

Chapter 13

Classroom Creativities, Pedagogic Partnership and the Improvisatory Space of Creative Teaching and Learning

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Abstract There is a long history of collaborations between teachers and professional artists in participatory arts activities in schools and communities. Models of pedagogic partnerships between artists and teachers vary considerably. However, effective partnerships between artists and teachers in schools suggest that it is in classroom creativities that innovative professional practices emerge. This chapter draws significantly on Professor Maurice Galton's study of the pedagogy of resident artists in schools for Creative Partnerships and the Arts Council of Great Britain. Extending Professor Galton's ideas, I argue that creative learning and teaching are more likely to occur when the rigid division between teacher and student is relaxed, creating an improvisatory space where teacher, artist and students jointly construct the improvisational flow of the classroom.

Keywords Creative learning • Creative teaching pedagogic partnership • Artist-teacher collaborations

In primary and secondary classrooms, a collaboration between teachers and professional artists (Craft et al. 2007) has been associated with fostering positive learning relationships, fostering wellbeing and enhancing engagement along with innovation, originality, ownership and control (McLellan et al. 2012; Burnard and Murphy 2013). Reflecting on what makes for creative learning is only part of the picture, since teaching for creativity, together with the mutual dependency of learning and teaching, also needs to be acknowledged. One of the biggest challenges for teachers, particularly in climates of school reform, accountability and standards, is in

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their planning and in the ethos which they create to afford high value to curiosity and risk-taking, ownership, autonomy and making connections (McLellan et al. 2012). Successful teachers more often work in partnership with others: with children, other teachers and artists (Galton 2010). Creativities embodied in and arising from partnership practices are often initiatives involving artists and teachers working in collaboration. Pedagogic partnerships are often inherently improvisational. The name that we give an activity or process (such as ‘teaching’) acts as a ‘frame’ for how we put it into practice. As with ‘unscripted theatre’ and ‘jazz music’, where there is a body of accumulated knowledge built up around the terms, so too with ‘teaching’; innovative teachers make a conscious effort to develop improvisational expertise and educational practices that create improvisatory spaces. Pedagogic partnerships, typically those which are long-term initiatives between teachers and artists, usually involve an arts organization that both funds the project and has direct input to its planning and delivery. Local government arts offices have acted as major stakeholders in supporting and developing partnership initiatives. Research evidence highlights the impact of partnerships (involving professional artists and teachers in collaboration with pupils) in developing creative learners who can succeed in a twenty-first century economy that rewards creativity and innovation.

Between 2002 and 2006, Professor Maurice Galton codirected a £1 million UK study on grouping and group work for the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP). This project was followed by a study of the pedagogy of resident artists in schools for Creative Partnerships and the Arts Council of Great Britain and the impact of creative partnerships on the wellbeing of children and young people (Galton 2010). In this project, his purpose, as with the premise of all of his work, was to develop classroom practice and to enhance the act of teaching and teachers’ status as creative professionals. Effective creative teaching strikes a delicate balance between diverse renderings of classroom creativities arising from artist-teacher collaborations. Pedagogic partnerships set up with artists encourage teachers to take risks, to be adventurous and to explore creativity themselves. Yet, what constitutes creativity in education remains ambiguous. Slippage in language is confusing, and it is common for slippage to occur between the terms ‘teacher creativity’, ‘creative teaching’, ‘teaching for creativity’ and ‘creative learning’. In this chapter, I will discuss studies that explore partnership programmes which aim to foster and promote classroom creativities through the development of positive learning environments in which students can take risks, engage in imaginative activity and do things differently.

One of Maurice Galton’s many groundbreaking projects in educational research, the Oracle project (Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation), provided a detailed picture of the range of strategies observed in British primary classrooms. The pedagogic levels on which teachers operate concerned: (a) classroom practice at the strategic level, which thematized teachers’ intentions prior to the start of a lesson, and (b) tactical decisions in the ‘moments of teaching’, i.e. the minute-by-minute occurrences throughout the lesson. Galton identified a number of teaching styles which can be seen to be linked closely to different types of pupil behaviour – some being more effective than others.

Studies conducted in the following decade have largely confirmed these findings (Galton et al. 1998). The ongoing debate recognizes, more than 10 years on, that the translation of educational policy into pedagogic practice is neither straightforward nor unproblematic.

In the UK, as well as in the USA, Norway, Ireland, Taiwan and Hong Kong, governments are encouraging an expansion of artist-teacher pedagogic partnerships (Burnard 2013). In these partnerships, working professional artists visit the classroom for a limited time period and work side by side with the full-time teacher. Partnerships have become a delivery model in education, offering a forum for creative opportunities.

