Shifting the boundaries of professionalism: empowering learners and teachers through assessing creativity during a collaborative CARA2 project.

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Abstract

Three schools from the Reading area - a girls secondary school, a special needs school and a primary school won a bid to conduct a collaborative project under the auspices of the ‘Creativity and Action Research Awards Two’ projects managed by CapeUK. The project focus was the application of ‘De Bono’s Thinking Hats’ to the use of dance as a medium for creative learning with pupils whose linguistic capabilities were very limited. The project enabled the schools to work with externally appointed ‘creative partners’ and a university mentor. A formative assessment tool was developed resulting from collaborative working that used theory to inform practice and creative reflection upon practice. During the process the professional identities of the teachers evolved as they focused ever more closely on personalised approaches to learning and empowering learners through sharing the responsibility for learning with them. Effective collaboration by the project partners created motivation and promoted values of care, trust and ambition between the partners and the learners as the teachers became ever surprised by the increasingly high and sustainable levels of achievement by the learners.

Introduction

A consortium of schools in the Reading area were successful in the ‘Creativity Action Research Awards, 2006’ organised and administered by Cape UK. The ‘Action Research’ Awards scheme enables teachers to work creatively with learners. The project group consisted of a girls’ secondary school, a special school and a primary school. The schools had to apply competitively for the awards and commit as ‘whole schools’ to the project. The author’s role was as a university mentor working in support of the project team enabling a ‘research led’ approach and acting as a critical friend. An external dance company were commissioned to lead the ‘learning’ activities with the children.

The stimulus for submitting the research proposal was de Bono’s ‘Six Thinking Hats’ and their potential use as an analytical and creative tool. The project was undertaken with eighteen pupils, six from each of the three schools involved. The pupils ranged in age from eight – fourteen years and all had varying degrees of speech and language difficulties. The project ran during the Spring Term, starting in March 2007 with a total of ten, two-hour workshops carried out over six weeks.

The group began by aiming to be able to identify children’s creative responses and relate them to de Bono’s six expressed modes of thinking using dance as the medium for teaching and learning. They subsequently demonstrated ways of
broadening, clarifying or simplifying creative decision-making and behaviour. The approach adopted by the group supported by the mentor was to engage in the processes of ‘ideation, action and reflection’ in holistic, iterative ways. This was ultimately shaped into creating the following research ‘opportunities’:

- To establish a way of assessing children’s creativity through dance.
- To use assessment data to plan interventions that will broaden what children are able to bring to creative activities.
- To engender a sense of belonging to a creative community for the adults and children involved.

The team developed new methods and instruments in support of formative assessment and in so doing, enhancing the creative potential of the teachers involved. A range of personal and professional benefits were accrued by the participating teachers during the course of the project that resulted in more confident, more competent professionals. A contract extension to the project allowed reflection to take place on the in-service value of the project experience.

The professional context for creative learning

The terms profession and professional with regard to teaching and education are as much debated today as they have always been. Hoyle & John (1995) argued that they are essentially contested concepts. Law & Glover (2000) remind us that the terms hide a multiplicity of perspectives amongst different stakeholder groups and interpretations often relate to public culture at the time of discussion.

Barak & Doppelt (1998) note that:

> In the era of information explosion, change, dynamism and pluralism, there is an increased need for education to equip the school graduate with higher order cognitive skills. Future society may particularly reward those who not only possess logical thinking, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, but are also enterprising, innovative original and creative. (p. 1)

Schools as communities have many roles at many levels. Increasingly the ability of individuals to grasp informal educational opportunities is playing a role in the achievement of ‘life success’. Schools are concerned with promoting social and cultural norms; individual care and improvement. They are even agencies for improving societies in a better world in addition to equipping learners with their academic bedrock. The current debate on school improvement is often concerned with three areas (amongst others):

- classroom improvement;
- the teacher as a learner;
- school effectiveness.

Judgements about the work of learners and teachers are made by many agencies, for example, educationalists, parents, government, industry and commerce and other lobbies who interpret domains in ways that serve their interests and value systems. Each makes judgements based on what they perceive to be in the best
interests of the learners, in relation to their future roles as citizens and participants in complex communities and society as a whole. However, teachers are the mediators of learning in the settings of schools and classrooms. Teachers need to be in possession of the tools to plan meaningful classroom experiences to equip a ‘learning culture’. They then need to be participative and reflective about the classroom activities in order to create the relationships that enable learners to be equipped with competencies that enable them to face uncertain futures, calculate and manage risks and turn ‘problems into opportunities’ in their lives.

