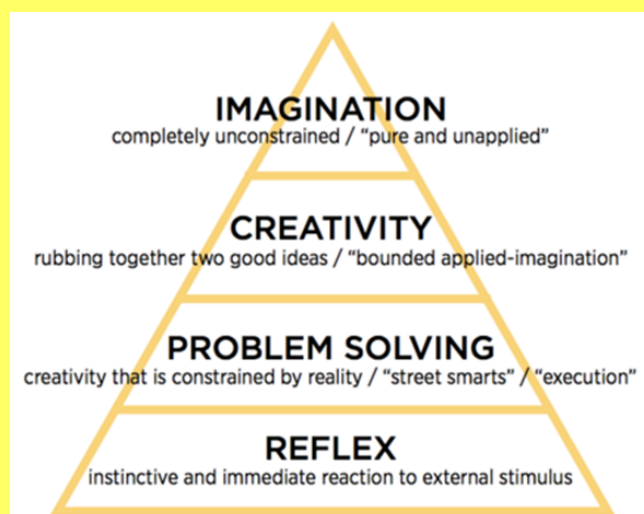
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Image courtroom: <http://thumbs.dreamstime.com/x/lawyer-front-jury-5627151.jpg>

## Hierarchy of Imagination

Patricia Flatley Brennan

*"a skeptic of insight-oriented cognitive approaches, Brennan expressed her ideas about imagination to Maeda who was able to formulate them as a drawing. By the end of their session [the Hierarchy of Imagination] was born. The discussion leading to this concept focused on getting patients to imagine themselves as healthier individuals. Brennan's hypothesis was that creativity could not necessarily be taught but that it is malleable and could be cultivated - encouraging patients to expand their imaginations could help them envision better outcomes."*



<http://www.deepfun.com/hierarchy-of-imagination/>



**Editor comment:** Sometimes, perhaps most times, we cannot pinpoint exactly when an idea came into our mind that fires us to the point that we go beyond wanting to making a difference to the world - we actually go out and do it Our next contributor, James Walker, captures this very well and shows us that in his case his idea for making a difference to the world, grew from the circumstances of his life, particularly the writing communities of Nottingham he was involved in and his desire to tackle a problem he cared deeply about - poor levels of literacy in young people and decline in their willingness to read.

## **Dawn of the Unread: A Tale of Creative Development, Achievement & Innovation**

**James Walker**



*James is the Editor & Author of Dawn of the Unread, and winner of the Teaching Excellence Award at the Guardian Education Awards in March 2015. His previous commission The Sillitoe Trail, was voted in the top ten of content for the launch of BBC/Arts Council platform The Space. He is a Director of Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature, and a senior lecturer in digital humanities at Nottingham Trent University. [www.jameskwalker.co.uk](http://www.jameskwalker.co.uk)*

### **A Context**

Over the last decade the arts have changed, technologies have changed and audiences have changed. Instantaneous communication means that rawer, more guttural, forms of expression on platforms such as YouTube have come to replace the 'well made' standards and formats of traditional broadcasting. A new generation of student has emerged that demands content in multiple forms and in varying lengths and formats, all of which means the humanities needs to be more reflexive in the way it views and disseminates knowledge. This requires a less reverential approach to established sources of knowledge and more emphasis on the journey students take in embracing knowledge.

This isn't to be confused with 'dumbing down' and nor should it be seen as pandering to 'the Cult of the Amateur'<sup>(1)</sup> Instead it follows the simple dictum that knowledge must be extended to embrace experience. Our students have become accustomed to sharing their opinions at the touch of a button. A more interactive user-friendly digital landscape has enabled them to become curators, editors, and publishers of content. Therefore, the digital humanities must adapt to these values and create an educational space that is more emotionally responsive to these needs. And no, this doesn't mean they need to stop learning about reading. More important than ever is a framework that informs procedures and learning. The main difference now is the journey that they take to get there, which means we need to focus on the roots of our routes. It is also important to note that in our eagerness to embrace all things digital, the one platform that matters the most is the imagination. Digital projects that tend to script every outcome, predict every reaction, leave no room for imagination or personal engagement<sup>(2)</sup> Like Narcissus, they are too in love with their own reflection to be able to see anyone else.

### **My platform for imagination**

With this very much in my mind I want to tell you about an online graphic novel serial I created and developed called Dawn of the Unread<sup>(3)</sup> that explores Nottingham's literary heritage. It started on 8 Feb 2014 (National Libraries' Day) and ran for 16 issues. The platform created placements for over 120 Nottingham Trent University students from the arts and humanities, but more of this later.

First, we need to start with the problem that was the most important driver for my invention and my creativity: a problem I cared enough about to do something about it.

## Problem 1: Books are boring



Many projects begin with ideas that are connected to or inspired by problems and development is the process we go through to try to figure out how to solve them. One major problem in the UK is alarming literacy statistics. According to a major study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development<sup>(4)</sup> England holds the unenviable title of 22nd most illiterate country of 24 industrialised nations.

The long-term economic implications of these findings were supported by the Confederation of British Industry who found one-in-six pupils struggle to read when they leave primary school; one-in-10 boys aged 11 has a reading age no better than a seven-year-old; and at 14, 6 in-10 white boys from the poorest backgrounds are still unable to read properly.<sup>(5)</sup>

The National Literacy Trust suggests the reason for this depressing trend is that books are deemed a thing of the past by a 'YouTube generation' of reader. Consequently, the number of children reading outside of school has dropped by 25% since 2005. The survey of 34,910 teenagers found that 35% of boys agreed with the statement that "I cannot find things to read that interest me."<sup>(6)</sup> Literacy is a particular problem in my hometown of Nottingham where our performances are below the national average.<sup>(7)</sup>

## Problem 2: Books are not accessible to many people

When we look at access to books the hole gets deeper. How are those 35% of boys ever going to read if physical access to books is diminishing? Despite the Public Libraries & Museums Act (1964), the law that makes public libraries a statutory service,<sup>(8)</sup> libraries are feeling the brunt of economic cuts. 201 libraries were closed down as part of government cuts in 2011-12.<sup>(9)</sup>

The outlook for independent bookshops doesn't make for pretty reading either. They dropped below 1,000 for the first time in February 2014.<sup>(10)</sup> This means the most visible place for books are the supermarkets. I don't want to live in a world where Tesco determines taste, not because I'm a literary snob, but because only large publishers can afford to stock mass produced books at such a low rate. Some of the questions and issues raised by these problems are shown in the adjacent box.

### Possible Solution

Books aren't boring. But occasionally libraries, the platforms used to deliver books to the public, are. Take the old Central Library of Birmingham which was built in the 1970's and demolished in 2014, it was once described by Prince Charles as looking like a place where books would be incinerated rather than read.<sup>(11)</sup> This cannot be said of the new eco-friendly, recently completed £189m Library of Birmingham, which defines itself as a cultural hub rather than a 'book bank', providing numerous services that have once more made it a focal point of the community. Given that most cities don't have the money for such grand designs we need to think of a different way to entice people in. We need to make reading exciting and accessible particularly to young reluctant readers. This is how I tried to do it.

#### Questions/issues raised by problems

- How do you make libraries a focal point of the community?
  - What happens to authors and independent publishers when their work is inaccessible?
  - What happens to the publishing industry when books are most visible in supermarkets?
  - How do we engage reluctant readers?
- (13+)



## Dawn of the Unread: my solution to this problem

Where ideas come from is an important theme of this issue and mine are the result of being a part of my local community. I am a firm believer that you create the kind of city you want to live in and so for the past decade I have been involved in a variety of literature organisations in an attempt to raise the profile and aspirations of my home city. I was one of the founding directors of the Festival of Words, Nottingham's first city-wide literature festival in forty years. As Chair of the Nottingham Writers' Studio I saw our membership expand from 70 to 200 members and moved the studio to new premises in the city's Creative Quarter so that writers became a more visible and respected part of the community. Through these roles I have gained an incredible insight into Nottingham's literary heritage which culminated in our recent UNESCO status as a City of Literature as well as filling me with ideas for digital literary projects. In addition to this I've been a literary journalist for the past decade which means I regularly meet new people every day: There is no better way to navigate a city than through the minds of its inhabitants.



All of the above roles have been done on a voluntary basis and given me a vast knowledge of local knowledge and people. Therefore, when I have an idea for a multi-collaborative project such as Dawn of the Unread, I instantly know who to talk to.



It's hard to pinpoint exactly where the initial idea for Dawn of the Unread came from but three things in particular stand out: 1) I met Paul Fillingham through the Nottingham Writers' Studio. I discovered he ran a company called Think Amigo which specialises in digital heritage trails. He is the person who is able to take my ideas and make them happen on digital devices. 2) I met Adrian Reynolds when sourcing commissions for the Festival of Words. I discovered he was an avid comic reader and somewhere in my brain comics must have got lodged as a possible medium to promote Nottingham's literary heritage. Adrian would later become my Script Editor. 3) For the last decade I've been writing headlines and puns for LeftLion magazine as well as generating endless article features. A good headline needs to be informative, witty and intriguing. It's worth adding that I walk everywhere. I find the minute I'm away from a computer the ideas start flooding through. The title of Dawn of the Unread came to me on a walk to work. I remember being so excited and running as fast as I could to get to a computer. I thought, someone else is bound to have thought of this before. When I discovered it hadn't I quickly took up domain names on Twitter, Tumblr, Storify and wordpress. Now I had a working title, the rest would fall into place.

The idea underlying Dawn of the Unread is not to thrust 'complex' books on people to read, rather its purpose is to create a thirst for knowledge: to tease, tantalise and inspire the reader so they want to read more. This is why each issue is only between 8 - 10 pages long: enough to whet the appetite but to leave the reader wanting more.



The platform uses the graphic novel medium as this is more accessible to reluctant readers who are our target audience. To accommodate changing reading habits the graphic novel is available across multiple media devices (eg website, Smartphone App, iPad). There's also a gaming element built in which rewards users for completing tasks. Digital technology enables us to offer numerous routes into literature knowing that our reading paths are ultimately solitary and taken at different speeds. And if kids go on to the library to get out books it will be because *they* want to learn more.

## Turning the idea into reality

Dawn of the Unread imagines what would happen if the great literary figures from Nottingham's past went unread. If their ideas are not preserved and made accessible will they effectively disappear from our minds? Sillitoe, Lawrence, Byron et al would never put up with such an insult and so return from the grave, in a loose twist on the zombie genre, in search of the one thing that will ensure their survival: 'books'.

Although each issue featured a different literary figure, all narratives featured libraries or archives in some capacity. This enabled a subtle discourse to emerge over their role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (see examples in adjacent box).

## Encouraging interaction

Digital technology affords and often demands active participation and readers expect to share their opinions and to be part of the conversation. Therefore I introduced an optional gaming element via an App (Android) whereby readers were asked to perform four tasks at the end of each issue. These scores were recorded on a virtual library card and the person who scored the highest would feature as a character in the final issue. Although some of the functionality has now been removed from the App, the original four tasks that had to be completed for each issue are shown in the adjacent box.

To further enhance learning we (myself and the editorial team) introduced embedded content into certain panels of the comic to provide contextual information to help further learning. This took the form of a 'star' icon and basically works on the same principle as a hyperlink.

Although these were generally essays we also used different forms of multimedia such as:

- A music video with author Nicola Monaghan reading quotes from her book *The Killing Jar* <sup>(14)</sup>
- A computer game involving Arthur Seaton where he collects pints and love hearts to get across themes from *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) <sup>(15)</sup>
- Original audio recordings of William Booth speaking about poverty <sup>(16)</sup>
- Infographics of key events that shaped the life of 16th century polymath Margaret Cavendish <sup>(17)</sup>
- Documentaries and photo-essays <sup>(18)</sup>

## Student engagement

There are two things in particular that I love about digital projects. First, they tend to grow and evolve in ways that you can never predict. Second, you can change things at any point and start again - this is particularly useful when you start to analyse statistics (such as what is driving users to your website, what things do they click on the most). In order to make these changes I needed an immediate workforce with a wide variety of skills. This is where the

In the Alan Sillitoe issue we explored the Operatives' Libraries of the 19th century. This was where working class men met in pubs on a Sunday and self-educated. <sup>(12)</sup> Naturally, only a boozier like Arthur Seaton, the main protagonist of Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), could tell this tale.

The Ms Hood (issue 10) is written in the style of Carol Ann Duffy's *The World's Wife* which explores the lives of famous men through the eyes of their wives. In our updated version of the Robin Hood legend Ms Hood goes back to college to escape a life of crime. Through the story we were able to talk about the First Feminist Library in Nottingham at the Women's Centre <sup>(13)</sup>

### App Tasks

**GO** - Visit a location related to the literary figure. We tracked this via GPS. The aim here was to create a sense of civic pride.

**BWAINZ** - Answer multiple choice questions to test learning. To ensure readers took this seriously they only get one go at answering the questions, thereby stopping them from just pressing buttons.

