The contribution of the Arts to the health and wellbeing of children and young adolescents

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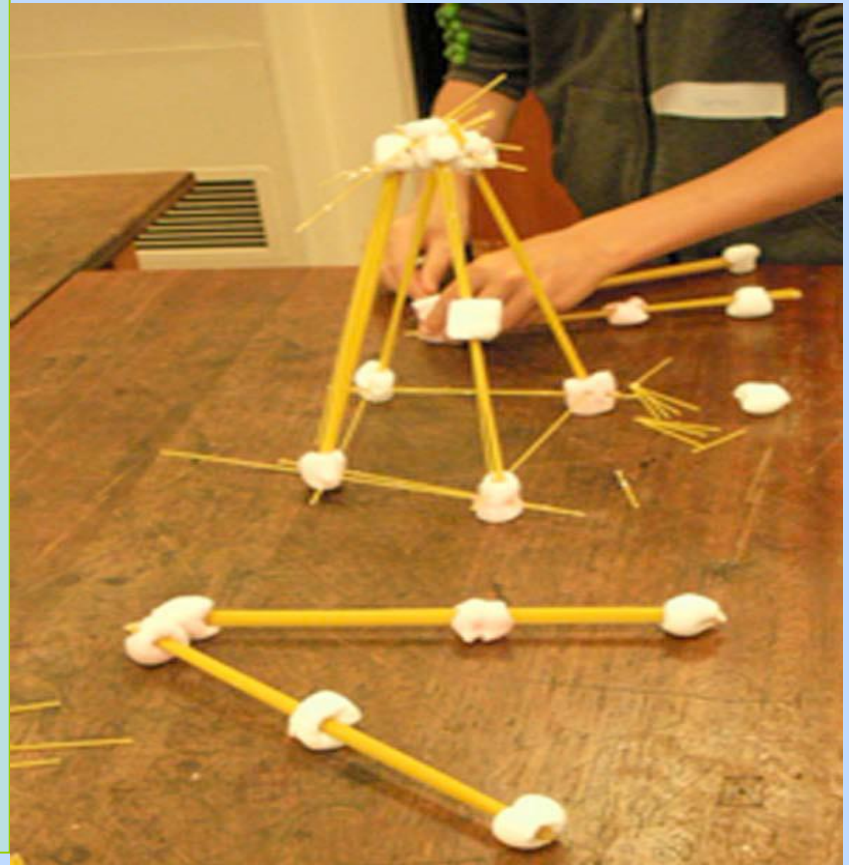**University of Cambridge**
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The Arts, Creativity & Creative Learning

Creativity 'essentially and inevitably represents a communal judgment'. Thus, the only way of arriving at an estimate of a person's creativity 'is by observing the fate of the work he or she has fashioned (Howard Gardner, 1999, p 18)

Creativity: Two Approaches

Creativity as an 'imaginative activity producing outcomes that are both original and of value (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education's. *All our Futures Report* (NACCCE, 1999.)

Creativity as *flexibility of the mind (*artistic director, Jude Kelly when speaking at the 2002 NUT/NCA conference)

Similar to Craft's (2000) notion of creativity as *possibility thinking* allied to imagination. Kelly's view of creating has been described elsewhere as '*aesthetic intelligence'* (Raney, 2003, p. 149).

