



**Systemic Innovation in Vocational Education and Training**



social innovation  
exchange



# Systemic Innovation in Vocational Education & Training

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THE YOUNG **Y** FOUNDATION



What do we know  
about innovation?



## Social innovation

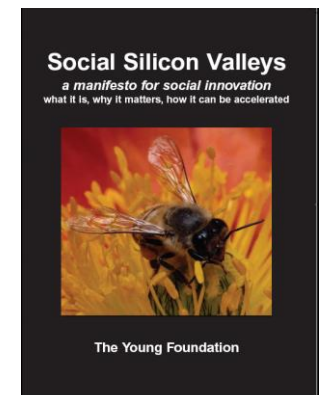
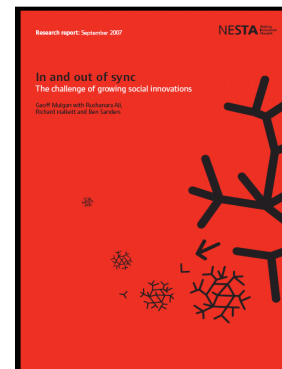
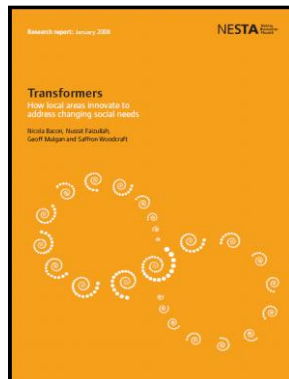
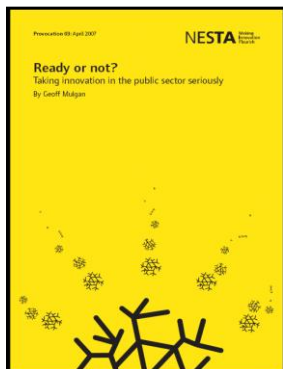
- Social innovation is the term used to describe **the development and implementation of new ideas (products, services and models) to meet social needs.**
- Social innovation can come from the public, private and third sectors. It can come from service users, frontline staff, middle managers, civil servants, politicians, social entrepreneurs, it can be the result of social movements and technological innovations etc.
- Growing interest in understanding the dynamics of social innovation – what institutions and finance can support it and how social innovations can be more effectively developed, grown and diffused – from governments (national and local), public agencies and third sector organisations etc.



## Systemic Innovation in Vocational Education and Training

Drawing on a range of disciplines:

- Biology (e.g. D'Arcy Thompson on Growth and Form)
- Sociology and social change
- Economics of innovation (and greater emphasis on pull vs. push factors)
- Business theory
- Knowledge, learning models (e.g. Bart Nooteboom)
- Literature including Everett Rogers, Greg Dees, Peter Uvin, Amy Gerstein, Diana Leat, Jeff Bradach et al.
- The work of the Young Foundation....





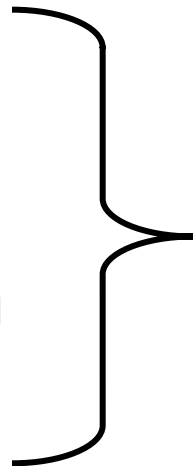
# Public sector innovation

Typologies of innovation in public services:

- **policy** innovations (new missions, objectives, strategies);
- **service** innovations (new features and design of services);
- **delivery** innovations (new ways of delivering services and interacting with service users);
- **process** innovation (new internal procedures and organisational forms) and;
- **system** innovations (governance structures).

Or,

- systemic/radical vs. incremental innovation?



