

The background features a light purple base with large, overlapping, organic shapes in shades of green, yellow, and blue. The shapes are layered, with some appearing behind others, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

# Creative Approaches to Research

Winter, 2012

Volume 5 Issue 3

*Creative Approaches to Research* is a trans-disciplinary journal for creative research. It reflects the convergences between epistemology, pedagogy and technology. It incorporates multiple forms of text including academic and creative writing, sound, images, and multimedia.

*Creative Approaches to Research* recognises the need to extend the range of voices and ways for doing, reporting, and discussing research. Academics from many disciplines have come together to create this journal who share a vision of it as a living and colourful text inviting engagement with multiple ways of knowing.

CAR is currently published as an Open Access Journal. We invite papers of variable length, between 2000 and 7000 words, APA style. For inquiries and submissions, please send an email to: [CAR\\_submissions@aqr.org.au](mailto:CAR_submissions@aqr.org.au)

ISSN: 18359442

# CONTENTS

## SPECIAL ISSUE: CRAVE (Creative Arts Research as Valued Education)

2012, VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

GUEST EDITORS:  
TARQUAM MCKENNA & MARY-ROSE MCLAREN

---

Preface: Arts as a Voice . . . . .	5
<i>Tarquam McKenna &amp; Mary-Rose McLaren</i>	
To Begin the Day—An Introduction to Our Australian ‘Scene’: Emergent Reflections on the <i>Consultation Feedback Report on the DRAFT Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts</i> . . . . .	7
<i>Tarquam McKenna</i>	
Applied Theatre for the Sake of the Theatre. . . . .	21
<i>Yasuhiro Kumagai</i>	
Re-constructing the Self: Self-portraiture as Exploration of Personal and Professional Identity . . . . .	35
<i>Fabian A. Rojas</i>	
We are Robot Engineers!! Drama Pedagogy as the Core of an Integrated Curriculum Unit for Learning English as a Foreign Language. . . . .	62
<i>Naoko Araki-Metcalf</i>	
An Indigenous Conversation: Artful Autoethnography: A Pre-colonised Collaborative Research Method? . . . . .	75
<i>Tarquam McKenna &amp; Davina B Woods</i>	

Arts Education: Just like a Day at the Beach .....89  
*Mary-Rose McLaren*

The Child, the Heart, the Arts—  
The Literacy Game: High Stakes and Risk Avoidance .....101  
*Ligia Pelosi*

Proposal for Special Issue for *Creative Approaches to Research*  
This Century Becomes You:  
Qualitative Inquiry, Being/There and Social Becoming in the 21st Century .....114

# PREFACE

## ARTS AS A VOICE

TARQUAM MCKENNA & MARY-ROSE MCLAREN

---

**A**t Victoria University in the School of Education a recent research Symposium was held in honor of Dorothy Heathcote and John Carroll. *CRAVE (Creative Arts Research as Valued Education)* configured the event with several School of Education arts educators having a commitment to arts as a research method in education. CRAVE hosted this two day event, which brought together more than thirty Victoria University, national and international creative arts education scholars, teachers, performers, early career researchers and research community members. The workshops and papers focused around broad interests in arts as practice, social justice and social change through the lens of the local, national and international community. The events set out in this edition attempt to capture and to present existing research, support dialogue and build strong networks around people working in and with creative arts education practice in the School of Education.

Professor Nicola Yelland opened the evening of the event which began with a performance by three Nihon University Teacher-actors and Professor Yasuhiro Kumagai presented a reflection on arts education in Japan. The second day of the symposium, which was funded from The School of Education research performance funds, had the two keynote speakers from NYU (Steinhardt School of Education) being Professor Philip Taylor and Professor Yasuhiro Kumagai from Nihon University. Saturday the work of Ignacio Rojas, (VU) Fabian Rojas-Flinders University; Naoko Araki from Deakin University and presentations from QUT

Professor Brad Haseman and Tarquam McKenna occurred. Some of these are outlined here. VU Colleagues who presented included Kate Kantor, Julie Arnold, Mary-Rose McLaren and Ignacio Rojas.

The focus of these presentations was on being artistic practitioners within the classroom, whether at primary, secondary or tertiary level. The tensions arising from pressures of time and curriculum, and competing ideologies in the classroom, were explored in an attempt to find a space and a voice for the arts. The challenges of asserting the value of arts education, when it is difficult to measure and deals with deeply human experiences, were common to many of the presenters. However, in each case, these difficulties also led to a deep conviction of the significance of arts education.

The reflections of the event are published here in the special edition of CAR. The Victoria University School of Education acknowledges the work of Mark Vicars and Julie White as lead editors of this journal for their invitation to this special edition published under the auspices of the Association of Qualitative Research. Thank you for making this special edition possible and for the support offered to the presenters.

## TO BEGIN THE DAY

### AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR AUSTRALIAN 'SCENE': EMERGENT REFLECTIONS ON THE CONSULTATION FEEDBACK REPORT ON THE DRAFT SHAPE OF THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM: THE ARTS

TARQUAM MCKENNA

---

#### WHAT IS MISSING AND WHAT IS PRESENT?

In March 2012, Creative Arts as Valued Education (CRAVE) hosted a symposium at Victoria University. What follows is a discussion of what happens when you give some opinions and the key aspects of what was said as being present and being absent from the draft paper, *The Consultation Feedback Report on the DRAFT Shape of the Australian Curriculum: the Arts*. I begin by presenting and contesting the 'scene' as a lead presentation for the community of scholars at the symposium in March. In this paper I hope to illustrate the multiplicity of perspectives we face in whatever we do, but especially with regards to the concept of a Creative Arts Education 'symposium'. As a very brief statement around the perception of the Arts in March 2012 (as there is now a new Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting (ACARA) document to draw upon) this paper can be observed through multifarious lenses. The key notion that it holds to concerns the notion of the Arts as a 'collective' discipline, a notion that is still not easily accommodated in schools in Australia. In the last twenty-five years the determination, hard work and energy of many people have added to the visibility of an Arts curriculum—but is this visibility enough? The public occasion of our CRAVE symposium was a time to comment on the strengths and weakness in the draft

document and to come together to ‘drink-up’ what we do with the Arts. This presentation was as intentional response to the previous evening’s presentation by Professor Yasuhiro Kumagai—“Arts in the Japanese School Context”.

I led a session that was to serve as an enticement for me and my fellow attendees to wonder about the day ahead of us, especially about how the Arts are situated in Australia. The literature used to formulate this ‘grab’ of symposium time was drawn almost exclusively from the work of ACARA and especially the *Consultation Feedback Report on the DRAFT Shape of the Australian Curriculum: the Arts* (2011). I also referred to earlier iterations of these documents, and especially to the rich work of Robin Pascoe and Peter Wright (2006) from Western Australia that served as a precursor to the work on the Arts in ACARA. In addition to this I brought my own 25 years of Arts practice as an educator. The purpose of my presentation was to ‘open’ the day and to respond to the previous evening’s presentation by Professor Yasuhiro Kumagai who had so lucidly and generously related his own experiences of and exposure to Japanese Art Education, which in his own estimation was in need of further serious attention. His paper appears elsewhere in this journal. My position opening the day meant that I had to set aside my original prepared presentation around research and the paratherapeutic use of the Arts in order to ‘respond’ to Kumagai’s words.

In some ways this paper—and, indeed, the presentation to which it refers—is a personal statement of specific relevance to the audience on that one day in March 2012. It was and remains a statement of values; it is *not research based*, but is, rather, a special reflection on the conversations that took place; it represents an emergent set of ideas gleaned from my life work in the Arts that culminated in my stance on that day. These ideas were set out as a statement for this particular audience on that particular day and so some of them will be less useful than others to the present reader. Yet, in many ways it is the quality of the encounter, the very exchange of meaning, that I wish to convey here and that is important; the work that we *share*.

I endeavoured to start a conversation that would allow the subjectivities and life-world experiences of those present on the day to form the core of the presentation. In this sense it was a reflexive ethnography in which I, as the ethnographer, remained.

My role as presenter was, I perceived, to offer some insights into Arts Education in Australia by drawing on my own perceptions and on my own processes of self-formation and self-understanding; and to explicate the structured ambiguity and internal complexity I saw there. My presentation, with all of its uncertainties and equivocations, was a deliberate if ad hoc endeavour to impart meaning whilst at the same time challenging any representations of truth around Arts Education in Australia.



The framing of the presentation was concerned with ‘making sense’ of Arts Education in Australia by drawing on the *DRAFT* statement around what the Arts seem to do well and what they don’t seem to do well in this country. The broad disciplinary field I observed over those two days encompassed the full gamut of Arts modalities in the Australian and international contexts: Art making, Arts viewing and Arts presenting. Dancers performed alongside installation artists while visual artists presented their video artworks and the unfolding of life theatre and drama manifested the central aspiration of the CRAVE program: the *valuing of Arts Education*. The sessions wove rich tapestries of what I examine as Artful Praxis in an upcoming edited volume entitled *Engaging the Disengaged* (McKenna, Cacciottolo & Vicars in press); that process by which a knowing is enacted, practiced, embodied or realised by and through Art and its teaching. My session dealt with the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realising and practising the Arts, and was deliberately framed to encourage the asking of questions rather than the offering of answers. Let’s begin.

My focus was on the Australian ‘scene’ and drew on my reflections on the *Consultation Feedback Report on the DRAFT Shape of the Australian Curriculum: the Arts* (2011) that had arisen during Yasuhiro Kumagai’s presentation of the evening before. I had been wondering about the status of the Arts by asking myself two crucial questions:

## **WHAT IS MISSING IN ARTS EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA? WHAT IS PRESENT?**

I very deliberately drew upon these two questions, filled to the brim as they are with subjectivities and colour, and am only too aware that I added lots of personal and personally professional ‘values’ to my presentation. Such subjectivities are central to any statement of who I am in life and as an Arts practitioner (these two actualities being inseparable). The nature of my own knowing (with its emphasis on affect) is my *personal* understanding of the Arts. The matter of whether or not this subjectivity and personalised understanding should inform my work of teaching in the Arts in Australian Universities was offered as a deliberate enticement to this audience (and is offered again here for the reader). These subjectivities and the statements they produced were posed as a ‘keynote’ or lead lecture so as to place the audience into the shoes of an Australian tertiary Arts educator at the beginning of the day’s exploration.

While some presenters attending the symposium had painted, some had danced and others had performed the stories of their knowing, all had done so with deliberate affect and effect. They presented their language of knowing as *performed and shown subjectivities* (affect) to an audience that ‘sat with’ or received the *consequences of this exposure’s impact* (effect) on their shifting awareness. Such

a shift or transformation in the artist and their perception is central to all Art forms. All expressions and interpretations of Art provoke attention to what is present in the work as well as to what is absent. Each perspective is equally valid (and invalid) at all times; permanence and authority are illusory—especially in combination. *The only certainty is that we are HERE together and are all agreed there are always ways to improve our work and our lives.*

I began with what was then the most recent documentation—the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts*—which was still in draft form and, using this as a starting point I set out to explicate my own personal and professional interpretations and understandings of where we were at through the lens of the ACARA at *that time*. Things went slightly awry when I was criticised by one member of the audience who perceived my statements on the process of assessing and reporting authoritatively as an ‘attack’ on the scholarship of ACARA. This was far from my intention; indeed, quite contrary to it. I intended to use the first session of the day to entice the audience into conversation and to enable us to collectively see the then-current state of play, especially in light of the fact that the previous evening we had heard of various absences and presences in the Japanese context.

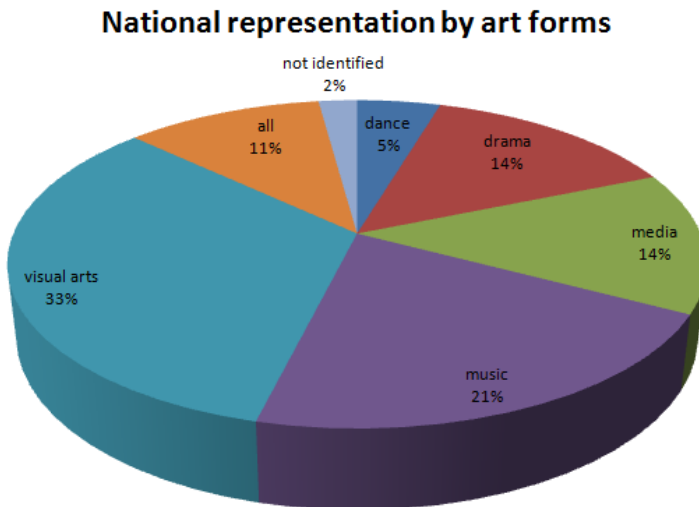
The term symposium has come to mean a meeting of minds in order to discuss a particular question. It is a term derived from the Greek and means ‘fellow drinker’; it has its roots in the Greek words *sun* (meaning ‘together’) and *potēs* (meaning ‘drinker’), which are combined to form the notion of a convivial drinking party following a banquet for the purpose of conversation and intellectual entertainment. We had had our banquet the night before. This was to be our symposium and I invited all to imbibe the Arts with me as we talked.

I used the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts*, which had been spoken of as being readily-accessible—and which was purposefully displayed in the symposium—to both contextualise some of my intellectual views on the Australian Arts Education scene and as an invitation to a conversation. The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts* is a document that is instantly available online; it is not some obscure, esoteric text accessible only to members of some ivory-towered elite... it is an important document and should be openly wondered about. No one is, or should be, above criticism in the broadest sense of the word.

I began and ended with a focus on whether or not we, as teachers of the Arts, can come to be in a space where we are inundated by the ever-increasing amount and variety of information that passes before us, without becoming more informed practitioners across all Art forms. That is, does this torrent of information serve merely to inform our teaching in a single Art form or should it be integrated into an understanding across the Arts? I shall do likewise here. At the symposium we ruminated upon these questions and deliberated around the relationships between the Arts. I placed special emphasis on the pedagogical understanding of our intentions and the relationships that revolve around the Arts and art making

that must occur. I spoke of how I hold to the notion that Art functions through the manipulation of metaphor and wondered what happens when we ponder the significance of the Arts as they can be perceived through the abstraction and inference of such a draft report.

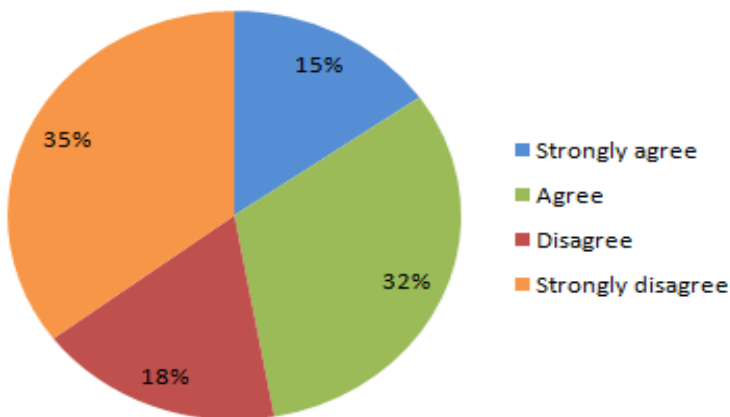
The report notes the variety of responses and the number of Art forms; who spoke and how they spoke; the positions and intersectionalities. The chart below shows the national representation by Art forms that engaged with ACARA as at August 2011, and I note here that quite clearly the place of the Visual Arts is strongly present to the inquiry, followed by a strong representation by Music.



The presentation continued with my proposing the notion that we as an Arts community are still *not clearly coherent* in the politicisation of our purpose. I did this in order to show, as ACARA did and does show, that stronger voices emanate from the Visual Arts; this came as no surprise to many of my fellow drinkers. What was surprising is the take up of responses by the five main Art forms. The National representation of the Art forms as noted above shows the dominance in the draft of Visual Arts and Music. Drama and Media are certainly represented but nowhere as fully as the former Art forms. These ‘data’ seem to state that there are varieties of strengths of presence and whilst perhaps, in March 2012 it was ‘premature’ to allude to the need for a ‘coherent voice’ I drew the symposium’s attention to another readily available slide. Based on Question 22 of the report, it presented a response to the statement “I agree with the overall of the DRAFT shape of the Australian curriculum the arts paper”. This slide, reproduced in the chart below, showed that 47% of respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the

overall intention of the draft, while 53% of respondents ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’.

I saw this as a sign that *we are still not quite ready* to agree upon the ‘shape’ of the Arts in Australia. This emergent, professionally-focused idea was presented to the audience in order to illustrate that we are at present (and probably always will be) *not* coherently agreeing on *the Shape of the Australian Curriculum: the Arts*. I asked if we were enjoying being alongside our fellow revellers. I asked if these slides had meaning, if they privileged one Art form over another and, indeed, if that mattered? My address employed this evidence to identify what was *not* showing up in the beaming smiles of my fellow drinkers. I was asking whether or not we have a way to go before we can become optimistic about our ability to celebrate our achievements towards collective Art Education? I was asking whether or not this collectiveness was too hard to achieve?



**Q22. I agree with the overall intention of the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts paper.**

The report states that 166 written submissions were sent directly to ACARA. It is important to note that of the 86 individual submissions, 42 were personal submissions and 44 were standard group or Arts Education-based association submissions, illustrating again a strong voice from Music Education or Visual Arts education groups. I was again indicating the presence of these two emphatic arenas and the richness and political strength of their voice but note that Drama is also present. They have an undeniable presence and, for the purpose of this day’s discussions, my raising the issue was intended to contextualise what is obviously present as we peruse the data set generated from August 2011.

The CRAVE symposium heard that the Arts in Australia are valued as “stand-alone learning areas in the Australian curriculum” (ACARA, 2011, p. 4). The ses-

sion unfolded with a discussion around what are known to me as five distinct subjects or disciplines—Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts—with an “emphasis *on the entitlement of all students to access all the Arts subjects*” (ACARA, 2011, p. 4, italics added). My presentation was predicated on my belief—filled to the brim as it is with subjectivities and colour!—that all Art forms should co-exist within school communities and across societies in order to honour and celebrate the very traditions that have composed those communities and societies; that no single Art form should be privileged over others. We spent time wondering around the exploration of the various Art forms and how tertiary institutions in which Art is explored can and do impact on how Art can be experienced and used. I asked whether we had wondered how and why it is that attitudes to Art differ across schools in Indonesia, Australia, the USA, Japan, Spain, New Zealand, and how this could come about. I asked how the attitudes towards more mainstream positivistic emphasis curriculum—numeracy or literacy, where ‘exploration’ is not an option and the ‘answers’ are either right or wrong—is privileged, and we entered the debate on the necessity of the Three Rs.

To this point the stating of facts that are publicly and readily available had occurred. I went on to the matters raised in the report around *Matters for improvement*. Again acting as a presenter of readily available literature I introduced the audience to issues that were consistently and clearly raised in the consultation feedback in the report but that could have been seen as ‘negative.’

The actual wording of the report notes criticism received that “terminology and language was unclear, vague and used inconsistently throughout the document” (ACARA, 2011, p. 4). The respondents had commented that the “organising strands do not adequately reflect the approaches and unique nature of each art form”, whilst the matter of any definition of “aesthetic knowledge” was less than clear and, in the report’s own words, needed “to be strengthened to include areas such as personal, social, historical and cultural analysis for each art form” (ACARA, 2011, p. 4). This matter of the specificity of Art forms—of each Art form having a language of its own—was the matter I was endeavouring to bring to the audience in my presentation. The report noted that “entitlement for students was confusing, especially around Years 7 and 8 with concern that some Arts subjects may receive significantly less time” than other Art forms (ACARA, 2011, p. 4). This need for clarity forms the basis for the stand taken by many Arts educators and indeed by Arts practitioners: being collaboratively interprofessional is often seen as a *real* challenge in the world of creative process pedagogy.

We discussed this matter in relation to finding intersubjectivity as an agreed upon need for the advancement of the place of the Arts in Australia. We struggled to address the matter of what this data actually illustrates when it depicts such a strong presence of Visual Arts and Music and a lesser presence of the other Art forms in the learning environment. Drama and Media are both very powerful Art

forms but it is my estimation the Art form of Drama is still 'less' valued by many schools.

The symposium audience were eager to learn more about the "unique and separate identity of each Arts subject" and we discussed what was and is referred to in ACARA as the "the proposed integration approach in the primary years" (ACARA, 2011, p. 4). This was new ground for many and the symposium was enthused by hearing of an integrative approach to which we all aspire. A rationale for the integrative nature of learning the Arts was not ever in question. As an Arts psychotherapist I see integration as the process by which a well-balanced psyche becomes whole. Were we asking that the well-balanced psyches of the various Arts work collaboratively to create together and to restore their sense of 'being together', thereby countering the fragmenting effect of each Art form's unique defense mechanisms?

At this juncture a sense of defensiveness became palpable in the room as people began wondering aloud what any schism between Art forms might entail. I think some members of the group had not even considered that historically, Art forms had 'separate' identities in Australian schools. In our deliberations I proposed the matter of a 'psychic split' as very familiar to me in my work in groups as an Arts Psychotherapist and counsellor. A 'psychic split' or division begins between strongly opposed sectors or parties, caused by differences in opinion or belief. The denial of the psychic and group split that is the nature of all work needs to be presented. It was certainly present on this day.

So many moments in the ACARA draft document are identifiable as evidence of misunderstandings and 'splitting'. There are turns of phrase that emphasise inconsistencies, such as the "description of the learning *entitlement* for students was confusing, especially around Years 7 and 8 with concern that *some* Arts subjects may receive *significantly less time* than currently allocated" (ACARA, 2011, p. 4, italics added). This is an indication of the value placed on Art forms as *individual* subjects and as indeed less so as the collective. The previously mentioned statement on issues "consistently and clearly raised in the consultation feedback in the report" (ACARA, 2011, p. 4) was discussed from the perspective of questioning what would happen if we homogenised the Arts? The conversation continued and the discussion focused on how, in the draft paper's discussion of learning across Years 3 to 8, the authors do not adequately acknowledge cognitive developmental differences across those years. We looked at how the important role of teachers in the delivery of Arts Education was stated as being underrepresented. We heard how the Arts industry and community need to acknowledge their supplementation of in-school learning.

My presentation was more around whether or not the Arts and each of the Art forms are valued as creative processes in addition to playing a role in determining the nature of creativity and of the "artistic" students. And so we deliberat-

ed on how teachers might unknowingly condition only certain types of creativity through their own teaching. We wondered around the nature of creativity and the manner in which talk about creativity could foster the actual processes of creativity in the everyday lives of schools.

The session considered the very core of the draft document: the interdisciplinary nature of Arts as education and as a philosophy for education. I emphasised the direct pleasure of making Art and how, by engaging in the creative we gain a chance to review and to re-create our own personal and collective life stories.

It is this very capacity to craft spaces, places and time through artifacts that drives the creative exchange and builds community both in the school and across the wider society. The symposium and the events that followed the day confirmed, over and over again, that we can and should use our imaginative impetus to drive students towards seeing their own artwork as a way towards *deep personal* learning. We must allude, too, to the distinction to be drawn between the therapeutic use of the Arts with children having specialised needs and the use of the Creative Arts as Artful Practice.

The Arts as engagement were deliberated upon and formed the basis for conversations throughout the day. We considered how the teacher, as a model Arts practitioner, must hold close to the expectations of and enthusiasm for all creative endeavors. The day proceeded with the core story of Art as a strong and culturally relevant way to initiate self-regulatory processes for students. There were many moments where my co-presenters spoke of their level of engagement with an Arts ‘task’ that drew on their self-knowledge in company with their societal knowledge in order to illustrate their own motivational beliefs about the self.

So, a classroom becomes the place where students can access and engage in art practice and inquiry, so as to equip them to be alive to and with one or more of the Art forms—Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts. It is the author’s belief that authentic Arts learning is always democratic and emancipatory and that in the Arts can be recognised an actual philosophy for learning; a pedagogical strategy in its own right, as well as in collusion with other aspects of the curriculum. Contemporary Australian cultural, economic, social, technological and institutional changes can be brought to bear upon the imperatives and strategies that influence teaching in and through the Arts.

In the mid-2000s the Australian Government stated that

Arts education offers *rich and complex* learning opportunities and *powerful developmental* experiences for young people by fostering cognitive, *social and personal competencies* for lifelong learning and *fulfillment*. Arts education develops innovative and creative minds equipped for the knowledge society and also *provides meaningful connections and social experiences* for disadvantaged or ‘at-risk’ students.

The ubiquity of visual information and communication in contemporary society means that *artistic and visual literacy are increasingly as important to success in work and life as numeracy and language skills*. To keep pace with, and contribute to the *world of rapid and constant economic, social, technological and cultural change*, young people's creative and visual capacities must be well developed. (Australian Government, 2005, p. 4, italics added)

The emphasised words and phrases are especially important, as Arts engagement must address emerging notions of *new global learning* communities. Local and individualised knowing can be encouraged to occur simultaneously in the artful classroom by taking the time to share the deepening and individual sense of the rightfulness of knowing and the *mindfulness* that surrounds individual creativity. It is largely individual purposefulness that is required to address issues of learning and teaching concerned with creativity. In my presentation I emphasised how the study and provision of Arts Education must lead to the mindful development of a body of individual and collective artworks that aspire to be

- transformative;
- a vehicle for social commentary;
- a way to enhance notions of community;
- built on story—past and present; and
- a way of self-knowledge

These attributions lie at the core of the table that follows. By focusing on these multiple ways of knowing there is always at the core of a work the belief that we can see how the Arts can and have been framed so that engagement with Art *products* is not only a way towards social commentary but also for wellbeing and that this is not only implied but appreciated as part of our praxis.