Handy (1995) posits the view that schools are concerned to prioritise the maintenance of cycles and structures, rather than moving towards the ‘new age’, and are resistant to change. Consequently, schools can be uncomfortable places for creativity and innovation even though there are well recognised exceptions to the status quo. In the post-1988 Education Reform Act period, the teachers’ role has become increasingly subject to compliance with conservative pressures to conform to politically mediated targets and approaches, with little room for discovery or innovation. Assessment led approaches have been particularly restrictive in classrooms. Projects such as Royal Society of Arts (RSA) sponsored ‘Opening Minds’ have tried to establish learning environments in classrooms that encourage the ‘creative growth’ of individual pupils (RSA, 2008).

**Creative and lateral thinking in classrooms**

The starting point for the project by the group of project teachers was De Bono’s (1992) six thinking hats technique (pp. 77-229). This has become a popular ‘method taught in schools to introduce groups of learners to ways of efficiently collaborating to solve problems and create ‘best fit’ solutions. The technique itself is not one solely designed to find creative solutions but can involve creativity. De Bono differentiates identifies lateral thinking as a means to change concepts and perception and his ‘thinking hats’ tool was devised as a method of achieving this in social and cultural settings. He suggests that creative thinking strongly overlaps with this in that it is concerned with creating new concepts and / or new perceptions (1992, pp. 52-56).

Csikzentmihalyi (in Feldman, et.al., 1995), believes that:

...focusing on the individual alone when studying creativity is like studying how an apple tree produces its fruit by only looking at the tree and ignoring the sun and the soil. (p. 147)

The majority of people make little impact overall on any field, but are responsible for creative acts and can behave creatively, even though their efforts might only be recognised by a few. These might include friends, family, interested outsiders, those with a special concern for the creator or even be solely for the purposes of the creator themselves. In current society, there is much more emphasis being placed on the need for ‘creativity for all’. Seltzer and Bentley (1999), in writing about the ‘Creative Age’ state that:

We believe the key challenge is to shift the focus away from what people should know and onto what they should be able to do with their knowledge. This is central to developing creative ability (p. 25).

As a result of this growing recognition, a number of authors have described the
process of promoting creativity. LeBoeuf (1994) re-published his book on creative thinking several times which unravels methods of promoting creativity. De Bono (1992) in his book on Serious Creativity argues convincingly and methodically that creativity can be taught if attitudes are appropriate:

There is a creative and constructive attitude. There is a willingness to look for new ideas and to consider the new ideas that are turned up by others (p. 239).

He suggests the following as a set of ‘basic attitudes’ are related to creative techniques for everyday creativity:

- the creative pause – a willingness to stop and think;
- challenge – not criticism but a belief that there are better ways of solving a problem;
- green hat – looking for alternatives;
- simple focus – a deliberate search for a particular solution;
- alternatives – searching for a broad range of alternatives;
- provocation – when the culture of creativity is established, a willingness to consider strange or unlikely ideas;
- listening – gaining ‘tuned judgement’ helping others to realise creative potential;
- sensitisation – paying attention to possible instances of creativity;
- training – taught formal techniques of lateral thinking;
- programs and structures – organisations features required to promote and encourage creativity (pp. 239 - 242).

If teaching can support creative learning then assessment techniques can be developed that can scaffold and enhance that learning.

The social and economic cultures in which individuals work, in addition to the psychological factors, play an important role in the recognition of creative contributions to any field. Judgements about creativity cannot be separated from the more general norms and value judgements in a culture. A fundamental mistake that has often been made is centred on the assumption that creativity can be ‘tested’ by searching for one or more attributes in a focused, rational, way. There is much debate about the value and type of testing that is appropriate when creative learning is taking place. Shouksmith (1970) discusses the high levels of understanding required to interpret any kind of creativity testing stressing freedom from restriction as a basis for creative production and notes that:

Guilford (1950) himself never intended that (his) tests should be regarded as composite measures reflecting all aspects of creativity (p. 200).

In the UK the culture of ‘high stakes’ testing has distorted public perception about the methods and value associated with different types of testing procedure. More enlightened thinking recognises that creative individuals show the desire to create new order by breaking down existing order. This takes place through: constructing and testing new knowledge; holding notions of changeable reality; and working with detail and complexity within a domain and that measurement of this is firstly difficult and secondly of questionable worth. New individual and social realities are constructed and reconstructed in the remorseless change construed as ‘culture’. It is
through classroom culture that we judge the qualities and attributes associated with creativity and generate the opportunities to promote it through teaching and learning.

Developing emotional intelligence with children with speech and language impairments through creative dance

The teachers in the project had noticed from their classroom practice:

“that pupils with severe communication difficulties often responded cautiously to creative tasks and we were eager to explore the reasons why. We felt that movement might be the ideal medium for an exploration of our children’s creativity because it does not rely on abstract language and we had observed how responsive our pupils are to kinaesthetic activities. We were also keen to consider the importance of the ‘creative situation’ and aimed to explore how collaborative work between children and adults from three different schools might facilitate creativity, foster a sense of community and enhance children’s confidence and self esteem” (Stephenson, 2007).