**CREATE** - Upload short stories inspired by themes in each story which they could then view on screens in public spaces. This was to raise aspiration.

**READ** - We provided a reading list. They had to select one book and post pictures of themselves with it at a library. Initially I wanted to record this information linking library cards to the app. But this was not possible due to privacy issues.

decade of working voluntary for literary organisations and being aware of your local community comes in handy. I knew who to talk to and in this instance it was Murray Pratt, the Dean of Arts and Humanities at Nottingham Trent University.

At Nottingham Trent University, students have to complete a 30 hour placement as part of their compulsory second year module Humanities at Work. This was a great opportunity for me to draw on a talented workforce and for the university to trial means of linking up disciplines within the humanities. Over 120 students got involved.

English, Politics and History students worked as researchers, exploring archives and discovering non-digital sources, computing students created code to embed links or animate panels, broadcast journalism students filmed over 50 promotional videos for our Youtube channel, creative writing students helped with blogs and narrative, while media students managed social media platforms. Within this collaborative process there were many opportunities to 'skill share'. For example, someone proficient in filming can teach someone more confident with editing. And vice versa. This raises confidence as it positions the student in the role of teacher.

In my introduction I said that digital projects 'need to leave space for the imagination'. The same principles apply to placements. The more emotional the student's engagement with the project, the better the level of commitment. For example, Vincenzo Huh is a Korean-Italian student studying media. His job was to animate one single panel in each issue. I allowed him to decide which panel to animate but he wasn't given the go ahead until he had explained his reasoning and proved it helped to accentuate the storyline or highlighted a key moment in the story.

Some of the students who did placements have since taken themes raised by Dawn of the Unread as inspiration for dissertation subjects (the role of libraries in 2014, lack of female and ethnic authors in the local canon) all of which add legacy to the project. Others have since gone on to get paid commissions through contacts made during their placement.

### But I don't know anything about digital....

It's worth pointing out that I'm not that digitally literate. I have basic competencies in wordpress and so source the programming and coding out to Paul Fillingham, who I met at the Nottingham Writers' Studio. But what I do have is a brain bursting with ideas and a determination to help raise the literary profile of my home city of Nottingham. When you have passion you will always make something happen. The difficulty is figuring out what you're passionate about... and then it's just a matter of realising your imagination by investing time in developing your ideas to the point where they are useful to other people.

You can view Dawn of the Unread graphic novel here <http://www.dawnoftheunread.com/>



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**Editor's postscript:** After James had written this article I asked him Why only 16 issues? He replied:

*'Dawn of the Unread was originally funded for 10 issues by Arts Council England. But I managed (at cost to myself) to extend it to 16 issues because there were so many stories that had to be shared. It could easily have been extended to another 16 issues but projects have to finish at some point. I would love to see other cities use our format and do similar. There is no reason why it couldn't be rolled out nationally. I'm a big believer in sharing your knowledge and resources because in a skint city like Nottingham, this is how you survive and get things done. Together, we can build a better world out of words.'*

I think this captures well the attitude that is needed to bring new social projects into existence in world of scarce competing resources.



# Perspectives on Creativity in Development #LTHEchat43

Norman Jackson

I've been a bit sceptical about group conversations on Twitter, I think because my early experiences a few years ago were not so productive or meaningful. But I changed my mind after being invited to instigate/agitate one of the weekly #LTHEchat's on Twitter on the theme of 'exploring creativity in development'. The format for an #LTHEchat is six questions, posted by a facilitator, during a one hour conversation - one question every 10mins.



**Simon Lancaster** @S\_J\_Lancaster ·  
#LTHEchat has created  
529 Tweets  
135 Re-Tweets  
77 Users  
20 HashTags

The conversation is 'fast and furious' with over 500 posts made by 77 people in an hour. Conversation formed around participants' experiences of development in their own working contexts (e.g. teaching, research and educational or technology development activities) and their perceptions of what being creative means.

Prior to the session participants were invited to complete an online survey to share their perspectives on creativity <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FQVQX82> 37 people completed the survey and the results can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.net/results/SM-CHVZV52Q/>

In this article I draw on a selection of the 500 posts to illustrate some of the most important themes emerging from the conversation together with responses from the online questionnaire survey.



**LTHE Tweetchat** @LTHEchat · Jan 20  
Hello and welcome to the #LTHEchat the topic Norman will be discussing with us in a few minutes will be: Exploring Creativity in Development

## Q1 What does being creative mean to you in your work as a teacher, developer or other educational practitioner?

For these participants being creative in the context of their work involves thinking in imaginative ways, using their thinking to find solutions to problems, combining ideas/things to produce something new, taking risks, thinking into the future, experimenting and discovering new and novel ways of teaching, being open to new ideas, being flexible and adaptive—all of these things in the context of engaging learners and capturing their imaginations.



**Kyle Charnley** @KMCharnley · Jan 20  
#LTHEchat A1 creativity is - facilitating learning in a way that captivates all of your learners in new and meaningful ways



**Kandy Woodfield** @jess1ecat · Jan 20  
A1. #LTHEchat pushing at the edges, trying new approaches, testing out alternative ways of thinking or doing, having some fun ;)



**Gill Ritchie** @gsritchie · Jan 20  
A1 Coming up with novel solutions. having fun, doing things differently, taking risks #LTHEchat



**Simon Lancaster** @S\_J\_Lancaster · Jan 20  
A1 I am chemist., Creativity is synthesis: combining known elements to make some new and possible better then evidencing it. #LTHEchat



**Christopher Wiley** @Chris\_Wiley · Jan 20  
A1. The obvious aside (I work in an arts discipline), it means finding innovative solutions, e.g. unusual ways of teaching sthng. #LTHEchat

← ↻ 2 ...

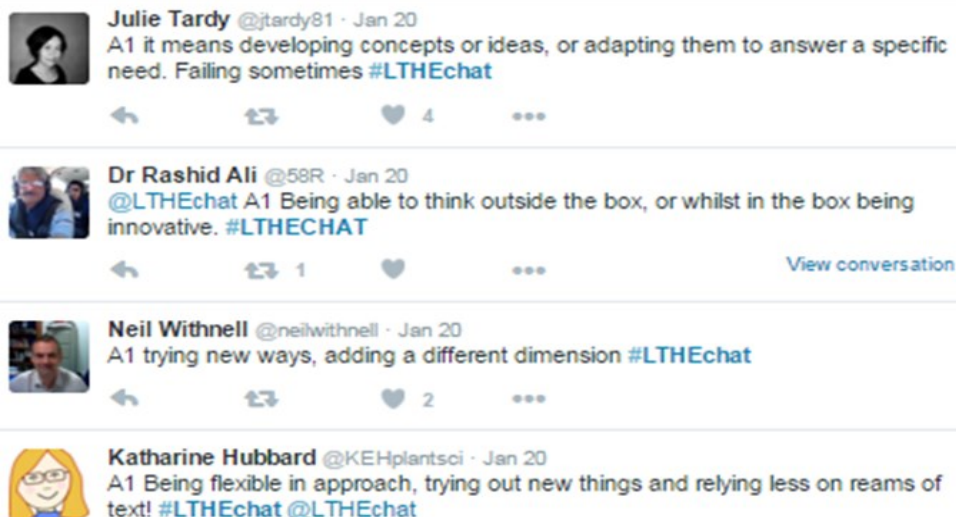


**Tracey Coop** @TraceyCoop1 · Jan 20  
A1 being creative helps with my students' engagement #LTHEchat

← ↻ 1 4 ...



**Kerry Pace** @DiverseLearners · Jan 20  
@LTHEchat A1 Finding ways to overcome learning barriers is how I use my creativity every day #LTHEchat



It can also be thought of in terms of helping an individual to deal with something that hinders them or conversely enables them to exploit what they are good at doing.



The survey showed that being creative in the work context means many different things. All 14 items in the checklist provided in the questionnaire were considered to be relevant with average scores of between 3.7-4.2 on a 5pt level of agreement scale. Presumably all these things could feature in a development process!

In the context of your work please indicate your level of statements about what being creative means to you agreement with these (n=37 1.0 strongly disagree - 5.0 strongly agree)	Average
using my imagination	3.89
having ideas that are new to me	3.97
having ideas that are new to the contexts I am working in	4.11
changing my understanding	3.70
adapting existing ideas for the contexts I am working in	4.11
doing things differently	3.73
making new things	3.69
making new things happen	3.89
seeing situations from different perspectives	3.92
going beyond what has been done before in a particular context	3.86
being able to look at new concepts and ideas and put them together in different but personally meaningful ways	4.22
generating something new in response to an educational need or aspiration which matters to me	4.16
solving problems and overcoming barriers	4.16
improvising when I have to	4.19

## Q2 What sort of things do you do in your work that requires/inspires you to be creative? Where is the most creative potential?

The survey revealed that most participants believe they are either often creative in their work (43%) or creative in most aspects of their work most of the time (35%) suggesting that affordance for creativity in professional work environments in higher education is high and that people working in teaching or development roles both recognise the affordance and are able to realise it.



**Neil Withnell** @neilwithnell · Jan 20

I feel there are creative opportunities in all aspects #LTHEchat

norman jackson @lifewider1

A2 Do most aspects of your work hold potential for your creativity or is potential limited to certain aspects? #LTHEchat

**David Smith** @dave\_thesmith

@lifewider1 Creativity can be found everywhere in teaching and research. Not sure about admin #ltthechat



**Chris Jobling**

@cpjobling



Follow

@dave\_thesmith @lifewider1 there's potential in admin ... and frankly it could do with a bit of creativity! #ltthechat

There are several driving forces for our creativity: the first is the self-actualising force that drives individuals to try to develop/improve themselves and the work they are doing.



**Neil Withnell** @neilwithnell · Jan 20

A2 always thinking "can I do this differently?" is there another way? #LTHEchat



**Fabio R Arico** @FabioArico · Jan 20

@neilwithnell A1: I like the idea of "adding dimensions": What more can be done in this learning space? If student-led = better #LTHEchat

A second driving force concerns the need/desire to serve the needs and interests of others - e.g. students, colleagues, subject and institution. There are many different contexts in which higher education professionals can use their creative talents e.g.



**Chris Jobling** @cpjobling · Jan 20

A2 Exploring the potential of a new technology that has potential for enhancing learning ... #ltthechat



**Marjorie L Wilson** @DrMarjWilson · Jan 20

A2. New curriculum ; new year; talking with peers #LTHEchat



**David Smith** @dave\_thesmith · Jan 20

A2 coming up with new ways of being active in lectures #ltthechat



**Ian Tindal** @iantindal · Jan 20

A2 I am not sure I can identify one most creative potential - creating teaching resources, engaging in dialogue with students. #LTHEchat



**Scott Turner**

@scottturneruon



Follow

A2. ideas from outreach activities- amazed what can be taken from STEM(in my case) activities in schools into HE, and vice-versa.#LTHEchat

**Dorothy Aidulis** @Dorothy\_Aidulis

@LTHEchat Create a safe learning environment where it's OK to fail....#LTHEchat

A third force is simply necessity. There is a problem to be solved or issue to be overcome so we enlist our creativity to help us.



**Paul Kleiman**

@DrPaulKleiman



Follow

A2 When faced with colleagues seemingly 'stuck' in apparently intractable situations #LTHEchat



**Gill Ritchie**

@gsritchie

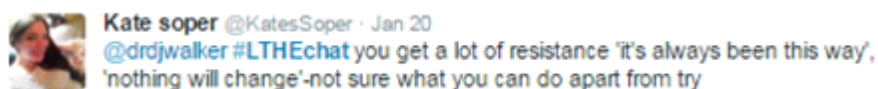


Follo

A2 trying to think of ways to engage people, solving specific problems #LTHEchat



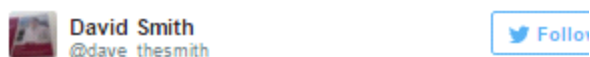
Creativity is also used in overcoming resistance and barriers [to different ways of thinking/behaving?].



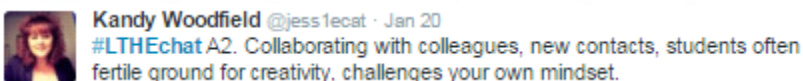
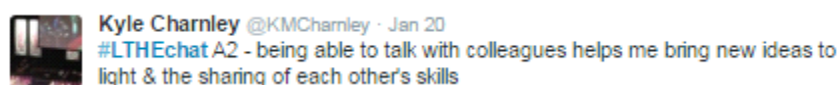
A significant number of participants recognised that their creativity is also connected to their collaborations and partnerships with students or peers.



