

FOSTERING CULINARY IDENTITIES THROUGH EDUCATION – ABANDONING THE VACHERIN AND EMBRACING PHYLLIS’ PAVLOVA

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is a discussion of two different approaches to contemporary culinary arts education. One pedagogy is the well-established master-apprentice approach to vocational education and the other is the design-led approach developed by the Food Design Institute at Otago Polytechnic (Dunedin, New Zealand). The paper uses the stories of two fictitious students navigating very different pedagogies.

The paper is informed by reflexive ethnographic learning and teaching practices (Hegarty, 2011), which have been implemented through more than six years of delivery of Otago Polytechnic’s Bachelor of Culinary Arts, and by more than a decade of teaching in the master-apprentice model by one of the authors. The story-telling methodology - a methodology which has long been associated with the construction of meaningful knowledge in higher education (Alterio, 2008) - provides deep and significant insights into professional practice and the actions that inform and drive them (Alterio & McDruy, 2003). The characters below and the insights discussed are based on general observations of how students have engaged with the traditional master-apprentice and the more recent design-thinking pedagogies. They are not representative of any one student, rather they tell the story of the pedagogies themselves and not the characters portrayed. These are ‘symbolic characters’ that are constructed from observations of lived experiences so as to create a sense of reality and realism for the reader (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). As such, each persona has their own voice to create an emotional reality and to capture the complexities of their own situation and context (Alterio, 2002). Their primary function is to illustrate key differences in the two pedagogical models being discussed which are amplified (as well as exemplified) by the characters’ interactions with the pedagogies.

The paper reads as a series of vignettes relating to a number of issues at play in both the traditional and design-thinking pedagogies of culinary arts education. Some of these issues relate to the explicit curriculum, while others are part of Apple’s (1982) notion of the ‘hidden curriculum’. The vignettes are presented ‘in character’ and represent both the cognitive and emotional responses that the personas have to the pedagogies. As such, behaviours and language that may seem unnatural (or even unpleasant or offensive) because they are not part of the social realities or cultural identity that the reader may be accustomed to (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) also suggest that we need to be aware of our own views and bias to better understand the social reality of others. To this end, expletives and ‘colourful’ language are not used for dramatic effect nor are they intended to offend or to be stereo-typical. This style of language provides linguistic context for the realities of each character. For Jonno (see below), in particular, expletive-ridden language forms part of his emergent identity, as he desires to become an ‘insider’ in the chef community where such language is a strong signifier of membership of this culture (Palmer, Cooper, & Burns, 2010). As such, the use of direct and expletive-filled language should not be seen as disparaging of the character; but rather a key element of his desire to ‘fit-in’ with the kinship group of the cheffing world. Chloe (see below), on the other hand, is in search of different identity: one that is altogether less masculine but also more self-determined and entrepreneurial.

Each vignette is followed by a commentary of the pedagogic approach and the overt and hidden curricula (and agendas) that lie behind them. The paper concludes with the key questions for the future that these two approaches raise.

MEET THE STUDENTS

Jonno Buxton (Level 3 Certificate in Basic Cookery)

Hi, I am Jonno. I am 17 years old. I left school at the end of year 11, coz I hated the place. I am a cookery certificate student.

I like cooking coz my cooking teacher was fun. Before I did cooking at school I didn't know anything about food. We never ate out much and mum's cooking isn't that flash. My form teacher suggested that I do cooking coz I am not very good at writing and stuff, she said that I am good at working with my hands. I am so glad she did, coz cooking at school was great and I was good at it. Plus the food was bloody yummy.

My favourite chef is Gordon Ramsay. One day I want to be just like him and own my own place. When I have finished at Tech I want to go and work at the best restaurant in town so I can learn how to be the best chef that I can.

I work part time at the local pub as a kitchen hand so I can get faster at my work. I work pretty hard, but the boys get on the piss after shift so it's lots of fun.

