Chapter 1

Listening to Stories: A Framework and Introduction to Why It Is Important to Really Hear What Happens in Arts Education

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Arts education ideally provides students with valuable opportunities to experience and build skills and knowledge in relation to self-expression, imagination, innovative and collaborative problem solving, co-creation of shared meanings and respect for self and others. This is what Eisner (2003) calls 'literacy of the heart'. Engagement in a quality arts education programme can positively affect overall academic achievement, engagement in learning and development of empathy towards others (Australian Council for Educational Research 2004; Board of Studies NSW 2006; Cornett 2007; Russell-Bowie 2006).

The teaching and integration of the arts in education is an internationally recognized form of interdisciplinarity that organizes the curriculum in integrated, humane and imaginative ways (Aaron 1994; Barrett 2001; Burton 2001; Chyrsostomou 2004; Hauptfleisch 1997; Klopper 2004; Russell-Bowie 2006, 2009; Snyder 2001). Through the integration of the arts in learning opportunities it is believed that young people can explore creativity, imagination and problem solving while connecting arts-specific experiences to meaning making in other contextual areas. The arts are seen to encompass different things in different contexts including, but not limited to, the performing arts (music, dance, drama and theatre) and visual arts, media, industrial arts and literacy arts. This book sets out to open up discussion and listen to the voice of arts educators, students, parents, school leaders and arts practitioners from the industry engaged in arts education. In presenting detailed and rich narratives throughout, the book invites the reader to reflect, connect and question the place of arts education and indeed the impact on individuals involved. The context of Australia is presented, with the reader invited to consider how the narratives resonate to international perspectives because it is believed lived experiences assist in making connections to one’s own understandings.

Throughout Australia, music, dance, drama, media and visual arts have been merged into the Arts Learning Area (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2011a). This transfers to the generalist teacher being predominately responsible for teaching arts education in the majority of Australian primary school classrooms (Alter et al. 2009; Davis 2008). Alexander et al. (cited in Alter et al. 2009) projected that teaching the primary education curriculum is ‘a far too demanding expectation of a generalist teacher’s subject-knowledge’ (18) and that often arts education is the subject that suffers most of all. Generalist teachers have been perceived both by themselves and others as lacking the experience, training and subject knowledge to teach arts education effectively (Alter et al. 2009). The situation is exacerbated by little support being available for teachers interested in teaching the arts after they graduate (Russell-Bowie 2002) and minimal
professional development in the arts being offered to primary school teachers (Pascoe et al. 2005; Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts References Committee [SERCARC] 1995). Klopper and Power (2010) present an overview of arts education research in Australia. They reveal that there is extensive research in the fields of music education and visual arts education, with comparatively little on drama education, dance education and arts education, as an umbrella term. The majority of studies are on arts education in relation to pre-service teacher education, with slightly fewer on arts education in primary schools and significantly fewer on arts education primary classroom practice. Aside from Power and Klapper (2011), no research is available on primary classroom practice of arts education as an umbrella term, that is, studies that focus on what is actually happening in environments where art is taught or explored and that look at all five art forms (music, visual art, drama, media and dance). Although Power and Klapper (2011) began to address this gap in the literature, theirs is only one study with identified limitations and more research is needed.

Currently, in Australia, ACARA is in the process of establishing a national curriculum for the arts. The recently released Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts (ACARA 2011a) outlines the purpose, structure and organization of the proposed Australian Arts Curriculum. This paper guided the writing of the Australian Arts Curriculum (ACARA 2001b). While full implementation of the Australian Arts Curriculum should not occur until 2015, it is nevertheless an important consideration in understanding the current contexts of arts education in Australia.

A provocative statement was made by Bamford surrounding the lack of Australian research in arts education (cited in Gibson and Anderson 2008: 103): 'While substantial studies into the benefits of arts education have been undertaken in the USA and the UK, very little research has been conducted into the impact of arts education in Australian schools. There is urgent need for a detailed study of the impact of arts programmes within the context of Australian schools.' This book helps to fill this void, building on the success of 'Tapping into Classroom Practice of the Arts' (Klapper and Garvis 2011), the outcome of the first Arts in Practice Symposium in Australia, held in 2010.

