Safe Spaces for Enabling the Creative Process in Classrooms

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Abstract: Based on interviews with five creative professionals this article looks to investigate the creative experience as a source of data on how educators might create space for enabling the creative process in the classroom. Looking toward professional artists who are also committed educators provides core commentary on how to maximise creative experiences in the classroom. Whilst acknowledging the importance of physical space, the following article looks purposefully toward how to enable space as an internal state of being, with the intent toward establishing transdisciplinary discussions that stimulate and provoke creative pedagogical research across an interdependent continuum. The research concludes that enabling space for the creative process lies in the educators' ability to create safe physical, social and emotional spaces for exploring creative processes. Implications for initial teacher education, professional development and classroom practice are identified.

Introduction

Education expectations and practices reflect the community in which they reside. Australian industries today within fields such as economics and technology have shifted from creating a culture of repetition to a culture of creativity (Bocchi et al., 2014). Contemporary educational policy, beliefs and ideals, both nationally and internationally reflect this shift toward the benefit of creative engagement, where a creative disposition is recognised as an asset to 21st Century society (Guo & Woulfin, 2016) and education systems. Pivotal within this shift is continual exploration of the essences that drive creative pedagogy as encouraged within the field of creative education.

This paper values creative processes as integral to active spaces of learning that are authentic and efficient (Eisner, 2002). Space, recognised within this research as a process of experience that is unique, customised, embodied and meaningful (Rinkevich, 2011) becomes a place of process that acknowledges a state of learning that allows metacognitive insight through creative experience. The following research recognises the integral role of the educator in fostering a space that evokes learners' creative experience within what Greene (2001) referred to as an aesthetic reality.

Although space is often attributed to physical space, this research looks toward how both external and internal space function as reciprocal within creative processes. Literature on creativity recognises the interdependence of both internal and external facets in shaping creative processes (Sternberg et al., 2009) and therefore shows opportunity for further inquiry as to how space collaborates in an embodied capacity. By exploring how practising artists, who also teach in their field of practice, live their creative processes, this paper aims to advance educational understanding on how to create a more collective view of space within classroom learning environments, identifying ways that educators can support

students' creativity and creative experiences in the classroom. Implications for initial teacher education, classroom practice and ongoing professional development are considered.

Defining Creativity

Creativity, recognised in this paper as the production of "an original product that has value" (Glover, Ronning, & Reynolds, 1989, p. 23), has been acknowledged as a conscious and intentional attempt to use the environment purposefully through time (Stolarski et al., 2016). Puryear, Kettler and Rinn (2017) suggest, "creativity is the interaction among 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. 60).

Creativity sits amongst a collection of adaptive qualities that drive, protect and foster intellect (Blaisdell, 2015). Amabile & Pratt (2016) suggest that creativity adds meaning to individual life by strengthening one's internal progress loop, where self-feedback is amplified through creative experiences, and in turn, strengthens the persistence, worthiness and justification of individual actions. Having the space to create is recognised as pivotal in fostering one's creative spirit (Keinänen, 2015).

Runco (2007) warns against the use of creativity, a term of empirical rigour (Glover et al., 1989), being used as an adjective and becoming a describing word within the context of language, rather than a noun. Non-critical and subjective use of creativity results in meaning that Glover et al., (1989) suggest adds colour rather than intent, and fuels ambiguity.

Documents that discuss creativity should therefore use language that shows clarity of definition. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (Australian Curriculum Learning Areas (ACARA), 2017) notes that "The Arts have the capacity to engage, inspire and enrich all students, exciting the imagination and encouraging them to reach their creative and expressive potential" (ACARA, 2017). There is, however, no specific glossary within the curriculum framework that outlines a definition of creativity. Instead the term creativity is described within an earlier document in conjunction with critical thinking as, "a higher order form of communication that fosters flexibility, precision and appreciates diversity" (ACARA, 2011, p. 23). Language such as inspire, improvise, create, innovate and excite are used in the making, responding and viewpoints strands within The Arts curriculum over the P-10 bands (ACARA, 2017). Creativity is also referred to in other curriculum areas. Within The Arts, there is an appreciation that creative exploration permeates all areas of learning.