Discussion of the need for the teacher to be a model or exemplar lay at the core of the UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education, Building Creative Capacities for the 21st Century, held in Portugal in 2006. The conference represented a global voicing of the belief of the cultural significance of the Arts, the primacy of the role of the Arts in education and the advancement of creativity. There is a need for a thorough reconsideration of both Education and the Arts. Because the Arts link areas of pedagogical endeavour that derive from different histories and that have been impelled by different forces, they are able to instill, and to become an occasion for the passing on of the knowledge, wisdom, experience, guidance and stories of a shared past and present. If teachers pattern themselves on the beliefs, values and attitudes that are modelled in the visual culture of which they are part then the Arts can assist the community of the classroom to co-create the future. Arts research into the making of Art could be modelled on the following chart. This chart (on p 18–19) was presented as a vehicle for discussion on the day.



Questioning and deconstructing the messages of Art forms and reassembling one's own personal reactions as a response, can be a fruitful first step towards knowing what Art Praxis is, in and of itself. Art is a well-trodden and time-honoured path that welcomes all to explore the wonders of knowledge and life. In closing I shall relate some commentaries that came to me a few years ago now but that remain timely. These are the voices of some teachers at pre-service level who comment on how they use Art in their practice; how they intend to induct others into knowledge of the Arts; and how the centrality of story is deliberated upon.

(1) How have I used Art to make meaning in my world?

*Firstly, I use Art to make meaning in my world by being able to view, experience and make assumptions about Art that I witness. As a life wide and long learner I am always taking the time to be a witness to natural and man-made Art forms. Experiencing how others view nature, flora, fauna, industry, commercial architecture, human form, technology, create advertisement and build meaning in their life through Art allows me to form new and more in-depth understanding in my own world.*

*Secondly, I create Art to make meaning in my world. My Art form, in which I create understanding in my world, is mainly through creating and developing interactive and artistic webpages and animations. As a novice to intermediate designer and artist my skills are in their developmental stage, so I find creating these webpages helps me to form better understanding of my views of the world, my emotions and my thoughts.*

(2) How has Arts Education been part of my teaching and learning?

*Arts education and the use of the Arts in classroom and teaching atmospheres is non-discriminatory and, in most cases, not concerned with questions of right or wrong. Being able to allow students to experience and learn through using different Art forms allows for better understanding of material and gives them endless avenues to learn through their own style. Arts education creates interaction and engages students through the use of imagination, self-directed creation, higher level thinking processes, through analysis and individual understanding, and allows students to take pride and meaningful ownership of their learning. Arts education has been integrated in mainstream classroom teaching through the use of Art creation, Drama, Playback Theater, role-play, Music etc. These and many other forms create different learning styles and experience suited to all students' learning.*

*Arts education involves the teaching of creativity and broadens students' imaginations. The Arts also allow students to explore their hidden talents and, further, to express feelings and emotions through different methods of Visual Art.*

(3) How will I induct the class into knowing through Art forms?

*Artful Praxis in relation to other ways of 'researching' our meaning*

<b>Research perspective</b>	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>Naturalistic</b>	<b>Transformative</b>	<b>Artful Praxis</b>
<b>Application</b>	Comprehension	Interpretation	Learning about self and others	Liberation through aesthetics and Art as practice and experiences
<b>Means of expression</b>	Prediction	Description	Collaboration	Connectivity through the ritual use of each Arts practice
<b>Intention</b>	Add credence	Uncover theories of meaning	Interrogate assumptions & beliefs	Creating the story using Art – to break the silences. To know our individual and collective (we-connectivity) truths. To especially make the from colonized notions of identify
<b>Viewpoint</b>	The "I" is prioritized	The "I and You" are visible	The sense is "We" vulnerable	Us Community and Artists working to build respectful collective knowing
<b>Stance on knowledge</b>	Fixed	Contextual	Relational	Emerging from unknown realms—unconscious material made 'conscious' in art products. Knowledge is process, co-creation and community-focused Knowledge is related to psychosocial wellness.
<b>Procedures adopted</b>	Test hypothesis	Multiple perspectives	Tensions & anomalies	Movement toward Integration Paratherapeutic knowing

Research perspective	Experimental	Naturalistic	Transformative	Artful Praxis
<b>Methodological stance</b>	Innocent	Relative	Democratic	Social justice Equity Respect Mutuality
<b>Pathway to understanding</b>	Simplicity	Complexity	Reflexivity	Inter-reflexivity (exhibited as products) Intra-reflexivity (interior focused—felt as artistic ‘process’) Self-hood Lifeworlds
<b>Role of research relative to schooling in our society</b>	Cultural literacy	Cultural diversity	Morality	Critical pedagogical focused on deep knowing A ‘gnosis’ —new emerging ever changing Art forms and literacies with knowing of self and other in the myriad of lifeworlds through the Art form
<b>How significance is determined</b>	Individual makes meaning	Cooperative meanings	Collaborative meanings	Witnessing “connectivity” through arts works, community and intimacy of making a shared meaning as an audience to research
<b>Consequences</b>	Better or Cleaner Arguments	More complex explanations	Learning & new invitations to inquiry	Invitation to build community and co-create new ways of respectful engagements beyond those that already exist.
<b>Product</b>	Study	Thick description	Journey	Depth encounter with of ‘otherness’ as reparation of injustice.

I acknowledge the contribution made to this model of research by John Carroll, Jonathan Fox, Davina Woods and Edward Errington both in conversation and in their publications where it is presented in earlier forms.

*Art can be introduced within a class through various ways of teaching.*

*Art can be incorporated within different areas of learning, and is suited for students who learn in different ways.*

*The Arts comprise various languages that most people speak, cutting through individual differences in culture, educational background, and ability.*

(4) What does this mean for my practice as a teacher to hear personal, social, communal stories through my Art forms?

*The Arts have the ability to allow onlookers to witness, experience and obtain information through one of the best sources on the face of the earth, other people. By being a witness to other people's lives through Art, we, as onlookers, can (through metaphor) take with us a little representative piece of our fellow man/woman and do with it what we will. We can converse, idolise, protest, reject, accept or grow. For classroom purposes, the experiencing of personal, social and communal stories, allows me to look differently at the way I teach my students; and at the students themselves. Coming to knowing people, eras and the world through the sharing of stories, experiences and movements in different Art forms, gives me, as a teacher, a broader scope for the ways in which I can assist my students to learn and be exposed to information. In turn, I become the presenter/performer for my students, passing on the knowledge, wisdom, experience, guidance and stories of the past present and helping them create their own futures.*

These are the future voices of Art Praxis and Art Education in Australia. It is so heartening to see nascent pedagogy in this Information Age instinctively deriving and delivering humanistic worth from the processes and products of the Artistic impulse.

## REFERENCES

- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (2011). The consultation feedback report on the DRAFT shape of the Australian curriculum: the arts Retrieved from: <http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/arts.html>
- Australian Government (2005) *Request for tender for the provision of national review of education in visual arts, craft, design and visual communication*. Prepared by the Australia Council for the Arts and the Department of Education Science and Training, Canberra, Australia.
- McKenna, T., Cacciattolo, M. & Vicars, M. (Eds.) (2013) *Engaging the disengaged*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, P. & Pascoe, R. (2006, June 9) National review of education in visual arts, craft, design and visual communication—discussion paper. *Curriculum Leadership Journal*, 4(18). Retrieved from <http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/default.asp?id=13808>

# APPLIED THEATRE FOR THE SAKE OF THE THEATRE

YASUHIRO KUMAGAI

---

## NATIONAL CATASTROPHE, THEATER ACT, EDUCATIONAL POLICY

**M**arch 11, 2011. The largest earthquake in Japan's recorded history struck the Tohoku region. This was subsequently accompanied by the tsunami from the Pacific Ocean and the nuclear accident in Fukushima, causing catastrophic damage to a wide area of eastern Japan. Even now, a year after it happened, life within the area that was struck continues to be in disorder.

Tokyo, the capital of Japan, also received a physical blow by the earthquake and the public transportation facilities were paralysed. In order to accommodate the large quantity of difficult-to-come-home refugees who lost their means of transportation, buildings such as public institutions as well as private commercial buildings opened their available spaces and played their part as refugee camps. Such centres included theatres.

June 21, 2012. The "Act for the Development of Theatres and Concert Halls" was established. It is a law for the nation, in a nod to the public nature of theatres, to take necessary measures for them. Then, what is the public nature of theatres? Of course, this does not mean, "open the place for shelter during disasters." In dispute over the "Theatre Act" in short, people pushing it actually used various expressions for the law. Though really various, the essence may be explained with this—it creates jobs for 5,000 theatre people.

I started writing this with relatively “big” topics such as large disasters and the public nature of theatres; however, the focus of this essay is by no means big. This essay is something to the extent of an interim report regarding a “small” project in progress. But first I wanted to identify the big circumstances in motion which have a certain influence in the background of this. Those circumstances are dynamic and the project is also still ongoing; therefore I cannot deny that the following discussion also has a transitional nature. But one thing sure is that 2011 shall be an exceedingly epochal year for Japan’s theatre and education—both the good and the bad.

Let us look a bit back in time.

July 06, 2010. I was harbouring both deep emotions and uneasiness in a conference room at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). At the time, I was attending a council’s meeting held by MEXT. The council was for promoting MEXT’s new policy in the field of education, which had started a trial run. It had been decided that according to this new policy, theatre would finally enter the realm of school education. As someone who knows the “history” before this, I could not help but harbor deep emotions towards this fact. However, when I thought of the “story” of how this happened, I could not brush away my uneasiness.

Up until then, theatre was a subject completely ignored by Japanese education. Japan’s arts education had historically been fine art and music only. In general, this was thought to never change. But it changed: theatre made its entry almost abruptly yet as almost the flagship subject in the government’s policy on arts education. It was planned to launch fully in 2011.

Why had theatre not entered the realm of public education up until that time? Because it was “theatre.” Theatre is immoral, self-indulgent, and antisocial—, such “antitheatrical prejudice” (Barish, 1985) obviously existed in Japan as well. Of course this sentiment of prejudice was strong among people in a ruling position. On top of this, Japan has a stereotypical centralised government. So, in regards to the authorities of the educational administration, no matter how many times one brings up the educational effects theatre has, it would not be taken up as long as it was “theatre.”

However, the situation had surprisingly changed quickly. As previously suggested, theatre education cannot be realised as long as it is “theatre” education. That being the case, there came an idea to do away with the former name and adopt a more impressive word to make it more appropriate. Not theatre or drama, but something more welcomed: for example, “communication.” What if doing theatre education under the name of, say “communication education”? This is not a joke. Such an idea actually made a breakthrough. Accompanied with the convenient change of administration, driven by some theatre people in liaison to the new administration, this idea became a rapidly advancing situation.

By the way, why and who needed this theatre education under the name of communication education, which was like a bad joke? Of course, many expressions were used, but in a sense it came to this—it creates jobs for 5,000 theater people. Same as the Theatre Act! As a matter of fact, both of these—driven by basically the same people—are two wheels of the same vehicle which carries the livelihood of 10,000 theatre people altogether. With the gravity of this fact in mind, it cannot be simply described as a bad joke anymore.

Again, this essay is no more than an interim report regarding a small (and a little troubled) project with a certain theatre. However, when I look back on that process, I deeply feel as if it has been influenced a lot by big circumstances in the background. In regards to personal awareness of these issues, I want to spare another section in order to explain.

## THEATRE FOR DISEMPOWERMENT?

Let me acknowledge this: I am sceptical of communication education. While I was a committee member of the promotional council for it, I had my doubts then, and I still feel that way now. To begin with, “communication” is way too much of a problem as an educational concept.

In Japan, “communication” has long been thought as something good and necessary for everyone. Many problems are explained by the word (its insufficiencies and imperfections) and many problems are thought to be solved by the word (its improvements and consistency). However, the contents lumped together by this magic word are not necessarily self-evident or equal.

Certainly MEXT wants a logical foundation in promoting communication education as a policy, so they prepared many documents.<sup>1</sup> As expected, MEXT’s exemplified main foundation was an ability questionnaire conducted by the Federation of Economic Organizations about the hopes of job hunting college graduates<sup>2</sup>. According to this questionnaire, communication skills stands out as the most desirable abilities businesses seek in their new employees. This result, which had quite a social impact, became the first foundation in promoting the communication education.

Theatre education in order to create people desired by businesses!

Theatre is not something that serves the business world; Rather, as art, theatre is something that possibly acts contrary to it—as old school theatre people not free from this kind of ideology, I can’t help but be sceptical about the foundation. Also I believe education is not something that serves only the worlds of business. Would that kind of communication education steal children’s power rather than empower them?

Even if communication education is necessary, the validity of doing it through theatre is not certain. Reading and writing abilities have literature or

linguistic teaching materials. For mathematical abilities, there is arithmetic...that being the case, is theatre the teaching material for communicational abilities? It is certainly not very clear. For argument's sake, let us say that theatre also plays a part in communication education. However, to begin with, theatre education is not originally used for teaching communication and much less communication is not the only thing taught through theatre. Having said that, the contradiction where communication education does not praise other more traditionally known powers of theatre such as imagination, creativity, or expressiveness is inexplicable.

Instead, “workshop” is featured. In Japan, this word has a distinctive implication (I will touch upon the issues regarding this later). It seems to be that “workshop” is the educational identity of communication education. If you were to infer the aspects of communication education from MEXT's records (and that is an exceedingly difficult job), you would only find contents suggesting instruction by means of workshops, which aims for the advancement of communicational skills. What surprises me is that the word “theatre” or “drama” does not show up here.

The problem was that there was a tacit but firm understanding that communication education was nevertheless persistently using theatre/drama as a base. To begin with, it was theatre education! But imagination, creativity, and expression are not focused in this theatre education; it only has the “workshop” in order to secure “communication” education. In a sense, this is a kind of applied theatre. What should we call it? Theatre for Communication, perhaps.

As to the African Theatre for Development (TfD), “development” in a sense has an abstract concept in the same way that “communication” does. On the other hand, it was a theatrical movement which has both very concrete and realistic purposiveness, as taught in the history of applied theatre. People are empowered through a TfD project. Therefore, TfD became a powerful social movement (Byam, 1999; Taylor, 2003). Communication education has a tendency of becoming the complete opposite, another TfD but for Theatre for “Disempowerment”—this is something I am afraid of the most.

Even more, there is the possibility of disempowering the supposed teachers of communication education—theatre artists. Although they are theatre professionals, at the very least in the education's official stance their objective cannot be theatre. They must dedicate their efforts to the persistently unclear “communication,” in which case, they cannot fully utilise power as a theatre artist. Where can the theatre artist utilise their maximum strength? Physically and metaphysically, it must be the theater.

## THE APPLIED THEATRE PROJECT

The theatre is located in Ikebukuro, within the Tokyo metropolis. Its name is Owl Spot. In those days because it was only 2–3 years old, the venue was not very



well known in the area even though it was a public theatre operated by the ward. On the other hand, the theatre did not know about the area either. Rising from this recognition was the slogan and theme for the project, “the town knows the theatre; the theatre knows the town”. The project named Toshimap<sup>3</sup> started from 2009 as a joint venture between Owl Spot and Nihon University College of Art. I have been serving as the overall director from the start.

This project’s official position in the theatre was a “workshop business.” As theater terminology, this is in contrast to the “production business.” But this is perhaps a concept that is unique to Japan after all.

As previously mentioned, there is a unique nuance to the word “workshop” in Japan. Even though theatre as art itself continued to be excluded from school education in Japan, the main sectors which brought up and supported educational theatre and drama were theatres, especially public theatres, as their “workshop business.” Throughout the 1990s, those workshops became active in theatres, and later, as a result of the spreading of “workshop” to more various, wider cultural areas, the word was popularised gradually.

Another example showing the peculiar nuances of “workshop” is the relation with applied theatre. The first model now categorised in applied theatre was introduced to Japan in the mid-1980s from Southeast Asia. The Japanese theatre people who participated in the activities of the Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA) brought home the techniques they learned there as “People’s Theatre Workshop.” In the eyes of the Japanese people of that time, the techniques of “workshop” had more appeal rather than the ideology of “People’s Theatre.” The result of this was the workshop becoming used as the word specifying a PETA-like theatre practice. Subsequently, later introduced models in various sorts of educational/community/popular/therapeutic theatres were all recognised as “workshop” as well. Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed was seen as workshop, too. In short, “applied theatre” is workshop in Japan; the umbrella term is little used but the meanings are recognised under the umbrella of “workshop.” In Japan, the word came to mean not only a kind of meetings, but also a cultural sphere, and even a philosophy.

As a result, in Japan the meaning of “workshop” specifies quite a wide range of things and it has become ambiguous (as long as communication education depends on the word, it also shares the same problem of being wide and ambiguous). The term “workshop business” in theatres is also wide and ambiguous; it often includes educational, community, and outreach programs altogether.

On the other hand, as for the practice of those theatre workshops, if anything they have an existing state advancing in a fixed form. I believe it is accurate to say the positive image of those workshops is a set of “composed” theatre games while the negative is “disposed” ones. Those kinds of workshops doing just games especially like the latter ones often give the highest priority to “communication.”

My understanding was that those kinds of workshops, also brought up and supported by theatres, led the idea of the communication education. Consequently with that timing, when I was committing to “workshop” as a theatre business, I had a complex yet fixed motive.

My motives were as follows—to conduct applied theatre project with a theatre as its base, with theatre artists. Although it was a “workshop business,” I wanted to go far away from the so-called workshops for the communication education. I thought of this as an applied theatre project for the sake of the theatre.

The first, preparatory year, I placed an emphasis on literally “knowing” the town. The team walked about the town as much as we could in order to gain familiarity with the area. At the same time, we were accumulating data in order to understand the conditions of the area as well as the actual state of affairs. Accordingly, after creating short plays from the contents of the collected data, we had a session with the local people to discuss problems shown in the plays. It was done with a style that conformed to the Forum Theatre. By treating the theatre as a forum, we wanted the community to learn the theatre’s existence and possible role.

In regards to this outcome, a fixed number of reports (although they are all Japanese-only) were also made<sup>4</sup>, I would like to proceed without giving a detailed explanation. Above all, it was from the second year that I began to strongly develop an awareness of the communication education.

## FROM WORKSHOP TO PERFORMANCE ETHNOGRAPHY

Based on the outcome of the first year, the theme of the second year was established as “children and theatre.” In the preceding year our team had spent a lot of time looking around the town, however surprisingly we did not know what the situation of the local children was. Japan’s declining birth rates are quite notable in urban areas and there are not so many places for children such as parks in Tokyo’s big towns like Ikebukuro. However, naturally there must be children born and growing up in the town. So we decided to focus on the present state of those children in the second year. What can theatre do for them?—at almost the same time I was about to begin preparation based on this idea, the Promotion Council for Communication Education took off.

This time the team was huge. With a total of fifty people, the main force was university students all majoring in theatre. These students were not yet theatre professionals, but they were in the process of training to become one; so to speak, they were theatre artists in the making. At first my image was relatively simple: the students visit places where there are children, get to know each and everyone’s interests, and then create plays for the children. This simple idea, apparently for the children, however, gradually changed as follows into a plan that headed towards a more integral and theatrical challenge.

The project team would visit four facilities for children in the area (three were public children's centres and one was a private facility for children who refused to go to school) and play with the children. While continuing to play, we would in stages throw in theatrical elements and activities in to the mix and eventually we would do actual theatrical activities or theatre itself. With this flow the team would gather information about the children at the same time. Eventually we would carry out the work of dramatizing the children's reality/facts or problems and would produce the plays—It would become an experiment of performance ethnography.

Performance ethnography has come to gradually be tried in Japan these days. However, in general the results of those performances were often unsatisfactory to me. To put it simply, they are usually weak as plays. The (non-)actors were usually weak, too. From this kind of feeling of dissatisfaction, I always wanted to try out performance ethnography with actors whom had accumulated experience and validate the effectiveness of the methodology (Denzin, 2003; Taylor, 2008:12).

The team had two tasks. The first one was to play with the children. They would aim to eventually play with them theatrically. The second task was to collect data on the children and create plays from that information. Although as far as their respective goals went, they were independent tasks, in actuality both tasks would progress at the same time.

While conducting the two at the same time, I noticed their complementary relationship. In other words, to play with the children was to also know the children. Thus, it was a very effective way of collecting data. And the collected data became useful information for planning theatrical activities with the children.

I requested the members to take field notes on their observations and experiences each time. Data records which were progressing at the same time combined with the bundle of notes, which reached several hundreds of entries were shared. We read through these, and through the examination of over 100 episodes extracted, the making of the play was progressing.

Thus came four extremely interesting plays: performance ethnography scripts to be showcased later were created.

The first was a play about the children who refused to go to school. The facilities called children's centres are not schools, but opened to all children under 18. Children's centres open at 10 a.m., so there are children who do not go to school and spend time from the morning there. This is a two-person play about a girl who doesn't (or can't) go to her elementary school, her time spent at the children's centre and the feelings she embraces.

The second is about the relationships between children at the children's centre. Girls are having a tiff: whether or not a girl in a certain group would be alienated/excluded, or not. The tiff within the play looks similar to a trial in the courtroom. It also looks like a Jean Genet play. Male actors dared to perform girls.

The third is about a case that involved a children's centre, the community, and the schools. A few children who had shoplifted are tormented by a local, a little eccentric adult man. The kids who have stolen are of course bad, but there is also a problem in the adult's behaviour that is too oppressive. The cooperation of the parents, teachers, and staff at the children's centre at that time and their difficulties were described in the play.

The fourth is about "school arts festivals" these days. It is a play within a play about the overprotective and asserting parents interfering with children's casting for a school play, the audience's struggle over the auditorium's seating resulting from enthusiasm, and then the audience's intervention towards the performance.

These productions were showcased in Owl Spot at the end of February 2011. I was pleased with favourable feedbacks received, not only from the theatre staff, but also people from the children's centre and educators.

## **THE POWERHOUSE, A PERFORMANCE AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY**

The trials in the second year got a fixed response. I think that contrast to the now-dominant, communication-oriented theatre workshops, our product-driven approach is characteristic of theatre people. This model was something that I wanted to try again.

Correspondingly, the preparations were close at hand for the third year when Japan was visited by the earthquake disaster. Although Owl Spot fortunately escaped from physical damage of the theatre's mechanisms, it was compelled to change/modify its business plans for the year. Naturally it could not be helped that our project was also influenced by those decisions. The reduction in the size of our activities was unavoidable and it seemed possible the situation may lead to stop all the activities.

As a result, based on the experiences with the earthquake as well, we decided to try doing some experiments of mobile theatre. The planning and activities would be done jointly with a professional theatre company<sup>5</sup>. I thought this year we would only implement this mobile theatre as a spinout project (named "Owl Spots") from the Toshimap itself. However due to the request from the theatre, it came to be that we were doing one children's centre as well. In regards to this, two actors and one director<sup>6</sup> from the same theatre company as the mobile theatre would be participated. I looked forward to both the activities with a new team and the reunion with the children.

The children's centre, however, had completely changed since last year.

As we, two actors and myself, entered the house with certain nostalgia, we were suddenly bombarded with words such as, "Tell us your f\*\*\*ing name!", "Who the f\*\*\* is this old woman?", "What a weird hat!" and other jeers. How-

ever, this was something that was never unforeseeable. The year before something similar to this happened. But the children calmed down to a certain extent while we established relationships with them.

This year, however, they did not calm down at all. Many children attended the centre were replaced by another, and the change of the members seemed to have triggered a change in relationships as well; the state of the children had suddenly and drastically changed. They could not concentrate on our activities at all and showed no interest either. In its place was a disturbance of activities and attacks towards the actors/facilitators. The flow of the activities we had prepared was frequently interrupted and often difficult to resume.

Occasionally there were also times when we somehow managed to keep the activities. Also there were times when the children created several plays during one visit. However, since such smooth cases were rare, we continued being compelled to change our plans. We tried various improvisations, R.G. Gregory's Instant Theatre, and on top of that even Boal's Forum Theatre<sup>7</sup>. Thus, we finally concluded it is difficult to bring in a structured plan when dealing with these children.

It was a tough situation. Two actors leading the team looked like they were losing confidence, feeling powerless each time. And the plan had already been lost. And yet, there was one pattern which was repeated due to the belief among the team that it was somewhat workable. The pattern was that we showed the children some kind of play at the beginning of each visit. Basically, the actors recreate the plays the children had created last time. The children tended to watch these with certain interests. After all, it was a play performed by professional actors!

That being the case, what if we couldn't create anything during the previous visit (due to complete "collapse")? Representing the collapse...was not something we did (we didn't show anything in those cases), but as an idea it is not impossible or bad. This may be what is called performance autoethnography (Denzin 2003). This may be something we were eventually heading towards. Almost every visit was tough, but in a sense you could say it was a very interesting and valuable experience. I came to think that it was inevitable to create materials out of these experiences.

For Toshimap is a project at a public theatre, it is necessary for us to eventually make a "report" of the results. Reports which become administratively important is naturally a composition, but there is a limit to show these kinds of activity thoroughly in writings. During the previous two years we had opportunities of showcasing the products while reporting the results. However, this year we might be able to consolidate our reports and products by capturing our tough experiences in the format of performance autoethnography.

The plays we eventually composed are as follows:

1. Ideals and Reality
2. Infection

### 3. The Wandering Italian

#### 4. Forum Theatre

“Ideals and Reality” depicts actors enthusiastically received by children while offering fun theatre games. The children very actively participate in the games. It is the very image of an ideal workshop as if painted in a picture. There is an pause and the atmosphere all at once becomes gloomy. The children show completely no interest in the activities and the like. The actors are only showered with jeers and kicks. Finally it comes to “I hate drama!” by a child. As the title suggests, there was a gap between the ideal activities the actors had at first imagined and their actual experiences. It goes without saying that “Ideals” is a satire of the public, idealised image of workshop.