These  
will often  
overlap

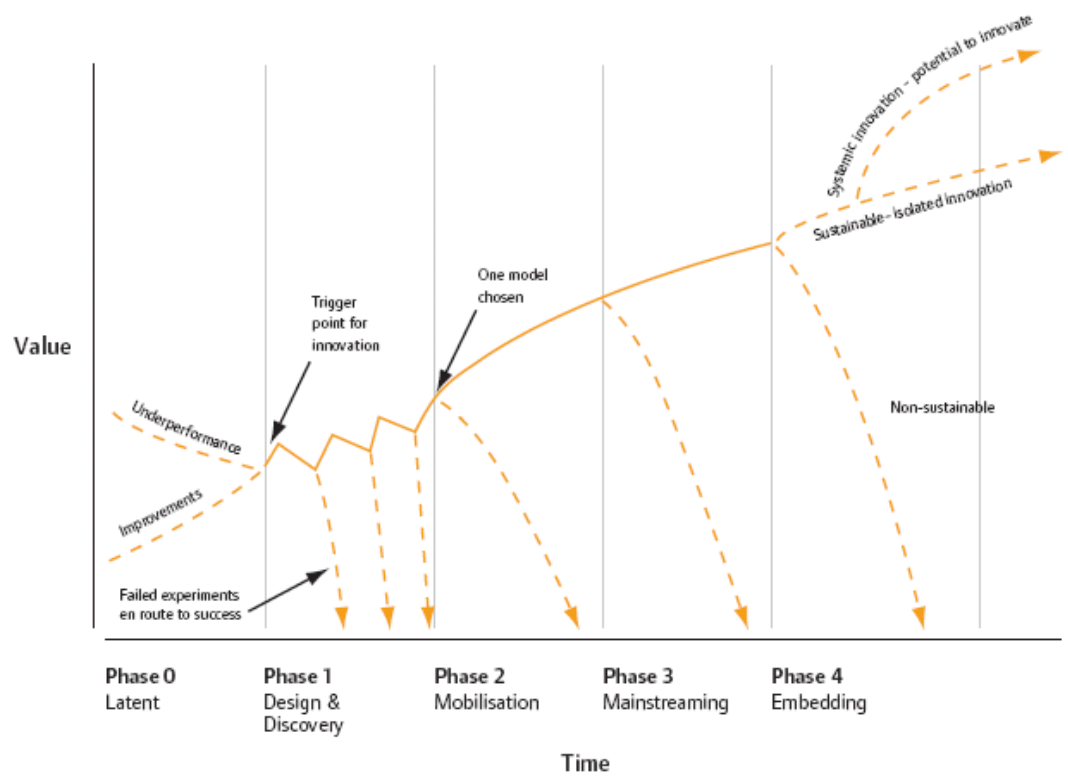


## Key stages of innovation

1. **Generating new ideas** - open discussions; prizes; small funds; competition and contestability; and systematic processes to tap front line workers' and others' thinking, all designed to widen the range of options that can be considered;
2. **Incubating, prototyping and developing promising ideas** - there are a series of more formal tools for testing and evaluating innovative ideas in practice, through pilots, pathfinders, experiments etc;
3. **Replicating and scaling up** - strategic budget setting and performance management can be vital;
4. **Analysing and learning** - constant assessment, analysis and learning since unexpected results are likely.



# Key stages of innovation





## Barriers to innovation

- Political and auditing constraints imposed by **performance and accountability frameworks** – short termism, focus on current performance not future direction, process not outcome oriented;
- **Risk aversion**;
- Lack of **institutional support** for innovation;
- Inappropriate structures and **organisational cultures** for innovation – recruitment processes which perpetuate process driven/risk averse mentality;
- **Silo structures** – duplication of effort, difficult to tackle cross-organisational issue. Move from silos to pipelines.
- uncertain results makes it more **difficult to win public support** for innovation;
- **Inability/failure to learn from failure** or even past experience;
- Insufficient means of **capturing voices/ideas** of service users;
- **Practical issues** about time, capacity, resources etc



## What enables social innovation?

- **Leadership and organisational culture** – Need to send signals from the top right down to front line staff that encourage and reward innovation. Leaders can help cultivate more of an appropriate risk culture.
- **Creative spaces** to generate and test ideas - skunk works, incubators, accelerators, zones, pathfinders, pilots.
- **Networks, collaboratives and partnerships** – to spread, share and diffuse social innovation.
- **Funding packages** to support different kinds of innovation - small grants for frontline staff; funding for experimental zones, such as Employment Zones; funds for testing out a variety of approaches simultaneously with fast learning to share lessons etc
- **Research capacity** to develop evidence – social R&D, universities
- Mechanisms for **capturing the voices and insights** of service users, frontline staff & practitioners



## The alignment of factors for innovation

- ‘Pull’ factors - **effective demand** - acknowledgement of a need, gap in provision, or underperformance/failure/ ‘burning platforms’ – and the financial capacity to address it.
- ‘Push’ factors - **effective supply** – (1) the generation of innovative ideas; (2) the development of those ideas into demonstrably workable forms; (3) their communication and dissemination.
- Effective strategies that **connect ‘pull’ to ‘push’** and find the right organisational forms to put the innovation into practice
- **Learning and adaptation** to ensure that the innovation achieves social impact and continues to do so as the environment around it changes – often through networks, collaboratives, partnerships etc.



