

DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE AND CREATIVE CAPACITY: THE ARTS LEARNING JOURNEY FOR PRIMARY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PRE-SERVICE STUDENTS

Susan Davis
Central Queensland University, Noosa

Abstract

In primary and early childhood educational settings arts-based programs are mainly taught by generalist teachers. Within their pre-service education programs these students often study only one or two courses which have a specific focus on arts curriculum and building student creative capacities. In this paper the rationale for the design of specific assessment tasks and activities for one mandatory arts pre-service teacher education course is articulated with reference to socio-cultural and systems theories of creativity. One cohort of students' perceptions and learning are analysed using mixed methods research strategies. Several key narratives emerge from the student creative work and analysis of reflective data. Whilst some positive shifts in attitudes, learning and domain knowledge can be identified, the long term impact of these experiences needs to be considered within the wider culture of university and school programs.

Introduction

The inclusion of The Arts within the national curriculum and upcoming implementation will require teaching graduates who are able to teach across the five arts areas of Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts (ACARA, 2011). How prepared are generalist teachers likely to be to teach the five arts areas, what experiences, capabilities and level of confidence do they have? Existing research has identified that primary generalist teachers often lack significant prior experience and confidence in the arts (Alter, Hays, & O'Hara, 2009; Bamford, 2006) and that the valuing of arts education and degree of training on offer to pre-service education teachers is decreasing (Ewing & Gibson, 2011; Gibson & Anderson, 2008; Russell-Bowie & Dowson, 2005). Pre-service education programs therefore need to address arts-specific knowledge and skills, but also issues of perception and creative capacity – how to encourage generalist teachers to unpack their own creativity and attitudes to art-making and forge positive frameworks for ongoing engagement. This focus on creative capacity as well as arts-specific learning is adopted within one arts curriculum course (subject) for primary and early childhood generalist teachers. This paper outlines the rationale for this approach and drawing on socio-cultural models of creativity. This framing shaped the design of assessment tasks and research which explored student perceptions about themselves as creatives and their confidence to teach the five art forms. Analysis of student creative work and reflections identified several dominant narrative themes and some shifts in perceptions. While the findings indicate some degree of success in increasing student perceptions of themselves as creative practitioners able to teach the arts, the potential for significant change in practice is qualified.

Preparation for teaching the arts in primary and early childhood education

In the majority of primary and early childhood settings the generalist teacher has responsibility for teaching all or most of the arts (with the exception of Music in some states such as Queensland, and in many private schools). International and Australian research has identified that many of these students have limited arts experiences themselves and lack confidence in their ability to teach the arts and creative discipline areas (Bamford, 2006;

Hennessy, Rolfe, & Chedzoy, 2001; Mills, 1989; Sinclair, Jeanneret, & O'Toole; Smith-Shank, 1993 Hallam et al., 2009). Students may have had negative experiences of the arts previously or have a sense of themselves as not being creative (Grauer, 1998; Jeanneret et al., 2006; McDermott, 2002). Specific Australian research about primary and early childhood teachers and the arts includes Gibson's work around primary pre-service students attitudes to visual art education. This work indicated significant numbers of students reporting negative experiences at secondary school and feeling that they were not good at art (Gibson, 2003). A number of national reviews have identified significant issues about the nature of and limitations to the training pre-service primary and early childhood education students receive in the arts (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1985; Davis, 2008; Pascoe et al., 2005). Research by Alter, Hays and O'Hara found that primary teachers felt that the scope and breadth of knowledge and skills required of the primary generalist teacher was extremely demanding and that there was a gap between curriculum framework expectations and degree of preparation provided by initial teacher education courses (Alter et al., 2009).

In primary and early childhood pre-service teacher education programs, often there are only one or two university courses or subjects dedicated towards developing their knowledge and skills in this realm. These courses often have to cover the five arts areas, introduce students to curriculum frameworks for the arts and how to plan and deliver related learning programs. The challenge, therefore, is how to equip students with the knowledge, skills and attitude to teach things they may have little experience of and in some cases towards which they have a poor attitude. This is further complicated by the fact that students are often working in school contexts where teachers are struggling with ongoing pressure to narrow the curriculum, to prepare students for testing regimes and teach prescribed curriculum units (Alexander, 2009; Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Landsman & Gorski, 2007; Luke, 2004). Whilst the task may seem impossible, this is the challenge that arts teacher educators continue to grapple with. This paper conceptualises the approach used in one particular course whereby socio-cultural and systems models of creativity have been used to underpin the course and assessment rationale. The course includes one or two 3 hour sessions on each of the five arts areas, but also an underlying focus on creativity and how to cultivate creative capacity. The assessment tasks are designed to encourage students to consider themselves as creative practitioners and facilitators and build their skills and knowledge about arts education and related domains. The research analyzes student confidence levels across the five arts areas (as identified in Australian curriculum) and therefore helps extend on existing Australian research.