Creativity: Artists' views

One important thing for me is to look at a different model of working; of the ways artists can work with 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 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 '
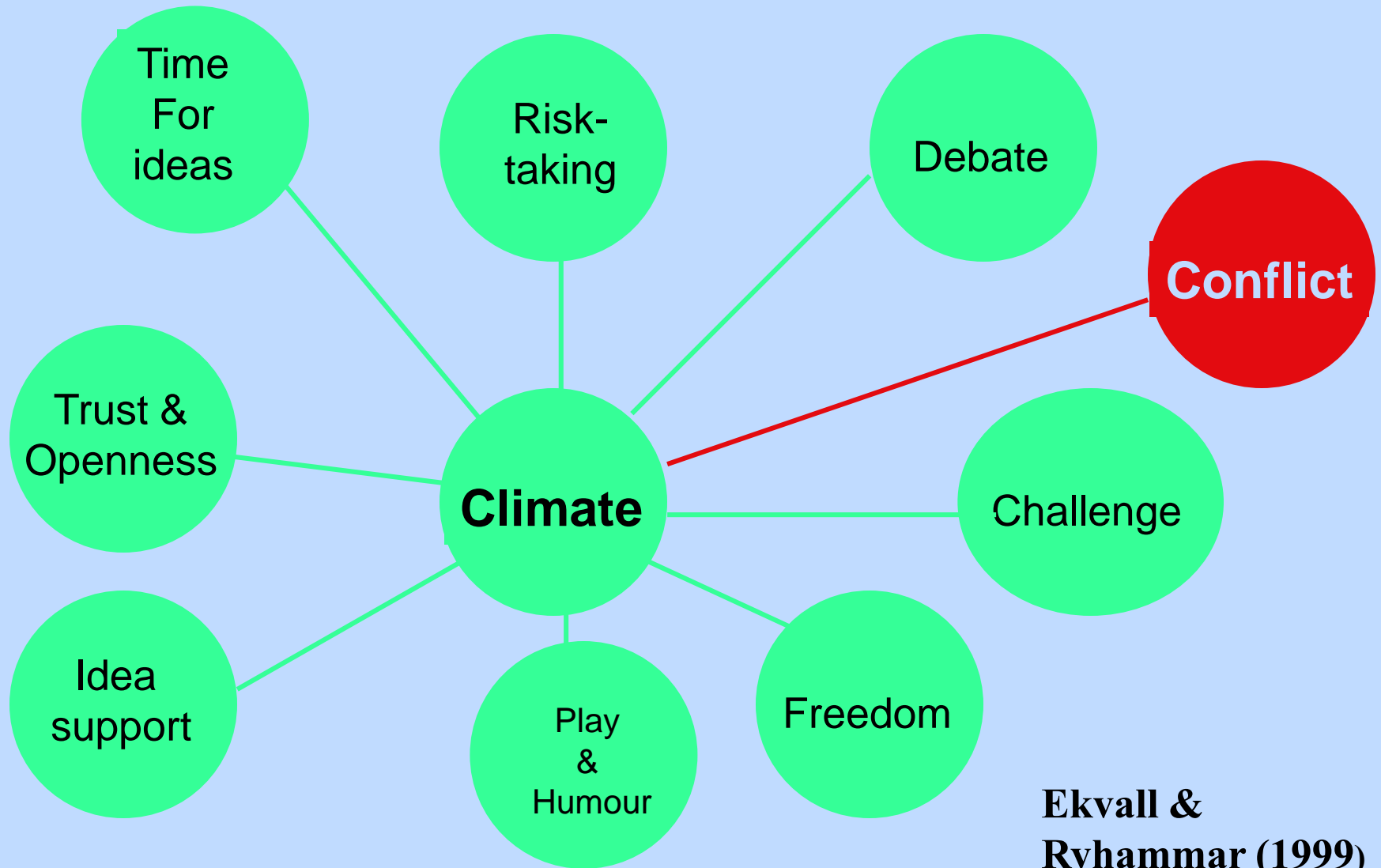
The key for me is getting creativity into the school. I just see myself as a friend. I don't teach… I actually have nothing to teach them, perhaps just to show them how to work things out. That's different from teaching….I think It replicates my studio practice. That's all I've done, brought in my studio practice and offered it to children.

Making & Creating (Amabile, 1996)
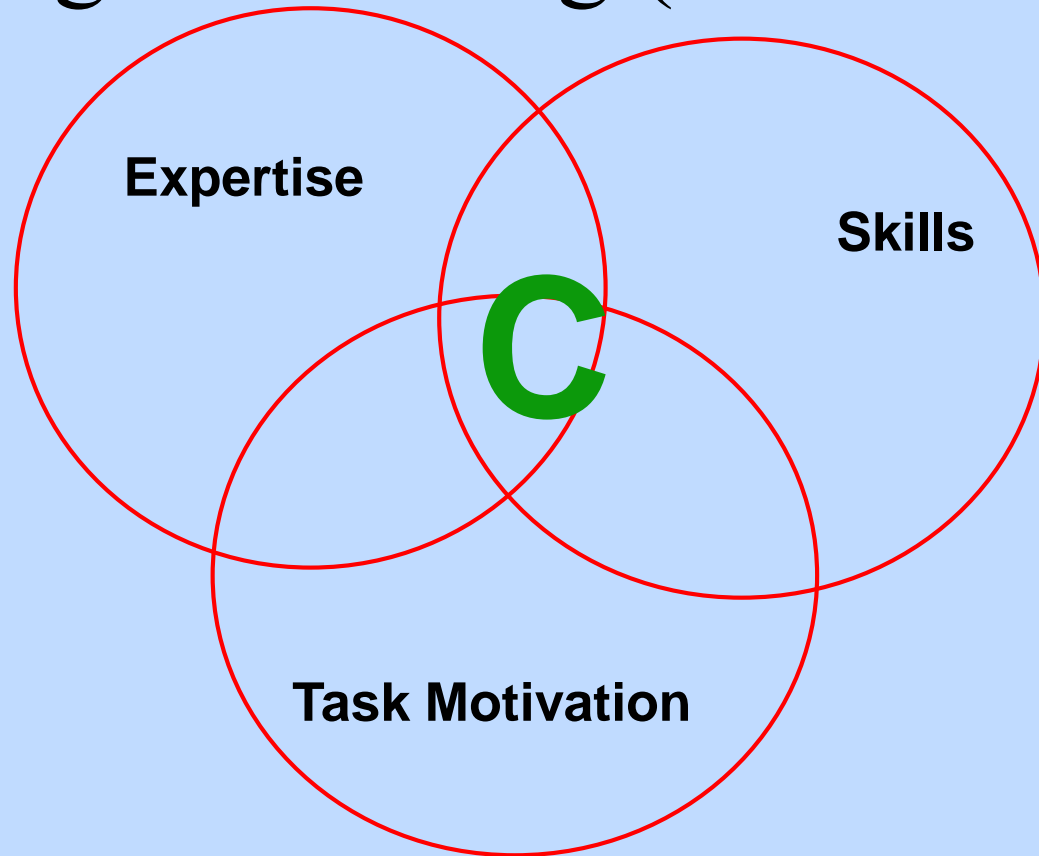
Social factors can impinge upon creative learning, particularly through motivation These are more readily changed than factors such as personality traits or cognitive ability

