



VOLUME 7 ISSUE 3

The International Journal of

Arts Education

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Visual Arts and Education

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THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ARTS EDUCATION
www.artsinsociety.com

First published in 2013 in Champaign, Illinois, USA
by Common Ground Publishing LLC
www.commongroundpublishing.com

ISSN: 2326-9944

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The Bwo-me (Life's Breath) Creativity Workshop: Visual Arts and Education

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Abstract: The 'Bwo-Me' (Life's Breath) intercultural 'hands-on' workshops are particularly concerned with issues of inclusivity and teaching for diversity and provide the opportunity to experience and understand arts-based practices that are culturally derived. The studio-based workshops aim to foster 'creativity' potentialities in pre-service teachers so as to increase their capacity to mentor children with significant learning disabilities, such as gifted dyslexics. This visual art-based intercultural 'hands-on' workshop provides space for teachers-in-training to become positive cultural agents for change (Saltmarsh 2006). The research methodology applies theories from hermeneutics and post-structuralism to emphasize issues of representation, repetition, signification, spatial awareness, meaning, identity and difference. This socio-cultural dimension to learning in the Arts highlights the inter-relation between the individual, visual arts education and the socio-cultural context (Atkinson 2002; Eisner 1972). This 'Bwo-Me' (Life's Breath) case study explores the works of contemporary Aboriginal artists from the Boomalli Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd. in Sydney (Bancroft 2011). The research builds on reconciliation themes recently developed by the author/artist/curator during studio-based research with pre-service primary art teachers at a tertiary institute. A variety of drawing, clay work and printmaking practices were explored on different surfaces as a way of engaging participants' imaginations and heightening their sensory awareness. 'Mindful Creativity' tendencies (Dunoon 2002; Dunoon and Langer 2011) and dispositions were noticed during the workshops while artefacts were measured using elements from Torrance (1974) creative thinking by noticing concepts such as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

Keywords: Aboriginal Artists, Arts-based Practice, Pre-service Teachers, Identity and Difference, Mindful 'Creativity'

If human activity were limited to reproduction of the old, then the human being would be a creature oriented only to the past and would only be able to adapt to the future to the extent that it reproduced the past. It is precisely human creative activity that makes the human being a creature oriented toward the future, creating the future and thus altering his own present. Vygotsky (1928/2004)

Introduction

Fostering 'creativity' in teachers' and children's visual arts education is important and should be highly valued (Eisner 2006; Robinson 2006, 2010; Wright 2010; Gibson and Ewing 2011; Charadia 2003). It is essential pre-service teachers know how to identify 'creativity' by firstly recognising it within themselves and then having the capacity to teach children. Mindfulness in 'creativity' exists on the assumption that uncertainty gives us the freedom to discover new meanings in life (Langer 2006). This research is concerned with the two ways Vygotsky (2004) suggests 'creativity' changes and creates meaning in our lives. For instance, one form of 'creativity' can be represented as repetition experiences that reproduce the past while the other form of 'creativity' is oriented towards the future. According to (Dunoon and Langer 2011) mindful 'creativity' has dynamic qualities with the power to explore uncertainties that can reveal multiple perspectives during an activity. One of the main challenges of this research was how to foster 'creativity' mindfully in pre-service primary teachers so they can identify and experience 'creativity' during visual arts practice and then apply these new understandings in the classroom. The paper is divided into three sections:

1. The first section discusses the literature review, theoretical framework and investigates some learning approaches that incorporate a community of practice

model and a conceptual framework designed to support teachers' self-confidence in visual arts education.

2. The second section introduces the arts-based research inquiry methodology, using a multiple case study method based on first nation Aboriginal arts and culture.
3. Finally, the paper explores a new approach to pre-service primary teacher-training education using a community of practice model through intercultural artist-led 'hands-on' workshops. Some preliminary findings from the mixed-methods approach are discussed. These findings revealed some of the necessary capabilities required to foster 'creativity' in pre-service primary teachers.