Figure: A Scene from “The Powerhouse” at Owl Spot

Next, in “Infection,” the roles of the facilitators and children are switched. It symmetrically describes two situations; it first describes exchanges between children and adults at different times and then applies these situations to a fictional adult society. For example, a child asks a “female” facilitator, “Do you have a penis?” Upon persistently repeating the same question to the speechless facilitator, they then ask, “Have you ever had sex?” The facilitator can do nothing but panic a bit. The scene changes. Then a woman (it is not clear whether she is the same person as the facilitator or not, but she seems to be so and also “infected” by the behavior of the child) is working in a clothing store. After showing a customer out, she calls out to a young male employee,

“Say, do you have a penis?” The following content is the same... By conveying the children’s experiences into the context of adult society, we exaggerate the strangeness.

“The Wandering Italian” is an extremely psychedelic play made by the children one day at an Instant Theatre session and is performed without almost any changes. The creation process of this play had been slightly shown in the previous two: those underplots are explained here.

In the last play, “Forum Theatre,” we did not conduct Boal’s Forum Theatre with the audience. It is a re-enactment of the state of the (extremely anarchical) Forum Theatre session we had with the children. The forum intervention done by a child is throwing a bomb; it destroys all.

Between the plays, narratives by the actors/facilitators are inserted; The plays and the narratives are united and consist a production of performance autoethnography named “The Powerhouse.” If we ask where the appropriate place is for actors who lived that reality to perform the texts as the people concerned/actors, surely it is the theatre. Surely it is, physically and metaphysically.

## POST PERFORMANCE DISCUSSIONS

The public presentation of “The Powerhouse” happened at the Owl Spot Theatre in February 2012. About one hundred people attended and most of them were from Tokyo’s theatre circle. It was because we promoted the presentation especially to them, since the subjects we were dealing with were things we wanted to consider with theatre people specifically. As for guests, I invited several well-known theatre professionals.

The sense of purpose we established and which was shown in the ads was as follows—Now we have the Theatre Act and the Communication Education; What a theatre and theatre artists can do anyway?

The presentation had a structure where in each of the piece’s intervals there would be a discussion with the guests. In the middle we cut in with a video which reflected the state of the children’s centre. Both the plays and video basically were consecutive shocking scenes.

As for the performance, despite it being accompanied by a feeling of tension due to the context, laughter erupted here and there and the audience seemed to be interested. However, it felt like that in the discussion during the performance, one guest (naturally the person in charge of the education programs of a theatre that lead the “workshop” in Japan) somehow had difficulties commenting. Finally she remarked, regarding the activities shown in the play, “Just what exactly was this...?” Well, it is just as you see!

She continued, “Was this the only possible result? Shouldn’t the people in the appropriate positions take some kind of measures against it?”—This was a criticism towards me.

My reply towards this was, “However, was this an example of complete failure?” Surely it could not be seen as successful since it was not intended to be shown as so; this is what we wanted to show. Upon saying this, I would like to further consider it. If we assume it was a failure, just whose failure was it? Who lost what? For example, if we had not conducted this at that time, the children would have just been playing or competing on console games.

And as far as the actors are concerned? It is true that the workshop’s “failure” might have been hard on them. However, these (workshops) are not originally part of their core business. In this sense, as theatre artists, did they not splendidly and professionally represent the predicament of their possibly failed workshop?

A few weeks later, a short, different version of “The Powerhouse” was presented in Melbourne, Australia<sup>8</sup>. I was worried that the Japanese context within the play would not be understood, but in general it seems they understood the subject. Accordingly, questions about the effects these activities had on the children came up. It was likely none and absolutely none in the mid- and long-term. However, in the very short-term, there was something of great interest that is as follows: After they did everything possible to “disrupt” the workshop, if anything the children would come to familiarly receive us. When we announced in the middle of complete chaos, “We’re done with the drama!” they spontaneously started telling us their personal stories, sang songs for us, and even started acting out dramas and plays!

It could be that the children were just instinctively vigilant of our intentions. We might have had high hopes with the children, expecting them to be obedient, purely motivated and active in “communication”..... If we assume they sensed a certain deception in such intentions and expectations, if anything, it is even promising. If we assume they were so, stubborn to that degree, there may not have been a need to hold those “workshops” for them; I do not know. However, at the very least through our “workshops” it is only certain that they were not disempowered; and this fact helps us. Rather, they may have been empowered; this is a masochistic joke.

Furthermore, we obtained powerful plays. We can think of this as an area where theatre people are supposed to work, in other words, an area where they are able to put their professional power to work.

In the Melbourne version, there are lines as follows:

Director: Why you started doing “workshops”?

Actor: Workshops make money. My boss said so.

Director: Did I say such a thing? Hmm... Were you paid enough?

Actor: ...Not bad.



Just before this, I had paid the actors a guarantee. As a “performance fee.”—  
Not bad, is it?

## REFERENCES

- Barish, J. A. (1985). *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Boal, A. (1985). *Theatre of the Oppressed*. New York: Theatre Communications Group.
- Byam, L. D. (1999). *Community in Motion: Theatre for Development in Africa*. USA: Praeger.
- Denzin, N. K. (2003). *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Gregory, R. G. (1990). *World of Instant Theatre*. Dorset: WANDA Publications.
- Kumagai, Y. (2003). “TO As A Result: An ‘Opportunistic’ Approach in Tanzania” In *PTO Newsletter*, Spring Edition.
- Taylor, P. (2003). *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community*. Heine-  
mann.
- . (2008). “Developments in Qualitative Educational Drama Research” In *Japanese Journal of  
Research in Drama and Theatre Education*, No. 1

## ENDNOTES

- 1 The policy outline is as follows on the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology’s “Promotion of communication education through the expression of arts” page ([http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/commu/1289958.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/commu/1289958.htm)). There is also a link to the main related documents on this page. Furthermore, as a project, its official title is “Experience with the expression of fine arts in order to play a part in cultivating the communication abilities of students.” Its explanation is as follows:  
 “This project is implemented as a part of the “personal experience of the fine arts for the children who will bear the burden of the next generation project” menu which aims to attempt to nurture a spirit that loves the arts as well as cultivate a rich sensibility together with the nurturing of communication abilities by means of implementing activities such as the skill guidance through systematic and continuous workshops, which utilise techniques of expression through instructors such as artists. This project especially makes nurturing communication abilities its goal and implements activities such as skill guidance through systematic and continuous workshops, which utilise techniques of expression through instructors such as artists.”
- 2 Japan Business Federation: Questionnaire Survey Pertaining to the Employment of College Graduates, April 2010.
- 3 A coined word that combines the words “Toshima” which is the ward Owl Spot operates in and “map.”
- 4 Also I did a “narrative” presentation on the project’s first year: “Theatre as Forum” at NYU Forum on Applied Theatre and Citizenship, New York, April 24, 2010.
- 5 Shigeki Nakano and the Frankens, based in Tokyo and Yokohama, staging modern plays since 2003.
- 6 Actor Takehiro Goh, actress Shiho Ishibashi, and director Shigeki Nakano.
- 7 To me, Instant Theatre (Gregory, 1990) and Forum Theatre (Boal, 1985; Kumagai 2003) had been something doable, workable in almost any situations, by then.
- 8 On March 16, 2012 as a part of ‘Creative Arts in Education: International Trends’ Symposium’ 2012.



# RE-CONSTRUCTING THE SELF

## SELF-PORTRAITURE AS EXPLORATION OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

FABIAN A. ROJAS

---

“Every creative art involves... a new innocence of perception, liberated from the cataract of accepted belief.” — Arthur Koestler (1964)

### THE RESEARCHER

**S**ince in my research the role of the researcher has a significant impact on how it is conducted and delivered, I believe it is important to start this research paper by providing some information on my story and what motivated me to undertake research in this area. I have lived in Australia for 25 years and during this time my personal growth and understanding about Australia has evolved from a basic and superficial level to a complex and intricate network of associations and definitions to what it means to be Australian. Even though my study doesn't have the intention to investigate and define an Australian identity per se, it is important to address this point as the very notion of my artistic and professional identity has been strongly influenced by the evolution of an Australian identity around me over the last 25 years. I have been engaged in art tertiary education for the last nine years, where the continuous artist/teacher duality has been strongly present. My interest in this research stems from these two developing roles. I have an interest in exploring these identity roles to develop a better understanding on how

these identities are constructed and its implications for teaching art. Researching these two identities gives rise to a *third* identity; the *researcher*; having the capacity to step outside and observe the *play* of both identities in question, with an analytical and responding manner. Thus, the role of the researcher occupies a place of significant influence during the research process; questioning and reflecting on the continuous process of exploration and discovery. As I embark in this research, I find that an effective way to explore my identity is through the development of self-portraiture, forcing me to metaphorically look at my *reflection* being constructed, slowly emerging and confronting me. I anticipate that this exploration will lead me to review my artist/educator duality further and reveal new understandings on how these two identities work and influence each other. This new understanding will lead me to new knowledge and the development of better art teaching practices.

## INTRODUCTION

The construction of identity has been researched and explored through many different avenues. For centuries artists have expressed their personal or projected identity of self and society through the means of visual representation using a vast array of mediums and techniques. Consciously creating, a visual self-examination of past, present and future or unconsciously, incorporating personal matters and experiences, within their art. For an art educator this artistic engagement is crucial in detecting in its analysis new knowledge having the capacity to inform the development of art teaching practices. Thus, exploring the duality of these identities has crucial educational ramifications.

Many artists have engaged in self-portraiture as a way to analyze, explore, learn and overcome the complexities of the task. Self-portraiture provides them with an opportunity to intimately attend to their skills, self-examine and interrogate. Self-portraiture has been a theme visited by many artists through history and remains as an important artistic endeavor today as it was then. Rembrandt used self-portraiture through the years to create a record of the passing of time, showing his obsession with physical change and ageing. Through Vincent Van Gogh's self-portraiture we can testify the state of his tormented soul, displacement and personal turmoil. Self-portraiture is often utilized to teach about identity, perception, and community (Armon, Uhrmacher and Ortega, 2009; Finley, 2008) and forms a significant component of artist development (Chilvers and Bean, 2003). Such exploration can serve as an avenue for self-discovery; establish a sense of belonging and cultural awareness. According to Finley (2008, p.100), the combination of "*the spaces formed by emotionality, intellect, and identity*" intensifies the way we learn.

### Research question

Central to the study is the following research question which drives the investigation, *how are the artist and art educator constructed, and what implications does this have for teaching art?*

To begin to answer this question one must consider how these two identities are personally and socially constructed, and how they interconnect. Addressing identity construction, through visual means, involves life experiences, relationships and connections. Constructing identity involves metaphorical or symbolical representation of thoughts or emotions in an expressive way.

Engaging in self-portraiture can re-define my personal and professional roles as I learn to understand these two conflictive 'forces' further. During my study, I intend to cross through the artist/teacher boundaries and understand further the conflictive space between these identities (Foucault, 1986). I anticipate that the engagement of the process will lead me to question and search for meaning of my cultural values as a way to understand my identity and my sense of belonging further. Self-portraiture can function as a literary autobiography, where aspects of self-interrogation takes place as a search for an individual's identity, by revealing and concealing aspects of the self during construction of the work (Platzman, 2001). This act allows new knowledge to emerge, informing and clarifying the roles.

The following practice-led research aims to explore these two identities using self-portraiture as an auto-ethnographical methodology allowing my identity become *visible* by investigating how my artist/educator identity is *constructed* and its educational implications. Allowing the plasticity of the medium to '*re-write*' my story I will create a series of self-portraits, intending to reveal, analyze and clarify the duality of the artist/teacher identity present. By embarking in this journey I intend to '*integrate knowing, doing, and making through aesthetic experiences that convey meaning rather than facts*' (Irwin, 2004, p. 31).

## MATERIAL THINKING AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

The process of art-making and writing are interconnected. The purpose of the writing is not to explain the art work, its purpose is to participate and enrich the experience of the conception of the artwork to create additional meanings. In my study I use the concept of, *Material Thinking* (Paul Carter, 2004), where I let the engagement with the medium '*speak*' and '*re-write*' my story in terms of images, tone, texture and colour, informed by personal enquiry and memory. This concept offers a way of considering the very nature of the process-making. The medium is not just a passive object to be used during the practice, but rather I allow the material and the process-making have an intelligence that comes into play with my own (Bolt, 2010). The material takes on the role of the written language

translating auto-ethnographically the story of the self. I am adopting Material Thinking as a research methodology tool to construct my identity as it allows the plasticity of the medium to be manipulated in search for personal exploration, identity interpretation and representation. As this process takes place the pure idea emerges from the act itself, where the plasticity of the material performs the very act of creation. Paul Carter (2004), states that the handling of materials during the art making process provides the niche for creative ideas to emerge, where the very act of engagement with the material is the place where the idea is invented nor before or after. With this search of *'truth'* in mind I intend to engage with the medium in an unconstrained and defiant manner attempting to go beyond the expectations of the formal attributes of a portrait. I intent for my self-portraits to become a reflective platform of personal enquiry; combining emerging images to reveal aspects of my personal story; my socio-cultural surroundings, my inner-subconscious query and my own visual understanding of my *world*, manipulated and articulated by the physical qualities of the medium. Through the process of Material Thinking I want to search for a visual representation of my identity to reveal how this is *constructed*.

## **EXPLORING IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION — THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SUBJECT**

The study explores how the identities of the artist and art educator are constructed and what implications this has for teaching art. The study explores the relationship of these two identities and how they place themselves in the immediate community and broader social-educational space and what factors contribute to the process of the construction of their corresponding identities. Identity theory (Carl Rogers, 1947), social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and construction of the subject theories developed by Michel Foucault, support the investigation and the research question proposed in this study. Foucault's theoretical framework suits the investigation as this paradigm holds firmly together the idea that the subject is constructed by external influences and the response of the self to the multilayered social choices and pressures presented to us. Foucault presents a solid background to the study as he places an emphasis on the fragmented Subject or Self as *constructed* in an unplanned manner by culture, upbringing and pressure groups. He goes to say that in contemporary society our sense of identity is developed and maintained by a continuous observation over ourselves and others. Forcing each other into categories of confinement, where we classify each other into expected roles. This occurs through external forces of pressure, affecting and constructing identity.

Foucault's critical analysis of the constitution of the subject in terms of interrelated domains of structure and agency states that human beings are shaped

by unknown, institutional, and other social structures as well as networks of knowledge (Foucault, 1988). According to him human beings have the capacity to change existing limitations and their own behaviour. I use Foucault's theory on the constitution of the subject, and his concept of technologies to study how the process of identity construction is revealed through the interaction of '*technologies of power*' and '*technologies of the self*'. According to Foucault human beings develop knowledge about themselves by a complex interaction of *constraint*, *choice* and *action*. The manipulation of the medium to create the portraits echoes this behaviour, where the medium metaphorically imitates these actions in terms of *material thinking* behaviour; moving, articulating and presenting ideas and avenues of exploration aiming to *retrieve* from the personal enquiry, what constitutes my identity. To Foucault the subject is an entity which is capable of choosing how to act within the restrictions of the given historical and cultural context. He makes the distinction between the subject and the individual. Where the individual is transformed into the subject; a transformation which takes place as a result of outside events and actions undertaken by the individual; where different forms of power relations makes individuals subjects. From my personal experience entering a new culture, new technologies of power began to act upon me, where new outside events and new actions have been undertaken. The very act of responding to the demands of what it has been imposed and presented has shaped the journey of my identity construction. As an artist I have become influenced by the perceived artistic direction of the new culture and as an art educator, the same artistic influence imposed by the curriculum, has played a part in directing the way how I teach art.

To Foucault the subject is *constructed* not discovered. The subject is a historical and cultural *construction*, where individuals act within the limits enforced on them by their social and historical context. Identities are not fixed; they are constantly *reformed* and *adjusted*. Foucault states that there is a need '*to pin things down, even if in a provisional way*' to develop a sense of self (Foucault, 1988, p 1). To Foucault individual's '*practices [of self] are nevertheless not something the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group*' (Foucault, 1987, p 122). In terms of my research, the identity *construction* of the artist and educator, have been subjected by my cultural shift, influencing the formation of the self; the educational institution, imposing rules of curricula and expectations, and the art field, having its own set of rules and impositions. These identities have been strongly formed by the very discourse between the opportunities and constraints that society has presented me with.

The process of *identity construction* is conceptualized in terms of interplay of Foucault's '*technologies*'; '*technologies of power and domination*' (structural environment of individuals) and '*technologies of self-creation*' that give concrete forms

to identities constructed by individuals within their historical and cultural contexts. If ‘*technologies of power and domination*’ represent the structural environment within which I function, I can say that, an aspect of my professional identity is represented by the educational institution (university), where the primary art educator role functions. Within this educational setting, there is an expected clear articulation about the process on how art is to be taught; rules of curricula, lectures and workshops and the ever presence of the *artist* is subjugated by the expectations of the art educator, expected to follow the rules set by the *institution*. However, as I enter the ‘*art field*’ as an artist, a new structure domain begins to play part in the construction of this identity, where the expectations of the art educator are no longer primary, but nevertheless intrinsically present; ‘*learning from the artist*’. The art field presents its own set of rules and expectations by which the artist is expected to conform and perform; gallery expectations in terms of progress of work and evolution, clients and critics. ‘*Technologies of the self*’ are revealed through the activities that I perform within these two structures, the educational and the art field settings.

### Cultural Identity

Culture is constantly in a process of becoming, of emerging out of the dynamism of popular culture and everyday life whereby people make and remake connections between the local and the national, between the national and the global, between the everyday and the extraordinary. (Edensor, 2002, p.25)

Cultural identity can be defined as the identity of a group or culture, where an individual is to be said to belong to that culture as far as she or he is influenced by this group or culture to which he or she belongs to. Where common shared characteristics, and set of norms, are observed among members. The culture of the group is mainly determined by difference as it highlights differences with other groups, and cultures, reinforcing its own qualities. Therefore, the dynamics of cultural self-definition implies a continuous contact between cultures. This fact that the construction of identity is linked to unequal power relations implies that identity construction can be seen as ideological. In establishing its identity, a cultural practice constructs, reproduces, or subverts social interests and power relations (Foucault, 1982). Within a culture or cultural practice, there is an awareness of a common identity. This implies that there is also a driving force to preserve this identity. Considering my cultural identity shift from one culture to another, there has been a clear *fragmentation* of the old culture in order to “accept” the new one, where the sense of belonging, shifts between a mental, spiritual realm to a physical, concrete one. I mentally ‘live’ in one remembered culture and physically live in the other. In terms of my artist/teacher identity construct both are strongly



influenced by the current culture as training and practice has mainly taken place within this cultural structure.

## THE ARTWORKS

This section provides an analytical overview of the artworks created, leading the research. Personal journal entries are identified by bold cursive writing, supporting the analysis as a second *voice*.

“To make a self-portrait is to add to the calculated risk, for it is to say something about oneself explicitly, to risk exposure. That is its strength.” (Author unknown)

The self-portraits created during the research have emerged out of complex combinations of artistic skills, experience and knowledge. I began to create these self-portraits as a journey of self-discovery and as *‘aesthetic experiences that integrate knowing, doing, and making’* (Irwin, 2004, p. 30). The very act; of manipulating the medium to create the self-portraits, aims to confront creative mental elements at play which drive the *construction* of the artworks, by letting the image emerge from the chaotic intersection between, colour, shapes, texture and tone. Furthermore, the medium chosen, aims to investigate the combination of realist and abstract elements at play into an arena of narrative visual experience. Imitating life and deliberately rearranging it are two different things, I have allowed the material to say something beyond the visual by letting it find a *voice* and re-write my *story*. The artworks are not just images of the self, they are multiple random images that would not normally exist together to create a story of the *self* and possibly other participants of my life stage. (See fig. 5—9.)

Allowing the material to *participate* in the creation of the work, takes the work to an unpredictable journey, invoking visual perplexity, in so doing, alerting the viewer and me to potential meanings. The textured qualities of the paper aim to inform and translate further search and meaning of the intention of the work with some unconscious sculptural attributes. The artwork takes an analytical and reflective view of the self within social, personal and cultural issues (Brown, 2007). As I reflect on my identity and the construction of the artist and art educator, I clearly detect the influence of memory, my surroundings, my culture, and the very nature of the task affecting the development of the work. The evolution of the work and the plasticity of the medium, by tearing newspaper and sticking it on the board mimicking and behaving as brushstrokes of paint, bring to light the *accidental* use of familiar visual signs, arranged into a new conceptually layered format aiming to inform and confront the possibility of failure or destruction of the work.

I had intended to create the self-portraits following a formalist approach, where the proportions of the face are ‘*strictly*’ followed to convey mimesis. However, as my intention is to say something more about a mere self-portrait. I find that the use of newspaper, charcoal, paint, and ink prove to be an amenable vehicle for translating inner vision to outer reality as it allows me to have the flexibility for ideas to bravely take form without the ultimate *fear* that the self-portraits do not represent me, an act, which can have the potential tendency to stop the process. Consequently, I let the material ‘*think*’ and find a *voice* ignoring constraints of formalism. As the work continues to evolve, I can clearly identify surfacing dominant art elements such as colour, tone, texture, line and shape, which establish a dream-like surreal quality to the work, suggesting notions of calmness and safety, contrasted with the sense of loss and fragmented existence.

The visible texts provide unconscious clues to content and interpretation, which may or may not clarify further meaning into the work. According to Foucault (1982) there have been two principles governing western painting since the fifteenth century; representational and linguistic reference. Not able to merge or intersect, subordination is required. Either the text dominates the painting or vice versa. Persistence in embracing the use of a new medium such as newspaper, challenges the practical execution of the work which tries to convey the idea of a self-portrait, this action resonates with the challenge in searching for my *identity*.

I find myself facing a contrasting dilemma, between my aim as researcher and my aim as an artist. As an artist I want to take the art work to a place of complete artistic engagement, personal passion and intensity...and the other as an educator...searching for practical, useful knowledge expected from the research... (See fig. 3–12)

I think of my work as an unfinished inventory of fragments, where text and image have been, placed together, aiming to reveal self-image not exclusively dictated by mimesis, but an image which visually summarizes the search for the answer to my identity. The final work is an improvisational stage in which the constructed and the ready-made images randomly presented on the newspaper are re-arranged and used to question the making of my *world* through printed textual language and knowledge. The text becomes part of the *story*, not with the descriptive attributes of text, but with its visual qualities given by its different styles of font, colour and size. The arrangement of the formal elements of the work is schematic as well as unpredictable; I have not specifically intended or planned the course of the work, my intention is to invite the viewer to move into a space of speculation. During my research and production of the work, I found new areas of interest and meaning arising, leading to possible new avenues of exploration and reflection, with new possibilities of knowledge acquisition. (See fig. 11)

I reflect on the making of my self-portrait as I begin to trace the key areas of my face, which I believe constitute the key to the accuracy of the proportion of the face; the alignment of my nose in relation to the angle of the face, the position of the eyes, the ear, the neck and the overall position of the face emerging out of the surface of the picture plane... My initial attempt is to reach likeness, carefully observe tone and how colour tends to change as the play of light changes over the surface of the face...

(See fig. 1, 2 and 4)

...I am also concerned with what I am trying to capture? And how I want to express it? I ask myself which colours I am going to use and how these colours will enhance and express the meaning of my work. I become concern with the ambiguity of the task, leading me to the question of what is that I am trying to address, likeness, based on accurate depiction of the proportions of the features of the face?, or to convey an idea or feeling through the way my face is depicted? Colour, tone, proportion? I find myself with the difficult task to render likeness by ways of carefully observing and measuring the alignment of my facial features and simultaneously observing the tones of the colours given dimension to the face....

However, I question if this is enough and conclude that it is not. I want to express meaning in a painterly manner and I begin to address my brushstrokes and the mixing of the colours that I am using. Deciding that, I want my colours to be mixed further into the colour wheel, reducing its range as well as working with more tertiary colours. I pay attention to the brushstrokes and how they shape the subject's direction and dimension, as well as how crisp, decisive and confident they appear. As the painting progresses my inner struggle between what is immediately in front of me; the task in the making of the work and how this works is taking me to other places of query in my mind—retrieving thoughts, questions and memories foreign to the actual work itself, but nevertheless, connected...

I get close and distant at the same time—my experience in creating the art work puts me in a place where I find myself facing many different avenues of exploration simultaneously.—overwhelming—I begin to retrace my steps which have led me to these confusing and multiple choices—I stop and reflect; and I make a decision addressing likeness as the main guiding structure, but also addressing the emotions of all the thoughts of my inner self, aiming to create a self-portrait which tries to convey something about myself and identity, through the use of colour and brushstrokes...How do I translate, all the marks, brushstrokes, texture, colour and the form? How do I 'construct' my identity?...I begin to consider, preconceived ideas, experiences and creativity... Brown (2007) suggests that *'sensory and felt states form the conditions of cognition'* (p. 10). There is a

feature of human consciousness that enables explanation of the relation between *self* and *world* as a way to unify *thought* and *knowledge* in the arts (Francini, 2009).

The multiple images used in the construction of the portraits, are copies of drawings, photos and previous stages of the same work, with the intention to visually replicate the act of remembering. As I find myself facing the task, I begin to re-collect images, knowledge, experience and influences which I ambitiously rely on, to create something ‘new’ by allowing the material to *speak*. As the work develops I encounter new meanings, associations and I begin to interrogate further. The self-portraits as research has impacted on my knowledge about teaching as the research involved in creating them have enlighten new avenues of understanding, thinking and theorizing in education. Creating these self-portraits has placed me in a position of constant enquiry about my *self-image*, continually shifting my thinking, forcing a *becoming* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983).

