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Title

**Developing Creativity and Innovation in Management Education:
an artful event for transformative learning**

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Developing Creativity and Innovation in Management Education

Abstract

This paper argues that management education needs to consider a trend in learning design which advances more creative learning through an alliance with art-based pedagogical processes. A shift is required from skills training to facilitating transformational learning through experiences that expand human potential, facilitated by artistic processes. In this paper the authors discuss the necessity for creativity and innovation in the workplace and the need to develop better leaders and managers. The inclusion of arts-based processes enhances artful behaviour, aesthetics and creativity within management and organisational behaviour, generating important implications for business innovation.

This creative learning focus stems from an analysis of an arts-based intervention for management development. Entitled Management Jazz the program was conducted over three years at a large Australian University.

The paper reviews some of the salient literature in the field. It considers four stages of the learning process: capacity, artful event, increased capability, and application/action to produce product. One illustrative example of an arts-based learning process is provided from the Management Jazz program.

Research findings indicate that artful learning opportunities enhance capacity for awareness of creativity in one's self and in others. This capacity correlates positively with a perception that engaging in artful learning enhances the capability of managers in changing collaborative relationships and habitat constraint.

The authors conclude that it is through engagement and creative alliance with the arts that management education can explore and discover artful approaches to building creativity and innovation.

The illustration presented in this paper will be delivered as a brief workshop at the Fourth Art of Management Conference. The process of bricolage and articles at hand will be used to explore creative constraints and prototypes while generating group collaboration. The mini-workshop will conclude with discussion of the arts-based process and capability enhancement outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

This paper argues for arts-based learning in management education. The authors discuss the necessity for creativity and innovation in the workplace and the need to develop better managers. Although in its infancy, arts-based learning is beginning to find its way into a range of business and management education environments. Nissley (2002, 46), Executive Director of the Banff Centre, Canada, says:

As leaders and management educators seek to find other ways of communicating, creating knowledge, and making sense of the complexities of managing in the New Economy, we are likely to see the continued growth of arts-based learning in organizations.

Based on research and findings from a three-year study of an arts-based management education program at an Australian University, the writers of this paper concur with Nissley. In this paper one illustration of an arts-based learning process, generated for a management education program called Management Jazz, is presented. The illustration of the arts-based learning process is examined and linked with commentary from qualitative interview research. It elucidates an individual's perceptions of artful experiences and their benefits by bridging one arts-based learning event to another like the points in a trajectory. This paper recommends that management education must provide artful learning experiences to assist with developing creative habits, as well as provide a habitat that both supports and invests in developing creativity and provides appropriate resources for that to happen.

THE BROADER CONTEXT

Although creativity is seen as a major component for business success, "there is no agreed definition of 'creativity' among educational policymakers, academics, teachers or employers" (Oakley 2007, 11). Creativity is defined in this paper as the creative human attributes and qualities concerned with imagination, inventiveness, improvisation, insight, intuition, and curiosity – the natural 'artful' genius and talent of people (Lloyd 2007, 5). These creative capabilities are sought after by business for long-term success, adaptability and productivity (Oakley, 2007), and creativity and innovation have increasingly been flagged as key drivers for the long-term success of business (Kerr and Lloyd 2008). This is supported by recent research in the alliance between the arts, organisational aesthetics, and areas such as leadership, management, and staff development (Barrett 2000; Candy 1995; Conrad 1998; Cummings 2000; Darsø 2004; Eisner (b) 2002; Kärreman and Alvesson 2004; Ottensmeyer 1996; Strati 2000; White 1996).

Creativity and Innovation in Business

Lotte Darsø (2004) author of *'Artful Creation: Learning-Tales of Arts-in-Business'*, identifies behaviours and competencies that reflect improved performance benefits from arts-based learning including:

Certain artistic capabilities [which] are important for business and can be taught by artists, such as presentation and communication skills, listening skills and storytelling. The same goes for team building and collaboration inspired by ensemble and rehearsal techniques, as these are used by musicians and actors. A variety of business people, from managers to human resource consultants, can benefit from these approaches (Darsø 2004, 43).

