

A CASE STUDY: ART-BASED INTERVENTIONS INTO MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The arts lead the way in facilitating our creativity in opening up our imaginations to future innovations. Arts-based learning in continuing management education intention is to embed the arts right into the centre of business culture, making the arts an integral part of the business process. This was also the aim of the Creativity, Innovation, and Change elective run on the Open University Business School (OUBS) Master of Business Administration (MBA) particularly the residential school which was a fertile ground for arts-based Interventions into creative problem-solving and opportunity-finding which could be further applied to managing innovations and organizational change.

This case study is based on a longitudinal study from 2008 to 2012 focusing on 10 residential schools on the Creativity, Innovation, and Change elective from the perspective of the workshop facilitator as an insider-researcher. These residential schools engaged participants in an arts-based learning environment where creativity flourished - an environment where they could experience being flexible, receptive, and open to new possibilities. A willingness to play around with new ideas leading to the creation of plans on how to manage the innovations back in the workplace was fostered.

This paper reflects on being a workshop facilitator of 'artful creations' from a more practitioner-based approach in a case study format utilizing first-person experiences and narratives. Lessons are drawn as a facilitator using a highly arts-based right-brained approach using images and metaphors versus a logically structured left-brained approach found in traditional creative problem solving (Henry 2010). Arts-based approaches engender liveliness with an openness to trust each other to take the time to generate new ideas, creating mood settings in which happiness and humour can be expressed. Above all arts-based workshops are participatory: allowing debates involving contentious ideas to be voiced; enabling conflicts to be handled constructively; and encouraging risk-taking at an emotional level. The power of the arts in management education lies in harnessing the emotional and energetic dimensions of its participants to create personal and organizational value.

INTRODUCTION

Arts-based interventions in management education involve all kinds of art forms: organizational theatre; theatre workshops; poetry workshops; workshops with painting or sculpture; music projects run by orchestra conductors, jazz bands, and presentations by dancers (Stockil 2004, Nissley 2010). These can vary from short workshops lasting only a few hours, short courses lasting days, modules lasting weeks or months to being embedded within a whole Masters programme. Over

15,000 students have studied on the OUBS MBA Creativity, Innovation, and Change elective in the 21 years it run until 2012 when it was absorbed into the compulsory units on the MBA. Described on the OUBS website Henry (2010) as having a slightly maverick quality, nevertheless it was the most popular OUBS Masters elective in an 18-year longitudinal study. The elective consisted of 3 blocks designed by Dr Jane Henry and the MBA team at the OUBS. Block 1 Creativity, Cognition and Development (Henry et al. 2010) this offered a psychological orientation to creative approaches to management, focusing particularly on individual creativity. This was followed by Block 2 Managing Problems Creatively (Henry & Martin 2010), which looked at ways in which managers and teams can approach problem management creatively. It was supported by the Techniques Library (Open University 1999) with over 150 techniques ranging from problem exploration, mapping, idea generation, decision-making, acceptance-finding to action planning.

The residential school sat in the middle of Block 2, and emphasized a variety of problem-solving and opportunity-finding approaches and frameworks. The residential school consisted of tutor workshops, and one-hour elective slots, allowing tutors to facilitate the residential school content using their own 'brand' of creativity. This could range from left-brained approaches of creative problem solving with a selection of techniques from the Techniques Library to more right-brained approaches employing storytelling, imagery and metaphor. The tutors tended to fall across a spectrum from those who facilitated using a left-brained approach, to a combination of both, to purely facilitating using a right-brained approach utilizing an arts-based approach. Block 3 Changing Organisations (Mayle 2007) followed Block 2, and dealt with ways of developing a creative organisational climate, managing innovations, and approaches to transforming organisations. Block 3 compared various approaches to organisational change and restructuring, and was a perfect vehicle to apply the learning from the residential school.

