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## Creativity and Inclusion in Aesthetic and Arts Education

Creativity doesn't mean inventing something out of nothing. Instead, it's about re-fashioning what already exists, the ideas that you have, the concepts that you have are tools that will empower you to do more than you could without them. Before the Empire State building was built, someone imagined it, then they build it, and now it's part of the real world. – Bjarke Ingels, architect

All too often arts educators have assumed a cemented role in creative and aesthetic education due to the conviction we are nurturers of creativity by virtue of the nature of our disciplines. But assumption and conviction are not enough, as demonstrated by the ongoing battles to maintain a place in any educational context from early childhood to tertiary. To claim a position in the broader educational discussions, we need to be aware of the breath of that discussion and research, and engage outside our arts echo chamber. If we are going to reduce inequalities, offer greater access to the arts, and make a contribution to the creativity dialogue, we have to embrace this broader engagement with confident, well-informed voices. Advocacy alone about the value of the arts to associated learning processes and outcomes largely takes place in the same chamber and as Hallam and Himonedes (2022) note, trying to argue causality is simply not supported by the research evidence. While we might argue the merits of process versus product, rarely do we unpack and explain what this process is or how educators might support it in the classroom. This journal offers a new and important opportunity for a global contemplation and discussion of creativity, arts education and the issue of inequity with a foundation firmly grounded in arts education research.

Creativity is still a contested space with a variety of researchers from different disciplines inside and outside academia (Fletcher & Benveniste, 2022; King, 2020). There have been various attempts to define the concept and multiple endeavours to describe the process. Relatively simple definitions have included the words “novel”, “original” and references to a “product” being of high quality and of value, also implying it is a solo act (e.g., Wright, 2003; Azzam, 2009). Others describe creativity being about “the

ability to think, not just to recall, but to apply, suggest, extend and model, to create analogy” (Longshaw, 2009, p. 91) and factors that might contribute to creativity, notably Plucker, Beghetto and Dow (2004) who propose “Creativity is the interaction between aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context” (p. 90). They recognise the idea of “interaction”; that aptitude and the environment are influential; that it can be individual or group, and that the context defines novelty and usefulness. I would argue that “disposition” might be a better word than “aptitude”, and I will return to this later.

Historical thoughts about creativity are important because of their lingering presence amongst current thinking. Galton’s (1869) *Hereditary Genius* was the first social, scientific attempt to study genius and for him, heredity was the major factor underlying the determination (this includes creativity). This implies, of course, that only a certain proportion of society will be creative, which is instantly exclusive and most arts educators would argue against it. Nevertheless, there are recent studies showing very young children’s creativity to be moderately to highly correlated to the parents’, showing the foundation for creativity could be present due to genetic influences (Hoicka et al., 2016), but social and environmental influences are also critical. As a music educator, I am all too familiar with parents saying “Nobody in the family is creative”, ergo, my child isn’t, without acknowledging the education context may also have an impact. Freud (1916) viewed creativity as having similarities with neurosis and believed creativity was the unconscious process through which sexual or aggressive energies were directed into culturally approved behaviours (such as art). He viewed creativity as an undue perpetuation of childhood play and the pleasure principle. Some of the essence of these ideas is still prevalent. His association of creativity with playfulness and the child implies childishness, but not in a positive sense. While “play” is celebrated in some early childhood literature, in the arts and in some mainstream creativity reflections (Cleese, 2020), it is almost absent from the general creativity research (Hammershøj, 2021).

Others tried to identify the creative process, and Wallas’ 1926 model implies the process is linear and about problem-solving. An individual is faced with a problem; after a period of “incubation”, the “illumination” or “aha” moment occurs, followed by “verification” that the solution works, a model still widely used, particularly in the corporate sector. The question arises about whether the process is this linear and segmented (Comte, 1976) and Gardner (1999) criticises the assumption that all creativity is of the same sort, particularly the idea “that all creativity fundamentally entails the solution of problems” (p. 338), a notion which seems to dominate much of the literature. Guilford (1950, 1973) argued that human intellectual ability had been defined too narrowly in terms of factors such as speed, accuracy and correctness – “convergent” thinking. He saw intellectual ability encompassing both convergent (analytical thinking), and divergent thinking characterised by the ability to generate alternatives and see multi-

ple possibilities – and that drawing on both types of thinking should be encouraged (Assmus & Fritzlar, 2018; Brophy, 2001). Yet convergent thinking still dominates the general classroom despite efforts to the contrary and the word “problem-solving” as related to artworks has crept into some arts education dialogue.

