

Submission
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**INQUIRY INTO ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND
TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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Inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales

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About the author

I am academic lecturer and researcher in Education (Arts and Inclusion), and I was a teacher for over 17 years, working in Primary, Secondary and for the last 17 years in academia.

I was a drama teacher, head of Drama and head of Creative Arts in schools in Australia and the UK. I currently Course-coordinate the K-6 Creative Arts courses at the University of Newcastle as well as being an award winning author of 10 books on teaching in the Arts, and supervising a number of PhD students in Arts Teaching research..

The positions presented in this submission are not representative of my employer, but personal.

Dr. David Roy

Introduction

In many ways the very reference terms for this Inquiry speak to the heart of the challenge in education and training in the Arts. The terms of reference delineate between ‘The Arts’ and ‘Music’ as to separate concepts, and yet the curriculum both Federally and Statewide place Music as part of ‘the Arts’. In addition, there is often a confusion amongst the wider public, and media between Visual Art and The Arts.

Therefore, we should be clear, that according to the Australian Department of Education, the Arts are 5 distinct subjects. Dance, Drama. Media, Music, and Visual Arts.

In NSW the new South Wales Education Standards Authority has chosen to not include media as a subject and lists only 4 art forms – Dance, Drama, Music, and Visual Art. This is problematic.

Through codifying and clustering certain subjects, we can unintentionally devalue their importance, both academically and instrumentally. Drama and the Creative/Performing arts are a case in point.

By exclusively labelling music, visual art, drama and dance as the ‘creative’ arts there is an assumption that English is not creative (which any writer will quickly correct you on). There is also an assumption that technology is not creative, which any designer will quickly dismiss.

However, Creative Arts is the current chic term, and so what is it that the creative arts, and specifically drama, can bring to the education table? Whilst there is rightly a key focus on literacy and numeracy in schools, we must be careful that we don’t ignore other crucial areas of learning that will allow our children to live productive and successful lives.

The problem is that in the past, many have considered the arts as an ‘extra’ subject area; not academically important or only suitable for those with a born ability. Recent international research has shown the exact opposite: anyone can develop skills in the arts. In general, those who study the arts get higher marks in other subjects, are more committed to learning and are more caring citizens in our society.

In a world where there are developing crises in areas spanning the environment, energy, human resources and sourcing basic foods, can we ignore the arts and the creativity it cultivates?

Afterall, someone must find new ways to create sustainable resource applications and nut out ways to engage our society and bridge the equity gaps in multiple areas. This simply won’t happen unless the next generation embraces creative ways of thinking and engages in the arts.

In short, we can’t survive without the arts.

Drama

For many, drama is considered an offshoot of English and is definitely seen to hold a lesser hierarchical status. However, it is more than a 'practical' English class. Drama is not just about creating actors, directors or designers. Through drama, students have to work with others, question problematic knowledge, form a sense of self identity and develop high degrees of presentation and oral communication skills.

Whilst other subjects engage with lower levels of these skills, it is drama that teaches and develops them continually.

There are few jobs that will not use these skills. Most students who leave school will not be literature analysts, nor will they be professional mathematicians - however they will have to work with others and be able to present their ideas or findings.

Drama, etymologically stemming from the ancient Greek word for 'do, action', is about interpreting ideas to communicate them through the voice and the body.

This is the very basis of human communication. Within the classroom, it involves children developing control of their thoughts, their bodies and their voices. Students develop skills in planning, organisation, groupwork, rehearsing (a form of self-reflection) and they learn to respond to audience needs. Children can develop skills to compromise and adapt through drama.

As with all subjects, to succeed in drama you need to apply intellectual rigor. Often it is through drama that students with special needs such as Dyspraxia and Cerebral Palsy can demonstrate their high intellectual capacity, as it develops a sense of physical control and harnesses above-average IQ.

Drama opens the intellectual doors to question knowledge so that highly articulate and able students have the freedom to stretch their inquiries. Drama students often outperform their peers in other academic areas, due to the variety of skills and opportunities it offers.