Literature Review

This research project builds on the International Council of Museums: Cultural diversity charter (ICOM 2010), which aims “to foster creativity by finding challenging approaches to stimulate inclusive heritage consciousness in culturally and linguistically diverse museums contexts” (1). The International Council of Museums: Cultural diversity charter (ICOM 2010) was developed from the guiding principles and recommendations made during the establishment of the Cultural Diversity Policy Framework (ICOM 1998). The framework addresses:

a wide cross cultural dimensions through intercultural and intergenerational dialogue, and in developing inclusive approaches and guidelines as to how museums [and art galleries] should endeavour to deal with cultural diversity and bio diversity (ibid).

The relevance for this study is that museums and art galleries are optimal places for building creative partnerships and can offer professional expertise and practical support to pre-service teachers during their university training in the Arts. Quality training of pre-service teachers in the Arts has continued to challenge both the university and school sectors. In Australia, the national teacher-training education organisation, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Association: *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA 2011) points out their concerns that “the important role of teachers in the delivery of Arts education is underrepresented and the definition of aesthetic knowledge needs to be strengthened to include areas such as personal, social, historical and cultural analysis of each art form” (4). This means further support is needed for pre-service teachers, delivery of Arts education both during their university teacher-training and practicum experiences in schools. According to ACARA (2011) teacher education programs also need to operate cross culturally to,

...ensure that Graduate Teachers have knowledge in applying culturally inclusive practices in relation to curriculum, classroom teaching and assessment and develop strategies for the establishment of partnerships with Aboriginal parents and communities for the education of Aboriginal students (NSWIT 2008).

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy ‘Closing the Gap’ program (ACARA 2009) works towards developing educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians through Reconciliation programs. One way this is implemented is by bringing Indigenous education into schools and by focusing on developing safe and effective creative and collaborative learning environments (Irwin 2012). In this paper, this concept has been explored through a community of practice model (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 2000). The community of practice model links cultural connections through the visual arts and brings people together from across the globe. Australia belongs to the Asian-Pacific Region and a national objective of the Australia government as expressed in the Asian Century White Paper (Australian Government 2012) is to build stronger cultural connections by developing deeper understandings and cross cultural appreciation. Working on the premise that

through people-to-people contacts links are forged through arts and culture and these dynamic links expand in educational training, economic and market opportunities. The National Cultural Policy: *Creative Australia (Australian Government 2013)* affirms the centrality of the arts to our national identity as well as to the social cohesion and economic success of the nation. This new policy centers on building capacities through cross cultural inclusive practices through the Arts. One important development highlighted in the policy centers around Indigenous art and culture:

...the fundamental place that Indigenous culture holds in the Australian story and the deep responsibility that bears upon our nation to nurture and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultural expression. (Australian Government 2013, 2)

In order to develop cross cultural inclusive practices in this research, a case study approach (Yin 2009; Stake 2010) was adopted using intercultural artist-led 'hands-on' workshops as creative spaces where pre-service teachers could express their 'creativity' through various visual arts forms. Creative partnerships were established between pre-service teachers, creative arts educators, academics and local urban Australian Aboriginal community-based artists. Harrison's (2011) research found many teachers were not familiar with the different forms of Aboriginal arts and culture. This is a significant finding as Aboriginal people often regard paintings as the literature of the Aboriginal people. Making content relevant, purposeful and connected to the lives of Aboriginal [and non-Aboriginal] children should be an important outcome in teacher-training education (Harrison, 2011). One of the creative partners, Australian Aboriginal elder-artist, Jeffrey Samuels, a foundation member of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative in Sydney, agrees with Harrison's findings (Samuels 2011). He adds that many non-Aboriginal people do not seem to be aware of the diversity and innovation of Aboriginal cultural art forms. . This sentiment was further echoed by the master educator on this research project who found, during her five years of university teacher-training experience, that 90% of pre-service primary generalist teachers were under the impression that Aboriginal 'dot' painting was the only form of Aboriginal art (McLauclan 2011). During the pre-service teachers praxis sessions at local primary schools, she observed the teaching of Aboriginal arts and culture was usually conducted on class worksheets and without consultation with local Aboriginal artists. This means that many children think Aboriginal art is 'dot' painting and they have not been given the opportunity to experience the richness of this form of creative expression from the traditional owners.