ARTS-BASED APPROACHES

The business challenge in the 21st Century, according to Adler (2006), is dominated by managing chaos and complexity captured in three distinct trends: discontinuous change; networked teams; and simultaneity. Previous business strategies advocating continuously improving existing products and processes are no longer working as business leaders are turning to artists and more arts-based approaches to invent the next new product:

"Designing options worthy of implementation calls for levels of inspiration and passionate creativity that, until recently, have been more the domain of artists and artistic processes than the domain of most managers" (Adler 2006:487)

Arts-based interventions based on visual arts, improvisational acting, reflective writing, drawing,

music, poetry, film, is ideally suited to meeting the challenge of providing ideas that businesses are looking for in their search for 'newness'. Darso (2004) sets out to understand how the arts function in business, found four art classifications of in Art-in-Business: *Decoration*; *Entertainment*; *Instrument*; and *Strategic*. *Decoration* encompasses art in offices to corporate art collections, whilst *Entertainment* embraces corporate tickets to the theatre, opera, and art exhibition to its staff and clients. Using the arts as *Instrument* employs the arts for teambuilding, communication, leadership development, and problem-solving purposes using theatre games, and exercises. The ideal is to integrate the arts in a *Strategic* process of transformation, involving: personal development and leadership; culture and identity; creativity and innovation through 'artful creation'. Darso (2004) defines 'artful creation', as art experiences that initiate an inner transformation, which open up a special kind of consciousness developed through direct experiences involving feelings that touches the person profoundly. Schuima (2009) builds on the work of Darso (2004) by identifying 4 Art-based Intervention (ABI) zones: *Igniting*, *Instrumental*, *Intrinsic*, *Artful*, which measure the intensity of the impact on arts in business in its people against the impact on the business.

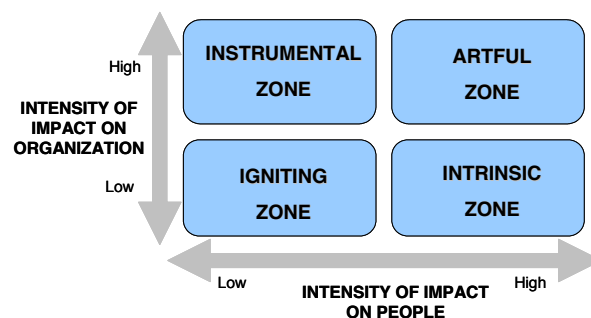


Figure 1: Four ABI's Value Zones

When both are low then the arts are used as entertainment in the *Igniting Zone*, whilst when they both are high in *Artful Zone* the impact of art in business effects the organizational environment, training and personal development, and enables organizational bonding and transformation. Schuima (2009) proposes a trajectory of *Artful Organizational Development* that moves from art being used as entertainment, through being embedded in the organisational environment up to organizational transformation.

Artful Organisational Development is driven by art-based interventions into organizations that enable 'artful creation' in the *Artful Zone*. Nissley (2008) describes five characteristics of 'artful creation' which provides a framework for categorizing arts-based interventions through: *presentational language* - a means of representing knowing and expressing meaning through expressive forms, allowing us to see what we're thinking; *mediated dialogue* - a creation of analogs mediating an inquiry into organizational life, where the analogs acted as a means through which insights may be elicited; *metaphorical representations* - symbolic

constructions to elicit, reveal, and transform existing sense-making; *collaborative inquiry and co-creation*, for the development of shared sense-making in groups, where the ‘artful creation’ is co-created by group members and the inquiry is self-guided; and *unconscious processes* – engaging ‘artful inquiry’ processes to make ‘hidden thoughts’ more discussable, as a vehicle for gaining insights by externalizing unconscious or tacit thinking.

In the field of management education the purpose of arts-based interventions is to enable arts-based learning. Kerr and Lloyd (2008) developed *The Artful Learning Wave Trajectory Model* of artful experiences that applies ‘artful creation’ to the implementation of arts-based learning programs.