In educational settings, Seltzer and Bentley (1999), believe that:

…creative learners need a wider array of contexts within which to apply their skills and knowledge. They also need ‘teachers’ or guides who can expose them to the strategies for thinking about the connections between their experiences. (p. 29)

Vygotsky (1978) recognises the developmental nature of knowledge and that individual’s capacities for increasing knowledge are also developmental. It is recognised by Feldman et.al.(1995) that to be creative, individuals have to come to believe that they can change the world and add to its knowledge. Intrinsic motivation, in addition to supportive frameworks at least creates the opportunity for individuals to realise their creative potential.

In the context of dance, presuppositions were made by the research group that:

- There is a relationship between thought and action and by observing children’s movement it is possible to discern what kind of thinking they are applying to a creative task.
- In order to assess creativity through dance we need to first identify the raw materials (the movement vocabulary) that children bring with them.
- There is a need to understand and appreciate that a child’s movement vocabulary will reflect their experience of being in the world and that intervention must therefore be considerate of this.
- Appropriate intervention can facilitate new ways of experiencing one’s body which in turn extends the possibilities for using the body expressively and creatively (Stephenson, 2007).

The assessment tools that were developed were based on a set of values shared by the teachers that were concerned to promote individuals achievement, build esteem and construct a ‘creative confident’ community of learners (Fautley & Savage, 2007; p. 77). Note that assessment processes need to be reflexive and teachers need to use creative responses to respond appropriately. It is the ability of
teachers to use their basic senses, for example of watching and listening, that enables them to become clued into the creative work and creative potential of their learners. It is in this arena that teachers need to feel they have the permission to assess creatively in order to respond directly to the reflexive accounts about what the learner needs are. Ashcroft & James (1999; pp 89-108) state how important it is for teachers to have a good grasp of the context and the problems they are trying to solve before being creative with assessment. Fryer (1996) in her important research study of creative teaching and learning finds that there can never be definitive assessment criteria for assessing creativity because creative work necessarily extends accepted norms. Nor is it easy to agree who can legitimately assess which is why to be affective assessment methods needs to grow within the learning culture and the learning community where all of the participants understand the purposes and are clear about the goals.

In this project, having the external professional dance partners involved in every stage of the process helped to fuel enthusiasm for the work on the part of teachers and learners. It gave great depth to the dance experience that in turn injected higher quality into the different reflexive dialogues that took place and the resulting shared understanding. It also enabled a clear focus to the learning journey no matter who was leading and who was following.

‘New’ Professionalism and professionality: impact upon teachers and learning

In education, much debate has always taken place about what professionalism means and stands for, Hargreaves & Goodson (1996, p.4) refer directly to the lack of consensus that surrounds it. This results from it being a concept that is socially and culturally constructed. Members of a profession form a ‘cultural group’ in any context and all professions. There will be elements of shared values, perceptions and codes of practice lying at the heart of this. These, particularly in the modern era are subject to reform and change, hence the associated values will change and so will the views of its members and those stakeholders who have an interest in the performance of associated professionals. An area of common perception however centres on relationship with ‘quality of service’. Professionality on the other hand is a term defined by Hoyle (1976) who defined it as ‘the knowledge, skills and procedures that teachers use in their work’ (p. 138). He recognised and defined extended professionality where teachers were empowered within the context of their professionalism and restricted professionalism where teachers’ judgment-making is limited and undertaken by other agencies – usually those with policy-making power. Evans (2008) argues that a hallmark of the modern era in re-defining professionalism has been to set narrower more procedurally based boundaries for teachers (that many would argue has de-professionalised teachers). Beck (2008) discusses in detail whether modern recent educational developments in the UK has been about re-professionalising or de-professionalising (pp. 119-143) and that an aim has been to create a compliant profession with the ‘discourse of standards’ at the centre with the intention to marginalise or even silence competing ideas about educational development and reform (p. 138). Frowe (2008, p.49) believes that there has been an attempt to capture in a series of propositions something that cannot be exhaustively captured.
This restricts the number and levels of ‘teacher judgment’ required. Evans (2008, p. 31) argues that educational reform in the UK set out to change the professionalism of teachers and has succeeded in doing so, but it has only succeeded in a ‘functional way’ and achieved limited success in raising standards and achievement. This should not be surprising as in redefining professionalism, Government demands that it controls the ‘fine detail’ responses that constitute the day-to-day activities in classrooms. Teachers therefore constantly need to update themselves on what their expected response to these situations should be. It is this updating their knowledge of ‘Government approved policy’ that has comprised ‘accepted professional development’. Usually undertaken by ‘approved agencies’ to ensure consistency in the delivery of accepted policy. Hoyle & Wallace (2005; pp. 4-5) however note that the expected success with Government reform has not been realised and has led to widespread dissatisfaction. Typical of the procedural tools adopted to force school improvement has been school inspection. According to Ehren & Visscher (2008, p. 224) These have typically enabled schools to make small changes to their procedures but have been ineffective in facilitating the more complex changes usually required to ‘make a difference’.

