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EDITORIAL

THE IMPACT OF PRODUCTIVE TENSIONS BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE ON CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION

With the current world financial crises of economics and global environmental concerns, the proliferation of creativity and related discourses are all pervasive. Globally, in both dominant and emerging educational discourses, creativity plays an explicit role as an economic driver representing and shaping the key planks of policy thinking, government initiatives, and practice discourses. Policies that generate performance criteria, tests, targets, tables of achievement co-exist with creativity policies in education. Thus the space of practice and related discourses reflects dilemmas, debates, constraints and tensions which are played out in a variety of ways across and within national and international borders.

The rhetorics of creativity have been well documented. How the productive tensions play out and how the dilemmas thrown up by the tensions between policies and practice are imperatives recognised in the focus of this Special Issue. Of particular significance are the dominant discourses which position creativity as 'democratic' and the emerging discourses around the increasing dissociation of the arts from the creativity agenda; the need for a reframing of the arts disciplines; the significance of context and the meditational role of policy on practice and pedagogies in education. These discourses have generated a productive tension between the individual arts disciplines and the larger arenas of culture and education at the interface between policy and practice.

What is commonly reflected in policy discourse and of particular significance, reflected in the articles in this Special Issue, is the need to commit to refining and applying creative pedagogies to prepare creative educators and researchers and workers for the creative knowledge economy. For this, what creativity is, why promoting it is a necessity not an option, and how it's applied by and to different individuals, groups of people, in different

communities, institutions and societies, historically and culturally, is dependent on how the term 'creativity' is grounded, politicised, and practised. We are told that we need new thinking in the current world crises of economics and global environmental concerns. We are also told that in education, a new critically reflexive form of creativity is in order to address the task of the age of reconciling the need for a stable, safe, ethical and empathetic world within which a productive, adaptive and innovative workforce can operate.

We have seen already that the creative economy, creative education, creative arts and interdisiciplinary role of policy-practice in arts education has emerged to be important facets of knowledge societies in the 21st century. Alongside which a quiet development has been taking place – a repositioning of the arts and their respective disciplines (of music, visual art, dance, and drama and the various disciplines of arts education) in the broad fields of arts and artist practice, creative partnerships and innovative learning environments. The re-location of the arts in both education and cultural arenas, in both pro-social and pro-market uses, in both creative industries and in realising a social justice agenda, has meant, that at cultural and educational levels, we are increasingly witnessing the emergence and generation of innovative pedagogic identities and practices, where artists work alongside teachers in schools involving interdisciplinary practices with mixed forms of representation, where the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic combine to create new types of learning, characterised in relation to notions of competence and performance pedagogies.

And yet, the difference between arts-centred creativity and the more generalised 'universal' notion of what creativity represents is by no means certain. At the forefront of the public agenda of governments and enterprise, as they contemplate the needs of a new millennium, are the complications of contrasting policies, and policy conflict between 'education' and 'work'. We now see arts educators reaching out to other scholarly disciplines, initially to legitimise and strengthen their position in the school curriculum but also to serve as a key to personalised forms of learning which contribute to creation of new learning techniques, creating events that celebrate occasions and bring together different elements of the school community.

The widespread acknowledgement of creativity and interdisciplinary arts perspectives is important in a global knowledge economy because there are continued concerns that educational systems are not producing graduates who are 'creative'. This comes as part of a change of political climate and as part of the post-modern paradigm has also affected theory and practice in arts education. In the 1980s and 1990s we note there was a framing of the arts within broad socio-cultural ideas and contexts in ways that further expanded the theory and practice of the arts. Anthropological and sociological perspectives view the arts as reflecting a society and what it values, serving as social and political tools; such lenses draw attention to the economic significance of the creative and cultural industries and the necessity of innovation for wealth creation. The significance of creativity as an aspect of not only educational but broader industry goals, and the role the arts play in culture and enterprise development, has helped educators, artists and researchers proactively draw together available information to produce pedagogies grounded in the distinct traditions and areas of scholarship within specific arts discipline, but with a view to outlining connections and common principles concerning our understanding of multi-disciplinary research in the arts and the various disciplines of arts education and arts in education.

This special issue comprises six empirically-based research papers from academics in the UK, Finland, Singapore and Australia. The significance of context is important as is the multi-disciplinary focus of each paper. Drawing from a range of arts domains and educational contexts and practices, this special issue aims to foster communication and dialogue among these communities in order to enrich knowledge and inform practice. To this

end, most articles focus on creativity in education and draw upon one or two subject domains (e. g. music education and dance education), while seeking to draw connections and communicate with readers *across* the various arts education disciplines. Exploring how arts educators negotiate, combine, and account for their own trajectories and territories helps to illuminate some of the more shadowy and controversial spaces within this very crowded arena of educational policy and practice. These connections are highlighted by the foregrounding of assumptions underpinning the productive tensions between policy and practice.