Chloe Jones (First Year Bachelor of Culinary Arts student)

Hello, my name is Chloe and I am an 18 year old, first-year Bachelor of Culinary Arts student. I love cooking! My grandmother taught me so much about food and I want to learn more about how to make my own recipes.

I was pretty good at the academic stuff at school, but I never took any cooking classes as my teachers said that I would be better to concentrate on getting achievement standards so that I could go to university. The careers advisors suggested I do some science subjects so that I could do a food science degree or maybe nutrition. To be honest I hated science and I really just want to learn about food, but my parents want me to go to Uni to get a degree. I loved English and Art at school as they allowed me to be creative.

I am not really sure exactly what I want to do when I graduate, but I do know that I would love to work in food somewhere. I love cake decorating and my grandma's baking is so amazing, so maybe I'd like to set up a business selling the sorts of cakes that she makes.

I am a barista and sometimes I help out in the kitchen at an organic café. We just got reviewed in Broadsheet and the girls are so excited.

Vignette One: In the classroom

Jonno

Vacherin!?! How the fuck do you even say that!?! What is this bullshit? Isn't that just a 'bird's nest'? My posh aunty brings them to our place every Christmas. I hate them. What's wrong with a Pav?

Chef Schmidt says we have to learn all these different types of meringue for our

assessment. To be honest, I am shitting myself about all of these things I have to remember. I have no clue what the difference is between the French, Swiss and Italian ones. They all look the same to me in the textbook.

I do remember making that one in class the other day. My arm was sore for days. Fucked if I know why we had to beat the eggs by hand, at work the sous Chef Lou chucks it all in the Hobart.

Chef Schmidt is some kind of asshole. He just likes inflicting pain on us. But man, that meringue swan he demonstrated for us was way cool. I wish I was that skilled. He's the man! I showed the photo to Chef Lou and he just laughed and said "what a bunch of bollocks!".

Chloe

Today we got our design brief for Patisserie. Before I got the brief I had already started to look for some inspiration by looking at Adriano Zumbo's latest TV series. This was a good starting point for me because the brief has asked me to design a dish based on the values of my favourite pastry chef. It also says that the dish has to be suitable to go into a local café. That's also really cool because I can design it for work.

The brief also says that we have to include a meringue in the dish somehow. There are some video links online that we have to have a look at before we go into the kitchen. I watched the first one today and I had no idea how important baking was for rural communities. The Country Women's Institute were ahead of their time. I am so going to get some of Grandma's old CWI cookbooks out for my research for this project.

I am not sure what is happening in the kitchen today, it just says 'Meringue Design Challenge'. These things make me nervous, as we never know what to expect. In the end it is usually a lot of fun, but I am not always comfortable working on group challenges.

Commentary

On the face of it these two vignettes are simply dealing with different approaches to the delivery of content. For Jonno, the content is delivered by his tutor (the master/the expert). He is expected to learn the canon of the classical repertoire which is the foundation of modern Western cookery. The pinnacle of this canon is its application in a Eurocentric haute cuisine environment (the assumption is that there is a hierarchy of culinary knowledge and skill with haute cuisine at the top) and, as such, the context for this learning is assumed to be that environment. This approach presupposes that Jonno has aspirations to work in haute cuisine (Woodhouse, 2015). In this case, Jonno does have aspirations, but he is finding it difficult to reconcile this with his everyday reality of working in a very different context. He is conflicted by the messages he is receiving from the institutionalised (legitimate/espoused) source of knowledge and that of the knowledge from the practice of the industry (Schön, 1983).

For Chloe, she is faced with navigating the uncertainty of a project-based pedagogy. She acknowledges the fact that this uncertainty creates some angst for her when she is given a design challenge, but she also enjoys bringing her own content to the context described in the project brief. Chloe is able to draw on past learning experiences (watching Adriano Zumbo) and to explore more widely than the method of making meringues (the social history video on the Country Women's Institute) so that she may put her learning in a broader context. As such, design is used as a pedagogical framework for what is described as a 'cognitive constructivist learning strategy' (Alterio & Day, 2005).