Socio-cultural and systems theories of creativity

The research has identified that for many pre-service education students perceptions about their own creative abilities impact on their confidence to teach learning areas such as the arts. An explicit focus on unpacking notions of creativity may therefore be fruitful for students to consider in relation to their role as facilitators of creative learning. Teaching in any area requires a certain degree of creativity, however in The Arts it is especially so as teacher/artists work with their students to combine ideas, materials, forms, techniques and feelings to generate outcomes that are new and original in some way. Creativity is not just about thinking or learning something new, it is also *generative* (Craft, 2005) and requires some application, product or action. That is where the special relationship between the arts and creativity emerges as students take risks and transform ideas and feelings into action and outcomes in various symbol systems.

There are numerous definitions of creativity, but common to many of them are notions about new-ness, originality, novelty, combinatory play, imagination and difference (Craft, 2005; Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994; Gardner, 1993; Koestler, 1964; National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999; Robinson, 2005). Some forms of creativity are deemed to be more significant and have more impact than others and

that is where the concept of little 'c' and Big 'C' creativity is worth considering (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Gardner, 1993). Humans make creative decisions every day through fashion combinations, changing recipe ingredients, making household design decisions and so forth. Most of these decisions will not change the history of any specific cultural domain, so that type of creative activity could be considered as little 'c' creativity. Big 'C' creativity is the culture changing type of creativity, and Gardner (1993) identifies those like Picasso, T. S. Eliot, Beckett and Martha Graham as people whose brave combinations and experiments initiated new movements and breakthroughs in culture. In educational settings we are concerned with little 'c' creativity for the most part, and building student skills, knowledge and capacity so they can push the boundaries in ways that are meaningful to them and local audiences. This simple distinction can be useful to helping students to understand that they probably already engage in creative acts but that it is possible to develop creative capacity through engaging with domains, developing skills and knowledge and continuing to take risks and embrace challenges.

This approach sits within a socio-cultural understanding of creativity which rejects the notion that creativity is a special characteristic that some gifted people possess and others do not. It is acknowledged that some individuals may have special capabilities or traits but that creativity arises from individuals interacting with and often collaborating with others and internalising specific domains or areas of practice. Being creative often relies on having learnt substantial knowledge and skills from the culture within a focussed area (also known as a domain). To be more creative then, an individual may deliberately develop their knowledge and skills in a domain, cultivate and interact with a field and consider ways to combine different ideas and practices to innovate. In the systems model of creativity Csikszentmihalyi therefore outlines three main components: *the individual, the domain and the field* (See Figure 1) and suggests that the interactions between them are important to the cultivation and recognition of creativity.

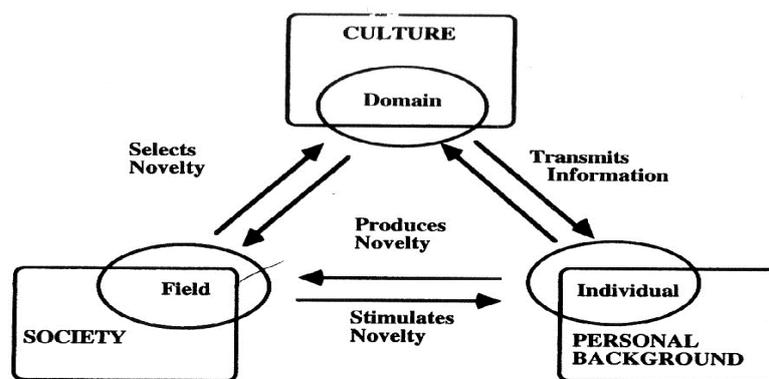


Figure 1: Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999)

Other versions of systems or confluence models of creativity exist in the literature and these include some different components, though the focus on interactions between the individual, culture and environment are common, with products and outcomes featuring more explicitly at times (Amabile, 1996; Feldman et al., 1994; Gruber & Wallace, 1999; Moran & John-Steiner, 2003; Sternberg, 1999).

Another significant feature of some models is the acknowledgement that the outcome of creative activity is not only material objects and concepts. Vygotsky and other cultural-historical theorists have identified that the creation of personality or identity is also an outcome of creative work (Vygotsky, 1998). Moran and John-Steiner explain that through

interactions with others, concepts and tools in creative activity, individuals “create the self as well as external artefacts” (Moran & John-Steiner, 2003, p.78). Whilst creative products and objects may be transformed so too may the human subject as they explore capacities and identities.

The implication of this perspective for course design, where the aim is to develop pre-service teacher capacity to teach the arts, is that a focus on content and skills specific to the arts domains is important. So too are reflective processes which enable the student to unpack their creative identity and perceptions of the arts, as are interactions with other work and collaborators in the field. Key features of this approach can also be identified in other research regarding the preparation of generalist pre-service teachers for teaching the arts with Jeanneret et al (2006) and McArdle (2012) advocating the need for students to unpack prior arts experiences as well as build specific arts domain skills and knowledge.

