CREATIVITY AND DEMOCRACY CONFERENCE

This paper looks at ways in which we have begun to broaden our curriculum to encourage the development of meta-cognitive abilities. I will firstly outline why this was important to address and then go on to discuss the measures we took to introduce intrapersonal intelligences as part of our curriculum.

Before we embarked on our project, we had been trying to resolve particular problems that had been emerging each year. To give you a bit of background, students work on briefs written and designed by staff throughout years 1-3 with a self-authored project every year, lasting about 2 weeks. In their 4th and final year, the student projects are mainly self-authored in negotiation with staff.

\*SLIDE- PROBLEM

A number of students were writing projects which appeared to be focussed towards the goal of gaining a good degree; work that echoed their idea of what their 4th year tutors would prefer them to make, rather than work that was built on their strengths and passions. \*SLIDE- OBSERVATIONS

For those who *were* making work they were passionate about, if this didn’t appear to match staff preferences or if they were getting less than fulsome feedback, they were becoming visibly, and vocally, anxious. \*SLIDE- getting it wrong

We were seeing students whom we had observed making experimental and exciting work earlier in the course becoming afraid of taking risks and becoming overwhelmed with perceived expectations. We were seeing students behaving like round pegs worrying about the square holes they thought they had to fit into.

The one to one tutorial is the way in which much of the teaching and learning takes place in the final year and it is that dynamic I am going to focus on.

\*SLIDE- secret destination

Many students had, in effect, gone from deep learners to strategic learners - to suit their perceptions of the marking system. Motivation was coming from external pressures and the perceived opinions of others.

It is important then to look at the communication between staff and students and to acknowledge the possibility of hierarchy and power relationship within that dialogue…to look at the external pressures that we, as staff can have an effect on.

Student communication with staff during the traditional tutorial comprises of students presenting work at different stages of its development.

Staff would then provide advice based on what they see.

We not only decide on the student grades, but can also be seen as the primary source of information and knowledge about the work and processes in this context. Students are reliant on our ability to understand them, their creative processes and their work.

\*DIAGRAM tutor/ student

In the traditional model, knowledge and expertise appears to flow vertically in one direction.

With expertise in both the subject area and in learning and teaching, the tutor sees the bigger picture of how creative processes function.

The student is ‘revealing’ their ideas, thoughts and work, putting them in a more vulnerable position, and also awaiting ‘the diagnosis’. Is it good? Am I any good? *However* sensitive to the hierarchy the tutor is, their judgements and advice are limited by the extent of their knowledge of the creative processes of the individual student.

We began to look at how we could help students to become more active participants in their own learning and motivations and also how we could deepen our understanding of the student’s creativity.

We considered how can this tutor/ learner process could be reconceptualised and replaced with something more organic, more mutual, more horizontal, where the power-balance can be shifted to give students genuine autonomy.

\*SLIDE- Etienne Wenger

The term ‘horizontalisation of learning’ was first used by Etienne Wenger; thought leader in the field of social learning systems.

One of his examples describes a new paradigm for the doctor-patient relationship, where a consultation is seen as a ‘dialogue between two experts’.

One- doctor, being expert in the generic medical science, while the other- the patient, is expert in his or her own case – medical and lifestyle history and symptoms. Both kinds of expertise are necessary for a successful diagnosis and agreed treatment regime and is arrived at through a dialogue between equals –

a horizontal relationship in which responsibility for outcomes is shared.

\*SLIDE

How might a similar re-conceptualisation be brought into student hierarchy within Higher Art and Design Contexts?

\*SLIDE- WORKSHOPS

We ran a series of five workshops and students were invited to participate on a voluntary basis:

Here is an outline of our project with a mixture of our research presentations from some of our workshops, student responses, reflections, interviews and student journal pages:

Workshop 1/ Introduction to Extrinsic and Intrinsic motivations

Workshop 2/Recognising and Challenging Overt and Covert Rules and Limitations

Workshop 3/Visualising the Inner Critic; replacing harsh judgement with responsive discernment

Workshop 4/Identifying and Understanding your Strengths

Workshop 5/Eros as a Metaphor for Creativity; Wooing the Muse

I’m going to dip into the 1st, 3rd and 5th workshops today.

