

Part 5

Law and Education

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An Overview of Integrating Arts and Creative Practices to a Business Programme: QAHE in Partnership with Ulster & Northumbria Universities

Abstract

The prompt for this study came about as a result of my previous paper presented in 2017 in relation to examining the role of creative art and link in education, originated from Prof. Claudio-Rafael Vásquez-Martínez work on arts and painting in education. For the present study, qualitative data was gathered using observation and focus group interviews with Business students and teachers at QAHE in partnership with Ulster, Northumbria, Roehampton and Middlesex Universities in London Campus. The findings indicate that creative arts can be linked to any form of learning and in doing so, would depend on how the teachers communicate the idea to the learners and how the students may perceive their learning styles from the process. The key challenge for QAHE is linking arts and creativity to other business curriculum for the benefit of other learners.

Keywords: art education, poster, design, drawing, painting, creative practices, transition, international students, business decision, academic success

Introduction

As an on-going research, this is the second stage of the work that was derived from a peer observation of a colleagues' class, where the work of art and creativity was linked to a business programme. The main aim of the study was to explore how the QAHE Business studies students were able to learn through this process and the knowledge and skill developed linking creative arts in their business course. As a result, I revisited my previous work and literature, hence the need to find out from the Business students and their teachers how they perceived linking arts and creativity in their business lessons, importance and value added to their learning. The students in question are in year 1 Business programme and one of their modules was linked to creative arts, drawing and painting in designing a poster. The lesson observed was on poster presentation where students were asked to create and design posters to analyse Porter's Five Forces Model to making a business decision. In order to consider the wider concepts and benefits of arts and creativity, it is important to revisit my previous literature.

Literature

The section aims to examine the contribution of literature and research in integration of arts and creativity in education with reference to the role of arts and creativity linked to a Business course for EU students. This literature review and scoping paper explores the experiences of EU students studying at QA Higher Education (QAHE) in partnership with four English Universities. The paper seeks to examine literature review and research carried out on the role of art in education and the interrelationships between art, creativity and value added to student's knowledge in a business programme. With reference to the work of Professor Claudio-Rafael Vásquez-Martínez, at the outset of a collaborative project to explore these issues further, this paper considers how the design of posters and creative art practices could help students interpret and explain Porter's Five Forces Model, one of the topics in their business programme and how this has helped students in their artistic and creative thinking, design, drawing and painting to a Business theoretical framework of Porter's Five Forces Model.

The growing influence and importance of the arts in education

As noted in my previous work, there is a large body of articles, research and on-going debates about the practice of creative arts and their application in education. The work of Vásquez-Martínez et al. (2015), Fleming (2010), Moorefield-Lang (2008), Winner and Cooper (2000), Purves (2012), Evans (2011), Achinewhu-Nworgu (2017), have all contributed to the understanding of the role of arts and painting in student creative thinking and to engage in academic studies. A good number of studies and research have been carried out and written (Macdonald, 1970; Sutton, 1967; Field, 1970). The most recent overview of key issues is given in Vásquez-Martínez et al. (2015), and Addison and Burgess (2003). Macdonald's (1970) seminal history that investigates the study of arts painting and design education in United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, United States and France which traces the philosophies of teachers from the age of the guilds and the academies, setting them in the context of the general education theories of their times.

A key development in thinking about art education (which influenced the development of drama education, drawing and painting) was the recognition of child art. The acceptance of child art was influenced by four related factors (Fleming, 2010).

Firstly, the naturalistic thinking of Rousseau who had argued that the child needs an education suited to its nature. Spencer (in Fleming, 2010) introduced the relevance of this kind of thinking to the teaching of art in England, although his ideas did not have an immediate impact on practice. As identified in the work of Fleming, Spencer challenged the emphasis on mechanical drawing from copies, recognising that when the natural instinct of the child is allowed to emerge, 'the drawing of outlines immediately becomes secondary to colouring' (Spencer, 1878, p. 83). Spencer compared the mechanical approach of teaching drawing to the process of teaching a child to speak by drilling in parts of speech. Innovative thinking in art education which challenged prevailing mechanistic practices thus began relatively early and paved the way for later more radical developments later (Macdonald, 1970). Art education is defined as a learning, instruction and

programming based upon the visual and tangible arts. Art education is grouped into performing arts such as dancing, music, theatre, and visual arts that include drawing, painting, sculpture, and design works. Arts practice in education is defined to include the fine and performing arts – painting, sculpting, writing poetry, playing an instrument, singing, dancing, acting, creating mixed media productions, and film-making of which each of these arts activities engages the learner wholly – intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Learning in, about, and through the arts involves active engagement in learning that unites mind and body, emotion and intellect, object and subject as pointed out by Fleming (2010).

