Arts-Based Methods in Higher Education

A Proposal for an Invited Symposium submitted to the Creative University conference
Aalborg 18-19 August 2016

Description

Alison Phipps (2010) argues that creative elements from the arts and humanities are in exile from higher education. The presence or absence of creativity in higher educational settings is exemplified in the diverse cases presented in Peters and Besley (2013). Both scenarios—the absence of arts and humanities or the presence/absence of creativity—have direct consequences and implication for the ways educators design the higher educational offers of the future.

The benefits of arts-based methods (Steven S. Taylor & Ladkin, 2009) are looked at with interest in several higher educational contexts, especially in management and leadership. The interconnection between arts/humanities and creativity in higher education will be the main topic of the present symposium. The dissemination approaches will be arts-based and will include hands-on exercises or experiences.

In this symposium, we will explore a variety of arts-based methods as they are currently being applied in order to enhance creativity in higher and adult education. This will include theatre and performance, play/games based on storytelling and communication skills, art as equality tool, dance and poetry.

In Theatre and play as communication the consultant firm Klods Hans (actors and facilitators Henrik Krogh and Pernille Bandholm Jacobsen) will present their storytelling game Snapstories. Snapstories is a fun, easy-to-play game that coaxes real-life stories out into the open. When you play Snapstories, the stories come automatically. Many more than you might have imagined. Some are humorous, others spooky. Some are happy, others sad. Some are down to earth, others plain bizarre. And we all have these stories to tell – it just takes the right tool to bring them out!

The game helps to create joy in telling, quality in listening and arouses the senses. We will also introduce our game Stories of Strength and the App “Fortæl!!” Lets play!

In Art as equality Allan Owens and Anne Pässilä will describe the project, which is an ongoing sub study of a larger research project and focuses on the use of Arts Based
Initiatives in leading the multi-professional co-creation of public services for young people aged 16 – 29. This research has been undertaken as part of the ArtsEqual –project funded by the Academy of Finland’s Strategic Research Council from its Equality in Society –programme (project no. 293199).

We use the term ‘Turning to Learning’ to highlight the emphasis in this approach on relational, educational processes rather than short-term, tool-box solutions so often used to design public services in Nordic countries. Instead of reaching directly for existing methods to apply to complex problems, Arts Based Initiatives are used to formulate questions that begin to identify the problems; this is done primarily through making visible the assumptions held about self, other and organizational infrastructure.

Our question: how is equality assumed in terms of leader identity, practices and social relations in the every day work practices of co-creation between the leader and team members, leader and stakeholder, leader in the role of service provider and customer as service-users. In our presentation-workshop we would like to introduce how we are using critical reflection and ethnodrama as research methodology as well as arts based action learning method. So we warmly invite you to our multi-modal practice of ‘Work Story & Work Journey’.

In Working with sensory experience and dance Claus Springborg will introduce the concept of Deutero learning. In neuroscience there is mounting evidence that abstract concepts are grounded in reactivations in the sensory-motoric centers in the brain, i.e. sensory experience. In other words, the way in which we understand abstract concepts, such as, communication, freedom, choice, learning, society, research, and creativity are structured specific sensory experiences.

Since Bateson introduced the concept of Deutero learning (learning to learn), scholars have looked at how some learning frame what can be learned later by framing the learning process itself. Inversely, the learning process can be potentiated by starting to asking questions about how the learning process is framed in specific situations. Therefore, it is important to begin questioning how we use sensory experience to learn. To do so, we need media through which we can work with sensory experience. Two media, useful for this purpose, are vocabulary created to describe sensory experience and dance.

In Poetry and authorship practices Per Darmer and Louise Grisoni will look at how poetry offers an approach for reflection and reflexivity; reflecting lived experience and reflexively engaging both the conscious and unconscious into the interior life of
workplaces for personal and organizational renewal. Cunliffe, (2004) defines reflexive practice as “questioning the relationship between ourselves and others: how we see the world, our assumptions/what we take for granted and the impact, our responsibility for ‘constructing’ life/self/social.” Self awareness and self insight operate together as key elements of reflexivity. However as Bolton (2010, p.16) states when reflecting upon the jump from reflection to reflexivity “A creative leap is required to support widening and deepening of perspective, and the effective ability to mix tacit knowledge with evidence-based or explicit knowledge”. This is where poetry has a part to play, acting as a bridge between reflection and reflexivity; the conscious and the unconscious; transforming existing knowledge into new knowledge and the ability to apply theory into practice. The writing and reading of poetry can be used to aid sensemaking, facilitating understanding and insight at individual and organizational levels. Against this backdrop, poetry facilitates conversation, discussion and dialogue; creating a platform for exploration and engagement.

The Closing Discussion will clarify concepts and emphasize critical connections through the different contributions in the Symposium.

Organiser:
Tatiana Chemi tc@learning.aau.dk

Presenters:
- Tatiana Chemi (IT/DK)
- Henrik Krogh + Pernille Bandholm Jacobsen (DK)
- Allan Owens + Anne Pässilä (UK/FI)
- Claus Springborg (DK)
- Per Darmer + Louise Grisoni (DK/UK)

Workshop Schedule:
- **Introduction** to symposium on arts-based methods in higher education (5 minutes) – Tatiana Chemi
- **Theatre and play as communication** (30 minutes) – Klods Hans (Henrik & Pernille)
- **Art as equality** (15 minutes) – Allan + Anne
- **Working with sensory experience and dance** (15 minutes) - Claus
- **Poetry and authorship practices** (15 minutes) – Per Darmer + Louise Grisoni
- **Closing Discussion** (10 minutes)

Total Time: 90 minutes

References