Rationale for the study and course assessment

This research study was focussed on identifying students’ perceptions of the arts and their confidence in regard to teaching the arts. It recognised the importance of students reflecting on their own experiences of the arts and themselves as creative individuals and using arts-based forms to do so. It also built on findings from past research that have found that some students may need to change negative perceptions of the arts if they are to be more likely to teach the arts in the future. In endeavouring to develop the creative capacities of students, it was identified that within the course, entitled “The Arts”, learning experiences and assessment tasks could address the three different components of the systems model for creativity.

The focus on the individual involves students unpacking their own personal background and arts experiences, recognising the opportunities and challenges they have faced. This is initiated through activities such as a ‘river reflection’ (Kerchner, 2006) with students analysing personal photographs and images to find metaphors for their personal arts journey. Their first assessment task asks them to focus on their arts journey – whether this has been good or bad, extensive or limited. Students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, their concept of themselves as creative and to share their arts journey through two creative forms including a digital photostory and a self portrait. These products are submitted with a letter to form a folio for a job application as a primary arts teacher (see Appendix A for Task details).

Students’ domain knowledge is addressed through arts experiences provided in each of the five arts areas and different conceptions of creativity are explicitly discussed. This opens up the possibility for students to consider that if they want to become more creative in a domain, they need to focus time and attention on building their knowledge and skills and engaging with the domain and a field. Offering such an approach for ongoing creative development is deemed necessary, as within the university course domain specific content is limited to 2-3 hours on each artform. So in the visual arts area, experiences include promoting student engagement in a ‘30 Days of Drawing’ program, visiting art galleries and exhibitions and choosing several artists or movements to investigate. With the self portrait we promote student engagement with domain knowledge through asking them to reference the work of at least two other artists and styles. The first assessment task usually also concludes around the time of the Archibald Prize, so we also look at the submissions for that year and the different approaches artists have taken.

The engagement with the field and collaborators is also addressed when students are engaged in collective creative activities where they can share their knowledge with each other and offer critical feedback and support on drafts of their work. The focus on the performing arts

and more collaborative practice is promoted through their second assessment task (see Appendix B). For that task, students have to create a performance piece, generally within an authentic context, to share with children in school or care contexts. Students have created performances and workshops for events such as 'Under 8s' days at schools, and arts festivals within the local community. Students also have to engage in peer and self-evaluation at the end of the task and submit that work as part of the second assessment package.

Research strategy and initial survey findings

For this study one cohort of students on one university campus were involved. These students were mostly first year students who were studying The Arts in the first term of their degree. This cohort, typical of this university, was made up of a mix of students aged 17-55, with only one third being school graduates. The gender breakdown was predominantly female, with only 5% of the students being male. University ethics approval was sought and information and consent packages provided to students. A proviso of the ethics clearance was that the analysis of student assessment products should not occur until after the students had completed their studies for the course.

The research strategy used was mixed-method and included several main tools, including survey questionnaires and content analysis of student assessment work. An online survey was conducted at the beginning and end of the course. The surveys were created in the online tool surveymonkey. Questions included multiple choice questions, likert scales and open-ended questions. These questions asked students to identify their prior arts experiences in each of the five art forms (Dance, Drama, Media, Music and Visual Arts) and their perceived level of confidence in teaching each one. The content analysis of student work occurred after the work had been assessed. Each task has a written reflective component and key concepts were noted from each student in a table format. Notes were also made about the ideas students conveyed in their digital photostories and the skills level demonstrated in their photostories and portraits. Conceptual analysis then occurred with a focus on coding student experiences, attitude towards the arts and confidence in specific arts area. For the second task previously identified coding was revisited, focussing on what students identified as having been learnt. Findings were mapped against the three creativity components of domain, self and field.

Entry level confidence levels, experience and perceptions

A number of questions in the first survey sought to ascertain student attitudes towards the arts and their prior experiences. Analysis of the responses indicated that approximately one third of students had significant creative experiences (including secondary school studies in one or more arts and co-curricula arts experiences) and saw themselves as creative people. Another third had some experience and had positive attitudes, and a final group did not have a lot of prior arts experiences and did not see themselves as creative.

In terms of their specific arts domain backgrounds, one question asked them to identify their prior arts experiences in each of the five arts areas. They could select from three choices, 'none', 'some' or 'a lot'. The analysis of this data indicates higher levels of prior experience in Music and Visual Arts (see Figure 2). This is not surprising considering these are the two arts areas with the longest history of inclusion in Queensland school curriculum programs. The two areas where students identified having the least experience were Dance and Media. These are the two arts areas most recently added to Queensland curriculum programs, and specific inclusion of courses in school programs is still quite mixed. This finding can be viewed in regard to that context.