Evans (2008, p. 35) stresses that central to the raising standards and increasing society growth capacity must be professional development for teachers. This is echoed by Brighouse (2008) who summarises the ways in which successive recent Governments has spent most time and energy engineering ways to effect and control entry into the profession and have largely ignored the development needs of the existing teaching force.

Essentially, what has been factored out of the professional equation is trust in the qualities a professional holds based upon their knowledge, skills and capabilities (Frowe, 2008). Decisions of any kind can be held up for scrutiny and publically examined. Potentially, final decisions made about fitness for purpose are not based on deeper knowledge but on what the ‘average stakeholder feeling’ might be. Of course it is accepted that the mark of a good professional will be to give an evidence – based defence of a decision. The extent of the situations in schools where teachers decision-making is trusted have been intentionally minimised through successive policy-making over the last twenty years. The culture of educational institutions, through the way they are governed, clearly convey a sense of deskilled and un-trusted professionalism on the part of teachers.

Professionals in any area clearly need to be regulated and held accountable for their actions, but what is at the heart of good teaching? It is the trust that a learner has in the teacher’s ability to prepare him / her for their future world – not the present one. Trust always involves vulnerability (Frowe, 2008; p. 43) but if the basis for trust is built solidly into the way teachers are trained, opportunities for abrogation of trust are minimised and the discretionary powers given to a professional are amply rewarded as in other international high performing systems such the Finnish one. Frowe ( p. 52) also argues that innovation and experimentation is encouraged by the freedom granted by trust, leading to mutually beneficial opportunities that would be missed in the absence of it.

Aubusson et al (2008) recognise how important close nurturing is to generate and maintain professional learning communities (p 134). Teacher learning is at the heart of this coupled with teacher research. Because of the complexity of schools and teacher communities there are no simple methods to instigate or drive the process.
Aubusson et al. (2008) describe how ‘Action learning’ that places an emphasis on inquiry-led action can help schools build the capacity to improve. Utilising such approaches in a bolt-on way however can never achieve sustainable change. Within the context of an extensive literature of change management such an approach can stimulate and contribute to sustainable change over time resulting in large scale shifts in values and attitudes.

Research methodology - a case study approach: rationale

Patton (1980) advises that:

The strategic mandate to be holistic, inductive and naturalistic means getting close to the phenomena under study…. Engaging in holistic-inductive research through naturalistic inquiry represents a comprehensive strategy for describing and understanding human service and education program that includes specification of the role of the researcher in conducting the evaluation (p. 43).

As the mentor to the activity I was by definition involved in the action. I was therefore in an ideal position to penetrate the worlds of understanding of the participants. My role was defined to aid them to identify and tease out their own meanings of what they perceived creativity to be in relation to both their personal and ‘school-based’ lives. Then subsequently to turn this into meaningful programmes for the learners. Additionally, there was a need to stimulate reflection on their experience in order to move towards conclusions that assimilated feelings and affect, in addition to cognition. To reflect latterly on the activities of the project has demanded the need to determine ‘a distance’ to be defined in my own thinking about the way the participants have evolved their understanding wrapped inextricably with the pattern of their actions and thoughts. Undoubtedly a limitation of this study is that I am unable to unravel my own influence upon the decision-making and development processes. Littledyke (1996) postulates that:

..people create their own understanding from particular experience and the resulting ideas may or may not be similar to other people’s ideas. (p. 124)

A strength however is that my role as the researcher was to reflect holistically on the factors influencing development as the progress of the project ensued. This included reflecting upon the growth, values and attitudes of the participants.

Generating data that are likely to have sufficient depth and give sufficient understanding of the contexts in which respondents operate led to an early decision to adopt a ‘case study’ approach. A case study is a bounded system developed over a period in time during which qualitative data is collected which is rich in context and which involves a wide range of sources for obtaining information. The conditions set by Cresswell (1998, p. 63), for ensuring the worthwhileness and completeness of a case study were cross-referenced including clarity of boundaries, access to depth of information and terms of reference for data-gathering. Yin (1989, p. 54) re-enforces both the importance of the context dependency of case studies and that any generalisability needs to take into account the particular constraints of the case or cases. The major object for data analysis was that as Cresswell (1998)
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advises: ‘...it is a matter of pulling data apart then putting it back together again’ (sic) (p. 154).

Yin (1989, pp. 146 - 151) records the following conditions for an exemplary case study:

- significance – a basis for the phenomena to be examined must be assured;
- completeness – exhaustive efforts on the part of the researcher must be proved to uncover the available evidence;
- sufficiency – the evidence must be present for readers to reach independent judgements about the phenomena;
- engaging style – the report should be written in such a way as to be sufficiently compelling and seductive for the reader.