Oakley (2007) emphasises the need for communication, leadership, entrepreneurship, team work, creative skills, cross-cultural understanding, problem solving, and right-brain 'stuff'. Her work is relevant in the context of this paper as she highlights a changing contemporary workplace and workforce, a need for increased creativity in business and broader management skills such as team work, communication, and emotional intelligence.

The exposure to creative and transformative learning in and through the arts offers a broad approach to learning and development. It provides alternative ways of seeing, thinking, feeling, doing and being. It offers intrinsic benefits that help discover other ways of thinking than the taken-for-granted. Benefits, such as joy, expanded capacity for empathy, cognitive growth, creation of social bonds, and expression of communal meanings are of intrinsic value to the individual and extend to community cohesiveness (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakara, and Brooks 2004). These learning benefits are derived through development of intrinsic (self-enriching) motivation, and are supported in transformative learning processes such as those found in arts-based learning.

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning:

...is the process whereby adult learners critically examine their beliefs, assumptions and values in light of acquiring new knowledge and begin a process of personal and social change. These changes result in a more comprehensive, yet differentiating frame of reference by which learners view and interpret their world (Mezirow 1997, 6).

Imel (1998, 1), adds to Mezirow's understanding by indicating that transformative learning involves:

- Becoming more reflective and critical,
- Being more open to perspectives of others, and
- Being less defensive and more accepting of new ideas.

Transformative learning, as a practice, may be a consciously rational process or a more intuitive, imaginative process. Either way an environment that fosters learning needs to consider several roles as part of the process. These include:

- (i) the role of the facilitator [creating a community of knowers (Loughlin 1993, 320-321)].
- (ii) the role of the learners [where they share the responsibility for constructing and creating the conditions under which transformative learning can occur (Taylor 1998)].
- (iii) the role of the rational (objective) and affective (subjective) [as a process that connects the rational and the affective by using feelings and emotions in critical reflection (Taylor 1998)].

By focusing on what an individual values, and needs to learn, those in transformative learning roles can provide a positive trend; so long as those learning needs are defined by both the learner and the educator, or the employee and the employer, and are based on consideration of generational, cultural, and gender belief systems and values (Kerr and Waterhouse 2008).

More specifically, artful and transformative learning in business and management is about developing the professional artistry of one's work habits and habitat (Lloyd 2008; Tharp 2003). In management education, using an arts-based learning model is thought to increase creative capacity and transposable capability, in contrast with a command-control model of learning which reduces creative capacity and activity (McWilliam 2007).

Supporting a Culture of Creativity

So how might business education processes support and encourage the creative potential of future managers by embedding a culture of creativity? In answer, we suggest management education needs to

- (i) facilitate leaders who can promote and support employee creativity
- (ii) set creativity goals
- (iii) invest in arts-based transformative learning programs
- (iv) become learning leaders (Buchen 2005; Zhou 2007).

This can only happen if those in leadership roles are in touch with their own creative capabilities because "... the very essence of 21st – century leadership increasingly demands the passionate creativity of artists ... " (Adler 2006, 493-494).

Nissley (2008, 22) rounds out the discussion by noting that “[t]oday’s leaders must leverage the creative energy of the workforce to compete in the creative economy [and we need to think] creatively about how we develop creative leaders and creative leadership in organizations.” Such transformative development requires reconsideration of the design and process of learning practices.

Literature highlights this emphasis on learning, suggesting that as work identity and the meaning of education are transforming, so too must learning processes change (Kerr 2006, 10) to include artful criteria... Artful criteria for success in business learning identify:

...hallmarks of success [which include being] good at learning and unlearning...open to new ideas from diverse network of contacts, but able to integrate them smoothly, ... staff to have a large measure of autonomy to try and fail...challenge the status quo, open communication and information sharing...flow of ideas, teamwork and flexibility will be taken for granted. (Landry 2000, 80)

Nissley (2002, 44) provides examples of how organisations are “beginning to integrate many art forms into an arts-based approach to management education, as well as embedding arts-based learning in their culture.” He also discusses ‘artful creation’ whereby organisations and individuals create visual representations using drawing, collage, drama, and visual tools to develop understanding, awareness, appreciation, and positive anticipatory images of themselves and the organisation. Adler (2006, 488) adds to the discussion by asserting “the time is right for the cross-fertilisation of the arts and leadership” and that 21st Century business is “anything but business as usual”.