Puryear, Kettler, Rinn (2017) highlight that data collection on creativity is influenced by how creativity is perceived, reinforcing the importance of defining terms to elicit outcomes. Continuing to provide research that challenges current educational discourse on creativity attempts to move conversations toward establishing a network of understanding that removes ambiguity. Raising and embracing the tacit and nuanced understanding of creativity (Cianci & Trigona, 2014) brings these well researched constructs (Runco, 2015) to the centre (Greene, 2001) rather than the fringe of creative pedagogical and educational discussions (Leavy, 2015).

Creativity and Cognition

From a neuroscience perspective, investigations on brain activities have revealed that the brain, integrated with the mind and body, functions collectively to facilitate creativity

and creative insight (Bresciani, 2016; Kounios & Beeman, 2014). The role of emotion is recognised as integral to brain function (Olson & Cozolino, 2014). Ellis and Newton (2010) suggest that without the emotional brain no amount of afferent brain activity can result in consciousness. Shamay-Tsoory et al. (2010) seek, through their study, to show that although creativity is related to prefrontal brain activity, that a balance between both hemispheres has a major effect on cognition and resultant creativity, reinforcing the complex and integrated relationship between parts of the brain.

Sternberg (1999) highlights that creative cognition creates a bridge between basic cognitive processes (attention, perception, memory, information processing) and creative problem solving. As a meta-cognitive strategy (Benedek et al., 2014), creativity allows the self to engage reflectively (Mumford.et al, 1991) to facilitate a state of problem solving where creative responses can result (Sadler-Smith, 2015). Through recognition that creativity is a state of brain interaction and operation (Bresciani, 2016) there permits opportunity to recognise the holistic way the brain learns (Nielsen, 2006), showing potential toward unearthing and strengthening new discussions related to creative pedagogy in response to how best to activate and enable neural pathways within classrooms.

A creative state of learning aligns with a willingness to show curiosity and open mindedness within situations (Balachandra et al., 2005) where convergent and divergent thinking lead to solving problems through inquiry (Ostafin & Kassman, 2012). Bresciani (2016) suggests that the more one engages in the act of a) creative action and b) paying attention, the more one strengthens the necessary pathways for creativity, allowing for easier activation.

Creative Spaces in the Classroom

From an education perspective, there is an understanding of appropriate teacher attitudes, attributes and pedagogical assumptions that promote and enable creativity (Olson & Cozolino, 2014). Craft, Cremin, Hay and Clack (2013) suggest that: a) a high value for co-construction, b) providing opportunity for children to control learning and c) high expectation toward skilful creative engagement, are pivotal within a learning environment that reflects creative learning that is: integrated, flexible, immersive and closely monitored.

Within education, creativity has been shown to correlate with unconditional positive regard where children are encouraged to be themselves (Runco, 2007). Rinkevich (2011) suggests that creative teaching involves: unique, customised and meaningful exchange between all individuals within a space. Evoking creativity demands that the learning space is conducive to creative exploration of materials (Dewey, 1934), avoids "squelching", where learners' ideas are devalued (Runco, 2007), and provides tools that trigger creativity (Craft.et al., 2013). Discussion of unconditional positive regard recognises that the student and teacher dynamic must reciprocate a creative synergy within a non-threatening environment that bridges the gap between implicit and explicit learning (Runco, 2007) within the education space.

Looking to space, as the selected foci within this research, aligns with Torrance's (1976) idea of looking for 'something new' and Langer's (2009) research on mindfulness and how in-the-moment attention alters individual creative processes by allowing mental space to notice subtlety and nuance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Through oscillating between in-the-moment processes and desired creative outcomes there-in-lies ownership and control of knowledge and learning processes (Jeffrey & Craft, 2006; Runco, 2007). The sense of agency within learning shows to result in a centeredness and a stillness

juxtaposed against the busyness that is contemporary society (Langer, 2014; Olson & Cozolino, 2014).

Creative space is facilitated through problem solving where small steps move from the known to the unknown (Runco, 2007). Sternberg suggests that problem solving is 'propelling a field' (1999), where propulsion is moving a field from one point to another in a non-passive state. To align the discussion of creative space with problem solving is to recognise the non-passive, propelling strategies required to evoke space within the creative processes of the studied artist educators, where the creative processes, within this research, can be viewed as a series of creative-problems to overcome. Enabling creative space becomes relevant within pedagogical application as a process that can be strengthened through deliberate strategies.

