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Exploring Creative Pedagogies for Creative Learning Ecologies

creative academic magazine

Issue Number 7D July-October 2017
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September 2017

October 2017
Sketching at Surprise View, Derbyshire Peak District,
by Michael Gage @MichaelGageArt

CAM 7D
July 2017
CAM7 is our first attempt to create an ‘emergent magazine’. By this I mean we are not finding, editing and organising all the content before the magazine is published, rather we launched the magazine in October 2016 in the hope and belief that every month to September 2017 we will be able to update the magazine with one or more articles relevant to the topic we are addressing namely how higher education teachers develop ecologies for learning within which students’ creativity can flourish. So far, in issues 7A, 7B & 7C we have published over 300 pages of content.

We believe that if you create the affordance for people who care about and are interested in something, stuff will happen - ideas will emerge as conversations take place and people share their understandings and practices. Through our Creative Pedagogies for Creative Learning Ecologies project we are trying to foster and facilitate new conversations about the importance of creativity in higher education teaching, learning and students’ development and achievements. We are trying to bring together and connect educational practitioners and researchers, educational development teams, networks, communities, universities and colleges who share this interest and concern for students’ and teachers’ creative development, through a partly planned / partly emergent programme of activities. And we are trying to connect the pedagogies of individual higher education teachers to the unique ecologies they create in which their students’ creativity can flourish.

We believe in collaboration and cooperation and we welcome the involvement of our readers in developing and creating this magazine. We believe in collegiality, openness and sharing and the knowledge we develop will be treated as open learning/ open educational resources. The ecology we are creating to explore these ideas is open to new ideas and to people and institutions who want to contribute. We are particularly keen to connect researchers to practitioners so that educational practice can be informed by evidence from research in this area. We are also keen to engage with the enormous range of learning contexts within higher education institutions in which students are encouraged to use their creativity. If you would like to share your own thinking and practices by writing an article for the magazine please do contact me.
Live Projects-An inspirational model: The Student Perspective

Prue Chiles and Jeremy Till

Prue is Prof of Architectural Design Research at the University of Newcastle. Prior to this she was Head of the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield. ‘My work seeks to strengthen connections between people and design and on the reciprocal relationships between people, place, teaching, creativity and architectural design’.

Jeremy is an Architect, writer and educator and Head of Central Saint Martins and Pro Vice-Chancellor of University of the Arts London. Prior to this position he was Dean of Architecture and the Built Environment at the University of Westminster and Head of

This article was written while both authors were working in the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield.

Introduction

The ‘Live Projects’ programme at Sheffield, is now an established and core part of the MArch (RIBA Part 2) course in the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield. This case study is concerned with this experience and the comments and perceptions from the students participating. The live projects involve students working in groups with community, regional or national organisations. The projects have to be ‘live’ (i.e. a real client with a real problem) and are done in real time, with a defined end result - often a report or presentation to the client group. In many cases the results of the live project have been enacted or else led to further research or consultancy. Live projects reject the separation between real and theoretical, practice and education and allow the student to be creative within constraints. The case study is accompanied by annotated examples of live projects over the past six years.

American Artist Kyong Park’s Detroit House, which was rebuilt in Sheffield City Centre by nine students, to highlight the plight of post-industrial cities. The students negotiated with Sheffield City Council for all permissions and Health and Safety approval and re-constructed the house with no drawings or other construction professionals to help.

What is special about the live projects at Sheffield?

We have built up a reflective and research led critique of the live projects with various publications and a website [www.liveprojects.org]. Also, a PhD by Rachel Sara in 2004 entitled Between studio and Street examined the role of the live project in Architectural Education. Supervised by Jeremy Till, Rachel’s PhD highlights the value in finding a place for learning that is both part of the academy and outside.

Live projects are happening in most schools now, but they vary enormously from place to place. Perhaps what is unique at Sheffield is the extent to which they are student managed and led. The client contact and the management of the project is almost all done by the group participating in the project. Also ground-breaking we believe, is the level of formal skills teaching and support that goes with the live project programme. Student comments support the approach we are taking. They are enthusiastic to learn the core professional skills of team management and communication and are increasingly interested in participatory consultation techniques. Students feel this helps their confidence and ultimately their creativity. We have completed over 50 live projects to date, establishing an enormous archive of fresh ideas and useful work.

“Through the live project architectural education is once again an inspirational model on which other forms of education may draw.”
In 2002 we set up the Bureau of Design Research (BDR) - a project office and research consultancy, in the School of Architecture. This was primarily as a result of clients wishing to continue with live projects. The BDR now has a portfolio of over 30 completed projects prioritising community visioning and school design. The BDR also archives all the live projects and has a distant mentoring role, as well as participating in the live project programme. We are working on the possibilities for a closer supporting structure to enable live projects to continue throughout the year and to allow individual students to pursue live project interests in their own projects. We are also developing a resource and ‘survival pack’ for the successful live project.

The live project can be accessed at [http://www.liveprojects.org](http://www.liveprojects.org) where you can find out more about all the live projects.
4. Students are empowered by the positive feedback from the clients. Institutional and professional clients have commented that they had no idea how strategic students of Architecture can be and what a wide group of skills they have.
5. Students find, in job interviews after they have completed their diploma, that prospective employers are very impressed by the live projects and the output from these. They are also highly regarded by our external examiners.
6. Students enjoy developing their communication skills and see this as a very positive part of the process.
7. Fundamentally it makes the student’s architectural education more relevant. The active hands on work is popular - not all like the actual building - as this is hard physical work but a core are really enthusiastic about this and find it enormously rewarding, putting in long hours and developing other carpentry and practical building skills.
8. Finally there are moral and ethical issues in the work, that cannot be ignored.

For the School of Architecture and the university generally live projects have enormous benefits. They tell the city and the community what students are up to and what the study of architecture involves; the general public are often completely mystified by what an architect does! They also give something back to the city and the community.

Students from Sheffield and Trondheim worked together in both Sheffield and South Norway to design and build new informal public spaces in two public parks

Teaching Approach/Methods

The live projects are logistically quite complex: in particular setting them up and briefing the clients. However, we have found that once they have started they generally generate a momentum, which gets over the short-term problems. It is also easy for the students to waste time at the beginning of the projects whilst meetings are being set up, so direction and support is needed here. Staff at the School of Architecture in Sheffield are now experienced in running these projects.

Tutoring is done in groups and is very much led by the students who use their tutors as consultants and mentors rather than as figures of authority. This is an important revision of normal power relations and leads to a much more committed student group. Tutors are put in a different and sometimes difficult role of stand-in for the client rather than tutor. From a tutor’s point of view the live projects offer many skills that can be gained elsewhere, but core skills of organisation, team working and working to a tight timescale are perhaps some of the key ones. These, we felt, have to be taught like everything else. So the live projects are supported by communication and brief building workshops, attached to the management module, as well as seminars on consultation and creative participatory techniques. Community consultation is a burgeoning profession in its own right; the line we take is firmly that of art and creative practices encouraging a visual, fun and experimental approach.

Students learn about the role of the client - and begin to understand the complexity of the multi-headed client - stakeholder mapping suddenly becomes relevant and is included in a workshop when the teams have all met their clients. Further group work in the workshops also brings out an understanding of what role each individual has in a team. An exercise which is always positively received is that of the Chinese whispers - illustrating how little we listen and how important positive listening skills are. Three years ago with university funding, we made a film with a professional team, interviewing clients and well-known architects on communicating with each other at various stages of a project. It is a revealing portrait of how architects need to learn to communicate better with non-architectural audiences and forms a back drop to the workshops.

Assessment

The live projects are assessed as group work according to a protocol that we have developed in the Faculty. We
We have variously tried to link the assessment of the live projects to a management module of the MArch course rather than the portfolio studio work, but have not found the perfect solution to date. We need to be able to provide formative assessment throughout the different stages of the project as well as at the final presentation stage - but then it is possible for tutors to fall back on the traditional, architectural assessment process.

Students perceive that there is a diminished focus on the critique, but sometimes tutors are seen to bring more traditional power relationships back in the review. This is seen as very negative and is really the only part of the whole live project process that has been criticised: so this is under review. We have had comments from students that occasionally tutors are trying to look clever and how irrelevant this is to the process here. We need to try and involve all participants in the evaluation process, giving value to the participants whilst reducing the power of the tutor over the student.

**What specific lessons are learnt in the live project and how are these different from lessons learnt from other studio or management projects?**

Many of the lessons are the same or related to those in other studio projects. However the following points summarise some observations.

1. Students fill a unique mediating role that a professional would struggle to do - clients, particularly community clients, are often wary of professionals, local authority operatives, housing groups etc. and will open up and discuss ideas freely with students in an unthreatening environment. Many extra-ordinary and creative comments come out of community consultation events. These are always a revelation to the students.

2. The tutor student relationship is definitely altered - the tutor becoming more of a consultant or client substitute. This has ramifications - it can become problematic when they become more like the client than the client themselves, although in some projects this has been a positive change of roles for the outcome of the project!

3. The whole design and building process is concertinaed due to the timescales of the project, the luxury of the long-term studio project development is often not an option, so prevarication is not possible. For a number of students this is their most productive project.

4. There is an emphasis on project management skills which is not really dealt with in other projects.

5. There is the potential for the 1:1 exploration - to actually build. This requires a whole new set of skills and has many benefits. Building requires a different kind of organisation and is often where their project and time management skills fall down.

6. Some different presentation skills are required, students struggle to provide these sometimes but in many cases some really imaginative work is produced. The skill of producing the creative feasibility study, necessary for all architects, is one very tangible outcome of many of the projects.

7. Some of the live projects are based abroad; this offers new challenges not found in many studio projects. Communication is even more of a challenge and there are different structures and processes to learn from - or a different emphasis created by the client from a different culture. Lessons are also learned in the universal power of design.