My recent research into the use of masks in the drama classroom revealed students can further enrich their sense of identity and awareness of others when wearing a mask (Roy, 2020).

Their ability to disassociate when in a role increased, leaving them better able to understand their adopted character. For children with neurological disabilities, and especially those with autism, the children felt a sense of real inclusion and success on their own terms when masks were used in drama.

As schools adjust to an ever-changing curriculum from non-experts, rather than creating something new we should perhaps remember what we already have available: a rich and

academically strong arts curriculum. By making the arts a centrepiece of learning we might just improve all academic outcomes.

Can we teach creativity

Creativity is a skill, a knowledge and an attitude. Some might say it is core to learning and should be taught as a discrete subject, others that it is domain-specific only, while others argue it already is taught through the creative arts. All such positions have some validity to some extent.

Creativity can be developed or suppressed in schools; the latter idea is pushed by Ken Robinson as one of the fundamental problems with current education systems across the world, so let's bust some myths.

What is Creativity?

Creativity is a learning attitude that requires knowledge. To be innovative with ideas and concepts there is a requirement to have some basic concepts and knowledge.

Creative thinking can be defined as the thinking that enables students to use their imagination to generate ideas, questions and hypotheses, experiment with alternatives and to evaluating their own and their peers' ideas and final products.

Key words here are:

- Thinking
- Applying
- Imagination
- Experimenting
- Evaluating

As teachers in all subjects, we need to create opportunities for these processes to happen. By doing so we can encourage creative thinking to thrive.

Summative assessments are important to establish what knowledge is embedded in young minds, but along with this, formative assessment (reflective and ongoing) allows students to question and explore what they know - rather than just accept knowledge and facts as immutable and set.

If children are not asking questions, then there is a chance they are being passive receptors rather than active learners.

Students must have a solid understanding of the basics of knowledges and skills in a subject if they are to then experiment and be creative. Creativity and foundational skills need to complement one another.

Fostering Creativity

Allow students to make mistakes, view alternative possibilities and perspectives. Creativity will thrive if students feel confident in their foundational knowledge and see a value in it so that learning is based upon intrinsic values rather than extrinsic rewards.

Teachers' need to value original thinking, as well a 'correct' response. This includes instilling values such as seeing mistakes as learning opportunities. For neurons to fire intellectually in the classroom, students require both a supportive and challenging learning environment.

Creativity is found across all subjects. Mathematics, for example, is highly creative. The purpose of mathematics is to solve problems, using previous formulas and knowledge to find new innovative solutions. That is creativity.

Science is similar – to find new understandings and solutions to the previous unknown. This requires the ability to make mistakes and learn from these. Even the 'creative' arts, while embedding experimentation and play at their heart, require a knowledge base first to then experiment and be creative with.

Most subjects can adapt the techniques used in high quality 'arts' practice to enhance creativity in their own context.

Of course, the highest level of creativity happens when both students and educators darw

upon knowledge from across multiple subject areas and make connections that create new understandings.

Curricular connections - a polymath approach to learning and communication between subjects, where all knowledges are valued; rather than silos - is perhaps the best hope for schools to foster true creativity.

Quality Teaching and the Arts

Using a reflective tool to assess the quality of teaching in a classroom is not a panacea for schools and teaching. Rather, it is a tool or framework that enables direct reflection and allows teachers to engage in conversations about pedagogy and to codify elements of practice (Department of Education and Training, 2003a, 2003b). The goal is to create a system for teachers to target areas of teaching and learning in order to improve children's achievement (Gore, 2007). The real benefit of using a reflective tool is that it is not about teachers, but about teaching.

If pedagogy is to improve significantly, teachers need a clear set of concepts as to what constitutes good practice with specific details about what that practice looks like and this set of concepts needs to be framed as support for teacher development, not as a system for judging relative performance (Gore, 2007, p. 16).