In the UK, an emerging commitment to address the performative climate within education and children's wellbeing was reflected in a government initiative called 'Creative Partnerships'. A £150 million initiative by the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS 2004), Creative Partnerships, invests in relationships between creative practitioners and schools to encourage and support creativity in learning (see www.creative-partnerships.com).

There is a long history of collaborations between teachers and professional artists in participatory arts activities in schools and communities. Models of practice in partnerships between artists and teachers vary considerably. However, effective partnerships between artists and teachers in schools suggest that it is in the act of creativity itself that empowerment lies. Teaching is a subtle and complex art, and successful teachers, like artists, view their work as a continuing process of reflection and learning.

Effective partnerships have been reported as directly benefiting students, but they also have the potential to indirectly benefit students by increasing teacher expertise. There is a consensus that educational partnerships are dependent on the help, trust and openness of the individuals involved (Burnard and Swann 2010; Galton 2010; Jeffrey 2005). For a partnership to work well, either for students or for teacher professional development, Wenger (1998, p. 73) argued that there must be genuine collaboration, dialogue, openness and mutual tuning. Under these conditions, there is the potential for a collaborative partnership to develop, one in which teachers and artists engage in dialogue and are dialogic in their teaching. For this to happen, they need to have time for thinking, to encourage and maintain ambiguity and to share understanding about what they are doing and what that means within the community (Galton 2008).

Teachers and artists co-construct a *pedagogy* when their collaboration encompasses 'the act of teaching, together with the ideas, values and collective histories that inform, shape and explain that act' (Alexander 2008, p. 38). To analyse how this happens, in my research, I study how the core acts of teaching – namely, 'task, activity, interaction, and judgement' (Alexander 2008, p. 78) – feature in the dialogue between teachers and artists.

When teachers and artists collaborate, they often have different conceptions of the organization of space, material and time in the classroom. The visiting artist typically uses a more improvisational, open-ended approach, while the classroom teacher typically uses a more structured style (Burnard and Maddock 2007).

This gives rise to a dilemma: How can the more unpredictable, improvisational approach of the visiting artist be balanced against the more predictable, normative and accountable style of the teacher? And how do teacher-artist partnerships resolve this dilemma?

Improvisational Spaces of Teaching

In music, improvisation can be thought of as the discovery and invention of original music spontaneously while performing it, without preconceived formulation, scoring or context. This definition of 'improvisation' helps to advance the notion of teaching as a performative act, moving flexibly, reflexively and spontaneously between scripted and unscripted sections, a kind of partly improvised and partly choreographed dance in dynamic interaction with all those present.

Another dimension of improvisation which is often referred to in music and theatre is 'going with the flow' or 'getting in the groove'. These skilled performances are based on a high degree of tacit knowledge and practice, just as is all professional expertise. Improvised behaviours involve 'ideas which leap to mind' (and to jazz player's fingers, according to Pike 1974) and can be seen in the perceptual nature of responsiveness on the part of the teacher and artist to students. This resonates with the notion of Nardone (1996) who considered the lived experience of improvisation to be a coherent synthesis of the body and mind engaged in both conscious and pre-reflective activity. When teachers and artists work together, particularly over sustained periods, their tacit knowledge and practice can be examined, reflected on and shared and new practices created.

Berliner (1994) offers a further understanding of the openness, uncertainty and dialogical nature of improvisation and the conditions that allow individuals to be generative, adaptive and reciprocal. He says:

The sense of exhilaration that characterizes the artist's experiences under such circumstances is heightened for jazz musicians as storytellers by the activity's physical, intellectual and emotional exertion and by the intensity of struggling with creative processes under the pressure of a steady beat. From the outset of each performance, improvisers enter an artificial world of time in which reactions to the unfolding events of their tales must be immediate. Furthermore, the consequences of their actions are irreversible. Amid the dynamic display of imagined fleeting images and impulses – entrancing sounds and vibrant feelings, dancing shapes and kinetic gestures, theoretical symbols and perceptive commentaries – improvisers extend the logic of previous phrases, as ever-emerging figures on the periphery of their vision encroach upon and supplant those in performance...Few experiences are more deeply fulfilling. (Berliner 1994, p. 216)

What follows is an analysis of the two different roles in a creative partnership, teacher and artist, and I focus on the tension between their two different sets of tacit practices, beliefs and professional perspectives. My goal is to understand how they resolve this tension to create a shared space for teaching that enables the emergence of improvisational forms of teaching. How this links to the work of Maurice Galton

is in the idea that there is a set of pedagogic principles that are associated with creative practitioners (artists). What takes teachers and artists from teaching together, independently and side by side, to co-constructing an emergent pedagogy? Like Maurice Galton, I focus on two questions: When is it that artists enable teachers by working in classrooms? And how are artists helping teachers improve their teaching?