It is important for the voices of the participants in a report to reach the audience. It should also allow for a range of alternative explanations and conclusions to be drawn, backed up by reference to evidence.

**Research design**

The project itself took place over a period of approximately 12 months and during this time records of meetings and discussions were kept that contained the judgments and suggested innovations and developments at each stage in time. Video captured the activities of learners working in workshops with teachers and the external partners. The project co-ordinator also generated an intermediate report and a final ‘summative’ report for the commissioning agency: Cape-UK. These materials were used as ‘waymarkers for progress’ during the research. Given the iterative nature of the project itself, research tools were needed that could capture the essences of shifts in the competences, values and attitudes of participating teachers. The tools created were a videoed focus group discussion constructed around the following questions. The responses were analysed and summarised in Table 1:

| Q1 | What is the role of a teacher in a classroom? |
| Q2 | What are teachers preparing learners for? |
| Q3 | What types of relationships should a teacher aim to build with their students? |
| Q4 | How does a teacher get the best from their students? |
| Q5 | What types of personal qualities are best suited to a teacher’s role? |
| Q6 | How can teachers work most effectively together to obtain the best for their students? |
| Q7 | How should teachers approach the task of selecting the best teaching approaches and curriculum for students? |
| Q8 | What should be the role of learners in classrooms? |
| Q9 | How do we best measure what students achieve in classrooms? |
| Q10 | Is it possible for us as teachers to account for the learning our students achieve from other people and other situations? |
| Q11 | What responsibilities do students have, and should have for their own learning in schools? |
| Q12 | What factors limit the achievement of students in schools and in society? |

On completion of the discussion participants were asked to quantify their experience as teachers and complete ‘values grids’ that recorded shifts in their beliefs about the ‘role of the teacher’ (Table 2) and ‘attitudes of learners’ (Table 3). The elements used in these tables were developed by Davies (2002). Views were also sought about any personal impacts that the project had made on individuals to ensure that participants had
brought their responses to the fore in a complete and open way. Hoyle’s notion of extended professionalism was used as a framework for analysing the results (1981).

It was originally intended that the process be replicated in each school with each participant running interviews and collecting values grids. However, due to pressure of work on the participants this phase was eliminated.

**Building professionalism through action, reflection and collaboration**

The project proposal was initiated by participant A who was a special school junior school class teacher / dance co-ordinator with six years teaching experience and a background in background: in dance, psychology and secondary teaching. She was project co-ordinator throughout the project. Participant B was Deputy Headteacher of a mainstream primary school had 21 years teaching experience with specialisms in literacy, SEN and DT. Her background was in nursery and primary teaching. She was a remodelling advisor. Participant C was a dance and PE teacher in a girls’ secondary school and had 3 years teaching experience. Her background was in PE and dance. The title of the project evolved over the period of the project into: “Body Talk: using movement to unlock the creative potential in children with speech and language difficulties”.

Participant A submitted the original proposal that combined an interest in the potential application of de Bono’s ‘thinking hats’ technique to helping children with speech and communication difficulties gain self esteem through learning dance and visual art. The technique was decided upon as it appeared to indicate how confusion and uncertainty can be managed pro-actively to build a sense of belonging for them. The climate influencing the methods of work at the beginning is one where teachers are used to following prescriptive curriculum requirements; being short of time due to the demands of responding to excessive bureaucratic tasks and creating classroom management strategies that occupy and manage learners’ attention. The early meetings consisted of struggles to make sense of theory and use personal experience to generate new ideas and possible innovations that would address core concerns. It took some time to reveal the range of core values and what the teachers really believed were the major purposes of education in the contexts we were working in. By the end of the project the main outcomes were recorded as:

- “partners recognised and appreciated each others’ strengths and areas of expertise
- an open and honest dialogue was set up in which it was safe to question and challenge each others ideas and approaches
- there was a shared commitment and sense of responsibility with regards to the project’s success
- there was a real sense of ‘learning together’ as new ideas emerged
- being part of a group ensured progression and prevented stagnation.

We have found that the partnership between teachers has:-

- strengthened the links between the three schools involved and given pupils and adults a sense of belonging to a community that extends beyond their own school
engendered a fuller understanding of creativity as a result of the different perspectives that each teacher brings.

We have found that the partnership between teachers and creative partners has:-

- fuelled teachers’ enthusiasm for dance and the ways in which it can be used with children
- enabled teachers and dancers to view creativity from each other’s perspective and in so doing move towards a shared understanding
- supported dancers in their understanding of how best to work with children with speech and language difficulties.