Kerr and Darsø (2007, 1) posit that being artful is not about using arts-based processes as a quick fix or trick. They suggest that:

...to be artful is to transform self through profound learning experiences that expand human consciousness, often facilitated by artistic processes. In management education and development this suggests a shift from instrumental management towards a paradigm of artful creation of managerial self, in a creative economy that also creates social innovation.

The concept of arts-based learning in the workplace is not about turning individuals into professional artists. What this paper suggests is that through the interaction and engagement with on-going arts-based processes and activities, evolving managers and staff have the potential to find alternative, unique, and playful ways to develop a capacity for aesthetic perception (Eisner(a) 2002; Gibb 2006).

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ARTFUL PRACTICE: Management Jazz

Beginning in 2004, the Management Jazz program was created and delivered to 110 senior management and academic staff over a four year period at an Australian University.

Participants explored the art and science of management, reflecting a process through four trajectory points: capacity, artful event, increased artful capability, and the application that creates product (Kerr 2006).

Using this learning trajectory, the program focused on managers and leaders who were working with others and leading teams (showing capacity), then on participating in art forms and artful processes (artful events), increasing their management understandings (enhancing their capabilities), leading to action (application creating product).

The Management Jazz Program – An Arts-based Process for Business Education

In participating in artful processes, the forms an ‘artful’ learning role may take are events that are:

...completely interactive, completely participatory ... feeling connection and support ... actively being heard and actively listening – listening ... is being very creative. ... The arts can support creating relationships that are conducive for real meetings (Darsø 2004, 44-45).

In the Management Jazz program a number of artful events and experiences were designed and delivered. The arts-based processes and experiences included (i) ‘process drama’ (O’Neill, 1995), (ii) movement and dance, (iii) sculpture from modeling clay, and (iv) creation of a prototype through bricolage.

This paper will focus on the fourth process, the creation of a prototype. Entitled Creative Constraints and Prototypes, participants were asked to collaborate in teams of two with colleagues outside of their unit, area of core responsibility, or discipline.

To enhance the artful process, the role of ‘bricoleur’ was introduced. The bricoleur deals with diverse tasks without using materials and tools normally made or bought for a task. For the bricoleur the rule is to use whatever is at hand and that bears no relation to the current project. In bricolage there is no proper or improper use of objects and generally no conventional definitions of value (e.g. a rubber duck may be more valuable than a lead sinker). Interestingly, the use of non-affiliated objects to create outcome in a project can lead to a redefinition of the task in the light of meanings in the unusual objects the bricoleur uses. The use of this process (Weick 1993) as a radical and new understanding of organisation redesign began by playing with new modes of use. The improvisatory aspects of bricolage

provided the potential for new relationships and ideas to be uncovered during a collaborative development process.

Illustration One - The Process

In a half-day session, as one part of Management Jazz, the morning began with the academic participants arriving to find a room full of tables filled with a huge variety of items such as rubber duckies, pipe cleaners, straws, floating candles, ice cream sticks, balloons, tape, string, feathers, Styrofoam cups, wooden pegs, and so forth, along with some joyful music. In this artful activity of the Management Jazz program participants were asked to work in pre-organised teams of two or four. The dramatic process advised them that they were being asked to collaborate with their other team members, all of whom were from different departments, units and divisions of the organization. The participants were advised that the 'organisation' had called them together to develop collaborative teams from the various and disparate units and divisions of the organisation. They were asked to work in pairs to make a learning prototype in the form of a game, an interface, a method, a process, or a framework, with the constraint being that the prototype was constructed through bricolage, using found items both at hand and not originally intended to be used to make this prototype, and the creation had to float (on water, literally).