If we are to apply the learning in this text, it is useful to have a tool to measure the success of learning goals. One such study of looking at the quality of teaching in classrooms was the Systemic Implications of Pedagogy and Achievement (SIPA), conducted in New South Wales between 2003 and 2007 (Amosa et al., 2007; Ladwig et al., 2007). Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) was one of the Key Learning Areas (KLAs) that was not commented on in detail. Another study, *Effective Implementation of Pedagogical Reform* (EIPR), explored the implementation of quality teaching as professional development (Bowe et al., 2010).

In many of these studies there have been clear areas of focus that are not always seen in classrooms but do appear to be engaged with to a greater extent when the Arts are taught.

Problematic knowledge

To what extent are students encouraged to address multiple perspectives and/or solutions? To what extent are students able to recognise knowledge as constructed and therefore open to question? (Department of Education and Training, 2003a, p. 16)

Setting a problem is not problematic knowledge in itself. However, as soon as the basis of knowledge is questioned, then problematic knowledge is apparent. This may be in exploring issues and morals in media, or even in examining the differences between fact and fiction and the point of view in a film as shown in the way it is edited (Ellis, 1982). In *Toy Story 2*, the character Stinky Pete is seen as a bad character who tries to stop Woody and Jessie from being played with, as he doesn't like children. However, if we saw the film from a different perspective, we could say that Woody is being selfish, as he wants to be played with even though his owner Andy will grow up, whereas Stinky Pete knows they will be appreciated in a museum and not be thrown away. Neither viewpoint is wrong, but it is important to be aware of both of them.

Higher-order thinking

To what extent are students regularly engaged in thinking that requires them to organise, re-organise, apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate knowledge and information? (Department of Education and Training, 2003a, p. 18)

In most creative activities – those that do not just require the transportation of information (repeating given knowledge) – higher-order thinking is present. This can be as simple as synthesising tempo, rhythm and fingering (or breath) in performing a piece of music for an audience.

Higher-order thinking is the basis of the Arts. We take multiple pieces of information and 'create' something new from it. If an Arts-based lesson does not have a high level of higher-order thinking, then the chances are it did not involve any meaningful Arts education. If you look at the revised Bloom's Taxonomy, you will note that 'create, plan, compose, construct, design, imagine, devise, combine, originate, etc', are activities associated with higher-order thinking.

Student self-regulation

To what extent do students demonstrate autonomy and initiative so that minimal attention to the disciplining and regulation of student behaviour is required?

(Department of Education and Training, 2003a, p. 34)

In the Arts, we often have multiple learning situations happening at once, and therefore children need to have the skills to be able to work and behave autonomously. If children are using a variety of materials in visual arts, there needs to be strong organisation. The teacher has to be willing to apply discipline where needed for the safety of all.

Student direction

To what extent do students exercise some direction over the selection of activities related to their learning and the means and manner by which these activities will be one? (Department of Education and Training, 2003a, p. 36)

One of the joys of teaching in the Arts is that children will start to initiate the work to be undertaken or the pace at which they wish to work. In media creation, children will work at different paces as they film, edit and use IT and other resources. You will find that, with positive social support in the classroom and with engaging work, children can self-regulate, and as a teacher you will therefore be freed to facilitate their exploration of the Arts (Clay et al., 1998).

Inclusivity

To what extent do lessons include and publicly value the participation of all students across the social and cultural backgrounds represented in the classroom?

(Department of Education and Training, 2003a, p. 46)

Inclusivity is a teacher's responsibility: they have to ensure that all children can access the learning and that the teaching is not exclusive to only one group. If there are children with mobility issues, how can we as teachers ensure that children can partake in dance activities that are meaningful and of equal value to those who perhaps don't rely on a 'frame' to assist in walking? Inclusivity forces us to be creative as teachers and allows no child to avoid being challenged and realising their own potential.