We have found that the partnership between teachers and mentor has:-

- provided teachers with a sounding board to test out ideas and potential actions
- enabled teachers to receive prompt and incisive feedback on project developments
- given teachers a safety net in the sense that there is somewhere to turn when the way forward seems unclear
- provided the mentor with insights into how teachers from different schools can work together
- fuelled the mentor’s interest in examining the impact that the project is having upon the values, attitudes and professional behaviour of those directly and indirectly involved” Stephenson (2007).

**Focus group interview results**

**Table 1**

The following question grid consists of a summary of the responses of participants during the focus group interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question number</th>
<th>Question discussed</th>
<th>Keywords and phrases used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What is the role of a teacher in a classroom?</td>
<td>Able to observe; flexible; enabling the learning; teacher and learner together as equals; pupils feel the teacher is also learning; reflecting with learners creating learning potential; children can teach you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>What are teachers preparing learners for?</td>
<td>Preparing for life; good self-esteem; take their own lessons; independent; sense of own agency; work in a range of contexts; things not easily assessable; taking and managing power; being innovative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What types of relationships should a teacher aim to build with their students?</td>
<td>Caring and secure environment; manage ‘negative energy’ release; clear expectations; clear focus on learning; freedom within clear boundaries; managing our emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How does a teacher get the best from their students?</td>
<td>Being emotionally open; going</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>What types of personal qualities are best suited to a teacher’s role?</td>
<td>Empathetic; listen and learn about the children – reflect on what you find; be reflective about yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>How can teachers work most effectively together to obtain the best for their students?</td>
<td>Seeing how each other works; open professional non-judgemental dialogue; gain vocabulary together; be supportive; accept that others might not share values or objectives; reflect together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>How should teachers approach the task of selecting the best teaching approaches and curriculum for students?</td>
<td>Meet the needs of students – lack of freedom is currently a problem to make the curriculum relevant and meaningful; engage children in curriculum planning; be flexible; draw on their strengths and interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>What should be the role of learners in classrooms?</td>
<td>Build responsibility on them; be accountable for their own learning; being responsible for each others learning. We as teachers are role models for pupils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>How do we best measure what students achieve in classrooms?</td>
<td>Identifying and supporting their strengths; balancing qualitative and quantitative approaches; assessment needs to developmental more than ‘high stakes’ summative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Is it possible for us as teachers to account for the learning our students achieve from other people and other situations?</td>
<td>We can’t define success criteria for everything we teach; the emphasis on different types of assessment is key. Giving permission for pupils to take risks; help them with skills – give them confidence to ask questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>What responsibilities do students have, and should have for their own learning in schools?</td>
<td>Create the opportunities for them to behave like teachers and they will take the same responsibilities. Ask pupils how their partners are rather than how they are; manage carefully the ‘release of responsibility and power’ to the pupils; self-selecting learning groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>What factors limit the achievement of students in schools and in society?</td>
<td>If pupils are not allowed to ‘follow through’ their projects; if they are not encouraged to innovate and this is not celebrated and shared; expectations that are too low or badly managed learning steps. Teachers limit children with pre-conceived ideas - children always have the ability to shock with what they can do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Values grid results**

Table 2 is a summary of the way in which participants judged the emphasis of their professional roles to have changed in importance as teachers. Table 3 summarises
the teachers views about changes in the attitudes of the learners during the project period:

| Attitudes of learners: creating the environment in classrooms and schools for the following | Changes in perceived level of importance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A lot more | More | No change | Less | A lot less |
| 1 Natural curiosity and reflectiveness of approach to learning; | 3 | | | | |
| 2 Learner are motivated and are single-mindedness to improve; | | 3 | | | |
| 3 Learners are effective in their exploration of ideas prior to their action; | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| 4 Self-monitoring and reflexivity is embedded in the learning; | | 2 | | | |
| 5 Learners are able to accommodate support from all sources within the school; | 2 | 1 | | | |
| 6 Learners are able to accommodate support from external agents and other learning situations. | 2 | 1 | | | |

Table 2

Table 3

| The role of the teacher | Changes in perceived level of importance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A lot more | More | No change | Less | A lot less |
| 1 Promotion of secure trusting relationships; | 1 | 2 | | | |
| 2 Creating a variety of contexts for learning; | | 3 | | | |
| 3 Encouraging learners’ risk-taking; | | 3 | | | |
| 4 Helping to manage learners emotions; | 2 | 1 | | | |
| 5 Taking risks with learners’ learning to encourage standards; | 1 | 2 | | | |
| 6 Encouraging learners’ originality and innovation; | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| 7 Being self-critical as a teacher; | 1 | 2 | | | |
| 8 Balancing directed and non-directed approaches; | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| 9 Selecting ‘content’ for lessons that reflects learners’ needs; | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| 10 Scaffolding learners’ mental modelling; | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 11 Possessing relevant up-to-date knowledge of subject; | | 2 | 1 | | |
| 12 Possessing relevant up-to-date skills in subject; | | 2 | 1 | | |
| 13 Being personally creative as a teacher; | 2 | 1 | | | |
| 14 Promoting sceptical thinking with learners; | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 15 Encouraging learner’s self-expression; | 2 | 1 | | | |
| 16 Promoting and encouraging reflective questioning; | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| 17 Encouraging learners to challenge assumptions about set. | 2 | 1 | | 13 | |
Analysis

