

Reinvention

Paul C Taylor

The Reinvention Centre is:

- a Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)
- based at the University of Warwick
- working in collaboration with Oxford Brookes University

Funding for the 74 CETLs comes from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)

- we are tasked with promoting *undergraduate research*

- we are attempting to reinvent, for the era of mass higher education, the notion of an inclusive academic community where learners, teachers and researchers are all seen as scholars in the common pursuit of knowledge
- grounded conceptually and practically in the work of Ernest Boyer (1990)

“Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry (wo)men pursue in the world, with the world and with each other.”

Paulo Freire

Inquiry is an orientation to learning that is open and flexible, in which faculty and students are co-learners who guide and facilitate the student-driven learning experience, emphasising the development of complex questions, critical thinking and assumption of responsibility. The roles of the instructor are to teach the skills of inquiry, to inspire interest, to model processes (e.g. critical thinking), and to act as a resource person (Hudspith and Jenkins, 2001). (Justice et al)

- ‘Inquiry’ is focused on the instruction of students in the art of inquiry, to prepare them for subsequent learning experiences

Whilst the importance for students of getting jobs is recognised, and the relevance of skills acquired by doing research is made explicit, this is not the primary focus of work carried out within the Reinvention Centre.

Instead, research is defined in such a way as to re-centre intellectual and critical enquiry, questioning the notion of 'work' itself,

[Lambert, Parker & Neary]

Reinvention Fellows seek funding to reinvent modules *of their own choosing*:

- Performing entrepreneurial ethics: learning business ethics through research activities
- English Perceptions of Venice
- Hip Hop Theatre and Performance
- Performance, Geography, History: Intersections and Traces
- More Problems and Less Solutions: A reinvention of accounting education in an age of employability
- Student Perspectives on Careers and Employability – a research based Career Management Certificate Module
- New Undergraduate Module in Creative Collaboration

Freedom and Creativity

In a straightforward Enquiry-Based Learning task, it may well be that the goals the students discover are the same as those the tutor would have set: the path leads to the same end. The difference is simply – but crucially – that the students learn for themselves. But, in more complex and problematic tasks, there may be many pathways leading to many different ends.

[Hutchings 2006]

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We should be encouraging our undergraduates to learn in a manner that mirrors the learning process of research. The facilitator must recognise that it is the students who are driving the learning. Facilitators must both have, and demonstrate that they have, trust in the students. This means allowing space and time, not interfering, not nervously hovering, not intimidating.

It is about releasing, freeing and having confidence in the enquiring minds of our students, treating them in short as colleagues in the learning process. This is providing freedom to explore and space and time.





Hierarchical academic/student relationships change to produce more fluid and elaborate collaborations between producers of scholarly work. Addressing these theoretical issues in practical ways calls for a critical rethinking and reinvention of the spaces in which students learn [Lambert]



An open space with minimal fittings in order to encourage and enable the free and flexible movement of people and ideas and with no pre-determined place for teacher or student. With its portable yet attractive furniture the room can be adapted to a range of pedagogic situations, not only from one class to the next but within a single teaching session. [Lambert]

Assessment

*Enquiry-Based approaches [with conventional assessment methods] can lead students to engage with ideas that **may not be included in their final work**, but nevertheless play an important role in their broader intellectual development*

- When the assessment event is closely related to the **practice** of the subject, “assessment takes a back seat” [Theatre Studies students reflecting on an assessed performance]
- Though some of the same students still report choosing a “safe” option for their assessed performance

Reinvention

a Journal of Undergraduate Research

- Launched in September 2007
- Publishes undergraduate work
- Peer-reviewed
- Multi-disciplinary and open to all
- Collaboration between staff, both academic and admin, and students
- Editor is a student

Reinvention

a Journal of
Undergraduate Research

To date it has been the single most helpful process with regards to my writing skills

[I was] pleased with the fact that [the reviewers] had taken the time to think in such depth about the paper's content, and very interested to receive their views and critiques

It made me engage with the topic in far greater depth than is usual with undergraduate study; the extra motivation existed because of the promise of a tangible end product, and a sense of actively creating something, rather than the usual undergraduate activities of writing essays simply to 'make a grade'

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Undergraduate Research

I had nothing to lose by submitting my paper and am very proud that I was able to make it good enough to be published

- How often do students feel *proud* of their work?
- Students have everything *to lose* when being assessed

Conclusion: the Student as Producer

1. Discipline based research
2. Freedom to explore, fail and succeed
3. Creative environments
4. Assessment through the practice of the discipline
5. “Validation” of research through peer review

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Collaborative, creative engagement of staff and students within the curriculum and in innovative learning spaces is challenging, complex, troublesome but offers *“room for error, experiment and astonishing achievement”*