To summarise, this special issue aims at two related functions. On one level, the issue is not expected to be a distillation of knowledge in the respective disciplines of dance, drama, literature, music, and visual arts education. It is however, meant to be foreground existing relevant literature, helping define and articulate productive tensions that have shaped the past and present, and point to the future of a multi-disciplined view of the arts. In that respect, its purpose is to address, interpret and organise a field of research within arts education, mapping theoretical and practical directions in the research of arts education. It provides conceptual and methodological definition to an area of inquiry while at the same time reviewing past achievements in a way that increases the field's attractiveness to a new generation of scholars and researchers. Its second function is based on the assumption that communication among the arts disciplines will advance each of them individually and facilitate cross-fertilisation.

The potential of creative, multi-disciplinary education to train more broadly for flexibility and diversity amidst difficult times inheres in the dominant creativity agendas and rhetorics. Underlying assumptions are embedded in investment in the arts, whether seen as an end in itself or as a means of offering cultural recognition and encouraging self-directed economic participation, government promises. Not surprisingly, productive tensions arise as common trends appear to operate distinctively in arts and culture in education.

In this issue, nine contributors draw on their multi-disciplinary arts backgrounds to offer varied perspectives within the current creativity agendas. The themes and discussions of productive tensions between policy and practice focus on what is distinctive in the creativity rhetorics in various contexts. These include:

- assumptions underlying Government policy rhetorics of creativity and the tensions and ambiguities between **policy context and development**
- explaining the tensions between **practice and policy development** and the impact of artists' involvement on the development of arts pedagogy in schools
- describing the significance and **impact of policy and practice on specialists notions (i.e. dance and visual arts education) of what creativity is** and if it is considered as a way **to researching educational phenomena within the field of art(s) education**
- reconciling the productive tensions at both theoretical and practical levels in **developing adaptive environments**
- new directions for the new millennium on **educating the creative workforce**

This special issue opens with article by **Anna Craft**, Professor of Education, University of Exeter and The Open University, UK, discussing the tensions in policy developments which both 'universalise' creativity (where everybody is creative) and yet appear also to 'particularise' it. The distinctive romantic tradition that pervades the 'creative genius' rhetorics, particularly when related to artistic achievement, versus the 'universal' or democratic claim of creativity, and tensions between the pro-market and pro-social construction of creativity, the latter

promoting a culturally situated, arts-centred view, are productive tensions identified and discussed. She explores aspects of the policy focus and thinking in education which views a specific set of social, economic and cultural arrangements and values within the current educational culture of the United Kingdom. Although more fundamentally, government initiatives (such as *Creative Partnerships,* introduced in more detail later), offers clear policy advice on how to develop the creative learning agenda, finding the balance between the pressure cooker of raising achievement and accountability agendas and the attention paid to creativity as both part of the process of learning and the qualities that seek to be instilled in young people, position creative learning at the centre of one key arena of the tensions played out in current education agendas.

T**eresa Dillon,** PhD, an artist-researcher and director of the intermedia company Polar Produce, Bristol, UK (where she creates and produces, location-based, intermedia work and combines performance, visual and sound arts, interactive design, new and old media), writes of the productive tensions arising from a new artistic partnership. Positioned within the fields of psychology and sociology, the author shares her experience of working in Portugal with new Portuguese partners involving the creative collaboration between an artist-producer and architecture collective.

The government's 'flagship cultural education policy' *Creative Partnerships,* introduced in 2002, promotes partnerships between artists and teachers, cultural institutions and schools. The aim is to give school children and their teachers the opportunity to explore their creativity by working on sustained projects with creative professionals. The following article provides a reflective analysis of the ways in which teachers and school leaders have been able to reconcile some of the productive tensions of developing creativity in this way. **Pat Cochrane**, a CEO of CapeUK – an independent research and development organisation in the field of creativity and learning engaged in both practice and policy development, reflects on the experience of practitioners in the three-year action research awards programme Creativity Action Research Awards (CARA). In this paper the pedagogic questions raised by these policy initiatives include how the artists teach, how and whether these ways of teaching differ from teachers' pedagogies, and the impact of the artists' involvement on the development of arts pedagogy in schools more generally.

Clearly, the ways in which creativity is positioned within various social and economic instrumental agendas, as identified in the contemporary creativity rhetoric in policy discussions and in practice in UK schools, goes some way to illustrating, if not explaining, the productive tensions between why commissioned projects 'delivered' by creative professionals are bought in to enhance 'creative learning' and utilise artistic engagement in order to *Support Excellence in the Arts* (see report by Brian McMaster, 2008), an initiative which emphasises learning in the arts as 'cultural learning'.