In 1981, Hoyle developed the notion of extended professionality, the data from this research is analysed using his framework:

1. **Skills derived from mediation between theory and practice**

   The start of the project was characterised by group meetings where concepts were fuzzy and the teachers feeling a) they didn’t have the time to reference necessary research and b) were not sure how to go about it, hence were limited in confidence. For a while, frustrations existed in not being able to come up with quick clear solutions to the problems. Teachers struggled with their emotions to deal with this. In Table 2, responses concerned with changes in ‘emotional scaffolding’ showed some of the greatest shifts in perception in teachers ‘before and after’ values (elements 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7). The importance of using theory to inform practice and creating new theory from practice was recognised and the necessary skills developed to perform in this way resulting in more embedded attitudes about its importance and the competences. The co-ordinator particularly became adept at leading the group discussion and using theoretical evidence to justify actions and results. The final written report confirms this precisely. The external partners existed as an ‘expert group’ associated with the theoretical dimension that became integrated into project management in an easy, evidence-based way as the project progressed. Stephenson (2007) states this in her summary report. Discussion about specialist knowledge issues and pedagogical knowledge became more analytical and finely tuned as a result of the close collaboration and continuous reflection conducted throughout the project and evidenced in the quality of discussion in Table 1.

2. **Perspectives embracing broader social contexts of education**

The close focus on the learners and their particular needs became more potent as the project developed. Each workshop resulted in new levels of awareness about the potential and capacities of this particular cohort of learners who carried in some cases severe learning needs. The teachers were allowed to observe the powerful social and cultural interactions between the learners, themselves and the creative partners. Managing and changing the social and cultural contexts enabled the strengths of the learners to be built upon and their areas of need to be addressed in non-threatening innovative ways. In the values grid, all of the participants agreed that creating new contexts for learning was a category where their values had adjusted most positively. In Table 3, two of the participants recognised the important role of ‘external agents’ to the educational experience of learners (element 6). Creating a supportive climate is recognised to be crucial to securing effective, empowering learning. The discussion summarised in Table 1 emphasised the responses identified in Qs. 3, 6 and 11.

3. **Classroom events perceived in relation to school goals**
The terms of reference of the CARA2 projects was that a ‘whole school commitment’ was required to be made in order for school bids to be considered. This meant that in two cases teachers with the power to implement change were involved in leading the project. In the third case– the larger school – the participant was a specialist who taught dance. However, in Stephenson’s summary, she noted how the strengths of the links between the schools had been increased and the sense of belonging to a bigger community had been enhanced. This of course bears directly on the ethos of the project schools and the corporate identity felt.

4. Teaching methodology compared with that of others

Learners and their needs became the focal point for all discussion and action by the teachers. The ‘core value’ was constructed around respect for learners and creating the freedom for them as individuals to engage, experiment and learn. The critical role of the creative partners who as the co-ordinator stated:

“enabled teachers and dancers to view creativity from each other’s perspective and in so doing move towards a shared understanding.”

Feelings of success came from creating the supportive environment for learning together and then seeing children perform beyond expectations. This in turn fed back into the psyche of the participants realising that what had been achieved resulted from a ‘team effort’. The participants therefore learnt from each other – both in terms of subject (dance) knowledge and pedagogic knowledge. Participants gained such confidence from this that they were prepared to be self-critical in an open way creating a culture of self-improvement (Table 1, Qs. 6 & 7). This enhanced personal creativity (identified in Table 2, Q 13).

5. Value placed on collaboration

In Table 1, Q 6, a strong sense of collaborative working is conveyed. The teachers building up a sense of professional collegiality where they ‘innovate together’, face new challenges and deal with the issues and problems that arise. They lost the sense of fear generated through working alone, feeling insecure and inadequate. The shared professional experience gained through running the workshops together elicited the response from the co-ordinator who stated that:

“an open and honest dialogue was set up in which it was safe to question and challenge each others ideas and approaches”.

The ethos of collaboration is clearly illustrated in Table 1, Q11 centring on how learners are induced into taking care of each other.

