

Divisional Conferences

HEIA(Q)'s *Home economics: Creativity at work*

The challenge of staging a 'Creativity' conference drew upon just about every creative bone in the bodies of the small but committed HEIA(Q) conference committee that brought together the most fabulous conference—the words of many, many of the delegates. We knew what creativity looked like, we knew lots of creative people especially in the world of 'food and fashion', and some of us could make a fair job of assessing student work for creativity (bit hard, that one). But how do we develop our own and our students' creative talents? We did not want to showcase other people being creative, watch other people being fabulously creative as they created but, rather, we wanted to know what was going on inside their heads, and how we could get that same 'something' going on in our own heads and those of our students.

CPR = Creative Potential Rediscovery

Most of us had the message that people are born with heaps of creativity and that, as we get older it is 'knocked out' of us. We were reassured by opening keynote speaker Lisa Smith from Minds at Work that it is still there—we hoped that it was alive and well in our own psyche, and some proudly acknowledged that yes, they still have it. Others were not so sure. But awakening it in our Year 9 boys? Well, maybe if Michael Carr-Gregg could come to my school and give me a hand ... Anyway, no time for fretting about it. Lisa said that creativity was fun (and all the other presenters agreed with her—something about making us more relaxed so our creative juices flow better) so we got into it.

Are we sparking fires or are we filling empty vessels?

The delegates had a ball, and I think it was something about the fact that the presenters lived up to the theory and let us have fun whilst we learnt. So what did we do? We all constructed our own adventure with 12 workshops to choose from, 260 delegates from whom to choose to talk with, and heaps of trade tables to look at. But most adventures ended up at the same place—the buzz of the cocktail party. The cocktails were ideal to set the ambience for the annual catch up, debrief the day or get to know the speakers a little more, with most people staying way after the time we told the venue managers we would all be gone. The cocktail party has become an institution with delegates knowing to tell loved ones that the conference concludes at 6.30pm (and not the official 4.30pm).

As we constructed our own adventures, it was clear that the organising committee had fulfilled their brief of 'something for everyone'—teachers, other practitioners, retirees, students, those with a theoretical bent, those with a passion for food and those with a passion for textiles, early childhood, hospitality—and so the list went on. It was all there.

Lisa Smith started the day with a lively presentation that put a few cards on the table: creativity is often mixed up with artistic expression

but, in fact, is about thinking; we can 'get it back' with practice and overcoming our fears (fear came up a few times during the day); creativity will be limited if we are not having fun; controllers and bureaucrats limit creativity (even though they tell the 'workers' to be creative). Lisa encouraged us to remove the controls that we can, reject traditions that are not working for us, and put the ideas out there and test them (they won't all work). She used a theoretical framework to encourage us to start with an explosion of ideas, then interpret what they will look like and evaluate them, and switch from magic to logic as we move towards asking how it will work—but not to ask this too early or it will bound the ideas unnecessarily. She showed us how to move through the Ds:

Dreamer
Designer
Decider
Doer

What a great start to the day!



Catching up before it all starts



Delegates putting creative ideas down on paper

Dr Irena Shaw continued with the 'fun' theme in her closing keynote address. And she certainly made us laugh a lot so it would have been a good time to be creative—some of us had to be creative to duck the flying missiles in this very interactive closing session! And between the start and finish? There were twelve workshops that included exploring theoretical underpinnings further, learning

We had a wonderful time watching delegates' creative minds come alive and active in our workshop ... they didn't follow instructions but experimented ... like the first butterfly in Lisa's PowerPoint—demonstrating discovery of their own and being proud of what it became.

Workshop presenter, Robyn Gooley

from four Home Economics teachers about their forays into creativity in the classroom, exploring our own creative talents with a range of techniques for colouring silk creatively, insights into the creative process involved in food product development, creativity in the hospitality kitchen, creativity in the early childhood setting, or examining the tensions within fashion design that can inhibit creativity. And still there was more—some of us 'rebooted our head' with Lisa Smith, whilst others explored conditions for fostering creativity in the classroom, or 'got green' by being creative using recycled fashions. In some respects, the day made us link back to familiar design and technology practices, but the speakers took this to another level that enabled us to truly embed creative thinking into these practices.

There was little wonder that people lingered over cocktails—there was so much to talk about after such an inspiring day, and the

*I was particularly enthralled to discover that by simply monitoring my breathing I could indicate which side of the brain I was actively engaging throughout the session and activities. I can't wait to test this theory with my students—
Breathe deeply, creativity is on its way!*

**Delegate at Donald Welch's
'Creative Thinking' workshop**

fabulous Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre is such a great place to linger.

Thank you to Convenor Michelle Nisbet and the organising committee for such an inspiring day.



Creativity ideas for the hospitality classroom



Lunch was so delicious



Keynote speaker Lisa Smith (L) with HEIA(Q) member Cheryl Conroy



Denise McManus looking after the HEIA(Q) trade table