Arts and creativity linked to Porter’s Five Forces Model by Business students

The Porter’s Five Forces Model originated and was developed by the Harvard Business School’s Michael E. Porter in 1979, the five forces and model looks at five specific factors that helped determine whether or not a business can be profitable, based on other businesses in the industry (Martin, 2017). The designing of a poster to describe the five forces that shape a business in terms of what Porter regarded as an understanding of both the competitive forces and the overall industry structure as important factors for effective strategic decision-making in business. Linking art, design and creative practice opens up rich possibilities for developing a new creative pedagogy – and a more interdisciplinary approach in the field of education – in order to improve learning outcomes and enhance student success in a business context.

The potential of art and creative practices for enhancing students’ learning as set out in Vásquez-Martínez et al. (2015), with reference to the work of Purves (2012), we know that the operation of the left and right hemispheres of the brain is associated with distinct forms and types of thought and perception. The left hemisphere is the part of our brains which focuses on digital, lineal, logical and direct language – it is adept at analysis, mathematics and logical reasoning. The right hemisphere, meanwhile, is where we process “*images, nonverbal language, paraverbal language, analogue, it is the creative, dreamer, intuitive, sensitive, poet, symbolic*” (Vásquez-Martínez et al., 2015, p. 18).

Each hemisphere has its own distinct, and ultimately complimentary, modes of operation and expression. Thus, the left hemisphere is associated with verbal expression (using words to name define and describe); whereas the right uses nonverbal, yet nevertheless conscious, expression.

The left hemisphere operates through processes which are analytic (thinking in a step by step way), symbolic (using symbols to represent), abstract (taking a small fragment of the information and applying it in order to represent something), temporal (adhering to time and order in sequencing things), rational, digital (e.g. using numbers), employs logic and is lineal (thinking in terms of chained ideas, one thought followed by another, leading to a conclusion at the end of the chain).

The right hemisphere, on the other hand, is synthetic (grouping things in order to make teams), concrete (capturing things as they are at the present moment), analogical (seeing similarities between things, understanding metaphorical relationships), timeless (centred in the present moment), unreasonable (not depending on facts and reason), spatial (seeing where things are and how they

combine in order to form a whole), intuitive, and holistic (seeing complete structures or patterns at once).

This insight into the workings of the brain has important implications for teaching and learning. Interestingly, it is noted that different cultures and educational traditions (e.g. Western and Eastern) place differing emphasis on each type of thinking, with Western teaching styles typically devoted more to the development of left hemisphere thinking. The paper goes on to argue that the greatest achievements may occur when the two hemispheres are integrated and balanced. Indeed, it is concluded, “*an aware teacher... will develop activities to stimulate the two hemispheres in order to keep the attention of his or her student and never miss motivation*” (Vásquez-Martínez et al., 2015, p. 18).

The aim of this paper is to apply this insight to the experiences of the EU students studying at QAHE in the United Kingdom. These are students whose education in their home countries may fall within the left brain oriented, with their chosen degree courses in the UK reflecting this orientation, as their interesting subject such as business. Majority of the foreign students face challenges adapting to education in another country and the work of Vásquez-Martínez poses the intriguing possibility that integrating arts and creative practices into their learning (even though only indirectly related to their chosen discipline) may help these students in their studies. This is the main focus of this paper to find out the value added to knowledge in designing a poster to make a business decision and the proposed further research to follow from the findings.