6. High involvement in non-professional activities

The changes in practice associated with the elements identified in Table 3 indicates recognition of the fact that ‘learning is not something solely located in classrooms and controlled by teachers’. These participants felt empowered
to challenge boundaries; to be resourceful in finding new resources, new opportunities not clearly quantified in existing professional guidelines. This in turn questions the purposes of defining the nature of ‘teacher professionalism’ in precise terms if as often occurs in current practice. Professionalism defines what cannot happen rather than what can. Risk-taking is a related area rated highly in Table 2, Qs. 3 & 5 requiring the need to challenge orthodoxy and existing boundaries. The learners in this project were individuals whose development had been stalled by their experiences received up to the project. The project enabled them to find the appropriate cognitive and affective tools to achieve and develop. This came on the back of relationships with the project group as people, as much as their relationship with them as professionals.

7. Frequent reading of professional literature

The initial motivation for the project came from de Bono’s ideas on lateral thinking – in recent years, there has been ‘official’ encouragement to adapt some of de Bono’s techniques into classroom practice. With her background however, the co-ordinator recognised the importance of scholarship and literature to effective teaching. However, the climate of the time, where the power to influence the development of the curriculum and teaching and learning has been taken by Government and their chosen agencies, has resulted in teachers seeing little relevance in theory and not having the time to read. This has had the direct implication of weakening the understanding that teachers have of educational cause and effect and reducing the confidence of teachers when they try to justify actions and consequences in classrooms. In this project, with the guidance and support of the University mentor, selected literature informing actions and practice building the confidence amongst the participants that their approaches were evidence-based and linked to educational purposes, not political purposes. As the project developed, the ability of the project group to strategically use literature increased.

8. INSET includes theoretical courses

Brighouse (2008, p. 317) states that ‘an outstanding headteacher / principal is committed as his top priority to secure, promote and sustain the intellectual curiosity of staff as a key ingredient or school success’. In this sense, all INSET should flow from that principle. One of the things we know however, that combined with a view of professionalism that defines teacher professionalism in terms of pupil achievement of Government legislated standards, INSET has revolved around the management of the means to achieve this. Namely having little to do with the holistic development of intellect or the stimulation of curiosity. This project however was categorised by increasing levels of curiosity as the outcomes of the project stimulated greater levels of thought built around the reactions of the pupils (Table 3 responses). This formed the hub for inquiry, theoretical investigation and interest. Towards the end of the project, revolving around the role of formative assessment. The meetings with the project partners, guided by the mentor were all characterised by questions, enquiry, clarification, deduct. The summative view of the INSET role played was expressed by the co-ordinator in the final report:
“provided teachers with a sounding board to test out ideas and potential actions
enabled teachers to receive prompt and incisive feedback on project developments
given teachers a safety net in the sense that there is somewhere to turn when the way forward seems unclear.”

Email exchanges often occurred in the follow-up period to the meetings where participants had had the time to consult literature and frame more ideas. Hence the ‘process-led’ elements summarised in Tables 2 & 3 were continuously being probed, investigated targeted and reflected upon. Outcomes in terms of targets became transient reference points rather than an end game.

9. Teaching is seen as a rational activity

During the course of the project teachers gained a sense of control over their destiny tied to the educational destinies of their pupils through achieving the ‘basic attitudes’ defined by De Bono on page 3. Their main purpose was to feed the learning process and to face that task they needed to know their pupils. They thought in increasingly complex ways and began to be able to rationalise that complexity because they owned the process and therefore were able to make sense of it. Feeling frustration because of incompleteness or inadequate meeting time or too many priorities were occasionally motivators and sometimes de-motivators, so success was always driven by the ‘emotional agendas’ but as confidence in each other grew through development of shared understanding and effective collaborative practice so did competence and capacity to act in rational ways. Confidence in managing the uncertainty of the workshops was helped by recognition of the ways in which the pupils behaved as they shared responsibility for the learning with the teachers. Hence the teachers grew in stature as they realised they had precipitated a process where the pupils were acting autonomously.

Conclusion

This research is founded on a small scale project with clearly defined boundaries but extensive ambition. It shows that if you trust teachers and they are properly trained to the highest level possible and there are continuous opportunities to upgrade both subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge they will continue to raise their aspirations and abilities to perform as teachers. Their identity is so closely linked to the identity of the learners that in ‘best practice’ scenarios, performance of teachers and learners are inextricably linked, provided that the ‘processes of learning’ are at the heart of concern. The project outlines the ‘power and potential’ of creating social and cultural capacity when you change the working relationships between teachers and learners. Quantitatively defined targets might be useful to other stakeholders to take snapshot views of progress and achievement but teachers need to be immersed in collaborative practice with a clear focus on personalising the learning but must have the power to create the methods (the curriculum, the learning contexts and teaching and learning) to respond directly, in a planned way to the needs. We see very much in the UK over the past decade, a managerialist
system that has certainly achieved some notable successes concerning ‘normative performances.

This project is an example of how to promote high performance, through establishing emotional instability in teachers and pupils; about sharing ideas of what success means and motivating both teachers and learners. It gives a small indicator of what could be achieved if the political parameters of power and control are adjusted to accommodate and value the factors that release the creative potential in human beings.

References


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