\*INTRINSIC/EXTRINSIC

Empowering students with evidence-based research on motivation was a key part of the project; research into how intrinsic motivation results in high quality learning and creativity, was presented to students in an understandable way.

Here are some of the key pieces of research that we made accessible to the students.

\*3 THINGS THAT PROMOTE MOTIVATION

The premise of Deci & Ryan’s Self-determination theory is that individuals have innate tendencies towards personal growth and well-being that are either satisfied or undermined by their environment.

An environment that supports the individual’s experience of autonomy (choice), competence (a sense of ability) and relatedness (connectedness) fosters motivation and engagement, including enhanced performance, sustainability and creativity.

\*SLIDE- PROMOTE

When these needs are *not* met, we experience a lack of both motivation and well- being.

\* SLIDE

DECI DIAGRAM

Ryan and Deci’s model shows the relationship between different types of motivation. \*SLIDE- translation

We translated it into more accessible language for the students. It shows clearly that the type of extrinsic motivation that is most external – involving punishment or reward – is closest to amotivation. Nearly as unsustainable in the long term is the Introjected extrinsic motivation –focusing on approval from self or others – so- I’d better do it or I’ll look stupid’.

Intrinsic motivation – ‘I like doing this’, ‘– is the most sustainable, closely followed by the more internal levels of extrinsic motivation, where the activities are chosen to bring us closer to our valued goals.

\*Kolb leaning cycle and translation

We introduced students to Kolb’s 4- stage experiential learning cycle.

\*Translated Kolb

By supporting students to be clear about whether they were at a point where they needed to be in the flow of making, or reflecting, or planning next stages, or experimenting with taking findings into new contexts, they gained confidence in being able to focus on that part of the cycle, without feeling they should also be capable of simultaneously functioning in every other part. Also that they are able to enter the creative cycle at any point.

\*FLOW

The simplicity of Csikszentmihaly’s flow diagram means it can be used as a reference when we’re far from being in a state of flow; on one axis is the difficulty of the task, on the other, the level of existing skills. We have a possibility of entering a state of flow when the two are balanced. If we find ourselves bored, it might indicate that we need to challenge ourselves further; if we are made anxious by the task, simplifying it could help, possibly by breaking it down into smaller challenges.

Students reflected on and discussed their own experiences of rewards and punishment within education, and to what extent their needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence were met.

We hoped that in distinguishing between the different types of motivation, that they would feel supported to identify their intrinsic motivations – the weight of scientific evidence indicating the value of this, counteracting the perceived weight of authority that undermined their autonomy.

For this workshop, along with 2 of our colleagues, we showed connections between our childhood and adolescent interests and our current preoccupations within our work.

\*SLIDE- CHILDHOOD IMAGES

\*Elise recollected the importance of the sensory as a child, sunshine or cool breezes on the skin at the beach at Millport and she returned there to make a short performance based on Butoh, which emphasises intense presence in the sensory.

\*Michael Dancer made carefully measured and accurate diagrams, cataloguing his interests as a child. This one is top 10 chart singles and details the consecutive number 1’s and how they progressed through the charts.

He is now a graphic designer who delights in cataloguing and precision.

We asked students to recall self directed interests from earlier periods in their lives, and to find equivalent activities that were suited to their current abilities and preferences, whether it involved collecting, making, organising, looking, listening or dreaming. The aim was to identify and reconnect with experiencing intrinsic motivation.

\*\*SLIDE- Student 1

This student grew up in the Highlands and loves empty white spaces. He was in  the Merchant Navy for a while and loved the emptiness of the open sea. He  missed having that space in the city so decided to make himself some  models of the sort of space he loves.