**What are the limits of Live Projects?**

One of the limiting factors is money. Often the client is at a pre-feasibility stage in their project with no money and only vague ideas about funding the project. They see using university students as a chance to gain from free work. We need to put some effort into persuading these clients to put some funding into the live projects to ease the process. Students sometimes end up spending a considerable amount of their own money on travel and disbursements. At the beginning of a project clients are often unaware of the value and quality of the work the students will produce and in some cases almost feel they are doing the university a favour with their time. It is afterwards they realise the power of the work they have, when it is too late. We need to brief clients better in this respect.
Charles Jennings talks about the ways we learn:

- **Learning Through Experience**: we learn a huge amount through exposure to new and challenging experiences. ‘Work that stretches’ is often the best teacher any of us will ever have. Research tells us that immersive learning and learning in context provides the most memorable learning experiences. This is one reason for the increased interest and activity in experiential and social learning in the past few years. However, experiential learning is still often under-valued and under-exploited by learning professionals. As the late professor Allan Tough said ‘most of the learning is under the waterline’.

- **Learning Through Practice**: we learn through creating opportunities to practise and improve. Without practice we can never hope to become high-performers. We can’t for a minute imagine our great sportsmen and women rising to the top of their game without hours and hours of practice, even when they are world champions. What makes us think becoming high performers in our work is any different?

- **Learning Through Conversation**: we learn through our interactions and dialogue with others - through informal coaching and mentoring, and building social networks inside and outside work. Conversation is the ‘lubrication’ of learning and development. Jerome Bruner, the greatest educational psychologist of our era, once said ‘our world is others’. We often forget this fundamental fact.

- **Learning Through Reflection**: Reflection is the ‘glue’ that we need to exploit the other forms of learning. Charles Handy, the management ‘guru’, writer and observer, points out that ‘experience plus reflection is the learning that lasts’. We learn through taking the opportunity to reflect both in the workflow and away from our work. We can then plan further activities that will incorporate our learning and improve our performance further.

Tammay Vora turned this synthesis into the memorable infographic.
Fifteen Principles for Facilitating Creativity

Michelle James

Michelle James has been pioneering Applied Creativity and Applied Improvisation in business in the Washington, DC area since 1994. She is CEO of The Center for Creative Emergence and founder of the Capitol Creativity Network - an Applied Creativity community hub since 2004 - and Quantum Leap Business Improv. Her mission is to integrate the worlds of creativity, service, meaning and commerce, and cultivate whole brain, whole-person engagement.

For the past several years, I've offered an annual creative facilitation program based on universal principles of creativity, education, research and application of creative processes in the workplace. Most significantly, they are based on lessons learned and insights gleaned from the trial and error of facilitating creative process with hundreds of individuals and organizations (an ongoing exploration, with each iteration I refine the program). It requires a different focus, skill set, way of being and “container creation” than facilitating analytical processes. Below are a few of the many principles and practices I've learned or discovered.

1. Set intention and embody purpose.
Get clear on your intention - not only from a business perspective, (i.e., leave with a strategic plan), but also from the human element. Creative process in human beings is organic, and contains emotional energy. In fact, the more passion and inspiration, the deeper and more coherent the creativity that emerges. If you intend to support the growth, creativity and awareness of those you serve, you facilitate from a more meaningful place than if focused only on the business goal. If you take time, both in the program design and in the room when facilitating, to think about what is the service you are providing – the gift you are offering - it frees up your own creativity more to support that in your facilitation. Focusing solely on the task limits the creative potential. By genuinely focusing on what is yours to give, (not how you come across doing it), participants pick that up – either consciously or unconsciously - and are more receptive to trying new things with you. Creative facilitation adds some new “yes-ands” to what already works.

2. Focus on awareness in addition to what happens.
Focusing on the awareness aspect allows it to be transformative. In all facilitation, the debrief can be one of the most powerful parts. It integrates the learnings and serves as a bridge to what’s next. In debriefing creative process, focus on what was going on inside of the participants as well as what actually was created outside in the room. This leads to self-awareness, which increases the chances of continued creativity and co-creativity after the workshop, program, or process is over. The more aware participants become of what emerges within themselves as they create - both what was most alive as well as what was most challenging - the easier it is to continue to navigate and cultivate their creativity beyond the workshop setting.

3. Understand the normal resistance that occurs with navigating the unfamiliar.
Resistance is a healthy, natural part of the creative process. It only becomes unhealthy when it is allowed to block the process (by overemphasizing it and spending too much time engaging it, or by not acknowledging it all and trying to barrel past it). Be prepared for resistance to show up. It’s usually a result of fear of entering the new territory, and it can show up in a myriad of forms - deflection, sarcasm, distraction, disengagement or, most often and most subtly, talking about what is already known. It’s not something to be pushed down or avoided, but rather something to be acknowledged and moved through if it shows up. Acknowledgment ahead of time gives it permission to follow its natural course when and if it emerges. It is the natural “contraction” to balance the creative expansion. You find this in all of nature’s creativity. The flower feels the resistance of the bud most just before it blossoms.

4. “Fail” gracefully.
Be comfortable with messing up. This is a great lesson from improv theater. Improvisers do not see mistakes as static failures. Instead, we see them as dynamic invitations to learn in real time and an opportunity to create...
5. **Adapt in real time.**

There’s always a dynamic balance between creating enough structure and releasing. If you as a facilitator need to control the process, do whatever you can on your free time to get comfortable with letting go, shifting gears, and modifying the agenda in real time. Use the real-time feedback loop: engage, get feedback, modify; engage, get feedback, modify, etc. It’s an ongoing process, and like with all things, takes practice to embody. Do this enough and it becomes comfortable and easy…and alive! In fact, you will get to a point where it takes more energy to try to stick to the exact plans than to follow the creative aliveness of what is trying to emerge in the room. Be ready to adjust your “agenda” at any time for what is really going on in the room. Otherwise, you can get engagement, and even expanded perspectives, but generally no real novelty. Novelty contains an unpredictability within it, and to facilitate creative process means adapting to that unpredictability in real time. May as well have fun with it!

6. **Work from your own creative edges, not your comfort zone.**

This creates a palpable dynamic aliveness in the room. You are all in it together. This may seem antithetical to our “expertise” culture. The paradox is that you must still deeply know and understand what you are doing before you enter the room, but then once in the room, hold it loosely and respond in real time. Be in your own unknown - a co-discoverer instead of the expert on their creativity. Allow yourself to be surprised. Don’t limit them, or yourself, by your creativity experience or pre-existing assumptions. While you are the one creating the container and holding the space, this role is balanced with your own openness to what emerges. Creative facilitation is an open system.

7. **Respect creative style diversity.**

To further expound on #6, one size, approach, method, technique, or even paradigm does not fit all. One creativity model definitely does not fit all. Understand that each person in that room is at a different comfort level, and will have a unique relationship with the creative process. Each carries unique and different stories of creativity in his or her consciousness. You give them tools and techniques as entry points, but be ready to let their creativity show you ways of creating that you can’t imagine. This expands your own Creative Practices repertoire.

8. **Understand patterns found in the creative process.**

This allows you to facilitate during times of resistance. Another paradox: while each person has different creating styles and approaches that work for them, there are also re-occurring universal patterns that tend to emerge in a creative process. The deepest understanding comes from your own experimentation and learning, and will most likely be refined over time. Start with what you know, and open up to being “yes-anded” all the time. Look for patterns, not just techniques. Techniques only get you so far…patterns and principles allow you to create new techniques on an ongoing basis. Start where you are, be gentle with yourself as you learn, and learn from direct experience. Insights that emerge from experience and observation give you a real-time agility that book learning alone cannot offer.

9. **Embrace dynamic balance.**

Divergence and convergence. Left and right brain. Structure and flow. Reflection and action. That is one of the re-occurring themes in this post because it permeates all of creative process…and the complexity of being human. Creativity is filled with paradox. Setting up conditions for creativity is as well. Like with all natural systems, every situation, project, and group has a dynamic balance that will allow the most amount of creativity to emerge in that situation. Too rigid keeps the creativity bound; too loose, it gets unfocused. There is a balance between structure and flow. This is why whole brain practices are needed - the right brain to access new levels of ideas and information, and the left to discern and organize it.

10. **Allow for self-organization when facilitating a group project.**
11. Seek to make it safe, not comfortable.
Safety will allow people to open up and move into unknown territory without the fear of criticism, failure. Too much stability, and nothing new emerges. Asking people to share what they already know is different than guiding them into their unknown. On the other side, without doing the “container creating” to make it safe, taking people in too deep too soon can throw them into chaos and they will shut down - and they lose trust in you. In either case, nothing new emerges. Find the balance of the Creative Zone - the place of creative potential between stability and chaos. Create a safe space and guide your participants into new territory, which can be uncomfortable. Discomfort is a normal part of the creative process. In fact, if everyone is the room is entirely comfortable the whole time, chances are you did more of an information gathering process than a creative one.

12. Fun is functional.
There is more research emerging all the time that shows how fun, play, and “lightening up” have a serious role to play in increasing creative thinking and establishing creative work culture - not just as an outlet to do on your free time, but as a driver to navigating change and working on serious challenges in work and life. It frees the brain to think more creatively, and frees the energy in the room for more effective and safe collaboration. In fact, I have not come across any research anywhere that points to not having fun and not being playful as a more effective way of living and creating. To facilitate creativity requires accessing and being comfortable with having fun yourself. And, knowing how to bring it in purposefully, and in a way it can be accepted (and not shut people down). It’s different for every group and every culture. Once you access your own “deep fun” self, you have more choice on what methods to use and how. As with all facilitation, know your audience.

13. Your inner stories directly impact the container you create for others.
Check out all the stories you carry around creativity, fun and play. Do you hold them as separate from a business bottom line? Most of us grew up with the programming that creativity is something you do on your free time after the “real work” is done. Facilitating applied creativity carries a new story - that it is an essential part of the real work. It is more than something fun to open up a group, but actually something to help transform individuals, groups, teams and organizations; create a thrivable work culture, and feed the bottom line. Do you carry a story that creativity is for the domain of the arts…or do you know it to be present, in infinite abundance, for every person, group and system? What stories do you carry about yourself as a creator? In knowing yourself as a creator, and knowing that you are walking into a room filled with other creators (whether they are aware of it or not) allows you to help facilitate a new story for those in the room.

