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What Are Artists and Art Educators Teaching Us About How We Can Conceive and Deliver Teacher Professional Learning Into the Future?

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Artists and art educators have an aptitude for nimble, responsive and adaptive thinking borne from extensive experiences of traversing crises; be it through enduring significant cuts to funding, marginalization in cultural and curriculum agendas and – consequently - having to reinvent where, when and how they engage in their practice. In looking at the ways in which artists and art educators have weathered such challenges, a masterclass in professional reinvention and transformation emerges. In consideration of this, what insights can be drawn from the practices of artists and arts educators in Australia to inform how we conceive and deliver global teacher professional learning into the future?

Keywords: art education; professional learning; practice; teacher education; artists; art educators, a/r/tography.

INTRODUCTION

In Australia, the Arts and education sectors respectively are navigating unprecedented challenges for how to engage in and sustain practice in the pandemic (An open letter from Australia's arts industry, 2020). Prior to COVID-19 many were already innovating embodied and participatory practices in line with social, cultural and educational changes (InSEA, 2018; Wright & Coleman, 2019). While this crisis created a sudden and unanticipated pivoting for teachers through digital technologies, it has for others expedited, consolidated and affirmed post-digital ways of making and responding to art. These responsive shifts borne of crises exemplify artists' and art educators' nous for splicing physical and digital contexts to enable successive teaching of art education. Artists and arts educators have much to contribute to how teacher professional learning can create circumstances conducive for teachers to challenge, improvise and hybridize, redefine boundaries and break routines (MacDonald, Hunter, Ewing, & Polley, 2018). This chapter articulates the gaps we found between practice and pedagogy for better understanding how art teachers hybridize their practices and pedagogies to enable slipperiness and slippage (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1988) for teaching and learning in and beyond a crisis.

INNOVATION

This project was designed as a speculative a/r/tography; an innovative, speculative practice-related method that invites a participatory response through its design; it is through finding slipperiness and slippage that it locates a site to thrive. As a relational methodology it allows for connections and collaborations to create pedagogical interventions from the human, non-human and more-than-human places we find ourselves in (Coleman, 2018; MacDonald, 2012). It is from within this gap that we are coming to understand how process, product and creative practice are nurtured through embracing not knowing, endurance, survival, resilience, and risk (Dow, 2020).

As a speculative-possibilities project, it begins within our roles in art teacher education. Our provocation and invitation to *practice as research* through collaboration had other art educators also responding quickly to the need for creative and critical engagement opportunities for students' visual art learning at home; catering for online, offline and off device needs (Art Education Australia, 2020; InSEA, 2020; TATA, 2020). The collective implications and our response to this global pandemic have reminded us that complex societal problems will not likely be solved through singular disciplines or priorities (MacDonald & Brown, 2019).

Being an insider also opened space to co-design learning and teaching opportunities with pre-service art teachers. Shifting to an active inquiry-oriented and collaborative research lens that embraced digital literacies brought a sense of true to context purpose and reassurance for those looking to enter the field. Given the contextual and circumstantial precarity created by COVID19, coupled with an emphasised need for teachers' to be able to employ transferable capacities, this shift of relational dynamic for teaching and learning is both necessary and messy (Budge, Lemon, & McPherson, 2016) for the initial teacher education context. However, as artists who are entrepreneurial and agile (Bridgstock, 2013), they bring a preparedness to exercise these attributes, and a readiness to shift into new ways for driving innovations in studio-based pedagogies in art education. At the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, the Visual Arts program embraced being online and candidates began to design and curate 'making' and 'responding' learning experiences using TikTok, YouTube and Google Classroom, in turn these candidates have been researching slipperiness and slippage in practice for teaching and learning art, in and beyond the crisis. At the University of Tasmania, the MTeach Arts Specialisation was already being delivered fully online prior to COVID19. The slippages that unfolded from the teaching/learning intersect in this context were simultaneously bound by and opened through a collision of individual and collective experience of crisis. Online encounter during this time gifted a renewed depth of insight into, and appreciation for how, when and where relationships can be enriched in and through digital encounter to cultivate kindness, understanding and rapport. In the context of attending to relationship in the online initial Arts teacher education space, digital technologies can powerfully underscore how we make sense of shifts and slippage as a threshold for change.