Theoretical Framework

In an attempt to 'close the gap', a case study was developed to investigate pre-service primary teachers, limited understanding of Aboriginal arts and culture. This was carried out by making connections between the socio-cultural settings visual arts and the individual. For instance, a supportive community of practice was established and intercultural artist-led 'hands-on' workshops were designed to open up creative possibilities and deepen understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal arts and culture. This type of intercultural approach develops our critical awareness of the culture embedded in language, arts and culture, which operates within, and shapes communication (Moloney 2010).

The community of practice model (Wenger 2000; Lave and Wenger 1991) explores how visual arts practice responds and interacts with 'creativity' in new and diverse ways. Wenger argues for a new kind of organizational design, one that involves informal gatherings of people who are passionate about an issue such as the visual arts. Smith (2009), describes how a community of practice could look:

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression...In a nutshell: Communities of practice are

groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

The idea of establishing a community of practice model with cultural centres and creative partners such as artists, pre-service primary teachers, universities and the school community seems uncommon in Australia. However, there are a growing number of researchers who perceive creative partners and cultural centres as critical in enhancing visual arts teachers expertise. For example, Price (2010) highlights the challenges experienced by pre-service teachers in their search for suitable visual arts support both in and outside schooling. Another piece of relevant research was by the New Zealander, Bowell (2010). Bowell developed a model of community of practice for pre-service teachers to work collaboratively with experienced artists in non-school settings such as cultural centres (Bowell 2010, 2012). These cultural centres became the ideal places to support primary school teachers' confidence in a range of integrated curriculum pedagogies. The preliminary results from these studies found that early career primary visual arts teachers gained higher levels of confidence in teaching after being systematically supported over a two-year period of time. Bowell (2012).

Another approach to using the community of practice model in teaching and learning about visual arts education outside schooling is that of the TATE Modern Gallery in London. The TATE Modern has been working with established cultural communities of practice through artist-led workshops for the past few years. The aim of the workshops is "to explore possibilities for teaching and learning through the creative arts such as action, film, installation, participation, speech-based events and performance" (TATE Britain 2012; TATE Modern 2012, 2). The role of the workshop is to enable teachers to build their confidence in visual arts education while working in collaboration with diverse cultural communities. This community of practice model operates under the guidance of educational and curatorial staff in the internationally renowned TATE Modern, TATE Britain and TATE Liverpool galleries (TATE Modern 2012). They collectively found in their research that, when they placed the artists central to learning, the children and adults tended to foster their imagination and 'creativity' in culturally safe and aesthetic learning environments. The strength of these arts-based programs is they bring teachers together from across the globe to participate in free culturally-inspired creative spaces. These informal creative spaces are not subject to the pressure of testing regimes and the demand for quick results such as those of the various school-based national testing regimes currently sweeping the Western dominated world (TATE Modern 2012). These arts-based programs are universally designed for all audiences including teachers with children who require additional support needs within the primary, secondary and tertiary learner environments. The main aim of these workshops is to support the teachers' confidence in planning their own school activities. Innovative approaches to learning are explored and practical ways to support teachers' own 'creativity' are encouraged. The senior curator at the TATE Modern gallery said the benefit for teachers working collaboratively with creative partners in communities of practice is that novice teachers can comfortably work alongside established artists, educators, curators and resource experts (Wade-Leeuwen 2012). These professionals value the learning experience and generously give their time and professionalism to support both pre-service and in-service teachers and "spend time together in a creative cultural space, within a framework that suits their needs"(TATE Britain 2012; TATE Modern 2012, 1).

The TATE Modern Gallery artist-led workshops use arts-based practical sessions that operate both within and outside the teachers' country of origin. The workshops are accompanied by specially designed creative and visual arts packages for teachers to use in class lessons. Each participating school in these programs collects a resource package consisting of aesthetic and found objects and an instructional booklet. This resource has been universally designed by artists to fit into an A5 size package so that it is easily reproduced and manageable in informal scenarios. The costing is generally covered by the creative partners within a community of

practice or by associated local industries. The creative industries may consist of members from the local hospital, insurance company or banking industry. The TATE Modern Gallery's community of practice relies on new media technologies to disseminate knowledge via its virtual online presence. New career pre-service teachers are encouraged to tap into the vibrant online community and synergize with the vast array of international educational experts involved in the creative process.

