Exploring the Ecology of Learning, Teaching, Pedagogy & Creativity

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Powerpoint slides can be downloaded from http://www.normanjackson.co.uk/ait.html

The presentation will introduce the idea of learning ecologies and the proposition that in the world outside higher education we continually develop our own ecologies to learning and achieve something significant and deal with complex situations, solve problems and engage with opportunities. An ecological perspective on learning requires teachers to think of themselves as part of a specialised ecosystem within which teaching and learning takes place. Through their pedagogical thinking and practices, their personal pedagogy, HE teachers create ecologies within which students learn and have potential to use their creativity. Learners are involved in these ecologies but they also create their own. An ecological view of higher education takes account of the opportunities students have to create their own ecologies for learning within and outside the academic curriculum.

This talk explores the idea that learning, teaching and creativity are ecological phenomenon and our ecologies for learning are the vehicles for integrating our creative imagination and critical reasoning to create new meaning.

AIT Google+Forum - for follow-up conversations relating to talk and workshop https://plus.google.com/communities/115011427288607647716

Core concepts

1 Lifewide learning (Jackson et al 2011)
2 Lifewide Curriculum (Jackson 2011)
2 Learning ecology (Jackson 2016)

3 Learning ecologies are the vehicles for the integration of perception, ecological and critical thinking (ecological thinking)

Perception, Imagination, Critical Thinking & Creativity in Action

HOW EXPERTS SOLVE PROBLEMS
3 Learning Ecologies: the students' perspective

Example of a student's ecology for learning

Ecologies for learning, developing & achieving occur at all scales & in all parts of a students' life

Students' higher education experiences can be visualised as a constellation of ecologies for learning.

Most are shaped by teachers & institution some by students, and some by organisations outside the university.

To accommodate all the affordances for learning in a students' life we need to adopt a Lifewide Curriculum.

A student's ecologies for learning, developing & achieving

"becoming the archaeologist I want to be"

Types of learning ecology involved in becoming the archaeologist I want to be: A process of creating meaning

Conceptual tool for making sense of a students ecologies for learning, developing & achieving

Determined by learner

B Partly determined by learner(s)

C Partly determined by institution or other external parties eg a work placement or volunteering organisation

D Completely determined by learner

Other Contexts eg work, community field, co-curriculum extra-curriculum

Learning ecology includes goals, affordances, processes, spaces, relationships, resources (knowledge, tools, technologies, mediating artefacts)
4 Personal pedagogy

Ecological concept of pedagogy

Pedagogy is more than teaching method, more than curriculum, more than assessment practice. It is all these things, but it is also how they are made into patterns of actions, activities and interactions by a particular teacher, with a particular group of students [in a particular context].

The concept of pedagogy encompasses relationships, conversations, learning environments, rules, norms and culture within the wider social context. It takes in the ways in which what teachers and students do is framed and delimited within a specific site, a policy regime and the historical [cultural] context.

Thomson, P. Hall, C., Jones, K. and Green, J.S (2012)

Within a university, teachers create ecologies within which students learn, develop, create & achieve. These learning ecologies are shaped by their beliefs, values & pedagogical knowledge & skills.

Possible influences on a teacher’s pedagogical thinking & practice

- Strategic priorities
- Institutional influences
- Graduate attributes
- Peers
- Other

- Policies & incentives
- QA policies
- Module feedback
- NSS
- Formal training / professional development
- Employers / industry / business practices & expectations
- Professional bodies
- Professional networking, social media & conferences
- Technology
- Reading
- Past history

LEARNERS AND THEIR NEEDS & INTERESTS

TEACHER

GENERIC PEDAGOGY

DISCIPLINARY PEDAGOGY

- Generic pedagogy
- Disciplinary pedagogy
- Learners and their needs & interests
- Teacher
5 Creativity in higher education - The Wicked Problem of Creativity in Higher Education

Teacher beliefs

**HE teacher beliefs about creativity #lthechat n=40**

- Creativity is a rare gift that only a few people have
- Some people are naturally more creative than others
- Most people can develop their creativity if they are given the opportunity to do so
- Developing students' creativity should be integral to their development while at university
- Students' programmes are designed to encourage students' to use and develop their creativity
- HE could do more to encourage & support students' creative development
- HE should do more to encourage & support students' creative development

**What being creative means in eight disciplines**

*Based on surveys within each community (Jackson & Shaw 2006)*

- Being imaginative – ability to think generatively & associatively
- Being original / inventive - new ideas which add value
- Being able to adapt/improvise (re-creation)
- Being curious having an enquiring disposition – having the desire to find out
- Being able to think synthetically and relationally – connect in novel ways, work with incomplete data, recognise patterns
- Being able to think critically to evaluate ideas
- Being resourceful – finding and making use of what is available
- Being able to communicate in ways that help people comprehend and if necessary, see things differently
Pedagogical thinking and practices that encourage students' to use their creativity and create their own ecologies for learning and achievement

Encouraging students to use their creativity
PEDAGOGICAL DESIGN TOOL

PEDAGOGIC APPROACHES THAT
• foster intrinsic motivation
• immerse the learner in challenging, solution-finding situations and tasks
• involve inquiry-rich approaches to learning and problem working
• are rich in peer-to-peer interaction and collaboration
• involve teacher as co-creator, activist, facilitator not just a transmitter
• involve teachers in getting out of the way – to enable students to create
• involve space for reflection to enable learners' to understand their own creativity
• involve the use of strategies for recording, curating and communicating learning, creativity and achievement

AND CREATE OPPORTUNITY FOR LEARNERS TO
• create their own ecologies for learning & achieving
• experience contexts that are unfamiliar
• experience novel tasks and challenges
• experience real world situations
• use their imaginations to design, invent, adapt and/or develop something
• use their skills to make something or make something happen
• take risks without being penalised for not fully succeeding
• reflect on their processes and grow personal understandings about their own creativity
• gain recognition for their creativity

IMPORTANT FEATURES OF CREATIVITY IN DISCIPLINES
• Using imagination
• Being original – new ideas / perspectives / things / solutions
• Being curious / inquiring / find solutions
• Being resourceful
• Being able to combine, connect, synthesise etc
• Being able to think critically / analyse, evaluate
• Being able to think reflectively / empathically
• Being able to represent ideas and communicate meaning to others & form / tell stories

Further resources relating to creativity in higher education
Creative Academic community website includes articles and a magazine free to download. You can register your interest on the home page [http://www.creativeacademic.uk/](http://www.creativeacademic.uk/)
#creativeHE Google+ Forum [https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041](https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041)
Creative Pedagogies project [http://www.creativeacademic.uk/creative-pedagogies.html](http://www.creativeacademic.uk/creative-pedagogies.html)