### *The Engagement—The Making of the Work*

...New layers of paper intersects and interrupts the layers above and below... letting myself be taken and driven by the fluidity and plasticity of the medium. Allowing me to make spontaneous decisions; responding to each layer as a new image, transmitting a new meaning... (See fig. 5–10)

Exploring my identity requires ‘*de-construction*’ as a metaphor to an evaluation of the existing present identity and the ‘*construction*’ of the new found ‘self’. Adopting the use of newspaper as an already constructed object, destroyed and rearranged to *re-construct* something new, allows for the material to instinctively *re-invent* itself in the search for new understandings and knowledge. *‘A moment of complete happiness never occurs in the creation of a work of art. The promise of it is felt in the act of creation, but disappears towards the completion of the work. For it is then that the painter realizes that it is only a picture he is painting. Until then he had almost dared to hope that the picture might spring to life’* (Freud, 1996 p 220). The expectation that the work of art will fulfill the intentions established at the start of the work is never accomplished, because the many ‘avenues’ presented during the art-making process leads the work into an ‘unknown’ domain, only known by the process itself and not by the artist. The plasticity of the medium manipulates the original ‘idea’ into a world of internal enquiries and responses. The work does not possess the power to satisfy, only the process. My aim is neither, to reproduce reality nor delineate a character but to create. I am not heading the picture towards a *truth* already grasped, but responding to something *unfolding*. *...As I recall past memories, I visit places and events once experienced and as I connect the present with those memories I can vividly remember emotions and feelings surrounding those places and events; making them ‘current’, however, briefly and fleeting in nature, pushing me to quickly record them in the art work...* (See fig. 11 and 12)

The work is created by the physical engagement of the medium on the picture plane. This medium is manipulated, forced and stretched to the point where its boundaries of consistency and limitations are tested. During the art-making process multiple layers of images are created in the search for further understanding and meaning, consistently attempting to go beyond the surface and *'penetrate to the essential'*; images emerge informing and clarifying further ideas of *'construction'*. This unexpected repertoire of images carries meaning beyond further descriptive explanation, giving rise to the creation of further layers, to *'stress the visual as a source of knowledge/meaning without the need for accompanying description or explanation, although this may further amplify understanding'* (Hoffert, 2000, p 1)...

*By simultaneously responding to the image emerging in front of me and the query of the search...the work acquires an individual intimate approach, informed by the collective influence of the surroundings...the image aims to represent the possible ultimate answer to the question of who is been represented; is it the self? or the perception of others of me?...the organic rawness attributes of the newspaper; the instinctively unconscious/conscious execution, informs me of the nature of texture and shape and simultaneously showing me a transformation and representation of my external/internal world...revealing and concealing layers of anticipated revelation of meaning...*

All visual experience is essentially abstract; what we observe, the sensations which impose on our visual mechanisms, are colour, shape, line, texture, tone and their relationships, but it is what they mean in combination which we perceive. In terms of my self-portraits their execution can be explained in terms of purpose, materials, technical features, history, authorship and belief, but it is their appearance, which I believe, formulates their *identity*. It is how their composite meaning is communicated. The behavior of the medium has the capacity to convey something unfolding, as the spontaneity, randomness and organic qualities of the paper bring to the surface an inter-connective pattern, between what I search and the emerging image of my *reflection*.

In conclusion, the self-portraits created had the intention and purpose to reveal, what was not at first obvious, hidden and possibly concealed. By becoming aware of what was obviously 'present' and 'hidden', new avenues of discovery can take place. Art provides a medium for forming ideas that may not be literal or logical, but it is the capacity for conceiving them that makes art compelling. I have intended with my self-portraits to make my identity visible where elements of the self can rise to the surface and become 'palpable'. Platzman (2001) argues that one can read in artists' self-portraits an autobiographical element where personal feelings collide with the artist's cultural, social, and historical context. The process of making art becomes a research tool, where the plasticity of the medium, driven 'manipulative' unconscious and conscious forces, visually and simultaneously translates inner query and response.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

### *Auto Ethnography*

Auto ethnography can be defined as a platform of self-discovery as we enter the daily living arena and explore the significant incidents of our lives as a way to reveal how we represent ourselves. This is a process of revealing the individual which we have become by taking into consideration the many significant choices and life deciding avenues which have led us to see and represent ourselves to the world around us. Incorporating elements of one's own life experiences and looking deeply at the interactions of one's self with others can reveal the affecting mechanisms of history, social structure, and culture (Edensor, 2002). My personal experience on arriving and settling in Australia in the late eighties placed me in a position of cultural contemplation and involvement, where the very fabric of what constituted my identity began to be questioned as I began to interact and learn from my environment. For the first time in my life I began to dissect who I was. Auto ethnography as a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context, it is both a method and a text, where the story of the self is placed within the story of the social context in which occurs. In my study the text has been replaced by the 'voice' of the medium as a way to re-write my story.

The execution of the work as it unfolds has the undeniable capacity to reveal aspects of 'meaning' and clarification of some unconscious 'message', memory, experience and response. Auto ethnography has emerged as a useful research methodology due a growing "challenge of creating texts that unfold in the intersubjective space of individual and community" (Holman Jones, 2008, p. 210). I use the medium to create, shapes, tones, texture and colour; these become the written *voice* by which self-identity can be re-written. Auto-ethnography is highly appropriate for the study because "it includes any form of inquiry that attempts to confront complexity among human relations within their temporal, spatial, and historical contexts." (Irwin, 2004, p 34). This method of research allows me to connect with the surrounding social and cultural habitus (Ellis, 2004). Creating art works is emotionally driven encompassing an array of experiences, memories and ideas. Auto-ethnography connects this emotion back to the wider contexts of the inquiry. When considering a work of art created based on one's identity or the pursuit of it we should take into consideration everything that surrounds and relates to the relevant artwork in question, the viewer, the artist, the physical setting of the work; the art, culture and society that gave origin to it. It involves 'thinking in the medium' through a series of problems that have 'an end in view' (Ecker, 1966, p. 64). Allowing the material, *respond* to the query.

### *Material Thinking*

The plasticity of the medium allows for new ideas and discoveries to be revealed. The very process of manipulating the medium gives rise to new avenues of inter-

pretation, translating aspects of the enquiry. Every choice made allows for meaning to be revealed. The very act of manipulating the medium to construct the self-portraits becomes a metaphor to self-identity enquiry. In other words, the mental process of searching is physically translated into action by the very performative aspect of the material, being manipulated on the surface of the board, giving rise to an image. By using newspaper-mixed media on board, I am deliberately inserting an unconventional art medium to allow new and different ways of revealing and modelling. Through this process I create many layers of representation on the work, metaphorically mimicking the very act of searching, concealing and revealing. By using and manipulating newspaper-mixed media, I am introducing a new way of making meaning through practical invention. Where I allow the material to discover and unravel its possibilities without my *intervention* (Carter, 2009). ‘*The art making process always issues from, and folds back into social relation*’ (Carter, 2009, p 19). Paul Carter refers to this as a process of *discourse* as an analogy to the decision making process during the creation of the work. This discursive nature of the process provides a reflective platform to test new ideas and explore new and different avenues of discovery. This very raw, organic and unpredictable nature of the material establishes its interest. The discursive nature of the material has a strong relation to Foucault construction of the subject, where he argues that discourse constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge, and it is with this knowledge that the subject is *constructed* (Foucault, 1972).

## CONCLUSION

The research undertaken investigated how the artist and art educator constructed, and what implications do this have for teaching art. The shifting relationship between my artistic and professional identity was investigated through a series of self-portraits. This auto-ethnographical research facilitates personal and professional development, by acknowledging that these identities merge and disrupt within a constant flux, informing each other, continuously and persistently within the environment and structures of power. Where the constant influence of these structures further transforms these identities. The development of effective teaching practices is about finding out what the concepts and theories are, when they are occurring within the very act of practice itself. This act of practice forms associations about practice and teaching. The action of practicing is informing, applying and processing theory. Knowledge can emerge in the “*flow between intellect, feeling, and practice.*” (Irwin, 2004, p. 29). This requires a certain level of sensitivity, adopted and implemented to understand how knowledge is acquired and interrogated during the process of practice. Art practice engagement aims to find solutions and new avenues of discovery to the ongoing ‘*plasticity*’ challenge presented by the execution of any work of art. The self-portraits created as

research have revealed aspects of my personal and professional identities, making it visible, by the unfolding visual character of the material at hand, allowing it to re-invent itself during the art-making process and finding a *visual voice* to represent my identity.

The *material thinking* nature of the medium used during the research has the capacity to transform my way of thinking about my identity by enabling me to think differently about our human condition as it explores and displays, an action of *becoming* by addressing the very fabric of my identity as the self-portraits unfold in front of me. The theoretical analysis of how the subject is constructed clarifies the mechanisms by which my identity evolves, placing me within an arena of discovery, which is destined to continuously grow. Getting to know, through the practice, the very essence of my character I begin to understand how identities form, how relationships with others are actively invented and re-invented. This knowledge is essential to our understanding of society, its sustainability and survival. Creating the portraits, created me, as I learned to see how I had shaped the person I am, how I perform and where I fit in my *'world'* as I begin to understand it further.

Understanding the construction of identity through self-portraiture assists in my artistic and professional development, because it revises the self in multiple ways, placing me at the centre of the enquiry where I question and discover new ways to theorize about art, engaging me in *becoming* the artist and the art educator and through this process finding rigorous intellectual connections between them to develop my teaching professional role further.



## APPENDIX



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8





Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

## REFERENCES

- Armon, J., Uhrmacher, P. & Ortega, T. (2009) The significance of self-portraits: Making connections through monotype prints in “Letras y Arte”. *Art Education*, 62(6), 12–18.
- Bolt, B. (2010) *Heidegger Reframed: Interpreting Key Thinkers for the Arts*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Brown, N. C. M. (2007). *Literature review for the National review of education in visual arts, craft, design and visual communication*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Carter, P. (2004). *Material thinking: the theory and practice of creative research / Paul Carter Carlton*, Vic: Melbourne University Publishing.
- Carter, P. (2009). “Interest: The ethics of invention.” In Barrett, E. and Bolt, B. (Eds.), *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. London, I.B: Tauris.
- Chilvers, I. & Bean, R. (2003). *The Artist Revealed: Artists and their self-portraits*. California: Thunder Bay Press.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. (R. Hurley, M. Seem & H. R. Lane, trans.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Originally published as *L'Anti-Oedipe*, 1972, by Les Editions de Minuit, Paris.
- Edendor, T. (2002). *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*. Oxford: UK: Berg
- Ecker, D. (1966). “The Artistic Process and Qualitative Problem Solving.” In E. Eisner, & D. Ecker, (Eds.), *Readings in art education*. Waltham, MA: Blaisdell Publishing Company, pp 57–68.
- Ellis, C. (2004). *The Ethnographic I: A methodological Novel about Teaching and Doing Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

- Finley, S. (2008). "Arts-based inquiry: Performing Revolutionary Pedagogy", in N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Los Angeles: Sage, pp. 95–114.
- Freud L. (1996) Some thoughts on painting In Selz, P. and Stiles K. (Eds) *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, University of California Press, London pp. 219–221.
- Francini, A. (2009). *Analysing oppositions in the Concept of visuality between Aesthetics and Visual culture in art education using John Searle's Realist account of consciousness*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. Available at <http://unsw-works.unsw.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/unswworks:5034>
- Foucault, M. (1982). "The subject and power", In H. Dreyfus and P. Raimbow (Eds.), *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Brighton: Harvester, pp 208–227.
- Foucault, M. (1987). "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: an interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984" transcribed and edited by Raúl Fornet-Batancourt, Helmut Becker, Alfredo Gomez-Müller and J.D. Gauthier in *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 12:, pp. 112–131.
- Foucault, M. (1988). "Technologies of the Self",i In Martin, L., Gutman, H. & Hutton, P. (Eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*. The University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst, pp. 16–49.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock
- Foucault, M. (1986). "Of Other Spaces" (J. Miskowwicz, trans.) in *Diacritics*, 18(1), pp. 22–27.
- Hoffert, B. (2000). "Seeing as a way of knowing: The relationship between Observation and Meaning". *Australian Art Education* Vol. 32, special edition pp.1–7
- Holman Jones, S. (2008). "Autoethnography: Making the personal political", in N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Los Angeles: Sage, pp. 205–246.
- Irwin, R. (2004). "Introduction: A/r/tography: A metonymic metissage", in R. Irwin, & A. de Cosson (Eds.), *a/r/tography: Rendering Self Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry*. Vancouver: Pacific Educational press, pp. 27–40.
- Koestler, A. (1964). *The Act of Creation*. New York: Pan Books.
- Platzman, S. (2001). *Cézanne : The Self-Portraits*. New York, University of California Press
- Rogers, C.R. (1947). "The Development of Insight in a Counseling Relationship". *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 18, pp. 96–100.
- Tajfel, H. and Turner, J.C. (1979). "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict" in W.G. Austin and S. Worchel (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Monterrey, CA: Brooks/ Core, pp. 33–43.

# WE ARE ROBOT ENGINEERS!!

## DRAMA PEDAGOGY AS THE CORE OF AN INTEGRATED CURRICULUM UNIT FOR LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

NAOKO ARAKI-METCALFE

---

“I chose to become a top-class robot engineer from China, Dr. Chen. I created the character and decided her name, age, and family members. Dr. Chen was living in me. Actually, she became me, and I became her” (a Year Six girl).

**T**he feedback above depicted this Year 6 student’s deeper engagement with her learning in the Drama-English integrated unit, in which Year 6 students took on the roles of top international robot engineers. Being in the role of Dr. Chen, she understood that the medium of language was English. She said she often thought about this character, even when she was at home. When all of the students were asked to decide a costume and plots as robot engineers, she said she could not stop thinking about what Dr. Chen looked like, how she walked, how she talked, and how she dressed. Through being in role, “we can transcend our limited and restrictive social roles and discover new aspects of our personality” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 24). The Year Six girl’s confidence even surprised her classroom teacher, as she was usually a very quiet student who lacked self-confidence in class, but through this transformation she had discovered her own competencies that she may not have ever known about. Dramatic transformation can also assist with reducing anxiety in an additional (both second and foreign) language learner (Piazzoli, 2011). “Drama activities...successfully break the fixed social rules of

the formal school setting by inviting the participants to experiment with different roles under various imaginary conditions in a very safe manner. Trying things out in drama is pleasant and non-threatening second language (L2) learners because they face the tension of making decisions without the pressure and fear of ‘what if I am wrong’ (Kao and O’Neill, 1998). Piazzoli’s research (2011) focuses on advanced Italian language learners at a university, however a very similar outcome was witnessed with beginner English language learners in Japan. This Year Six girl presented herself as a confident, professional, and approachable robot engineer, Dr. Chen. The distance, which was created by her adopting a new role as a robot engineer, became a safely net for her to explore, what Kao and O’Neill call “new aspects of [her] personality” (1998, p. 24).

Drama education is not offered within the usual school curriculum in Japanese schools. Arts Education only provides Visual Arts, and Music. Dance is embedded within the Physical Education curriculum. Therefore, the use of drama in the classroom is an unknown entity to students, and teachers, in Japan. The word ‘Drama’ can be translated into a Japanese word ‘*dorama*’. In my previous research, the impression of Japanese teachers and students towards the word ‘*dorama*’ was associated with TV drama (Araki-Metcalf, 2006). Although traditional theater forms, such as *Kabuki* and *No*, as well as contemporary theatre performances do exist in the Japanese society, these forms are often associated with another Japanese word, ‘*Engeki*’ (a theater performance). The Year Six students and teachers were familiar with being the audience, the receivers of forms of drama either TV drama, *Kabuki*, *No*, or contemporary theater performance, but they had never had the experience of being on the side of ‘providers’ or ‘creators’. In this paper, I will discuss the possibility of using drama pedagogy as a crucial driving force within an integrated curriculum for teaching English as a foreign language in Japan. These students experienced being the ‘providers’ and ‘receivers’, as well as being ‘creators’. Through taking these multiple perspectives, they used English as a foreign language in a more creative and spontaneous way within an authentic context, in comparison to the language lessons that they used to receive, which were focused mainly on repetition of target vocabularies and participating in short language activities and games.

## A JAPANESE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL’S CONCERNS

A principal from a public primary school in Japan shared his concerns that his Year Six students were losing their interest in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at his school. He therefore approached me, as an educational consultant, for guidance and advice on how to provide a more effective EFL curriculum. The school was appointed and funded as a model school for teaching English as a foreign language by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and

Technology (MEXT). This school was providing a leadership role in this particular area of learning amongst the neighbouring schools in the area. This integrated Drama-EFL project was conducted during the preparation phase, prior to the official introduction of a compulsory EFL curriculum for Year 5 and 6 students from 2011, under the new educational concept of ‘Zest for Living’ (MEXT, 2011). Some schools in each city started implementing trial EFL programs during this preparation phase. Teachers in leading schools and educators started publishing handbooks on ‘how to teach English to younger students’ and activity idea books on EFL programs within the Japanese Primary School contexts (Kanamori & Oka, 2007, Matsukawa, 2004, and Yoshida, 2008) to support primary school teachers in this new educational reform. Whereas, Japanese academics like Otsu (2004, 2007) expressed serious concerns and disagreement of this introduction. One of the reasons was that the classroom teachers, who are not language specialists nor received any training courses to teach EFL, are appointed to design and teach the EFL programs with language assistant teachers. To overcome this issue, Yoshida’s guidebook (2008) suggested how classroom teachers could teach together in a team-teaching method with language assistants (an English language speaker or Japanese person who had experienced living overseas, or who had previously taught English in Japan). With the extra funding from MEXT, the principal who approached me decided to employ several English language speakers to provide this team-teaching method in his school. The team-teaching was not equally distributed; English language speakers mainly taught the class and the Japanese classroom teachers assisted in class, due to their lack of confidence in the use of the English language within the Japanese classroom setting. A majority of these English language assistant teachers were not qualified teachers in Japan, nor had they completed any teacher-training course overseas.

From observing teachers, assistant teachers, and students in their usual EFL class several times before I introduced the integrated Drama-EFL curriculum, there were some concerns that had emerged. For six years since Year One, these students participated in English language activities such as singing songs, playing language games, and participating in controlled communicative activities under different topics. Since the typical language lessons repeated similar patterns of activity structure with different set vocabulary items, the lesson content became very predictable. Some activities did not even require active participation from the students. The language class was offered only once a week, for forty-five minutes. Consequently, the limited amount of time for EFL class, and also the repetitive lesson content contributed to many students disinterest in the existing curriculum. In other words, these students rarely experienced the meaningfulness in the repetitive learning program, which Gibbons (2002) stresses that “there may be no rational as to why this is a particularly relevant or meaningful piece of language for children to be learning at that point in time” (p. 119). In Japan, students’ daily



environment does not require them to use the English language for communication at all. This limited usage of the language made it quite difficult to see the usefulness in English as a foreign language, let alone as a tool for communication. It was challenging for the teachers to plan and implement a language lesson which was fully engaging to students in their EFL learning, and also helped to promote their communicative skills in English. This was understandable since most teachers had never been taught how to teach EFL in primary schools, nor studied in the area of EFL education. What teachers had to rely on was their extremely limited experience of participating in professional development sessions for EFL (a few times a year at the maximum), and their personal knowledge of the English language which was gained from their own secondary and tertiary education in Japan. Their learning experience of the English language at that time was, however, heavily focused on drilled exercises on worksheets and the Grammar-Translation method, where they simply translated textbooks from English to Japanese with the study of the grammar rules. The teachers found that their knowledge of English language learning was not useful for teaching English to primary school students, as the focus was on communication. The teachers' lack of confidence in teaching EFL seemed to be influencing the disinterest in the students, particularly amongst the older grades. Similar issues were shared amongst Year Five and Six teachers in other primary schools.

## **INTEGRATED CURRICULUM WITH DRAMA AS AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH**

An alternative curriculum for EFL was urgently required, not only for providing a meaningful context for these students, but for the teachers as well to enable them to deliver it with confidence. I therefore suggested the introduction of an integrated curriculum approach, to shift the learning focus from the students' language skills to content. This still allowed students to use the target language within a meaningful context, in which classroom teachers provide inquiry-based learning in their classes for this new curriculum, and assisted in building up the context together outside of EFL classes. The idea was well received by these teachers, especially since the focus was not solely on teaching EFL. They already felt their limitations in teaching EFL as some students knew more about the language than them, and they also recognised the difficulties with providing a positive learning environment in EFL class by using the existing curriculum.

When curriculum in general is discussed, Watkins and Kritsonis (2008) explain there are two major forms of curriculum: the first form is "to offer a fragmented, isolated view of a subject matter...In this model there is no attempt to connect the relationships between curriculum in other fields within the content area being studied" (p. 6). This model is a very common one that these Year Six

teachers were used to delivering within their school. The other model is an integrated one, in that several academic subjects are integrated under a wider conceptual theme. This can be described as an organisation of “teaching and learning experiences in which significant content, across and within learning areas, is selected to develop and extend students’ understanding of the world” (Wilson and Jan, 2009, p. 11). Further, Churchill et al (2011) discussed that integrated curriculum also allows students to draw on “the knowledge and skills that are useful to [them] at that moment to problem solve or clarify what [they] are investigating” (p. 183).

The concept of integrated curriculum was fairly new among Japanese teachers. The Japanese Year Six students, and teachers, had a basic concept of what integrated curriculum was about, as the MEXT had already introduced the concept into the primary school curriculum in 2002 within an educational reform called ‘*Yutori Kyoiku*, Relaxed Education: room to grow’ (Willis & Rappleye, 2011). The direct translation of this reform theme in English appears to be problematic. It meant a new curriculum, in which the previous curriculum content was cut back immensely “30% reduction in curriculum” (Willis & Rappleye, 2011, p. 13); Saturday morning classes were no longer offered; and inquiry based learning was introduced, so that Japanese students became able to apply their gained knowledge and skills from individual academic subject into solving social and environmental issues. A well-known Japanese educator and researcher, Sato (2000, 2003, 2011), who had observed thousands of classes in Japanese primary schools and worked collaboratively with the schools and teachers, perceived this as a positive, eye-opening opportunity for Japanese teachers, since it allows them to become curriculum creators, instead of totally relying on the role of curriculum consumers or followers.

The benefits of using Integrated Curriculum for English as an additional language, such as English as second/foreign language, have recently been recognised. “An integrated program takes a functional approach to language, systematically relating it to the uses of language curriculum, so that curriculum topics will have both subject and specific language aims. When this occurs, the curriculum can provide an authentic context for meaningful and purposeful language use” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 120). This meaningful and purposeful language use was lacking in the existing curriculum within that particular Japanese primary school. From my observations, these students were able to introduce themselves in English using greeting words and were able to name familiar objects in English such as colours, numbers, fruit, vegetables, foods, classroom objects. Gibbons (2002) identifies three vital questions when implementing integrating learning: What are the language demands of the curriculum?; What do children currently know about language; and What are their language-learning needs? Instead of developing the curriculum and then finding out the language needs within the curriculum, with the Year Six students, I planned the integrated curriculum using drama pedagogy

as the central focus. Kao and O'Neill (1998) noted that "the dynamic nature of drama activities creates a lively, enjoyable learning environment, motivates students to be participants in classroom activities, and helps to build up the students' confidence in learning the target language" (p. 80). The integrated curriculum can provide an opportunity for students to "learn about language as well as to learn it and to learn through it. The critical question...is how this can be done in ways that do not compromise interactive and meaning-driven classroom practice" (Gibbons, 2002, p.132). Thus, my focus within the innovative project with these Japanese Year Six students was to constantly shift between the meaning and the form of the language by offering carefully chosen roles, dramatic tension, and authentic context which was woven into the flow of the integrated curriculum.

## **AN INTEGRATED CURRICULUM WITH DRAMA FOR EFL IN JAPAN**

In the previous two years, the Year Six students studied themes on Environment and Welfare in their Integrated Studies classes in their first language, Japanese. They completed an inquiry-based learning and investigated on the environment around them, including national and international environmental issues. In the project on welfare, they studied about their community and the elderly people, and also visited care houses for the elderly within the community to interact with them. They participated in the class discussions on how they can help people who needed help in their community. Following up on these themes, the theme for Year Six's Integrated Studies was on 'Our future'. When the teachers and I discussed a possible direction for this Drama-EFL integrated curriculum project, we came across the idea of designing future robots. The decision was made based on several reasons: there was a public robot museum in the city where the school was located; one of the high schools in the same city received an award for creating an interestingly designed robot and its programming system; and a parent of one of the students in a younger grade was actually a robot engineer from Korea, researching at a university near the school. Although the Year Six teachers had a basic understanding of integrated curriculum, it had always been a single isolated unit within the Integrated Studies class, which never crossed over, or included, different key learning areas. Thus, this was their first attempt to implement a full integration of a wider curriculum, which involved Drama, EFL, Japanese language, Visual Arts, Information Communication Technology (ICT), Social and Studies, Mathematics, and Science.

Within this integrated curriculum, drama was implemented as a core pedagogy that was woven into the curriculum to give an authentic context. The students experienced and explored how the English language works in a meaningful and purposeful context, within a fictional world. As discussed before, drama as

pedagogy within the classroom was an unfamiliar concept to both teachers and students. Therefore, I led the Drama-EFL part of the curriculum as a facilitator and also an English language teacher, and taught in a team-teaching style with the classroom teachers. The teachers also took charge of the rest of the integrated curriculum within their own classroom, to ensure that they kept up the high level of students' engagement whilst outside of the Drama-EFL classes. This collaborative and equally distributed teaching role assisted in these teachers being able to gain their confidence again in being involved in teaching EFL. Their teaching role in the Drama-EFL curriculum was to contribute towards building on a meaningful context together by teaching other subject areas, which was their expertise. Since the school curriculum and allocated time for individual subjects at Japanese schools were strictly controlled by the authorised textbooks, and by the MEXT study guidelines, the support from the principle was greatly appreciated in order to provide more flexibility in timetabling and curriculum content.