When teachers and artists collaborate, their different conceptions of teaching and different paradigms of expertise must be resolved before they can construct an effective learning environment. This examination sheds light on the teaching paradox because the visiting artist represents the more creative, improvisational end of the paradox, while the classroom teacher represents the more constrained, scripted end. Teacher-artist partnerships have been shown to help teachers enliven and loosen up tightly scripted ways of teaching (Burnard and Swann 2010; Burnard and White 2008; Jeffery 2005). As one creative practitioner put in Galton's (2010) study:

To me being here is about several things. One important thing for me is to look at a different model of working; of the ways artists can work with schools and teachers in a much more collaborative way rather than be expected to come in and deliver and then go away again. And another important thing is with the children. What we are trying to do here is to be a person who responds to ideas that the children are coming up with and then to bring our own practice to share. (p. 365)

Very often teacher identities are played out in particular professional roles where their pedagogy and values are regularly scrutinized and tested in the classroom, as behaviour managers fuelled/informed by an institutional dimension often creating an inner conflict between skilfully modelling teacher attributes and pedagogic content knowledge. Artists, in contrast, are stereotypically presented and seen as artists or arts practitioners, professionals involved in cultural production. The artist in education is frequently an outsider who comes into an education space and acts as a catalyst or challenger of learning and who provides ways of exploring the world which involve more sensory, immersive and improvisatory ways of working than are customary in classroom settings. The artist is often seen as precisely *not* the teacher, as the 'other' who is permitted to open up new contexts, new frontiers and challenges that are unfamiliar to the learners.

I will now move beyond these divisive stereotypes of teacher and artist and discuss how teacher-artist partnerships can create collaborative spaces for teaching that resolve the teaching paradox in a way that promotes conditions conducive to student creativity, such as taking risks and allowing for the unexpected.

Pedagogic Partnerships and Teaching for Creativity

For many years, schools have employed visiting professional artists, in music, dance and theatre, to work in educational partnerships with teachers in schools. But this practice has increased dramatically in the UK in the last decade, as a result of the

publication of the report of the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE 1999). In the years after this influential document was published, many subsequent government policies and advisory documents have indirectly increased the interest in partnerships with artists in schools. The partnerships are thought to directly impact creative learning (Creative Partnerships 2005a), as well as to indirectly impact it by enhancing the teacher's ability to teach for creativity, even after the partnership has ended and the artist has left (Pope et al. 1999). In educational research, there is a small but growing body of research that identifies the pedagogical potential of teacher-artist partnerships (Burnard and Swann 2010; Triantafyllaki and Burnard 2010; Burnard and Maddock 2007; Jenkins et al. 2008). The vision and the hope are that the learning of pupils, pedagogic practices of teachers and schools as organizations will be changed by educational partnerships and their significance in school improvement.

The vision and number of educational partnerships were increased dramatically in the UK as a result of the 2002 policy initiative, *Creative Partnerships* (2005b, c). Creative Partnerships is the government's flagship creative learning programme designed to develop the creativity of young people across England. The vision and hope of this program brought artists who champion contemporary arts practice and creative practitioners such as architects, scientists and multimedia developers into schools to enhance young people's learning through arts and cultural experiences. With over 330,000 young people and over 4500 teacher-artist collaborations, partnerships are acknowledged to have great potential to enhance arts education and creative education in schools.

The Creative Partnerships programme was established within the Arts Council of England in April 2002 as a shared initiative between the Department of Culture Media and Sport and the then Department for Education and Skills. Unlike the earlier 'resident artist in schools' ventures in earlier decades, this flagship creative learning educational programme has been rolled out to more than 1,100,000 young people in 12,800 schools in 36 different areas across in the UK. In total, the English government has spent £247,000,000 with multiple goals. One goal is to help pupils learn more creatively; a second goal is to help teachers to teach more creatively; a third is to help schools become more innovative organizations; a fourth is to forge strong and sustained partnerships between schools and artists. Research on the impact of artists (more recently referred to as creative practitioners in the UK) in schools and classrooms has focused on their pedagogic practices (Galton 2010) or on pupil perceptions of learning with artists (Burnard and Swann 2010). This chapter provides evidence of how the teaching paradox is resolved in these collaborative pedagogic practices between teachers and artists working in partnership in schools.