The presented 'script' noted that, due to national organisational requirements for collaborative activities, in order to justify funding, specific units and divisions that had not worked together before, were now expected to collaborate and create a 'product' that would benefit others in the organization through the collaborative project. The workshop they were attending was an initial step toward learning and teaching others about each unit. They were to explore for each person in the team, who they were, how they worked, and what process the team would therefore use to later 'produce' or create an future-agreed-upon actual collaborative product. The intention was to learn how they might come to function as a collaborative whole, before they actually decided on a collaborative project or product. Within this context, Loughlin's (1993) and Taylor's (1998) transformative learning 'roles' are reflected in the Illustration's learning process. The facilitators set the scene for a community of knowers, as bricoleurs, to share responsibility for creating the learning conditions in a bricolage process designed to promote artful engagement and critical reflection. On that basis, the further instructions provided to the participants read as follows:

The Workshop Outline

Building a Flexible Learning Prototype

(creating and modifying a physical object)

Floating the Prototype of a Bricolage Floating Device

- **Learning materials and Prototypes.** As part of the program the participants will, in teams, produce one prototype representational teaching/learning material that can advance the restringing of constraints in collaborative processes, especially as required amongst unknown and disparate parties of the organisation. The prototype is a ‘floating creation’ that represents the process you will use as a team to later develop and generate a currently unknown collaborative project.
- Using the variety of materials currently at hand in the workshop space, you may create the prototype in the form of a game, an interface, a method, a process, a framework, a technology, etc., that will enhance the engagement of units in the organisation and **that will float.**
- The floating capacity will be physically tested. The Prototype will be presented and described to the other teams during the floating demonstration.
- The aim is to advance the ‘being artful’ learning of the involved parties, as well as the creative constraint process, by relating to a flexible physical object that is developed for the organisation in need of collaboration between disparate parties. You are also asked to explore and play with your task while at the same time studying the learning process of ‘creative’ constraint and ‘being artful’ in decision-making and collaborative negotiation.
- Specifically, your creation that must float is to be based on exploring:
 - a. ‘Who are you’? (what each party/unit/ department/ profession/discipline you represent in this new creative relationship,
 - b. ‘What do you do; what skills, capabilities do each of you bring to the team’? (to reflect what each unit or department actually does or performs in the professional organizational environment that you bring to the team),
 - c. As you create the prototype, consider how the ever-changing requirements of the task creates team work shifts in the ways the team interacts, and
 - d. Reflect how, armed with the above knowledge, you will create a process. (ie: the ‘real time’ floating prototype as a creative approach to what your innovative and collaborative process will look like and how it will flexibly operate.
 - e. The process you create will enable the team to later go forth and collaboratively generate a project and outcome of use to yourselves and the other people in the national organisation.

The artful product of this activity will be a floating model of how this new team will work together and creatively interact to collaborate in future tasks. As a team, you should be prepared to demonstrate and describe your creative and innovative model as it floats.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The experiential learning and transformative knowledge that comes from being artful, producing artful products, and exploring creative practice, taps into the core, creative human potential, offering people alternative insights and new perspectives for ways to approach their work (Lloyd, 2007). This was particularly evident with several participants who were interviewed after completing the Management Jazz program.

They were asked a number of questions as to what they thought of the arts-based processes and if they felt there had been any benefits from engaging in these artful experiences. ???

One participant had been involved in the program a year previously, and said the insight they got from the art-based processes provided them with more “acceptance of how I work - coming from an area which is often perceived as being structured and systematic”. The participant acknowledged that they don’t really work that way and reflected:

I work in bursts, especially with my research where I have periods of nothingness and then a burst of creativity. I always gave myself a hard time about my way of working and now I just relax and my research has improved. (focus group interview, November 3, 2006)

This participant felt they could clearly make a connection with their change in attitude about how they work from their exposure to the Management Jazz program.