A2 My colleagues inspire my creativity, truly understanding issues, needs and requirements can itself demand a creative approach. #LTHEchat



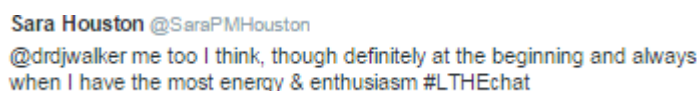
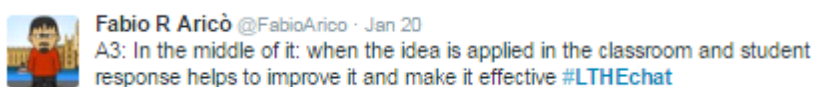
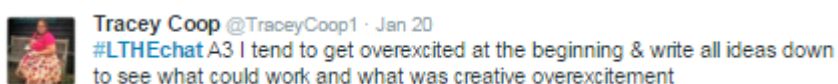
@iantindal Some of the best ideas arrive after conversations with students who present a problem that needs addressing



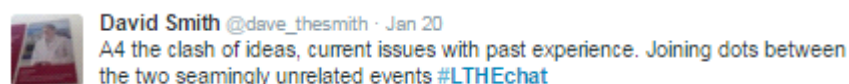
@lifewider1 #thechat I agree - for me creativity and inspiration lies in collaboration with students as well as staff.

### Q3 Think of a particular educational or professional developmental project - at what points did your creativity emerge within it?

Many different views were expressed. The first theme is temporal - creativity is associated with the early stages of a development project when excitement, motivation and energy is high and new possibilities are being generated. Or, in the middle stages of a project when ideas are applied to specific contexts and situations.



A second theme relates to points when new connections are made - ideas collide, dots are joined up.

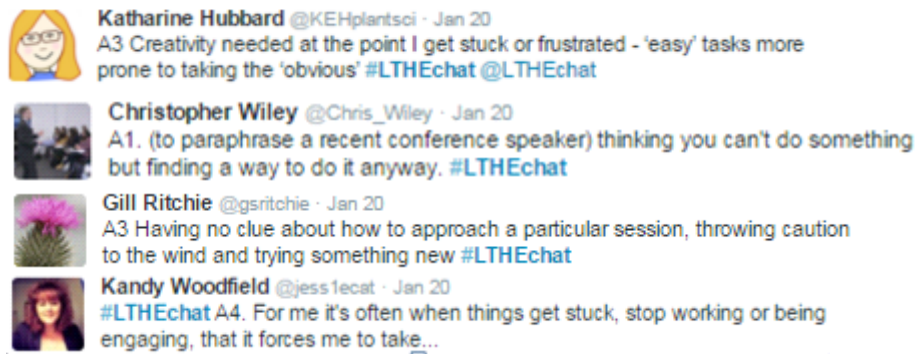


A third theme is when people take stock of a situation and challenge themselves to think differently about a situation.

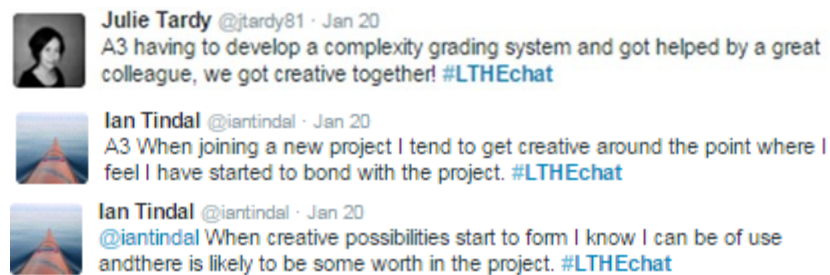


A3. I guess it was when I stopped following other people's ideas and started having my own. #LTHEchat

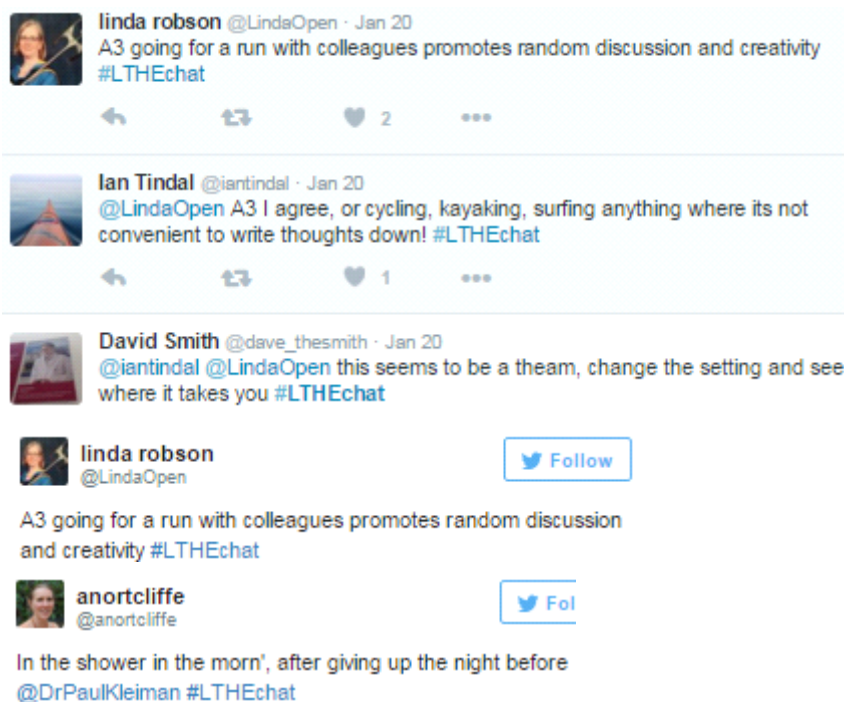
A fourth theme was creativity is needed when it's needed e.g. 'when you get stuck' and/or need to improvise.



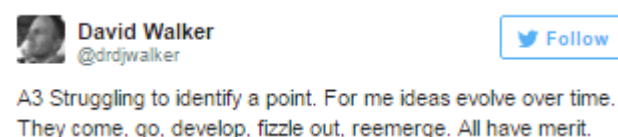
A fifth theme involves relationships - creativity emerges when people interact and help each other and form relationships with their developmental project.



Relationships also extend to situations outside the work context where people interact socially or with a particular pastime that may have nothing to do with work but which provides the thinking space within which new thoughts can emerge.



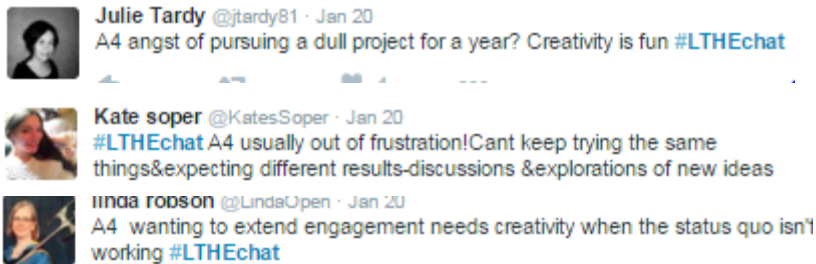
Finally, there is a view that there is no particular point in a development project.: creativity can and does emerge and fizzle out at any point.



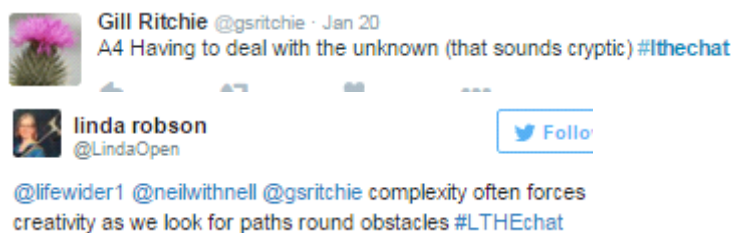
## Q4 What circumstances caused your creativity to emerge in this particular developmental scenario?

Responses to this question reveal a wide range of circumstances including:

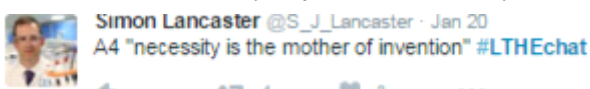
Negative situations when people are dissatisfied with the status quo, or are bored and/or frustrated.



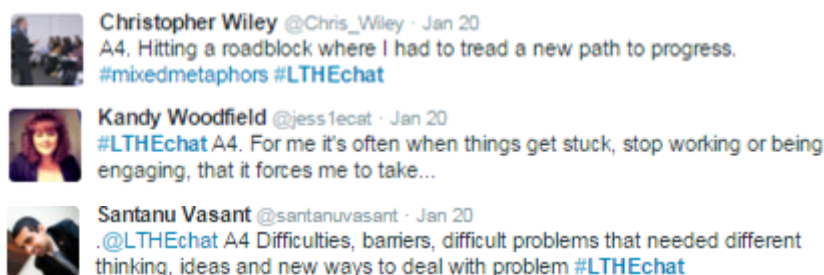
Having to deal with situations that are unknown or unfamiliar and /or complex.



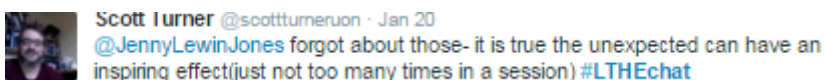
And situations when you just have to use your creativity.



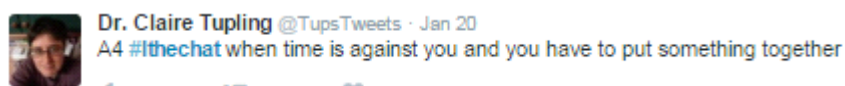
For example when you encounter a barrier which inhibits or stops progress or get stuck.



Or you have to deal with something that was not anticipated - the unexpected!



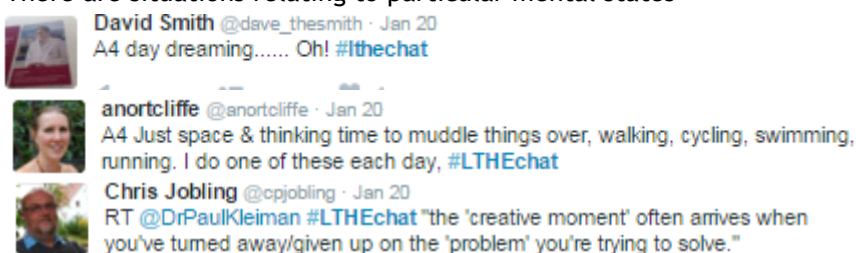
Or you are severely constrained by a resource like time.



Then there are personal factors relating to self-esteem and the need to prove [and implicitly develop] oneself.



There are situations relating to particular mental states







**James Wadsworth**  
@JamesEDEU

Follow

#LTHEchat A3 most creative not at the time of conversation or planning but in the moments of quiet and "brain in neutral"

And some mental states are just not conducive to being creative.



**David Walker**  
@drdjwalker

Follow

@SaraPMHouston So true. When I'm overrun and sapped of energy ideas don't come easily. Need space to think, reflect and discuss #LTHEchat

A number of participants recognised that situations other than work can produce mental states in which good ideas emerge. For example when you are in the shower, out walking or running, or pursuing a sporting activity. Several respondents identified this situation and it seems to be quite common. This is particularly interesting as it links our creativity in a professional development context to a developmental ecology that is lifewide rather than job-wide.



**Ian Tindal** @iantindal · Jan 20

@LindaOpen A3 I agree, or cycling, kayaking, surfing anything where its not convenient to write thoughts down! #LTHEchat

anortcliffe @anortcliffe

A4 Just space & thinking time to muddle things over, walking, cycling, swimming, running. I do one of these each day, #LTHEchat



**Chris Rowell**  
@Chri5rowell

Follow

A3 not just the shower - lots of creative ideas/solution come to me doing routine tasks #ltthechat [twitter.com/lifewider1/sta...](https://twitter.com/lifewider1/status/714444444444444444)

And then there are situations when other people help you.



**Katharine Hubbard** @KEHplantsci · Jan 20

@LTHEchat Talking to someone outside the situation - my poor hubby is brill when I get stuck and then I start generating ideas! #LTHEchat



**David Walker** @drdjwalker · Jan 20

A4 Desire. Drive. When these fall into line for me I am at my best. #LTHEchat

## Q5 How did your creativity express itself in this particular developmental scenario?

New ideas about how to accomplish something are essential to how creativity emerges in a development process.



**Santanu Vasant** @santanuvasant · Jan 20

.@LTHEchat A5 With new ideas or ways of doing the same thing that could yield better results #LTHEchat

Several participants identified a moment of realisation or perhaps a change of perspective or understanding as a way in which creative ideas emerged from their circumstances.



**David Smith** @dave\_thesmith · Jan 20

A5 realising there was a different approach to a problem or setting that could be done #ltthechat



**Simon Lancaster** @S\_J\_Lancaster

A5 revelation! #LTHEchat

A second scenario is when a person decides to abandon their plans and 'wing it'. Having to improvise is one way in which our creativity emerges



**Gill Ritchie** @gsritchie · Jan 20

A5 Decided not to do what I was supposed to do, took a totally different tack and crossed my fingers #LTHEchat



**Dr. Claire Tupling** @TupsTweets · Jan 20

#ltthechat A5 deciding to ditch PowerPoint and teach off the cuff

One respondent identified a process of filtering a lot of ideas to focus on the most useful.