Establishing a Creative Climate –

Time For ideas

Risk-taking

Debate

Conflict

Trust & Openness

Climate

Challenge

Idea support

Play & Humour

Freedom

Ekvall & Ryhammar (1999)

Research on the Arts

The idea that a small dose of arts is all that is needed to improve pupils' thinking skills, social retention, academic self concept ……is simply not scientifically based. (Winner & Hetland, 2003 from a review by a Harvard's Project Zero team)

Most studies on the arts and wellbeing in school settings are

- Small scale
- Lack objective and reliable outcome measures
- Do not give details of samples, precise details of the intervention, and have no comparative group (McLellan, Galton et al., 2012).

Measuring Student Wellbeing

Subjective [*hedonic*] wellbeing expressed as feelings, emotions and life satisfaction

In schools subjective wellbeing is often induced by drawing up rules that avoid pupils being exposed to unpleasant and harmful situations. (e.g. Being supervised while walking from the assembly point to the classroom makes pupils feel safe from being knocked into by older and bigger pupils. Appointing playground monitors ensures pupils are not bullied, left with nobody to talk or play with etc.)

Psychological [*Eudaimonic*] wellbeing as functioning in a satisfactory way.

Wellbeing as functioning involves living in ways which promote happiness and positive hedonic feelings. When pupils function well they feel supportive of each other so rules can be kept to a minimum. Cooperative learning, for example can engender these feelings of *connectedness*. It is the functioning form of wellbeing that is more important because it enables pupils to gain personal satisfaction from their behaviour and their learning. They do things, not because they are told to by adults but because it leads to fulfilment and authentic happiness (Seligman, 2002)