However, beyond these differing approaches to learning, there is also a fundamental shift in the motivation for the students in question. For Jonno, he is learning in a system that is driven by extrinsic motivators (assessment, qualification and legitimacy). He is motivated by the need to learn the 'truths' of the classical canon and the need

for legitimacy in the world of haute cuisine (whether this is real or a figment of his and the collective imagination). To become 'qualified' legitimises his place within the 'cheffing' community. The qualification is a means to an end and as such is a rite of passage. This model of culinary education is built on maintaining the rhetoric and structures of the rites of passage – the language, the gatekeepers, the uniforms and the unquestioned 'truth' of the classical repertoire (Deutsch, 2014).

For Chloe, there is a mixture of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. She too, is driven by the legitimacy that the qualification affords. This, however, relates to her level of academic achievement rather than becoming a member of the culinary community. There are many pressures that have led her to 'need' a degree (of any kind) to legitimise her social status. However, design allows an inquiry-based pedagogy where she can bring her own taste, personal motivations and desires to her learning. As such, she can bring her own worldview to the classroom and explore it from a multitude of angles. She is not driven by content for content's sake, but by how this new understanding can enrich her own personal context. The content may or may not have any direct relevance for her future career, but she has a broadened understanding of how to apply knowledge and understanding in different contexts, which is identified by UNESCO (2002) as being a useful in her future, whatever it might bring.

Vignette Two: Assessment

Jonno

I've got a resit tomorrow. My bloody Vacherin didn't work during assessment last week. Chef Schmidt told me I failed because my meringue was too grainy and far from perfect. At work I get it right every time because we use the Hobart and its easy to whip up, but Chef Schmidt said that only cowboys do it that way.

I'm gutted I fucked up on assessment day coz when we were practicing in class I nailed it at least once and was so close the other time. Chef said he hadn't seen anything that good in a practice before.

I am absolutely packing it. I don't like letting Chef Schmidt down. He is tough on me but I know that this will be good for me when I get into a real kitchen. He has even been teaching me some of the tricks he has learned that aren't really in the textbook, but seem to work really well. I am gutted that it didn't work for me on assessment day.

I also didn't do very well on the theory test and have to resit that too. I just can't get my head around the difference between the types of meringue and it's hard to remember when I have to use each one. We only use one type of meringue at work and it's not any of the ones we have to learn at Tech.

I really need to pass this assessment! It's important that I know this shit coz the next level is fucking hard. Chef Schmidt told us that if we can't make a perfect French meringue every time, we won't be able to make macarons. He also said that there is this super hard thing called a Japonaise meringue that is so technical. If I want to succeed in a real kitchen I have to nail the advanced stuff too.

Chloe

I'm so excited to be finally doing my assessment today. I have spent weeks exploring different alternatives on paper and in the kitchen. I've even made an eggless meringue using aquafaba (chickpea water) as we have heaps of it at work and I hate to see it go to waste. I am not going to make this for my assessment, but they have put it on the menu at work, which is kind of cool.

After lots of trial and error and making heaps of mistakes, I have decided to make a pavlova based on Grandma Phyllis' recipe. I have so many amazing memories of her serving this crunchy pavlova to us when we visited. I was also so inspired by the Country

Women's Institute's (CWI) cookbooks that I really wanted to do something based on my New Zealand heritage.

My recipe works well for the café that I work in because it's a mini pavlova and it uses organic and free range ingredients and I have decorated with foraged edible flowers. In the end I decided not to go with Adriano Zumbo as my favourite pastry chef, instead I used the CWI as my culinarian.

The process of developing the dish was a bit scary at times as I had to get feedback from my lecturers and classmates, even when I was just mucking around with ingredients. In the end the feedback was awesome because I learnt heaps about how different people will react to my food. In one of my prototyping sessions, I wanted to get feedback on the texture of two different recipes: one chewy and one crispy. It was a 50:50 split and even my lecturers didn't agree with each other, so in the end I just had to go with Grandma Phyllis' crunchy-style. I wanted to stay true to her memory.