The Creative Educator

In a review of 17 publications relating to the teacher's role in promoting creativity, Davies (2006) identified that: teacher skills, attitudes, willingness to act as a role model, awareness of learners' needs, flexible lesson structure and types of non-hierarchical classroom interaction, are all advantageous dispositions for teaching for creativity. Australian research (Harris & Bruin, 2017) recognised the need to address the accountability of teachers and their role in promoting creativity, a requirement within Australian curriculum frameworks, (ACARA, 2017) where creativity is integral to learning.

Abramo and Reynolds (2015) labelled the personality traits of a creative educator as: responsiveness, comfort with ambiguity, combination of disparate ideas, and fluid and flexible identities, as necessary to foster teaching for creativity. There is an appreciation that these traits are considered a minority mindset within educator thinking (Dweck, 2017; Kettler et al., 2018). Craft (2003) believes attitudes and strategies that foster everyday creativity show the potential to stir creative traits within us all. How to evoke the qualities identified by Abramo and Reynolds (2015) within educators, not recognised for a natural creative disposition (Stoll et al., 2006), is of interest within creative pedagogy, creative processes and enabling creative environments in the classroom.

Runco (2007) suggests that teachers can develop a sensitivity that is conducive to creating a learning environment where individuality is catered for, allowing the individual to explore their own creative processes. Repetti (2010) notes that educators who set aside their own time for slow, reflective, contemplative inquiry create spaces for safe, creative exploration, unavailable under the information model. Discussions reveal that unless a teacher is prepared to engage critically with their creative self the curriculum will not reflect authentic creative engagement (Craft, 2006), one that enables genuine student creative processes to result (Davies et al., 2014).

Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006) advance the idea that teacher education is paramount in supplying the tools that allow a culture of creativity to prevail. Looking to creative professionals who also teach as a source of data provides the potential to illuminate practical ideas and strategies that can be employed by educators to strengthen pedagogical application of creativity within education settings.

Method and Methodology

Qualitative research looks to enhance understanding through a desire to explain social behaviour and thinking (Yin, 2011). This study uses a case study design (Yin, 2011),

with an appreciation for the emic - etic perspectives, where emic captures participants' indigenous meanings of real-world events (Yin, 2011) and the etic captures external meanings seen as illuminating by the researcher. The application of the qualitative design, where capturing professional artists' perspectives on their creative processes shapes the direction of the results and conclusions made, provides opportunity for application onto real-world situations, including pedagogy.

Participants

Participants were identified using purposeful sampling, where individuals who had experience of the phenomenon of creativity were recruited as information rich sources of data (Patton, 2002). Through purposeful sampling outlier information became imbedded within the design and recognised as necessary in creating thick descriptors (Yin, 2011). Practising artists were approached by an initial email after being identified by their public profile and through known contacts representing a range of creative fields including: figurative and landscape art, musical composition, jazz drumming and poetry. Through participant variation more complete patterns through comparison and contrast of the data could be achieved (Palinkas et al., 2015). Five professional creative participants from a range of creative disciplines were invited to participate from various locations in Australia.

Ruby, of Slovenian and Italian heritage, was the youngest participant at 33 years of age. She grew up in Melbourne and now resides on Australia's New South Wales Northern Coast. Ruby has a designated studio for her creative pursuits but finds a large proportion of their creative processes occurs at home.

Daisy is a 61 year old female. She was born in rural England before moving to study music at Trinity College at the age of 16. At the age of 23 she moved to Australia, and worked as a permanent part of the Victorian Opera Company. She has recently moved to Melbourne CBD to continue her artistic pursuits, studio vocal coaching, choral directing and composition.

Fred is a 57 year old male. He studied Art at the Victorian College of the Arts and now resides in Melbourne's Northern suburbs where he works as a respected educator. Today most of his art is reflective of the Australian landscape, notably the Flinders Ranges in South Australia.

Oscar, a 59 year old male, began playing drums in bands from the age of 14. He has recently finished a three year stint touring nationally and internationally and now lectures, teaches and gigs, solo and collectively, within and throughout the Melbourne district and beyond.