Rhodes (1961) drew on a synthesis of research to date and proposed there are four separate components that influence creativity – Person, Process, Press and Product – a paper as relevant to current debates as it was 60 years ago. Importantly, Rhodes broadened the concept of creativity. He acknowledged personality traits, intellect, temperament, motivation and so forth are important factors in informing the creative process; that an interaction takes place in a “conducive” climate; and the “product” is communicated to other people in some form that might be verbal ideas, or another such as art, but it is something tangible and concrete (pp. 307–309). Neuro-scientists (e.g., Eagleman, 2018) talk about creativity being hampered by the brain’s default systems suggesting we are bound by what we’ve done before and what we know works, and the easiest solution is also the path of least resistance – that we are generally risk averse. One of the repeated messages throughout the literature is the richer and broader experiences, or ‘inputs’, with the extension of neural pathways, the more the brain has to draw on in the creativity space. The education literature is replete with evidence showing the richer the environment, (and thus, the greater the extension of these neural pathways) the more we learn and are able to make connections. The richness of the environment and implied development of schema are features of Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) the notion of “flow” and its foundation for the creative process, identifying personal control over the situation, and a balance between skill/knowledge and the challenge assigned as being two important components. If a task is too difficult, anxiety arises out of the lack of requisite skills and knowledge to tackle it. If it is not challenging enough, boredom and lack of motivation manifest. It stands to reason that this skill/knowledge does not have to be highly honed, and the task should be designed according to prior experience, aiming to build and extend on existing skills/knowledge. Arts education, at its best, has long accommodated the varying abilities and prior experience in the same group, afforded access to the disciplines regardless of students’ backgrounds, and provided an enriching, safe environment, both physical and psychological.

The physical and psychological factors that support creativity in the general classroom are also common to arts pedagogy,

- supporting learners to take risks and giving them some autonomy (Berghetto & Kaufman, 2014; Burgess & Addison 2007; Cremin et al., 2006; Ewing, 2011; Gandini et al., 2005; Grainger et al., 2005; Hall et al., 2007; Hall et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2014);
- designing dynamic atmospheres and environments that engage learners (Berghetto & Kaufman, 2014; Davies et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2014);



**Fig. 1:** The Creative Climate

- implementing interesting, relevant and motivating activities (Rutland & Barlex, 2008; UNESCO, 2014);
- promoting cultures, diversity, inclusion, and viewing space not as static, but as dynamic (Kyritsi, 2018);
- using possibility thinking to encourage deep engagement (Craft, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996); and
- supporting collegial environments for teachers to enhance possibilities in classrooms (Downing et al., 2007; Thomson & Sanders, 2010; Troman et al., 2007).

All these ideas also resonate with the vast literature that abounds in the student engagement research. I believe teachers can nurture creativity in the classroom, but the outcomes are going to be dependent on students' individual dispositions (as Rhodes acknowledges), for I don't believe there is a uniform model that services all students. Lucas (2016) proposes that developing and assessing creativity is not about the products but the movement of students on along what he identifies as a spectrum related to his Five Dimensions of Creativity – imaginative, inquisitive, persistent, collaborative, and disciplined, which reflects what others have written that characterise the creative

personality. Drawing on this general creativity research and a Model for Engaging Practice (2013) derived from artists working with children research (Brown & Jeanneret, 2016; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013) I propose a “creative climate” model (Figure 1) that acknowledges both the psychological and physical factors we know to support engagement, creativity and equity that could contribute to the broader educational discussion while acknowledging arts education research in the area. I am not suggesting that every classroom encounter embodies all of these factors but more a consideration of them in relation to current practice and ways in which this practice might better support the development of creative dispositions.

Although there may be genetic differences in creative (and artistic) individuals, it is clear that environmental and social factors are absolutely critical (Sotiropoulos & Anagnostouli, 2021). Educators from across all disciplines can do much to nurture creativity in their classrooms (UNESCO, 2014) and learn from arts education practices/research. At the same time, arts educators need to refute the creativity myths, demonstrate the inclusivity of their best practice through research, and take a serious place in the broader education discourse. The *International Journal for Research in Cultural, Aesthetic, and Arts Education* will provide a significant platform in this discourse.

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