14. Diverge…and converge with discernment.
Facilitating transformational creativity requires your presence, adaptability, agile thinking…and discernment. Discernment keeps whatever emerges in the room focused on the objectives, relevant, and purposeful—not just random creative expression (unless that is your goal). This means having processes for convergence as well as divergence. Divergence explores, discovers, yes-ands, and accepts to expand the playing field – the increase the field of potential from which to draw. Convergence discerns, focuses, fleshes out, uses what is relevant and leaves the rest. For a visual with more on Divergence and Convergence click here. As with each of these points, the dynamic balance is the key: expand, contract; explore, refine; value logic and intuition; planning and spontaneity. Most people naturally gravitate to more comfort with diverging or converging…find out which is your preference and practice giving more time and attention to the other.

15. Prepare yourself with pre-workshop creativity rituals.
Creativity, by its nature, contains a lot of energy and newness. Facilitating novelty is not “business as usual.” It’s about leading a group into the non-habitual. It requires being resilient, agile, compassionate and an “expedition guide.” Taking some time to do whatever you need to enter your own non-habitual state first can makes a significant difference. One of the best ways to do that is by taking some alone time before the facilitation, to do pattern-breaking exercises to increase your own energy and become present, alert, and responsive. The more of the whole-brain - and whole-body! - you bring in, the better. Like an athlete who warms up by stretching muscles, you’re a creativity facilitator who warms up by stretching beyond your familiar patterns. Try different things, like moving in non-habitual ways around your living room before you leave your house. You’ll be alone, so the more “out there” you can be in the privacy of your own space, the better. Surprise yourself at how "out there" you can get! It will also help you be more comfortable when something “out there” emerges from a
'Creative Academic' was founded in January 2015 by two members of Lifewide Education - a not for profit, voluntary and community-based, social-educational enterprise. Our purpose is to champion creativity in all its manifestations in higher education in the UK and the wider world. Our ambition is to create and support a strong network and vibrant community of people who are interested in their own creativity and committed to enabling students' creative development.

Our goal is to become a global HUB for the production and curation of resources that are of value and relevance to educational practitioners and institutions. Our focus is primarily higher education but we are interested in connecting to and learning from all phases of education. Our aim is to influence thinking and practice and encourage educational professionals to share their practices that facilitate students' creative development in all disciplines and pedagogic contexts, and to connect researchers and their research to practitioners and their practice.

We value ‘openness’ and believe in open learning, open education and open resources and practices. Most of our resources are published under a creative commons licence. Membership is free and open to anyone who shares these interests and values.

Our activities involve exploration and research for better understandings and for improved educational practices, in particular we explore:
1) Creativity as a concept and perceptions and narratives of our own creativity in different contexts
2) The creativity of teachers and other professionals who support students' development
3) The creativity of students and how their creative development is encouraged and facilitated by teachers and other professionals who contribute to their learning and development
4) The creativity of universities - the ways in which institutions encourage, support and recognise the creativity and creative development of students and staff.

We undertake research, scholarship, publication and dissemination of information relating to creativity and creativity in learning & education

We support the development of higher education professionals by:
- contributing to CPD programmes of education professionals
- leading and facilitating on-line conversations via the #creativeHE Google+ community forum
- preparing and publishing magazines that encourage the sharing of educational practices encouraging academics to publish articles on their teaching
- organising and contributing to our events

Our Team

Our team of ten volunteers act as champions, brokers and facilitators to engage and work with the global community. During 2016-17 our team expanded to ten with new members Simon Rae who helps with illustrations, Lisa Clughen, who guest edited CAM8, Maria Kefalogianni, Teryl Cartwright and Rebecca Jackson who are regular con-
Review of Activities August 2016 - 17

The main activities undertaken during this period were:

1. **Ongoing support (see below) for our community of interest.** There are 550 subscribers an increase of nearly 200 in the last 12 months. We use Mail Chimp to manage our mail list and communicate with our subscribers. People can join and leave the mail list at any time. Our aim is to be an international HUB for creative thinking, research and resources. The majority of subscribers are from the UK but our membership includes representatives from: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Korea, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Netherlands, Peru, South Africa, Sudan, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tanzania, and the USA.

2. **Maintaining the website and blog** [http://www.creativeacademic.uk/](http://www.creativeacademic.uk/) The website has been regularly updated.

3. **Maintaining a presence on the twitter @academiccreator twitter platform.** We currently have 559 followers. Twitter has proved useful in finding people to contribute to our magazine and also in the promotion of activities relating to our magazine, blogs and surveys. During the year we facilitated one #LTHEchat.

4. **Support for three Google+ community forums.**
   - #creativeHE (see below) [https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041](https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041) 589 members
   - Our Creative Life [https://plus.google.com/communities/106367720977059375674](https://plus.google.com/communities/106367720977059375674) 86 members
   - Creative Academic [https://plus.google.com/communities/113507315355647483022](https://plus.google.com/communities/113507315355647483022) 56 members

5. **Creative Academic Magazine.**
   - CAM6 ‘Exploring Creative Ecologies’ August 2016
   - CAM7 ‘Creative Pedagogies for Creative Learning Ecologies’ - 10 monthly issues
   - CAM8 Role of the Body in Creative Processes & Practices
   
   The magazine page on our website has received **7000 page loads** for the 8 issues of the magazine we have produced which shows that there is interest in the contributions we are making. We are averaging about **2000 page loads a year.** We also share our magazines via academia.edu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Assessed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30th October - 4th November 2016</td>
<td>#creativeHE conversation Exploring creative pedagogies and learning ecologies</td>
<td>Creative Academic Magazine CAM7A November 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th - 20th Jan 2017</td>
<td>#creativeHE open course linked to MMU module</td>
<td>Complete #creativeHE course, curated in Creative Academic Magazine CAM6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27th -31st March 2017</td>
<td>#creativeHE open conversation 'Exploring Personal Pedagogies' our contribution to Open Education Week between April 15-21 2017</td>
<td>Assets significantly curated in Creative Academic Magazine CAM7C March 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th -21st April 2017</td>
<td>#creativeHE open conversation 'Exploring the Role of the Body in the Process of Creation' our contribution to World Creativity and Innovation Week between</td>
<td>Assets partly curated in Creative Academic Magazine CAM8 June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 22-26 2017</td>
<td>#creativeHE Creativity in HE open learning course</td>
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Contributions to World Creativity & Innovation Week April 15-21 2017 http://wciw.org/

WCIW encourages people to use their creativity to make the world a better and more interesting place and to make their own place in the world better and more interesting. Creative Academic participated in this global event in 2017 by hosting an open conversation ‘Exploring the Role of the Body in the Process of Creation’, publishing a magazine on the same theme and publishing via Twitter our 101 ideas - a project led by CN and EH. We were considered the top engaged partner by Marcia Segal (founder of WCIW) for many weeks in the run up to WCIW.

101 creative ideas campaign
https://101creativeideas.wordpress.com/

During the year Ellie Hannan and Chrissi Nerantzi led and facilitated a successful #101creativeideasOpen Education Resource project to gather and share novel ideas around learning and teaching that foster and nurture imagination, curiosity and creativity in higher education. Nearly 50 ideas have been gathered to date from practitioners. All creative ideas are being made available under a specific Creative Commons license so that others can easily use and develop them in their own practice with staff and/or students. #101creativeideas collection 2017 will consist of the 101 most novel creative ideas selected by a panel of educators and students. In the countdown to WCIW an idea was posted every day on twitter.

Creative Pedagogies for Creative Learning Ecologies Project

- Creation of a network of interest (89 people)
- Exploration of ideas and sharing through Creative Academic Magazine (CAM7 - over 300 pages of content between Oct16 and July17)
- Facilitation of 3 #creativeHE conversations
- Contribution to online TLC seminar and facilitation of #LTHEchat
- Contributions to professional development events in five HE institutions
- Production of 9 monthly newsletters to disseminate activities
- Development of the concept of personal pedagogy

We undertook a survey of HE practitioners currently 110 respondents on the factors that influence the pedagogical thinking and practices of HE teachers. The survey is still open and an interim report of the results was produced by Dr Jenny Willis and published in CAM7. About 20% of the respondents indicated that they would like to contribute further to the project and these people will be invited to participate in phase two of the project in the coming year.

Goals for 2017/18

- Sustain and build on our achievements including:
  - Continue to serve and grow our community
  - Publish at least 2 issues of Creative Academic Magazine each exploring a new theme
  - Encourage/facilitate discussion and enquiry through surveys using our Survey Monkey website
  - Maintain and develop our presence through social media (Google+, Facebook, Linked in, Academic.edu, Twitter, other)
  - Contribute to the CPD activities of teachers in universities in UK & overseas
  - Provide opportunities for members of our community in at least one face to face event
  - Research & development priorities - Continue exploration of important themes relating to creativity in higher education - eg disciplinary perspectives on creativity, teaching practices that encourage students to use their creativity and learning ecologies that enable creativity to flourish, personal pedagogies and the use of imagination in higher education.
  - Publish a book based on the research we have undertaken.
  - Contribute to World Creativity and Innovation Week April 2018
# Rough Plan July 2017 - July 2018

