

## **Cornucopia – innovation - editorial**

When the verb innovate is used in the field of education it is often done so as a call to arms for change. This makes absolute sense given that the word is a derivative of Latin's *innovāre* meaning that changes are to actively occur in something previously established, particularly if it means announcing a novel or different idea or way of doing something. Interestingly though, *innovāre* is the present active infinitive of *innovō*, a first conjugation which as well as meaning: I alter, innovate, also means: I renew, restore; I return to. These additional semantics that recognise a former or established state that requires enlivening, reconsidering, or simply returning to, rather than changing, have worth in a consideration of what it is to innovate.

Innovation can be understood through the choices that are made by an individual or a community that differentiate a particular outcome from what has gone before. It works therefore with tradition to provide agency in people's lives. It is innovation that allows the perception of how knowledge can be manipulated. As such it represents the 'variation in repetition', as Nicolaisen (1980) would say, that prevents the reductive definition of innovation as being merely the opposite of tradition. How could it be the opposite when tradition itself is abstract and multivariate? But, we can on the other hand usefully think of innovation as based on an appreciation or recognition of traditional precedents. Innovation and tradition are intricately and inexorably entangled, "and represent the complex processes of humans expressing themselves to others in ways that carry value and meaning" (Bronner, 1992, p.3). It is no coincidence that tradition will be the theme of next year's edition of Cornucopia, nor that reflection was the theme last year, for it is this skill that allows innovation to be conceptually disentangled from its playful conflict with tradition in order that an individual's or collective's creativity might flourish in practice.

Innovation then, is not just the product of creativity it is also the bedfellow of tradition. And whilst we might come across reductive understandings that attempt to describe the opposite of innovation as simply being repetition; and innovation therefore as originality. Nonetheless, as has been highlighted, innovation itself can be understood in many different ways, in many different contexts. One understanding is an individual's specific performance or creative act set aside from the collective precedent. Alongside the following consideration of this, the interdependence of individual creativity and cultural tradition though should not be underestimated. Without such interdependence the former would not be recognizable as remarkable.

In an educational context, innovation certainly runs the risk of being faddish or fashionable, but this is possibly and more optimistically a sign of a community of practitioners being willing to try out new things; at least recognising the possibility for change. Those practices that are successful in brokering new pedagogies, approaches or ways of understanding impact though, are usually those that do not rather cynically or disingenuously profess to 'capture tomorrow's ideas', or provide 'a model of innovation'. While these sentiments may peak practitioners curiosity, innovative practice is not a fixed process, it is a process concerned with: taking risks; venturing into the unknown through adaptation; giving 'what comes out' a chance to be a determiner, rather than obsessing over particular 'outcomes'; and above all, it is

about creating cultural synchronicity, synergy, and sharing new found understandings. So that whatever guise innovation may take, it may be of practical use.

In this third issue of Cornucopia, Wendy and I hope to do just that: share and celebrate the scholarly excellence of students in our Faculty. This issue again includes examples of outstanding academic writing by students from Levels 4 to 8; from first year undergraduates to post-doctoral level students. We have welcomed an excellent contribution from a guest institution, Leeds Trinity University. All of the papers offer innovative thinking or approaches to pedagogy in one form or another, and in many of the submissions, the authors challenge the status quo to improve: Someone once said, 'if it works, it is obsolete', this is a concept that while pithy would perhaps make a good motto for an enduring innovative practice.

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### References

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