In 2009, the Creative Partnerships programme moved to a new national agency *Creativity, Culture and Education* (CCE 2009) which created a fund with which to manage cultural and creative programmes for young people; this agency invested a further £100 million between 2009 and 2011. One of the key policy messages was to establish 'a new balance in education' through 'relationships between schools and other agencies' (NACCCE 1999, p. 10). The vision and hope here, in the light of these educational policy initiatives (as well as CCE 2009; NCSL 2002; QCA

2005 and *Schools of Creativity* (Creative Partnerships Prospectus for Schools September 2007)), were that teachers would better learn how to resolve the teaching paradox: they would be stimulated and supported by sharing the spontaneous and unpredictable nature of working in collaborative practice with artists, where the teacher makes unpremeditated, spur-of-the-moment decisions, where a considerable degree of residual decision-making occurs and where the acquired skills which are normally executed as a professional repertoire of teaching strategies are linked up with those of the artists to develop a new way of resolving the teaching paradox between advance planning and the real-time practice of classroom teaching.

Professional Relationships and the Spaces That Enable Teaching for Creativity

As Maurice Galton's work on creative partnerships has shown, when artists and teachers collaborate, the full complexity of teaching is affected. Teachers and artists enter the partnership with different theories, beliefs, practices, questions, visions and hopes. Thus, the teaching paradox is played out visibly, in the social interaction between the two professionals. There is strong evidence that artists use a more improvisational approach as they engage with students and teachers (Sefton-Green 2008). Research suggests that artists share processes of creative thinking in classrooms through an apprenticeship model of teaching, in contrast to the instrumental/instructionist style that dominates most school classrooms. This is further substantiated by Pringle (2008) who notes that artists view teaching 'as an experiential process of conceptual enquiry that embraces inspiration, critical thinking and the building of meanings' (p. 14). She argues that artists teach by sharing artistic knowledge and by enabling learners to participate alongside them (Pringle 2008).

Maurice Galton (2008) studied a group of artists with a successful track record of working in schools, not only including artists from traditional disciplines but also practitioners making regular use of various forms of information and communications technology (ICT) such as digital photographers and film-makers. As with Pringle's (2008) account, Galton found that these artists mostly felt that it was sustained dialogue with teachers (and students) and the time taken for planning that enabled them to engage in improvisational practices in the classroom. Artists define themselves as creative practitioners in terms of the artistic expertise, knowledge and skills they possess (Galton 2008); they also define themselves by what pedagogical practices they use in their work in schools (Hall et al. 2007; Hall and Thomson 2007; Jeffery 2005).

Creative Partnerships has funded 'action research' investigations (the first round was in 2004–2005; the second round was 2005–2006) into these partnerships. There are some studies that explore artist-teacher partnerships in primary school contexts (Hall et al. 2007; Hall and Thomson 2007; Maddock and Sapsed 2008), in secondary schools (Galton 2008; Cochrane et al. 2007b; Cape 2005; Jeffery 2005), in

higher education and university sectors (Cochrane et al. 2007a) and in professional development programmes (Jenkins et al. 2008; Ledgard 2006). These primarily analyse the impact of the artists on students' experience of learning and tend to be outcomes of what artists *do* rather than what teachers learn.

While recognizing the value of the wide range of artist-led interventions in education, which can enhance students' learning (such as the long-standing tradition of theatre in education), this chapter explores the research that demonstrates the benefits, complexities and challenges of teacher-artist partnerships and provides evidence of how artists and teachers collectively create emergent resolutions of the teaching paradox.

Improvisatory Dimensions of Teaching for Creativity

There is a growing body of evidence on teachers' experience of teacher-artist partnerships, its rewards, tensions and dilemmas (Hall and Thomson 2007; Uptis 2006; Ledgard 2006; Jeffery 2005; Cochrane 2008). In schools, where the Creative Partnerships programme is well established, a key issue has emerged: How do artists' perspectives on pedagogy inspire, guide and mentor teachers? While there is no lack of evidence that artists motivate students, there is little extant research which identifies what teachers learn about teaching while working with artists. The metaphor of improvisation helps to illuminate the concept that creative learning is essentially polyphonic; it evolves not in a single line of action or thought but in several strands and directions at once. It is not circumscribed by the tried and traditional and enables risk-taking. In the face of this, artists can adopt different stances and engage in different collaborative activities, to different degrees, in collaboration with teachers.