We value open learning & educational practices, we work for our community, we adapt to changing circumstances and we are open to new ideas and possibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July</th>
<th>MAGAZINES</th>
<th>RESEARCH</th>
<th>SURVEYS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2017</td>
<td>• Begin research on 'Disciplinary Perspectives on Creativity' project to feed into posts on #CreativeAcademic &amp; #creativeHE</td>
<td>• CAM#9 Disciplinary perspectives on Creativity</td>
<td>• Surveys on what creativity means in different disciplinary contexts. We might use study include questions on imagination linked to our project with Imaginative Education.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• #creativeHE &amp; #creativeacademic conversation 'Disciplinary Perspectives on Creativity'</td>
<td>• CAM#10 Exploring the Meanings &amp; Practices of Imagination in Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guest Editor Dr Gillian Judson</td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>• Publication final issue in CAM7</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>• #creativeHE &amp; #creativeacademic conversation 'Disciplinary Perspectives on Creativity'</td>
<td>• 'How Does Personal Pedagogy Influence the Ecologies Teachers Create for Students to use their 'Creativity'?</td>
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<td>November</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>• Colloquium for participants in research project 'How Does Personal Pedagogy Influence the Ecologies Teachers Create for Students to use their 'Creativity'?</td>
<td>• Invitation to all those who completed the personal pedagogies survey and offered to prepare a narrative. The aim is to produce a book.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2018</td>
<td>• #creativeCreativityCourse 22-26th January Lead facilitator Chrisi Nerantz</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Publication CAM#9 'Disciplinary Perspectives on Creativity'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb/March</td>
<td>• Preparation of CAM10 'The role of imagination in education'</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>World Creativity &amp; Innovation Week April 15-21</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• #LHEchat Twitter conversation 'Using Imagination in Education'</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• #creativeCreativityCourse Lead facilitator Dr Gillian Judson</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>• Publication CAM#10 'The Role of Imagination in Higher Education Meanings, Ideas &amp; Practices' Lead facilitator Dr Gillian Judson Guest Editor Dr Gillian Judson</td>
<td>• 'How Does Personal Pedagogy Influence the Ecologies Teachers Create for Students to use their 'Creativity'?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-August</td>
<td>• Publication of Book 'How Does Personal Pedagogy Influence the Ecologies Teachers Create for Students to use their 'Creativity'?</td>
<td>• Surveys on what creativity means in different disciplinary contexts. We might use study include questions on imagination linked to our project with Imaginative Education.</td>
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'Blending' Kerry Bertram (see Kerry's article 'Blending Past, Creating New'
Lifewide Magazine #19 @  http://www.lifewideeducation.uk/

CAM 7D
August  2017
Imagine a University with No Classrooms, No Teachers, No Degrees, Curriculum or Exams, Founded on Principles of Self-Designed and Self-Determined Learning

Rahul Hasija

Rahul is a writer and storyteller and works as a lead facilitator at Swaraj University. Part of his work is to design and implement the programme, develop facilitation tools, create safe spaces for the learners to share, hold the space, host sessions on team-building, cooperative games, circular dances, reconnecting with the ancestral roots, rethinking development and connecting with nature. Community building, gardening, bird watching, making herbal products, gift culture, theatre and nature connect are his key areas of interest and engagement. This article is adapted from a previous article he wrote ¹

What if you walk into a university to find out that there are no classrooms, no teachers, degrees, curriculum, and exams? Above all, you see people learning joyfully in their own ways, involving their head, heart and hands, doing what interests them and making a difference to what they care about most in their lives. This is our vision and our practical educational goal for Swaraj University.

A university (Latin: universitas, “a whole”) has come to mean an institution of higher education and research which awards academic degrees in various academic disciplines. But the word “university” is derived from the Latin universitas magistrorum et scholarium, which roughly means “community of teachers and scholars.”³

Our concept of university is a place where learners and teachers come together to learn, research and experiment. We use the word ‘University’ to challenge the notion of what a university has come to mean. Swaraj University does not offer any degrees, diploma or certificate, nor does it have or require accreditation from anyone. Rather than certificates, Swaraj helps learners (learners at Swaraj are known as khojis i.e. seekers) build their learning portfolios, which comprise their experiences and achievements, actual work models and recommendation letters from mentors, peers, and feedback council.

Imagine if the youth of today…

- Were equipped with the skills to deal creatively with complexity, uncertainty, collapse and change in the world?
- Had a personal vision of and commitment to building healthy and resilient communities and lifestyles?
- Were able to put their ideas and dreams for social change into real action?

Swaraj University was founded in 2010 as a two year learning programme for youth. The focus of the programme is on self-designed learning; deepening understanding and practice of perspectives like ecological sustainability, social justice, healthy living; and finding / designing and starting ‘right livelihood’ + leadership (livelihood which integrates my dreams / heart’s calling, gifts, beliefs & values in a way that is in sync with nature.

This self-directed learning process invites learners to identify their hearts’ visions and engages them in developing the skills, relationships and practices they need to manifest those visions.

Swaraj University is located at Tapovan Ashram 15kms from Udaipur city in the Rajasthan province of NW India. The University was founded in 2010 when it launched a 2-year programme that is partially structured and partially co-created with khojis to enable them to become designers of their own learning and whole, happy and healthy beings.
educational and pedagogical cultures and practices to support and enable self-directed and self-managed learning.\(^5\)

**Educational mission**

Since its inception in 2010 Swaraj University has provided a platform for young people to identify their hearts’ vision and engage them in developing the skills and practices they need to turn their vision into reality. In this way Swaraj University nurtures the creativity of its learners and empowers them to bring their ideas into existence so they can make a positive contribution to the world.

Our khojis come from all over the country. They are also from varied socio-economic backgrounds and hail from metropolitan cities, semi-urban as well as rural areas. The first cohort of khojis joined Swaraj in 2010 and in the last 7 years, over 120 khojis, more than 250 mentors, and countless other supporters from all over the world have been part of the programme while the idea has reached many more in some way or the other.

The question might arise as to why we need a programme for self-designed learners. All of us have experienced self-designed learning and we might be ready to walk our own unique paths, but several factors stop us: fear and doubt, lack of mentorship or guidance, finding supportive co-travelers, socio-economic responsibilities or simply not knowing how to start.

At Swaraj University, we support and enable khojis to start, create and reclaim self-designed learning processes and pro-

**Origins**

Swaraj University was founded by four visionaries - Reva Dandage, Manish Jain, Nitin Paranjape and Deborah Frieze - who imagined a democratic open learning space for youth to engage in. The seeds for this venture were sown years before. One of the co-founders, Reva Dandage (right), in spite of being an above-average student in school failed in all subjects of class 12th exam. During the same time, two of her friends committed suicide due to failure in exams. This made her question the parameters of grading and measurement and pushed her to find the dreadful impacts it was causing to a learner. She felt these parameters were not leaving learners with satisfaction and happiness; rather they created new social hierarchies like rank, grades, pass or fail. Then on, she has been passionately involved with democratic education. Her interest in understanding the pedagogy of self-directed learning made her leave a well-established design business and took her to several alternative and free schools around the world.

Manish Jain, on the other hand worked with UNSECO, where he realized that there were existing traditional learning systems in African and Asian nations to which the mainstream education not just neglected, but destroyed. He saw a big picture of how the whole education system is destroying local cultures, traditions, occupations and is creating more insecurity and fear, and is getting people ready only for corporate slavery. This made him quit his job and he came back to India, and along with his wife and sister, initiated a learning movement called Shikshantar in Udaipur. For last 20 years, Shikshantar has worked tirelessly creating alternatives and challenging mainstream education system. It has also worked for creating Udaipur as learning city. Over the years,
The concept of swaraj, or self-rule, was developed during the Indian freedom struggle. ... As Gandhi states, “it is swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves.” The real goal of the freedom struggle was not only to secure political azadi (independence) from Britain, but rather to gain true swaraj (self-rule where ‘self’ implies an interconnection of many selves, local governance and localized and self-reliant model of living). Swaraj University uses this concept as a foundation principle

Nitin Paranjape has been actively involved in activism through Abhivyakti Media for Development, an organization he and his wife started 25 year back in Nasik and has actively worked with land rights movement including Narmada Bachao Andolan. Nitin, in his life, has experimented a lot on learning and unlearning. He also supported her daughter to unschool. He opens up space for talking which a youth does not find anywhere in society. Nitin and Manish ran a fellowship program called Berkana fellows for self-driven adults striving for a different lifestyle and occupation just before the launch of Swaraj.

Deborah, another co-founder, lives in USA and was long associated with Berkana institute. This US-based nonprofit promotes “leadership development” projects based on community conversations on issues of interest. She has also co-authored a book with with Meg Wheatley called Walk Out Walk On: A Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now. She also runs an urban learning center where neighbors gather to rediscover how to create healthy communities.

Unique ‘institution’

One frequent compliment we have received from khojis is that this place offers them acceptance that they struggle to get elsewhere, and that is one of the biggest reason young people are attracted to Swaraj. Unfortunately, due to pressures of society, family, media, and education system, youth today are devoid of acceptance at every

Concept of fee at Swaraj University
What are the expected expenses for a learner at Swaraj University?

Today we see commodification of everything around us, including education. This is wiping out ideas and practices of deep learning, self-organizing learning communities and vibrant learning ecosystems. Hence, at Swaraj University we believe that learning should be free. This will not only help revive other practices of learning but will also give us the opportunity to re-examine our relationship with money. Through this we can explore money in a newer and holistic manner and experiment with the spirit of gifting, sharing, trust and abundance.

However, to run this program we will incur expenses for lodging, boarding and travelling for each learner. For those whom it is possible we ask a contribution against the above mentioned expenses. And if you can, your additional contributions will help to support other peoples’ participation. This year for the batch starting in 2017, the
today’s living. The best part for khojis as well as the facilitation team has been the continuous evolution of the programme. It has never been the same for any khoji cohort, and nor it has been for the facilitating team. Every khoji cohort bring their own flavors, ideas and needs, thus helping the program to not be stagnant but evolve keeping everyone on toes, ready to learn new things, challenging & pushing everyone out of their comfort zones.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogical principles &amp; practices</th>
<th>Formal university</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-directed learning where individual interests and styles are the foundation of the programme</td>
<td>1. Compulsory learning - individual interests and learning styles are not taken into account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Learner decides the amount of time he/she requires to go into the depth of the subject</td>
<td>2. Limited time and opportunity to understand the subject in-depth</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Learners carry out self and peer evaluation as well as develop their own learning portfolios</td>
<td>3. Evaluation based on testing which creates fears, inferiority complexes and a sense of competition with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Grooming of learners so that they question the current state of society and develop the commitment and practice of sustainable action</td>
<td>4. Grooming of learners so that they become spectators, producers and consumers for the state and corporations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. All the learning opportunities are real and are based on understanding of local issues and their global context</td>
<td>5. Teaching matter and the process is disconnected from their immediate world</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Geared towards starting one’s own enterprise</td>
<td>6. Geared towards finding a job in the government or a corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Co-learners coming from a wide variety of backgrounds and ages that can help in bringing different flavours and learning resources to the process</td>
<td>7. Students separated by age groups. Students from similar age group are put together in the classrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A sense of community and democratic co-learning environment</td>
<td>8. Hierarchical and authoritarian learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Each learner will have a mentor in their area of interest and a mira to provide guidance in the learning process</td>
<td>9. Larger class size, so lack of individual attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Hindi and local languages are used in the learning process to bring out feelings and nuances, and to keep ourselves in contact with our cultures</td>
<td>10. Teaching done majorly in English, which disconnects the student from local culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pedagogical principles & practices

An educational concept of ‘swaraj’ (learners as self-determined, self-directed, self-managed and self-regulating) underpins the pedagogical practices that are used to develop learners so that they can become proactive beings. There are also strong elements of ecological thinking embedded in the relationships that are cultivated between the learners and their mentors and facilitators and the natural and social environment in which they are learning. For example, Khojis are also empowered to build their own support structure involving parents, peers, friends, mentors, and other people who can motivate, inspire, instigate, critique and help them through their journey.

