

Provocation workshop 1

Personal and organisational creativity

In coming to a discussion of the nature of creativity, and trying to understand its potential within health, we suggest that material on the subject falls into two very broad camps which we identify as personal and organizational.

The personal approach to creativity can be crudely characterized by a belief in the latent creativity of human beings and an understanding that increased creativity ultimately leads to personal change and/or improved well-being. This approach is exemplified in the work of psychologist Carl Rogers who says:

The mainspring of creativity appears to be the same tendency which we discover so deeply as the curative force in psychotherapy - *man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities* [sic]. By this I mean the directional trend which is evident in all organic and human life - the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature - the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, or the self. This tendency may become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defenses; it may be hidden behind elaborate facades which deny its existence; it is my belief however, based on my experience, that it exists in every individual, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed.
[italics original]

Rogers, Carl *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*
London: Constable, 1990: 350-1.

Rogers proposes that everybody is creative but material in this category may also propose the individual genius of the creative artist. The emphasis of the work, however, remains on the personal experience of creativity.

The other broad approach we term organizational. This perspective may be more focused on systemic change - for example within business. It proposes that the innovative nature of creativity may be a tool to increase efficacy and profit i.e. wealth creation. An example of this approach is given in *Creativity at Work: Developing the Right Practices to Make Innovation Happen*. The authors state:

...what allows a company to respond proactively to diverse pressures is *the development of creativity as a core competence*. By core competence we mean a well-developed ability or characteristic that is central to your firm's ability to succeed. The focus of creativity may be innovation in the traditional sense - the invention of outstanding products and services - but it may also be the development of new processes, new ways of communicating with customers, or new ways of attracting and retaining

the best talent. *Creativity, in short, is the core of all the competencies of your organization because creativity is what makes something better or new.* Creativity is your best path to creating value.

[Italics original]

DeGraff, Jeff & Katherine Lawrence, *Creativity at Work: Developing the Right Practices to Make Innovation Happen*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002: 2

This text places an emphasis on systemic creativity. For example, chapter five is entitled:

“Improve Practices: Incremental Creativity Through Modular Design and Development and Process Improvement Systems”.

In trying to understand how creativity might be better encouraged and facilitated amongst a health and care workforce, we have begun to question whether some clues might reside in an exploration of the cross-over between these camps that we have so crudely polarised. In considering the needs of patients and of the public we are perhaps used to approaching creativity from a personal perspective. The health and care workforce, however, are themselves probably more subject to organizational approaches to creativity. The ultimate goal of the public health service is to promote and sustain health and well-being rather than to maximize financial profits, but it is also under pressure to function efficiently (including cost efficiency) as an institution. There are, however, fewer purely economic drivers in the health and care sector than in the purely commercial sector so perhaps it is useful to consider the potential and implications of both personal and organisational creativity.

In preparation for the session we ask you to reflect on the different perspectives of creativity and to consider what problems or possibilities these may offer to Creativity in Health and Care.

Areas of particular interest are:

- *The value of creativity to society* - Is creativity of value in its own right? Is creativity always healthy? How can you evaluate creativity? What are the imperatives for creativity?
- *The distinction between creativity and innovation* - what constitutes the creative process? How might the creative process be employed to encourage innovation? Is it possible to be creative without being innovative and innovative without being creative? What are the institutional expectations of creativity?

- *The role of risk in creativity* - what conditions are necessary for creativity to thrive? What may prevent/encourage people to enter into a creative process? What is at risk personally and institutionally in a creative encounter? What are the consequences of creative endeavour?
- *Individual/institutional creativity* - What are the personal/institutional imperatives for creativity? How might creativity affect institutional culture? Is creativity sustainable?