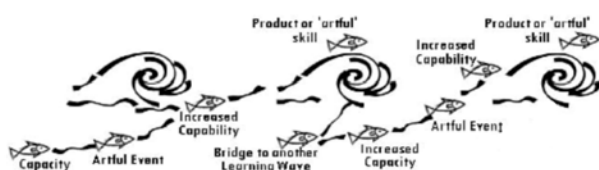


Figure 2: The Artful Learning Wave Trajectory

The model bridges from any one ‘art-work’ event to another, like the points in a trajectory, linking an individual’s perceptions of artful experiences. The points on model are: capacity; artful event; increased artful capability; through being artful; and becoming an artful being. Each part of the wave provides space for experimentation and discovery with any arts-based learning experience for the learner. Whilst the *Artful Organisational Development* trajectory focuses on arts-based interventions into business the *Artful Learning Wave Trajectory Model* focuses on the arts-based learning interventions into business education.

ARTS-BASED DATA AND METHODS

The focus of the research is on arts-based learning interventions into business education specifically OUBS MBA Creativity, Innovation, and Change Residential School. The author has been involved in the Residential School as a workshop tutor from 1999-2012 as 5 day residential that over time reduced to 2.5 days. The case study is restricted to longitudinal study from 2008-2012 over 10 residential schools whose format consisted of 7 two hours tutor workshops, and 5-6 one hour elective slots. The focus of the case study is the facilitation of tutor workshops using arts-based approaches with the facilitator acting as participant observer enabling both reflection-in-action, and reflection-on-action as an insider-researcher (Schon 1987). This is also triangulated with participant feedback per residential school from between 8 to 10 participants as well as the Course Director feedback from each residential school.

Participant observation was selected as the data collection method to gain a close and intimate familiarity with the participants and their experiences through an

intensive involvement with them as a workshop tutor, over the duration of the 7 workshops. The 7 workshops acted as art-works events on the *Artful Learning Wave Trajectory*. The aim was to collect data that captured artful experiences of the participants to shed light on the 5 characteristics of ‘artful-creation’: presentational language; mediated dialogue; metaphorical representations; collaborative enquiry and co-creation; and unconscious processes (Nissley 2008).

The participant observation level of involvement was active as a facilitator, whilst enabling the researcher to maintain a balance between insider and outsider roles (Spradley 1980). The facilitation style was an arts-based approach that was process-oriented, participatory, experiential approach engaging imagery and metaphor leading to the development of action plans full of strategies, tools, encompassing emotional and energetic dimensions both personal and organizational. The facilitation of arts-based approaches (Figure 3) is the antithesis of left-brained approaches defined by logic and reason (Figure 4).



Figure 3: Arts-based Participatory Workshop



Figure 4: Left-Brained Participatory Workshop

The 7 workshops under investigation cover the six steps of Creative Problem Solving (Osborn 1993): Objective Finding, Data Finding, Problem Finding, Idea Finding, Solution Finding and Acceptance Finding. The first workshop in the evening set up the ground rules for arts-based interventions into the Creative Problem Solving steps, and moved onto Objective Finding. The next 4

workshops focused on Data Finding, Problem Finding, and Idea Finding keeping the participants engaged in divergent thinking for the whole of the next day. The last 2 workshops the following day were spent converging onto Solution Finding and Acceptance Finding expressed as a Journey Plan - an action plan encompassing the emotional and energetic dimensions of self and the organisation. These 3 groupings of workshops mirror the first three stages of participant observation research studies (Kawulich 2005): the first grouping of workshops established rapport with the participants; the next grouping of workshops immersing the researcher as the facilitator in the tutor workshops; and the last grouping of workshops enabled the researcher to reflect-in-action on the recorded visual data expressed in the participant Journey Plans. After each residential school when consolidating the information gathered the researcher was able to reflect-on-action on the totality of this particular arts-based intervention into management education.

ARTS-BASED FACILITATION

A detailed analysis of the author's first-person experiences and narratives as a facilitator of 'artful creations' on the Creativity, Innovation, and Change residential schools is covered in the 'The Artist Within' conference paper (Jagiello 2012). The analysis of the data referred to this paper re-examines the reflective dairy entries for the 3 groupings of workshops. The first grouping of workshops: set the ground rules; bonded the group; introduced good listening skills by engaging the participants in the creative art of story-writing and story-telling. The ground rules were introduced by using the concept of the Six Thinking Hats DeBono (1999), which were divided into 2 groups: silver, blue, black hats representing thinking about data, principles, and critiquing respectively found in a traditional MBA education; and another group of green, gold, red hats facilitating Creativity, Positivity, and Emotion respectively the building blocks of arts-based learning.