Mabel is a 69 year old female who resides in South Australia. She takes inspiration from feminist literature amongst a host of other sources that she reads and transcribes. She has worked as a professional curriculum writer. She has been the recipient of several poetry awards and had poems published in various publications.

Following approval from the host institution ethics committee, participants were interviewed about how, through their creative processes, they enable space for creativity within their lives, and in the lives of their students. Participants showed various levels of creativity with their daily life, dress and language and all showed a commitment and passion toward the creative. All were also teachers in their area of creative expertise.

Data Collection

Using a semi structured interview protocol, participants spoke initially to a work of art they had created that had significance, in order to funnel discussion toward their creative process within a specific experience. The interviews then broadened out toward more general beliefs about the creative process within their lived knowledge. Semi structured interviews provided a mental framework that guided the direction of the interview by establishing a non-directive style where a natural flow embodied the participant's world (Yin, 2011).

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Before analysis, each participant was provided with a copy of their transcript for confirmation or clarification. All participants accepted the transcriptions of their interviews to be included in the analysis phase without correction or addition.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using Yin's (2011) five phase cycle: (1) compiling, (2) disassembling, (3) reassembling (and arraying), (4) interpreting, and (5) concluding. Compiling involved careful and methodical organising of the original data into a database table. Through the database design, formality and order comply with qualitative expectations, where qualitative research seeks to be transparent, methodical and demonstrate adherence to evidence. Disassembly involved the identification of individual pieces of data relevant to the topic under investigation. The disassembling phase offers the opportunity for clear connections between the data and the substantive research to be identified (Yin, 2011). Reassembling is considered the active phase of recognising patterns, either broad or narrow, divergent or convergent.

Through exploring hierarchies, the emergence of a new narrative, representative of the participants' voice, prevails. These narratives were then interpreted in relation to the research topic and existing literature. Through the results and interpretations made, it is hoped that specific and unique conclusions can result that challenge conventional stereotypes (Yin, 2016) within the field of creative processes and pedagogy.

Results

In creating their own space for creativity, the artists revealed factors of their external and internal environments they experienced as important. Although the results of this research acknowledge the complexity between the self and the environment in enabling space, the following results look explicitly toward the external physical and social environment, and to the artists' internal environments, and the dynamics of the establishment of *safe spaces* to support creative experience. These spaces were engineered and reflected through the participants' self-management of their creative processes and environment.

The External Environment

As well as attending to aspects of the physical environment, the participants pointed to the importance of establishing the social environment and creating emotionally safe

spaces when others were present, particularly in classes. Preparation, attitude and commitment toward preparing the creative space "as a creative sanctuary" (Fred) was necessary to create an environment that "charmed" (Fred) the internal space. As Fred suggested:

> *There are physical things and tuning things. I suppose where I set up things in the studio, pictures around to stimulate ideas, things I am working on, feeding what happens. Having a nice space to work in. A dedicated space. In the classroom preparing the head and heart space, good ventilation, flowers, I take time to set up the space. Also, practically, like dynamics, different seating and forms to create the space differently. So, the thoughtfulness, the thoughtfulness (repeats slower) is a powerful, powerful thing.*

The Social Space

Emotionally safe spaces in the social environment were of relevance when others were present. This was regarded as particularly necessary in the teaching space. Each artist spoke of the emotional social space and how they create these spaces for their students. Supportive educational settings were regarded as "safe" (Ruby) and "thoughtful" (Fred) physical spaces where individuality was valued through an "ego-less" (Oscar), and "sharing" (Mabel) climate. This social space, connected to the artist or student's emotional safety, was regarded as one where they could be themselves, experiment, make mistakes, and not fear competitiveness or judgement.

Participants spoke of creating a "non-hierarchical space" (Oscar) in their teaching. Deemphasising praise, judgement and competition were key aspects to facilitating the idea of an inner "safe space" (Ruby) for one's creative process to be explored that was then mirrored onto the external space. Feedback that was immediate, authentic and personal also strengthened a safe space conducive to creativity.

> *Basically, creating a safe space for people to have a go. So, what I have noticed with the life drawing is people come, and by the end of the class they are like, oh my goodness, this is such a lovely space, loving space, such a safe space, safe space, safe space, I keep hearing the same thing, it keeps coming up. (Ruby)*

The Internal Environment

The artists also describe how they engage in conscious and deliberate strategies in preparing and maintaining the internal space they require for creativity, exploration and expression. These self-management techniques involved establishing routines, managing time and managing distractions in their environment.