All learning and teaching activities should aim to be a deliberate choice on the teacher's part. Take, for instance, in dance, when a new movement idea is being introduced; for safety reasons, it is highly likely that children's self-direction would be extremely low, because at this stage of the learning a clear control over the activities is needed until the children have grasped the skills to explore them safely themselves. Once children have knowledge, they are then encouraged to question the 'social construction' of that knowledge so that everything becomes problematic knowledge. This leads to higher-order thinking, deep knowledge and opportunities to demonstrate deep understanding. This is the beauty of the Arts.

It is important to remember that the reflective models do not dictate what to do. They cannot replace strong curriculum, lesson designs and task development. They are only a tool to analyse the quality of those efforts and cannot be delivered meaningfully in isolation from a strong program focused on curriculum and pedagogy (Lewis, Perry & Murati, 2006). Reflective tools can be used to diagnose and refine the quality of classroom practice, the quality of assessment tasks, the quality of lesson plans, and the quality of units of work. As the teacher, you have to decide what you need to do next with your students to allow them to achieve success.

Innovations often fail when educators focus only on the surface features of the innovation rather than the underlying mechanism[s] that will enable it to work (Lewis, et al., 2006, p. 5).

Brookfield (1995) presents educators with a 'critically reflective' approach to teaching. He maintains that what makes reflection 'critical' is the use of multiple 'lenses' to examine one's own teaching practice. He suggests four lenses: autobiography, colleagues, students and literature. Thus when reflecting on a teaching moment or observed lesson, Brookfield encourages the teacher to collect data from each of these sources in order to reflect critically on the meaning of that moment or lesson.

The elements and principles of general capabilities

The Australian Curriculum: The Arts has at its core a rationale to engage and develop creative learners for the future. However, learning for its own sake, while to some degree an ideal for individuals, is not an aspiration for society. Education is a large investment in a community. Thus, curriculum systems all over the world have a larger purpose and, in the developed nations, the same basic foci.

In Australia, the rationale of the curriculum in conjunction with the needs of society and the workplace has developed seven 'general capabilities'. These skills, though not directly related to discipline knowledge, are embedded in the learning in all subjects.

These general capabilities are:

- literacy
- numeracy
- information and communication technology capability
- critical and creative thinking
- personal and social capability
- ethical understanding
- intercultural understanding.

These are not just new names for essential skills; they demonstrate the links between skills, knowledge, attitudes and values. All of the core skills/competencies/ capabilities presented were based around the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study, conducted for the large OECD countries in 1997. The report noted:

Today's societies place challenging demands on individuals, who are confronted with complexity in many parts of their lives. What do these demands imply for key competencies that individuals need to acquire? Defining such competencies

can improve assessments of how well prepared young people and adults are for life's challenges, as well as identify overarching goals for education systems and lifelong learning. A competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context. For example, the ability to communicate effectively is a competency that may draw on an individual's knowledge of language, practical IT skills and attitudes towards those with whom he or she is communicating (Rychen & Salganik, 2005).

Individuals need a wide range of competencies to face the complex challenges of today's world, but it would be of little practical value to produce long lists of everything that they may need to be able to do at different times in their lives.

Each 'key competency' must:

- contribute to valued outcomes for societies and individuals
- help individuals meet important demands in a wide variety of contexts
- be important not just for specialists but for all individuals (Rychen & Salganik, 2005, p. 4).

It is interesting to note that, while the media and government bulletins emphasise literacy and numeracy as key skills, within the balance of the 'competencies' and 'capabilities' the ability to understand oneself and others is key. The notion of praxis in Arts learning, it is clear that the Arts have a fundamental role to play.

ACARA(2015, pp. 21–2), defines the seven general capabilities as follows.

Literacy

Students become literate as they develop the skills to learn and communicate confidently at school and to become effective individuals, community members,

workers and citizens. These skills include listening, reading and viewing, speaking, writing, and creating print, visual and audio materials accurately and purposefully in all Learning Areas.

Numeracy

Students become numerate as they develop the skills and confidence to use mathematics at school and in their lives beyond school. In the context of schooling, numeracy involves students recognising and engaging with whatever mathematical knowledge and skills are needed for understanding in all Learning Areas.