**anortcliffe** @anortcliffe · Jan 20

A5 shower of ideas, learnt to filter only take through the important, my problem is stopping the ideas, ...#LTHEchat

## Q6 What are the implications of the way creativity emerged for encouraging student/staff creativity in your work contexts?

It's often difficult to extract meaning from a conversation when you are still in the conversation. This question forced participants in only 10mins to reflect on the perspectives that had been shared, to make sense of it and draw out some general conclusions that might be applied to their own teaching and/or professional development contexts.

One of the main themes to emerge was that creativity cannot be forced. It requires teachers/developers to establish certain conditions that encourage, nurture and facilitate individuals' and groups' creativity. Engaging colleagues/students in new novel experiences i.e. take them on a developmental pathway with which they were unfamiliar.

Perhaps also colleagues/students could be presented with incomplete solutions to problems to complete.

The everyday constraints on creativity featured and the need think creativity to get around the problem of lack of time and space for interaction. Staff and students need time and space to think and encouragement to use their own courage to take risks. The need to change the culture so that if people tried something [that was risky/difficult] but they did not succeed they would not be penalised, rather they would be rewarded for their courage.

Perhaps the teachers'/developers' role is to model their own creativity encourages others and gives them permission to try things for themselves.



**Julie Tardy** @jtardy81 · Jan 20

A6 got colleagues to engage, noticed more engagement with students. Reason also is content can be showcased in a sillier way too #LTHEchat



**David Smith** @dave\_thesmith · Jan 20

A6 you can't force creativity to happen, you can foster it. #ltthechat



**Simon Lancaster** @S\_J\_Lancaster · Jan 20

A6 I can see where this question is going. But there isn't a recipe for creativity. We can just encourage and facilitate. #LTHEchat



**Jenny Lewin-Jones** @JennyLewinJones · Jan 20

@LTHEchat A6 Must think creatively to get around the problem of lack of time and space for interaction #LTHEchat



**Tracey Coop** @TraceyCoop1 · Jan 20

#LTHEchat A6 engagement from colleagues in new/novel approaches and change including the use of technologies



**linda robson** @LindaOpen · Jan 20

@Chris\_Wiley @chrisnerantzi it has to solve the problem, trying something which fails or makes things worse is not rewarded! #LTHEchat



**Chrissi Nerantzi** @chrisnerantzi · Jan 20

@LindaOpen @Chris\_Wiley but can/should we learn from it? How can we enable this? What is required? #LTHEchat



**Neil Withnell** @neilwithnell · Jan 20

creativity emerged? A6 created surely #LTHEchat



**Santanu Vasant** @santanuvasant · Jan 20

@LTHEchat A6 Having half done solutions or ideas for staff to get a head start to things, that's a challenge. #LTHEchat



**Katharine Hubbard** @KEHplantsci · Jan 20

A6 Being visibly creative gave others 'permission' to also try new things - create! culture of thinking outside the box #LTHEchat



**Christopher Wiley** @Chris\_Wiley · Jan 20

A6. Implications - staff need to be given space & time to think, and courage to take risks & experiment. #LTHEchat



**anortcliffe** @anortcliffe · Jan 20

A6 new approaches help others learn and engage, moving pedagogy forward for next generation #LTHEchat

## Closing remarks

As one person remarked, and I have observed in many similar conversations about creativity, where creativity is concerned there is a huge convergence of beliefs. We are in fact dealing with belief systems that are embedded in a culture and this culture is widely shared amongst HE teachers and developers all over the world.

The really interesting thing for me is how many different ways and in different situations people get their ideas which they see as creative ideas, and similarly the many different contexts in which people are able to act creatively. People see the affordance in their working life and they use their developmental processes to realise the affordance. The one aspect of creativity I think was generally omitted from the conversation is the way we use our reflective skills to make sense of our experiences and draw deeper meaning from them. I believe that this is an essential aspect of our creativity which often goes unrecognised and unappreciated.

<i>Please indicate your level of agreement on the value of these definitions when considering creativity in the context of developing something. (1.0 not useful 2.0 useful 3.0 very useful)</i>	<b>Average</b>
Creativity is the production of novel and useful ideas in any domain (Amabile 1996)	<b>2.11</b>
Creativity is the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality. It involves two processes: thinking then producing. (Naiman 2014)	<b>2.19</b>
I define creativity as the entire process by which ideas are generated, developed and transformed into value. It comprises what people commonly mean by innovation and entrepreneurship (Kao 1997)	<b>2.25</b>
Creativity is the desire and ability to use imagination, insight, intellect, feeling and emotion to move an idea from one state to an alternative, previously unexplored state (Dellas and Gaier 1970)	<b>2.31</b>
Creativity is 'the emergence in action of a novel relational product growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life' Rogers (1961).	<b>1.78</b>

One final comment relates to the value of different definitions of creativity when considering creativity in the context of developing something. Five different definitions were offered in the questionnaire. The definition considered to be of most value was that proposed by Dellas and Gaier (1970) with a weighted average of 2.31 on a 3 point scale. This is perhaps not surprising given the importance of ideas in the academic domain. What is surprising to me, given the perspectives shared in the #LTHEchat conversation, is that the definition considered to have least value is that proposed by Rogers' (1961). As the LTHEchat demonstrated creativity does not just happen in a vacuum, individual's creativity is deeply connected to their uniqueness as an individual and the circumstances of their lives and where our relational products might be our ideas, the material or virtual objects we make, the processes we invent to achieve something through which we also develop, and the practices we perform.



norman jackson @lifewider1 · Jan 20

This chat has been really energetic and I look forward to reading everything again - lots of great stuff - thank you so much #LTHEchat

## Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to all the participants in the #LTHEchat and all the respondents to the questionnaire survey. Thank you very much for sharing your perspectives. I welcome comments and additional perspectives based on the #LTHEchat. A version of this article will be published in the April issue of Creative Academic Magazine. You can read my reflections on my own development process for #LTHEchat at: <http://www.normanjackson.co.uk/scraps-of-life-blog>, <http://www.creativeacademic.uk/magazine.html> normanjjackson@btinternet.com

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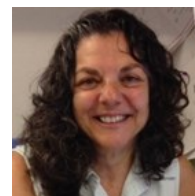


**Editor's comment :** The concept of development and innovation is not restricted to products, processes or performances. They are concepts that we can apply to ourselves and our own life circumstances. In this article Debra describes how she has sought to fundamentally change her own life to escape from circumstances that she did not like, and in the process develop a life with more potential for creativity and personal fulfillment.

## I Take My Chances

**Debra Josephson Abrams**

*For nearly 30 years, Debra has taught English to both native and non-native English users. A national and international conference presenter she has written in a number of genres and for many publications. Her areas of expertise include liberatory pedagogy; teacher training, peer coaching and mentoring; multiple intelligences and learning styles; composition pedagogy and practice; critical thinking, critical literacy and critical reflection; research and research training; curriculum design; and formative assessment. She is also a photographer and the owner of Parts of Speech Educational Creativity and Down the Shore Images. [partsofspeech@gmail.com](mailto:partsofspeech@gmail.com)*



I take my chances, I don't mind working without a net/  
I take my chances, I take my chances every chance I get.  
Mary Chapin Carpenter

Brian Eno, legendary musician and artist, offers this comforting observation, “Human development thus far has been fueled and guided by the feeling that things could be, and are probably going to be, better.” I certainly hope that is the case because I’ve embarked on a daunting, thrilling, and often frustrating and frightening adventure of personal development and professional reexamination from which I’m learning mighty and hard-won lessons about myself, my relationship to others and the world, my profession as an educator, and possibility. Join me as I share the evolution—and revolution—of my adventure.

Newly divorced from a habitually lying, cheating spouse and in my mid-50s, I moved 1800 miles from the area where I lived and worked for nearly four decades and took a job in what I quickly found was a deeply dysfunctional Intensive English Program where anti-Semitism was rife and whose administrators—not unlike my ex-husband—had been deceptive and duplicitous. The curriculum was inauthentic and anachronistic, the program had lost its CEA accreditation, students were considered customers who were always right and were to be served, I was often subjected to anti-Semitism from other instructors and my supervisors, and, not surprisingly, employee turnover was (and is) rampant, with everyone from administrators to faculty to staff regularly quitting. Some employees quit even though they have no new jobs awaiting them.

In the midst of considering my options and planning my exit from my job, my beloved companion animal, Sylvester, became seriously ill, I had a miserable bout of parotitis, a root canal, and a third hand surgery. The timing of my hand surgery and other ailments proved fortuitous—if not serendipitous—because it was soon apparent that I could not work, and not working meant I was able to spend all my time with Sylvester, time that yielded great gifts and great wisdom.



Three days before Sylvester died in my arms and a miserable 29-months after I began working in the sick IEP environment, I quit. Correction: I liberated myself. Within days of each other, both Sylvester and I were free of pain and anguish.

In “To a Mouse,” the great Scottish poet, Robert Burns, observed, “The best laid schemes o’ Mice and Men/Gang aft agley”, and so it was with my plans.

What lay ahead for me wasn't clear; I fell into the standard—and often necessary—belief that I had to find another job and fast. After all, I have bills to pay. For months prior to my job departure, I spent many hundreds of hours applying for many hundreds of teaching positions and interviewing: I flew to many schools for interviews and had other interviews via Skype, FaceTime, and phone. With each interview, I was burdened by dread that I

might indeed be offered a position that would thrust me back into a traditional teaching environment; increasingly, I knew that teaching in a conventional program was no longer meaningful to me. Profit—not proficiency—is frequently the driving force propelling programs and institutions that profess commitment to higher learning. Recently, [The Atlantic](#) and the [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#) published articles examining the troubling issues arising when universities' emphasis moves from education to profit.

Along with begrudgingly coming to terms with profit's preeminence, I've begrudgingly learned from years of teaching in ESL programs that too often, those enrolled have no investment in their education because they are sponsored by their wealthy governments, and they see their time in the US as a prolonged vacation: Programs' accountability provisions are weak because the dollar is strong. Perhaps my ambivalence and misgivings about working in another conventional program revealed themselves during the interviews because I had no offers.

Initially, with each rejection, I was disappointed, but very soon thereafter, I was relieved. Remarkably relieved. The more I learned about the programs, the more disenchanted I became. And I had such lousy interview experiences that I wrote about them (you can read my article [here](#)).

Once I was relieved, I asked myself if I really wanted another teaching position in another traditional American program even if it did mean the security of a paycheck, health insurance, and a retirement plan. No. No. Again and again the answer was no. The rejections saved me.

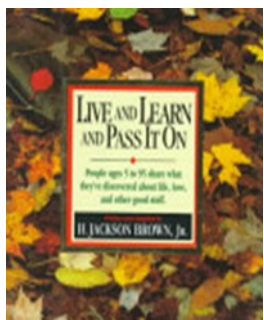
The rejections—and the lessons I learned from my health issues and Sylvester's life and death —allowed me time to reflect creatively, innovatively, and imaginatively about what I'd pursue next. I began to consider what life could be, to imagine and construct a meaningful, fulfilling life without self-imposed constraints.

When I adopted Sylvester, he was starving, traumatized, and catatonic. I do not know what caused his psychological injury, but it was severe. However, with unconditional love and care, he incrementally improved and ultimately blossomed and thrived. Time and time again, he surprised me with a healthy behavior I never thought he'd manifest until, after nearly 15 years, he had transformed from a starving, wounded, and desperate orphan paralyzed by fear to a loving, brave, curious, interactive, ornery, tenacious soul who taught me that great things can come from patience and there is always a reason to be hopeful even when it seems as though there isn't. Sylvester taught me that taking risks can pay off big. Initially, I felt guilty for considering what I could do now that Sylvester was gone, and it has taken me a good deal of reckoning to come to terms with the reality that, because Sylvester no longer needs me, I am free to make decisions I would not have made if he were still alive: Sylvester was my only dependent. Guilt is powerful: I had to accept that looking beyond life with Sylvester did not mean I was happy about his death or looking forward to life without him. But the fact was that Sylvester was dead, and I had a choice: To learn from and celebrate his life by living,—really living—or to play it safe.

As I ruled out what I don't want, I began to envision what I do want: I want to do meaningful work, I want to use my talents and skills to work with those who are committed to and value education and who are eager to take advantage of my talents and skills, and I want to travel.

It is a rare child who can come through his schooling with much left of his curiosity.

But what, I reconsidered, is education? What has passed for education is no longer enough. It is no longer enough to try to bring authenticity to the confines of inauthentic curricula, doing what I can to infuse my courses with credible and legitimate exercises, assignments, and assessments based in multiple intelligences and critical thinking and critical self-reflection. It is no longer enough to try to teach and inspire those who don't want to learn or who want only to pass the TOEFL or their courses because they are just Ts to cross and Is to dot on the way to a diploma. It is no longer enough to try to teach or inspire those who have no time for or interest in education's remarkable and infinite gifts. It is no longer enough simply to yearn for change; it is time for me, as Gandhi implored, to be the change.