Nicholas Addison, a senior lecturer in Art, Design & Museology at the Institute of Education, University of London, argues for the potential of visual arts practice as a way to research educational phenomena within the field of art education. This paper argues for the potential of visual arts practice as a way to research educational phenomena within the field of art education. It draws on aesthetic and semiotic theory an attempt is made to provide a framework for understanding how embodied and metaphoric action can help interpret education in practice. An examination of two installations by students following an MA in Art and Design in Education demonstrates how embodied practices (here, making in art, craft and design) can be reconfigured as a mode of enquiry into education. Specifically the argument centres on the ways students explore their situated, pedagogic practices by deploying interdisciplinary, multimodal strategies for representation, analysis, interpretation and metaphoric equivalence, a process that complements social scientific methods.

From the perspective of English expert specialist dance teachers, **Kerry Chappell,** PhD, from the University of Exeter, UK, discusses the productive tensions that emerged from research using an interdisciplinary framework to investigate creativity. Within the context of developing creativity discourse and policy, this paper begins by exploring a number of the tensions that emerge from research using an interdisciplinary framework to investigate creativity with English expert specialist dance teachers. The paper then interrogates and articulates the productive dynamics of one of these tensions that between individual, collaborative and communal creativity. This tension is discussed within the wider debate of individualised versus collaborative/ communal creativity and the encouragement of the former by individualised, marketised creativity policies. It is argued that one constructive product of articulating how dance professionals negotiate this tension within education is a pertinent and helpful example of a more humane framework for creativity than that espoused by the individualised marketisation agenda. In turn the paper draws out the idea of humanising creativity as a productive process that has the potential to challenge aspects of the dominant policy discourse in an emergent way.

Patrick Dillon, Professor of Education at the University of Joensuu, **Finland** and **Daria Loi,** PhD, a Research Scientist in the User Experience Group at Intel, recognise the capacity of adaptive environments with reflective analysis of the productive tensions at both theoretical and practical levels. Three years ago the authors worked collaboratively on a paper that integrated theoretical perspectives and practical insights in a conceptualisation of adaptive educational environments as creative spaces for fostering intellectual abilities associated with transference and synthesis in cross-disciplinary situations. Since 2006, they have worked independently, developing and refining the notion of adaptive educational environments as creative spaces in different educational and industrial settings. The present paper offers a new synthesis and reflects on how their thinking has changed in the light of continuing work at both theoretical and practical levels.

Another key arena where tensions play out is seen in the current emphasis on cultural and creative industries and the need to prepare for work in the new information or creative economy. Here, the final article provides a systematic attempt, at the cutting edge, to thoroughly modernise education for tomorrow's societies. This piece is written by **Erica McWilliam**, Professor of Education, in the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice at the National Institute of Education, **Singapore**, and **Shane Dawson**, PhD, the Academic Leader, for Educational Development and Evaluation with the Graduate School of Medicine, University of **Wollongong** (**Australia**) and **Jennifer Pei-Ling Tan**, PhD, research fellow in the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation (CCI) at Queensland University of Technology, (QUT) **Brisbane** (**Australia**). These contributors take the challenge head on and reflect on and make the case that creative capacity building can be made visible through empirical processes of inquiry. Much of this, the authors argue, comes down to how creativity in learning is assessed and valued.

Framing problems is of course a good way to start solving them and, as suggested by several authors, it may be that one of several imperatives is the ongoing argument that research in the arts attempts to and should succeed to do something beyond traditional dominant methodological models. The necessity of a participatory methodology working across discipline boundaries to guide society's new potentials into creative means of self-augmentation, qualitative growth and continuing variation of the world, is needed.

As we develop our practice, policy and strategies for the use of arts in education, we need to be mindful of not only the narratives and issues of author position, standpoint and of the starting points they adopt in studying creativity, but also that how we understand creativity depends upon the theoretical approach taken. All the papers eschew positivism and crude neo-realism, approaching research from a more broadly interpretative, critical or arts-informed position. In this special issue the contributors' feature several lines of enquiry with the intent to provoke debates. These include invitations to:

1. Rethink the nature of creativity; to advance our theoretical and practical understanding of creativity and capture the elusiveness of creativity as exemplified by the identification of differing but relevant characteristics for conceptualising it.

2. Rekindle debates concerning the relationship between individual and collaborative creativity, adult creativity and child creativity, specific domain creativity and general creativity.

3. Restore the place of the arts in the curriculum with forms of provision that best develop arts' communities awareness, knowledge and values surrounding the aims, design, content, context and pedagogies for creativity.

These authors offer too a rich quarry of imperatives for all concerned in arts education. Each provokes us with, amongst others, the question of whether creating art authentically makes people 'more ethical' beyond the confines of the artistic. In reflecting personally on what constitutes creativity, they invite us to reflect on what constitutes our own *voice* as researchers and teachers, as learners and artists.

So, how might we influence a creativity research agenda for multi-disciplinary arts education in the future?

And to finish, as editor I would like to thank the authors for their generosity in presenting ideas for publication in this journal. I hope that the ideas presented in this volume, about policy and practice within the creativity discourses and agenda, inspire our readers to new directions and action. We also hope that the creativity dimension continues to expand as a focus of the work of governments, becomes more highly valued in our communities and that artists and arts organisations be supported to work most effectively.

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