The previous section of the paper explores how different communities of practice models are being used in visual arts education in both New Zealand and the United Kingdom. However, the model does not seem to be systematically applied in Australia. One reason for this could be that Australia has traditionally been separated into state and territory based curriculums without a united approach to the Arts. Currently in New South Wales (NSW), the pre-service primary generalist teachers deliver the Creative Arts curriculum through the domains of Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts. These strands of the Creative Arts program span kindergarten to grade six (Board of Studies 2000). The teaching of Aboriginal cultural dance, drama or other performative and visual arts are strongly encouraged and the classroom teachers are expected to collaborate with elders from local Aboriginal communities (Charadia 2003). The visual arts syllabus involves the making of and appreciation of art through visual art forms such as drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking and new media technologies. The role of the teacher is to encourage children to develop competencies in learning new understandings, skills and knowledge in the making and appreciating of the arts including working closely with Australian Aboriginal cultural communities (BOS 2000, 11). However, the literature reveals that this is not always possible (Davis 2008) probably due to socio-cultural restrictions. For instance, teachers are already working within an overloaded school curriculum and trying to make connections with local Indigenous artists in the community is often too demanding in terms of time, effort and communication skills.

The NSW visual arts curriculum for kindergarten to secondary schooling (Board of Studies 2003) seeks to enhance children's understanding of historical cultures and contemporary art from the perspectives of the artist, world, audience and artwork. This conceptual framework is applied as a visual tool to help children understand the scope and depth of the Arts. It is designed to frame aesthetic and emotive knowledge from the past through the ages to contemporary times (Hulsbosch, FitzGerald, Guihot, Randall and Wade-Leeuwen, 2008). These four agencies establish the boundaries of the art world so children can develop their knowledge, understandings, skills, values and attitudes in making and responding to the Arts (BOS 2000, 10; Hulsbosch 2008).

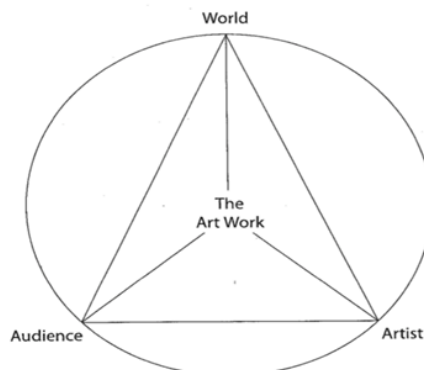


Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework in the Visual Arts Years 7–10 Syllabus (BOS 2003, 22).

The new Australian curriculum: *The Arts Foundation to Year 10* (ACARA, 2013) "aims to develop children's: creativity, imagination, aesthetic understanding and critical thinking and arts practices with increasing self-confidence through engagement in making and responding to artworks" (1). There are two main components: making and responding to the Arts. The making

component is seen as a creative activity where children use innovative arts practices and emerging technologies to express their ideas and develop empathy with multiple viewpoints. The responding to art component occurs when children develop their communication skills and knowledge through the "valuing and sharing of experiences, representing, expressing and communicating ideas about their individual and collective worlds to others in meaningful ways" (ACARA, 2013, 1).

Methodology

The methodology use in the study was arts-based research inquiry (Barone and Eisner 2012) and data was gathered using a mixed methods approach. The methods used were questionnaires, participatory observations, critical friends groups and semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were analysed using Adaptive theory (Layder 1998) building on elements from constructivist grounded theory (Bryant and Charmaz 2007). These methods were chosen because they do not distinguish between different ways of knowing. Thus the theory and practice and the non-discursive material could be analysed in a flexible yet systematic manner. The underlying assumption is that, by using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the research will gain a deeper understanding of the research problem which focuses on how to foster mindful 'creativity' in visual arts practice. This study incorporates multiple case study techniques to document and explore 'creativity' changes then adapts these new knowledge perspectives to generate future educational practices (Freebody 2003, 85).