Traditional methods of assessing arts practice in generalist classrooms have been claimed inadequate. As Winner and Hetland (2000: 7) suggest, 'more rigorous research' is needed within arts education to ensure better research. Researchers must move 'beyond measuring the effects of the arts in terms of scores on paper and pencil tests to assess how the arts affect learning in areas that are more difficult to measure, but may well be more important' (Winner and Hetland 2000: 7). In the past, the more measurable may have driven out the more meaningful. Within Australia, evaluations of arts education research studies suggest a lack of baseline data and of replication studies, inconsistent measures, vague definitions, imprecise methodology and over-reliance on anecdotal evidence. In a postmodern era, every inquiry mode is now an option. In this book the authors provide a snapshot of learning and teaching of arts education in Australia. The book provides a series of case studies that identify effects, sustainability and impacts of the arts on children's lives. Case studies are drawn from artists, arts
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educators, gallery and museum arts educators and community arts education organizations and partnerships. Semi-structured interviews with arts educators from a variety of settings aim to uncover the pedagogical practice and decisions to engage students in arts learning; specifically by uncovering the visions, tensions, challenges and celebrations of these practices and decisions based around Bamford and Glinkowski's (2010) Effect and Impact Tracking Matrix (EITM). This construct assists in identifying a number of domains that have been identified through international research in arts education that are consistently associated with high levels of impact. The nine domains are defined by Bamford and Glinkowski (2010) as:

1. **personal impact**, such as the development of confidence, aspiration, enjoyment, fun and happiness
2. **social impact**, such as the fostering or development of networks, collaborations, partnerships and contact webs
3. **cultural impact**, such as changes prompted at an organizational level, changes in external perceptions, changes in profile and influence
4. **educational impact**, such as new knowledge, skills development, conceptual development, professional education, education of the broader field or community
5. **ethical impact**, such as addressing social problems or minority issues or audiences, promoting changes in attitudes, or contributing to sustainability
6. **economic impact**, such as value for money, changing spending patterns, income generation
7. **innovation impact**, such as talent development, the development of new pedagogic techniques, processes or products and the instigation of debates or new discourse
8. **catalytic impact**, such as flow-on effects, changes in direction, transformations and journeys
9. **negative loss impact**, which described things that had to be sacrificed or negative consequences of some other kind that arose – such as opportunity costs, talent loss, personal loss, unhappiness, loss of enjoyment, loss of creativity.

(2010: 8)

A plethora of literature exists documenting the underlying belief and procedures associated with analysing qualitative data. Most are associated with particular approaches or traditions such as grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990), phenomenology (e.g., van Manen 1990), discourse analysis (e.g., Potter and Wetherall 1994) and narrative analysis (e.g., Leiblich 1998). However some analytic approaches are 'generic' and are not labelled within one of the specific traditions of qualitative research (e.g., Ezzy 2002; Pope, Ziebland and Mays 2000; Silverman 2000). When using the EITM, an 'inductive' analysis exists where 'rather than being predetermined, themes are allowed to emerge from the data' (Bamford and Glinkowski 2010: 18). The primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies. Key themes are often obscured, reframed
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or left invisible because of the preconceptions in the data collection and data analysis procedures imposed by deductive data analysis such as those used in experimental research and hypothesis testing research. Such an approach is 'widely understood to offer a suitable approach to impact evaluation in the field of creative learning' (Bamford and Glinkowski 2010: 18). The EITM (Bamford and Glinkowski 2006) serves as a basis for the presentation of case studies to promote opportunity to listen and hear stories of learning and teaching that highlight each of these domains throughout the book. This strengthens and emphasizes the need to hear, share and critically reflect and understand the work that arts education performs in supporting all key stakeholders. The writing style of the book highlights the voice of arts learners and educators with narrative used to deepen the conversation. The authors provide a contextual place for all key stakeholder voices to be heard in regard to arts education. It contributes to this area of academic study by being one of the first books to include all stakeholder voices from a variety of contexts that are important for children's learning. We show similarities and tensions for arts education, providing the reader with the possibility of working with the arts in the future. The important feature of the book is the illumination of the voice as a respectful way of contemporary research.

The concept of 'children's voice' has received greater focus in child-centred research. Spyrou (2011: 151) suggests that 'one could argue that the interdisciplinary field of childhood studies has built its very raison d'être around the notion of children's voice. By accessing the otherwise silenced voices of children - by giving children a voice - and presenting them to the rest of the world, researchers hope to gain a better understanding of childhood'. A moral perspective further strengthens the concept of children's voice when children's voice is considered to empower the social position of children and childhood from a social justice and rights perspective.

Children's experiences are organized in narrative form within the memory. Narrative is considered a universal mode of thought and a form of thinking (Bruner 1986; Nelson 1998, 2007). According to Haakarainen et al. (2013: 215), 'from the cultural-historical perspective, a narrative could be defined as a psychological tool formalising and unifying human thought and knowledge into thematic units - units of thought'. Accordingly, narrative is the smallest cell of human thinking, providing insight into the child's experiences.

The use of narrative as a contemporary research technique allows young children to share their experiences with others. The research technique is respectful of the child's voice and allows the child to choose what they would like to share with others (participation). Later chapters in this book will discuss the many different approaches that contemporary research can choose to collect and analyse narratives. Greater awareness and understanding, however, is needed for the widespread importance of narrative as a sense-making form for young children (Bruner 1990).