Information communication technology (ICT) capability

Students develop ICT competence as they learn to use information and communication technology effectively and appropriately to access, create and communicate information and ideas, solve problems and work collaboratively in all Learning Areas at school, and in their lives beyond school.

Critical and creative thinking

Students develop critical and creative thinking skills and suppositions as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, ideas and possibilities, and use them in combination when seeking new pathways or solutions. This includes learning to think deeply and broadly in activities that require reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all Learning Areas.

Ethical behaviour

Students develop ethical understanding as they learn to recognise and understand matters of ethical concerns, make reasoned judgments and, in so doing, develop a personal ethical framework. This includes understanding the role of ethical principles and values in human life, acting with integrity and regard for the rights of others, and having a desire to work for the common good.

Personal and social capability

Students develop personal and social competence as they learn to understand themselves and others more fully, and to manage their relationships, lives, learning and work effectively. This includes recognising and regulating their emotions, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams and handling challenging situations constructively.

Intercultural understanding

Students develop intercultural understanding as they learn to understand themselves in relation to others. Students learn to respect and appreciate their own cultures and beliefs, and those of others. This includes engaging with people from diverse linguistic, social and cultural groups in ways that recognise differences and create connections and cultivate mutual respect, and coming to understand how personal, group and national identities are shaped by many different histories and experiences. In the context of schooling, this involves students learning about the diversity of languages, institutions and practices, and developing perspectives on complex issues related to global diversity.

Arts classrooms are ideal places for the exploration of critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, intercultural understanding, and personal and social capability. There are few situations in the Arts where children are not encouraged to work together, to discuss and to plan for personal and social competence. Social support and cultural knowledge encourage ethical behaviour.

The Arts in Early Childhood Education

The place of the Arts in learning

In education, when we talk about the Arts, we often silo the knowledges into Dance, Drama, Media, Music and Visual Art; but the Arts encompass wider concepts. ‘A work of Art is an object that embodies meaning’ (Bamford, 2006, p.10). We cannot separate the Arts from the cultural context from which they originate, as they are fundamentally a form of expression of both the personal and the wider society (Roy, Baker, & Hamilton, 2019). Thus, for children as they develop, the Arts are key in growing their understandings of the world around them (Gibson & Ewing, 2011).

The Arts themselves both involve development of knowledge and skills, using a physical application in their creation – a praxis (Alperson, 1991). For this reason, the Arts are recognised as important for a child’s learning, both physically and intellectually. Accessible for all children with differing abilities, the Arts enable children to experience success in their learning (Sinclair, Jeanneret & O’Toole, 2009).

The purpose of early years learning

Contemporary early childhood education is shaped by *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009). Recognising the significance of a holistic approach to teaching and learning, it foregrounds the connections of mind, body and spirit, as well as relationships with family, community and the natural world.

In the early years, an appreciation of learning that occurs through play provides educators and children opportunities for creative encounters, where art practice and play are entwined and experimentation is supported, encouraged and given time.

The arts play a critical role in assisting young children to not only understand their world, but express this knowing, as they make sense of their experiences. The arts allow them to communicate their thinking and feelings in multiple ways (Wright, 2012). Art practices in early childhood encourage children to be active participants in taking their own direction. Art that fosters risk-taking and exploration is nurtured as children come to understand various art mediums and develop skills alongside facilitating adults (McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002). Art practice, as learning in early childhood, cannot always be planned for, it evolves in rich environments and flexible spaces that cater for different interests and learning styles.

A servant with two masters

The dichotomy between the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2015) and The Early Years Learning Framework (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) for young children's learning via the arts is unambiguous. The early years of primary schooling, informed by the Australian Curriculum, privileges the academic endeavours of literacy and numeracy, relegating creativity and imagination to the margins of a young child's educational experiences (Eckhoff, 2011). Art is sidelined to Friday afternoons and only called upon for special occasions (McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002). This stands in contrast to the promotion of a holistic approach taken up in early childhood education.