The project emerged out of Eisner (2006) argument for the case that research is a creative activity that takes place in the arts and not just in the sciences. A multiple case study approach (Stake 2006, 2010; Yin 2009) was used consisting of two case studies. Case study one, 'Linear Motion', was an investigation of Chinese language, art and culture. Case study two, 'Bwo-me' meaning (Life's Breath) in Aboriginal Dharug dialect (Foley, 2010), explores 'creativity' through an investigation of traditional rock art and contemporary Aboriginal art and culture. The 'Bwo-me' case study consisted of two hundred pre-service teachers in their third-year of study in the Creative Arts teacher-training education program held at a Sydney-based university during 2011–2013. The research setting consisted of twelve intercultural artist-led 'hands-on' workshops under the direction of the studio leader (author-artist-researcher). The 'Bwo-me' case study strongly aligns with the principles taken from the International Council of Museums (ICOM, 2010) in that it encourages learning about diverse global art and uses intercultural practices to achieve these outcomes. For example, the main purpose of the workshops was to explore 'creativity' through a variety of visual arts forms inspired by Aboriginal arts and culture. The pre-service teachers were encouraged to develop multiple perspectives on 'creativity' by working with reproductions of the past and creating new imaginary responses for the future.

The research involved intercultural artist-led 'hands-on' workshops that were conducted at the university studio space and also off-site at a local Arts Centre. The off-site workshops were supported by a grant gained from the local council. The grant was specifically designated for creative partners who facilitated the passing on of traditional knowledge to a variety of audiences. The creative partners came from three local arts centres two were Indigenous and one non-Indigenous. This segment of the research will be discussed in another paper.

The Creative Process

The pre-service primary teachers were able to unpack meaningful elements from a variety of Aboriginal arts and culture. The study draws on the UNESCO four pillars of learning principles (Delors Report, 1998). Thus the creative process consisted of four ways of learning. The first phase involved 'learning to know' through art appreciation. The second phase was 'learning by doing' through 'hands-on' workshops. The third phase was 'learning to work together' by

evaluating the artworks from the workshops and the fourth phase was 'learning to be' which became evident from the post-workshop interviews.

Art Appreciation: Learning to Know

Firstly, 'learning to know'. This is where the pre-service teachers were introduced to the founding members of the Sydney Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative (Boomalli) by viewing the video on the 'Boomalli Five Koori Artists'. Secondly, they visited an exhibition of Indigenous artists held at the Boomalli Co-operative with local elder-artist, Jeffrey Samuels. During this unique and engaging encounter, Samuels expressed his feelings about Reconciliation and the importance of the arts to society (Samuels 2011). He explained about the difference between contemporary and traditional Aboriginal approaches to arts practice and briefly talked about the various techniques and processes being used in his work and by other artists in the exhibition. The pre-service teachers gained insights into the multiple perspectives and expressions that can be present in visual arts practice.