Wellbeing & Motivation: Self-Determination Theory
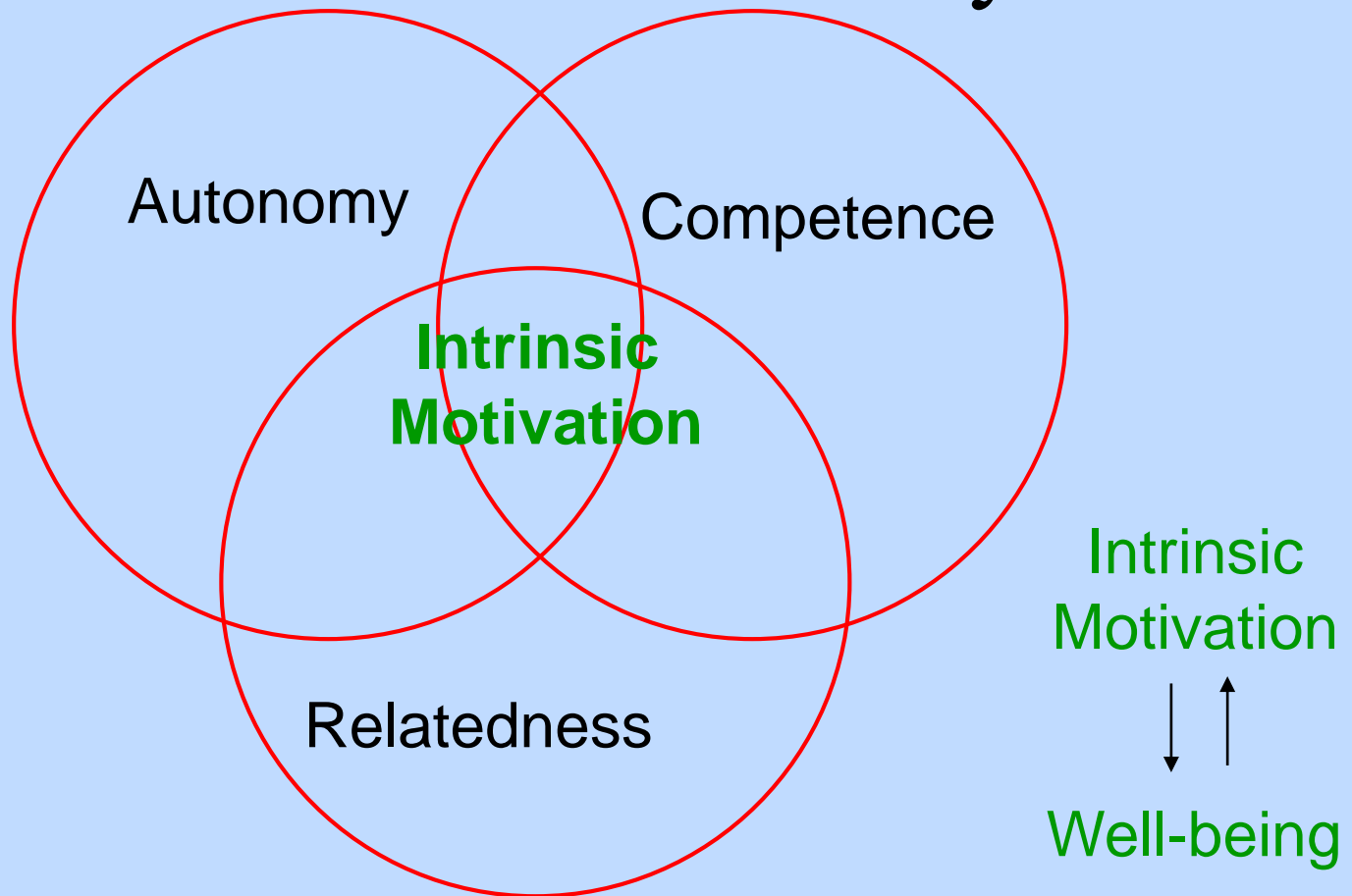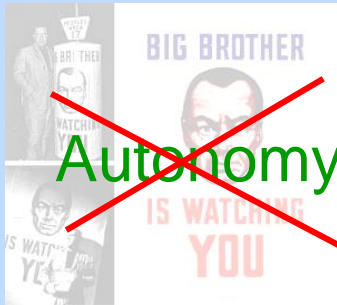
Interpersonal Climate

…Autonomy support involves one individual (often an authority figure) relating to target individuals by *taking their perspective, encouraging initiation, supporting a sense of choice, and being responsive to their thoughts, questions and initiatives*

Deci & Ryan (2008)

Contexts undermining Intrinsic Motivation

~~Autonomy~~

Autonomy

Rewards

Threats of punishment

Surveillance

Pressurised evaluation

Deadlines

Imposed goals

Choice

Acknowledgement of feelings

Opportunities for self-direction

Wellbeing, motivation and school climate

Strong pupil voice
Cross curriculum
Learning community
Informal pedagogies

Meaningful topics
Positive feedback
Elements of choice
Behaviour management

Intrinsic motivation

Improved self- esteem
Improved self-efficacy
Sense of autonomy
Willingness to take risks