I know there are heaps of things that could go wrong today and I really want to show people the best possible dish because I am super proud of it, but I also know that if it doesn't go well I have done enough work that I won't fail the assessment. We've been getting heaps of feedback on where we are at when we take our workbooks to checkpoint and the lecturers have been really positive about my work. I can also see that I do more work than most of my classmates and they often come to me for help with things so I must be doing ok.

We also do a reflection after the main assessment where we look at our processes and what we have learned from the assessment, including anything up to the point of actually cooking the dish. That's an opportunity for us to look at what went well and what we could have improved on. I know that I probably explored too widely and tried too many different things so I haven't had a lot of time cooking this particular recipe. This is something I will explore in my reflection as I know I could narrow things in my process so that I get more time to work with a specific recipe. This has happened for a couple of assessments now so I really need to refine my processes.

Commentary

The assessment processes outlined in these vignettes reflect the difference between a behaviourist and constructivist approaches to learning and assessment. One of the key differences is that for Jonno it is an assessment of his learning, while Chloe has a project where the assessment is the learning (see Alterio and Woodhouse's (2009) discussion of assessment of learning versus assessment for learning).

Chloe's assessment recognises that much of her learning occurs in the process of preparing for the assessment and she is rewarded for that work. It also acknowledges that self-, peer- and group- feedback is instrumental in the learning process, so her assessment actively promotes this formative feedback. By contrast, Jonno is assessed for his competency at a given point in time. He practices/studies to achieve the predetermined outcome. There is some feedback along the way, but this comes from the tutor (master/expert) and reinforces the absolutes of the canon. He is assessed on his ability to master technocratic skills that segment knowledge into discrete categories and hierarchies. There is still a stair-casing of knowledge and skill that could be conceived of as constructivist (for example; advanced methods build on the mastery of less advanced methods). However, this is built on one worldview: the French taxonomy of cuisine developed by Escoffier (1907).

Chloe's assessment allows her to construct her own authentic and meaningful knowledge based on her own worldview (Alterio & Day, 2005). As such, stair-casing for Chloe is based on 360 degree (self, peer and lecturer), formative feedback on her learning processes. She shares her work with lecturers and classmates throughout the project and (p)reflects on the feedback before and after the date of the cooking of the dish that she has designed. Chloe's assessment also acknowledges that she brings existing knowledge and skill (for example, her work

experience and learning from her grandmother), while Jonno's work experience is dismissed as being unworthy of the canon (for example, the guys he works with are 'cowboys').

Chloe's assessment is a process and this is rewarded by spreading the assessment over the entire project or learning process. Many students struggle with this process to begin with as they are used to being able to 'cram' for summative assessments at the end of a project/semester. This type of 'assessment as learning' means that it is impossible to save your 'learning' to the very end. A by-product of this is that, once students embrace the process, they are more likely to be mindful learners throughout the semester as learning that is vital to their assessment outcome might occur at any time.

Jonno's assessment is based on a single, bounded outcome. It is no more or less summative than Chloe's but relies on delivery of skills and knowledge devoid of context and within a particular timeframe. Rote learning can solve this short-term need to perform with limited long-term benefits.

DISCUSSION

These vignettes discuss just a small part of the Food Design Institute's 'design as pedagogy' approach to culinary arts education. They highlight some of the key differences between the traditional vocational approach and the design approach to culinary education in classroom and assessment philosophies. Figure 1 summarises these differences.

	Traditional	Design
Learners are...	<i>passive consumers of knowledge</i>	<i>active producers and consumers of knowledge</i>
Knowledge is...	<i>unquestioned (there is a truth)</i>	<i>critiqued (there are only truths)</i>
The canon is...	French classical (<i>haute cuisine</i>)	not predetermined (the learner creates/explores their own)
Practice is...	<i>technical through a recipe (the outcome is assessed)</i>	<i>conceptual through a process (process is assessed and assessment is a process)</i>
Failure is...	frowned upon	an integral part of the learning process
The application of knowledge is...	assumed (<i>haute cuisine</i>)	context-driven (multiple applications)
Control of knowledge is...	<i>structural (the State, institution and lecturer has absolute control of the learning)</i>	given to the student (they have some <i>agency</i>)

Figure 1. Key Differences between traditional and design pedagogies in culinary arts education.

