

Title: Curriculum innovation through public arts: developing a 'creative campus'

Presenter: Jennie Winter
Plymouth University

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Identify the benefits of exposing students to others' creativity through items of public art
- Appreciate the potential for making curriculum links between different disciplinary contexts and public arts in the university
- Suggest how links might be created in their own institutions

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

- Engaging students creatively as partners
- Creativity in curriculum design
- Experiential learning.

As an educational developer I have grown increasingly interested in informal campus based learning opportunities which I see as crucial to strengthening the lived experience of the curriculum as set within a wider scholarly community. This interest led to a recent research project which investigated potential curriculum development opportunities around a university-based public arts programme through conducting focus groups and interviews with Faculty and students. There has been limited research that considers the impacts of university public arts programmes; neither is there much in the way of guidance available for developing interpretation and learning opportunities specifically for a multi-disciplinary university-based student population. However, there is a growing 'creative campus' movement originating from the US which recognises both the utility and cultural value of Arts programmes for encouraging disciplinary and interdisciplinary understanding, meta-cognitive skills and the utility of different media for communicating ideas (Creative B 2010; Falk 2006). There is also widespread interest in using the creative outputs of others as a basis for encouraging conceptual blending, divergent creativity and divergent production, all important skills for contemporary graduates faced with a world characterised by complexity, uncertainty and risk (Barnett 2000; Guilford 1967). The findings of the research suggest:

- There are several possibilities for Faculty and curators to work together in creating curriculum-enhancing learning design within a public arts programme. For example, curators can attend Educational Development programmes to become cognisant of common approaches to learning and there are possibilities for curators and Faculty to co-design peer-led learning activities focused on exhibitions and events.
- Students respond well to arts-based innovative learning experiences but require encouragement and guidance to interpret others' creativity. This suggests that appropriately structured scaffolding is important, certainly in the first instance, to provide students with a foothold with which to enter and negotiate a new disciplinary context.

These findings have fed into recommendations for educational developers, educators and curators in an effort to raise awareness of and engagement with art-based learning opportunities on the university campus. These recommendations are presented and critiqued as part of this discussion paper.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- Brief introduction to the topic area (5minutes)
- Questions to audience about public arts in participants' intuitions (5 minutes)
- Description of the research focusing on the analysis and findings (10 minutes)
- Discussion session – how might these findings feed in to their own area of educational development? What potential or questions do they raise? (5 minutes)
- Introduce the evidence –based recommendations that the project generated – provide an opportunity to comment and critique (10 minutes)
- The a discussion with the following questions as prompts (10 minutes)
 - How could the creative work of others help to enhance students in your area?
 - How might you advise Faculty to build bridges between formal and informal learning opportunities? What expertise/ resources might you need?
 - From reflecting on the discussion paper what other informal campus – based learning opportunities can you think of?

References

Creative B (2010) Creative Campus. Available from:

<http://www.arts.ufl.edu/welcome/creativecampus.aspx>

Falk, J. (2004) The director's cut: towards an improved understanding of learning from museums. Wiley InterScience. PpS83-S96

Falk, J. (2005) Free choice environmental learning: framing the discussion. Environmental Education Research. Pp 265-280

Guilford, J. P. (1967). The Nature of Human Intelligence.

Koestler, A. (1964). The Act of Creation. London: Pan Books.