RESULTS

Writing results in a speculative a/r/tographic inquiry is troublesome, as this work continues to be mapped and traversed through ongoing practice. The slippage needs be interrogated further, more adventures recorded, and possibilities explored. We can, however, discuss the (im)possibilities found within the ethos of an a/r/tographic inquiry; resisting findings and preferring to follow emergences and openings in data as nimble, responsive, agile, adaptive and relational researchers. Found within the possibilities of a global pandemic we have developed a new Collaboratory in this inquiry, developing a connection as insiders within the cultures we have been exploring and will further through the implications for professional learning that have emerged. These results may seem unorthodox, as they indicate opportunities for learning, unlearning and (re)imagination as the crisis unfolds.

Our results are contingent upon our capacity to reinvent what we do in our practice, where we do it, how we do it and why we do it. What we have learned from our experience as insiders in this moment in time is akin to what our artist and art teacher colleagues are finding as they traverse new paths and new opportunities: that artists and pre- and in-service art teachers must be afforded opportunities to enable slipperiness and slippage in their practice to ideate, create, reflect and innovate without fear of criticism and punishment (Harris & de Bruin, 2017). These results have implications for art schools, initial teacher education and professional learning. When artists and art teachers are provided space to explore, and engage in debate and discourse as practitioners, they are given means and permission to reimagine, rethink and reinvent beyond the (im)possibilities.

IMPLICATIONS

This speculative research emerges from spaces between the aforementioned examples of research and a desire to render, look to and learn from the ways in which the arts and education sectors are navigating this situation. Through our practices, we are coming to know that the phenomena we find ourselves in ought to be captured, observed and acted upon from the inside, because we too feel the risks and consequences of the biggest crisis (Coggin, 2020) in the arts in Australia in our lifetimes. When art teachers are supported to engage in a professional learning community of inquiry that intentionally employs arts' sensibilities, practices and processes, they are equipped with a suite of established and emerging capabilities to reimagine how, and what they teach (Coleman & Selkrig, 2020; Healy & Coleman, 2019; MacDonald, Wise, Riggall, & Brown, 2019; Watkins, Grant, Coleman, & Meager, 2019). Specific implications for art education professional learning that has emerged from our a/r/tographic inquiry include:

1. Ascertaining how relational art, research and teaching practices are being enacted by pre- and in-service teachers in Australia to enable opportunities for slippage between teaching, learning and assessment contexts.

2. Articulate how insights obtained from looking into how art educators hybridize art making, teaching and research can be used to inform how we conceive and deliver responsive, innovative and dynamic teacher professional learning going forward.
3. Acknowledge how teacher professional learning that has previously been contingent upon physical access to arts, cultural and educational enrichment public programs can look to the slippages practiced by artists and art educators to reimagine how teachers participate in professional learning beyond the complexities of circumstance.
4. Design and deliver professional learning collaborations underpinned by artist and art teacher ingenuity, resilience and adaptability for negotiating hybrid spaces and practices that can enable new hybridized pedagogies to emerge.

This crisis has shown us that when art communities share, collaborate and practice through ways of being, knowing and doing, they are able to reinvent and transform their practices collaboratively (ArtsHub, 2020). Artists' capacities for synthesizing diverse forms of knowledge is underpinned by a propensity for *leaning into* practice and embracing challenge as opportunities to innovate. It is important for future research to map the journeys undertaken from here in order to alight potential professional learning pathways for others *through* practice. Maps or travelogues of how challenges are negotiated in teacher professional learning during the pandemic will be necessary to educate others about the interesting places travelled to (Baguley, Kerby, MacDonald, & Cruickshank, 2020).

FUTURE RESEARCH

The rationale for examining how hybridization evolves in this crisis reflects a way of thinking about practice and pedagogy that is contingent upon being disrupted (MacDonald, Hunter, Wise, & Fraser, 2019). A rationale for slippage as a theoretical framework for enabling transcendence of contexts for teaching and learning and brokering relationality for teacher professional learning has been afforded in this crisis. Future directions for researchers might include looking to the methods of practitioners and scholars in the field of artist and teacher professional identity and practice to understand how they anticipate and adapt to shifting agendas and create space for unplanned outcomes to emerge (Coleman & MacDonald, 2020). Speculative research that explores how creative and critical practice provides architectures for professional learning that enable spaces of play, making, iteration and reflection is essential for scaffolding the process of change and transformation.

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