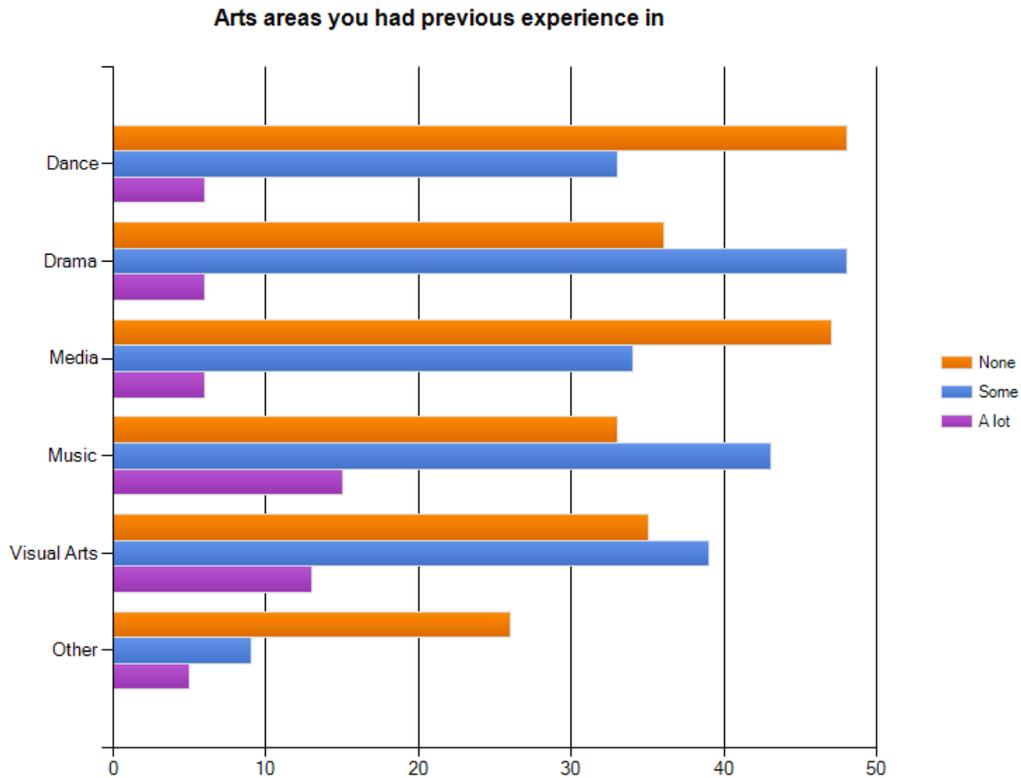


Figure 2: Previous arts experience N = 98

Even though the survey was conducted at the beginning of the course, one question was aimed at ascertaining student confidence in working in and possibly teaching the arts. This question offered students a five point scale to choose from and was broken down by arts area to determine any difference in confidence levels across the five art forms.

Table 1: Student confidence about working in each art form - Entry survey (N = 91)

Rating> Artform	Not at all (1)	Not very (2)	Okay (3)	Quite Good (4)	Very (5)	Average Rating on five point scale
Dance	16 (18%)	32 (35%)	30 (33%)	7 (8%)	6 (6%)	2.5
Drama	7 (8%)	28 (31%)	35 (39%)	16 (17%)	5 (5%)	2.8
Media	7 (8%)	13 (14%)	54 (59%)	14 (15%)	3 (3%)	2.9
Music	7 (8%)	25 (27%)	36 (40%)	17 (19%)	6 (6%)	2.9
Visual arts	7 (8%)	16 (17%)	37 (41%)	22 (24%)	9 (10%)	3.1

This reveals some interesting points. Students were most confident about working in the visual arts and music and that would align with their having more experience in those arts areas. However, confidence levels were also quite high for Media, even though that was an area students had less prior experience in. It could be that this is an area that students believe they have considerable life experience in, with the media being so much a part of our

everyday lives, certainly this is a point some made in their task 1 reflections.

Analysis of task 1 creative and reflective work

The analysis of student work was conducted with a focus on several components. Firstly an analysis was conducted of what students communicated through their work with reference to specific arts domain knowledge and skills. Secondly, the content of their arts journeys was coded and analysed to explore their perception of themselves as creative and their attitude towards the arts. Of particular interest was whether there were any shifts in perceptions that students identified as having occurred through the result of their experiences in the course.

For the first component, I made notes about the level of experience students had in the arts and also what was conveyed in the work they created. This included their manipulations of visual art and design elements in the construction of their work, their mastery of materials and techniques and ability to express their ideas creatively through the selected artform. I then devised a five-point scale for ranking their experience and work:

- 1 – Can not identify prior arts experiences, artworks show minimal skills level.
- 2 – Little arts experience (e.g. primary school only) and basic skills levels evident in work
- 3 – Some previous arts experience and evidence of some skills in at least one arts area in their work
- 4 – Considerable background experience (including high schools arts or post school experience) and evidence of arts skills in construction of their artwork
- 5 – Extensive background experience and evidence in construction of their artwork

The rankings I gave their work is tabulated as follows, with the number of student assessment packages being reviewed numbering 80.