Improvisation is characterized by flexible, adaptive, responsive and generative activity. Improvisation forms a part the discourse of creativity which permits an understanding of the elements which frame teaching as a performance which can move between a fixed and a flexible structure, an existing and an emergent framework, where choices can be made spontaneously, moving between scripted and non-scripted formulations. Teaching, like improvisation, is framed conceptually and ethically, as well as temporally and spatially. Pedagogic practices can be rigid, with impermeable borders that form barriers to students, or they can move inside and outside the safe, the known and the predictable.

In the variability of pre-existing pedagogic and artistic practices, teachers and artists engage in considerable risk-taking when they work together. Improvisational teaching constantly negotiates the teaching paradox: It dances between planned, scripted, deliberate and conscious episodes and opportunistic action, ensuring spontaneity by yielding to the flow and its immediacy, signifying improvisational characteristics in the synchronous moment to moment of creating a new pedagogic practice. From teacher expertise literature, we know that expert teachers have mastered the structures of teaching – a large repertoire of plans, routines and scripts. In

addition, teachers must master the practice of teaching – a range of teaching strategies which include improvisational forms.

Pedagogic Creativities or Pedagogies of Creativity?

In the context of the qualitative differences between artist and teacher pedagogies, Bernstein (1996) offers a framework which differentiates between pedagogies in terms of *competence* and *performance*. ‘Competence’ pedagogies focus on the learner and what the learner has achieved and so tend to be ‘active, creative and self-regulating’. Performance models of pedagogy place the emphasis upon clearly defined outputs so that learners are expected to acquire certain skills or to construct specific texts or products in fulfilment of the required outcome. The pedagogies of artists, who more often define themselves in terms of the specialist knowledge and skills they and others perceive they possess, prioritize the development of learners’ ideas and individual creativity while encouraging them to reflect on the process and what has been achieved. The emphasis is on ‘competence’ pedagogies which pass a greater degree of control over learning to the learner.

The ‘performance’ model of pedagogy, Bernstein argues, ‘places the emphasis upon a specific output of the acquirer [learner], upon a particular text the acquirer is expected to construct and upon the specialised skills necessary to the production of this specific output, text or product’ (Bernstein 1996, p. 4). In any given teaching session, performance models might include, as a core act of teaching, improvisational forms which ‘in the moment’ promote learner independence and autonomy or require the teacher to spontaneously scaffold learning so as to help learners to move forwards in their learning. Teachers are being pushed by two opposed agendas: They are being asked to promote creativity while at the same time meeting accountability targets measured by success in standardized tests. The evidence from several studies is that there are many understandable tensions arising out of this paradox (Cochrane 2008).

What kinds of pedagogic practices and partnerships have the potential to create better professional teacher practices? These narratives of artists’ and teachers’ illustrate two aspects of pedagogic collaboration. First, we have strong evidence that artists work adaptively with and alongside teachers and students (Galton 2008). They work together improvisationally, as ideas are exchanged and built on dialogically (Sawyer 2004). Second, we have strong evidence that for the teachers, working with artists involves teaching in a variety of ways.

Artists tend to move between competence and performance pedagogies, splitting the focus between the learner, what the learner achieves, the teacher and the performance of teaching. Teachers tend to favour the performance models of pedagogy, which place the emphasis upon clearly defined objectives and outputs, but having seen the effects of encouraging students to pursue different lines of thinking and to question and challenge the values and practices of past lessons and the consequences of professional reflection, most teachers increasingly come to understand that

creative learning is not about getting a right or wrong outcome but is, rather, an improvised and choreographed dance. As a result of the partnerships, teachers change their approach to teaching: they become more improvisational.

The ways that artists tune in to teachers and learners provide an important clue as to how teachers can better negotiate the teaching paradox. In the same way that instruments are tuned on the basis of tension, so the success of an educational partnership depends on the tension being maintained in balance. On the one hand, as artist and teacher open themselves up to each other, they feel the pull of the other that demands respect. The point at which the partnership results in the most effective learning environment is when improvisatory acts (of collaboration) and improvisations (in classroom activities) occur. When artists and teachers attune to each other's ways of working, they render diverse classroom creativities in education. These include practices which invite flexible thinking, risk-taking, multivocality or taking a new professional viewpoint. These practices are modelled on more improvised and less formulaic and fixed approaches to teaching. As Professor Galton makes clear and as I argue, creative learning and teaching are more likely to occur when the rigid division between teacher and student is relaxed, creating an improvisatory space where teacher, artist and students jointly and authentically construct and reconstruct the improvisational flow of the classroom.

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