Improved functioning
leading to
School Enjoyment,
Better relationships etc.
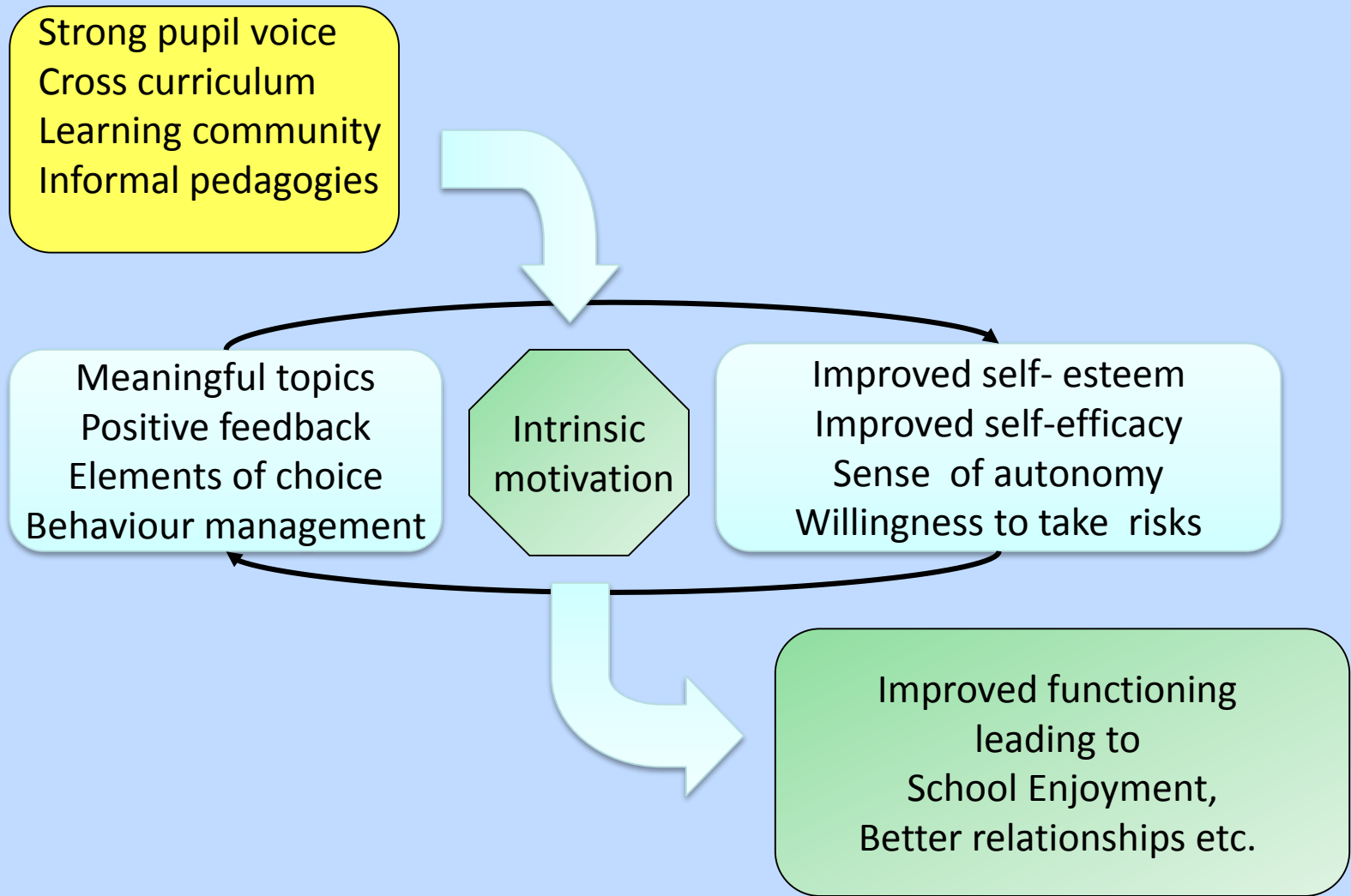
The impact of artists working in schools on student wellbeing

Creative Partnerships

Fostering long term partnerships between schools and creative partners.
More than 5000 schools and
Over 1 million young people have participated since its inception in 2002 until its demise in 2012

Background

- Schools have always employed artists and some achieve striking results. However effects are often short term. Once the artist leaves 'normal service' is resumed.

- Creative Partnerships (2002-2011) was set up by UK's Department of Culture, Media & Sport. Artists (or creative practitioners because they could be film makers, photographers, dancers etc., as well as literary and visual artists) used in extended placements (up to a year) in an attempt to sustain change..

- McLellan et al (2012) gave a wellbeing questionnaire to 40 schools (20 primary and 20 secondary) Half of each phase were active in CP activities over at least 3 years. 5 Primary (3CP-2 non CP) and 4 Secondary (2CP- 2 non CP) with highest wellbeing scores were each visited for 2 days of case study.

Wellbeing Questionnaire

Four scales: the third is closest to functioning aspects of wellbeing.

- **Interpersonal**: (*Feeling safe, feeling part of things, feeling I'm treated fairly*)
- **Life satisfaction**: *(Feeling energetic, feeling there's a lot to look forward to)*
- **Perceived competence** *(Feeing capable of coping with challenge, feeling successful)*
- **Negative emotions** *(feeling stressed, feeling miserable)*

Health

One item on the questionnaire asked if pupils felt healthy. The correlations have been converted to z scores using Fisher's transformation, At primary level there were much stronger associations between wellbeing and health in CP schools. We have now developed an extended health wellbeing section to examine the nature of this relationship

Health v interpersonal scores

z score

	Y3	Y6	Y3/4

Legend: CP, non CP
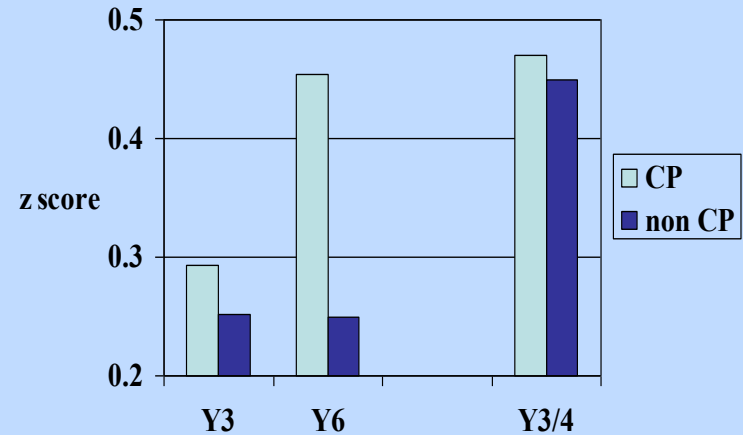
Health v perceived competence