How the Arts can be delivered

Arts practice in the contemporary early childhood space is closely connected with everyday creativity within a play-based environment. Young children are seen as capable social beings whose ventures into art practice, while often considered unpredictable, are nevertheless rich, and reflect unacknowledged cognitive dexterities (Schulte & Thompson, 2018).

The arts in education are typically associated with non-academic skills such as imagination,

creativity and aesthetic appreciation (Schiller, 2000) and are not often coupled with different and complex ways of thinking and learning; problem solving, multiple perspectives taking and diverse interpretations of knowledge. The arts are a cultural tool for building and articulating understandings.

Art, creativity and play as learning in early childhood, are in danger of being consigned to the margins as the 'push down' imperative for school readiness intensifies in educational spaces and in community expectations (Martin et al., 2013). And yet it is through involving children purposefully and deliberately in Arts activities that support for 'school readiness' can occur in deeper and meaningful ways (McLachlan, Fleer, & Edwards, 2018).

From the development of early coordination skills that lead to the precision required for writing, through to fostering empathy, relationships and social interactions, 'doing music, and dance and drama and Visual Art' supports wider educational achievement (Callcott, Miller, & Wilson-Gahan, 2012).

What we must remember is that the importance of the Arts is more than just the instrumental benefit, but the fundamental enjoyment that happens as a result of any engagement with the Arts (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004).

The Arts in the K-2 Classroom

The Arts are a required element of teaching K-2 in Australia and coexist with learning in the early years classroom. How can they be implemented in practice?

To explore this, rather than 'silo' each art form, we use the key elements of the Early Years Learning Framework; *Belonging, Being & Becoming* (AGDEEWR, 2009) as a way to realise Arts praxis for young children's learning.

Belonging and the Arts

Experiencing 'belonging' is about knowing where and with whom one belongs (AGDEEWR, 2009). The Arts in practice – music, dance drama, medial arts and visual arts – offer young children (and old) universal languages that connect them with others and bring about a sense of belonging. They have the capacity to communicate complex and sometimes difficult messages by connecting people emotionally, intellectually and also physically in ways that other educational disciplines cannot (O'Gorman, 2014).

Art bears witness to social and cultural traditions that can be shared and understood, building relationships that shape children's identities and their sense of belonging. Belonging begins within a child's family, their cultural group and community. Children's expression of the Arts – when facilitated by educators in supportive learning environments that encourage children to explore, problem solve and create – begin often with representations of belonging to family via visual arts, via role play (drama), music and dance. US educator Dr Victoria Brown (2017) argues that the immediacy, spontaneity, vigour and inventiveness of imagined role play situations can be explored and extended through process drama, identifying issues, events and relationships that convey a child's own experiences of belonging and the belonging of others.

Being and the Arts

'Being' recognises the importance of the here and now in children's lives (AGDEEWR, 2009). Early learning is not conceptualised as only a preparation for the future. Competency, agency

and voice become significant when the child's 'being' is appreciated via the Arts. Through drawing, painting and clay, children can be seen to be making meaning of the world around them.

Engaging children in the visual arts is not as simple as teaching children to follow a set of directions which result in a stereotypical image (McArdle, 2012). Young children's visual representations act as an important means of communicating; a visible expression of their ideas, thoughts and theories (Robson, 2012).

Children's images afford children a voice. If as educators we are prepared to listen, show genuine interest, respect and create significant dialogue around art making, this voice can be heard. Involving a pedagogy of listening (Rinaldi, 2001), listening to children's thoughts via the arts, legitimises the child's view and who they are now.

Australian artist Ben Quilty (2018) recently published a book of Syrian children's drawings that give voice to their life experiences, acknowledging their agency while powerfully representing their being.

