

Can we invigorate vision and voice by changing the way we think?

Peter le Breton

Our governments and institutions often express satisfaction, even self-congratulation, at what they are doing to prepare our students for an uncertain future. But is such rhetoric propaganda? Does it conceal both a lack of vision and a lack of voice by stakeholders in higher education? Part of the challenge is that we don't know what kind of future our students will face. We do know that it is likely to be very different from the present, and possibly dire if we continue on the trajectory we are on. So why are we—despite the extraordinary benefits of science and technology and the massification of higher education—arguably going down the rabbit hole? If, as Einstein said, “We can't solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them”, ought we to examine what it means to change the way we think? If how and what we think, feel and act are deeply interconnected, might epistemological error be a root cause of our troubles? In this workshop I propose that the prevailing way of thinking (which I call *linear or fragmented* thinking) in higher education—as everywhere—is damaging, and that a different way of thinking (which I call *systemic or integrated* thinking) can be healing.

Participant activities include identifying and discussing:

1. The characteristics, taken-for-granted assumptions and 'common sense' of our prevailing way of thinking.
2. The characteristics of systemic thinking—or thinking more like the way nature works.
3. The benefits for learning and teaching of changing the way we think, and the challenges of doing so.
4. Changes participants might be making to their way of thinking and behaving in teaching and learning contexts as a result of insights or learnings during the workshop. This workshop is based on 'warm data' gathered from teaching and learning in university classrooms face-to-face and online for the past decade. In particular, we will consider the implications of thinking differently for enhancing vision and enriching voice, especially in students and teachers.