Scoping study: EU students’ experiences of using art and creative practices in their studies – designing a poster

This small-scale research draws on qualitative data, gathered during a peer observation of a colleague class and focus group interviews, with a small group of EU students studying at QAHE and on Business programme in UK. One of their business modules required the students to be artistic and creative in presenting a poster as part of their course work. My interest was to find out how the students linked their business programme to the world of arts and creativity and if there was value added to their knowledge and thinking, hence hearing from the students and staff helped me in drawing a conclusion on importance of arts and creative thinking and the link to the work of Vásquez-Martínez.

Findings: Student comments

I think there is a lot to learn in making this poster presentation in a style that develops your creativity and same time linking arts to our course. Designing a poster in this lesson helps you to be focused and in control of your learning. It teaches you creativity and helps your imagination as you keep calm thinking of how to be the best in poster making. It also fits in with my learning style as I enjoy the challenges in creativity and practicality in my learning. Doing it this way helped my understanding of Porter’s Five Forces Model and the link to business. (S3)

One of the interesting things studying here is the variety you get in your programme. The first time the teacher introduced what we needed to do on this module, I could not understand the link to designing a poster in a business class using Porter’s Five Forces Model. Since it was made compulsory, when we started designing the poster,

I began to appreciate the link to using the poster made to analyse impact of Porter's Five Forces Model, particularly painting the poster in five different colours, helped me to describe the usefulness through colour differentiation to describing each of the forces. (S4)

As this business course has a topic that requires us to practice design or drawing and painting a poster. I can see the relevance of creativity and artistically gaining knowledge that adds value to my business knowledge; although, this is my first time doing this. What we call poster drawing and design can be very challenging for the first time, particularly, using the poster designed to describe Porter's Five Forces Model. Looking at the samples given by the teacher and using them to design yours imposes challenge and knowing what to do helped me to derive joy from the lesson and to concentrate. The most interesting is that you continue to work on your poster design until you get it right, which will require you to think, generate ideas and be creative to describe a situation and what you have presented in a meaningful manner, but can be difficult, interesting and challenging task. (S5)

I think linking arts and creative design in any of our module is helpful to people like me who like drawing. I hate theories and describing through charts, drawing and design is my best way of learning, although I am not trying to say that I like arts. Describing things through designing them and being creative has helped my thinking and more understanding as I can concentrate facing the challenges drawing can present. But you have to ensure that it links to your message. (S8)

I love this idea of linking the poster design in my business class. Since teaching on this programme, I can see how the students have developed in their artistic and creative thinking which have motivated them to do good work. However, some are not good in arts and design and to them, you don't expect much, although they try because it is compulsory for them to do it, but in terms of creativity and value added, had to measure at this stage. (Teacher 1)

As the above quotes represent, all of the students were able to come up with examples of creative practices had been a part of their studies in the business subjects. For many, this was a relatively good experience, particularly with the creative thinking involved as the aspect of learning and more so very challenging to them suggesting some benefits for these students in creative practices being integrated into their package of business programme.

Conclusions and further development

The stage two of my research analysing the work of Vásquez-Martínez suggests that there is a great deal of potential in arts education for students and more so for the EU students in the Business programme at QAHE given the students opportunities for developing their creative and artistic skills in designing a poster linked to their business programme. In this way, they will not only adapt more readily to the practical elements of their courses that involve, for example, elements of technical drawing and design of a poster. It is speculated that this balancing of left and right brain activities might also make them more creative and effective problem solvers and analysts; in short, more well-rounded and capable individuals in arts, design, creative thinking and link to a business decision making process. It is further speculated that involvement in creative and artistic practices might bring further benefits, such as a valuable form of stress relief and new avenues for socialising and developing social support networks. The benefits may not be limited narrowly to the

academic sphere, but extend to these students' wellbeing and happiness as well as developing their learning styles.

These are areas to further develop in my next stage of this work through more systematic action research with other students in business courses at QAHE.

This is a 3 year Postdoctoral project in conjunction with Professor Claudio-Rafael Vásquez-Martínez, the first stage of the work was presented in 2017 at the BCES Annual International Conference and it focused on Nigerian students and their experience in linking arts and creativity in engineering programme; the current paper is the second stage that focused on business students at QAHE with a link to poster design on their business programme. The outcome of the work will be monitored through action research with the students, who will further be encouraged to reflect and report on the project and contribution to their learning.

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