Becoming and the Arts

Using narrative texts as a stimulus point, to further explore learning through the Arts, is a method that allows children to explore who they are as individuals (AGDEEWR, 2009). The Arts give a form of expression, separate to the social construct of literacy, for children to understand their becoming identity (Erikson, 1980). Developing knowledge and understanding of oneself, and others, shapes one's 'becoming'.

Children (and adults) need tools to comprehend their own capabilities, skills and relationships, to come to terms with the world around them and their place in it (Daniels, Cole, & Wertsch, 2007). The Arts offer an opportunity for inclusive practices and a creative way to explore divergence and difference. Through dramatic play and role play, children can express how they are coming to recognise their becoming identity and the differences they see in others.

The Arts enable children to express, in multiple ways, ideas that words alone cannot communicate. They can also convey ideas that are 'unspeakable' (Watson, 2017). Dance and movement allow for the expression of inner emotions and turmoil; an outlet and a joy (Davies, 2003). Music gives children an unrestricted voice, not limited by society's norms, and the visual arts allow opportunities to communicate in shape and colour (Wiggins, 2009).

The Arts, as a non-competitive learning form, build collaborative skills, while valuing children's interests, and contribute to the shaping of a child's becoming identity.

Learning and the Arts

So how to implement this in the K-2 classroom is the question that remains. What Arts pedagogies are appropriate?

The first key point is that whilst certain Arts do often commonly use particular pedagogical forms, such as group work, and rehearsal with Drama, there are no set pedagogies specific to the Arts (Roy & Ladwig, 2015). The key is approaching learning from the child's perspective; what skills do they require to access knowledge and understanding (Gupta, 2009). Too often with some learning areas, it is more traditional to provide knowledge leading to skills (Ewing, 2011).

In the Arts there can also be an expectation for skills to develop solely through an activity, yet knowledge, skill instruction and activities all support the learning experience (Schulte & Thompson, 2018). For example, if we want children to make clay monsters for Halloween, the skill of using clay needs to be demonstrated before the praxis of using clay. For younger children, the knowledge behind how the material of clay works is needed, and for more experienced others the purpose of the knowledge, skill or activity is required for engagement. The principles should be to share knowledge, skills, opportunity for activity and significance (Ladwig & King, 2003).

Key to any learning is to make it meaningful, make it inclusive, make it achievable and make it engaging.

Using Drama as a tool for inclusion within the classroom

The principle of inclusion of all students in daily teaching practice and activities is a simple concept in presentation but can offer pragmatic challenges to ensure that it is true inclusion, meaningful and significant for all.

Australian Senator Pauline Hanson voiced parental concerns in particular with regards to children with a disability and the concept of inclusion potentially causing a diminution of success for other children. Whilst grievously erroneous in her delivery and conclusions, based upon empirical evidence, it did raise an important conversation that needs to be had. The right for all children to be included in education and, more importantly, how this can be practically achieved.

What is inclusion?

Inclusion means all children are involved and supported in all aspects of education, no matter the gender, ethnicity belief system, social circumstances or challenges (including disability). Separating children into 'special' areas for learning is not inclusion but integration or segregation (dependent upon the context). This is not inclusion, and yet whilst the default of Australian and indeed international education systems is for inclusion, too often there are reports of this not being applied.

The challenge is that whilst inclusion is an ideal, the pragmatic reality of application is why teaching is a challenging career that requires the sharpest and most creative minds, as well as the most empathetic. To be truly inclusive is challenging but is also easily undertaken with thought and sometimes a re-positioning of default language and practice.

Words

Key to inclusion for all is the usage of words and how we present knowledge and task. It is through the framing of classroom activities that we can easily include or exclude. The task 'draw a picture of your family' seems like a simple activity for a five-year-old. However, for those children without a family it is excluding them. 'Draw a picture of whom you live with'

is the inclusive phrasing. Ensuring that those students with English as a Second Language (ESL) are supported through additional staff can also be inclusive.

The key to any inclusive settings is for the teacher to place themselves in the position of all students before them and ask, 'what barriers are there in this lesson to allow the students to access it?' Barriers may be emotional, intellectual or physical.