Table 2: Student knowledge and skills level demonstrated in media and visual arts products

Ranking arts background & skills level	1 (Minimal)	2	3 (Some)	4	5 (Extensive)
Number of students	4	22	29	23	2
Percentage of students	5%	27.5%	36%	29%	2.5%

This ranking indicated students had the full range of experiences, with around a third (31.5%) having a solid background in one or more arts areas and demonstrating a good level of skills in the creation of their media and visual arts products. A little more than one third (36%) had considerable arts experience and showed some evidence of skills in at least one area. Many of these students had studied one or more arts at secondary school and had out of school arts experiences. However, around one third (32.5%) had little or no arts experience and some had trouble recalling any arts experiences, even from childhood. This confirmed the findings of the survey quite closely.

A thematic analysis of what students communicated through their letters and media stories revealed a number of common narrative themes and these can be identified as follows:

- Little experience - I have had very limited arts experiences, mainly in primary school or as a child (for some there was a growing understanding and appreciation)
- Post school appreciation - I had little arts experience as a child but have come to

appreciate the arts since school through my experience of travel, especially through a love of music or photography

- Rekindled love - I enjoyed the arts as a child, or at school, but went away from it, or lost interest, I have now rediscovered the arts and am enjoying it
- Interest through parenting - I had some/little arts experience previously but have discovered a love of the arts through my children
- Considerable experience and ongoing involvement - I have had ongoing experience, involvement in and love of the arts.

The number of stories that included each of these themes is tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3: Common narrative themes in students' arts journeys

Theme	Number N = 80	% of students expressing this theme
Little experience	27	34%
Post school appreciation	13	16%
Rekindled love	18	22.5%
Interest through parenting	16	20%
Considerable experience and ongoing involvement	11	14%

The numbers with little experience were significant at 34%. The degree of shift in attitude varied in relation to any commitment to ongoing development in arts knowledge and skills. For some of the students who identified having little or no experience in the arts a significant theme that emerged was the realisation, through studying the course, that the arts were a part of everyday life and that perhaps they did have some personal experiences they could draw on:

I have always had a love of sport, being outdoors, on the ocean and part of a team. So when I was asked to create my arts journey, I had no idea where to start. I thought about it and realised that I have grown up with the arts and it has influenced my life in many ways, from writing short stories in English, exploring media through Computer Studies and enjoying music in my social life. Through photography I capture the moment artistically. After finding my journey, I have come to realise that the arts were in my life after all. Katie, aged 21.

There was not a lot of dramatic change though for these students in terms of their desire to become more involved in the arts. If there was any such indication, it was usually in regard to media and especially photography.

The middle three themes were quite interesting. With two thirds of our students being mature-aged students, they bring with them varied working and family backgrounds. These experiences signal different opportunities for building creative knowledge, skills and artistic appreciation. Of those students who indicated discovering a love for a specific arts area or mode of creative expression there were several clear pathways. The first of these was a kind of aesthetic appreciation awakened through travel. Several students spoke of travelling to Europe and enjoyed going to art galleries and seeing the work of famous artists. A linked theme here was the way they could capture and express their appreciation through photography.

My only memories of the arts at school were playing the recorder. But now... on my walls, beautiful images, prints and photographs from my travels ... on my shelves sculptures and art pieces collected from many countries ... using the arts to communicate ... I too now make and create. Julia, aged 47.

Another theme emerging from those who developed arts appreciation post schooling was that of loving music. In several cases students had not necessarily participated in the arts in schools but had been heavily involved in music since that time. Some talked of attending concerts regularly, enjoying live music and in some cases had the experience of performing in bands or singing.

A theme around a rekindled love or interest in the arts was clearly evident with some very touching and heartfelt stories. Within these narratives there were two sub-themes. Some students spoke of enjoying the arts or a specific art form at school (such as dance or drama) but not having the chance to experience that since school. Another group talked of having enjoyed the arts, but then having negative experiences. These included negative teacher feedback and peer or parental pressure to leave the arts behind and focus on other activities or subjects that were seen as more 'academic'. In most cases though there was a sense of appreciation and fulfilment at having the opportunity to reconnect with the arts and become involved once again:

As a child I would dance freely. I loved to imagine I was famous. I would spend hours moving and performing. In the later years of my education I began to focus more on so-called academic subjects and eventually I gave up dance and other arts subjects that I was interested in... however my need and love for those experiences has caused me to try new things lately, including photography and playing the bass guitar. Upon reflection, I appreciate the arts so much more now that they are again an influence in my life. Nicole, aged 21.

Another strong theme was that of discovering the arts through having children and being a parent. Several students spoke of how being a facilitator of arts experiences for their children helped them see how much children learnt and benefited from these experiences:

My arts experiences have been a rollercoaster ride, not a lot of positive experiences myself, but positive experience as a parent. I can see the difference it makes with my kids. Shannon, aged 24.