z score

	Y3	Y6	Y3/4
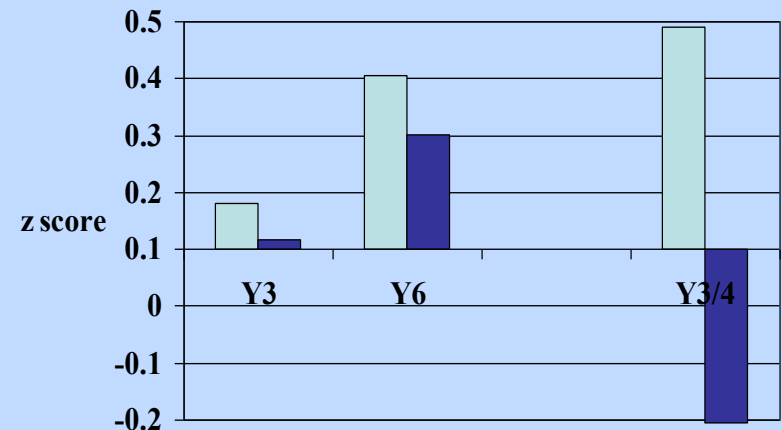
UK PRIMARY SCHOOL CASE STUDIES

In CP schools pupils were encouraged to make choices, take risks, face challenges and given space to think share ideas with others etc.

Pupils gained confidence because they succeeded without too much help from adults and reacted better towards teachers and peers (functional wellbeing)

Characteristic of CP Schools

Enhanced practice and helped it develop in ways that it might not otherwise have done'. ***Additionality***

Relationships went beyond mere tolerance in stressing the need to respect students' cultures and life experiences. ***Considerate***

Schools encouraged a sense of fun during lessons and 'legitimised' collegial working relationships between teachers, between pupils and between teachers and pupils. ***Convivial***

Students had an important role in governance, in relationships and in the co-construction of learning. ***Voice***

Bragg, Manchester and Faulkner (2009)

Additional, Convivial and Considerate

They choose the theme that they want to work on ..and then we'll talk about it as a class. What sorts of things could we do?' Now initially I used to get blank faces because it was almost like 'well you're our teacher' you know you learn us, you tell us what we learn, we don't tell you and that's something that's really changed because now I don't get a word in edgeways, (Year 6 teacher)

I like it because normally you just mix with the people you already know but on a 'WOW' day you can go with other people. And you can share things with other people. And you're learning but in a fun way. (Year 5 pupil)

I just want to get on with my work. I want to do it myself. If the teachers are helping it's not our work. We need to learn…because why do we come to school? We've come to school to learn, not people helping us learn. (Year 3 pupil)

[On WOW days pupils opted for various creative activities and worked with pupils from different year groups.]

Impact on Pedagogy

A shift from what has been termed a *default* pedagogy, where lessons were planned around the achievement of specified outcomes, a transmission mode of teaching was favoured, and schools mainly relied on tests to determine the extent to which the prescribed outcomes were achieved.

Creative approaches made use of *exploratory* pedagogies which focused on improving students' background knowledge and raising issues through a mix of extended class discussion and outside visits and where emphasis was placed on children's prior experiences when setting learning goals and time was set aside for the teacher and the pupil to reflect on outcomes.

Thomson, Jones and Hall (2009).

Exploratory pedagogies

I've been involved from the very beginning. It a movement project that I did in this classroom actually. We worked with Reception so the children in Year 4 worked with children in Reception and they did similar projects. We got all the tables out the way which I found quite frightening because I was used to all the children sitting at desks and planning everything. So it was really a big steep learning curve for me - but I've never looked back. It's changed the way I approach things now and the way I teach...and how I look at how we can get the children engaged (Year 6 teacher)

We worked with a scientist last year, and it's just bringing that extra dimension ..those extra ideas. The work we've done with learning journals has been amazing. The children themselves had the idea of taking a book and transforming it into your own thing and again the way that they [artists] have worked has been very open.. They've brought the resources in and they let the children explore and try things for themselves. (Year 2 teacher)

Student Voice

Interviewer: *So on the School Council What sort of things can you discuss?*

Pupil 1: *So when people are having troubles at school we help. We help sort out their problems.*

Interviewer: *You've told me maths is not very exciting. Would you take that to the School Council?*

Pupil 1: *We have talked about it and they have said, 'yes'. But sometimes you do need to sit down and work in your book. But at School Council we did resolve it a little bit because some of the children were saying they got bored in lessons.*

Pupil 2: *Yeah!*

Pupil 1: *But in the end we have sorted it out and we tend to do more interactive lessons.*