Routine

A common theme toward evoking creative safe spaces was having structure or routine. This structure involved the process of preparing the physical environment and themselves, and allocating regular times for work. Rather than a chaotic experience, each artist described a routine that they used when moving into the creative space. Essentially routine allowed a "solid vessel" (Mabel) within which creativity could flow and was

recognised as pivotal for freeing up the space through which one's internal creativity could be explored.

Discussion of "routine" (Mabel) became the label through which the importance of structure was reinforced. Routines became a statement of commitment that their creative practice was valued and created a sense of "priority, order and non-attachment" (Oscar) within the participants' life that negated the myth that, as Mabel explained:

> *Many people think that creativity comes from just wandering around in a daze, staring at a flower, and yes, sometimes it does but creativity happens for me, when I get my bum on a chair and I do it for myself, now I am writing, and I set my timer.*

This sense of order also helped to "reign" (Mabel) their creativity in, which for most participants flowed strongly, "it is something that has always been inside of me, and I have just had to listen to" (Ruby). Through routines, the participants' creative life did not consume them in a way that blocked their space for creativity but orientated and focused their creative practice.

Some participants were more philosophical and spiritual about the value of their routine, "whether you have any spiritual beliefs or not it is about yourself as a being and your relationship and collaboration with the subject matter" (Fred). Others were more practical where convenience and better working conditions shaped their routine decisions.

> *In terms of my inner space. It sounds silly but, I find that sitting at my computer and sticking to my routines really does help to create that internal space. (Mabel)*

An "everyday" (Mabel) routine was regarded as the most successful for carving out creative patterns. However, the importance of predictability, expectations and commitment of routine placed the value for routine as an expectation that worked in collaboration with the physical act of creating, "but I think it is also doing it as much as you can. It could just be one Sunday a week. That is better than nothing" (Ruby).

The routines established pathways and patterns that resulted in successful creative outcomes. How routines elicit this, participants revealed, related to a routine that permitted the participant to engage in their creative processes where "mistakes were valued" (Mabel) and "playtime was given priority" (Oscar) and "tangents" (Daisy) that supported the overall creative self were appreciated.

The routine, although personal, was a series of practised steps that became an expectation within their creative processes and allowed the stillness necessary for their creativity to flow. Over time routine strengthened the artist's identity, value and mindset as an artist and, as Ruby highlighted, provided a connectedness to their artistic self that fostered a lifelong resilience:

> *I think most of the time we just need to be reminded, I need to remind myself all of the time. I know that I will again, allowing the time and the space. I think what is really exciting is just knowing where you can go and that this is never over. It is never the end. You always develop. (Ruby)*

Time

By providing learning opportunities where time was given for creative processes to unfold, a sense of value was placed on creativity as a construct of worth within learning and pedagogy. Through valuing time, a reflective and personal state of exploration was recognised as a safe place for learning. Having time to explore creative processes equated to a sense of thoroughness and thoughtfulness that was

valued by the participants, who recognised that time was needed to apply the effort required for creative endeavours to prevail.

> *I had five different leaf designs. So, what I did, and it might sound like complete nonsense, and even though you might not analyse it in this way, and you might not consciously see it, because I have put that time and effort in, that design element you can feel, even if you can't articulate it. (Fred)*

Managing Distractions

The desire for safe spaces was reinforced through ample discussion on life clutter, temptations and distractions that harboured the creative space by blocking the perceived space within which their creativity sat. Recognising the value for creative space became a motivational tool to manage these recognised distractions that were neither conducive nor productive in enabling rich creative experiences.

> *I am a very distracted kind of person and the 21st Century is full of it, every which way you turn. I feel like San Sebastian being pinned to the post and having arrows shot at me. I do find it is pain, and I find it very difficult. (Daisy)*

In some cases, there was an appreciation that "old patterns" (Ruby) were not helpful and that "new patterns" (Mabel) needed to be established that were better. This fostered a resilience that strengthened the "space" (Oscar) template within their creative process.