Each person’s learning programme is individualized according to his/her specific interests, talents, questions and dreams. There is ample scope for learners to develop a multidisciplinary curriculum. There is a strong focus on apprenticeship learning, leadership development and community living. In the area of community living, learners explore healthy and sustainable personal lifestyle choices, gift culture, co-creation and democratic decision-making. Decisions regarding day-to-day functioning is done through the form of consensus, with a space for each person in the Swaraj community, be that learner or facilitator, to express his/her voice.
In a self-design learning approach, each khoji is encouraged to...

- Explore their learning styles, questions and passions without the institutional constraints that smother interest and joy, and breed mediocrity

- Engage consciously with unlearning, *jugaad* (playful improvisation), deep dialogue and gift culture

- Design individualised learning webs that are based on authentic real world trans-disciplinary projects and inter-generational relationships

- Build feedback frameworks and mechanisms to reflect on their learning

Use the close, supportive learner community as a base from which to engage with local, regional and global communities

With this as a basis, the *khojis* design their own learning plan. Their learning plans revolve around one core feature of this programme - *intimate mentorships*. Swaraj University aims to revive the traditional approach to education in India, through a *guru-shishya parampara*. That is, learners being placed one-on-one with mentors (also called *ustaads*) who share both a range of practical skills as well as personal philosophies/wisdom. These mentors have been carefully selected to ensure that, in addition to being cutting edge leaders in their respective fields, they are able to engage with youth in a true spirit of co-learning and friendship.

This is complemented by...

- **Khoji meets:** The *khojis* converge every few months to cross-fertilise their learning and build perspectives on the core principles of Swaraj at our campus 30 kilometres away from Udaipur city. (To know more see Campus)

- **Individualised self-study program:** After getting initial exposure to several practice areas, *khojis* chart and pursue their own path of study based on their interests. They are guided in developing their self-study programme using various books, websites, films, etc. Significant attention is given to processes of self-awareness, self-understanding, and examining their life choices.

- **Skill workshops:** *Khojis* have the choice to participate in workshops featuring basic entrepreneurial skills as well as other skills such as: communication, facilitation and group dialogue, computers, financing, marketing, cooking, sewing, farming, yoga, film-making, web design and blogging, desktop publishing, writing of proposals and business plans, documentation, working English, etc.

- **Service projects:** *Khojis* design individual and group projects in collaboration with local communities and social movements.

- **Organisational internships:** *Khojis* can do internships with leading social organisations and social movements spread all over India. This experience gives them the opportunity to know the expectations of the real work-world.

- **International dialogues:** They interact with and spend time with visiting students from other countries. In
Programme structure

The structure of the programme (see below) reveals that there is an emphasis on learning, developing and applying knowledge and skills in the real world in a range of contexts linked to the idea of learning journeys in which social learning is important. There is plenty of opportunity for project-based learning, and self-directed learning is underpinned by mentors who encourage reflection on learning experiences and the results of actions. A summary of differences between a traditional university and Swaraj University is shown in Table 1.

Year 1

The aim of the first year is to encourage khojis to unlearn their dependence on external sources of knowledge and to engage in co-creating their self-directed learning path. Khojis also learn basic jugaad (playful improvisation), planning, facilitation, media and communication skills, as well as identify a practice area to pursue in more depth. It is also the time to go deeper into their own stories, histories and understand one’s own self: beliefs, values, patterns, fears and emotions, and not just one’s own self, but also understanding these stories of the whole group that empowers them to support their peers much strongly. There are various explorations and experiments to understand the meaning of Swaraj, and the core principles re-

Here is a typical time-table for the year 1 programme:

Khoji Meet 1: Exploration of self, our own stories, community building, etc. Includes the initiation ceremony of khojis who have completed 2 years’ process (5-8 weeks)

Learning Journey 1: Whole group goes to one city or area to meet various inspiring activists, artists, social entrepreneurs, and change agents (2 weeks)

Self-Designed Learning Time 1: Individually or in pairs (1.5 - 3 months) Khojis design if they want to do mentorships, travel, go home or a combination

Khoji Meet 2: Re-thinking development, co-learning and community living with peers and through workshops at Udaipur (8 weeks)

Learning Journey 2: Cycle Yatra to villages (10 days)

Self-Designed Learning Time 2: Individually or in pairs (1.5 - 3 months) Khojis design if they want to do mentorships, travel, go home or a combination

Khoji Meet 3: Co-learning and community living with peers and through workshops at Udaipur (6 weeks)

Learning Journey 3: Whole group goes to join any live people’s social movement of resistance and stay with the resilient communities.
Year 2

The focus of the second year is on Deep Diving. The aim is to facilitate deeper learning around each khoji’s emerging vision. It is in a way consolidation of first year’s exploration into a live project they take up.

Central piece of year 2 - identifying one’s heart’s calling & following it. This is done through Project Based Learning (PBL) which is a form of self designed learning (SDL).

The Project is to give your heart’s calling some concrete shape in the real world. It involves:

- Pedagogy of mistakes / failure: risk taking, learning by doing, celebrating mistakes as paths of learning.
- Feedback & iterations: unlearning the student teacher relationship of writing an exam and getting marks which declare whether you know something or not and that’s the end of it. Here, learn to take, seek and value feedback, create dialogues to figure out what can be better / different in your own work instead of thinking I need to give the ‘right’ answer. Based on this iterate for constant improvisation. Khojis sometimes find it hard to take feedback / dialogue about their work / iterate as they are still stuck in the cycle of ‘but I gave the right answer’ / seeing facilitators as authority.
- Identifying and leveraging your learning style
- Self awareness
- Self evaluation

Khojis are encouraged to take risks, to try new things out and not to be afraid of making mistakes. These projects can be anything - right from their dream ideas to ideas they want to experiment with in their communities, from a foundation of an enterprise to ideas implementation in existing organizations. We call it Alivelihoods. Usually the focus of existing universities is just to have learners reach livelihoods. Our focus is to increase the spectrum and include questions, ideas and deeper calling from the world that makes the khojis alive or the communities they intend to work with, Alive. Khojis also begin to develop understanding and practice in leadership, management, resource mobilization, marketing and networking skills to engage others to support their vision. They also

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Encouraging & facilitating creativity

The whole pedagogical approach to encouraging khojis to determine and design their own learning pathways taps into the deep interests and ambitions that drive intrinsic motivations within which creativity can thrive. Indeed one of the core purposes of the Swaraj approach is to develop people so that they are able to create their own learning projects and bring new enterprises into existence. Here are just two examples of strategies we employ to encourage khoji’s to use their creativity.

One of the interesting experiments we do with the khojis in the first year of the programme is called Eklavya Ghumantu. Ghumantu means a nomad. And Eklavya is a mythological character who learnt archery by constructing a sculpture of his Guru as his teacher. He represents a true self-designed learner. Eklavya Ghumantu is an exploration of finding learning opportunities on the run. In India, learners are made to believe that learning could only be possible if there’s an expert to teach you. So, the whole power of learning is shifted to that expert. Eklavya Ghumantu is a process where khojis are encouraged to go on the streets to search for and find their own Gurus. There is treasure of learning everywhere and potential teachers are everywhere. Artisans, cobblers, barbers, mechanics, and repair artists - the streets are full of people whom we can learn from. The khojis have to find these teachers and learn from them. It challenges their notion of learning and
Inspired by ‘red-clip’ challenge, in the second year of the programme khojis are given an object of some value and asked to exchange it as many times possible to acquire new objects and other resources of higher value. Learners are forced to use their negotiating and resourcefulness skill in order to complete the A lot of processes at Swaraj University are indeed designed by khojis themselves. From the 1st meet of year 1, they get into designing the khoji meets and many aspects of the meet. Right from designing the conflict resolution mechanism to designing the way responsibilities will be help and executed, from designing and hosting events, to setting their own criteria for graduation, the khojis do it all and they are encouraged and forced to use their creativity.

Experiments like cycle yatra, Eklavya Ghumantu, where they are not allowed to carry money or food, push them to think more creatively, and they have to use their imaginations and be resourceful.

Many a time khojis struggle to take initiatives because they get into the head-space too often and think on it so much that action seems to be a faraway thought. We encourage them to act, to try things out to make quick prototypes to shift into action and experiment without thinking too much. If they are taking up a big project, we ask them to make a quick prototype that breaks their fear and gets them involved in action so that they can learn from doing something that contributes to what they want to achieve.

In the year 2, they are also encouraged to undertake a research, collate all the necessary inputs and experiences and design a Course Hamara (Hamara, in Hindi means Ours). Taking their cue from the online learning platform like Coursera, Course Hamara encourages khojis to put together their learning into a form that can leverage the project they are already doing and we believe that one of the best ways to learn is also to share/teach it to

What are our khojis up to?

Khojis have explored more than 75 different fields, such as sustainable living practices, eco-architecture, farming, theatre, design, healing (psychology, pranic healing, naturopathy, etc.) technology, facilitation/teaching, writing, film making, storytelling, alternative education, kabaad se jugaad, event-management, and much more. More than 60 khojis have now completed their two-year programme at Swaraj University.