Artists and Teachers

What do creative practitioners do that makes a difference?
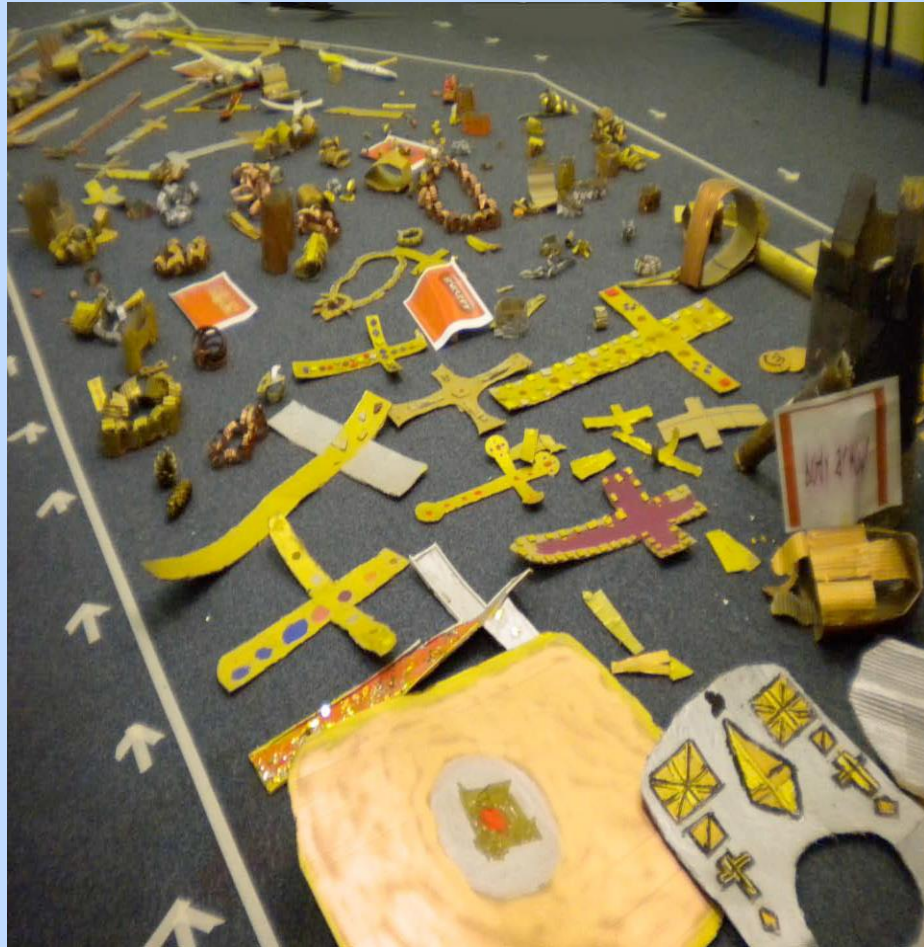
Background

This project was concerned with 10 artists (or creative practitioners). There were 3 visual artists, 3 dancers, 1 photographer, 2 film (documentary) makers and 1 actor/director. Both primary and secondary schools were involved. Schools tended to be situated "in difficult circumstances". All 10 practitioners were picked because teachers said they "were outstanding". They were observed at least 6 times during the course of the school year. (Galton, 2010)

Initial Encounters: *Giving pupils space and time*

Initial encounters with artists

- Emphasis tends to be on process and finding some aspect which interests pupils (favourite TV programmes; photographing interesting buildings chosen by pupils)

- Pupils are encouraged to ask questions which are often answered by another question '*Why do you ask that*?' Hence extended dialogue. "*Its been more about raising questions rather than making decisions. Films don't happen by accident''* (film maker at end of 1st lesson)

- Pupils given a task and left to get on with it while artists watch silently (building a dance sequence; creating scenery for a play)

- When making suggestions artists often build on pupils ideas; they don't often change or reject them.

Initial encounters with teachers

- Emphasis tends to be on outcomes
- Pupils encouraged to answer questions with short wait times with 'cued elicitations to get the desired answer.'
- Teachers intervene very quickly and suggest alternative solutions)
- Teachers don't always build on pupils ideas: they change or reject them.

Initial encounters: What pupils say

Interviewer: *Are artists the same as teachers?*

Pupil: *No: they let you make the big decisions.*

Interviewer: *How do you feel about that?*

Pupil: *Scary at first in case it goes wrong.*

Interviewer: *But when it comes out right at the end?*

Pupil: *It's magic. You feel all proud and warm inside*

Interviewer: *And don't you feel like that with teachers?*

Pupil: *Sometimes but not often.*

Giving Feedback

Artists tend to build on pupils' ideas. When offering reinforcement artists are very specific while teachers tend to be more general

Artist [after a group has performed their dance]: *That was really lovely work. You know when you come up from the swing. Reach into your arms so they are not dying.* [Then to the rest of the class] *Anything else you saw?*

Girl: *I liked the shape*

Another girl: *I liked their canon*

Artist: *Yes. I suggest you have an obvious signal like a clap. Then go into the canon.*

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The task is for pupils to make themselves into a helicopter.