\*SLIDE- Student 2

This student fondly remembered being allowing to clear her friend’s bedroom and put it back, completely rearranged. This opened up discussion about the possibility of work based around curation or museum design.

Workshop 3/Visualising the Inner Critic; replacing harsh judgement with responsive discernment

In the third workshop we further explored the area of introjected extrinsic Motivations.

Our aim was to develop further an awareness of the ways in which our self-constructed rules can limit us in our learning, which we’d begun to address in our workshop about challenging overt and covert rules. This workshop, based around the idea of the ‘inner critic’ as a critical voice within each of us that comments negatively upon who we are and what we do, \*SLIDE MISS TRUNCHBULL

was designed to encourage awareness of possible negative patterns within our creative life.

Tuning into their own experiences, the students began to explore their awareness of their inner critics.

What did it say? How did it say it? When did it say it?

Where might some of the critical ‘commentary’ come from? The idea that some of the commentary might be ideas that we have taken on from our parents, our friends or our culture was explored. Researchers Stone and Stone observed that the content of the criticism changed according to the value system of each culture.

With students from many different cultures attending the workshop, it was valuable to stand back and consider the cultures and social ‘rules’ that we might have been consciously and unconsciously absorbing and how this may have effected how we think we are *supposed to* and *not* supposed to behave.

It is important here to be honest about the limitations of the workshop(s). They were one-day workshops and were not intended as a form of therapy. Obviously this is a dense subject area in a discipline outside our own and we felt it was important to be clear to the students that this was about exploring creative process and motivations. Aside from cultural elements, we were aware that each students’ life experiences would have created very different types and strengths of inner critic. We were clear with the students throughout the workshop that i) it was not an assessable part of the course and ii) any comments or observations or visuals were voluntary.

DECI DIAGRAM

Looking again at Ryan and Deci’s self determination continuum, we can see that these processes associated with ‘Introjected Extrinsic Motivation’ are of ‘ego involvement and Focus on approval from self or others’.

They explore a form of ego involvement in which people are motivated to demonstrate ability or avoid failure to demonstrate feelings of worth. Deci and Ryan’s research suggests that this can motivate us in the short term, but it’s a type of motivation that is hard to sustain, and that will stimulate a lesser degree of creativity. So the intrapersonal relationships within our creativity and learning become important to explore.

The activity for this workshop was for the students to find an image or sentiments that helped them to identify their inner critic(s). We asked questions such as

‘Is your inner critic male/female, older/younger, a group of people, just one person, supercool, highly intelligent, extremely sceptical, easily embarrassed? Was it a person at all or was it an abstract colour or shape or sensation?

Here are some of their responses:

\* SLIDE A student identified his inner critic as Samuel Becket, saying that he felt that if his work couldn’t be as good as Becket’s, it was worthless; \* SLIDE Bomb- all ideas are going to disappear. \* SLIDE This student found an image of Little Red Riding Hood with the wolf- she felt it had something to do with the naivety of trying to please someone who was clearly unpleasant; \* SLIDE another student showed an image of a plane close to the ground that was always about to crash; \* SLIDE this work describes the feeling of her inner critic as a wall of static, creating a dizzy, light-headed feeling, making her feel over-whelmed. \* SLIDE

Looking at possible functions of the inner critic, we considered the idea that it was formed to help avoid pain and shame.

That this part of us wants us to do well, to succeed but needs to curb any behaviour deemed annoying or embarrassing “and to make you acceptable to others by criticizing and correcting your behaviour before other people could criticise and reject you.” That it could inhibit you, like and overprotective parent.

\* SLIDE \* SLIDE

This pointed to a way of transforming the inner critic, rather than banishing it, or criticising it in return.

\* SLIDE Stone and Stone quote

TRANSFORMING THE INNER CRITIC

A genuine and understandable concern for some students was that if in changing our inner critic, we reduce our critical faculties, leaving us incapable of seeing when we might be producing genuinely awful work. Tuning in to the ‘tone of the voice’ of the inner critic within the creative cycle was important in the identification of it. It was important to clarify that we *can* be honest and critical of ourselves without being hurtful or cruel.