Here are a few examples of the ways our graduates are using their creativity and talents.

Ritesh is currently running a collaborative enterprise called Eco-Hut, which is a store in Udaipur that sells handmade herbal products, products out of waste, books, and hand-made jewelry. She makes jewelry out of seeds.
**Gyan** is a documentary filmmaker. He has worked with Ekta Parishad, a pan-India organization working on land rights movement, covering 18000kms of Jan Samvaad Yatra. He has also worked with other activist organizations and has made more than 50 films.

**Kamalbir** has started her own enterprise ‘Saadgi’ where she with the help of women-folk of a village in Udaipur, makes utility bags out of fabric waste and then markets it at various handicrafts store and exhibitions. [https://www.facebook.com/saadgicreations/](https://www.facebook.com/saadgicreations/)

**Arjun** has been working extensively with SkillTrain in developing video content, marketing and the website administration part of it. SkillTrain is a technology-enabled blended vocational training company that offers online and mobile-based training programs to cater to prospective vocational skill learners anywhere in India, for free.

**Karen** left her job of 5 years in IT & Advertising sector and gave herself space to explore her association with theatre. She has begun directing theatre shows in Bangalore and has started her Theatre company.

**Vikas** is currently practicing Pranic healing on gift culture basis in Anand, Gujarat and carries out small experiments in farming with his wife. During the course of Swaraj process, Vikas worked at Vinobha ashram (Naturopathy centre) for 1 year and experimented that year living without money and later also practiced consultancy for 6 months at a friend’s clinic in alternative therapy.

**Rahul Karanpuriya** initiated his traveling and learning process called 52 parindey, in the process of which, he travelled to 52 differently located people who have self-designed learners in their life and are experimenting with their life and lifestyles. The intention is to make short films and inspire others to take a leap and walk on their own path. Right now, he is visiting and documenting 12 weaver communities for next 12 months.

**Neema** worked as teacher with a Government school for 10 years and then joined Swaraj. Her pursuit has been to bring reform and liveliness to the educational system as a whole, specially in the State of Gujarat, where she belongs to. She is currently the principal and brought Theatre and democratic styles of learning into her school. She has also been part of the Frisbee team of her state.

For more stories of what khojis are up to, check: [http://www.swarajuniversity.org/khoji-stories.html](http://www.swarajuniversity.org/khoji-stories.html)

Many other khojis are trying out different things, experimenting different ways of lifestyle and livelihoods, some figuring out what kind of life they want to live, some confused, some trying to understand the impact they want to create in society, but all are connected to each other, sometimes working at individual levels, yet kind of supported by a community.

**Ideas, experiments and way forward:**

Many people, of all ages, show interest in being part of Swaraj University but due to family and financial responsibility and unavailability of time, they are not able to join. For people who cannot afford to give 2 years into it, we have short period workshops, which are open for khojis as well as outsiders, which also helps people interact with the khojis and get the feel of the programme and space.
We believe spaces like Swaraj University can sprout up anywhere and everywhere. The idea for us is not to scale up and expand to various cities, but support individuals, groups and communities to begin one in their own locality, with their own philosophies, design and ideas. That is how learning can evolve and be diverse; otherwise, expansion with the same idea will homogenize the learning and will turn it destructive similar to mainstream education.

For the readers of Creative Academic who are open to new ways of thinking, have dreams of building healthy and resilient communities and who want to keep learning alive, we urge you to experiment. Begin with your own lives, start with your own learning spaces and contexts, challenge continuously what you have been taught all the while. Make your own learning live.

You are welcome to visit Swaraj University to experience the joy and aliveness of our way of learning.

We welcome contributions of all kinds!

Swaraj University is a small but potentially powerful step in the direction of 'Swaraj' the way Gandhi imagined it. Our aim is to restore the responsibility of education to the learner and the community and revive local cultures, local economies and local ecologies.

We invite you to join us on our journey. Swaraj University is not accepting any grants from big donor agencies. We operate on the idea of Gift Culture, accepting gifts of various kinds from friends, supporters and well-wishers. You can also contribute in our journey by gifting books or films for the library, or old laptops for the media resource centre, games and sport activities for

Sources
1 A version of this article was originally published in “The Common Indian” http://thecommonindian.in/2015/11/learning-what-you-feel-like-to-learn-welcome-to-swaraj-university/
2 Swaraj University http://www.swarajuniversity.org/
3 the meaning of university https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University
4 the meaning of swaraj www.swaraj.org/whatisswaraj.htm
5 http://www.swarajuniversity.org/comparison.html

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gesJTwgkga0&t=216s

This TEDx talk by Reva Dandage, co-founder and director of Swaraj University, explains how she came to hold her beliefs that led her to establish an alternative university with a focus on self-design learning, including exploration of basic entrepreneurial skills within the context of environmental sustainability and social responsibility. It is India’s first university dedicated to strengthening local economies, local cultures and the rich diversity of local traditions. Its two-year program is rooted in the age-old ‘guru-shishya parampara’ or learning through practical experience with mentors or gurus. Reva’s passion is to create and host alternative spaces for learning, and through Swaraj University, she facilitates young people in co-creating their learning programs towards their passions and dreams. She is also dedicated to living sustainably and engaging youth in dialogues to challenge their ideas of success and inspire a spirit of compassion and social responsibility in them.

Her talk is about the journey of her new initiative: Swaraj University. Faltu is a movie, which is a Hindi remake of the movie “Accepted”. Swaraj is a kind of University where students make their own curriculum and decide their own path. The talk focuses on some of the problems with current education system.
Andrew is Head of Academic Practice & Learning Innovation at Sheffield Hallam University. He is a National Teaching Fellow with 22 years of experience in higher educational development and curriculum innovation. His background is in fine art and music, and these continue to shape his thinking about life and learning. A studio philosophy has informed his work on the development of future learning spaces, active learning and the student experience in recent years with peer co-operation in a learner-generated context being a recurrent theme. Andrew is a member of the Creative Academic Team and he blogs at: tactilelearning.wordpress.com

"There is knowledge, or better yet knowing, in practice. People have in their doing a tacit kind of knowing. They know more than they can say, and in zones of uniqueness, uncertainty, and conflict they are sometimes able to reflect on what they know."1:3

Introduction

Several contributions to the Creative Academic inquiry into creative pedagogies for creative learning ecologies have drawn attention to the importance of certain sorts of spaces in encouraging learners to use their creativity2. In this article, I build upon Donald Schön’s observation above of the studio as a place of tacit learning and his assertion that the studio is an ideal space for developing conceptual knowledge1. I set out to discover what we mean when we talk about the studio as learning space and a place of practice. To do this, I have consulted with people who have taught and learnt in studios and asked them “What does studio mean to you?” and used their testimony alongside the literature on studio learning to discover whether there is something we can call the essential studio. A number of these testimonies can be found on the #creativeHe Google + forum for conversations about creativity in education4. A goal of my study has been to explore the degree of commonality about the studio within those disciplines, to distil its essence, and to ask if this can be shared more widely for the benefit of all.

The general educational value of the idea of studio is illustrated in a comment by Fred Garnett, an advisor for InQbate, the Creativity CETL at Sussex University. “After a long consultation and design process they built an interactive classroom that was based on the Art School learning model.” InQbate concluded that the studio environment offered the most flexible and supportive learning environment within which creativity could flourish regardless of the discipline.

In formal educational environments the studio is perceived differently to other types of learning space like the lecture theatre or the classroom. Creatives from many disciplines say that their studio space operates on many levels, serving as a private, social and professional space for their work and study. They are clear that the studio is imbued with meaning, being understood variously as a material space, a place of teaching and learning, a way of thinking and being, and a place of work5. For some, their very identity is bound to the idea of the studio. Here, I will make connections between conceptions of studio and the way it is lived as a networked and ecological environment, and how this reflects an emerging idea of digital hybrid learning studio.

Studio learning space

Etymologically, studio is derived from the Latin studere to study and historically its identity is as a place of learning and apprenticeship. However, its trajectory as a learning space is distinct from that of the dominant, pedagogic and cultural trajectory of the didact6. Pedagogically, the studio is a space for practice founded on exploration, interpretation, uncertainty, serendipity, experience and, importantly to Schön, reflection-in-action3. Shreeve and Batchelor7 say that for tutors the studio “is not didactic, but open-ended, individually focused and about realising the potential of each student”. Not all studio disciplines agree with this Fine Art view of developing individuality however. In Design or Performance, for example, the studio is as often about being group-centred. In all cases, studio philosophy tends to be about exploration and experimentation where ideas, topics or themes are explored. In the drama studio Paul Kleiman explains the studio creates a space for exploring themes through experimentation with a ‘Let’s try’ attitude.
There is also consensus that the studio, whatever it is, contrasts with the didactic philosophy of the lecture room in which the single authoritative voice of the teacher is used to systematically deliver highly structured knowledge. Paul Kleiman, who has experience of both art and theatre studios, reflects on how the studio is essentially "a democratic, shared space, in complete contrast to the somewhat 'authoritarian' space of the lecture theatre and the standard classroom." Perhaps there is a contrast being closing down or managing knowledge and the studio philosophy of resisting the resolution of knowledge; keeping possibilities open for as long as possible.

The traditions of the ateliers, conservatoires, schools of architecture, and the performing arts have had and maintain distinct identities. In the UK, colleges of the arts, technology and education were largely subsumed by degree-awarding universities, being integrated as departments through changes following the Robbins Report in 1963. This shift addressed the need for higher education to have a better approach to financial management, recognise the advanced levels of educational quality in colleges, remain competitive on a global stage, and meet a demand for growth. Despite this organisational convergence, institutional provision has remained mixed in the plastic and performing arts while cultural identities have been keenly protected. This determined independence may explain why the essential studio is not well-understood beyond its disciplines.