Teacher: *Remember there are two rotors, one at the back and one at the front. So we want one here* [puts girl in place] *and one there* [puts boy at back]. *Now you turn inside and go round and round making a put-put noise.*

The use of scaffolds

Many pupils avoid taking on challenging tasks for fear of failure. Scaffolding provides a safer environment in which children can problem solve. It provides freedom within a framework.

Teachers often use guided discovery or modelling to scaffold pupils' thinking but in lowering the risk of failure these supports also take away the ambiguity (or uncertainty) about the acceptable outcome.

Artists tend to frame tasks in such a way as it maintains ambiguity while reducing risk of failure by restricting the number of possibilities or pointing out crucial associations.

The use of scaffolds

The class is to perform a play in front of the whole school. The children not taking parts are to mime various bits of scenery (a river, bridge, houses etc.)

Artist: *Ok class. In your groups I want you to make a bridge but there are two rules; one you must be off the floor and two you must be able to hold the pose when I say freeze.*

The school is preparing a concert for parents. The task is to design a cover for the programme.

Teacher: *It's up to you. You can do any design you want, but you might like to remember that the recorder group will be playing and there will be a violin and a trumpet solo so you may like to see whether pictures of these instruments can be incorporated into your design.*

Dealing with dependency: Risk taking and creating a sense of ownership

Seeking permission

The artist has got the pupils to design and paint scenery for the local pub pantomime. Jason is leader of the castle group

Jason: *Can I paint this red?* (pointing to the tall turret)

Artist: *What do you mean by 'can'? Does it mean are you allowed or are you able?*

Jason: *I can do it alright but am I allowed?*

Artist: *Why ask me? You're running this group.*

Jason: *I know that but we usually ask teachers first.*

Giving pupils responsibility

The pupils are to film various objects around the school

Artist: *How much do you think this camera costs?* (various guesses) *Whose the highest?*
Chris: *Me £850*
Artist: *Double it.*
Chris: *what happens if it breaks?*
Artist: *I'd cry. Now whose going to carry the camera? OK Jack's hand was up first. What's the most expensive part*
Jack: *The camera*
Artist: *Ok. Then hold it there* (pointing to the handle) *not through the tripod.*

Some Key Differences in the use of management strategies?

Explaining decisions

Artists often justify decisions by reference to their feelings. They will discuss their lives including the emotional aspects. Teachers also talk about themselves but rarely mention feelings.

Artist: (A pupil wants to stick paper snowflakes on trees which are part of the scenery.) *'Look Anne. I've got this* [the castle] *to finish, the trees to assemble, the paint to clear up. I haven't any more to give today. I've had it. Do you see? It isn't because it's a good idea. It is a good idea but it's come too late.*

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Photographer is editing pupils' photographs. Pupils opt for the stained glass format

Photographer: *Are you happy with that? We need a title*

Teacher: *Stained glass snake*

Pupil: *What about stained snake*?

Teacher: *Sshh. We've chosen. I'm going to see whose being silly.*

Back to normal: When it's learning do as you think; when it's behaving do as I say

Pupils are preparing for a performance in front of parents. As a finale they have to lie down and at the count of five jump up. As they jump they shout out 'five' which they are not supposed to do.

Artist: *We'll need to do this again until you do it quietly. It's supposed to be a surprise: we keep quiet before we jump so nobody expects it. See if you can do it without talking or do you need my help? Can you manager by yourselves?*

Pupils: *Yes*

Teacher: *We won't start again until you're quiet. I said quiet Stephen* (shouting at the boy pupil)

Artist: *Are we nice and still? Then off we go.*

Teacher (at the end of the dance): *Ok. Back to normal. Line up in pairs and go quietly back to your classroom.*

I can't condone but I understand

Pupils are pretending a tent is a time machine but when they take turns to enter there's lots of laughing and fooling.

Artist: *When I was your age my brother and I had a tent in the garden. We wanted to sleep in it but my mum said we wouldn't get any sleep because we'd be giggling all night. So do you think when we go in the tent you could not have a giggle? I know it's hard but you'll have to stop yourself. That's if you want to hear all the sounds when you go on time travel. So are you ready for the challenge?*

The wrong end of the stick!

This presentation is not about Artists = *good*; Teachers = *bad*. It's about sharing ideas on learning and teaching. These artists were deliberately picked because of their previous recognised successes. There will also be teachers who also make use of these strategies but with more difficulty because of the daily struggles they face in today's educational world. Both need each other.

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