Specifically related to the illustrated Prototype artful event, another participant commented:

The ability to construct a device with a total stranger was a worthy exercise for me, I associated it with my own creative, interactive and communication skills, I found myself more motivated to incorporate these skills into my daily working life, for example, adopt constraints with creativity and always improvise. (personal email, 20 September 2006)

While another commented “although I have lots of constraints on my work I can still be creative in my solutions within those boundaries” (personal email, 9 October 2006).

Other comments included “artists don’t always know what they are going to paint onto a blank canvas” wherein the previous participant said:

That's exactly what I got, like a painter wouldn't come and say I will capture this, I know what I'm painting and then I will have a break. I think it was interesting especially reading an article about research and art and I thought wow, that's interesting that I work like this especially in a profession where we're not supposed to be like this (focus group interview, November 3, 2006).

These participants reflect both their increased capabilities for change by modifying their ways of working, and by removing a constraint and finding that their collaborative capabilities improved. Such arts-based learning products as this open these participants up to experiencing both the artful process and the application/product part of the learning wave. Recognising how they really do 'work' assisted in creating new artful work metaphors rather than staying in a taken-for-granted performance situation.

These participant comments offer interesting insights into how it is possible to get stuck in a particular way of working or in the perception that one area of work should be or is more creative than another. It also highlights that given an alternative way of looking at things we can make decisions or think about what we do from another perspective. The comments also reflect increased participant capability, artful event awareness, and application of artful product, bridging to the next wave in an ongoing transformative artful learning trajectory.

Throughout the Management Jazz program these experiences were based on practice and subsequent innovative application, especially through movement away from performance of oneself within work boundaries, to self as self at work and elsewhere (Kerr-Edwards 1994). The desired product of such a development program is a dynamism based on what Rosalind Williams (2003, 26) of Massachusetts Institute of Technology discussed as "the vitality...[which] lies in breaking down boundaries, keeping things mixed up, developing a lot of interfaces, going with the flow and creating 'self-made' habitats." The designing of artful learning and practice also provides understanding of what perceptions may change for the participant. Such new understandings regarding work and individual capability-building provide for improved creative self-management of constraints within the habitat of the collaborative work world.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The question posited here, for at least management education, is how creativity and transformative learning can be unlocked as professionals prepare for various roles in the 21st Century world? We have, in this paper, presented evidence and example that the artful process provides both an opportunity for learning and insight and a space in which people can

explore ways of working outside their usual working constraints. The arts-based learning experience assists people to think about what they do from a different perspective. They become aware that they are learning and working in different ways that also provide enhanced capacity and new product. Transformational arts-based learning offers capacity building of both critical reflection and imagination in a creative process. Artful learning events and subsequent capability building develops relational awareness, confidence and self-knowledge.

The pedagogical approach in the arts-based program reflects an opportunity for experimentation, exploration and discovery of the use and application of artful processes. The pedagogy allows for exploration and discovery through a learning process that provides space for consideration of whatever is possible within any particular theory or system, particularly as a process of managing and expanding creative constraint.

The quality of where one ends up as a manager or participant in an organisation is based on both the depth of the individual's capacity and capability, and the organisation's ability to support and nurture that person. Such enhanced awareness of possibility and critical doing, learning and knowing, as a product, is then available to enhance critical thinking and innovative creativity.

This paper provides evidence that artful, critical awareness is desirable in the practice of business and management education through arts-based learning. As Gibb (2006, 10-11) says:

Knowledge work in particular involves doing and trying, not planning then acting. When people are involved in a process of doing and trying without a blueprint to guide them,trying again...getting things wrong, [but leading] to high-quality choices [they are] involved in artful making.

The authors conclude that it is in the arts-business nexus where we can facilitate learning that builds creative, resilient, counter-intuitive and artful leaders. It is also in the engagement and creative alliance with the arts where both business and management education can explore and discover artful approaches to building creativity and innovation in collaborative relationships, and in leading management activities within more open habitats, using creative constraint.

We suggest there is opportunity for further research that measures the outcomes of arts-based learning, and opportunity for identification of other illustrative learning programs that embed arts-based learning in critical and aesthetic pedagogical processes.

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