The second grouping drew upon practices of Neuro-linguistic Programming (Andreas & Faulkner 1996) the kinesthetic through 3D model building, the auditory through soundscaping, and visual through visual brainstorming, engaging all the senses to gain multiple perspectives on the problem, issue, challenge or opportunity. The 3D modeling exercise used colour-coded flexi-straws for each participant to build a model of their organization.

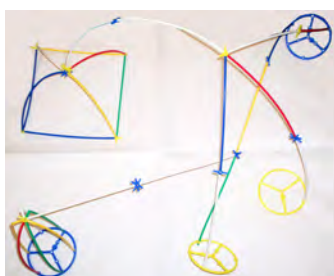


Figure 5: 3D Modeling using Flexi-straws

The flexi-straws were coloured-coded to represent the data (white), procedures (blue), opportunities (yellow), actions (green) and emotions (red) found in the organization. The participants identified where in the organizational structure their problem existed. Then they paid attention to the 'sound' of the problem by creating a soundscape with 3 components: a keynote sound, sound signal, and ending with a soundmark (Schafer 2009) of the organization with this problem.

Visual brainstorming enabled the participant to send the problem around the group with each member contributing an idea in the form of an image. Each idea/image built on the previous idea/image in a direct application of the SCAMPER (Eberie 1996) model where ideas could be substituted, combined, adapted, magnified or minified, put to other uses, eliminated, rearranged or reversed until the problem returned to the problem-owner with a stack of ideas. The Visual Brainstorming session used images to engage participants in new forms of representation to encourage new ways of seeing. Eisner (1997) describes this process as engaging in 'productive ambiguity' in stimulating multiple perspectives around a problem vividly expressed in the 'particularity' of the moment. The images of the ideas capture the internal thoughts and feelings of the participants raising questions that inquire further into the nature of the problem to reveal the 'individual aptitudes' of the problem-owner that might otherwise have been hidden.

The next part of the workshop aimed to experiment with theatre conventions as an active inquiry mode (Jackson 1993) in order to discover more about the human experience to translate, present, and transform personal and organizational problems. In moving from traditional managerial approaches to improvisation, Adler (2006) observes that core skills shift from sequential planning-then-doing to simultaneous listening-and-observing-while-doing. This core shift echoes the aims of Postdramatic Theatre (Lehmann 2006) as the shared generator of meaning between the performers and the audience. Theatre conventions such as narrative-action, context-building action, poetic action, and reflective action were employed by each group of 3 to 5 through the use of mime, still-images, tableaux, and freeze-frame conventions (Johnstone 1987).



Figure 6: Theatre Workshop using masks

The participants in each group learnt how to: identify with characters and events in the organisation; gain new understandings on their problem through the matching of content and convention; and above all discover new insights into their solution through risk-taking, experimentation, improvisation and interaction with the audience:

“ ... it has become essential to blend the traditional skills of planning and analytical foresight with the ability to respond in the moment to problems and opportunities as they arise. Although improvisation has been evident in the arts, it has [only] more recently been acknowledged as an important [managerial skill] ... ” (Crossan 1997:1)

The last groupings of workshops built on the previous improvisations by posting each participant's problem accompanied with an image of its current reality, and an image of its future vision and a 'How to ..?' to bridge the gap. Each participant was then invited to post ideas to bridge the gap on all the other problems in the group except their own. The idea representing a basis element of thought, either concrete or abstract was expressed as an image or object from an Ideas Bank (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Ideas Bank

The image or object gave birth to the following ideas (Graham & Bachmann 2004):

- problem solution - tool, resource, procedure
- evolutionary idea - strategy, model
- symbiotic idea - where multiple ideas are combined
- revolutionary idea - breaking away from traditional thought creating a brand new perspective
- serendipitous discovery - not intended revelation (least understood by the recipient)
- targeted innovation - a direct path of discovery
- artistic innovation - disregarding practicality and holding no constraints
- philosophical idea - a way of thinking

These ideas were incorporated into a visual action plan capable of expressing the emotional and energetic dimensions of the self and the organization. The visual action plan mapped the territory by tracing a journey of possible actions with signposts of tools, emotions, resources, and strategies in form of a Journey Plan.