Knowing the Self

All artists identified that creating a safe space for creative process came from a self-awareness of what they "needed" (Daisy) as an artist. The artists spoke of the importance of self-knowing in underpinning their success in these spaces, and the need to enable this as a deliberate element in supporting the creative experience. Self-knowing allowed the participants to make critical judgements that supported the actions they took to inform their creative practice and deliberately foster a creative space conducive to them as artists whether creating for work or pleasure. By allowing opportunities for the artists to fully immerse themselves in their creative processes they could find the safe spaces where their creativity flourished.

The opportunity to know one's self was not necessarily an "easy ride" (Fred) and considered an effortful experience, one that was "fluid" (Ruby), constantly "evolving" (Oscar) and "changing" (Daisy) but one that was "worth it" (Mable), where boundaries and expectations resulted in a suppleness within their creative processes that gave "power" (Oscar) to the creative space:

> *But I think where it really stems from is me getting to know myself after the nebula collapse of life that happens every now and again. So, I was in a space where everything I knew was completely different and I had to start again. And I think a big part of that was being alone. Going into what it felt like to be alone and even though it was really scary it ended up being one of the best things I have done and I think I needed to get to that place before this burst of creativity and these ideas for this project came into being. (Ruby)*

The effective management of the physical and social environments, and the management of the artist's internal space, allowed the artist to immerse themselves into the creative experiences. Together the effective management of the physical, social and

emotional environments and management of the self, created a sense of "stillness" (Mabel, Oscar, Fred) for the artists.

Stillness

The sense of stillness, described as an in-the-moment focus, enabled the creative experience as a fully immersive experience, where possibilities could be explored and solutions and expressions sought through their creative processes. Stillness was reported to develop the "physical, emotional and mental state necessary for their creative processes" (Oscar) through allowing a state of "trust" (Ruby) and "relationship" (Ruby) that allowed the self to "listen" (Ruby) more acutely. Some described this experience of stillness as being "in the zone" and giving the sense of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1977), a state where the rhythm of engaging in work and learning takes on a tempo of its own.

> *I think it is true what they say about being in the zone, or being in the flow. It's hard to say what that rationally means. It feels like a very focused feeling. You can feel like you are in a channel and it doesn't have anything to do with getting it right, it is not right brain or left but somewhere in the middle, and there is an energy which flows with putting it on the page. (Mabel)*

The idea of the need to establish safe spaces to facilitate creative processes through stillness was shared by all participants. Participants spoke directly and indirectly of how their creative processes was strengthened by valuing stillness within their practise, prior to their creative process. As Oscar explained:

> *I have found after 48 years of playing drums and percussion, this is not exaggerating, but every time I sit at the drum kit I am finding something new and it just starts from a few moments of silence and then things emerge.*

There was recognition for the almost counter-intuitiveness of this idea where participants, in their early career, resisted this idea of stillness, "I thought being an artist was about parties and late nights" (Mabel). Eventually, through a trial and error approach, and frustration toward ineffective creative process, the participants became accepting that their creative process was fuelled by a "simplicity rather than complexity" (Oscar). A simplicity supported through stillness. "There is nothing mystical about it, I just put my hands together like this (prayer) and then go" (Fred). Oscar concluded that "sound must come from silence."

> *I believe, sound comes from silence. From a stillness and silence first. An opening up to a newness and freshness. (Oscar)*
>
> *The strengthening of the "whole self" (Oscar) through stillness created a more holistically accepting, positive and aware state that allowed their innate creativity to flow throughout their creative practice, almost a "giving in" (Ruby) to the process. This opened a space conducive to their creative processes and outcomes that felt "calm and stable" (Oscar).*
>
> *I often feel like a secret agent for stillness and consciousness because every class that I take, every one-to-one lesson, every ensemble, I just request we have a minute of silence and stillness before we begin. I get them to do breathing exercises, three long breaths. That is not taught, and it is so beneficial, breathing. I feel for educators and people involved in the arts education, that is really essential, all levels, including kindergarten, it's the source of creativity.*
>
> *To be still, for the participants, became an opportunity to connect to their own internal rhythms, where the external pressures of time were put to the side and*

> *the participants, through stillness, entered a positive relationship with time and the self.*

Overall, establishing their environment as safe spaces became central to facilitating creative processes. Through their routines, the artists were able to explore their creativity within a framework where, although they were engaged completely within their creative processes, there was structure around them that permitted the safety to fully engage.