This book is significant because it allows the use of narratives and highlights the understanding of the 'voice' that comes from children, parents, teachers and principals. According to this concept of voice telling a narrative, we learn from the knowledge that is shared. Our interest is in the particular, in the authentic lived experiences associated
with arts education and experiences in schools. As story and narrative have served as the inspiration for many of the chapters within the book, it seems fitting to also describe in this chapter the foundations of their use in research, particularly educational research.

Stories are present within all cultures, as a way of communicating history, understanding experience, and making sense of the world. Bruner (1986) describes 'narrative knowing' as one of two modes of thinking and meaning making in which story and experience play a central role. Polkinghorne (1988) agrees:

Our encounter with reality produces a meaningful and understandable flow of experience. What we experience is a consequence of the action of our organizing schemes on the components of our involvement with the world. Narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite [...]. Narrative displays the significance that events have for one another. (13)

The stories people live and tell are a rich source of knowing and meaning making. Narrative inquiry is an epistemological approach to research through which this knowledge is explored and interrogated.

Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story [...] is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomenon under study. (Connelly and Clandinin 2006: 477)

Following the definition given above of narrative inquiry, lived experience is central to the methodology. This book provides opportunities for the exploration of arts experiences. The originality in this book is the incorporation of different stakeholder voices and stories being appraised by the EITM. The overall analysis shows the true benefit and cost of arts education within the Australian landscape. Unique insights into what it means to participate in arts education from varying perspectives are provided. Participants were selected using convenient sampling from a range of different educational landscapes across Australia. A range of different consenting voices were chosen to illuminate the diversity that exists within and across Australia. The unique perspectives from teachers, artists, students and arts organizations are shared throughout the following chapters:

The Lived Experience – Finding Joy Through Working in the Arts

This chapter focuses on the connection between self-knowledge and working in the arts and how self-knowledge is used within one's work. It highlights the personal impact of working in the arts, such as the development of confidence, aspiration, enjoyment, fun and happiness.
Twitter for Arts Community Collaborations and Networking: Social Impact of Fostering Partnerships

New ways of engaging with networks are emerging and with this comes the recognition that social media is an innovative way to communicate, collaborate and curate content. For the arts community the introduction of, engagement with and use of Twitter as a professional social-networking tool is beginning to gather more momentum and interest amongst art educators, artists, performers, galleries and organizations globally. What comes with this is networking possibilities and the potential for the establishment of a community that collaborates and shifts boundaries of isolation. Twitter can increase interaction in a variety of forums through real-time feedback, enhancement of conversation, quick transfer of knowledge, and quick building of social knowledge of users as external sources. Despite its short history it has clearly defined conventions of use that enhance networking possibilities. This chapter looks at the social impact of working in this online space, mapping the development of networks, collaborations, partnerships and contacts for arts education. The perspective of pre-service teachers undertaking studies in visual arts with discussion around the following questions is explored: What are the benefits associated with this practice of peer partnership learning? What parameters guide best practice in this area and what cautions should we be aware of?

Building Capacity and Confidence Through Arts-Based Learning Experiences: A Whole-School Approach

This chapter reports on a year-long project that aimed to build capacity and confidence through the arts-based learning experiences of identified teachers and students. The project was conceptualized through comprising multi-layered and potentially multi-pronged PIRI (Plan, Implement, Review and Improve) cycles that:

- offered identified students arts extension activities on a weekly basis each school term
- provided ongoing professional development for all staff about 'finding the arts' in what they plan and prepare
- offered consultation for staff about 'finding the arts' in what they plan and prepare
- mentored two identified teachers over the duration of one year to deepen their capacity and confidence in arts-based learning experiences and move from dependency to autonomy.

Areas of cultural impact, such as changes prompted at an organizational level, changes in external and internal perceptions and changes in profile and influence, are extrapolated and showcased through the presentation of the visual feast.
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**Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed but Not Blue:**  
The Educational Impact of the Arts

In this chapter, three vignettes are presented that look at the various ways in which arts education knowledge has been embodied into practice. The vignettes are explored in a holistic way, providing consideration to a broad range of multidisciplinary aspects of arts education. Each of the vignettes uses old knowledge, new knowledge and borrowed knowledge to help inform the implementation of the arts. As we read these stories we are able to reflect on the future practice of arts education in school classrooms and be inspired to tap into the educational possibilities and potential.

**Whose Art Is It – Mine, Yours or Ours?: Exploring Ethical Impact**

This chapter explores a number of vignettes from teachers, parents and children to highlight the ethical impact of arts in a variety of schooling contexts. Ethical impact includes the exploration of social problems, inclusivity, diversity and the promotion of changes in attitudes. What happens when cultural music is taught in school? How confident do teachers feel engaging with arts from different cultures? Who is included and excluded in school arts programmes? Can the arts build a community within a school? Findings also show how the arts can contribute to sustainability of societal values in the promotion of ethical behaviour.