“School is bad for children,” Holt incisively observed in his nearly 50-year-old essay <sup>(1)</sup> School. Not education. School. We teach that “learning is separate from living,” Holt perceptively and boldly declared. School isn't bad only for children, I've learned. I've learned it's time for me to live and learn, to “live and learn and pass it on.” <sup>(2)</sup>

Ever since I was so small that I couldn't articulate my thoughts or feelings, I have been keenly aware of my mortality, an awareness formed from watching my mom's long-term and remarkable fight against cancer and her death when she was much too young and I was only 20, followed quickly by my dad's heart attack and triple bypass surgery, his battle with the insidious and debilitating cancer of multiple myeloma, and then, a quick six years after my mom's death, his own. As I rapidly approach the age my mom was when she died, I'm no longer willing to accept a life of the American status quo: There's too much living and learning to do. I have no dependents, I have some savings, and I am healthy. Now is the time.

Health psychologist Dr. Kelly McGonigal advises that the best way to make decisions is to, "Go after what it is that creates meaning in your life."<sup>(3)</sup> Decades before McGonigal's suggestion, renowned writer and teacher Joseph Campbell urged, "Follow your bliss. Find where it is, and don't be afraid to follow it."<sup>(4)</sup> And so I am.

After months of thorough and percipient research, my plans have taken shape. I have begun an educational creativity business ([www.partsofspeechec.com](http://www.partsofspeechec.com)) and a photography business ([www.downtheshoreimages.com](http://www.downtheshoreimages.com)), I'm doing international volunteer work, and I am traveling to places I've long wanted to visit and those I never considered before. And I have applied to be an English Language Fellow and a Peace Corps Response Volunteer.

Of the lessons I'm learning on this adventure, perhaps the greatest one, is that, as my musical hero and fellow New Jerseyan, Bruce Springsteen, sings, "I'm tougher than the rest." Certainly, it doesn't always feel like that, and I frequently doubt it; sometimes I just do not believe it. But I—like my beloved Sylvester--am.

Are you a fearless educator who is eager to make substantive and lasting innovations in education? If you are, contact me. Let's work together to unify living and learning and passing it on. Let's take our chances.

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#### Editor's comment

It seems to me that Debra describes a process that follows the pattern of being dissatisfied and wanting to change something (in her case her life), making a decision to fundamentally change it and then voluntarily giving up something (her job) in order to create the physical, intellectual and emotional spaces to change. She then embarked on a journey to develop herself and began to see new affordances in her life with opportunities to be and become the person she wanted to be. Over time (development is a slow process) she recreated herself and her two businesses so that she could live a more fulfilled and creative life



<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/j/josephcamp134756.html>



# I ♥ Learning: Innovating for Creativity

**Susan Cobb, Helena Kettleborough, David Leathlean, Marcin Wozniak**  
Manchester Metropolitan University: Cheshire Campus, Faculty of Business and Law, Hollings Faculty



## Introduction

In this article, we want to explore innovating for creativity through a research project underpinned by action research and co-operative inquiry methods. We offer a reflective commentary on our creative journey over the past year. We explore creativity: what it meant to us as individuals and the processes that emerged through the co-operative inquiry. We started with the idea of developing a product but spent the year exploring processes and next year we will finalise the product: an 'ideas box' to share creativity in higher education (HE).

## Creative process: Our growth

The 'I Love Learning' project began with a group of individuals from different disciplinary backgrounds, who are passionate about introducing creativity and innovation into the classroom and engaging students with interesting and thought-provoking activities. We feel that learning does not always have to be a serious business, delivered in lectures<sup>(1)</sup>. While some have even suggested abandoning lectures completely<sup>(2)</sup>. The 'I Love Learning' Project aims to find ways to inject some creative magic into learning in HE, encouraging lecturers to try new ideas, engaging students and introducing excitement to learning. As James and Brookfield<sup>(3)</sup> suggest, 'for learning to "stick" ... the fullest range of our imaginative faculties needs to be engaged'.

'The statement 'you are lecturing me' in almost all other social situations would not be a positive statement... Yet, as a method of communication aimed at groups of students (even in small groups), it thrives in higher education'. <sup>(1)</sup>

As a group, we met on the 'Creativity for Learning in HE' Professional Development Unit at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) facilitated by Chrissi Nerantzi. Our experiences on Creativity for Learning Unit and on creativity in our practice are recorded on a CELT MMU video<sup>(a)</sup>. We applied for and successfully gained a one-year Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) from CELT. The 'I Love Learning' project engaged us as four co-researchers, sharing creative approaches and experiences from individual teaching practices aimed at engaging students in learning. This project platform allowed us to gain confidence in using creative approaches within our teaching and test ideas in a safe environment. We found the project stimulating and were able to showcase our creative ideas through posters and workshops at a university Teaching and Learning event. By bringing new and creative ideas into our work, and bouncing ideas off each other, we developed not only as a group, but also as individuals. In co-operative inquiry sessions, we engaged other colleagues in reflection on creativity, using creative approaches such as stories, free fall writing and collage making, followed by discussion and exchange of creative ideas. This allowed us to get feedback on the effectiveness of the approaches and share good practice.

## Creative process: Engaging learning through "Active Learning Workshops"

Having worked in HE for almost 15 years, most recently leading the Foundation Year (Apparel) programme at the MMU, David experienced considerable change in the methods used and locations chosen to engage and excite students. Recent changes in the student cohort and their differing educational needs, expectations and experiences, have led to developing a very different approach in their education and learning, with an exciting new strategy. Having recently observed students disengaging with the more traditional forms of delivery, lectures and seminars, action has been taken to address this, with considerable success and positive feedback from the student cohort.



'Active Learning Workshops' are a programme of off-site activities: delivered in two academic terms, linked to all units on the Foundation Year (Apparel) programme. David used the opportunity of the 'I Love Learning' project to reflect on what he was doing and develop his ideas. Students were given the opportunity to visit and learn in a variety of interesting and inspiring locations, including museums, galleries and retail environments, with the added benefit of working with industry professionals including Google and local businesses. Having trialled this concept, the next development will be to extend these opportunities, highlighting to students that learning happens everywhere and is not restricted to a lecture theatre or seminar room. An exciting and engaging, educational future awaits.

## Our Creative Process: Exploring creativity through action research

The 'I Love Learning' project started with a commitment to using the ideas of action research and 'co-operative inquiry' to investigate creativity and links to innovation and development. We wanted to collaboratively explore a potential methodology which could be used both within the project group and in any wider research group we created.

Our working definition of action research: 'A participatory, democratic process, concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory world view. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally to the flourishing of individual person and their communities'.<sup>(4)</sup>

Action research can be seen as a broad tent or family sharing common characteristics which help guide research <sup>(4,5)</sup> We developed our understanding of these characteristics, exploring, for example, extended ways of knowing. Experiential knowing or lived knowing from our own lives; presentational knowing or the knowing of story and art; propositional knowing of academic research and literature and practical knowing, which is taking action in the world for a better world building on the other ways of knowing<sup>(6,7)</sup>.

We explored different levels of reflection and learning together, using ideas of first, second and third person inquiry to guide us. We investigated first person inquiry: inquiring into oneself, reflecting on, and observing one's own actions. Second person inquiry: listening to each other, inquiring with each other and reflecting together became an aim of our meetings. We studied the ideas of a co-operative inquiry group, where all participants are co-researchers, the inquiry question is agreed together and the group works through cycles of action and reflection<sup>(8)</sup>. We created a wider co-operative inquiry across different disciplines within the university to share our ideas and explore creativity in learning together. During all of these cycles, we developed creative ideas by working with the students, following our study and reflection.

## Creative Process: Exploring through co-operative inquiry

One of the creative processes we shared within the 'I Love Learning' project was the use of music in teaching sessions. Marcin came to use this approach by accident when he noticed that students did not feel confident to present ideas in a small tutorial group. He played music to break the silence, encouraging students to participate in the task. Helena then developed this by playing music at the start of seminars: this met with surprise, amusement but most importantly with engagement from students. Students have now taken on this idea. During a seminar, one student selects a piece of music to start the next seminar. This creative approach reduces the formality of the seminar and aims to catch students' attention, engage them and awaken their learning. Students' involvement in the activity helps to break confidence boundaries, actively including them in discussion and allowing students and staff to get to know each other.



Another creative approach shared was Helena's use of free fall writing, drawing and use of colour to enhance students' engagement and participation, also providing feedback and measuring the impact of the activities. As a result, students became involved in the use of creativity within their learning; they became co-creators - partners in creating engaging learning environment<sup>(9)</sup>.

## Involving students as partners and co-researchers in teaching and learning

In the next stage of our inquiry, students will become co-researchers through participation in the third co-operative inquiry session. Students and staff will explore what teaching and learning means to them: how they would like to learn and what engages them in learning. Additionally, students will be invited to take part in a 'creative teaching and learning residency', which aims to find out which media or creative approaches appeal to them. Ideas developed in this residency will be expressed via a mixed media installation, leading to the development of a 'marketing campaign for learning'. This creative and visual output will allow reflection on our co-developed understanding of teaching and learning and will help us to share our findings with the wider student and staff community.

## Concluding thoughts

Next year we will finalise our product: our 'ideas box'. We will be presenting at conferences - perhaps we will meet you.

### Acknowledgments

Our thanks to MMU: Charles Neame, Chrissi Nerantzi, Tom Scanlon and the CELT MMU Research Scholarship. Our experiences on Creativity for Learning Unit and on creativity in our practice are recorded on a CELT MMU video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKVcqzkrCD8>

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## Editor's commentary

The most important challenge facing all human beings is fundamentally a developmental challenge focused on the question of how we learn to deal with and make the most of the situations and opportunities in our lives. When it comes to developing ourselves, the question of what we develop, why we develop it, when, how and where we develop it is entirely up to us and these decisions will emerge from and through the circumstances of our lives. In this wonderfully illustrated story Roger Greenhalgh offers his insights on everyday creativity illustrated through what seems like a 'rite of passage' experience that grew out of the circumstances of his family and work life. It reveals the important truths that the demand for our creativity reflects the contexts we inhabit - necessity grows when we put ourselves into contexts that are unfamiliar and meet challenges that we have never dealt with before and have to invent solutions for problems we have never encountered before. His story also reveals the collaborative nature of our own creativity - two minds and pairs of hands are better than one!

## Finding the Creative Affordance in Life

### Roger Greenhalgh



*Roger works for Jisc and helps educational leaders make strategic use of ICT in the operations and development of their organisations. He started messing with computers in the mid-'70s and was an early adopter of IT in the classrooms of the '80s. An entrepreneur in the '90s DotCom boom and subsequent Ed Tech enthusiast in universities and colleges, mentorship with IT innovators seems to be his forté.*

The year was 2006; my son and I were at the tail end of delivering the goods for a multi-university development project we'd been working on together (an online Knowledge Exchange platform). The website code development was done, the initial content was mostly in place, and it was now at the stage of just fixing the bugs.

There was no new project on the horizon. The summer was looming and gaining and it was becoming increasingly unlikely that we would be doing any more development work until the Autumn term. We were not good at doing nothing. If there isn't an obvious challenge, then we try and seek one out. Curiosity whispers constantly in the ear. As Richard Bach once said, "Every problem comes with a gift in its hands - we seek problems because we need their gifts."

That same curiosity is also something that feeds innovators and networkers to sniff the merest whiff of opportunity: a possible technique; a different view; a better tool; an unexpected benefit. All are earmarked and linked into that back-catalogue of loose connections to resources and routes that "just might come in handy someday".

Our core project had been using web-based maps, with expensive licensing. Google Maps were a new thing, and suspiciously open about licensing. We also wanted to try using SMS texts to update a website or send automated alerts. So, we needed a low-risk guinea-pig to try these. Serendipity brought us into contact (outside of work) with some chaps who were trying to fundraise for Mercy Corps by organising cheap and cheerful rally teams from the UK to Mongolia. We offered to build online mapping into their website so that the position of teams on the overland drive to Mongolia could be updated regularly and automatically by SMS text messages. They were very grateful and accepted our offer. Thank you, serendipity, for the grateful guinea-pig.

When people are looking for creative affordance they walk around with their eyes and ears wide open - their radar ever alert for inspiration from what emerges through the circumstances of their life. I cannot pretend that the next steps came through any focused research. The maps and SMS updates had been a good idea hatched in a pub in Brick Lane one evening. From completely left-field came two other stimuli - firstly, Ewan McGregor and Charlie Borman's TV programme "The Long Way Round" documented their motorcycle journey overland from the



UK to Vladivostok, (recorded by a film crew), and secondly, a chance viewing of a YouTube video of an old cinema classic, the 40-minute London to Brighton train journey captured by sequential time-lapse photographs and replayed at high speed in just 4 minutes. Connect both these concepts together and one has the next and obvious challenge - how could one also record the 3 week journey from London to Ulaanbaatar by road with a webcam, and condense it into just a few hours?