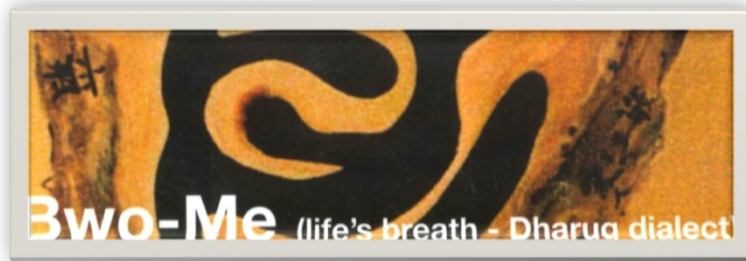


Figure 2: The Bwo-me (Life's Breath) Case Study 2011–2012



Figure 3: Artwork: "The Dancer," 2011 by Jeffrey Samuels

Intercultural Artist-led ‘Hands-on’ Workshops: Learning to Do

The second phase, ‘learning to do’, took place through the intercultural artist-led ‘hands-on’ workshops held at the university studio space. The creative process was divided into two types of creative action. The first type which Vygotsky (2004) referred to as reproductive or mimetic activity repeats previously mastered patterns in the artworks. This is when our actions do not necessarily create anything new, but rather we take part in a form of repetition of something that already exists such as a technique or method. The second type of ‘creativity’ combines two or more fantasy forms. It occurs when our imagination draws out our own ideas from within. Thus these artworks are not based purely on reproductions of the past. This research draws on both types of ‘creativity’ to stimulate the pre-service teachers’ artistic expression. This was done by allowing opportunities for reproductions of past experiences stimulated by aesthetic elements from Aboriginal arts and culture and the second type of ‘creativity’ was a more personal response to the aesthetic stimulation. Central to this research was the concept of strengthening the pre-service teacher’s belief in his or her own capacity to access ‘creativity’ and imagination. This was initially planned by using universal design principles that were mindful of ergonomic, accessibility and inclusivity considerations (Piscitelli and Weier 2002). The pre-planning of the workshops environmental space requires experience, reflexivity, and visualization (Wade-Leeuwen 2010a; Wade-Leeuwen 2010b; Wade-Leeuwen 2011).

In the Bwo-me case study, the participants were exposed to a variety of aesthetic materials and processes such as drawing with charcoal and slate, learning skills such as different ways of print making: mono prints, silkscreen and experimental printing. The participants also learnt how to draw out their imagination through the use of cultural narratives.



Figure 4: Participants Drawing from Imagination and Memory in ‘Bwo-me’ Workshops

The Travel of the Bogong Moth

The narrative about the travel of the Bogong moth was based on a true story that has been told by artists in the Canberra regional area. Elements of the story are described below.

The Travel of the Bogong Moth

The narrative about the Australian ‘Bogong Moth’ traces the travels of the Bogong moth from far north Queensland during migration in the late summer to the Canberra area. They fly in large hordes through our nation’s capital and each year gets stuck in the air-conditioning units in new Parliament House because it was built on the Bogong moth’s travel path. Those that free themselves continue their migration path up into tight crevices in the Snowy Mountains area. It has been reported in the early documents of Aboriginal history that Bateman’s Bay Aboriginals were reported leaving the Snowy Mountains with shiny skins and well fed bellies due to the protein from the roasted Bogong moths.

After the participants listened to the Bogong moth narrative they were given drawing, printing and sculptural materials and expressed their impressions while listening to Aboriginal music as they worked. Minimal instruction was given during the art making sessions to allow a creative space in the environment for participants to connect. It is interesting to note that the spatial relationship between different symbolic marks in each artwork were different for each participant showing how their individual responses reacted to the aesthetic materials which in turn, allowed their inner artist-self to surface.



Figure 5: Pre-service Teachers Inventing Creative Responses in the Workshops



Figure 6: Learning New Printmaking Skills with Local Aboriginal Elder Artists

The image above was a demonstration work for the workshop participants based on the rhythm of an Aboriginal dancer.

Student-made Artworks: Learning to Work Together

The third phase 'learning to work together' occurs when the pre-service teachers use the conceptual framework and the four agencies of world, artist, audience and artwork. This is a

process of learning to work together by thinking of themselves as artists and considering the artist's relationship to the audience, world and artworks. This concept of learning to work together became clearer when evaluating the artworks produced in the workshops. The assessment of the artworks was done through a collaborative process of audiences choice (Wade-Leeuwen 2011). The artworks and portfolios were displayed around the studio space and, operating as audience, the pre-service teachers moved around the room choosing artworks that emphasised certain aspects of 'creativity' such as uniqueness, fluidity, flexibility, elaboration, humour or avoidance of premature closure (Torrance 1974).

An example of this evaluation process was when the studio-leader asked participants to respond to artworks that demonstrated mindful creative play and free expression. The participants were encouraged to gravitate towards those works, which had best achieved that criterion. This was followed by an engaging open discussion reflecting on the similarities and differences of opinions on the artworks. Placing the artists central to learning tended to fostered their imagination and 'creativity' in this culturally safe and aesthetic learning environment. The four pillars of learning, learning to know, learning to do, learning to work together and learning to be (UNESCO, 1998) became an integral part of the achievement standards for the arts and an instrumental measurement tool for this project. Another way of achieving standards in the arts is through a portfolio of artefacts and artworks. The portfolio builds on the four learning principles by gathering textual documentation that reflects how these annotated artworks were produced during the creative process revealing the aesthetic, emotive and cognitive thought patterns present during the making of their artworks.