We explored ways in which several psychologists have addressed the inner critic in an attempt to transform it into supporter or critical friend, and to replace harsh judgement with responsive discernment.

MINDFULNESS AND COMPASSION

\* SLIDE elephant

The capacity to recognise one’s own needs and to be nurtured by the self is an important characteristic of health according to Paul Gilbert’s research on Compassionate Mindfulness and it’s use in Psychotherapy, which draw on Buddhist teachings.

We explored how having compassion for our harsh inner critic, rather than criticising it in return might work in practice. We looked at how a mindfulness exercise, bringing attention to our senses and allowing thoughts to flow without following or reacting to them, might support disengaging from identification with self -criticisms.

\*SLIDE- Dementor

This is a student’s visualisation of her inner critic as a Dementor, a creature from Harry Potter, who sucks your of your happiness and even your soul.

\* SLIDE quote

By the end of the workshops, her inner critic was no longer in the form of a powerfully destructive Dementor, but had been transformed. She was now more like a bitchy schoolgirl. That, she said she could handle.

\* SLIDE

Exploring an area of ‘creative health’ that when left unchallenged is so destructive to creativity seems vital to our curriculum. Discovering, questioning and if necessary working to alter the way that we talk to ourselves is essential in creating a space to learn; to move away from extrinsically controlled motivations, concerned with ego involvement, rewards and punishments through to more creative autonomy and eventually to intrinsic Regulation.

Workshop 5/Eros as a Metaphor for Creativity; Wooing the Muse

\* SLIDE- IMAGES OF LETTER FROM LIONEL

In Eros as a Metaphor for Creativity Or Wooing the Muse, initially inspired by a letter received by Elise as a young woman, we played wit the idea of creativity or inspiration as being experienced as coming from a separate entity.

\* SLIDE second letter

Considering what sort of relationship the students might *want* with their Muse,

we compared the commitment of professional artists or designers to their relationship with their creativity, with the commitment of a long term relationship or marriage, and it was agreed that a passionate relationship with our creativity was preferable to ‘a marriage of convenience’.

We explored the work of Marion Milner, author of ‘Of Not Being Able to Paint’ who wrote of how she learned to make work that resonated with her. She wrote:

“..this process could be felt as a plunge – a plunge that one could sometimes do deliberately but which also sometimes just happened, as when one falls in love.” And noted her ways of inviting this “plunge”.

We considered inducing it in ourselves, just as the experience of initial attraction to another person begins to invite relationship.

\* SLIDE HEART THUMPS We looked at anxiety in the context of falling in love, and at the start of, or during the creative process. \*SLIDE FRIENDS THINK

and we compared egotism in the creative life with egotism in romantic relationships. \*SLIDE DON’T EXIST

The students were asked to write a letter to their Muse, and also to write a letter from their Muse to themselves.

The activity suggested to the students was to plan and go on a date with the Muse somewhere that might bring back the passion or fuel the fire in the relationship.

The aim of the workshop was for the students to identify what is valuable in sustaining their motivation and what undermines of diminishes it. Providing an element of humour and ‘lightness’ was important to this process in order that they could have fun in considering and planning their ‘dates.’

These workshops have now become part of our curriculum, from years 2 up to Masters level and we are continuing to develop the workshops for different areas of the school.

Returning to the idea of a horizontalisation of learning, we would argue that by embedding intrapersonal intelligence and meta-cognitive skills into our curriculum, we support a more democratic between tutor and student.

\*SLIDE- tutor/student

The tutor in this relationship again has knowledge of the subject and also knowledge of the bigger picture of how creative processes operate. But also *now* has a greater understanding of the individual student as well and is able to make more effective judgements.

The student *now* meets the tutor with new s*pecialist* knowledge and acceptance of the different parts of their creative selves;

a deeper understanding and authority of their own creative processes, motivations, memories, strengths, passion and struggles.