The analysis of the Residential School Course Directors reports from 7 different directors on the tutor workshops facilitated using an arts-based approach acknowledged the unique and valuable contribution it brought to the residential school. A very useful balance to the left-brained approaches to creative problem solving by bringing in a facilitator in arts-based approaches who is dynamic and enthusiastic with unique talents and skills from the Creative and Cultural arts. At the end of each of the 10 residential schools each participant in the tutor group, whose size varied from 6 to 10, was asked to reflect on their experience. A typical response from the participants was that the experience: 'inspired both scepticism & confidence, and was delivered beyond expectations in the end' by a 'excellent communicator'. This style of facilitation consistently created an atmosphere of aesthetic sensitivity and perceptiveness that bonded the group together in terms of presentation, facilitation, stretch, and response. As an experienced facilitator the author was able to bring a wealth of arts-based approaches to the residential school:

“Intensive, unique, sensitive, experienced tutor who is able to draw out hidden depths in people and encourage them to be more daring in a gentle way. Once again she ran a small group in an unconventional way but received the highest possible rating from everyone in the group... ” (Dr Jane Henry, Course Director, 24/01/2011)

ARTS-BASED INTERVENTIONS

The purpose of arts-based interventions can be defined using Latour (2005) framework of participation outlined in his Actor-Network Theory as: 'socio-material assembly' - a collection of people and objects dealing with matters of concern which offers new possibilities of experience. The ultimate outcome of the residential school was the 'socio-material assembly' of a Journey plan - a visual action plan that captured the emotional and energetic dimensions of self and organization. Journey Plans with their non-analytic way of using metaphors, and analogies, can make the unsayable sayable, undoable doable, unthinkable thinkable (Firth & Leigh 1998). Journey plans play with emotions, work with ambiguity, and enable different interpretations to further develop intuitive approaches to problem-solving. They can stimulate reflection enabling new interpretations of new ways of perceiving reality, the problem and its solution. The Journey Plans created a personal and organisational landscape synthesizing all the parts of the personal with the organizational (Figure 8 and 9).

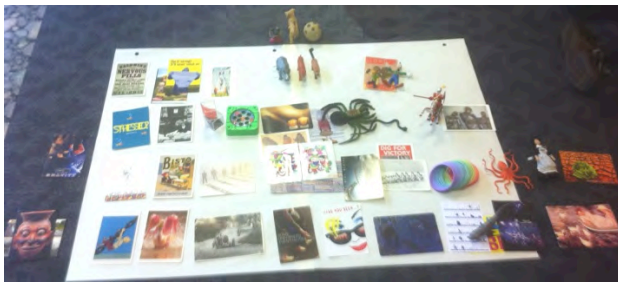


Figure 8: Journey Plan – The Organisational Dimension



Figure 9: Journey Plan – The Personal Dimension

The Journey Plan is a visualization of Symbolic Modelling (Lawley & Tompkin 2000) that describes a model of human perception through the framework of metaphorical constructs. The model acknowledges the different ways in which a person might try to articulate a problem: a glance; a look; a sound; a gesture; a word; a image. By considering different elements of people's communications and how they have organized and see their world and the relationships inherent in that world, offers a different level of understanding. Symbolic Modelling relies on the person's own system to find its own solutions whilst respecting their inherent wisdom and uniqueness. The stages of creating a Journey Plan (Evolved Landscape) can be further explained by referring to the 5 stages of Symbolic Modelling (Lawley & Tompkin 2000):

- Stage 1: Enter the Symbolic Domain
(Choose the images/objects from the Ideas Bank)
- Stage 2: Develop Symbolic Perceptions
(Attribute meanings to the selected images/objects)
- Stage 3: Model Symbolic Patterns
(Sequence the images/objects - ideas)
- Stage 4: Encouraging Conditions for Transformation
(Enable a dialogue about their meanings, groupings, and relationships)
- Stage 5: Mature the Evolved Landscape
(Facilitate a change through movement/replacement of an image/object)