### **'WE ARE ROBOT ENGINEERS!': THE DRAMA-EFL INTEGRATED CURRICULUM PROJECT**

The project consisted of three phases: investigating what robots are, introducing international robot engineers, and designing and presenting future robots. In the first phase, the Year Six teachers initiated this project in their classrooms by discussing 'Our future', and led the class discussions to robots by showing visual images of robots. The students investigated a range of robots available in our society using the Internet. The teachers also took their students on an excursion to the robot museum in the city, to investigate what kinds of robots are available. One of the Year One teachers then introduced her student's father, who was a real robot engineer from Korea researching at a Japanese university at that time. Year Six teachers invited him to the school and he brought an upper body human robot with him, along with his computer programming system. He demonstrated how each movement was programmed and how he managed to find realistic materials for the hair, eyes, and skin for his human robot. The principal in the school also found a company that had a Segway (a motorised two wheels platform which relies on body movements for direction, speed, and breaking) and invited them to bring it to the school for his students to try. Visiting the robot museum, meeting with the real robot engineer, and driving the Segway in the school gym greatly stimulated the students' interest towards the project. Then, the Year Six teachers discussed with their students what robots meant to them, and came up with their own definition in class. Their agreed definition was that robots are machines, which should be useful and helpful for people. The Year Six teachers used their students' first language, Japanese, as a medium of instruction for class discussions, since the focus was to provide necessary content and knowledge to these students.

There are three phases when drama is applied into classroom at primary schools, which are; the initial phase, the experiential phase, and the reflective phase (O'Toole and Dunn, 2002). The initial phase is considered as the first phase of the project, 'Investigating what robots are'. The initiation phase included the non-dramatic activities mentioned above, and also some warm-up drama activities that the students participated in with me in their EFL class. These warm-up activities helped in developing their awareness of their own body movement and also in becoming more familiar with new expectations in drama-oriented activities. As O'Toole and Dunn (2002) explain, this initiation phase "can take a long time and involve a number of dramatic and non-dramatic activities" (p. 6). This is the preparation stage where Year Six students found out about Robots, and developed an understanding in this particular area of study.

The second phase, the experimental phase, began with an introduction of educational drama in their EFL classroom with the theme, "We are Robot Engineers!!" Dramatic tension was required in this phase, which offered an opportunity for students to actively participate in a dramatic context. O'Toole and Dunn (2002) call this tension, "the electricity that exists in the gap between what the participants know and what they want to find out through the drama" (p. 7). The dramatic tension, which was presented to the Year Six students, started with an invitation from a top international robot maker, The RoboTech Company. The invitation was for top robot engineers around the world to attend an international conference organised by the company. The invitation was written in English and it was read to them in their EFL class. I asked them to take on the role of international robot engineers. "It is possible for the L2 [the second language] teacher to give students the widest possible opportunities for language use by endowing them with carefully chosen roles that go far beyond their usual restricted classroom roles. The most useful roles will be those that permit students to ask and answer questions, to solve problems, to offer both information and opinions,... and generally to fulfill the widest range of language functions" (Kao and O'Neill, 1998, p. 25). The Year Six students had already developed an understanding of robots and had also become familiar with expectations in drama-oriented lessons with me, therefore the request to take on the role of a robot engineer was not an unfamiliar concept, yet provided with an opportunity for them "to "shape" this role further through discussion and activities" (Kao and O'Neill, 1998, p. 25). In other words, they were able to further develop and create these roles themselves. O'Toole and Dunn (2002) explain that in the experiential phase "the children are taking part confidently and unselfconsciously. This is the center of the dramatic action, in learning terms where the implicit learning happens, where the children construct meaning inside the dramatic context, meaning that is sensory and emotional as well as cognitive" (p. 7). The Year Six students first selected their own country of origin from a world map for their role as a robot engineer. The

countries that they had chosen were Japan, Korea, China, Russia, France, Italy, England, and America. This also helped them to learn the names of the countries in English. In the Drama-EFL class, we made a conference ID card in English. Since it was an international conference organised by The RoboTech Company, the students accepted the fact, without hesitation, that the use of English was very appropriate, as English is a global language. The use of English in this meaningful context became natural to them and they understood that there was a clear purpose and legitimate reason for them to use the target language for their communication.

Meanwhile, these Year Six students also researched on the Internet with their classroom teacher the following information regarding the country of origin for their characters: location of the country, the national flag, the official language(s), the capital city, famous food and festival, population, traditional costumes and customs, and common names used in the country. Japanese language was used for this investigation, in order for them to gain as detailed information as possible with the assistance from their classroom teachers. Based on the information that they investigated, they decided how they dressed up as a robot engineer who represented the chosen country. They also completed their own individual ID cards with their name, country of origin, the national flag, their age, and the languages that s/he spoke. They all included English in the language that they spoke, which showed their positive attitude towards using English, although none of the teachers including myself instructed them to do so. Some students researched and found out common names used in a specific country, and others who needed assistance chose a common name from a list that the Year Six teachers and I had selected. Several students had decided to create a rather unique name for their character that reflected on the common characteristics from a particular country. For instance, a girl decided that she was an Italian engineer and she named herself, *Makiteeni*. She explained that her name was Maki and she found that several Italian names had 'teeni' at the end. She therefore blended these to create an Italian-like name for her character. Although it was the very first time for most students to be asked to write their ID cards in English, they showed their keenness and positive attitude towards creating them. An ID photo was also taken when they were all dressed up in their character as a robot engineer. Their characters varied greatly in dress as some students put on a moustache and also wore a white doctor's coat, and others chose colorful dresses and hats that they felt represented a particular country and its culture. From the effort and detail that they had gone to, it was obvious that they had spent extra time investigating outside of the Drama-EFL classroom.

Being in the role of an international robot engineer, which is called Student-In-Role (SIR) in educational drama, these students participated in the welcome ceremony. Their teachers and I used Teacher-In-Role (TIR) and became organis-

ers of the ceremony. We also asked an English language assistant teacher at the school, who was an English language speaker, to become the president of The RoboTech Company. The ceremony began with a welcome speech by the organisers and the president, and then the students introduced themselves in small groups according to their country of origin. After the ceremony, they attended a small function where they individually introduced themselves to each other, and then wrote all the other robot engineer's names and country of origin down. The target vocabulary items that students used for this SIR and TIR were very familiar ones as follows: 'Hello, my name is Dr. (name), I am from (a country), nice to meet you'. These students introduced themselves in English so many times, however it was the very first time for them to pretend to be someone else, and to introduce themselves in that role. Since they were pretending to be an international robot engineer, they readily changed their mannerisms and the simple script according to each character that they introduced themselves to. Their spontaneous communication was witnessed on many occasions during the ceremony. Piazzoli (2011) identifies three essential factors that influence language learners' spontaneity in communication: role, authentic context, and dramatic tension. Consequently, the ordinary set conversation scripts for self-introduction in English that the Year Six students already knew were modified slightly, according to their chosen character. This opportunity of spontaneous communication contributed towards increasing more confidence with the use English. Dramatic context can "create a beneficial linguistic environment to elicit student output and [to] promote meaning negotiation in the target language" (Kao, Carkin, and Hsu, 2011, p. 489). This meaning-negotiation was extensively demonstrated by the students even though their English language was limited. This self-introduction activity with SIR and TIR was well received by the students, which provided a purposeful context where students used the set script with a purpose of introducing themselves as a robot engineers and meeting others in the same profession. One of the Year Six teachers commented, "at the end of the lesson, my students all looked like real international robot engineers".

The final phase was for the students to design a future robot. In O'Toole and Dunn's (2002) term, it is called the reflective phase. Before the Year Six students moved onto this phase, they spent time with their classroom teachers outside of Drama-EFL class to design a future robot. In each small group, they came up with a theme such as a robot for an environment, a robot for safety, and a robot for a rescue. Then, they completed their design on a large poster. In the reflective phase, they were invited back to an international conference as international robot engineers to present their designs in English. Each group presented their designs and explained all of the major functions of their robot. One request I asked the students prior to this was not to rely on verbal explanations too much, and I encouraged them to use plots and non-verbal elements as much as they could, including

body language and facial expressions, to explain the robot's functions in a clear manner. Since their first language level, Japanese, was very high in comparison to their additional language, English, some students felt frustration when they tried to translate everything they wanted to say. They soon realised that a word by word translation did not work, and started negotiating a meaning within their group, in this case they used Japanese for their discussions. Each group presented their designs and other groups assessed the designs, being in the role of robot engineers, to decide the best future robot design. This was all conducted in English. The peer-assessment within the role was carried out in a positive and constructive manner, which was an element missing in the typical EFL classes that I had observed prior to the implementation of Drama-EFL curriculum. Again, spontaneous communication in particular speaking and listening was witnessed amongst students-students interactions as well as teacher-students interactions being in the role of robot engineers and organisers. Subsequently, they turned "their implicit meaning-making into explicit knowledge" (O'Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 23) in the future robot design presentations. The empowerment of drama on students surprised even their teachers. There was a boy in the group who constantly struggled with his study at school, and always showed a lack of interest in any learning area. His teacher commented at the end:

What surprised me most was that one of my students, who never showed any interest in learning and slept all the time in class, was actually participating in the drama-EFL classes. I saw him asking questions to other students when he was making his ID card and he also participated in designing the robot. His performance as an old robot engineer was fantastic and he even introduced himself in English (A Year Six classroom teacher).

His willingness to communicate spontaneously was powerful and influential to others, and also the teachers. In a class discussion after the drama-EFL curriculum, students and teachers watched their final presentation on a video, to reflect on their learning. Some of his classmates also gave him positive feedback afterwards, and their recognition of his efforts helped to increase his confidence.

## CONCLUSION

The integrated curriculum, 'We are Robot Engineers!', was a trial unit that highlighted the potential of Drama pedagogy as a core of the collaborative curriculum unit. The principal, teachers, and students all found their participation in this project to be a very successful and rewarding one. The students and teachers became totally immersed in their project, and were all actively participating. Many extra hours were spent outside of the classroom, eagerly seeking more information and direction to assist in completing their projects. Some students, who were not



actively engaged in their daily school lives, were “coming out of their shell”, and were even leading others in some instances, by taking charge of some of the discussions. The students became totally immersed in their roles, and even surprised themselves sometimes as to how much they could communicate in the English language in a meaningful and purposeful way. The students collaborated together to come up with some very interesting and innovative thoughts and ideas. The carefully chosen roles, an authentic context, and drama tension greatly contributed towards both teachers’ and students’ spontaneous willingness to communicate in the target language and this willingness was also seen in their learning. Subsequently, the students gained new knowledge from the inquiry-based learning and discovered a new way of communicating with others in their additional language through drama. This was also an opportunity for the principal and teachers to experience that the EFL teaching does not limit the teaching to ‘how many vocabulary items students can consume’ or simply following a set of textbooks. They re-discovered their strengths in their teaching and consolidated a stronger rapport with their students in a new and unfamiliar area of EFL.

## REFERENCES

- Araki-Metcalf, N. (2006). *The Waterhole: Using Educational Drama as a pedagogical tool in a foreign language class at a public primary school in Japan*. PhD thesis, The University of Melbourne.
- Churchill, R. et al. (2010). *Teaching: making a Difference*. Milton, QLD: John Wiley and Sons.
- Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning: teaching second language learners in the mainstream classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Kao, S., Carkin, G., and L. Hsu (2011). “Questioning techniques for Promoting Language Learning with students of limited L2 oral proficiency in a drama oriented language classroom” in *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 16:4, pp. 489–515.
- Kanamori, T. and H. Oka (2007). *Shougakkoo eigokyouiku no susumekata: kotobano kyouikutoshite (How to proceed with English language education in primary schools: as a language education)* Tokyo: Seibido.
- Kao, S., and C. O’Neill (1998). *Words into Worlds: Learning a second language through process drama*. Stanford, CA: Ablex Publication.
- Matsukawa, R. (2004). *Asuno shougakkou eigowu hiraku (Leading tomorrow’s English language education in primary schools)*. Tokyo: Apurikotto.
- O’Toole, J. and J. Dunn (2002). *Pretending to Learn*. Sydney: Pearson Education.
- Otsu, Y. (2004). *Shougakkoudo eigokyouikuwa hituyouka (Is English language education at primary schools necessary?)*. Tokyo: Keio University Press.
- Otsu, Y. (2007). *Nihonno eigokyouikuni hitsuyoonakoto (What do we need for English language education in Japan?)*. Tokyo: Keio University Press.
- Piazzoli, E. (2011). “Process Drama: the use of affective space to reduce language anxiety in the additional language learning classroom” in *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, Vol. 16, No. 4, November 2011, pp. 557–573.
- Sato, M. (2000). *Jyugyouwokaeru, Gakkougakawaru (By changing lessons, the school will change)*. Tokyo: Shougakkan.
- Sato, M. (2003). *Kyoushitachino Chousen (Challenges for teachers)*. Tokyo: Shougakkan.
- Sato, M. (2011). “Imagining Neo-liberalism and the Hidden Realities of the Politics of Reform: teachers and students in a globalized Japan” in Willis, B. and J. Rappleye, *Reimagining Japanese*

*Education in the Global Conversation: borders, transfers, circulations, and the comparative.*  
Oxford: Symposium Books, pp. 225–246.

Yoshida, K. (2008). *21nendokara torikumu shougakkoueigo: Zenmenjisshi madeni koredakewa (English for Elementary schools from 2009: necessary preparation for official implementation)*, Tokyo: Kyouikukaihatsu Kenkyujyo.

Watkins, D. and W. Kritsonis (2008). “Developing and Designing an Effective School Curriculum: Enhancing Student Achievement Based on an Integrated Curriculum Model and the Ways of Knowing through the Realms of Meaning” in *Focus on Colleges, Universities, and Schools*. Vol. 2. No. 1, pp. 1–16.

Willis, B. and J. Rappleye(eds) (2011). *Reimagining Japanese Education in the Global Conversation: borders, transfers, circulations, and the comparative.* Oxford: Symposium Books.

Wilson, J. and L. Wing Jan (2009). *Focus on inquiry: a practical approach to curriculum planning.* Carlton, Vic: Curriculum Corporation.

#### *Website*

MEXT (2011a) The Revisions of the Courses of Study for Elementary and Secondary Schools, [http://www.mext.go.jp/english/elsec/\\_\\_\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2011/03/28/1303755\\_001.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/english/elsec/___icsFiles/afieldfile/2011/03/28/1303755_001.pdf)

# AN INDIGENOUS CONVERSATION

## ARTFUL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: A PRE-COLONISED COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH METHOD?

TARQUAM MCKENNA & DAVINA B WOODS

---

In this paper, which is a read ‘conversation’, the intention is to take the reader into the life worlds of its two author-researchers. An academic—Tarquam McKenna—and his colleague, an Australian Indigenous woman—Davina Woods—set about ‘yarning’<sup>(see notes)</sup> around art and its role as a vehicle for (re)searching their lives. Never far from their thoughts was the 26 May, 1997, release of the Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission’s (HREOC) report, *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, which included mandated recommendations to the colonising Australian people. One of these recommendations was that the Commonwealth and State Governments of Australia say ‘sorry’ for the centuries of shameful and traumatising violations of human rights to which the Indigenous peoples of Australia had been subjected.

It took changes in Commonwealth Government leadership and over a decade of vacillation before the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd stated on the 13 February, 2008, that:

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

And the sky did not fall down.

## THE CONVERSATION

*Tarquam:*

In *Gathering Voices Essays on Playback Theatre* (Dauber and Fox, 1999) I wrote a short essay in which I somewhat naively set out to qualify the nature of dramatic action, and especially theatre, as a vehicle for research. It was inspired by my work with Jonathan Fox, one of the founders of Playback Theatre in the USA and with a colleague from Australia, Professor John Carroll (Carroll, 1995). The key elements of ‘transformation’ that are at the centre of that 1990s article and its title, “Layers of Meaning Research and Playback Theatre—A Soulful Construct”, still hold relevance and meaning for me as a researcher (Conti, Counter & Paul, 1991). I’d like to reflect here on working within a model of socially just inquiry that focuses on Indigenous communities. We are eager to ‘push the boundaries’ a little on the manner in which research can occur at the intersection of what are termed artful practice, ethnography and autoethnography. These three research modes are explored as a ‘model’ and have deliberately been written about as a ‘provocation’.

Whilst we attend to the notion of research as having a sense of interiority, something which I have noted occasionally elsewhere (McKenna, 1992, 1992a 1993, 1993a, 1993b 1993c, 1997), we wish to simultaneously draw particular attention to the work of the paratherapeutic arts, as they have become known. This work encompasses the notions that all art forms energise and, to be art that matters, are socially just in their capacity for transformation. This conversation is built on our belief that the arts are now more often used in such a way that they are automatically aligned with ‘healing’ or ‘wholeness’ but that this need *not* always be delivered by an Arts Psychotherapist.

I am qualified and registered as an Arts Psychotherapist and my most recent work has been mainly focused on the use of the creative arts in a paratherapeutic sense to decolonise Indigenous peoples and validate their models of knowing. Davina Woods is a Kuku-Yalanji and Kuku-Djungan woman from the Atherton Tablelands, Queensland, Australia and I am, and my mother’s family are, from Tasmania.

The study of arts and creativity has been my lifelong passion and the work present here has developed over many years, but came about when I supervised women drama therapists and arts psychotherapists (Brooke, 2006) in training for their MA in Art Therapy or Drama Therapy—and when I worked with storytelling theatre in Darwin Australia in 2001.

Since writing “Layers of Meaning Research and Playback Theatre—A Soulful Construct” in 1999, I have continued to work with women who identify as Indigenous, and have had many moments of discussion or ‘yarning’ with them; strands of these conversations are woven through this chapter. This ‘yarning’ is a style of first-person reflection used by many Indigenous communities and is examined in part in this chapter. Davina and I also used the process as the basis of a paper we co-presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia Pacific Rim Counselling Conference in Hong Kong in June of 2011, published with a focus on psychotherapies, an alignment that will be alluded to but not fully examined here (McKenna, T, Woods, D and C. Lawson 2012)

*Davina:*

What we hold to is the tenet that when we are ‘yarning’ we are engaged in quality encounters that set out to explain, explore, and open up the value and style of our engagement. Ideally, the metaphorical yarn weaves the fabric of researcher’s understanding, and the community he or she is in, as a collaborative heuristic-like experience (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985). The insights gained into the world and our life views by using yarning can be employed to attend to trivial or profound matters. But these matters are always imbued with the social, cultural, or historical legacy in which the yarn is taking place. Attention to the yarn is a form of social and self-dialogical encounter (Moir-Bussy, 2011) which I contend occur simultaneously. Yarning, for Tarquam and I, was not concerned with the quality of encounter espoused by Buber (1973) or Grotowski (1991), but it does have a clear goal of making known that which is meaningful alongside the artful and spiritual realms.

*Tarquam:*

When we ‘yarn’ and concurrently co-create artworks I believe we are engaged in a process that we, as researchers, should be calling *artful autoethnography*. I would like here to advance discussion of the uses of autoethnography employing the arts to formulate, evaluate and synthesise the field of inquiry. As a researcher, I am very eager to see both theatre and the visual arts, especially in colonised Australia, employed to redress the inequities put upon first nations by the white invaders.

*Davina:*

We can also use art making and this artful auto-ethnographic method to celebrate the Indigenous peoples of the world, of course, but here it is being espoused as a method of inquiry to critique negative experiences encountered in Indigenous communities worldwide. The arts have always been a vehicle for communication of meaning and are known in many parts of the Indigenous world as a form of meaning making that is implicit in the daily life of many Indigenous communi-

ties. Artful ethnography, then, is an emerging research practice that I think we should use here as a model of inquiry as we deliberate on creative arts praxis and the critical issues of identity lived out through the worlds of Indigenous peoples.

*Tarquam:*

Davina and I also presented at “Healing our Spirit Worldwide—HOSW” in Hawaii in 2010, using art making workshops to develop narratives and stories, and to celebrate the lifeworlds of the Indigenous women and men there. I would like here to present the relevance of this research method as it sits alongside other forms of formalised inquiry. The arts as we know them have always been seen as a natural way of inquiring and have been acknowledged as such by many Indigenous communities from time immemorial. So this is not new. But it is ‘new’ to the world of the contemporary researcher who must ask how we can use this artful ethnography or artful autoethnography to contribute particularly to the sense of psychosocial. A fundamental premise of our yarn, as Davina stated from the outset, is that we as authors hold to the belief that Indigenous communities have always and everywhere used artful practice for healing; this was the work of the clever woman or shaman. With the onslaughts from colonization, and through the deliberate acts of pillage that accompanied colonisation, the artworks, wellness, the Indigenous emotional capacity, mental health, and spiritual knowing of these communities were mutilated—this was an ultimate act of larceny.

In 1997, at Kassel University the first ‘academic’ forum for investigation into Playback Theatre took place. Professor Hienrich Dauber and Jonathan Fox brought together many ‘academic’ practitioners of playback theatre. I was one of those practitioners and I began to open what might be called a personal conversation that was concerned with the level of *unknowing* that can occur as we research and how theatre—especially playback theatre which is still one of my main life interests—is a vehicle for seeing stories in action and how these stories are beyond research. This is a new mode for research, which “*traditionally has been viewed as a search for data, something presented externally to be observed and experimented on, with an external locus of control*” (McKenna, 1999). The latter, positivist point of view uses research, especially experimental research, to test ideas and to evaluate the efficacy of pre-test and post-test interventions or instruments. These interventions and the subsequent findings were, and are still, used in the quantitative research environment to observe what change is and how it happens.

I continue to contend that research has always needed to, and must still now attend to the artfulness in which the work of the researcher occurs. The societies and the people who live in the communities need to be seen and acknowledged through their artworks as artefacts or objects that are evidence. It was this need to realise the value of the inner world of the matters being researched—the soulfulness of research—that I contemplated at that time. Since then my thinking

has moved on: those people being researched and their artworks are more than vehicles for research—these artworks are of great importance.

*Davina:*

It is paramount that the art making of individuals and communities be seen as a way of knowing that is not alongside, or other to, the evidence gathered. It is essential that the reading of a society continue to be through the lens of the art they create, so as to give aesthetic wakefulness to their daily rituals. The anaesthetic sleepiness that some research evokes leads to unconsciousness and to behaviours that are lacking in soulfulness. It is the balance of the inner world of interiority and the outer world of space, place, and time which intersect in this model of research that is made known through art works.

*Tarquam:*

The personal and social emphasis on space, place, and time working from principles of shared space; collaboration and meaning making need to drive a different model of research; one that we now need to move towards: a model that does not merely perceive the surface of the memoirs or place the researcher amidst the audience of artful practices in such spaces, places, and times as exhibitions, public showings, and so forth. Art must have depth and soul (Cousineau, 1995), but we are entering times when, faced with life world challenges, and seeking to understand the meanings of foreign realities or fugitive knowledges (Vicars & McKenna, 2011) we are obliged to search inside the field and recognise the multiplicity of truths that co-exist with numerous meanings as the many art forms evolve.

Playback theatre as an art form is based on dramatised storytelling and the work that we are describing here is what we could call in Australia ‘yarning’. We’ve written of this process elsewhere (2012) as a retracing or walking the journey of your Indigenous family heritage, Davina. With you as a colleague and a co-presenter of these ideas, the centrality of yarning and the need to yarn are driving our work. But what is noteworthy is that Davina, you have no choice but to yarn your story. The yarning that you, Davina, and other Indigenous Australians are engaged in, is a practice that has been on-going for more than 60,000 years. For the Indigenous Australian, life is research, but it is through yarning that meaning is made. ‘Yarning’ is a term used by several of our Indigenous colleagues (Wyatt, Dwyer & Hineysett, 2011) and also forms the basis for framing research where questions are not planned, presented to panels of University ethics committees, or known before the work begins. The quality of the encounter rather than mere questioning is the goal of the yarn; the weaving and co-creation of fabrics of meaning emerges through the interweaving of the various yarns. Talking circles where art is concurrently made are so familiar to many Indigenous communities;

and it is in the making of the art and the talking of the stories of existence that change occurs.

*Davina:*

The playback theatre performance is an artful practice and, as story-telling theatre, it is a place where in action, the audiences' stories come to the actors. These stories are not known prior to the performance and are performed with immediacy; are purposefully artful. They come after an invitation to a shared encounter and engagement. So this playback method of inquiry proposed in 1999 and 'yarning' have a lot in common. I recall you saying then, Tarquam:

The experience for the teller of the enactment in playback is not only a retelling, but also an occasion of deeper and fuller knowing. It may be that there is a different consciousness 'raising' as a consequence of the art form. Playback theatre is always a ritualistic occasion. In this theatre form a human being attends to his or her self and at times to something greater than the self. In this respect I [meaning you Tarquam] have written elsewhere of the 'journey' or 'quest'. (McKenna, 1999a, p. 3)

Playback does not always attend to the complex societal issues and values lying beneath the lifeworlds seen in the performance. Especially regarding the matter of how the decolonizing of a community might be implied or have actually occurred. Often the attention of the audience is turned only to the surface features of the performance such that time and the audience drive attention to the play as much as does the teller's story.