**Money Makes the World Go Round: The Economic Impact of Arts in Education**

The chapter shares insight into an area that is often forgotten when discussing arts education: economics. This chapter explores the economic impact of the arts in three different schooling contexts. Issues arise such as the positioning of children's arts as income generation for schools, the economic impact of schools in funding cycles and how schools define value for money with arts education funding.

**Innovative Partnerships:**  
**Opportunities to Create, Make, Explore and Respond in the Arts**

Partnerships between schools and the professional arts sector have been found to play an important role in deepening students' engagement with learning. These partnerships are also often associated with innovation in how they extend and develop processes and products in the instigation of arts education. This chapter shares three cases across the primary arts education programme that looks at partnerships and innovative
approaches to the development of new pedagogic techniques, processes or products and new discourse among teachers, students, arts organizations and artists. In each of the cases, highlighting student engagement is a priority for the teachers in either their partnerships with others or design and implementation of an innovative programme or project.

Transforming Pedagogy from Listening to Young People's Voices: Catalytic Impact on a Gallery

This chapter shares a case study where one national gallery set out to rethink, change and transform the pedagogical approach of their schools’ programmes in the arts. An approach of listening to the children and young people who participate in these programmes was initiated out of acknowledgement of the need to connect with young people, their learning dispositions and needs and to meaningfully engage with feedback and evaluation of programmes and experiences.

Shared in this chapter is a project that used visual narratives, created through the generation of digital photographs paired with reflection, to understand what children and young people think, see and experience at the national gallery. Using digital technology to record their learning as visual narratives (photographs plus text) in gallery-based learning programmes enhanced engagement with art knowledge, understanding, meaning making and the national gallery as an art space. Most importantly, hearing the voice and opinion of young people highlighted impact on the gallery education staff and teachers who organized the school-based excursion to the gallery.

Specifically, the gallery allowed for the creation of unique and innovative relations and collaboration between young people, teachers and an arts organization.

Pitfalls and Speed Bumps of Being an Arts Educator: Risk and Negative Loss Impact

This chapter explores the hidden and evaded stories associated with arts education. Multiple case studies are shared that describe things that either had to be sacrificed so that they did not produce negative consequences for the arts educator or thus cause a domino effect for organizations and learners. Risks and negative losses discussed include opportunity costs, talent loss, personal loss, unhappiness, loss of enjoyment and loss of creativity. The four shared stories highlight the negative impacts and risks associated with the extra hours of work involved when one is a dedicated and passionate arts educator who wants to provide opportunities for students in their development, understanding and knowledge in the arts. The consequence of exhaustion on multiple levels is highlighted.
We hear from a beginner music teacher whose passion and creativity to support and inspire students was slowly chipped away at, resulting in a loss in confidence, morale and engagement with the school and with the teaching profession. There was a significant cost in terms of health for this beginner teacher, which impacted on the teacher’s ability to continue to share in and motivate arts experiences. The cost in turn-over rates of beginner teachers associated with burn-out and conflicts in pedagogical approach are explored and juxtaposed against the tensions associated with the negative effect on the teacher’s perception and approach to children.

Paralleling the beginner-teacher story is one from an experienced art teacher who juggles family change, not enough time, too many projects to manage and the cost on energy and focus. With a reduction in teaching hours in order to manage and balance work and personal life, an additional layer of this story is the negative impact on job sharing with a non-arts educator whose focus is on a competing subject area within the school. Even though the principal agreed to maintain the high-performing arts programme, the politics of position and people available, along with pressure not to advertise, challenged the agreement. Issues that arise with training, curriculum support, planning, resourcing, consistency across multiple teaching levels, arrangement of room time and resourcing materials are all highlighted as risk factors that impact the workload of an arts educator.

The story of an educator from a one-teacher school is shared, which highlights the negative impacts and risks associated with working in this way and envisaging active arts learning and teaching opportunities for young people.

The book’s concluding chapter provides a summary of each chapter and of the importance of arts experiences for all children.

While the book has intended to illuminate diversity across the context of Australian arts education, it is limited in its approach as it has not heard the voices from all involved and sometimes found contexts related only to music education. Nevertheless, the book provides a window into the complexities of arts education and allows the voices of those who participated to be heard.

**Concluding thoughts**

The purpose of this book is to give voice to the stories of arts experiences and to evaluate the importance of the arts in adults’ and children’s lives. These stories of experience are often kept secret. This book, however, brings these stories to the forefront, providing a platform for stories to be shared. The stories told by the individuals illuminate personal thoughts and actions at the same time as the individuals make sense of their relationships with others and their stance in the world (Bruner 1986).

While these stories do not match traditional beliefs about research, they provide meaning for arts experience. The stories scratch the surface of the arts education research domain and provide a trail of meaning.
References


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