Journey Plans are a great way to illustrate the power of Symbolic Modelling to explore the inherent logic of the Evolved Landscape which enabled individuals to reach a deeper understanding of their problem, opportunity or challenge through the introduction of new objects and/or images (ideas) that:

- Concentrate attention on lower, more fundamental levels of organisation
- Attend to higher, more significant groupings of patterns

- Broaden attention to outside or beyond existing spatial boundaries
- Lengthen attention to before or after a sequence of events
- Identify the logical conditions necessary for change
- Introduce one symbol to another so that information or resources can be transferred or exchanged

The creation of the Journey Plans seeks to improve creativity, teamwork, and encourage new ways to inspire and motivate the participants as well as improving personal performance in the solution of organizational problems. The participant Journey Plans often started with the aim of finding a solution to an organizational problem but quickly shifted into being one of the signposts on a longer journey encompassing their career aspirations. Facilitating the participant's journey plan brought out hidden depths and meanings that were more holistic for example around their work/life balance. One participant who could articulate the work-related part of their Journey Plan, but was struggling to understand the rest, in the facilitation unearthed that: 'it is important to work hard', 'to earn money', 'to be happy'. Yet the person who made them most happy was the person they spent least time with. This realization brought tears to their eyes. The facilitation of the plans by participants and the facilitator connected and related the doing and relentless target setting at work with their being, identity, thoughts and feelings about life as an act of participatory innovation.

DISCUSSION

The skill of the facilitator of arts-based approaches is crucial to the implementation of arts-based interventions in managing joint creative processes whose focus is on participation. Participation as 'socio-material assembly' is a risky endeavour as the outcome is uncertain. These risky trade-offs (Huybrechts 2014) include uncertainty: around sharing ideas and opening them up to change; the variety of domains of participant expertise; the complex systems developing within the network; and the blurred boundaries between the facilitator and the participant.

The value in managing the risky trade-offs in participation lies in trying to find solutions to wicked problems (Conklin 2006) - a problem whose solution requires a great number of people to change their mindsets and behavior. Wicked problems display complex interdependencies, changing requirements, and incomplete and contradictory information. Complex global challenges such as climate change, healthcare, natural disasters, epidemics, social injustice, and the financial crisis. Wicked problems are characterized by their: novelty and uniqueness; no definably right or wrong answer; no given alternative solutions; and above all the problem is not understood until after the formulation of a solution. For participants in these residential schools, facilitated using arts-based approaches, their problem, issue, or opportunity was not

fully understood until after the formulation of their Journey Plan - an arts-based intervention into their continuing management education.

Research on the impact of arts-based interventions on people and organizations (Biehl-Missal & Berthoin 2011) concluded that arts-based interventions unfold their impact as a 'spill-over' effect which starts with the individual who participates in an artistic intervention; whose experiences effects the teams they work which can filter upwards to impact organizational development, resources, and assets (Schiuma 2011). This will call upon a unique skills set to facilitate arts-based approaches to continuing management education, summarized eloquently by Alder (2006) in her article 'The Arts and Leadership: Now that we can do anything, what will we do?':

"Designing innovative options requires more than the traditional analytical and decision-making skills taught during the past half century in most MBA programs. Rather, it requires skills that creative artists have used for years. Many management experts suspect that the traditional MBA is obsolete (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Ewers, 2005; and Mintzberg, 2004, among others)." (Alder, 2006:4)

One of the authors of 'Rethinking the MBA: Business Schools at a Crossroads' (Datar et. al. 2010), David Garvin, Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School, believes that business education becoming more like the liberal arts would facilitate a well-rounded human being who happens to be practicing business. With this in mind the University of the Arts London is planning to launch a new kind of MBA, which will combine the creative culture of an art and design school with the analytical and operational strengths of business education. This MBA will be centred on organisational creativity and innovation by exploring strategy, innovation and marketing as opportunity-creating rather than just problem-solving, to find new solutions to today's complex global challenges.

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