For a small number of students the arts have always been a part of their lives and this is something they value and appreciate. Some hope to pass on their passion to others:

Once upon a time in a land far away a princess was born (but that is another story). On the very same day in another far away land a dancer was born. Twinkle toes was the first grand-child of the village ballet teacher. She spent many days and nights dancing, often falling asleep curled up in a long chiffon skirt. When times were tough or life didn't seem fair, she escaped to the magical world of ballet ... then she knew ... she needed to teach others, to share the joy with children. She rediscovered the joy of dancing and she decided this was something she wanted to share with the world. Tanya, aged 22.

The analysis of this component indicated that for many students, their experiences in the course and creating the assessment products had been the stimulus for worthwhile reflection. For a considerable group it had been the trigger for reconnecting with creative experience and for re-versioning their sense of self. This was most often so for those students who had some prior experiences in the arts or had connected with the arts through their children. For those students with minimal arts experiences, their connection to the arts was most likely through music (as a lover of music) or photography, artforms which they appreciated through their every day lives.

Task 2 and final reflections

With their second assessment task students engage in what we call ‘Learning in action’ and the focus is on the performing arts. For the year this study was conducted students were engaged in a regional project entitled ‘TreeLine’. Various groups, artists and the community were involved in creating stories and artworks about significant trees in the region. For their assessment task students had to research a significant tree or type of tree and create an entertaining and educational performance about it, incorporating drama, dance and music in their presentation. At the end they had to submit group documentation of that process and an individual reflection.

The analysis for this component focussed on the students’ written reflection and learning they identified as having emerged. This data was coded in relation to the three creativity systems components, domain, self and field. What emerged from this analysis was that students had gained considerable domain knowledge, both about arts curriculum but also specific arts learning areas (see Table 4). The arts area they indicated having the most learning in was Drama. This can be considered in the light of all groups having to work through a drama devising process to create their performance, and the fact that their lecturer had specific expertise in that area. Students also identified considerable learning in Media and Dance as well.

Table 4: Learning identified by students in their second reflective task

Learning by creative component	Aspect	Number who identified this learning N = 65	% of students
Domain (arts learning generally)	Value of the arts in education, means for expressing imagination and creativity	15	23%
	How to turn research into creative products	6	9%
	Domain (by artform)	Drama – how to create drama from research and use dramatic conventions	24
	Dance – choreography, how to create a dance/movement piece	7	11%
	Media – how to create photostories, use moviemaker, powerpoint	12	18%
	Music – importance of incorporating music, making music	2	3%
Personal learning	Personal presentation skills – building confidence to present in public	6	9%
	Creative extension – working outside the box and own comfort zone	5	8%
	You don’t have to be an artist, we can all be creative	3	5%
The collaborative field – working with groups	Positive group experience – value and importance of working in groups, how to problem solve and work through problems	22	34%
	Difficulty of working in groups	9	14%

In terms of personal learning, comments made in this realm tend to overlap with others, for example students spoke of having developed more confidence in presenting to others through

having to do the drama performance. For quite a few that had been a major achievement and learning for them. Others spoke of having to extend themselves and try new things and seeing themselves as creative. Many students commented on learning more about working in groups and the collaborative process. Whilst the majority spoke about how this had ended up being a positive process and included comments about solving problems and working through difficulties, for a significant number this had not necessarily been a positive learning experience.

To consider changes in confidence levels and perceptions it is possible to look at entry and exit responses to a survey question with the same question being asked in both surveys (see Table 1 and Table 5). This question asked students how confident they felt about working with each of the artforms. This data is presented with some serious qualifiers around it however. The first survey was conducted at the beginning of the course and the response level was very high with 91 students completing the survey. The second survey was completed at the end of the course with students about to go on holidays. While students were encouraged to complete it, the response rate was not high with only 18 students completing the survey.

Table 5: Student confidence about working in each art form – Exit survey (N = 18)

Rating> Artform	Not at all (1)	Not very (2)	Okay (3)	Quite Good (4)	Very (5)	Average Rating on five point scale & change
Dance	2 (11%)	3 (17%)	6 (33%)	7 (39%)	0 (0%)	3 (.5 ^)
Drama	2 (11%)	1 (6%)	6 (33%)	4 (22%)	5 (28%)	3.5 (.7^)
Media	1 (6%)	2 (11%)	6 (33%)	4 (22%)	5 (28%)	3.5 (.6^)
Music	2 (11%)	4 (22%)	3 (17%)	7 (39%)	2 (11%)	3.2 (.3^)
Visual arts	0 (0%)	2 (11%)	9 (50%)	2 (11%)	5 (28%)	3.5 (.4^)

Whilst no great claims can be made from this data, what is of most significance, and reflected in the data already reported on, is the increase in confidence around drama. In the final column of the table the average rating for confidence regarding each of the artforms is listed and below the rating the change from survey 1. The greatest change noted here is the increase in confidence in relation to drama (up from an average of 2.8 to 3.5), but also of note is the increase in confidence around media (up from 2.9 to 3.5) and also for dance (up from 2.5 to 3).

