



# Stonebridge

## INNOVATIONS IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK DIPLOMA COURSE

### Sample Pages

#### ☒ DEFINING INNOVATION

**What is an Innovation?**

#### Q ACTIVITY 1: QUESTION

**Allow 10 minutes**

**Define:** Innovation, Inventiveness, Innovativeness

#### A ACTIVITY 1: ANSWER

You might have thought of the following:

**Innovation:** New or different thinking on existing ideas or products, new thinking about new ideas.

**Inventiveness:** Ideas, creativity, imagination.

**Innovativeness:** Process of being innovative, having an idea and turning it into a reality.

Innovation has a number of definitions within academic literature and has been used as a term used to describe something as 'new' or perceived to be new (Downs and Mohr, 1969, cited in Glor, 1997); as different or as a generation, acceptance and implementation of new ideas, processes, products or services (Thompson, 1965-6) or Innovations in Health and Social Work as a conversion of knowledge. Aspects that are important to the concept of innovation are creativity, conceiving new ideas or adopting or implementing new services or ideas. Webster's New World Dictionary (1982) defines innovation as "...the act or process of innovating; something newly introduced, new method, custom, device etc; change in the way of doing things; renew, alter."

As we can see from these definitions, there are several strands to consider. The ‘newness’ of an idea or concept is one important theme. We can also see from the Webster’s definition that something does not have to be new to be innovative.

Changing the way in which we approach or apply ourselves to situations, theories or models can also be seen as an innovation. The concept of change is important- it implies that there needs to be an ability to accept and instigate change. To do so requires some personal attributes such as creativity, fluidity, reflexivity, and dynamism, a certain level of stubbornness, action and perseverance. The process of implementing change is also important, as the innovation is not an innovation if it is not implemented.

### **When is Innovation Innovativeness?**

Personal attributes such as creativity does not automatically mean that a person can be innovative. Innovation is the result of a process therefore you can be inventive (creative) without being innovative. Henry, Walker and Davis (1981) make a distinction between inventor and innovator; “A distinction should be made between the terms inventor and innovator. They are widely confused. The inventor produces ideas; the innovator applies these new ideas, he makes new things happen. Many talented people do both. Yet someone who is good at inventing is not necessarily good at turning his concept into a viable commercial application.”

All those ‘eureka’ ideas need to be implemented before it can then be said that you are an innovator or that you have created an innovation. Brodtrick (1999) suggests, “Innovation is the result of Innovativeness, of being innovative. Innovativeness is a process; Innovation is the result of that process...the SONY Walkman is an Innovation. It is the result of SONY’s Innovativeness.” He concludes by saying that if you have ideas, are creative, make inventions but never implement them, you are inventive, but not innovative. The innovation has to be implemented to be accepted as an innovation.



### **ACTIVITY 2: QUESTION**

**Allow 10 minutes**

Think about some ‘eureka’ ideas you may have had. What prevented you from turning those ideas into a reality? What enabled you turn those ideas into something more concrete?

**A****ACTIVITY 2: ANSWER**

Some of the things that might have prevented you from turning ideas into reality might be:

- Lack of time, support
- Self doubt about the idea “it will never work in practice”
- Someone else doubting your idea
- Lack of funding to pursue the idea
- Lack of confidence to continue
- Resistance to developing the idea further
- Lack of market research and exploring whether such an idea could be financially and practically viable
- Lack of passion/determination to take the idea further
- Lack of imagination or creativity to apply the idea in practice etc.

Some ideas, which you might turn into reality, might be:

- Support and encouragement from others
- Faith and belief in your idea to enable you to respond to the sceptics
- Time to research your idea and see where the viability of it might be
- Ability to secure funding to further explore your idea
- Determination and tenacity to continue to apply your idea
- Confidence
- Adaptability and imagination to see ‘how’ the idea can become a reality

There may also be others that you can think of. We will later explore what the characteristics of the innovators are.

We can establish that innovation can be tricky to define as it relates to personal attributes, processes and action. There are also different ways in which innovation can be described, depending on the environment you work or live in. For example in the industrial industry, innovation is seen as a cycles and defined as “...an S-shaped logistic curve consisting of three distinct phases: emergence (the development of the product or service, its manufacturing capabilities, and its place in the market), growth (where the product family pervades the market), and maturity (where the market is saturated and growth slows).” (Howard and Guile, 1992).

In the organizational environments, innovation is defined by something which “occurs largely because a few key executives have a broad vision of what their organizations can accomplish for the world and lead their enterprises towards it. They appreciate the role of innovation in achieving their goals and consciously manage their concerns’ value systems and atmospheres to support it.”

In the private sector, innovation tends to relate to profit and innovations are by developing and selling goods that are sold for more money than it takes to make them.

Private sectors need to look beyond their own organization to lead the market and extend their success. The external environment is competitive therefore private sector organizations need to seek and gain a competitive advantage over their competitors and ensure they keep ahead of their competition in order to retain and acquire new customers. Innovation may relate to the quality of the product, the process of developing a product, or adapting old products in new ways.

Public organisations, in contrast, do not produce goods and do not generally create profit from selling a product. They have different stakeholders and different demands.

However, they can still be innovative.



### ACTIVITY 3: QUESTION

**Allow 10 minutes**

Think about your experiences in health and social care. Try to think of two innovations that you’ve seen within these public sector services.



### ACTIVITY 3: ANSWER

Two examples which spring to mind are: 1) Hand held records and 2) Introducing Direct Payments to clients.

The development of hand held records in healthcare have lead to three key innovations:

1. The client retains their own information and can pass it to various professionals who add information to the records thereby providing one document which gives information about the different professionals interventions;
2. The client retains control of the records and are more likely to feel in control of the process of interventions, thereby more likely to participate in their healthcare more proactively;
3. The focus of records shifts from the organisation to the client, where the client holds more power through being in receipt of information more directly and can choose who to share the information with. It helps to address the inequality of professional patient relationship. Having said this, the pilot of hand held records was carefully researched as it was felt that clients perceived as 'chaotic' might be less able to manage the information they receive and might lose the records!

In relation to direct payments, this was a bold and innovative move which gained momentum with social consciousness and public and political pressure to make changes to the traditional service delivery. The aim of direct payments is to enable people with disabilities to purchase their own care and support rather than rely on the quality of the service offered by the statutory service sector. It offers people more control over who provides care and support, it enables the client to decide when and where they need it rather than rely on domiciliary care where the client has no control over the delivery of the service. It also corresponds to the social model of disability whereby the client accesses services aimed at supporting them to live independently according to their values and priorities rather than that of the service.

### **Who are the Innovators?**

“The successful innovator is a doer – someone with imagination who can visualize the possibilities of an idea and who has a strong desire to see it realised in concrete form.

He is likely to encounter considerable scepticism and even determined opposition. Yet he presses on despite all the doubts and uncertainties.” Henry, Walker and Davis (1981).



### **ACTIVITY 4: QUESTION**

**Allow 10 minutes**

List five characteristics that innovators have.