Findings: Learning to Be

The fourth principle is 'learning to be'. This is where the pre-service teachers express their attitudes and beliefs about what they have learnt during the intercultural artist-led 'hands-on' workshops. The preliminary quantitative results come from two hundred and thirty-six pre-service primary teachers' responses from both the third-year and fourth-year students. The results showed 80% perceive their prior knowledge of visual arts practice was limited before university instruction. The data analysis also showed 50% of the pre-service teachers felt competent in using visual arts practice and half of the cohort believed 'creativity' could be taught.

The preliminary qualitative results revealed pre-service teachers found the workshops to be valuable in the development of their own learning and self-confidence. Of particular importance was the notion of striving towards developing multidimensional perspectives on 'creativity' capacities by working with creative partners within a supportive community of practice. The other factor that impressed them was the cultural narratives told during the workshops which seemed to offer new ways of unlocking their 'creativity' and imagination. One teacher's response during the interview was:

Since the workshop I feel a lot more confident. I feel I gained lots of confidence and it's encouraged me even to think, go further, beyond, to do more research. And hopefully I'll be able to adopt them in the classroom. (Participant interview 2011–2012, NM 21.10.11).

The research found an increase in pre-service teachers' confidence in teaching visual arts education. Another teacher voiced her opinions about teaching 'creativity' to children in the following statement:

As a teacher ...I would inspire children to be flexible, choosing the way they want to go, but focus on the theme, on the topic, or whatever we want them to express. Teaching children about different forms of art using different media, methods or processes. But

being flexible and giving choice to the children. Use 'creativity' and creative thinking and recreating something. (Participant interview 2011-2012, BK 11.11.11)

The workshops assisted in developing their understandings about what fostered and what inhibited 'creativity' in schooling. A typical response was:

It's just-too many rules, too many boundaries. There's a lot of emphasis on technique and skills and I think that's important. I think that should not be the main objective, whereas I think that can hinder the way a person expresses himself or herself because they're too conscious of the restrictions. ...There's just not a lot of importance placed on Art or the Creative Arts. A good example of this is the NAPLAN-standardized testing. (Participant interview 2011-2012, JK 25.10.11)

These findings point out the perceived restrictions pre-service primary art teachers are finding when learning about different visual art forms and how to teach them to primary children within the schooling system. There appears to be a correlation between what the pre-service teachers are expressing through their attitudes and opinions about their need for support in visual arts education and what the Australian government perceives as the role of teachers in the arts (ACARA 2011). However, the preliminary findings supports the literature review which indicates the pre-service teachers generally lack the self-confidence to express themselves creatively and this is an issue that needs further investigation.

The fundamental premise of the intercultural 'hands-on' workshops is that 'creativity' is a decision that anyone can make. Sternberg (2006) believes few people actually do make the decision to be creative because they find the costs to be too high. In other words, educators, academics, parents, children and the broader community need to invest time and effort into the creative process if they are to achieve any depth of understanding in The Arts.

Conclusion

As highlighted in the literature review, researchers, artists and educators have found the arts provide rich opportunities to extend our senses, imagination, emotions and aesthetic capabilities. This paper highlights the inter-relationship between the individual, visual arts and the socio-cultural context of this study by establishing arts and cultural communities of practice. The 'Bwo-me' (Life's Breath) Aboriginal art and culture case study used intercultural 'hands-on' workshops as the ideal space to support pre-service primary teachers' confidence in a range of integrated visual arts curriculum pedagogies. The preliminary findings showed when pre-service primary teachers are mindful about making connections with other cultural experiences, they develop common understandings of how multiple perspectives on 'creativity' in visual arts might be interpreted both collaboratively and individually. Finally, the findings indicated there are necessary dispositions needed to foster 'creativity' in visual arts education and without these dispositions evident, 'creativity' is unlikely to occur.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank artists from the critical friends groups: Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative Ltd; Darug Research and Information Centre; Mo-ku Expressionist Artists Australia and Workshop Art Centre for their insightful comments about collaboratively working within a supportive community of practice. My gratitude goes to Jennifer Bowes, Alma Fleet, Neil Harrison, Jan McLachlan, Alan Rice, Jeffrey Samuels and the participants in the study for their valuable contributions and insightful feedback on previous versions of this manuscript.

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ISSN 2326-9944