Conclusions

To draw together the findings from this research, the data revealed that there were three broad groups of students in this pre-service teacher education course focussed on the arts. One group had considerable arts experiences, saw themselves as creative and enjoyed the experience of using creative means to share their learning, another group had some arts experiences in the past, but moved away from that kind of learning and appreciated activating that part of their lives through the course. There was another group who had limited or no

significant arts experiences, some of them developed an appreciation for the arts in education and acknowledged the place of the arts in their lives.

It can be argued that a focus on the three components of a systems creativity model including personal traits and identity work, domain capacity building and engagement with the collaborative field is of value. The students who seemed to benefit the most from this approach and process were those who had some prior experience in the arts with their interest being reactivated through their engagement in the course and assessment tasks. For some students this was a transformative experience and they felt they had regained or reconnected with a part of themselves they had left behind. It could be argued that this approach assisted considerably with building student confidence and improving attitudes towards teaching the arts, however the impact on capacity building is more problematic.

In my university role I visit final year students whilst they are engaged in school-based practicum. On these visits I always ask them what they are actually teaching in schools. What I find is that relatively few speak of teaching arts units. For most students the focus is determined by their teachers and school context and is currently on teaching English and Maths and implementing national curriculum areas such as Science. Therefore, the opportunities for students to enact arts education experiences in school contexts and build capacity are often limited. If students are teaching the arts, it tends to be the visual arts, while several students have taught drama or media units, largely predetermined by the mentor teacher or student interests in a particular arts area. This indicates the importance of the broader educational context and the relative valuing (and devaluing) of different learning areas.

Through the conceptualisation and assessment of The Arts course I believe it is possible to build student confidence in teaching the arts and contribute to their capacity to do so. However, there are other issues that need to be considered if quality arts education for all students is to become a reality. Pre-service students need to have more opportunities for developing arts specific knowledge and skills and putting them into practice in the classroom to build upon their emergent capacity. If they don't get to see and experience different arts lessons in practice in the classroom, their university learning seems detached from that of the professional context. There also needs to be ongoing consideration of a role for arts discipline experts in primary school classrooms if we acknowledge the significant third of pre-service students with little or no prior arts experience and limited opportunity to develop such at university or in schools. A focus on creative capacity building can lead to significant engagement and learning for primary and early childhood education students, however, to consolidate that learning requires ongoing support for arts education programs across school and educational settings.

References

- ACARA. (2011). Shape of the Australian Curriculum: the Arts. Retrieved from <http://www.acara.edu.au/arts.html>
- Alexander, R. (Ed.). (2009). *Children, their world, their education: Final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Alter, F., Hays, T., & O'Hara, R. (2009). The challenges of implementing primary arts education: What our teachers say. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 34(4), 22-30.
- Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context: Update to the social psychology of creativity*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Bamford, A. (2006). *The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of The Arts in education* New York, Munich, Berlin: Waxmann Munster.
- Commonwealth Department of Education. (1985). Action: Education and The Arts, an

- illustrated edition of the report of the task force on education and the arts to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services.
- Craft, A. (2005). *Creativity in schools*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Crocco, M. S., & Costigan, A. T. (2007). The narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy in the age of accountability urban educators speak out. *Urban Education*, 42(6), 512-535. doi: 10.1177/0042085907304964
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. New York: HarperPerennial.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). Implications of a systems perspective for the study of creativity. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 313-335). Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Davis, D. (2008). *First we see: The national review of visual education*. Sydney: Australia Council for the Arts.
- Ewing, R., & Gibson, R. (2011). *Transforming the curriculum through the arts*. Melbourne: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Feldman, D. H., Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Gardner, H. (1994). *Changing the world: A framework for the study of creativity*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Creating minds: An anatomy of creativity*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gibson, R. (2003). Learning to be an Art Educator: Student teachers' attitudes to art and art education. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 22(1), 111-120. doi: 10.1111/1468-5949.00344
- Gibson, R., & Anderson, M. (2008). Touching the void: Arts education research in Australia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 28(1), 103-112.
- Grauer, K. (1998). Beliefs of preservice teachers toward art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 39(4), 350-370.
- Gruber, H. E., & Wallace, D. B. (1999). The case study method and evolving systems approach for understanding unique creative people at work. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of Creativity* (pp. 93-115). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hallam, S., Burnard, P., Robertson, A., Saleh, C., Davies, V., Rogers, L., & Kokatsaki, D. (2009). Trainee primary-school teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness in teaching music. *Music Education Research*, 11(2), 221-240. doi: 10.1080/14613800902924508
- Jeanneret, N., Brown, R., Bird, J., Christine, S., Imms, W., Watkins, M., & Donelan, K. (2006). *Encounters with engaging pedagogy: Arts education for the pre-service primary generalist*. Paper presented at the Backing our Creativity Symposium. http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_publications/subje cts/education/backing_our_creativity_symposium_final_report
- Kerchner. (2006). Tools for developing reflective skills. In P. Burnard & S. Hennessy (Eds.), *Reflective Practice in Arts Education* (pp. 123-136). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Koestler, A. (1964). *The act of creation*. London: Hutchinson & Co.
- Landsman, J., & Gorski, P. (2007). Countering Standardization. *Educational Leadership*, 64(8), 40-44.
- Luke, A. (2004). Teaching after the market: From commodity to cosmopolitan. *Teachers College Record*, 106(7), 1422-1443.
- McArdle, F. (2012). New maps of learning for quality art education: what pre-service teachers should learn and be able to do. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 91-106. doi: 10.1007/s13384-012-0051-2
- McDermott, M. (2002). Collaging pre-service teacher identity. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 29(4), 53-68.
- Moran, S., & John-Steiner, V. (2003). Creativity in the making: Vygotsky's contemporary contribution to the dialectic of creativity and development. In R. K. Sawyer, V. John-Steiner, S. Moran, R. J. Sternberg, D. H. Feldman, J. Nakamura & M. Csikszentmihalyi (Eds.), *Creativity and Development*. New York: Oxford University