In an ideal world, culinary arts education would have active, engaged learners who shape their own education and understand how it could be applied in a range of real-world contexts. Using 'design as pedagogy' puts in place a constructivist framework that goes some way to achieving this. At the core of this approach is the realisation that students need to be given a level of control (*agency*) over their learning. The concomitant outcome is that institutions and educators must let go of a control of the knowledge –they must become what King (1993) terms the 'guide on the side' rather than the 'sage on the stage'.

This is not an easy task because, as Woodhouse (2015) points out, there are several structures at play that create inertia that resists change. These include:

- The master-apprentice educational paradigm that has persisted for more than 500 years in vocational education. This was reinforced through the industrial revolution and the development of the guilds (knowledge became about producing workers for industry);
- The transformation of the guilds into State-run learning institutions, which further reinforced the structures of the guild system;
- The deep entrenchment of Escoffier's 110 year old canon within culinary education;
- The remaining belief within the industry that there is a hierarchy of cuisine (*haute cuisine* at the top).

Design is a useful and convenient framework to apply as a form of pedagogy as it already has established tools and language (indeed its own structures) that embrace the agency of the designer and that of the end-user. As Speicher (in Vander Ark, 2017) suggests, 'design as pedagogy' provides "the tools and methods [needed] to apply design thinking - discovery, interpretation, ideation, experimentation and evolution." At its core, design is pretty straightforward: it is good old-fashioned thinking and making (or, indeed, thinking through making). At some time in the past, in the process of institutionalisation, culinary arts education forgot about the thinking.

The Food Design Institute's approach is not inherently anti-tradition, anti-French or even anti-classical, but rather opens learning to other worldviews. Fundamental skills and methods are still at the core of our approach, and many of these are derived from the classical methods of cookery, but their application is open to interpretation and application. Without these fundamental skills, it is impossible to transform commodities into value-added products, services and experiences.

It is important for us to acknowledge that the persona case studies presented here relate to differing levels of education with different learning outcomes. However, and probably more to the point, design as a pedagogy can be used at all levels within the education framework. An example of this is the technology curriculum from year 7 to year 13 in New Zealand schools which embraces design (technology) and its associated pedagogies as a framework for enquiry-based learning (Mitchell, Woodhouse, Heptinstall, & Camp, 2013). Arguably, allowing students some agency over their learning could be seen as beneficial at *all* levels of education. The critical question therefore is, if it happens at intermediate and secondary school, why is it typically not adopted within tertiary vocational education?

Similarly, by no means are we suggesting that Jonno is only capable of operating within the traditional, behaviourist model of culinary education; quite the contrary. A constructivist approach such as the design pedagogy used at the Food Design Institute could liberate people like Jonno from what Freire (1970) calls the 'oppressive' structures that have reinforced his place in the education system (and wider society) for many years. Freire's (1970) core principle is that education should permit self-liberation through 'conscientization' by providing him with agency to develop his own, more meaningful learning. In this way, it is possible for him to discover new ways of solving problems, exploring his creative talents and communicating his thinking.

For the last two decades there has been a growing voice in hospitality literature that calls for a critical turn in hospitality (Lugosi, Lynch, & Morrison, 2009; Mitchell & Scott, 2013) and culinary arts education (Deutsch, 2014; Hegarty, 2011; Woodhouse, 2015). The use of design as a pedagogy provides a framework to facilitate this critical turn. In turn, this creates graduates who have skills that allow them to quickly adapt to new situations, identify and solve problems, be creative, be effective communicators and apply their culinary skills in different contexts. In short, they are liberated from the shackles of the *worker* to become the *professional* that the industry has requested for decades.

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