



Using a Contemplative Enquiry Approach For Teaching Research Methods to Chefs

A Case Study in Progress

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Photograph by T.Barrett, Chef cooking in the kitchen, Absfreepic
Photograph by Pete Linford, Brain energy, Pixabay

Context

This case study is based on chef professionals, undertaking a research studies module as part of a Masters in Applied Culinary Nutrition. This Masters is specifically designed for practising chefs to enable them innovate food for health and wellness. Chefs are naturally creative in their professional role but some lack confidence in their academic ability.

The Challenge for the Educator

Could the use of Contemplative Enquiry practices holistically engage culinary professionals in their learning at Masters Level in a way that would; breakdown inherent barriers to studying and learning, support them in their academic writing developing their evaluation skills from a meta cognitive dimension and, provide a fertile ground for inspiring emerging creative research ideas that will personally and socially make a difference?

Creativity

The Student Experience

Photograph by Errol Miller, Vector Art, Absfreepic



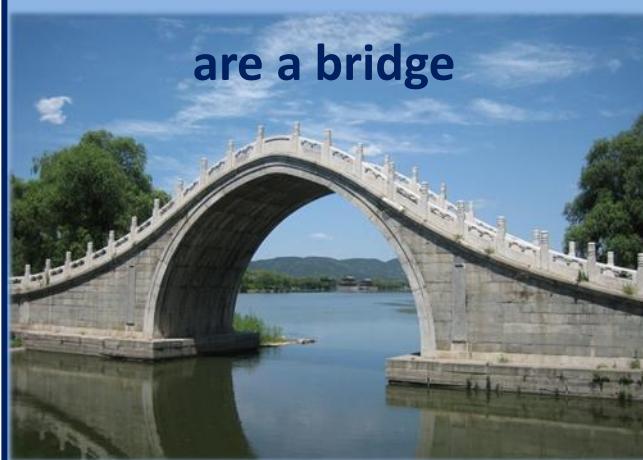
“Contemplative Enquiry acts like an enzyme in that it speeds up the chances of coming up with original ideas” Mark

“As the weeks went by I felt the contemplative practices were everywhere, it was like it had seeped into every part of my life from day to day workings to the way I thought about the day and even how I interacted with people” Derek

“Together Contemplative Enquiry (CE) and traditional learning, allow for a fuller more creative understanding of a subject. CE tries to connect creativity with focus and understanding” Mark

Contemplative Enquiry Practices

are a bridge



Photograph by Hennessy, Gaoliang Bridge of The Summer Palace, Wikimedia Commons

from professional chef practice, to writing ‘flow’ and research creativity

“When we allow the mind to settle, unusual and creative thoughts can arise to surprise us.”

Webster –Wright (2013 p. 562)

Culinary Nutrition Research Studies Module

- Literature reviews
- Sensory analysis of food
- Applied research project proposal

Writing

The Student Experience

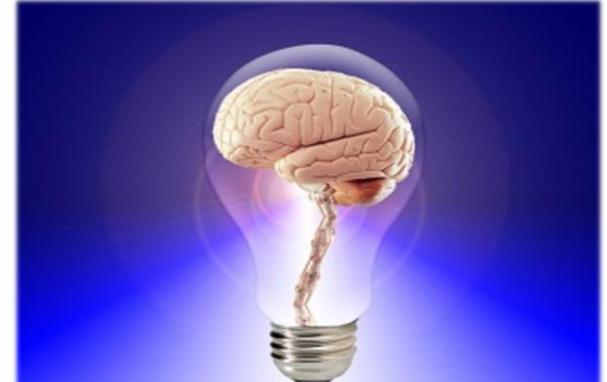
Photograph by Mary15, Writing on Paper, Absfreepic



“To understand how Contemplative Enquiry could be beneficial in literature review writing took a little convincing. It was in the doing that I achieved that understanding” Mark

“Based on the practices my learning and research has been transformed, it helped me make a deeper connection with the data collection, analysis and representation. This has been a joy to watch.....Journaling enhanced my reflection skills” John

“The mere fact of physically writing starts off the process. The ‘block’ sensation is diminished. I just write and sometimes that helps the thought processes to be unblocked and the ink to flow!” Jane



Photograph: Creative Commons, Pixabay

Methodology

At the beginning of the module the students were introduced to the neuroscience evidence for these types of practices (Davidson 2015, Goleman 2014, Siegel 2015) in particular highlighting the role it had in developing critical thinking.

Each week the students carried out a number of practices in class that were task specific (e.g. attention practice, deep-listening, reading and journaling). From this, a daily practice combining Contemplative Enquiry and journaling was encouraged, the outcome of which was discussed in the session the following week.

Contemplative Enquiry practices were specifically used to inspire project ideas on an individual level and within the group. The author also kept a journal. Both students and the author reflected on the experience at the end of the module.

Possibilities

The Student – A Future Vision

Photograph by Zany, Drop of Water, Absfreepic



“I see this as a very important part of 3rd level education. Should this not be something that is implemented into a chef’s training? Could this change the culture of the kitchen?” Brian

“This is an area of expertise that we as food professionals should have knowledge of, it is through contemplative enquiry that we need to develop an inner belief and confidence in our own abilities, that will ultimately help us move forward and improve” Darren

“I envision using the Contemplative Enquiry practice in different aspects of my life...the practices learned in the classroom are applicable not just to academic writing and study but also to the fulfilment and enjoyment of life” Mark