*Tarquam:*

We spoke in Hong Kong of how, according to the United Nations text *The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, over 370 million Indigenous peoples in ninety countries are documented as co-inhabiting the planet. We also spoke of how these same Indigenous peoples suffer disproportionately higher rates of youth suicide (Vinding, 2009; Tatz, 2005) and how in the 19th and 20th centuries many colonizing nation-states implemented procedures and practices that were ultimately intended to annihilate these Indigenous cultures (Brulle & Pellow, 2006; Cox, 2008).

*Davina:*

The remaining Indigenous cultural structures and life worlds continually undergo alienation and disenfranchisement and this is compounded by the normalizing of contemporary manifestations of overt and covert discrimination. In *The Decolonization of Asia and Africa in the Twentieth Century* Duara posits that "decolonization refers to the process whereby colonial powers transferred institutional and



*legal control over territories and dependencies to indigenously [sic] based, formally sovereign nation-states*" (2004, p. 2). This makes it sound like a remnant of the past. This is far from accurate...

The pre-eminent scholar of settler colonialism in Australia, Patrick Wolfe, Research Fellow in the History Program at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia, and Charles Warren, Fellow in United States History at Harvard University, has written that *"to evoke the multifaceted fullness of imperialism...is to trace its complex psychosocial operations...of race, class and, gender...sexualities and...the psychology of violence"* (Wolfe, 2004, p. 115). It is Dura and Wolfe's work, Tarquam, that I see as inspiring you and I to examine the notion that it takes just one metaphorical scratch below the surface of a society of a British dominion to see what imperialism and/or colonialism really is: the practice of tacit, overt, and covert violence and racism begins with the dispossession of the Indigenous peoples from their land. Frontier wars included massacres, the removal and enslavement of children and women are ubiquitous. Australian Indigenous peoples had known their life world for 60,000 years so the upheaval they experienced was commensurately great. To ensure complete dispossession the colonisers removed large numbers of Indigenous peoples and impounded them in compounds euphemistically called missions, reserves, or stations. Australian Indigenous peoples were completely disempowered and the shift imposed upon them, my ancestors—from people having an internal locus of control based on self-regulation, to an external locus of control based on regulatory behaviour from outside—is an intergenerational trauma that many Indigenous families in Australia are still suffering from in contemporary times. The external locus of control perpetuates and is still causing dysfunctional familial encounters for Indigenous communities and individuals alike.

Dispossession of land is a major feature of colonization and is both a historic and contemporary cause of trauma for Indigenous peoples. However, attempts at genocide, assimilation, and culturally invalidating educational agendas, are additional events responsible for the momentous bereavement and psyche impairment, maiming, and mutilation. Ruined processes of dispute resolution over land claims and the dominant non-Indigenous groups' resistance to systematically implementing Indigenous requests such as "bilingual education are ongoing struggles for Indigenous communities" (Hill, Kim, & Williams, 2010, pp. 105–122) and produce ongoing trauma for both Indigenous communities and individuals.

The experience of racism within the context of colonization has created similar damaging negative impacts across nations and continents. Among Indigenous communities racism is linked with critical toxic health consequences (Brulle & Pellow, 2006; Krieger, 2003). Racism and colonization compromise the psychological well-being of Indigenous peoples.

Researchers of depressive symptoms have found them to be strongly associated with perceived discrimination but that engagement in cultural practices buffered some of the negative effects of discrimination (Whitbeck et al., 2002). When one considers Western institutional initiatives and expectations for Indigenous persons to ‘Whiten’ themselves, or acculturate, and the level to which participating in cultural practices is directly or subtly discouraged, then the health landscape for Indigenous individuals and communities becomes even more grim. Indeed, distress caused by discrimination could make Indigenous individuals withdraw further from their own communities. Coping styles employed by Indigenous peoples in the face of racism, include acceptance of the racist comments and behaviours as simply a part of their lot, as well as withdrawal and avoidance of future contact. Indigenous peoples may also indulge in cognitive reinterpretation of the event or events. Social supports often come from within the Indigenous person’s family and community in the form of deprecating non-Indigenous people and cultural practices. Some Indigenous peoples attempt to prove their ‘worthiness’ and in that way hope to dissuade racist attacks. All Indigenous peoples attempt to make their “*children stronger in response to the same fate*” (Hill & Williams, 2010, pp. 105–122).

*Tarquam:*

Artful practice can and should be being used to address the sense of dispossession, institutional control, demonization, and racism that abound in Indigenous communities in Australia and elsewhere, and the ‘need’ for whiteness. You and I, Davina, recognise your art and the making of your art as research to address and ‘repair’ the experiences of racism and the demonization you have faced in your educational, work and family life. We contend that artful autoethnography can be used to redress the damaging negative outcomes across nations, states, countries, and continents, as well as in a one-to-one context. Artful ethnographic research practice as can be used reparatively, as a way to respond to the toxic health consequences and psychological illnesses experienced by dispossessed Indigenous peoples.

## ETHNOGRAPHY

*Tarquam:*

In the field of ethnography, and of artful autoethnography in particular, we, as researchers, are trying to reach an understanding of other people and their stories; stories which are embodied by, and made external in, the rituals of the performance, artwork, or artefacts. The purpose of this conversation is to wonder to what extent the observational research paradigms of ethnography have moved to a

deeper place, when they now include art making and the artful autoethnographic form of self-healing in community. White privileged artists make art because it makes them feel good. Indigenous communities have always made art to hold the space, which is symbolic and usually sacred to them. Whilst there is a place for the analysis of biography the question arises as to what we do with artful ethnographies that are transcendent and evoke the sense of the numinous. The research method proposed here must construct a sense of depth, with attention to a purposeful engagement, yet without falling into an essentialist labyrinth or responding only to functional aspects of the needs of the individual. There is a relationship between research, interiority, and artistry that I have previously referred to (McKenna, 1997) as a ‘soul-making’ tool.

*Davina:*

Ethnography is a form of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004)—of inquiry—and any form of inquiry whether it be ‘straight’ ethnography or more artful autoethnography is by definition either group or ‘self-focused.’ The latter is nowadays more common as a qualitative methodology with legacies, especially, in the fields of self-study in the arenas of nursing and psychology. Artful autoethnography and autobiography are methodologies of belonging—both are journeys. The richness, though, of any ‘art making’ is that it is a form of conscious and unconscious reflexive knowing (Roman & Euell, 1971). Artful autoethnography as proposed here brings together the personalised psychosocial identity of the individual ‘alongside’ or beside the identities of the communities in which historical cultural and other contexts intersect. Artful autoethnography is a research model for acknowledging the life world by affirming the subjectivity of reflexive practice.

*Tarquam:*

Let’s break away from the colonised notions of identity and examine the manner in which artful ethnographies and artful practices such as autoethnography engage with the life world experiences of the art maker. It is in the products of art making and the processes of their creation that we may find many different ways of looking—and all art has an infinite number of ways of being seen. Like all good research, artful practice as ethnography sets out to extend the researcher’s understanding of the multiplicity of facets to being human. When creating the story using art, the goal is to break the ‘silences’ and to come to know our individual and societal collective truths.

Table 1: Artful autoethnography in relation to other ways of ‘researching’ meaning

<b>Research perspective</b>	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>Naturalistic</b>	<b>Transformative</b>	<b>Artful autoethnography</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Comprehension	Interpretation	Learning about self and others	Liberation through aesthetic experiences
<b>Vehicle</b>	Prediction	Description	Collaboration	Connectivity through ritual using arts practice
<b>Intent</b>	Add credence	Uncover theories of meaning	Interrogate assumptions & beliefs	Creating the story using art—to break the silences to know our individual and collective truths. To break away from colonised notions of identify
<b>Stance</b>	I priorities	I-You invisible	We vulnerable	Us Community and Artists working to build respectful knowing
<b>Stance on knowledge</b>	Fixed	Contextual	Relational	Emerging from unknown realms—unconscious material made ‘conscious’ in art products. Knowledge is process, co-creation and community-focused
<b>Procedure</b>	Test hypothesis	Multiple perspectives	Tensions & anomalies	Movement toward integration
<b>Methodological stance</b>	Innocent	Relative	Democratic	Social justice
<b>Path to understanding</b>	Simplicity	Complexity	Reflexivity	Inter-reflexivity (exhibited as products) Intra-reflexivity (interior focused—felt as artistic ‘process’)

<b>Role of research relative to schooling in our society</b>	Cultural literacy	Cultural diversity	Morality	Critical pedagogical focused gnosis—new emerging ever changing literacies
<b>How significance is determined</b>	Individual	Cooperative	Collaborative	Witnessing connectivity through arts works and the intimacy of making shared meaning
<b>Results</b>	Better or Cleaner Arguments	More complex explanations	Learning & new invitations to inquiry	Invitation to build community and co-create new ways of respectful engagement
<b>Product</b>	Study	Thick description	Journey	Depth encounter with 'otherness' as reparation of social injustice.

The authors acknowledge the contribution made to this model of research by John Carroll, Jonathan Fox and Edward Errington in conversation and representation of the model in earlier forms of this chart.

Artful autoethnography is not therapy; nor is it solely some form of psychological self-inquiry or practice; it is much more than this. Art brings to the art maker and the art viewer alike a sense of the 'larger meaning' of the life world; of the sense of meaning we make in life. Artworks bring a special quality of meaningfulness to the individual and his or her community. Artful ethnographies are a form of aesthetic action that can be used to explore our physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing with the goal of fomenting a new speculation regarding what is happening in our life. As a primary vehicle, art brings with it an invitation to witness what is often in the unconscious realm of the researcher and researched alike; art accelerates management of the physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being as it brings into consciousness that which is not 'known'. Artful ethnography is not always an expedient process and the products take real chronological time to make or create, and often need to encounter what has been termed *kairos* time (Carpenter & McKenna, 2012)—that opportune or synchronicitous moment that is ripe for the product's emergence.

Artful autoethnography and artful practice as ethnography, are centred on the belief that the process of engaging creatively in drama, movement, or other art-making, within a therapeutic or paratherapeutic (McKenna, 2006) relationship, supports changes in the researcher's inner world, and move her to develop a more

integrated sense of awareness. By bringing unconscious material into consciousness and simultaneously deepening that consciousness, the creative processes, and creative product itself, build their own discovery. It is the depth of encounter (see Table 1), of the social reparation of injustice, and knowing of otherness that the artful practice we are espousing sees as its goal.

*Davina:*

As authors and researchers we contend that artful practice, when used to encourage personal and social growth leads to an increase in self-understanding and assists in emotional restoration. The creative process is life-enhancing and ultimately awakening for the researcher into alternative ways of knowing. Art as a form of self and societal literacy is so familiar to Indigenous traditions: over thousands of generations Indigenous cosmologies and belief systems were respectfully illustrated in paintings, carvings, and especially in dance.

*Tarquam:*

That we are obliged to consider that art works are beyond postmodern critiques of documentary (McKenna, 1999); the corollary to this observation is that through artful practice, and the praxis of artful ethnography and artful autoethnography in particular, we can, by building on a quality of relatedness move beyond a mere development of a sociology of life or the slice-of-life approach towards a deeper place of expression.

I'd like to close by stating the obvious: In all art forms, and so in the deliberate use of artful practice as research, we are yearning for depth of meaning and that which is unique to our collective story. This manner of researching is not about recognizing truths or comprehending existence, but is rather more holistic. It is a call to return to the space where artists-as-researchers and researchers-as-artists work together towards a wholeness of understanding; it is a space already mapped out to some extent by the life world practices the very Indigenous peoples whom the positivist takes as objects of study.

Artful autoethnography and artful practice are more than mere propositional modes of knowing; they are ways of our being awakened to each other. The ethnographer who uses art and the artful autoethnography, together, are only now modelling the life worlds of Indigenous communities. They are discovering that for these people there has always been a soulful place; a space that uses respect and reflective reverence to transcendence of the mysteries of the research process.

## NOTES

'Yarn' is used here as a synonym for 'story', while 'yarning' is synonym for 'talking' and/or 'storytelling'. This is a euphemism particularly rich in allusion, capturing

not only the sense in which the ‘threads’ of a story may be ‘woven’ together to create a ‘fabric’ of narrative, but also drawing forth associations with storytelling techniques stretching back to and beyond narrative artefacts such as the Bayeux Tapestry. Indeed, Theseus, in order to escape the clutches of the Minotaur used a skein of thread, or yarn, to guide him through the tortuous passages of King Minos’ Labyrinth.

## REFERENCES

- Brooke, S. (2006). *Creative Arts Therapies Manual: A Guide to the History, Theoretical Approaches, Assessment, and Work with Special Populations of Art, Play, Dance, Music, Drama, and Poetry Therapies*. Illinois: Charles C Thomas.
- Brulle, R., and D. Pellow. (2006). “Environmental Justice—Human Health and Environmental Inequalities” In *Annual Review of Public Health* 27, pp. 103–124
- Buber, M. (1973). *Between Man and Man*. (Trans. Robert Gregory Smith). London: Collins
- Carpenter, C., and T. McKenna. (2012). “Exploring” in Pryor, A., Carpenter, C., Norton, C.L. & J. Kirchner (eds.), *Emerging insights: International perspectives on adventure therapy. Proceedings of the 5th International Adventure Therapy Conference, University of Edinburgh, Scotland*. Prague, Czech Republic: European Science and Art Publishing.
- Carroll, J. “Video Lives: Dramatic Role and Emotional Literacy.” Paper presented at 2nd World Congress of Drama/Theatre and Education, Brisbane (February 7–11, 2009)
- Case, C. (2007). “Imagery in Supervision: The Non-verbal Narrative of Knowing” In J. Schavarien and C. Case (eds), *Supervision of Art Psychotherapy: A Theoretical and Practical Handbook*, . London: Routledge.
- Choudhry, S. (2010). “Multifaceted Identity of Interethnic Young People—Chameleon Identities: Studies” In *Migration and Diaspora*. London: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Conti, G., Counter, J.E., & L.C. Paul. (1991). “Transforming as Community Through Research.” *Convergence* XXIV 3, pp 31–42
- Cousineau, P. (ed.) (1995). *Soul—An Archaeology*. London: Thorsons.
- Cox, D. (2008). “Working with Indigenous Survivors of Sexual Assault”. Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Dauber, H and J Fox, (eds.) (1999). *Gathering Voices: Essays on Playback Theatre*. New Paltz, N.Y: Tusitala Publishing, 1999. [Originally papers presented at the 1997 symposium at Kassel University, Germany and published as *Playbacktheater—wo Geschichten sich begegnen*. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt Verlag, 1999.]
- Denzin, N.K. & Y.S. Lincoln (eds.) (2004). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Duara, P. (2004). “The Decolonization of Asia and Africa in the Twentieth Century,” In Duara, P. (ed.) *Decolonization—Rewriting Histories: Perspectives from Now and Then*. . London: Routledge—Taylor and Francis Group.
- Errington, E. (1992). *Towards a Socially Critical Drama Education*. Geelong, Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press.
- Grotowski, J. (1991). *Towards a Poor Man Theatre*. London: Methuen.
- Hill, J., Kim, S., and C. Williams. (2010). “The Context of Racial Micro-aggressions Against Indigenous Peoples: Same Old Racism or Something New?” in Sue, D. (ed.), *Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc..
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1997). *Bringing Them Home—Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia

- Krieger, N. (2003). "Racial/Ethnic Bias and Health—Does Racism Harm Health? Did Child Abuse Exist Before 1962? On Explicit Questions, Critical Science, and Current Controversies: an Ecosocial Perspective" In *American Journal of Public Health*, 93, 2, pp. 315–325
- McKenna, T. (2006). "SIG—Dramatherapy—IDEA." Unpublished proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Drama Education.
- McKenna, T. (1992). "Playback Theatre and Behaviour Management" In *Western Australian Teachers Journal* (November, 1992).
- McKenna, T. (1999). "Layers of Meaning—Playback Theater as a Soulful Construc." In H. Dauber & J. Fox (eds.), *Gathering Voices*. Ed.. New York: Tulistala, 1999.
- McKenna, T. (1994). "Drama Research Must Have Soul" In *National Association for Drama in Education* 18, 2, pp.
- McKenna, T (1993a). "Transformational Research and Drama Education" in Michaels, W. (ed.), *Educational Drama*. Sydney: NSW Education Department
- McKenna, T. (1993b). "Using Playback Theatre and Behaviour Management in Schools" In *Behaviour Problems Network Newsletter* 15.
- McKenna, T. (1993c). *Playback Theatre in Action*. Perth, WA: Department of Language Arts Education, Edith Cowan University, Perth.
- McKenna, T. (1992a). "Speaking Strictly—Language is More Than Words" in *Teacher Monthly*, Hangzhou P.R.C. Jiaoxue Yuekan: *China Education Journal*. 9, pp.
- McKenna, Woods, and Lawson (2012). "Indigenous Art Therapy" in Gilroy, A., Sheridan L. and J. Westwood, (eds.) *Art Therapy: taking a Post Colonial, aesthetic turn*. Sydney, Australia: Bentham Books.
- Moir-Bussy, A. (2010). "Transformative Counsellor Education Through Dialogue: Hong Kong Example" in *Asia Pacific Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 1, 2, pp.160–169 .
- Roman, M., and J. Euell. (1971). "Art as a Community Mental Health Tool" in *Community Mental Health Journal* 7, 2, pp 134–43.
- Vinding, D.(ed.) (2009). *ST/ESA/328*, State of the World's Indigenous Peoples Report, United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development, Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, New York: United Nations.
- Wolfe, P. (2004). "The World of History and the World-As-History: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theories of Imperialism" In Duara, P. (ed.), *Decolonisation—Rewriting Histories: Perspectives from Now and Then*. London: Routledge—Taylor and Francis Group.
- Wyatt, N., Dwyer, J., and M. Hineysett. (2011). "Our Healing Ways: Successful ways of working with complex cultural issues." Paper presented at the 2nd Asia Pacific Rim Counselling Conference, Hong Kong, June.



# ARTS EDUCATION

## JUST LIKE A DAY AT THE BEACH

MARY-ROSE MCLAREN

---

**A**rts education is qualitatively different to other ways of learning and teaching. It is about experience rather than outcomes, self-awareness in conjunction with 'other-awareness', intuition rather than logic, and collaboration rather than competition. Creativity is a way of thinking and being, of finding or establishing new relationships between ideas or things, or indeed of having brand new ideas (Runco, 2007), allowing some part of the self to emerge and wave at the world. In our schools, creativity is most often linked to the arts: the arts are perceived as an expression of creativity (Atherton, 2011). Gibson and Ewing (2011, p.1) argue that 'an Arts-led curriculum for children... is imperative if today's students are to develop a sense of their own identity within their social and cultural worlds together with the creative and flexible thinking skills needed for coping with living in the twenty-first century'. O'Toole and Becket (2010) state that arts-informed inquiry 'can provide a balance between rigour and creativity, imagery and accuracy, the individual and the collective' (p. 76). This paper explores the nexus between the arts and creativity in an attempt to better understand what we mean by 'creativity', and whether creativity can be 'taught'.

To begin, I invite you to imagine that you are at the beach. It is a lovely hot day. The surf is good and you are about to catch a wave. You can feel the undertow tug at you, pulling you out, as you wait for the wave into which you will throw

yourself. You will body surf into the shore. The wave comes, just at breaking point, and you thrust your body before its swell. The water rushes over you—completely enveloping you, carrying you inside the wave. If you have caught it really well, your head will be just ahead of the wave, and if you dare, you can open your eyes and watch the foam of the wave splurge about you. And then, when you feel that you can hold your breath no longer, you are suddenly at the shore, sand along your chest, perhaps you graze your knees. You stand up, pushing the hair out of your eyes, rubbing the salt water from your nose, and look around.

And here's what you see:

Plenty of other people caught the same wave—little kids, fat people, teenagers, people just like you, people different from you. All came to shore on the same wave. And then you look a little harder, and you see the sentries lining the shore. Parents mostly, standing at the water line, watching their kids and others' kids, making sure no one's drowning. And you look closer and you see the beach dotted with sand castles, that the surf life-saver van is giving out free sunscreen, that people in the water and on the sand are jumping in and out and around each other, in a sort of dance. And you notice that people are at play.

Your adventure body surfing is a metaphor for arts education. It encapsulates the nature of creativity as an individual and collective, all-consuming pursuit (Craft, 2008). The waves don't care how many people they carry or who the people are or what they look like. Each person who catches a wave catches it on their own, but many people travel on one wave. Individually caught, but a shared experience, the thrill of the wave is not competitive but communal. Similarly, the sentries on the beach, just ordinary parents, don't care whose child they save. They watch primarily for their own, but if someone else's child is drowning they'll be in the water for them.

It seems to me that this is what arts education should be: a sort of spontaneously choreographed dance in which everyone participates, everyone watches out, and everyone, at their time, plays with abandon. Craft (2008) identifies the primary site for creativity as social engagement, requiring peer to peer equality. When you catch a wave, it is not a race or a competition you can win. Everyone reaches the shore at once, together, shaking off the water and looking about: how far did I come? Where am I now? Where are we? The metaphor can be explained further by Cremin, Burnard and Craft's study of creativity in early childhood (2006) which identifies risk taking, independent judgement, commitment, resilience, intrinsic motivation and curiosity as underpinning creative experiences in classrooms. Furthermore, in this study, 'the teachers prioritised learner agency, and provided multiple opportunities in which the children could initiate their own activities or make their own choices within a loosely framed activity' (p. 114). The day-at-the-beach metaphor captures this idea—that given time, space, opportunity and freedom to initiate action, everyone can catch a wave.

I begin with this metaphor because I believe that metaphors lie at the core of what we are doing when we act creatively. A metaphor is two things at once. It is a story of itself and of something else. It communicates with us as an image. It links the conscious (what it is) and the unconscious (what it tells us about). So doing, a metaphor is 'alive', it can change and develop, it can allude to further experiences, thoughts and images; it provides a key into shared and individual spaces. Metaphor indicates that discourse is flexible, it is simultaneously symbolic and forgetting in that it represents something, while asking one to forget how the 'real' something should be (Lacan, cited in Herbert, 2010; Runco, 2007). This element of simultaneously symbolising and forgetting is critical in creating in that 'it allows us to operate outside our immediate experiences' (Herbert, 2010, p. 96). O'Toole and Becket (2010) state that "'our ways of knowing" should be holistic' (p. 48). They observe that phenomenology, as a way of engaging with knowledge, employs metaphor to express the knowing 'that we know through our body' (p. 49).

When we engage students in arts education we invite them to work through their bodies in the space of metaphor. They are simultaneously that which is created and the creator. The dancer is the body and the movement; the actor is the character and the one acting the character; the musician is the sound, but also the fingers choosing the frets or keys. Boal calls this metaxis—the presence of two minds acting simultaneously in one; the presence of the character and the presence of the actor existing absolutely in the same body at the same time (Boal, 1995). Similarly, Anna-Karin Herbert links the creative impulse to the experience of the Other, claiming that learning about the Other is learning about ourselves, and that creativity lies within this nexus. Creativity requires both 'a knowing of' and 'a knowing how'—it is an all-embodying and all-embracing experience of being and becoming. The correlation between synaesthesia and creativity (Domino, 1989; Runco, 2007) extends the metaphoric understanding further, into the senses themselves, as one sensory experience becomes the experience of another.

Brophy suggests in his book, *Patterns of Creativity* (2009), that creativity is an evolutionary outcome, and that it is linked to the unconscious, that part of our mind which is continually engaged, and which actually determines most of our decisions and actions, but to which we pay no attention. This idea of the unconscious is the wave that surrounds us and carries us to the beach. We are aware of the undertow, the salt, the sunshine and the sand, but when the wave breaks over us, when we throw ourselves into it, we are aware of nothing but the ways it surges forward with us inside. To experience the unconscious is to be in the space of creativity, a space where connections between the unconscious and the conscious are made, images are generated, and metaphors become the most effective ways to communicate the experience of being and doing. The unconscious requires us to be fully engaged in the moment, not thinking about it, but being within it.

Engaging with metaphor invites us to do two things which, in evolutionary terms, only humans can do. The first is to imagine—a task accepted so easily by us when we imagined surfing. In this case, the reader can feel the water on their skin and face, taste the salt, be carried in mind on the power of the wave. The second is to hold two or more ideas open or accessible in our minds at once. This is a uniquely primate ability and connecting two ideas, particularly two images with commonalities that are not explicit, is uniquely human (Walter, 2006). Both these intellectual actions, imagining and connecting, are identified as central to creativity and the arts (Heath, 2000), and are identified by Gibson and Ewing (2011, p.4) as ‘indicators of what it means to be human’.

One of Boal’s games invites us to consciously experience the unconscious (Boal, 2002). In this game, participants stand in a circle, facing outwards. Each adopts a physical position and a sound to accompany it. Participants then make dynamic their action and sound. Once this is established for each individual, participants turn in to the centre of the circle and continue with their sound and action but allow themselves to be changed by the sounds and actions of those around them. Gradually, and without conscious thought, the sound and action changes until it is uniform across the group—a new sound and action emerges which has been created within the body of the group through unplanned and unthought responses to one another. There is a certain danger in this game, as each individual participates, bringing something of themselves to the action, and yet, each individual also succumbs to the creative impulse of the whole. An expression of self becomes an expression of the collective as consciousness moves from self to other, instigating a moment of shared creativity.

The experiences we tap into with games like this take us to a place of intuition. Played fully, it is a genuinely collaborative experience—the outcome is entirely dependent on collaborative will and collaborative release. It encourages us to move into a space where we think through action rather than words, where we can experience the unconscious. When first played in a group, when the group is unfamiliar with the game, and perhaps with one another, we find our head full of words: ‘should I change now?’ ‘what’s she doing?’ ‘Is this okay?’ But when we play fully, if we are ‘playful’, and allow ourselves to rely on the unconscious to guide us, our heads are empty of words, though they might be filled with images or other sensations. These images and sensations, when we turn off the words, and release the whole body to an experience, are a place where creativity grows for the individual and for the collaborative community (Cropley, 1997; Gruber, 1989).