Press.

- National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education. (1999). *All our futures: creativity, culture, education*. London: Department of Education and Skills.
- Pascoe, R., Leong, S., MacCallum, J., Marsh, K., Smith, B., & Church, T. (2005). National review of school music education *Perth*. Centre for Learning Change and Development: Murdoch University.
- Robinson, K. (2005). Creativity in the classroom, innovation in the workplace. *Principal Voices* Retrieved 4 July, 2008, from <http://www.principalvoices.com/voices/ken-robinson-white-paper.html>
- Russell-Bowie, D., & Dowson, M. (2005). *Effects of background and sex on confidence in teaching the creative arts: Tests of specific hypotheses*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, Sydney.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1999). A three-facet model of creativity. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of Creativity* (pp. 125-147). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1998). *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky - Volume 5 child psychology* (M. J. Hall, Trans.). New York & London: Plenum Press.

Appendix A – Task 1, Arts application and folio

Arts Learning Manager Letter

Part A You are applying for a position as a Learning Manager who will be teaching the arts. The school is interested in employing someone with a solid knowledge of relevant arts curriculum and policy documents and able to articulate why the arts are important in education. Within this piece you should also reflect on your preparation for your role as a Learning Manager for the arts. Your work needs to draw on syllabus/curriculum materials and relevant course readings, using appropriate quotes and referencing (1000 words).

Media Product

Part B requires you to construct a **media product about ‘my arts journey’, which** demonstrates key messages about your personal and professional learning (in one or two arts strands preferably) and clearly links to ideas and statements made in your letter. Around 20 photographs/images will be required for your media product and you should construct some of these. Your work is presented in a media form using a program such as Photostory, MovieMaker, iMovie or Powerpoint. You also need to pay attention to specific media languages and conventions and ensure that the work is presented in a visually appealing way and in a format your Lecturer can access (e.g. on a USB stick).

Visual Arts Folio

Part C requires you to **create and interpret a visual arts product** of your own which should be a self-portrait that draws on one or more artistic styles explored in the course and incorporate some drawing and/or painting. The work should show evidence of working with visual arts elements and processes over time to develop an idea and construct meaning. If the piece is larger than A4 size, please photograph it and include that in your submission rather than submit the original work (which you should show your lecturer during workshop time). You should also accompany the work with an artist statement, which explains the concept, influences on the work, art elements used with your anticipated interpretation or audience impact. This should be approximately 500 words long.

Appendix B – Task 2, Learning in action – presentation and reflection

This ‘learning in action’ task involves students working in small groups to create a performance based presentation/ integrated arts learning experience that is targeted at a (primary) school audience. You must include some performative elements in this work with a focus on using **Drama, Dance &/or Music** in particular. Typically this ‘Learning in Action’ will include:

- The selection or creation of an effective pre-text which will be a key stimulus for the presentation - we suggest using a piece of literature or story
- Some kind of presentation of an arts learning experience which is viewed by the course lecturer, students and other school staff
- Group documentation that includes a written introduction and justification explaining how this performance links to a curriculum unit. E.g. a specific year level and related Essential Learnings (Qld).
- Some ideas for follow up activities that a classroom teacher could conduct
- An individual evaluation and reflection of the design and implementation (what worked well, what didn’t work so well, what you would do differently). You should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the experience and your arts learning as well as your reflections on your participation in your group process.

Example 1

A Year 6 class at a local school is looking at issues related to the environment. The BLM students prepare an integrated arts experience as a process drama. They enrol the class as different animals and humans. They participate within the drama, with tension created through the introduction of a proposal to build a new shopping centre.

Example 2

BLM students created a performance about Anzac Day to be performed as part of school Anzac Day activities. This was intended to help introduce students to the overall meaning of the day as well as providing some insight into local experiences of war. The students prepared a series of activities for follow-up lessons, which teachers could use after the performance.