### Studio as an engaged learning experience

While acknowledging a diversity of practices across the studio disciplines, artists and performers tend to be independently minded and, without contradiction, critically co-operative. In educational development, where my own interest is located, a desire to move academic practice from a teacher-centred paradigm towards student-centred active learning has been ongoing since John Dewey first promoted ideas about experiential learning, and latterly through a more widespread appreciation of student-centred active pedagogies and the conception of the learning paradigm. This view seeks to create an environment in which deep level learning happens, where learners attempt to connect ideas as they understand underpinning theory and concepts, and make meaning from material under consideration.

The massification of higher education and the emergence of digital technologies since the 1990s have affected the learning environment for all disciplines, inherently challenging the teacher to consider their students differently. A marked growth in student numbers, and greater diversity, mean that the teacher must think about learner engagement as a prerequisite to student learning; it is not enough to assume that students are intrinsically motivated and academically capable. Equally, it is not enough to understand learner engagement as meaning keeping students ‘enjoyably busy’. Teachers in all disciplines need to be artful about how they inspire purposeful activity, not least because in the UK they cannot hide from the National Student Survey or the Teaching Excellence Framework. Consequently, classroom design and practice is turning to ideas that resemble some of the characteristics of studio-based learning.

"The spaces that are most effective for active and collaborative learning are those that create a flexible and fluid environment. A studio model, which resembles an open workspace for architects or artists... This enables more interaction than the typical classroom and supports student engagement and movement."14

The second factor, the advent of digital technology, largely remains full of potential as a learning space. Institutionally provided and personal technologies are ubiquitous in universities and have changed how we operate but, arguably, decades of investment have been misguided by the idea that learning is about the systematic and expedient delivery of knowledge. Consequently, there has been little real progress when it comes to the digital affecting the nature of learning. Learning today looks very much like learning yesterday.

Recently, however, the use of social media has shown us how co-operative networks can foster natural patterns of productive communal engagement alongside self-moderated experiences that really matter to learners. Today it is the users of the digital spaces and social media who show us how adept we are, as human beings, in using space and technology co-operatively when we feel a sense of purpose and ownership over our experience. The providers of institutional technologies have, for too long, tended to get bogged down in servicing knowledge delivery rather accommodating rich, blended learning experiences. In the studio, we learn early on that the
technical space is only one context for our becoming and that relationships we form around us are critical to our learning behaviours and identities. This is something that others seem slow to understand.

This demonstration of collective imagination over social space reveals that we do make space work for us when we are given the chance. Space is not agnostic. It matters to us, liberating us or tying us up. In education, this is referred to as built pedagogy15.

The studio affords the opportunity to create a balanced ecosystem that epitomises engagement through the authentic learning paradigm of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’16: the inherent flexibility of the studio is not that bits and pieces can be moved around, but that we move around within the space to incorporate, with guidance, activities of practice as we learn at the edges of our community of practice. The studio is a shell in which students become practitioners by exploring common interests and purposes in ways that are meaningful personally alongside peers and mentors.

Learning networks and ecologies

The essential idea of a studio learning philosophy, whatever the discipline, begins by creating a dynamic situation of which each student is part. Studio, then, is the sum of the physical or digital space, its people and their individual and collective ambition, and the problems and opportunities they find. Together, these factors are volatile, generating interactivity, change and growth. The responses and relationships of the people in this equation particularly create a sense of fluid dynamism. In this context, each learner has agency and finds meaning.

The studio ethos exemplifies situated and experiential learning therefore. It is an ecological space being open to possibilities, shunning the binary conventions of formal and informal learning, and exemplifying networked behaviours. With reference to social media, boyd17:1 describes an understated interdependence of networked publics as ‘the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice... they allow people to gather for social, cultural, and civic purposes’. Understanding the studio as a networked space, more than one of introspective communities, clarifies how the individual in the studio brings value as an autonomous co-operator. Each arrives into a dynamic learning space with their knowledge, experience, skills, dispositions and self-determined drive ready to work for the mutual benefit of their peer co-operators. Their histories are as diverse as their aspirations, but for a while studio learners act as networked co-operators enjoying each other’s wisdom and energies for mutual benefit.

More than communities, which are usually well-delineated and often inwardly orientated, networks are inherently nodal, co-operative, unbounded and fluid, being knitted together through loose ties. Because of social media, there is a new intensified personalisation and concurrent interdependency amongst young people in their use of digital space18. This is a state that will be familiar to many studio practitioners where the tension between the self and the social group is experienced as a false dichotomy. Even when we compare the Art studio to the Design studio where we have noted a difference of emphasis between the individual and the group, the studio is first and foremost an open plan fluid idea. The classroom and the lecture theatre are enclosures that exemplify hierarchical structures and are designed around teacher dependency, where the teacher is the leader and arbiter of knowledge. In contrast, the openness of the studio means it is essentially a networked construct situated around problems and opportunities that require the practitioner to work co-operatively in a socially-enmeshed space. Even the artist at their easel stands in the open being part of a supportive collective. The studio-based learner possesses, or develops, a different outlook and expectation of themselves and others as practitioners; an outlook embodied in the arrangement of the physical space, its histories, technologies and conventions.

The life class is perhaps an archetypal space for the art student. It works as a space for the individual in the context of the collective. A rather cosy space, warm enough to ensure the life model does not catch cold, Paul Kleiman describes how students “sit in virtual silence, working individually, concentrating on looking closely and making marks on paper, with only the occasional quiet words of advice from the tutor to an individual student.” The student is alone in their focus, with each one staking out their easel space to gain their angle on the model positioned in the centre of the studio as if in a forest clearing. He describes the fluctuations in the drama studio where performers work "sometimes noisily, sometimes quietly", but immersed nevertheless. In both cases it reflects what happens in a networked space where there is a balanced awareness and frisson of engagement between the mass players.
For a dancer like Roisin Cahalan, the studio has equal potency, evoking for her memories of “sprung varnished floors covered in non-slip Marley. Mirrors on one wall, bars along the others. Music system in the corner and lots of hot, sweaty dancers.” For Roisin, the studio is a space of action and freedom. But the artist’s, dramatist’s and dancer’s studios share this strong sense of being, of intense commitment, of being surrounded by a few defining tools and sometimes a degree of clutter, but always a sense of pending achievement. Roisin says of the dance studio, “It is a space for a community of like-minded people when nothing other than the dance is relevant or important;” a sentiment recognisable by any studio user. This is what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls ‘flow’, which is characterised by activities that are intrinsically rewarding, involving complete concentration on task, a transformation of time, and a blurring of actions and awareness.

Brown says that students in studios “learn from the struggles, the missteps, and the successes of their peers.” The studio is about an enculturation into a practice.

Respondents have observed how studio-based learners learn iteratively, prepared to accept and respond to failure readily. It builds both tenacity and reflexive adaptability. They are driven by a desire for imagined perfection even though this desire is probably unrealisable given that success is ultimately determined by an unknowable audience. Studio learning, in this way, is partially shaped by a deep and authentic self-assessment that contrasts with superficial extrinsic drivers often used in other disciplines. The experience and struggle encountered through each piece of work or performance is absorbed and used to shape the learner’s self-efficacy, as well as building their knowledge. It is this self-exploration through a multitude of personal experiments that develops the learning habit of the studio-based practitioner. The learner-practitioner adopts the ways, knowledge, motivations and sensibilities of their practice through productive enquiry in a social setting.

Spaces of difference

Ellen Sims is clear that the studio has many meanings to those who use them. She has written about the studio being a signature pedagogy of art and design. For her the studio provides a work space, office, library, a making space, an exhibition space, store, and archive.

These qualities are evident in Cork Lined Studios. Artist, Sharon Kivland shared a link to this project to which she has contributed. Initiated by Karen David, it presents the studios of over 50 contemporary artists through collections of annotated photographs. The practising artist’s studio is revealed to be idiosyncratic and mostly a space of inspirational clutter made up of found and made objects.

For some, the studio is positioned as having a distinct purpose that scaffolds artist discipline and distinct ways of thinking and being. Penny, who responded to my survey, said that her studio environment needs to be different from the other environments she uses each day so she can consciously move from her “more bureaucratic tasks as an educator to a more productive and experimental set of actions.”

Many of the respondents to my survey said that the artist’s studio is frequently characterised by its clutter, whereas the design studio is characterised by its organisation, and the performance studio by its openness and lack of clutter. Others said you can think of the space itself as a technology that functions to accommodate the different ways it is used by the individual and its communities.

The designer’s studio is a space of professional practice and Claire Lockwood, Head of Art & Design at Sheffield Hallam University, describes the learning space for her Design students as a space that steadily enculturates and supports them to become the designer they aspire to be. The renovated studio space at Hallam has been designed to replicate industry physically but also in the ways that students work with others. In the new development one of the greatest successes has been the proximity of academics to the students. She says, “Social spaces including
shared kitchens have been designed into every floor. Food brings everyone together. It’s where people talk.” It seems that before it is anything else, the studio is a way of being. Claire says, “A studio-based experience is different to other disciplines because it creates a safe environment for taking risks. Students feel like they can be creative. They can put things on the wall and they know this practise is valued. It gives them a sense of belonging and home.”

The studio bubble

Ellen Sims describes her experience of studio as a Fine Art student in a police state. She conveys a picture of the studio as a sanctuary and as a place of immense trust between the students and lecturing staff. Students would study in more formal and confrontational spaces and return to this studio sanctuary for long episodes of creative immersion. “This fluid coming and going … [established]... a more social learning experience, as did spending all day every day with scant breaks for lunch or coffee. Relationships with lecturing staff were also different - much less hierarchical, more informed by being wowed at the work they were producing alongside us in the same studio space.” She describes a reassuring conspiratorial culture supported by her lecturers who cut keys for the students so they had the freedom to come and go whenever they needed to. “Soon everyone was spending evenings and weekends in the studio. It was closer than a marriage, more intense than therapy - but probably played that role, too... We talked, talked, all the time.” Ellen remembers venturing forth from the studio, crossing the boundary into the dangerous hinterlands surrounding the studio to gather photographs and inspiration. The nascent artist identities of the students took shape in this safe and stimulating haven. “Tacit, implicit forms of learning were far more important than explicit forms. We all had a sense of being both teacher and learner, assessor and assessed, involved in a shared venture.” Although Ellen’s studio was situated amidst testing social conditions, other artists and musicians talk about the special bonding they feel in which communication seems to happen at an instinctive hyper-level. My own experience as a printmaker shares this idea of a privileged space, being set apart from the norm with special access to facilities and different kinds of trustful relationship. It also resonates with my experience of being in bands- a sense of tenacity, deprivation and “us against the world” in the cause of creativity.

