

Curriculum vs. Creativity?

How to keep the flame of creativity burning after the early years?

MADO auditorium, 20 November 2009, 11.15-14.45



Evidence suggests that creativity declines in people as they go through the education system. There is a common perception that existing education and training systems more often *kill* learners' creativity than nurture it. Traditional schooling is seen to be obsessed with the teaching and testing of established blocks of knowledge and ways of thinking, communicating, doing and behaving, and neglect imagination, intuition, emotions and wonderment – qualities of mind that are vital for innovation and creativity and for economic and social progress.

As children progress through primary and secondary schools, their entitlement to a broad and balanced education is increasingly (and for many needlessly) compromised by a focus on "the basics" (literacy and maths) and by increased standardisation and testing. The most conspicuous casualties are the arts, the humanities and those kinds of learning in all subjects which require time for talking, problem-solving and the extended exploration of ideas; memorisation and recall have come to be valued over understanding and enquiry, the transmission of information over the pursuit of knowledge in its fuller sense.

Fuelling these problems has been –in several countries- a policy-led belief that a broad curriculum is incompatible with achieving solid basic skills. Evidence going back some decades consistently shows this belief to be unfounded.

The speakers will argue that in today's changing world we need a radical reconceptualisation of the objectives and practices of education – we need to *transform* formal education rather than *reform* it. They will show up some of the failures of managerialist "back to basics" and "delivery-driven" approaches and will argue in favour of keeping a place for creativity in the education curriculum.

- How and why does creativity tend to get lost on its way to primary and secondary schools?
- What are the policies, pedagogies and wider frameworks that can prevent this?
- How to achieve both good basic skills *and* creativity?
- What is (especially primary) education about and by what values it should be guided?
- Why is the historic divide between "the basics" (protected) and the rest of the curriculum (viewed as dispensable) so strong?
- How do we move from a pedagogy of failure to a pedagogy of success?

PROGRAMME

11.15-11.35

Video 1 (20')

11.35-12.45

How Curiosity for Facts, Explanation and Skills Can Become Part of the Curriculum

Prof. Feiwei Kupferberg, Malmo University, SE

Why is creativity killed on its way into school? Can we make creativity part of the curriculum? Schools often fail in their core function which is to keep the flame of children's curiosity glowing beyond the first years. What are the reasons for this failure and what can be done about it? A possible explanation discussed in this presentation is that the current curriculum tends to separate the learning of facts, explanations and skills from the role of rekindling curiosity. We need to find ways to combine the need for substantial knowledge with a more general mental creative mindset that fosters the core aspects of creativity such as imagination, inventiveness, improvisation and inquiry. For this purpose we need to ask not only what facts, explanations and skills should be learned but also how the curiosity to discover such facts, explanations and skills can be kept alive as children progress through school.

12.45-13.00

The new EURYDICE report Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe

Presentation by Eurydice

13.00-13.30

Lunch break

13.30-13.45

Video 2 (14')

13.45-14.45

The Problem and the Potential of Poetry, Dr. Anthony Wilson, Exeter University, UK

This presentation will address the low status of poetry in the writing curriculum by reporting on two small-scale research studies on the poetry writing of children aged 10-11 and teachers' views of poetry writing pedagogy. It will synthesise writing and creativity theory with insights about young writers' use of language, form and models in poetry. The presentation will argue that poetry writing can be an aid to language development, enabling children to engage with creative habits of mind and extending their schema of what writing can achieve. It will also discuss key metaphors used by teachers to describe these areas of learning. In particular the presentation will critically examine the current context of poetry writing pedagogy in the light of these findings. Implications for further practice are considered in the light of the gap between teachers' explicit admission in these responses that poetry writing in education is simultaneously vital and marginalised.



Feiwei Kupferberg is professor of education at Malmo University and chair of the doctoral school of education. He is educated at Stockholm University and has lectured and done research at a number of universities in Denmark, Germany and USA. He has been the Danish project leader of two cross-national European research projects on entrepreneurial training and activities among women and immigrants and has also held a research grant from the Danish Social Science Research Council to study the impact of German unification on the identity constructions and memory work among East German professionals. He has written a number of books on professions, societal transformations, entrepreneurship and creativity and is currently working on issues related to creativity and entrepreneurship in education from a socio-cultural perspective.



Anthony Wilson is Primary PGCE Programme Director at the University of Exeter, Graduate School of Education. A published poet, he has worked as a primary school teacher, visiting writer in schools and writing tutor for adults. He completed his ESRC-funded doctoral study on children's poetry writing in 2004. He is editor of *Creativity in Primary Education* (Learning Matters, 2009) and is co-editor of *The Poetry Book for Primary Schools* (Poetry Society, 1998). His research interests include poetry in education, poetry written by children and creative approaches to literacy teaching. He is currently working on a project on "invisible children" and creative writing funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.