Creative Arts and Inclusion

In particular, a focus of my research at the University of Newcastle has been the role that the Creative Arts can play in inclusive learning in the curriculum. This involves both teaching in the Arts - Arts skills and practices, and *through* the Arts - using the Arts to teach other knowledges (Roy 2021).

The Arts communicate in non-linguistic, expressive ways, culturally, and through symbol and metaphor (Wiggins, 2009; Wright, 2012) Wright highlights the non-linguistic nature of artistic expression and communication stating that the Arts 'involve expressive and symbolic modes of thinking, understanding and knowing, and communicate ideas in a unique manner ... they enable us to "say" things to each other that cannot be expressed in any other way' (Wright, 2012, p.17). Most importantly they communicate something 'other', something valuable that is 'beyond' words; this is what the Arts 'do' for us, and therein lies their real value to adults and children alike.

Because the Arts are fundamentally vehicles for personal and shared expression and communication, learner agency is critical if genuine artistic learning and identity support is to be achieved. Robyn Ewing (Ewing, 2011) highlights the power of Drama as a means of increasing student agency by 'authentically sharing power and risk-taking' (Ewing, 2011, p.41) between teachers and children. This is not to say that other curriculum areas do not also offer student agency. Multiple learning areas that involve physical activity (such as Design and Technology or PE) can lay claim to this. However, all of the Arts have the potential to increase learner agency, because they enable children to engage through authentic processes *as* artists, *as* makers and *as* responders.

Drama and masks

My recent research (Roy 2022) into the role of masks within the classroom unexpectedly exemplified the potential for true inclusion in the classroom through the engagement of the Arts as a learning. School pupils were using masks to adopt characters and role-play situations such as conflict. Using a mask had an interesting add-on effect. Firstly, it removed the children's 'identity'. Gender and ethnicity disappeared. Communication was more reliant on physicality. It encouraged students to be very aware of movements and motor skills (supporting those with motor skill challenges) and most importantly students stated a sense of freedom to try ideas without judgement

What was increasingly interesting, to both observe and be informed within the research, was the impact that masks appeared to have on students with identified neurological disabilities and/or learning challenges. Their inclusion, and partaking of activities within the classroom, was not only equal, but Students with Learning Difficulties definable characteristics were not immediately apparent to the outside observer. This included children with autism and dyspraxia. Their role within the teaching and learning was as such that they presented as neurotypical students. This was an unintentional outcome that was not specifically sought but revealed by the teachers of the mask classes observed. This matched with the literature on mask usage with children, that has had limited study, but suggests this may be the case.

The Creative Arts, whilst teaching physical skills in a non-competitive manner, and through collaboration, are also, in simplest terms, a method of creative communication. The Arts allow us to communicate ideas and understandings in alternative ways to the limitations of traditional literacy. They allow students with challenges; the ability to make mistakes, develop learning and communicate it often without barriers (Roy, 2016).

An 'AI' responsive 21st Century curriculum

The 2010 European study, Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competencies in Education 'DICE' (Cziboly, 2010) demonstrated this. Drama education increases the quality of education for all students.

DICE was a two-year research study that involved 12 countries, 111 different Drama programmes and 4445 students, and the measurable impact Drama had upon their educational attainment. Examining five of the eight Lisbon Key competencies, it found that students in schools engaged with Drama in the curriculum are more likely to be successful citizens than those that are not. It found that students who study Drama have an increased employment rate; stay in school longer; have a higher quality level of education and training; make clearer links between culture and education; are more active citizens; more sympathetic to cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; and are more innovative, creative and competitive citizens.

If, as media reports suggest, the Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolution will require a curriculum that teaches social skills, empathy, creativity, collaboration, presentation and communication as well as inclusion, we do not need to worry. That curriculum is already there. Perhaps we need to make sure that the Creative Arts, and in particular Drama, are core subjects rather than limited elective choices.

Inclusion is possible. We just need to be Creative.

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