Discussion and Implications

To promote the creative experience, these artist educators emphasised the role of establishing safe spaces where individuals can experience stillness, seen as playing a central role in enabling creative exploration and expression. This stillness is supported by the efforts of the artists to establish the physical, social and emotional environments. Stillness facilitated a flow-like state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) aligning with contemporary thought on how to promote spaces for learning that are aware and focused (Bresciani, 2016; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). In the classroom, this stillness was thought to be supported through the management of the external physical and social environments, and skills of self-management enhanced by self-knowing and the management of time.

The participants all gave insights into how they engage not only their own, but their learners' creativity, through facilitating safe creative spaces in order to promote the experience of stillness. Each element of the external and internal environments, established and maintained to bring about an experience of stillness that each thought essential in enabling their creative processes.

Although creativity is recognised as "an original product that has value" (Glover et al., 1989, p. 23), this definition leads to a direction of thinking that attributes value to an external value (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). The findings in this research affirm that value can also be considered as an internal sense of worth, a value for a product that is original. Value then becomes associated with an appreciation for the product that is not only driven by external influence but by an internal sense of value for what it is to create and be original, the creative experience.

The participants' descriptions offer an insight into the nature of spaces that promote creative exploration and expression. In the classroom, this requires attention to the physical, social and emotional environments that provide safe spaces that facilitate the individual's sense of stillness. These findings have implications for classroom practice, and for the professional development of initial teacher education students and practising teachers. These implications are discussed below.

Creating Safe Spaces in Classrooms for Creativity

Our findings indicate the importance of establishing safe spaces for students to experience and immerse themselves in the stillness that these artists identify as critical in supporting creative experiences. Enabling safe spaces requires the creating of a reciprocal external environment that reflects internal needs of the individual within creative experiences, placing value on the processes of learning as a process of self-discovery where learning becomes situational rather than absolute (Runco, 2007). These features are identified as: including the role of establishing the external physical and social environments, encouraging individual self-management within the creative environment,

and supporting self-exploration as part of the process of building the individual's self-understanding of their needs as an artist.

Managing the Physical Environment

The artist educators in this research indicated the role of routine as part of their creative processes. These included different aspects of their physical work environment and the allocation of regular time. Teaching with different creative media, safely, means routines in distributing, using and returning materials safely showing respect, thoughtfulness and awareness for all aspects of individual creative processes. Routines form part of overall classroom management strategies, however different artistic areas and media will require considerations of necessary routines to provide for the smooth delivery of lessons while maintaining the usual safety considerations of practical classes.

Managing the Social Environment

The results illuminate the importance of learning environments that foster a positive internal state of being. Positive emotions set the flow for learning and discovery (Eisner, 2002). The importance of managing the social environment to support positive states in the creative space was identified by the participant artists. Such environments facilitate creative experiences that are useful, tenable and satisfying to the individual.

Positive emotions are enhanced in environments that are free from judgement, allowing students as artists to shift more quickly between primary and secondary processes (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2010). Within the classroom, educators can promote emotionally safe spaces, by de-emphasising competition (Runco, 2007), eliciting challenge (Sternberg, 1999), using purposeful language (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1986), and displaying acceptance of the individual and their own unique processes (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Interestingly safe spaces, although unconditional (Runco, 2007), are not superficial places of immediate praise and instant gratification, but rather spaces that foster a sense of going beyond the surface toward meaningfulness (Amabile et al., 2016), a place where co-construction involves a respectful acknowledgement of both teacher and student and their right to explore their creative processes.

Promoting Self-Management

The results of this study also identify some specific self-management skills the artist educators found useful in managing their internal environment. As well as routines in setting up the physical and social environments, personal routines were seen as important in establishing the creative space, and enabling the experience of stillness that was seen as an essential aspect to enhance the creative experience and enable their focus. These routines involved self-knowing, an awareness of the individual artists needs in preparing themselves for their creative experiences, and maintaining their creative experiences by managing time and distractions. Enabling students to explore their own needs as artists through opportunities for self-exploration could enable students to differentiate routines in their creative arts experiences to meet these needs.