*£300 from Ebay - needed a bit of reinforcing before we took to the Eastern roads (or lack of them)*

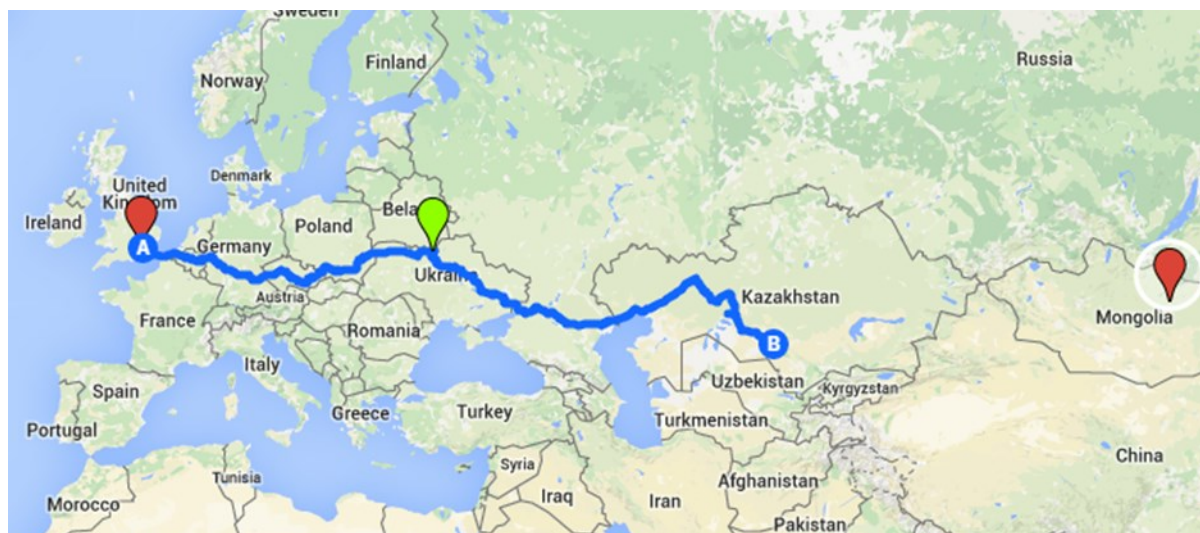
The curiosity seeds had been sown and were now germinating profusely. Within a matter of days, not only had we built the prototype map and SMS service, but we'd also decided to be a rally team, too, and record the journey. We bought a decrepit Fiat Panda 4x4 through Ebay for £300, and suddenly, this opened the floodgates to a whole new set of *off-piste* challenges, including the time-lapse video.

Everything so far was about technical challenge. We found ways to tackle the data capture; we found ways to re-engineer the vehicle to cope with challenging terrain, heat, dust, vibration, likely malfunctions, navigation, supplies and fundamentals of survival. The Mongol Rally is, after all, completely unsupported. The organisers help you to get the visas, throw a launch party and (if you make it), an arrival bash, and the initial camaraderie helps

you to believe in the quest. The rest is up to you. The route, the risks, and whatever your chosen reality.

We talked with the previous year's participants, and from that learned which spares to carry. We learned a few basic phrases of Russian, the most useful of which proved to be "Just a little" (as a precursor to vodka) and "I'm sorry", as a reflection on almost any misunderstood or confusing situation. We also knew that at internal Eastern Block checkpoints, having a selection of "presents" available for distribution would come in handy - and thus had scoured the local charity shops to assemble a cache of small, light, inexpensive items which were either quintessentially Western European (for high kudos value), or else incredibly useful. Most of these saved our bacon in unpredictable and completely unexpected ways.

Our journey began in London in late July of 2006, and over the next four weeks we travelled over 4,000 miles across Western and Eastern Europe, through Poland, Ukraine and Russia and onward across the steppes of western Kazakhstan. Our sights were originally set on reaching Mongolia, but circumstances changed, and we changed tack, abandoning the vehicle and returning by rail through Russia, weary, weather-worn and wiser, and hugely fulfilled.



By the time we had reached Kiev we'd ditched 90% of our spares. The trailer hitch had sheared off through extreme vibration on the backroads of Lower Silesia, so we abandoned the trailer, along with many of our spares.





*At the entrance to Chernobyl*

We piled too much from the lost trailer onto the roof-rack, and as a result of the added weight, later broke a leaf-spring somewhere in mid-Ukraine. We had kept lots of duct tape and spare tyres, and I'm glad that we did. In Kazakhstan, the most useful of our diminishing tools proved to be a 4-pound lump hammer... we would occasionally stop and hammer the wheel-rims back into shape on them before their tyres came off on the punishingly rough desert roads. We had earlier bribed our way with "gifts" into the first and second Chernobyl "exclusion" zones, but one of the finest exchanges made was with a Russian border guard keen on extorting \$75 (yes, dollars, not roubles, he had insisted) from us for allegedly not stopping fast enough at his barrier. He settled for a second-hand copy of a Monty Python's *Life of Brian* DVD, which he was overjoyed with. (£3.00 from a Shropshire charity shop.)



*Sometimes no amount of pounding with a hammer can keep the wheel rims in shape*



*Too busy looking at the scenery, we overshot the border control. The bribe almost cost us dearly.*

We never got to Mongolia - we had lost the brakes and three out of five of the gears by the time we'd reached the arid shores of the diminishing Aral Sea. With the help of some Kazakh truckers, we had rebuilt the rear suspension using parts from an abandoned Russian Uaz - which kept us going for another thousand miles. We had fashioned replacement rubber suspension gaiters from scraps of truck inner-tube by the roadside. Yet eventually there comes the realisation that the destination wasn't important any more. Discretion is the better part of valour. We donated the remnants of the car to the fire-station mechanic in Zhasaly, and a few days later caught the stopping train on the long haul back through Almaty to Moscow, tired, grubby but fulfilled.

We had started out as a father-and-son team, but this entire escapade was a complete leveller. We chose our own route, regularly re-adapted as conditions imposed, not really wishing to convoy with other teams - happier to meet up spontaneously and unexpectedly, exchanging experiences, plans and possibilities over a beer. It was easy enough to spot a fellow traveller in some of the townships en route, and the passing of other recent travellers was an easy snippet to pick up on the local roadside grapevine. I don't recall us arguing, though certainly there were some robust discussions about how best to tackle some issue. I particularly recall many, many formative moments, for each of us, coming to terms with so many lifestyles and expectations and ghosts of the recent



past, historical, political, and environmental, through the places and people and desolate or anachronistic places we encountered. The Majdanek extermination camp, the forsaken streets of Pripiat (the Chernobyl dormitory township), the abandoned ships of the Aral Sea, the Bykonur space launch pads, the Kazakh salt lagoons. In each of these (and many other places) we kept encountering people who had somehow through necessity and circumstance absorbed these places into their everyday lives, their work, their environs. We stopped and talked (or at times drew figures, “rich pictures”, on beermats or in the dust and dirt), and many of those dialogues caused each of us much reflection and re-processing whilst bouncing along across the endless Steppes.



*The long walk home*

My last memory of leaving the abandoned car with its proud recipient in Zhasaly was his most favoured choice of scavengings. We had relinquished socket sets and car jacks (all of which seemed useful to his trade) but his most prized gift was a knife, fork and spoon, which he proudly displayed in this shirt pocket, a symbol perhaps of globalisation of aspiration, turned so that its Swedish manufacturer’s embossed name was visible outermost -IKEA.



*The final great giveaway*

Paradoxically, I’ve since used that same word in a different context as an acronym for progression through a competency framework - *Introduced, Knowledgeable, Expert, Able*. On this bizarre physical journey, as with any learning journey, one steps through the same stages - and only when one has reached that point of being proficient at handling the unexpected, has one truly moved from *Expert*, perhaps, to *Able*.

## Reflections on Creativity

My son and I started out focused on a destination, with a rough idea of some waypoints. We were driven by a common desire to overcome a set of technical challenges, and a shared curiosity to explore new places.

We did our research, bought the maps, prepared tools and equipment, and learned the necessary vocabulary. Essentially, we used our initial creativity to apply structure to the unstructured, and at the outset, this gave us the comfort, confidence and purpose to proceed with the journey.



*No escape from the ubiquitous IKEA*

The epiphany, however, came from looking back at the journey, with 20:20 hindsight. At times, what could go wrong did go wrong. The greatest personal development for us both came through dealing with the unexpected. So much of that preparation proved superfluous, apart from the initial confidence build.

What saved the day was ditching the father -son, employer-employee, manager-gofer seniority paradigm, and subconsciously putting into practice the soft skills that team-role theory is all about. That sort of hierarchy could well have stifled our creativity to problem-solve in the novel situations we encountered.

We each learned which role to adopt, and when, and this has since served us both well in our home and professional lives. We learned how best to support, respect and encourage the timely application of one another’s creativity.

And lastly, on the long rail journey home, I learned to love молоко (sweetened condensed milk) in my tea, and had a much better understanding of the origin of the jargon words used in *A Clockwork Orange*. The truth is we never stop learning even if the stuff we learn seems incidental to the rest of our life it might come in handy one day and even if it doesn't it has in some small way enriched the meaning that is my life by triggering memories of things that are significant to me.

Too busy looking at the scenery, we overshot the border control. The bribe almost cost us dearly.

**Editor's comment:** it's great to experience the passion and enthusiasm of young people. In this article two young people, Nikos and Theodora, describe a new Facebook group they have established to help extend the reach of Creative Academic to people who we do not normally reach and add to our contributions to World Creativity and Innovation Week. WELL DONE!

## **Trees and Alphabets of Creativity**

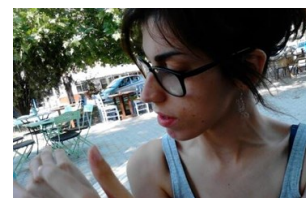
### **'Our Creative Life' New Community Space for Facebook Users**

**Nikolaos Mouratoglou & Theodora Tziampazi**



*Nikos Mouratoglou is currently studying in the Master Programm "Adult Education and Lifelong Learning" at the University of Macedonia of Thessaloniki, while at the same time he is a PhD. candidate at Aristotle University. His main interests include I.C.T. in Education, Instructional Design, Higher Education, Writing Research, Lifelong Learning and Intercultural Theory. He is also a member of the Creative*

*Theodora Tziampazi is a teacher in Primary school in Greece. She holds a master degree on Teacher Education and Training while her thesis topic is focused on Creative Writing in Education. She is experienced in designing workshops for children aiming at the development of their creativity. Her main interests include Creative Thinking, Literature and I.C.T. in Education.*



### **Introduction**

In early January one of us (Nikos) participated in a discussion with Norman Jackson, Jenny Willis, Roger Greenhalgh and Rafaela Tziouvara to identify ways in which Creative Academic could get involved with World Creativity and Innovation Week (April 15-21). We generated lots of ideas and one of them, establishing an online community space on Facebook, seemed to hold much potential, due to the fact that many people have already an account and also that many of them devote a considerable amount of their time in different online activities. As a result the "Our Creative Life #creativelife" community space <sup>(1)</sup> was born. 67 people were invited and 45 people now form the community, with 10-15 active users. The purpose of this group is to provide a space for Facebook users in order to share their thoughts and experiences on everyday creativity.

The community space also offers participants the opportunity to exchange and share educational resources that are linked to creativity. Some of them are: the post titled "18 ways you can boost your creativity" (by Rafaela), the article for the educational dimensions and possibilities of Lego (by Anna), the post titled "Crazy Kids' Inventions turned into real products" (by Tziadora) and the post made by Norman Jackson titled "Windows of the World: Photographer reveals the distinctive personalities of European cities".

### **Tree of Creativity**

Participants were invited to share some personal stories and experiences in which they felt creative. The act of sharing personal experiences in an on-line forum can function as a substitute of a logical argument or an example for a situation in order to explain, describe and even justify an opinion. However, in order for this type of disclosure to take place a sense of belonging, trust and some rudimentary emotional connections with the rest of the participants need to be present.

The start was made by Paul, who decided to share his experience. The content of his creativity was revealed in the lyrics of a song, which was co-written by Graham. One of the interesting aspects in this story lies in the fact that Graham came up with an odd line from his personal life, which eventually provoked Paul to write the "Nebulous" song. Of course, as stated in the community, there were multiple contributions by and from different members of the band, so the song is a collaborative creative effort. It must be also noted that this

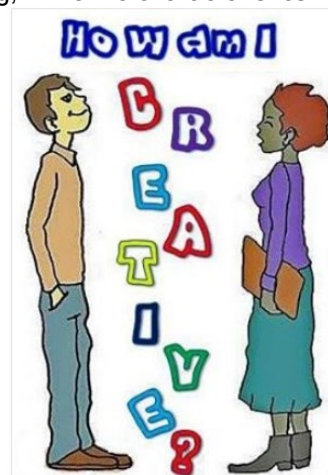
song was produced and performed for a charity concert that was organised in order to raise awareness and money for kids with cancer. Consequently, the context itself gave particular and deeper meanings and significance to this song.