The problem of what creativity is (Ronco, 1997; Craft, 2006; Brophy, 2009), how one describes and explains it (Simonton, 1997; Gedo, 1997; Eysenck, 1997, Smith and Amner, 1997), and how one then teaches it (Cropley, 1997; Jackson and Shaw, 2006), is one I face every day as a teacher. Many studies of creativity take people identified as creative and extrapolate creative characteristics from a

study of their lives and works (Simonton, 1997). Notably in these cases, creativity tends to be narrowly defined. Creativity is understood specifically as related to permanent product—art works, architecture, musical scores and so on. This way of defining creativity tends to be self-fulfilling: I call these people creative therefore their actions must be the product of creativity. However, creativity is often by nature ephemeral—a fleeting moment of insight applied to discussion, or performance, which lifts the moment to something wonderful and offers a door into new ways of thinking, understanding and interacting. However, it does not always result in a product (Runco, 2007). Such moments of creativity are shared but often not recorded. Csikszentmihalyi's notion of 'flow' recognises the often ephemeral nature of creativity by placing it 'in the moment', identifying 'flow' as complete absorption into an activity (Ted talk at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXIeFJCqsPs>). Ultimately he is talking about a shift in the experience of being. Such experiences are difficult to apply language to (hence the value of metaphor), and hard to grasp—they must be experienced rather than analysed. 'Flow' is a fine example of the ability to know intuitively and the assertion of the richness of intuition in a learning environment. Identifying and understanding creativity in the moment of being lies at the core of developing innovative teachers.

Unfortunately, in our schools we focus student learning almost exclusively on the intellect, the thinking which is connected only to the conscious. Our school system is designed to rank and sort (Teese, 2000). Consequently, when students undertake the Arts at school they are doing so within a system that marginalises collaborative creative engagement, sometimes ephemeral and often difficult to assess (Cowan, 2006), and instead recognises and rewards competition. Even in the arts themselves we see competition as a key component: students 'audition' for roles in the school show; they are marked on a bell curve; and they judge themselves against their peers. The Victorian Certificate of Education is specifically competitive, ranking students against one another, and ranking the perceived difficulty of subjects against one another. Numerous explanations are provided for these competitive behaviours. Teachers will say that auditions replicate the 'real world' where actors compete for roles; school teachers will say that it is important for students to have an idea of where they 'fit' in the class; students will compare and contrast in order to judge their 'worth' (but not necessarily their learning)—and in seeking to make sure that grades are 'fair'. Everything must in some way be measured. There is no space in our school time for metaphor, and no time to wait for the perfect wave.

In contrast, I want preservice teachers graduating from my classes, to be responsive and reflexive, to bring creativity to their profession, and to be able to respond to, and support, creative thinking in their students. Various studies have explored what creative environments in schools look like and how teachers of creative pedagogies behave. Craft (2008) identifies a body of scholarship

which asserts that ‘the creative impulse is identical across domains’ (p.242) and Cremin, Burnard and Craft (2006) observed common pedagogic themes across all settings, stating that ‘standing back, profiling agency and creating time and space, nurtured the development of aspects of possibility thinking’ (p.115) Pedagogical themes set the practice for creative environments, supported by student agency and motivation, and flexibility with time (Cremin, Burnard and Craft, 2006) When teachers encounter creativity in themselves, they begin to explore the nexus of creativity and artistry and provide opportunities for their students to learn in the space of the unconscious (Cropley, 1997). In other words, they develop a sense of embodied learning—where the whole person is involved in the process of reflection, understanding and creation, rather than learning being a ‘head’ exercise, confined to tables, chairs and books. Creativity provides a new vocabulary, not always language-based, with which they can articulate and communicate their world. When teachers are able to engage their students with the unconscious and share this vocabulary of artistic engagement, they equip young people with alternative ways to explain, understand and inquire into their experiences of themselves, others and the world around them. In order to think and teach in this way, preservice teachers need to experience creative ways of doing, being and communicating. This is a radically different image of learning to that present in our current education system—we so rarely teach with head, heart, soul and body (Atkin, 2011). To think creatively is to allow intuition to shape our intellectual landscape. It is the refusal to cut through the mountain and the determination to work with the mountain (Smith and Amner, 1997). When we talk to students about creativity we tend to try to define, and to explain, but the only way to understand creativity is to experience it—it is an experiential state, not an analytical one. In his book, *Thumbs, Toes and Tears and other Traits that Make us Human*, Walter investigates those attributes that make us human and traces their evolution. In his discussion of brain development he examines learning and language, noting that the capacity to copy and then conceptualise (in other words, to learn, rather than mimic) preceded the development of language. To learn, invent and apply are early indicators of the evolutionary trail to being human. But this learning is bedded in the body. It takes place in the body and is experienced in the body before it can be enhanced by language. Our most primal way of learning as humans is embodied. What athletes and musicians have called muscle memory is learning that is not articulated or moderated through language, but experienced in the body. Embodied learning, based as it is in physicality and image, allows metaphoric thinking prior to language.

I want my students at VU to throw themselves into the waves. I want them to experience the sensation of diving into and being carried by a wave of creativity, of the abandonment of self and the abandonment to self. I want them to trust their environment, to find the freedom to be, and the boldness to experience. For me,

the question is: how do I teach our teachers, along with their students, to throw themselves in the waves?

Each of the following examples focusses on doing, being or communicating creatively, and the expression of knowing that was experienced.

### *Doing:*

Doing creatively involves analysis, problem-solving, synthesis and the development of multiple perspectives. In this example doing is explored through an experience of process drama.

Influenced by Dorothy Heathcote's work, I recently used a form of process Drama with a group of 18 third year bachelor of education students. Each of these students is a drama or dance major. The purpose was to experience process drama for themselves, something none of them had ever done before. I wanted to contextualise creativity, and particularly Drama, in a place that did not involve written work, that was not 'assessable' and that demanded intuitive and instinctive responses. I wanted to make sure they knew how this felt.

I offered a number of articles from the newspaper to use as a starting point. We decided on an article about the exploding rabbit population in Melbourne (ref). We talked briefly about the sorts of people (and animals) that might be part of this story and I suggested a community meeting as a starting point. I took on the teacher-in -role stance, using a hat to distinguish when I was in role and when I was offering guidance, suggestions, or asking for a particular character to be heard or seen. The drama took up much of our three hour class and emerged from positions of involvement. Each student adopted a character, not a stance. We focussed our debrief, not on content, but on feelings.

All of the following emerged and were commented on during the debrief

- Insights into community structures and powers and the feelings they evoke
- Character and the influence of dominant individuals
- The ways in which less dominant people may manipulate circumstances and people in order to get what they want/believe is right
- Gender perspectives
- Rabbits as organised invaders (I had expected the rabbits to be soft fluffy victims as in *Watership Down*, but these rabbits were truly feral, very savvy and technologically switched on)
- Misunderstood relationships
- The intensity of the battle for survival and the way it influences behaviours

- Immigration and asylum
- Climate and food
- Adoption of multiple perspectives
- Ethics
- ‘the human condition’
- Economics
- Priorities—who do we decide does the most damage, who do we hate most? Where do we invest our money and time? In this case it was a question of rabbits or rats.

Each of these is consistent with Cropley’s cognitive aspects of creativity (Cropley, 1997, p.93).

Creative solutions to significant problems require more than statistical understanding and modelling. For example, we cannot solve the ‘problem’ of asylum seekers only by looking at human movement across the globe, sites of conflict and clusters of ‘people smugglers’. We must begin to look at the humanity of the problem (Jay and Perkins, 1997), and how it ‘feels’ before we can begin to solve it. Understanding of multiple perspectives, coupled with intuition, gives agency, creates empowered individuals who understand their motivation, look for the motivation of others, and listen. This sounds like analytical problem-solving, but it is people responding with head, heart and body to move toward solutions. It is creative engagement.

### *Being:*

This exercise in being creatively was aimed at developing students’ self and other awareness. Through this exercise preservice teachers recognised the ways in which our experiences can liberate us, even from oppressive environments and oppressive ways of knowing the world.

The same class as in the previous example was introduced to Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, creating theatrical experiences from personal stories of oppression. Their instruction was to think intuitively rather than rationally, and see what happens. Their first questions, when they began to develop their stories into theatrical events were focussed on, and directed to, the story owner. In each case it was ‘how did you feel when...?’ Image-laden questions followed, such as; ‘Was she a monster to you?’ These preservice teachers were sorting, organising, planning and building knowledge but they used image for understanding. They entered the world of metaphor to express feelings and ideas for which they did not have words. In one case the story teller tried to explain the oppressor’s actions, to contextualise them in a logical way, but others in the group asked: ‘Did



she seem bigger to you? Bigger than in real life? Did she grow bigger and bigger?' Their focus was on perceived relationship rather than on justification. It was on understanding the feeling rather than the context. In this dramatization, this oppressor did become bigger and bigger, taller, climbing on chairs and then tables, arms spread wide, but quieter and quieter as the oppression was internalised by the story teller, becoming a personalised dilemma. The scene froze with her literally being pulled in two directions. In another scene, from a different story teller, the oppressor began as physically big, and became louder and louder and louder until one's instinct in the drama, and as a watcher, was to cover one's ears, and duck down low.

### *Communicating:*

This example of communicating creatively involved using the whole body in contradiction of the spoken word, to convey complex ideas without explicitly stating them or setting them up in opposition to one another.

This last example comes from a language-based class, rather than a Drama class. We were looking at the relevance of the 'classics' to teaching English—cultural capital, quality of language, thematic content and so forth. The question was: does this sort of study have relevance to students in the western suburbs of Melbourne, a low socio-economic area with high cultural diversity, high numbers of ESL speakers and high levels of violence and other crimes? I said to the students: 'I don't want you to tell me; I want you to show me.' I allowed them time to sit with the task before they began to talk or plan. Two students (one male, one female) answered by together presenting the sonnet: 'How do I love thee, Let me count the ways...' by Elizabeth Barratt Browning. It began beautifully and romantically and then the tone shifted. Their performative bodies told a different story to the words themselves, and the words and performance attributes became reflections, symbols of each other. The students needed to forget the language of love they were using in order to recreate a different language of relationships, using the same words. As we moved toward the central images of the poem, it became clear that what we were seeing was the manipulation of one member of the couple by the other, through violence. In fourteen lines they opened up questions of domestic violence, family politics, social interpretations and expectations of love, and the capacity of really fine literature to be understood and engaged with in a myriad ways. They answered the question about literary relevance by doing. They were simultaneously the poem and a representation of the poem, themselves and the other, working in a space where the unconscious and the conscious were linked through metaphor. In this case the poem itself became a metaphor for corrupted love and the words became symbols of the abuse of themselves. Although these students had not encountered Lacan, they provided a rich example of Lacan's symbolisation and forgetting in the construction of flexible discourse

through metaphor. In doing so, they acted creatively and intuitively in their personal response to domestic violence and in their professional response as future teachers of English.

In each of these cases the preservice teachers were connecting their unconscious worlds with their conscious landscapes. As actors, they were simultaneously the stories and the commentaries on the stories; as students they were simultaneously experiencing these feelings and observing the experience of these feelings. They instinctively used metaphor to traverse between the two, and they worked in that metaphoric space. The use of metaphor not only supported them in seeking the truth, but through it they also found ways to make further thinking possible (Brophy, 2009). Several studies have sought to distinguish creativity from the construction of meaning (Craft, 2008). In each of these cases we might ask whether these were creative experiences and expressions, or whether the students are simply using metaphor in order to analyse a world view and construct meaning from it. This question of exactly what determines creativity is again present. It is unclear what differences there are between making meaning and acting creatively—perhaps, in fact, there is no difference at all. Cochrane, Craft and Jeffery (2008) suggest we are so used to measuring meaning construction in terms of educational outcomes that we have determined a false dichotomy between creativity and meaning making in line with the competitive and measuring culture of school and education.

When body surfing, the primary experience is of the wave. Similarly, when we create, the primary experience is of the creation itself. There are spaces in the experience that cannot be captured in words. They can be alluded to through imagery. But essentially they must be felt. So what is the place of creativity in education? I suspect that we cannot teach people to be creative, but I also suspect that being creative is as natural as breathing. Our job as teachers, then, is to provide the space and time to connect to the unconscious. We can talk in metaphors, and we can recognise that not all thinking needs to be constrained by language. Saussure's idea that we cannot truly think something until we can articulate it in language (1959) seems to me the antipathy of creativity, and in direct contradiction with what we now know about the evolutionary development of abstract thinking and language (Walter). Moreover, as teachers we might often see ourselves in the role of standing sentry on the beach. We can focus our attention on those things necessary for creativity to take place and ensure that these are provided for. We can stand back and provide agency (Cremin, Burnard and Craft), open up opportunities for embodied learning (Csikszentmihalyi), for engagement of the head and heart (Atkin), for the use of the whole body, for the chance to throw oneself into the waves. It is the job of the sentry to ensure the safety of those in the waves. 'Safe' classroom environments underpin creative engagement (Gude, 2010) and are essential for learning (Victorian Institute of Teaching: standard 5; Principles of

learning and Teaching:1). Collaborative learning, such as that which takes place in arts-based pedagogies, simultaneously supports and generates emotional and intellectual safety (Bryce, 2004). The role of sentry, therefore, is critical in ensuring that all students feel they can throw themselves into the waves, even if they are not skilful, in order to experience the rush of creativity.

Good teaching is an act of creative engagement. It takes us to a space where we must engage with thoughts and feelings rather than only with words. Often we ask school students: ‘what did you learn about at school today?’ A better question might be: ‘what did you learn?’ or even, ‘what did you do?’ Or ‘how *were* you at school today?’ The difference between those questions is the difference between externalising (learning about) and internalising the learning (Atherton, 2011); it is the difference between allowing the unconscious space to speak, and listening only to the conscious. It is the difference between *knowing of* and *knowing how*. Teachers who engage creatively in order to foster creativity in their students work ‘on the edge’ of social change by equipping students to critique their world and imagine something better and different. They allow space for metaxis to occur, where students can be simultaneously in the unconscious and in the conscious. Through exploring the arts in the tertiary classroom, and exposing preservice teachers to artistic ways of doing, being and communicating, I hope that they will become teachers who perceive themselves as creatively alive and who empower children to explore their own creative worlds. I hope they will leap into the waves and surf to shore, and I hope that, when their turn comes, they stand sentry with vigilance and care.

## REFERENCES:

- Atherton, J. S. (2011). *Learning and Teaching: Experiential Learning* [On-line: UK] retrieved 23 September 2012 from <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/experience.htm>
- Atkin, J. (2011). “*Leading authentic curriculum renewal with a focus on the Australian Curriculum*”, presented at Australian Curriculum Studies Association conference, accessed at [www.acsa.edu.au/](http://www.acsa.edu.au/)
- Boal, A. (1995). *The Rainbow of Desire. The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*. New York: Routledge.
- Boal, A. (2002). *Games for Actors and Non-actors*. New York: Routledge.
- Brophy, K. (2009). *Patterns of Creativity*. New York: Rodopi.
- Jennifer Bryce. (Jul. 2004). “Evaluation of School-Based Arts Education Programs in Australian Schools” in *Research Developments* Accessed at: [http://works.bepress.com/jennifer\\_bryce/12](http://works.bepress.com/jennifer_bryce/12)
- Cochrane, P., Craft, A. and G. Jeffery (2008). “Mixed messages or permissions and opportunities? Reflections on current policy perspectives on creativity in education” in J. Sefton-Green (ed.), *Creative Learning, Creative Partnerships*, London: Arts Council, England, pp. 27–40.
- Cowan, J. (2006). “How should I assess Creativity?” In Jackson, N. (ed.) *Developing Creativity in Higher Education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Craft, A. (2006). “Creativity in Schools” in Jackson, N. (ed.) *Developing Creativity in Higher Education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Craft, A. (2008). “Studying Collaborative Creativity: Implications for Education” in *Thinking Skills and Creativity* vol 3, issue 3, pp. 241–145

- Cremin, T., Burnard, P. and A. Craft (2006). "Pedagogy and Possibility thinking in the Early Years" in *Thinking Skills and Creativity* Volume 1, Issue 2, Pages 108–119
- Cropley, A. J. (1997). "Fostering Creativity in the Classroom: General Principles" in Runco, M. (ed.), *The Creativity Research Handbook*, vol. one. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, pp. 83–114.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (accessed 23/9/2012). "What makes Life worth Living?" Ted talk at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXleFJCqsPs>
- DEECD, *Principles of Learning and Teaching*, accessed at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingprinciples/principles/unpacked.htm>
- Domino, G. (1989). "Synesthesia and Creativity in Fine Arts students: An Empirical Look" in *Creativity Research Journal*, vol 2, issue 1–2, pp. 17–29.
- Eysenk, H. J. (1997). "Creativity and Personality" in Runco, M. (ed.), *The Creativity Research Handbook*, vol. one. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, pp. 41–66.
- Gedo, J. E. (1997). "Psychoanalytic Theories of Creativity" in Runco, M. (ed.), *The Creativity Research Handbook*, vol. one. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, pp. 29–40.
- Gibson, R. and R. Ewing (2011). *Transforming the Curriculum through the Arts*. South Yarra: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gruber, H. (1989). "The Evolving Systems Approach to Creative Work" in Wallace, D. and H. Gruber (eds.), *Creative People at Work*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gude, O. (March, 2010). "Playing, creativity, Possibility" in *Art Education*, vol 63, issue 2, pp. 31–37.
- Heath, Shirley Brice. (2000). "Seeing our way into Learning" in *Cambridge Journal of Education*, vol 30, issue 1, pp. 121–132.
- Herbert, A. (2010). *The Pedagogy of Creativity*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Jackson, N. and Shaw, M. (2006). "Developing subject Perspective on Creativity in Higher Education" in Jackson, N. (ed.), *Developing Creativity in Higher Education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Jay, E. S. and D.N. Perkins. (1997). "Problem Finding: The Search for Mechanism" in Runco, M. (ed.), *The Creativity Research Handbook*, vol. one. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, pp. 257–294.
- Odena, O. (2012). *Musical Creativity: Insights from Music Education Research*, SEMPRES Studies in The Psychology of Music, Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- O'Toole, J. and D. Beckett (2010). *Educational Research. Creative Thinking and Doing*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Runco, M. (ed.) (1997). *The Creativity Research Handbook*. Cresskill NJ: Hampton Press.
- Runco, M. (2007). *Creativity: Theories and Themes: Research, Development and Practice*. California: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Saussure, F. de. (1959). *Course in General Linguistics*. (trans. Wade Baskin) New York: Philosophical Library, retrieved 23/9/2012 from <http://faculty.smu.edu/dfoster/cf3324/Saussure.htm>
- Simonton, D. K. (1997). "Historiometric Studies of Creative Genius" in Runco, M. (ed.), *The Creativity Research Handbook*, vol. one. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, pp. 3–28.
- Smith, G. J. W. and G. Amner (1997). 'Creativity and Perception' in Runco, M. (ed.), *The Creativity Research Handbook*, vol. one. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, pp. 41–66.
- Teese, R. (2000). *Academic Success and Social Power: examinations and inequality*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Victorian Institute of Teaching, 'Professional Standards' retrieved 23/9/2012 from <http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/standardsandlearning/Pages/professional-standards.aspx>
- Wagner, B. J. (1999). *Dorothy Heathcote. Drama as a Learning Medium*. (rev ed) London: Heinemann.
- Walter, Chip. (2006). *Thumbs, Toes and Tears and Other traits that make us Human*. New York: Walker and Company.

# THE CHILD, THE HEART, THE ARTS

## THE LITERACY GAME: HIGH STAKES AND RISK AVOIDANCE

LIGIA PELOSI

---

Literacy is a really big deal. Schools work hard to make sure every child learns to read and write to, at the very least, a level of moderate functionality. But the aim of most teachers is for students to be able to perform at a much higher level than basic functionality. In pursuit of this worthy endeavour, educators are regularly and extensively drilled on current, or *preferred*, literacy teaching and learning approaches. Much of this instruction focuses on knowing *what* children should be able to do *when* in their education, and *how* specifically to make that happen. The *whys* are also examined fairly strictly, but it can be argued that is through a somewhat slanted lens. There is no argument about the fact that there is a complicated set of literacy learning outcomes for every level of schooling, and teachers have a relatively short time frame to move their students through these narrow and prescriptive achievement levels to prevent them falling behind. Rather than a journey of discovery, becoming literate can feel more like a highly complex obstacle course that favours some students over others. In the knowledge age, high-functioning communication skills are the most highly valued currency system. According to this paradigm, the goal of every educator should surely be to ensure that all students are in the black—fully owning the tools of literacy, with a thorough understanding of the manual.

The pressure on teachers to achieve good results is very real. Consequently, a lot of time and effort is invested in the endeavour. This places even more pressure on an already crowded curriculum. Curriculum areas deemed less important get squeezed out to make room for more instruction and the associated time needed to measure outcomes. Creativity and the Arts are among the losers in this process of rationalisation while literacy and maths would appear to be the winners. In the US, the repercussions of leaving creative, Arts-based practices out of the curriculum have been catastrophic since the adoption of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (Whitfield, 2009). Current trends in Australian literacy education indicate we are stumbling headlong towards the same alarming outcomes as the US. It is no surprise that creative, Arts-based practices in all curriculum areas, but particularly in literacy, are losing out in favour of more skills and drills, more testing.

Certainly, lack of confidence with Arts practices and pedagogy could explain their absence from literacy programs. Temmerman (2006) argues that the constraints from which the Arts suffer in schools—namely time, lack of resources and status—are present in the training of preservice teachers in universities. This situation creates a shortage in the numbers of committed creative Arts practitioners currently entering the profession. Such an outcome is all the more serious because it results in ever-dwindling number of creative Arts advocates in the system, which in turn hampers the opportunity for healthy debate. While support for the necessary inclusion of creativity and Arts-based practices into the curriculum abounds, with numerous studies concluding that such practices improve overall academic achievement (Miller & Hopper, 2010, Geist & Hohn, 2009) schools have been slow to respond to the research. A study conducted by Oreck (2004) found that lack of training did indeed impact on teachers' integration of creative Arts practices in their classrooms. However, lack of time, resources, and limited exposure to creative Arts practices in the teachers' own school education were also factors. Whilst there are many advocates for the necessary inclusion of creative, Arts-based practices in our schools, there seems to be little time or space for such practices in a crowded, results-driven curriculum.

At first glance, the Arts and creative pursuits in general do seem terribly wasteful. They in fact depend on the need for critical thought and judgements based on the application of values. Creativity is a process that cannot be predicted, demands many trials, and relies on learning from errors (Robinson, 2011). Certainty needs to be left at the door when teachers and students enter a creative space. Measuring outcomes using qualitative methods is subjective, and therefore a challenge. Results may often come as a surprise (delightfully). The reason for this is that central to the process of being creative is the need for individuals to extend, to put themselves on the line, to take risks in order to connect the abstract with what is concrete in their lives (Ditkoff, 2008). Ellis (2003) has argued that one reason creative, Arts-based practices are systematically ignored, and as a

consequence, undermined, may be the belief that creativity is innate, therefore cannot be taught or fostered. A sign of this is the predominance of literacy classes where students must adhere rigidly to set tasks. Framing literacy learning in this type of context creates other conditions that are equally alarming. Teachers are less able to act as designers of individualised programs, and less able to make decisions about curriculum and pedagogy for the benefit of all students. In practical terms, this translates to teachers no longer acting on their own principles, applying their professional knowledge to inform curriculum decisions, and consequently failing to engage in reflective practices in regard to their educational goals.

Gunzenhauser (2003) suggests that a climate of high-stakes testing, which places more emphasis on scores rather than on achievement, has created a 'default' philosophy of education. Lucido (2010), Grainger et al (2005) agree that teachers are lacking the ability to make decisions. High-stakes testing has a limiting effect on curriculum, or more dangerously, is setting an alternative curriculum, where teaching to the test takes precedence over other learning. Such rigidity is a threat to authentic and meaningful literacy education, which relies on students experimenting and playing with elements of language. The question, then, is how do teachers implement such practices with little freedom to make choices about the delivery of programs?

It's no wonder that in this culture, there exists a great deal of collective anxiety on the part of parents and teachers. Test results are regarded as a transparent and necessary way to measure if students are reaching expected levels of literacy. This is one way to measure if the job has been done *rightly*. Nobody ever stops to consider how we might measure if the job is being done *wrongly*.

## ENGAGING WITH LANGUAGE

My position in all this is one of astonishment. I am truly amazed that so many children manage to learn to read and write despite some of the barren and uninspiring teaching and learning environments in which literacy is embedded. That students can connect with texts in seemingly disconnected ways, without what I call the *food* needed for literacy (more on that later) is a remarkable testament to their resilience. What is even more surprising is that despite the disconnection and lack of authentic learning, most students *do* learn to read well. They also go on to be adults who do not hold anything against the written word, and who do, in fact, become champions of written communication, using it at highly sophisticated level for multiple, functional purposes at work, but also in a range of creative or leisure-related, life-enriching ways.

One could surmise from this that literacy education doesn't need to be interesting, authentic, connected to culture and prior knowledge, or integrated with the Arts. I would instead venture that people are so desperate for communica-

tion, be it verbal or written, that they will do almost anything to get it. But to accept that literacy can be taught as an isolated skill is to abandon it to a sterile and repetitive landscape that is fraught with problems. Many children *will* turn away. Damage *will* be done. The remedy for such damage is much harder than prevention.