The Challenge of Time

In creative processes, time was seen to be a value mindset, where time to explore concepts must be valued for time to be effectively and creatively explored as an in-the-moment experience (Langer, 2014). Time restraints are a common discussion within education (Kettler et al., 2018). In an already crowded curriculum (Jeffrey, 2006), time for creativity becomes limited by the regulatory and practical organisation of the school day. Allowing time to experience the processes and time to engage in the development of ones' self-awareness, seen as critical by the artists in this research, present challenges in the formal schooling context. Time challenges, the usual lock-step timetabling of schools or hourly tuition structures that involve finite time limits on lessons, and curriculum and assessment requirements, limiting completion times.

Initial Teacher Education and Professional Development

A creative educator is one who is responsive and comfortable with the individuality, ambiguity and flexibility of creative processes (Abramo & Reynolds, 2015). The results highlight the role of the educator in establishing a tone for learning within their lessons, curriculum and daily structures that promotes a culture toward creativity. By allocating time and establishing a space supportive of creative experiences, teachers convey a valuing of creativity within their classroom and as part of the curriculum.

Although connecting to creative experiences is not attributed to the educator majority (Harris & Bruin, 2017), enabling creative processes through routine provides structures where individuals are able to more readily practice creative skills and access creative pathways (Cameron, 2002). As well as the pedagogical implications of routines, routines can also assist teachers in developing their creative selves.

To facilitate creative experiences within the classroom, the educator must firstly connect to their own creative selves, placing awareness and importance on their innate creativity (Langer, 2006). Neural pathways, also recognised for their strength of activation through use, suggests that creating opportunities for initial and current classroom teachers to access their creative selves is pivotal in strengthening pathways necessary for creative exploration (Bhattacharya & Wiggins, 2014).

Practically this requires opportunities in university courses and professional development for educators preparing to teach in areas of the creative arts, or looking to incorporate creative opportunities within other domains, to explore the creative arts and their creative selves (Simonton, 2012; Sternberg et al., 2009), in turn promoting exploration of creative processes and subsequent application in the classroom (Craft et al., 2013).

Implications for Future Research

Looking explicitly to the role of the educator and their creative selves is pivotal within future discussions. Contemporary discussions on the need for teacher professional development (Harris & Bruin, 2017) is recognised in promoting a value for creativity within pedagogical structures. Looking to a more transdisciplinary and discussion model where values and beliefs about creativity are questioned, challenged and explored from a critical, knowledge based approach could show to illuminate and strengthen knowledge on how teachers engage with their creative selves (Scott, 2016; Craft, 2006). Looking to research

that addresses creativity in a transdisciplinary manner shows potential to illuminate key concepts that will drive creative pedagogy forward within practical settings.

The research recognises that further qualitative research is encouraged toward dialogue that is accessible to all educators and their varied personalities. To discuss space, routine, time, stillness and the self in enabling safe spaces establishes a tone of discussion that removes the elitism from discussions allowing inter-disciplinary pathways to be made within a safe space toward a state of everyday inquiry that is open, aware and focused.

Limitations

Though limited in generalisability as a small study of a group of practising artists, the study provides some initial insights into creative processes and its support in classroom settings, and potential directions for further study in this field. The paper also recognises that as a single case study the collated data and conclusions reached are a result of a limited sample size. It is also recognised that although interviews continued until a point of saturation (Yin, 2011), there is acknowledgment that a different set of participants may have altered the research findings based on their individual experiences.

Conclusion

The importance of promoting discussions where creativity is central to cognitive learning experiences is fundamental toward creativity emerging as a core construct of future economic structures (Guo & Woulfin, 2016). In supporting these aims, we advocate the need to reconsider the role of The Arts in Initial Teacher Education, and ongoing Professional Development of school staff to better promote creativity in schools. As creativity is recognised as essential in the world economy, understanding how to support creativity becomes a national (Khalili, 2016) as well as an individual good (Gardner, 1998).

These results identify some of the features of these aspects of the creative spaces and implications for those involved in teaching in the creative arts, as classroom teachers, or as practicing professionals. The research participants, all practising artists, emphasise the pivotal role of safe spaces in establishing an environment that enables the immersive experience of creative processes. Their description of these spaces, their physical and social elements, the role of time and routines, and the stillness these elements facilitate encourage teachers in creating the safe spaces for encouraging creativity in their classroom, across the curriculum and possibly, most importantly, within themselves.

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