Unfortunately, the fact that the participants did not yet know each other was perhaps a condition that prevented them from sharing personal experiences and as a result this initial attempt to encourage sharing was limited. We then posed the question:

**How would you describe YOUR creativity? And what are the two most important characteristics that you could attribute to YOUR own creativity?**

Fortunately, more participants responded to this question through posts and comments. Jenny situated herself in the field of words and learning and stated that creativity is the pleasure she gets by using words and logic to create and express ideas. She even creates most of the learning material she uses for teaching, while the characteristics that she chose to attribute to her creativity are “words/language” and “teaching/ learning”, which eventually contribute to her sense of wellbeing.

For TheoZina, creativity is connected with aesthetics and the beauty of the world around us. As she describes, “*creativity is an outlet of our brains to feel that we contribute by making something new with the help of our imagination. I think not everybody can be creative, it is a skill...*”. This statement produced a fertile dialogue between TheoZina and Nikos about the nature of creativity as well as TheoZina’s belief that “not everybody can be creative”. The main contradictory argument was that even though creativity is related to imagination and all people have imagination, then how is it possible that all people cannot be equally creative?



At the same time, emphasis was laid on the educational systems and the role of parents and teachers in the formation of creative people. Sadly, there was a common agreement that only a few teachers promote and provoke creative thinking and creativity, something which hopefully needs to be multiplied in the future.

Another contribution made by Tziadora refers to symbolism and the multiple levels of meaning as a creative aspect of her everyday life. For example, poetry constitutes the perfect field to do so by using a word with two or more meanings, or building a sentence which may have a double function. Characteristically, Tziadora provided an example which provoked further discussion and eventually led the participants to resurface interesting elements of creativity. Some of them include: “through questioning creativity blasts”, “seeing multiple perspectives and possibilities in things that seem to be already saturated”, “it’s all about playing with combinations, playing with ideas as if they were a lego set or a coloring palette”. Furthermore, a special reference for creative writing was also made by Tziadora, who shared with the rest of the participants three observations that she had made:

**Nikos Mour** Really interesting thoughts TheoZina, but if creativity is related to imagination, why do you think that some people are not creative? Therefore, some people will not have imagination? P.S. Food for thought: <https://www.linkedin.com/.../everybody-creative-jason...>

**TheoZina Tsagalīs** Is everybody creative?  
Everybody dreams. No matter how conservative, narrow-minded or literal we may be when we're awake, when...

LINKEDIN.COM

Μου αρέσει! · Απάντηση · Αφαίρεση προεπισκόπησης · 3 Φεβρουαρίου στις 8:17 μ.μ.

**TheoZina Tsagalīs** Because not everybody uses his/her imagination creatively and this can be seen in children's essays even in Elementary school. Creativity is a skill in my opinion because it can be encouraged by parents and teachers...

Δεν μου αρέσει · Απάντηση · 2 · 3 Φεβρουαρίου στις 9:12 μ.μ.

**Nikos Mour** Encouraged and cultivated. How about education? Do you think that the greek educational system promotes and fosters creativity?

Μου αρέσει! · Απάντηση · 3 Φεβρουαρίου στις 9:34 μ.μ.

**TheoZina Tsagalīs** I think that some teachers-professors try to encourage it but as critical thought, creativity fails to be a primary goal in greek educational systems... hopefully some subjects like arts and music still exist in greek school but even there we can find students that fail to express themselves ...

Δεν μου αρέσει · Απάντηση · 2 · 3 Φεβρουαρίου στις 9:46 μ.μ.

**Nikos Mour** Agree with that! Only a few exceptions (luckily enough i know some of those) do their best accordingly. We just need to hope that those exceptions will become the majority one day!

Μου αρέσει! · Απάντηση · 1 · 3 Φεβρουαρίου στις 9:53 μ.μ.

**TheoZina Tsagalīs** That 's exactly what i meant my dear friend..

Δεν μου αρέσει · Απάντηση · 1 · 3 Φεβρουαρίου στις 9:55 μ.μ.

**TheoZina Tsagalīs** We need teachers with vision they have to be creative themselves in order to transfer it to the next generation...

Μου αρέσει! · Απάντηση · 1 · 3 Φεβρουαρίου στις 9:56 μ.μ.

**Nikos Mour** I think we have reached an agreement! And the word "vision" really resonates with me! Only one small observation. I would replace the verb "transfer" with "cultivate", as in the first occasion it is implied that creativity is a package that can be transferred. Instead, i would suggest that the process of being creative could possibly be transferred.

Μου αρέσει! · Απάντηση · 1 · 3 Φεβρουαρίου στις 10:04 μ.μ.





## Alphabet of Creativity

The idea of constructing “the Alphabet of Creativity” emerged as a playful way to engage the members of the group in an activity which is designed to enhance creativity, refers to creativity and does not demand a great amount of time. Here is the first post which introduced the game.

*Hello everyone, Tziadora had a really interesting and playful idea.  
How about constructing the Alphabet of Creativity?*

*In order to so, each person will write something which is related to creativity starting with a letter of the alphabet.*

*Example:*

*All people are creative (Nikos)*

*Be spontaneous (Tziadora)*

*C.....*

*D....*

*E....*

*etc*

*P.S. In order not to be confused, add your contribution below as a comment.*



After that post, everyone could participate by adding their own comment. The only thing that the participants were expected to do, was to pick up a letter and unfold a sentence revealing a view, a perspective, or a short quote on creativity. The alphabet was constructed over 25 days even though there was not a deadline for the completion of the game.

The idea of organizing the members' contributions as an alphabet instead of collecting free, random thoughts on creativity was preferred for two main reasons. First, the alphabet resembles an open invitation which encourages people to participate and contribute, while at the same time the creative process shows similarities to playing a game. Secondly, the activity is based on free expression, with the exception of one provided restriction: the first letter of the phrase that will be written should be a letter of the Alphabet. Consequently, the Alphabet is an activity built in terms of developmental creativity. At this point, it must be noted that the nature of this task is typically linked to creative writing and improvisational theatre.

The gradual construction of the alphabet has the additional advantage of participants being provided with immediate feedback of the work that has been done so far making it easier to reduce repetitions. However, as it can be seen, there were alternative contributions in some letters, as some participants tried to shed light on different aspects of the topic. Perhaps this game can be played many times according to a particular thought about creativity. The final form of our first Alphabet of Creativity can be found on the next page.

When you start something new you begin with hope that it will be of value to someone. The way people collaborated in the alphabet project was the way that we hoped people would work together when we set up the Facebook group. But it has taken a while to achieve this.

The many different contributions and contributors mean that the alphabet grows in an organic way gathering beliefs, views and perspectives of different members. Facebook encourages interpersonal interaction and new relationships to form and flourish in response to posts that are made. The frequency of posts and comments made, together with 'likes' expressed by participants, all created a sense of energy as the game unfolded. The 'likes' and 'positive comments' also demonstrated that contributions were valued by other members of the community. Furthermore, feedback was not only provided by the participants, but also from the administrators, an action that promoted the continuation of the game<sup>2</sup>. Finally, the collective aspect can interestingly be spotted inside the Alphabet, where some contributors underlined the joy of co-creation:

*Help others fulfill their dreams (Konstantinos)*

*Unlock their creativity (Konstantinos)*

*Value those who share their creative soul with you (Bev)*

*Willingly assist others to unlock their creative mind (Bev).*

## Alphabet of Creativity



Our Creative Life #creativelife

*All people are creative (Nikos)*  
*Be spontaneous (Tziadora)*  
*Close your eyes and set yourself free (Jenny)*  
*Dare to be different, dare to be creative (TheoZina)*  
*Everybody is a creator, if he's willing to try! (Ioanna)*  
*Follow your dreams, Create your future (Giota)*  
*Go for it (Chrissi)*  
*Help others fulfill their dreams (Konstantinos)*  
*Inclusive not exclusive the universe and beyond is your creative playground (Bev)*  
*Just do it (Bev)*  
*Knowledge multiplied by creativity an unbeatable formula (Bev)*  
*Lose yourself in a beautiful song (Despina)*  
*Minimise the Blocks by opening up your creative mind (Bev)*  
*Nothing is impossible (Nikos)*  
*Open up your mind to creative thoughts (Sue)*  
*Play with "blocks" (blocks= both as building blocks and as obstacles) (Tziadora)*  
*Question is the answer. Ask ! (Tziadora)*  
*Reality is what you make of it, so... make the best of it! (Antonia)*  
*Sky is the limit (Rafaela)*  
*Teaching is the entrance to the world (Maria)*  
*Unlock their creativity (Konstantinos)*  
*Value those who share their creative soul with you (Bev)*  
*Willingly assist others to unlock their creative mind (Bev)*  
*X-plore, x-tend, x-cel (Jenny)*  
*Yank people to creative paths (Nikos)*  
*Zillions of stars, each one with its own story waiting to be told (Sue).*

Alternative contributions:

C Collaboration for Co-creation (Tziadora)

E Embrace, encourage and enjoy your inner creativity (Bev).

H Alternative contribution: Happy are those who hear and are in harmony with the voice of creativity (Bev).

X Xenial attitudes can provoke creativity (Nikos)

Y Yours for the taking if you just reach out. (Bev)

## Conclusion

Anyone with imagination can have a nice idea but to turn that idea into something meaningful requires work, effort and plenty of creativity. The idea was born in a discussion that was aimed at generating ideas. It didn't matter who suggested it as we were all working together to add value to what we were already doing by extending our involvement to another platform for social learning. Setting up a Facebook group is not difficult if you are a regular user. What is difficult is to attract a group of people to use it in such way that everyone benefits and sees value in participating i.e. the hard work of creativity is to turn a group into a community and Facebook page into a social learning space. Looking back we can see that the strategies we employed have all been directed to

developing the will in our participants to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences. This is the nature of development in this context and without it there would be no achievement and no article.

Development is a never ending process but we have two symbols to show from our initial efforts to develop our Facebook community. The Tree of Creativity stands for the beliefs that were expressed in the online community by its members and provides in general an inspiring, collective and authentic asset in the inquiry and perhaps discovery of creativity in our everyday life. In addition, the Alphabet of Creativity displays interesting views on what might be involved in our creative life. Teamwork and games empowered by the special features of social media made the project an "edu-taining" experience, through which learning was accomplished by sharing beliefs on creativity and often seeing that the beliefs of others are not so different to our own. Needless to say, that discussion over creativity can never be ended or locked up in an Alphabet! Our role as facilitators of this group is to continue to develop the conditions that liberate ideas and conversations that have yet to be brought into existence. After all, the developmental aspect of creativity not only can be perceived as the element that states the fact that creativity is everywhere and in everyone, but also dictates the paths in which all of us should walk, the path of imagination, the path of freedom, the path of passion, the path of creation.

## Notes

1 The Facebook community can be accessed in <http://bit.ly/21PRlxh>.

2 Feedback provided included two incidents: "The Creative Alphabet is not finished. More contributors and contributions needed! Emoticon smile and picture" and "Well, the Alphabet of Creativity is ready! Thanks to you all we have completed the Alphabet, an interesting and collective product, which highlights personal beliefs and views on creativity".



# A Story of Innovation: The Cyclone Vacuum Cleaner Invented by James Dyson

Robin Roy



*Robin is (Emeritus) Professor of Design and Environment at the Open University. He joined the University in 1971 and chaired and contributed to many courses on design, innovation and environment. His current interests are ecological design and sustainable development. He has written widely on these and related subjects.*

While James Dyson was developing his on Ballbarrow invention (wheelbarrow with ball wheel), the resin powder used to coat the metal parts of the Ballbarrow kept clogging the filtration system. Dyson was advised to install an industrial cyclone (similar to that used to remove dust from the air in sawmills and other industrial plant) to separate the fine powder from the air. While installing the cyclone James got the idea for a domestic cleaner that used the cyclone principle to separate the dust from dirty air. Although it may be argued that the cyclone cleaner idea arose by chance, it is significant that Dyson is always on the lookout for such ideas and 'chance favours the prepared mind'. Dyson's cyclone cleaner involved a mental transfer of technology from one application to another - 'We're never original' he observed, 'there are always connections somewhere'.