If literacy is fundamentally a social practice, it must be taught in ways that do not distance it from the full range of students' varied domains of practice, some of which include creative, Arts-based methods. Literacy taught in isolation, and therefore removed from its wider social context diminishes its meaning, as the written word does not exist in isolation from images, movement and sounds. To be truly meaningful, the fabric of literacy must be woven with the rich threads of family, culture and community. This directly involves music, dance, visual art and drama applied in explicitly creative approaches (Tusting & Papen, 2008). Misson and Sumara (2006) agree that the lack of creative connections to English curricula has been widely lamented. Successful students are identified by their ability to take directions and arrive at pre-determined answers. In contrast to this approach, creative meaning-making involves collaboration, social interaction, engagement in creative confusion and the use of meta-cognitive processes (Nottingham, 2010).

Words and language are intoxicating. They are irresistible. Their power and allure seduce most of us from a very young age. Students learn the mechanics of reading at school, but unless they are given meaningful and engaging opportunities to connect with text in class, they will seek out connections in incidental ways, wherever they may happen. Students' desire to discover and understand is driven not by getting through a spelling drill, but by the need to construct meaning through the many, continuous, day-to-day social interactions that occur at home and in the classroom.

In his interpretation of Vygotsky's theories, Smagorinsky (2007) describes the learning process as a two-way exchange: *'people's thinking shapes their physical and symbolic worlds, and their engagement with those worlds in turn shapes how they (and others) think.'* (Smagorinsky, 2007 p. 62). The Arts provide a bridge between thinking, what is physical and what is symbolic, in a way that connects deeply with what a child already knows; how their emotions motivate their actions and thoughts. When children are given an opportunity to engage in literacy through the Arts, they are able to draw more deeply on what they know and feel. They are able to construct meaning in ways that feel true. When teachers allow Arts practices to share the learning space with literacy, they are giving students *reason* to stake a claim. When putting marks on a page, using their bodies to respond to music, reciting a chant, making puppets come to life, or picking out a simple melody, students are 'keeping it real'. Along the way, they are finding powerful reasons to read and write.



In the following narrative, Felix hardly knows what is happening to him as he surrenders to the fantasies inspired by the reading of *An Awesome Book* (Clayton, 2008), letting colour and image flow through his mind and heart and out on the page through the pastel held in his fingers. But Jodi, his teacher, knows that his thought processes, the range of ideas he is able to generate, his use of vocabulary, and ultimately his motivation to become literate, will all benefit from this choice of pedagogy. As Felix gets older, he will become more familiar with the process, and will be able to use it deliberately to problem-solve, to self-express more articulately, and to better understand the world and himself.

### *Tell me a story...*

Now I want to know about some ideas you could dream up, Jodi says as she closes the book and props it back on the bookstand. We will write about it. But first you can make a picture and take some time to think a little bit. She reaches for a stack of small, brightly-coloured boxes and some large sheets of paper. Felix's legs and arms tingle, his fingers play with a frayed patch of carpet that's right where he's sitting on the rug in front of Jodi. There is a hum inside his chest, building to a lively beat. The other kids murmur about what they will draw. Felix listens, thinking about what picture he will do. Zach up the back calls out, Hey, Danny, I'm gonna do Optimus Prime.

Soon Felix is sitting at a table next to Madison, a fresh sheet of paper in front of him, and his own box of the irresistible pastels. He slides it open, takes in the familiar scent as the spectrum of colour holds his gaze. His fingers pick at the oily, smooth cylinders. He takes one out and tears off the paper to expose the tip. The white sheet of paper in front of him is thick and satisfying to touch; pristine and so full of expectation.

He knows what to do. Jodi's instructions flash like signposts in his head. Thinking about the book's pictures takes Felix on a swirling tour of his own dreams. One time, he dreamed he was in *Temple Run*, jumping over missing sections of bridge, dodging death monkeys and flying through the air, breathless. His dreams are a lot like stuff on television, or in the video games he plays with Miles when they're at his house, but that's only because his mum lets him. Felix gets to play different video games at home. Ones Mum says are *appropriate*. And she lets him play on the computer, too. When she's doing her work on the laptop and Molly's busy playing, she says, Felix, come sit next to Mummy, draw me a picture on the big computer. And he sits and draws on *Paint*, his grip on the mouse nimbly putting marks on the screen. Sometimes it's a whizzing paintbrush, or the mottled markings from a spray can. Sometimes he covers the whole screen in doodles with a thick marker, or a pencil, clicking on the little boxes, switching colours the whole time. Time goes. And then Mum says, save that one, that's lovely, or, let's print it out for Grandma, so he saves it in the folder named *Felix* on the desktop or prints it out and puts it on the fridge so it doesn't get lost. Other times, he just deletes picture after picture, and starts again. Over and over.

The blank paper stares back at Felix. His gaze drifts upward, way up above the vibrant pictures hanging from strings that span the room, to the white ceil-

ing spotted with faint brown stains. He scratches his head. What could he draw that would be a really good, really way out idea? Felix likes going fast. He likes it on his bike, and he likes it on his skateboard. He also likes fast video games. Something clicks in his head. His picture will be about a super-fast, super-something...

Close your eyes tight before you start, Jodi tells the class as paper is rustled, feet shuffle under tables, and children fiddle, re-arranging pastels in and out of the paper boxes. Take some time to let some ideas settle in your head before you put a mark on the paper, she says. When you do start, I want you to fill the whole sheet, and make sure you think about the colours. Think about whether you want your colours to be bright and strong, or soft and gentle. However you do it, I want you to make my eyes pop. Look at my eyes now—and she points to her eyes, making them wide, arching her brows high, waiting until all little faces have turned to her and a transient silence descends, her timing as perfect and as slick a seasoned performer—make them pop!

Next to him, Madison has already started, writing her name in red at the top of the page. She selects a pink pastel and starts to draw. Felix looks down at his paper, and images start to form in his mind. He grabs a green pastel, rubs the tip backwards and forwards at the bottom of the paper. Back and forth, back and forth, the pastel is soft, and the colour spreads easily on the paper, a bit like butter on toast. Long, luscious blades of grass soon take shape. Different colours dot the grass; making a kaleidoscope blanket of flowers. Pink, orange, purple, blue, yellow and red. He liked the book Jodi read, he liked the pictures and he liked the words. Now the picture is like a sea, and Felix dives in, swimming among the colours. Each stroke draws him deeper. There's less thinking now, and more going with the marks that are filling the paper. Curvy lines, heavy shading, light rubbing, and suddenly something emerges. Something that goes really fast... A giant silver sled with... Felix's hand hovers over the pastels, now strewn all around his picture on the table... He swoops. Green. Green snake reins for his super-sled. He switches to white. White for the eyes, but as he mashes the pastel on one of the snakes' heads, it doesn't much look like a snake's eye. What's more, the white pastel now has green all over it. Felix puts it back in the box and gives the snakes black eyes instead.

Mine's a video game, says Madison. You can get inside and run around. It's bigger and kind of scary, but it's really fun.

Felix looks at Madison's picture. It's just a series of boxes right now. All different coloured squares. He keeps watch on what Madison does with it as he keeps drawing. The classroom is full of voices, everyone busy, talking, but sometimes it quiets down, and Felix looks up. Everyone looks up. Someone laughs and the room is soon blanketed in chatter once more.

Felix lets out a long sigh as he surveys his picture. With a few, quick strokes, the sled is perched high on the side of the hill, with swooshing marks that make it rocket downwards at breakneck speed. Felix draws himself in the sled. Some brown marks are feathered around his head, and his hair is flying in the wind. A big red smile like a slice of watermelon. Blue dots for eyes. Felix wants to show the wind pushing against his face, and so he puts grey swirly lines of wind all through the picture, filling the gap between the green grassy bottom and the blue sky top. He peppers coloured dots to make rainbow stars all over the sky.

Jodi appears at his side. She says, tell me something about your picture. What is happening? Tell me about those lines all through the air.

She squats beside him, her hand poised above a new sheet of lined paper, a thick texta in her fingers. Felix speaks the words hesitantly, haltingly, at first, but Jodi asks more questions about the sled, and about the lines in the air. Soon, Felix stops checking his words, and the story comes out about his adventure on the speeding sled, how the wind feels on his face and through his hair, how the ride is bumpy and a little scary.

Jodi writes Felix's words. When she is finished, she reads the words back to him. Felix smiles. The words are familiar, and as he follows her finger while she reads, the letters on the page somehow come together in his mind, connecting with the words coming out of her mouth. They are his words; he made them. And now they are on the page.

\* \* \*

As the weeks pass, Felix will return to the story again and again. It is pinned on the wall with his pastel picture stapled above it, there for everyone to read the words one by one. When he looks at the picture and the words, he will remember the story he told Jodi the day he drew the picture, and he will recognise the words he used in the now-familiar groupings of letters on the lined paper. In the space of time before Jodi takes all the pictures and stories off the wall, Felix will read ever more fluently and with confidence, every word in his own story. The words Jodi wrote that day will come back him in countless other stories Jodi reads the class. Now and again, when Felix writes something new, he will glance up at the wall just to check how a word is written. His friends will have a look at his picture and at his story, and he will look at theirs. Sometimes they read to each other, or tell the story of their dream idea using different words to the ones Jodi wrote. In the quiet moments of the day, Felix listens to the pictures' whispers. They have their own versions of the story.

Days go by, and without Felix realising it, pieces of an unknown puzzle fall into place. Felix can read his own story and that of Madison, and more and more chunks of the stories pinned around the room. He can read. He is a reader, Jodi says. Felix knows it's true, because he didn't dream all those other dreams. Dreams into which he can now climb.

## CONNECTING THROUGH THE ARTS

Students who do not engage in meaningful literacy practices at home or at school are in real danger of failing to connect with the deeper and empowering literacy that is the passkey to life. It is not surprising that students with parents or carers who model successful engagement with written communication at home are more likely to succeed in reading and writing. But we also know there are students without this kind of home advantage. For them, connecting with literacy through the Arts during school time is a basic necessity. Support for this view of literacy education is strong, linking literacy and the Arts with constructivist notions of learning.

Tsao (2008) posits the notion that learning is a social process and that teachers scaffold learning within play-rich environments. The role of play in language experience is paramount. Language experience is the *food* on which literacy learning feeds. Without opportunities to experience, reflect, create and become immersed in creative play, students will become disconnected, and consequently, disengaged from literacy learning. The inclusion of play-based activities in the literacy curriculum help students to make connections between the written word and the arts, facilitating links between the classroom and the home and reaching out into the wider community. Freedom to combine play with language through a range of creative, arts-based experiences, allows students to bridge the gap between the affective and the rational, the objective and the subjective, and gives them opportunities to express themselves on a broader scope than if they were dealing with reading and writing in isolation.

There is no curriculum area that cannot benefit from the skills, insights and opportunities for reflection that the Arts offer. Hendrick and Weissman (2010) affirm that creativity supports language and literacy development, a claim that applies to every branch of the Arts. Music has many elements that connect directly with literacy, and which can in turn strengthen learning in both areas (McIntire, 2007). Some of the similarities between music and literacy are to do with the narrative of stories being parallel to that of songs or pieces of music. There are beginnings, middles and ends, as there are lyrics that tell the story. Where a picture book captures the imagination with an image, music captures it as powerfully by reaching into the heart. In addition there are numerous opportunities to deepen students' experience of book concepts, sight vocabulary, reading comprehension and fluency through the use of music in a literacy program (Kolb, 1996).

The visual creativity innate in picture storybooks has delighted children for generations. Picture books are a stalwart of every early years (and, increasingly, middle years) literacy program. Visual image adds nuances and a depth to meaning that words alone couldn't accomplish (Giorgis & Johnson, 2001). Students can be involved in creating and making images to accompany stories of their making, as Felix did in his representation of dreams after Jodi's reading of *An Awesome Book* (Clayton, 2008). There are also multiple opportunities to explore and respond to text through analysis of illustrations—the visual representations of story. Not to be forgotten is the deeper understanding of literature that can be gained through the dramatization of stories and through expressive dramatic interpretation of texts (Ortlieb et al, 2007). Through the creation of images and narratives, students of varying capabilities are able to learn from each other. Visual art can assist with the creative process of writing stories, and opens up opportunities for teachable moments. Teachers and students are natural storytellers. Through stories, lessons are learnt and experiences shared. Through this process, there is growth and development for all involved (King, 2007).

When Felix published his story, he joined a collaborative community of narratives. In sharing his tale, both as a visual image and through text, he was able to contribute to the collective voice of his classmates as facilitated by Jodi. A seemingly basic experience such as this can lead to countless opportunities to construct meaning and build literacy skills.

## A PLACE AND TIME FOR THE ARTS—A PLACE AND TIME FOR NARRATIVES

Felix's narrative is fictitious, but is constructed from years of my experience working with many children as they take their first steps towards reading; negotiating their way in and around the tricky territory of the symbols and conventions of written language. Felix's story is one way to measure and document outcomes. If the concept of student engagement is seen as such a vital component of teaching and learning, then it would be wise to reconsider how it is applied in the teaching of literacy.

Felix's world is not one of overt disadvantage. It is like that of many children. His mum has little time for herself, and doesn't often read for leisure. She rarely reads to Felix or his sister, Molly. Felix does not live in poverty, and like his friends, has abundant access to technology. Yet, he does not have out-of-school access to a varied range of Arts experiences. Without Jodi's vision in the classroom, Felix's literacy education would be adequate, yet decidedly lacklustre. He would not be at risk of *not* learning to read. His test results would most likely occupy the middle road, with his achievement dots safely in the *expected* range; innocuous but sadly under-realised pearls of potential. By integrating literacy learning with the Arts, Jodi manages to lift Felix's education out of the ordinary and above the lacklustre of many contemporary classrooms. The richness and breadth that the Arts bring to Felix's literacy learning isn't routinely measured or valued by schools. Though assessment approaches in the Arts are abundant, there is little incentive to measure learning outcomes that are about imagination and creativity, even when they are a factor in improving literacy outcomes.

Narrative accounts of how the Arts bring meaning to people's lives cannot be more relevant than when they are applied to children becoming literate. Telling stories, analysing and drawing meaning, is a powerful way to establish the many ways integrating the Arts into literacy education, as well as the wider curriculum, works.

Literacy education cannot be shaken up without the necessary chorus of voices giving life and validity to stories from the classroom. Richardson (2001) lists ten important reasons to write stories. Among these are: The desire to write and consequently discover oneself through an omniscient voice. It is impossible to tell a story—no matter whose—without the narrator's imprint. Writing others' lives

will ultimately shape the narrator's own life. The reader, too, will be influenced through the writer's creation of new plot lines. These 'alternate' representations of a life open up possibilities for the reader, enabling them to imagine new ways of being, or to re-examine known pathways more critically. Just as important is the desire to position a story within a socio-historical context, which makes the telling more authoritative, as each narrative possesses both local and historical context.

Narratives might seem unreliable, or at worst, problematic, and in direct contrast with the finite, precise and seemingly reassuring realm of numbers and percentages gleaned from test results. Conversely, it is possible to selectively use numbers and percentages in order to lend weight to one point of view, or to frame another in a negative light. There is, however, much to be gained from narrative that cannot be conveyed through a set of numbers alone. Both the writer and the reader of a narrative will take away valuable insights and understandings from the experience. A certain degree of reflection and analysis will be necessary, and will most likely result in participants benefiting from the process in highly individualised ways. Narrative choices will influence the outcome. A story written in the first person is generally perceived to be primarily one person's account, while use of the third person implies a more objective observation, inference, and a certain degree of impartiality. This, however, is not always the case, as third person narratives are filtered and framed by the narrator. Thus, such accounts can be more about the narrator than the subjects. Coulter (2009) contends that authorial voice can be written in a way that is not absolute, which allows it to be challenged by the reader. By problematising the researcher's voice, interpretation is encouraged. It follows then, that both authors and readers can benefit from creating and engaging with narratives.

Schaafsma and Vinz (2007), express the power and evocative beauty of narratives in the following passage. It underlines the vital importance of the use of narrative research in conveying and interpreting information outside set boundaries and free of the restrictions of conventional approaches.

We don't want to be so busy looking for answers that we lose sight of the first star, of the nearly perfect full moon, of the little girl, struggling in the back seat, fifth row. She loses power to the weight of numbers and mandates. She is made shallow through interpretation or someone's desire for tenure. Who is willing to be the caretaker of her perspective at all costs? Her story weighs on our desire, honour, and ability to (re)search honestly and for the right reasons. We want no more stories of how story isn't research, of why narrative needs to be analysed and dissected and, as Billy Collins has said of poetry, we don't need to strangle a confession out of story, either. We are thinking that effective narrative gives the reader a door to open and walk through. The reader enters and must be thinking: Take me gently toward meaning; make my feet move, step by step, across the floor. Help me experience what I haven't experienced before. Let me hear the

children sing. Let me question my own motivations and feelings. Let me reach down from where I stand and feel the presence of others (p. 277).

Ultimately, story-writing is about risk-taking. The act of discovering, and representing on the page others' and personal perspectives can be a disarming process—one crucial to life-long learning. Goodson (2006) believes that we are entering a period for smaller-scale, life narratives that rely on wider, social scripts. Understandings are born out of connecting our personal experience to that of others.

### **CONCLUSION: INVESTMENT IN CREATIVITY— A NECESSARY RISK**

Felix's pastel creation took a bit of time. Enough time for him to think about his dreams, wander off course to unrelated thoughts, and then return to spend time creating an image. The entire process took about fifteen minutes. Fifteen enjoyable minutes that were, arguably, a waste of time. Felix could have written his story without drawing a picture. The teacher had read the picture storybook on dreams, so it could be said that enough time had already been devoted to inspiration. The students could have gone straight from listening to the text and viewing the illustrations, to writing, or having their story transcribed, as happened in this lesson. What took place instead, in the fifteen minutes that was gifted to Felix and every other student in the class, was a pause. A moment in time devoted purely to opening oneself to possibilities. Without this necessary investment in time—an investment that has no guarantee of solid returns, the door to creativity remains firmly shut.

We may well think: 'Who cares if the door to creativity is shut? Nobody would notice if it was open.' But creativity, while seemingly invisible, is very much a tangible force. For some time now, it has been regarded as a necessary quality—the must-have skill for the intelligent workforce of the future. It is a widely accepted notion that in order for countries to succeed economically, ecologically and culturally, governments and businesses must foster generations of creative thinkers (Robinson, 2011).

Raising standards while investing time in the creative Arts seems an incongruous notion; two purposes at odds. Teachers who have integrated the Arts into the broader curriculum know otherwise. Though these competing elements—the first, a need to demonstrate an improvement in nationwide standards of literacy through measurable test results, and the second, student-centred, creative learning that is beneficial in a holistic sense—are intrinsically and plausibly connected through the needs and functions of one serving the other, opposing ideologies are at play.

In schools, time is a scarce commodity. In rational terms, one might argue that experiences such as the one given to the class by Jodi are a luxury. Children can draw with pastels at home; they don't need to give up valuable literacy learning time to do it in the day's most effective learning window—the literacy hour. But although most children like Felix own some kind of gaming device, not every child has the luxury of unimpeded time. Or a box of pastels.

Narratives—the stories we tell about ourselves and about those with whom we share teaching and learning spaces—bring a necessary equilibrium and clarity to the loaded discourse around literacy education and the Arts. Narratives allow us to *tell it like it is*. The uniqueness of each classroom; the character of every cohort of students; the diversity of our communities. These are the stories we must tell for the sake of our current students and future global citizens.

## REFERENCES

- Ditkoff, M. (2008). "Creativity—It's the fuzzy end of innovation" in *Leadership Excellence*, Vol 25, no.6, p. 10.
- Clayton, D. (2008) *An Awesome Book*. New York: Harper.
- Coulter, C.A. (2009). "Response to Comments: finding the narrative in narrative research" in, *Educational Researcher*, Vol.38, pp. 608–611.
- Ellis, S. (2003). "Story-writing, Planning and Creativity" in *READING literacy and language*, Vol. 37, no.1, pp. 27–31.
- Geist, E. & J. Hohn (2009) "Encouraging Creativity in the Face of Administrative Convenience: How our schools Discourage Divergent Thinking" in *Education*, Vol. 130, no. 1, pp. 141–150.
- Giorgis, C. & J. Johnson (2001). "Children's Books: Creativity" in *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 54, no. 6, pp. 632–640.
- Goodson, I. (2006). "The rise of the life Narrative" in *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Fall, pp 7–21.
- Grainger, T., Gouch, K. & A. Lambirth(2005). , *Creativity and Writing: developing voice and verve in the classroom*, London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Guzenhauser, M.G. (2003). "High-stakes Testing and the Default Philosophy of Education", *Theory Into Practice*, Vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 52–58.
- Hendrick, J. & P. Weissman (2010). *The Whole Child—developmental education for the early years*. US:Merrill Pearson.
- King, N. (2007). "Developing Imagination, Creativity, and Literacy through Collaborative Storymaking: a way of knowing" in *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 77, no. 2, pp. 204–226.
- Kolb, G.R. (1996) "Teaching Reading—read with a beat: developing literacy through music and song" in *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 50, no.1, pp. 76–77.
- Lucido, H. (2010). *Educational Genocide: a plague on our children*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- McIntire, J.M. (2007). "Developing Literacy through Music" in *Teaching Music*, Vol. 15, issue 1, pp. 44–48.
- Miller, S.R. & P.F. Hopper (2010). "Supporting Reading Goals through the Visual Arts" in I Vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 3–6.
- Misson, R. & Sumara, D. (2006). "Reclaiming the "creative" in the English/literacy classroom" in *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, Vol.5, no.2, pp. 1–5.
- Nottingham, J. (2010) "Creativity" in *Learning Matters*, Vol.15, no.1.
- Oreck, B. (2004). "Artistic and Professional Development of Teachers: a study of teachers' attitudes toward and use of the arts in teaching" in *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol.55, no.1, pp. 55–69.



- Ortlieb, E., Cramer, N. & E. Cheek(2007). "The Art of Reading: dramatizing literacy" in *Reading Improvement*, Vol.44, no.3, pp. 169–176.
- Richardson, L. (2001). "Getting personal: writing-stories" in *Qualitative Studies in Education*, Vol.14, no.1, pp. 33–38.
- Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds: learning to be creative*. UK:Capstone Publishing.
- Schaafsma, D. & R. Vinz (2007). "Composing Narratives for Inquiry" in *English Education*, Vol.39, no.4, pp. 277–281.
- Smagorinsky, P. (2007). "Vygotsky and the Social Dynamics of Classrooms" in *The English Journal*, Vol.97, no.2, pp. 61–66.
- Temmerman, N. (2006) "Equipping Future Arts Educators for Primary Schools of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: an Australian point of view" in *International Journal of Music Education*, Vol.24, no.3, pp. 271–282.
- Tsao, Y. (2008). "Using guided play to enhance Children's Conversation, Creativity and Competence in Literacy" in *Education*, Vol.128, no.3, pp. 515–20.
- Tusting, K. & U. Papen (2008)." Creativity in everyday Literacy Practices: the contribution of an ethnographic approach" in *Literacy & Numeracy Studies*, Vol.16, no.1, pp. 5–23.
- Whitfield, P.T. (2009). "The Heart of the Arts: fostering young children's ways of knowing" in Narrey, M.J. (ed.), *Making Meaning*. US:Springer.

# THIS CENTURY BECOMES YOU

QUALITATIVE INQUIRY, BEING/THERE AND SOCIAL  
BECOMING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

---

## PROPOSAL FOR SPECIAL ISSUE FOR CREATIVE APPROACHES TO RESEARCH

*Guest Editors*

*Dr Erica Southgate*

(University of Newcastle, Australia) Erica.southgate@newcastle.edu.au

*Dr Rachel Buchanan*

(University of Newcastle, Australia) Rachel.buchanan@newcastle.edu.au

*Rationale and key themes*

From Heidegger to the rise of social constructionism and more recent specialist studies in the social sciences, there has long been interest in understanding the foundational idea of ontology as a social process (Aspers, 2010; Bardon & Josserand, 2011; Hughes, 2007). This issue will highlight qualitative inquiry that grapples with theoretical, methodological and empirical aspects of “being in the world” and “becoming someone” through a range of social processes that permeate the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It will bring together a range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives that aim to address the following questions:

- What do the social processes of ontology mean for qualitative inquiry in a contemporary context?

- Is being or becoming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century qualitatively different from/in other times and places?
- How do we become digital selves?
- How has neoliberalism reconfigured ideas of becoming and what we should be?
- What is the impact of globalisation on identity and subaltern subjectivity?
- What kind of knowledge do 21<sup>st</sup> century subjects produce and what does this mean for the researcher and researched?

This special edition will be unique in providing an arena where the foundational idea of ontology wrestles with new ways of being and becoming.

#### *Criteria for inclusion:*

- Demonstrated contribution to the literature;
- Innovative theoretical and/or empirical qualitative research on the social processes of ontology in a contemporary context.

Papers submitted should be between 5000–7000 words (including notes and bibliography). You are welcome to discuss your ideas with the guest editors who can be contacted by email.

#### *Timeline*

December 2012/ January 2013:	Call for papers
April 2013:	Deadline for submissions
May–July 2013:	Peer review of papers
August–September 2013:	Author revisions
January/February 2014:	Publication

#### *References*

- Aspers, P. (2010). The second road to phenomenological sociology. *Society*, 47(3), 214–219.
- Bardon, T., & Jossierand, E. (2011). A Nietzschean reading of Foucauldian thinking: constructing a project of the self within an ontology of becoming. *Organization*, 18(4), 497–515.
- Hughes, B. (2007). Being disabled: towards a critical social ontology for disability studies. *Disability and Society*, 22(7), 673–684.