Systemic Innovation in Vocational Education and Training

# Systemic innovation in vocational education and training



## Why innovation in VET?

Incremental reforms are not enough - innovation is needed to reshape the services around the needs of learners and employers and to respond to the challenges below:

- Global competition – responding to changes in the nature of work and the shape of the economy; the development of the knowledge economy;
- Personalisation and customisation of services – rising public expectations;
- Ageing demographic - lifelong learning;
- Youth unemployment and social exclusion;
- Emerging technologies – ICT;
- Recognition of the importance of non-cognitive skills – e.g. research from Heckman, Feinstein; and employer demands’.



# Developments in International VET Systems

We can identify a number of broad trends in international VET systems:

1. **Non-cognitive skills** and competence-based models of learning - e.g. Singapore, Denmark.
2. **Reducing barriers between vocational and academic education** – e.g. Australia and England.
3. **Simplifying structures, increasing flexibility** – e.g. Denmark, Germany, UK - widen access, improve completion, lifelong learning, personalisation.
4. Greater **employer engagement**.
5. **ICT** - distance learning.



**Systemic Innovation in Vocational Education and Training**

## Different levels of innovation within VET systems

Level of Innovation	Focus	Examples
Classrooms	VET curricula and pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Hands-on, Minds-on and Hearts-on’ learning e.g. Singapore</li> <li>• Personal education plans and log-books for students e.g. Denmark</li> <li>• Competency based curriculum - ICT, technical and specialised mechanical skills, project planning and design, language skills and intercultural awareness.</li> <li>• Enterprise education pilots and business and enterprise specialist schools e.g. UK</li> </ul>
Institutions	Enhanced and/or new VET institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Tech High Schools using project based learning in technology rich environments. Use of collaborative and interactive teaching e.g. USA</li> <li>• Production Schools - based around one or more ‘workshops’ producing either goods or services e.g. Denmark.</li> <li>• Corporate Universities e.g. Fordstar, Motorola</li> </ul>
Networks	VET networks, partnerships and collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federations of Schools and collaboratives</li> </ul>
Systems	VET pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of new teaching and learning practices, supported by changes in progression routes (e.g. 14-19 learning pathways in the UK),</li> <li>• Governance structures, accountability and performance frameworks</li> </ul>



## Value in VET

All VET involves the creation of three distinct types of value:

- Value for the **individual** in terms of earning potential
- Value for the **employer** in terms of productivity
- Value for **society** in terms of overall impacts on growth and social objectives.

This raises a number of issues:

- 1. How to get the right balance between payments for VET and the distribution of benefits?** In principle, all three parties should pay proportionately to their benefit. But - barriers in knowledge and understanding. Benefits for whom? E.g. corporate universities
- 2. Is there a tension between personalisation and employability?** Tailoring provision to the needs (which are self-defined) and demands of learners may not necessarily improve their prospects of employment.



## Questions for further discussion:

- Definitions of systemic innovation?
- What does an innovation system look like in VET? Different models and context?
- Principles on which innovation system for VET should be based?
- Methods for innovation?
- Tensions between top down vs. bottom up approaches to innovation in VET?
- Measurement and monitoring of innovation processes and progress?
- What might indicators look like? What are the best ways of monitoring and supporting innovations?



Systemic Innovation in Vocational Education and Training



## **The Young Foundation's business is social innovation: finding and developing new and better ways of meeting pressing unmet needs.**

We undertake research to identify and understand unmet social needs and then develop practical initiatives and institutions to address them – in fields as diverse as health and education, housing and cities. Our work combines applied work and practical action (undertaken under our Launchpad brand), and developing our buildings as a hub and home for other organisations. For more information go to [www.youngfoundation.org](http://www.youngfoundation.org)