Dyson established the basic technical feasibility of his idea by testing a simple cardboard model cyclone fitted to a conventional vacuum cleaner and then considered the commercial potential of his invention before attempting to develop it....Conceiving the basic idea behind the cyclone cleaner was only the beginning of a lengthy research, design and development process. Determining the precise shapes of the cyclones needed to efficiently separate coarse particles and fine dust entailed Dyson in making and testing many thousands of brass, aluminium and perspex models in his workshop. He argues that this empirical 'cut and try' approach was necessary because none of the theories about how cyclones worked could provide the answers he wanted. Nevertheless, other individuals might have attempted to model the cyclone mathematically before proceeding to empirical ex-

'The first UK-made Dyson Dual Cyclone cleaner, the DC01, was launched in the UK in 1993, 15 years after the initial idea. The DC01 cleaner was commercially successful and quickly gained nearly a fifth of the British market. A cylinder version, the DC02, soon followed and Dyson now runs a design-driven business worth around £530 million which, as well as other products, has a number of new models in its vacuum cleaner range. The company continues to carry out the research and development needed to create new and improved technologies. This R&D work remains UK-based, but since 2002, to reduce costs and bring component suppliers closer to the factory, Dyson cleaners have been manufactured in Malaysia.'



perimentation. The first prototypes, with two cyclones, one for particles and one for dust, placed side-by-side was built in 1981. This innovative design was an upright cleaner that did not clog or lose power as it filled with dust, was easy to empty and had a built-in retractable hose to provide the functions of a cylinder vacuum cleaner. Its design involved Dyson's combination of skills as inventor, engineer and industrial designer. Dyson showed his prototype cyclone cleaner to the two major UK manufacturers of vacuum cleaners. Although keen to see his invention, these manufacturers were not willing to license it for production. Dyson believes that this rejection was partly due to the 'not invented here' syndrome and partly because such a radically new product represented too great a risk and challenge to the established technology. Undeterred, Dyson conducted further design and development work and produced a completely new design with concentric cyclones plus other improved features (the 'G-force vacuum cleaner').



He deliberately designed the product to be coloured pink to emphasis its innovativeness and made the cyclone enclosure transparent so that customers would be able to observe the swirling dust particles. 'From a market standpoint', Dyson argues, 'if the product contains any new ideas then it is absolutely essential that the product be visually different'. This design was successfully licensed in 1986 to a Japanese manufacturer after an abortive contract involving a British, an Italian and a US firm. The US firm subsequently copied the cyclone cleaner, which forced Dyson to combine the ability to conceive and develop technical inventions with the design skills to translate those inventions into attractive products. His particular approach to invention and creative design depends on getting ideas and solving problems when working with and observing physical objects, what Thring and Laithwaite call 'thinking with the hands', rather than by drawing or theorising. Dyson says he almost never solves problems by getting 'brainwaves in the bath' - a classic psychological model of creativity - for him solutions come when 'welding or hammering something in the workshop'. Dyson also believes that at the initial concept stage of an invention or new design it is best not to be too expert because the innovator has to question established ideas. However, in order to develop an idea into something that works and can be economically manufactured it is usually necessary to become highly expert technically. He observed: 'The more you get involved and study something in depth, the more creative ideas arise. You can't create marketable innovations as a amateur.' Fortunately, acquiring the necessary in-depth expertise is not very difficult when focussed on a finite problem and specific area of knowledge.

For Dyson, innovation is a matter of having good ideas based on experience and careful observation of the real world followed by hard work involving practical skills and technical expertise to convert that idea into a marketable product.

## References

The article is an edited extract from

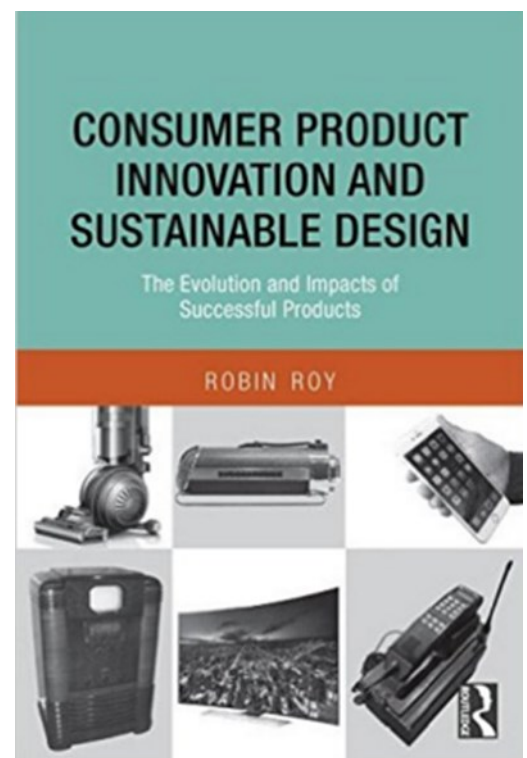
Robin R (1993). Case studies of creativity in innovative product development. *Design Studies*, 14(4) pp. 423-443. Available online at <http://oro.open.ac.uk/28441/1/CaseStudiesOfCreativity2.pdf>

Thring, M.W. and Laithwaite, E.R. (1977) *How to invent*, Macmillan, London, UK

*Readers might also be interested in the following OU modules in the Design and Innovation BA/B.Sc Hons degree*  
<http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/qualifications/q61>  
<http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/u101>  
<http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/t317>

### Consumer Product Innovation and Sustainable Design: The Evolution and Impacts of Successful by Robin Roy

The book follows the innovation and evolution of consumer products from vacuum cleaners to mobile phones from their original inventions to the present day. It discusses how environmental concerns and legislation have influenced their design and the profound effects these products have had on society and culture. This book also uses the lessons from the successes and failures of examples of these consumer products to draw out practical guidelines for designers, engineers, marketers and managers on how to become more effective at product development, innovation and designing for environmental sustainability.





### WORLD CREATIVITY & INNOVATION WEEK

April 15-21 2016 <http://wciw.org/>

WCIW encourages people to use their creativity to make the world a better and more interesting place and to make their own place in the world better and more interesting. Creative Academic will participate in this global event in 2016.

Check the website <http://wciw.org/> or WCIW facebook page for events around the world

### Creative Academic's Involvement in WCIW includes

1 Hosting an online conversation throughout April on the theme of 'Exploring Creativity & Innovation in Higher Education'. We invite you to share your perspectives and practices through our '[Creative Academic](#)' Google+ community.

2 Supporting a [Pedagogic Innovators #PIN survey and project](#) organised by Chrissi Nerantzi

3 Publishing Creative Academic Magazine #4 on the theme of 'Creativity in Development, Achievement & Innovation' <http://www.creativeacademic.uk/magazine.html>

4 Facilitating #creativeHE 5 day conversation and sharing perspectives on creativity April 15-20 2016 <https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041>



We are delighted to be working with the organisers of WCIW on another project: Jenny Willis, CAM's Executive Editor, will be conducting a survey of all participants in WCIW16 in order to explore their reasons for contributing, and their experience of the event. The results will be shared with Marci and her team, and will be published in an annex to CAM4 in May 2016, available on-line and free to download.

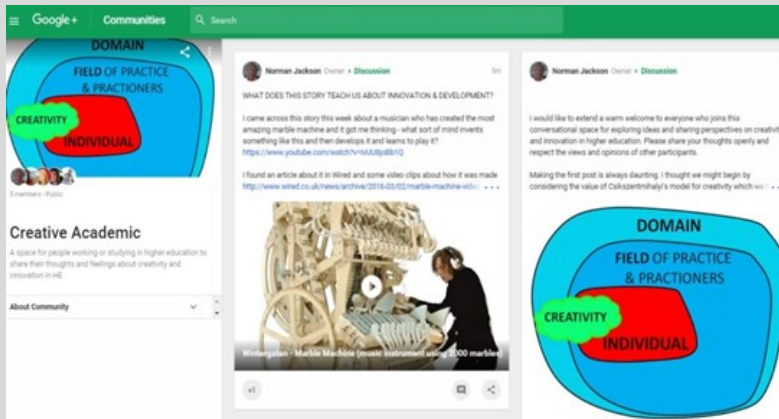


# GOOGLE+ platforms for social learning



## Creative Academic Google+

<https://plus.google.com/communities/113507315355647483022>



We launched our new discussion forum in March to provide members of the Creative Academic community with a space for conversation and sharing ideas and practices.

Throughout March-April we are trying to promote discussion and exploration of

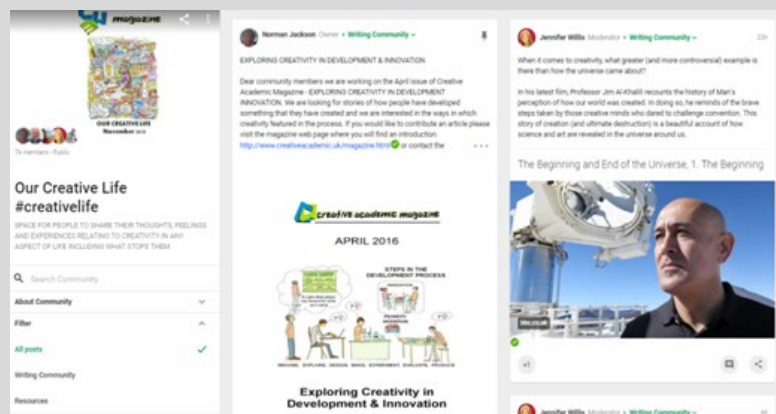
the idea of 'creativity in development and innovation' as part of our contribution to **World Creativity and Innovation Week**. We welcome your involvement,



## Our Creative Life Google+

<https://plus.google.com/communities/106367720977059375674>

This space for people to share stories about their own experiences of creativity and inspiring stories of the creativity of other people.



## CREATIVE ACADEMIC EVENT



April 15-21st

### 5 day #creativeHE 'Imagineering in Higher Education'

<https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041>

Imagineering involves using imagination to create ideas and invent possible ways they might be implemented - in this case the context is to enhance students' creative development in higher education. This is an open social learning event using the #creativeHE open learning platform. It is part of Creative Academic's contribution to World Creativity & Innovation Week. Everyone is welcome to participate.

## CONFERENCES

**4 Creative University Conference 2016**  
**18/19th of August at Aalborg University, Denmark**  
*"Knowledge cultures, critical creative thinking and innovative learning processes"*

The 4. Creative University Conference engages with the ideas of "Critical thinking, engaging learning processes, and stimulating collaboration - utopia or reality?" It addresses the development of knowledge economies, discourses of creativity and new conceptualizations of the University as place of education and research. Learning is becoming a key concept and phenomenon concerning creativity and physical as well as psychological learning environments that facilitate movement in body and mind, individual and organisation, institution and society.

The conference organisers invites contributions that investigate philosophical, cultural, social and pedagogical aspects of 'The Creative University', to extend the dialogues between playful, creative learning processes and the contemporary concerns in society and the wider world.

Further information can be found on the conference web-site <http://www.creativeuniversity.aau.dk/conference-theme/>



This edition considers approaches to supporting students' personal and professional development in Higher Education through innovations within and alongside the curriculum. Many of the features elucidate ideas around the nature of work in Careers Education, Work Placements, Internships and Careers Guidance and the value and benefits these provide for learners.


**Open Publication Goldsmiths**

The publication is free to download at:  
[https://issuu.com/theframe/docs/the\\_frame\\_3](https://issuu.com/theframe/docs/the_frame_3)

# CREATIVE ACADEMIC

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Creative Academic is a not for profit, voluntary and community-based educational social enterprise. Our purpose is to champion creativity, in all its manifestations, in higher education in the UK and the wider world. Our goal is to become a global HUB for the production and curation of resources that are of value to the higher education community. Membership is free and open to anyone who shares our interests and values.

Our activities are focused on:

- 1) The creativity of teachers and other professionals who support students' development
- 2) The creativity of students and how their creative development is encouraged and facilitated by teachers and other professionals who contribute to their learning and development
- 3) The creativity of universities - the ways in which institutions encourage, support and recognise the creativity and creative development of students and staff.

[Read more](#)

TO JOIN OUR COMMUNITY & SUBSCRIBE TO OUR MAGAZINE [CLICK HERE](#)



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

@academiccreator




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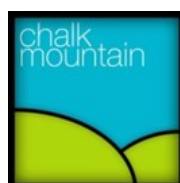
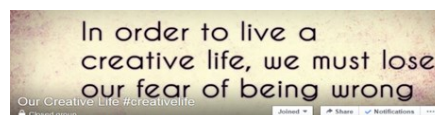


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## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

**Creative Academic Magazine 5, October 2016**

### **Design Journeys and Creative Adventures: exploring design in the creative process**

*"Design is the key to everything. If you learn how to design you can do anything."*  
Doug Cranmer

CAM4 focused on the relationship between creativity, development, innovation and achievement. CAM5 will focus on the relationship of creativity and design. Designing is a key part of the imagining and development process, regardless of what is being achieved, so it is appropriate for this issue to explore more thoroughly what design, designing and to be a designer means in different contexts and how creativity features in design processes.

While some academic subjects have design at their core, the ability to design in order to develop solutions to

problems or opportunities is important in many (most?) other subjects. Similarly, while some jobs and tasks are essentially about design, many activities that involve solving problems or exploiting opportunities require design skills.

While some individuals are Designers (with a capital 'D'), we are - in fact - all designers when we are engaged in thinking about creating something; whether it's a car, a cake, a camping trip...or a curriculum. We all use design, although we may not recognise it as a formal process, and we are likely to utilise our creativity when we are designing something.

In this next issue of CAM we will explore what design means - philosophies, purposes, processes and practices - in different contexts, the relationship between design and creativity, and how we develop and reflect on our abilities to think and act like a designer when we're being creative. We welcome contributions - written, graphic, visual, etc. - from our readers (and beyond - please spread the word!).