Even in adversity Ellen says, “Nothing approximates the luxury afforded by the studio.”

Autonomy and freedoms to choose

Many contributors told me that the studio is about high degrees of autonomy and freedom to pursue ideas, sometimes without clear purpose and structure. However, accounts describe a shift in the learning studio across educational levels that markedly affect the culture as students get more experienced and confident with the space. Simon Rae recalls how eventually “students were left alone to get on with whatever they wanted to do using whatever medium they chose... talk with whoever, and use whatever.” Giving students freedom is challenging and Simon says that, “unfortunately many students dropped out and left. Being a Fine Artist is a tough business.”

Stimulating the inner world

Kerry Bertram, a fine artist, responded to my question in her blog post titled ‘Inner studio’. She says that all she needs is an inspiring space, where space is as much head space as physical. It should be “full of light, pattern, colour and things that spark ideas.” She can imagine this, and that should be enough for her, although she also acknowledges the importance of the studio as a space to make the imagination concrete through visualisation or journaling: in effect, the process of challenging the imagination to make ideas real. Making real requires materials, tools, and surfaces to work on, but these do not need to inhibit creativity for her, often being to hand or freely available in the world. A studio in Kerry’s mind is the combination of inspiration, resources and a space that may only need to be temporal or psychological. The physical world is subservient to these.
A place of skills for the making of cultural artefacts

The studio can also be a functional space: A place for making. Norman Jackson, reflecting on making music and producing animations, highlighted the significance of technologies. The technical environment challenges the artist or performer to respond. He says, “In ecological terms, the space encourages and facilitates the sorts of relationships and interactions necessary for the making of such artefacts.” Julius Dobos, a Distinguished Professor of Digital Audio Technology, focuses on the studio as, “a place where hands-on creative work happens, which typically involves two or more individuals. To me studio refers to a place where creativity is at work, manifesting (a) creator(s)' ideas that will ultimately spread outside of the physical boundaries of the studio.” I do not think that a ‘studio’ has to involve any sort of technology.”

A place of becoming and placemaking

The studio is an ontological space. A place that is made through learner agency. John Cowan proposes the studio is “A place, empty when first occupied, where you can work creatively, shaped according to the kind of activity that will happen within it.” This shares Kerry Bertram’s view of the studio as a space relatively devoid of meaning until imagination and action affect it. The studio is a space that tempts the artist or performer to give it meaning. As such, the studio is a locus of placemaking and the creative act itself gains value only when it engages others.

Properties of the studio learning space

The essential philosophy and practice of the studio continues to reflect longstanding practices and cultures in disciplinary areas such as art, design, architecture, media, drama, dance and music. A studio, whatever the discipline, is a material space that supports a studio-based learning philosophy that resembles and scaffolds professional practices. In this space students accept challenges which they explore through research and experimentation by focusing on designing, producing and then presenting their responses. These can be individual or collective works and performances and, as such, they require the review and feedback of tutors, peers and publics.

Educationally, the studio continues to mean:
- a space in which individual craft, knowledge and dispositions are valued;
- a space designed to promote creative thinking and originality;
- an immersive networked place of individual effort and collective agency;
- a place of co-operation and co-production;
- a cauldron of ideas, technologies and people

Above all, a studio affords, for people who know how to use it, the space in which they can create their own ecologies for learning, exploring, developing, creating/co-creating, making, performing and achieving.

Studies for all’ enhancing opportunities for active and engaged learning

As we reshape higher education for an unknown future institutions of higher education are paying much more attention to the types of spaces that promote active engaged learning. The steady development of higher education as a discipline in its own right and the attention given to developing graduate attributes through the curriculum have demanded a wider appreciation of the ontological learning space. These changes in the way we are thinking about learning in higher education open up new possibility space for the expansion of studio-based learning.
At the same time, the supremacy of epistemological knowledge has been usurped by the accessibility of the internet; knowledge grows and is promulgated exponentially, challenging the paradigm of knowledge retention\(^2\). Further, the unreliability and disputability of factual knowledge and what we accept as credible, seems set to define our times as an age of uncertainty with the political denial of research evidence. All this means that the university teacher must be increasingly concerned with developing critical thinking amongst their students. This demands the use of strategies in which the learner is actively engaged in iteratively scrutinising knowledge by tackling problems creatively, and developing their own knowledge in the process, and then reflecting on the validity of knowledge developed through their activity.

So far, I have tried to establish the studio as a learning space with a different pedagogical tradition to other more didactic pedagogies of disciplines that do not use studio spaces in their teaching and learning practices. I have described these respective pedagogic traditions as running in parallel. However, there are signs in some universities as they rethink their learning spaces, and we shift from a teaching paradigm to a learning paradigm that studio type learning environments are becoming more widely available. I do not suggest the studio is an ideal learning space, having pedagogic challenges to do with managing informality and ‘hidden rules of engagement’\(^2\) however, a growing interest in active learning classrooms\(^1\) suggests a studio-type philosophy is becoming more attractive to teachers in disciplines that have traditionally not utilised studio spaces or pedagogies.

Adopting a Studio for All philosophy for developing higher education learning spaces resonates with the ambitions and aspirations of our students to lead creative, rich, rewarding and fulfilling lives. Smith Taylor\(^2\) has observed how exposure to a studio space “can launch teachers into active learning pedagogy and can increase the positive effects of that pedagogy on learning.” The challenge facing higher education in delivering a Studio for All philosophy, however, is a lack of experience and understanding of active, student-centred teaching, yet its execution needs the conviction to ensure that large numbers of students grasp the opportunity. However, vibrant the active studio is, we have seen how the studio is a challenging space; one not immediately suited to all students.

Nevertheless, the studio speaks of situated knowledge and a graduate fluency that Schön’ calls ‘a tacit kind of knowing’. These suggest the time is right to explore how the studio learning space might be used to good effect across disciplinary curriculum experiences.

But perhaps another question might be, where do learners in disciplines that do not use studio spaces, gain the sorts of experiences for authentic exploration, learning and creativity afforded by the studio environment?

EXPLORING STUDIOS FOR ALL
Andrew will be exploring the idea of Studio for All in a year-long project this academic year. He is keen to hear from anyone with experience of learning in studio environments and from people interested in connecting thinking in this area. Contact Andrew at: a.j.middleton@shu.ac.uk

Acknowledgements & credits
I am grateful to all the people who contributed to my survey and shared their views on what studio means in the #creativeHE Google+ Forum\(^4\) – Paul Kleiman, John Cowan, Simon Rae, Julius Dobos, Declan Phillips, Kerry Bertram, Roisin Cahalan, Ellen Simms and Fred Garnett

Image credits
1 Open space of an empty dance theatre http://weheartit.com/entry/36379532
3 Students learning to make clay animals in a studio social setting http://www.phoenixstudio.co.uk/courses/clay-animals-with-james-ort-27th-28th-february/
5 Peeking into the artists studio by Dina | Jun 2, 2013 | Creative inspiration, My blogrol
References

3 The Hive Centre for Student Creativity Creative Academic Magazine CAM7C p.69 May 2017
9 Plastic Arts http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Plastic+arts

You can share your views on what your studio spaces mean to you on the #creativeHE Google+ Forum for people who are interested in creativity and students’ creative development https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041
Example of a studio based approach to collaborative learning

ImaginationLancaster is an open and exploratory research lab at the University of Lancaster that investigates emerging issues, technologies and practices to advance knowledge and develop solutions that contribute to the common good. The team of people working in the centre conduct applied and theoretical research into products, places and systems - using innovative strategies including disruptive design techniques that combine traditional and social science methods with practice-based methods arising from the arts. Approaches emphasise productive collaborations to create desirable and sustainable design interventions that break the cycle of well-formed opinions, strategies, mind-sets, and ways-of-doing, that tend to remain unchallenged. Areas of research span education, health and social care, well-being, culture, the leisure sector, media, transport, manufacturing and the environment.

Designing Spaces for Creative Collaboration and Co-Design

The Designing Spaces for Creative Collaboration and Co-design workshop organised and facilitated brought together a multidisciplinary group of designers, designer makers and craftspeople to spend a half day within the shell of the 3rd floor ‘art school’ space in the Storey Creative Industries Centre, generating design proposals for refurbishment of the space.

The workshop took the form of an exploration, creative reflection and discussion of potential design elements which would allow the area to function as a space for creative community collaboration. The idea is that people from local communities, creative industry professionals, academics, public services and third sector employees can work together in this space to identify the specific challenges facing the communities, and collaborate to propose design solutions.

An interesting illustrated account of the process, pedagogy and outcomes can be found in the Workshop Report¹.

Studio spaces & pedagogy at The Claremont College’s Hive Centre

Creative Academic is always on the look-out for the imaginative ways that universities create spaces that encourage students and teachers to use their creativity. One such space, which takes its inspiration from studio spaces, is the Hive Centre created by The Claremont Colleges: a consortium of five undergraduate liberal arts and two graduate institutions in California. The Hive Centre was featured in the May issue of CAM7C.

At the Hive, we provide a space where students can experiment and play. Up until this point in their studies, students have usually learned to play it safe and get to the right answer, and so we seek to put them into modes where, as is the case in more problems than not, there’s not a right answer. There are many possible answers. For example, one of the exercises we do sometimes is set students up to have them working in groups on jigsaw puzzles. That’s a complicated problem but there’s a right answer. Everybody knows what it is, and everybody’s really comfortable. They divide up, and somebody wins. But then we take them into another room where there are scraps of fabric laid out all over the floor and say, “Okay, now make a quilt.” So what’s the difference between the jigsaw puzzle with the right answer, and the quilt with infinite answers and no right answer? How do you form as a creative team and what do you observe about your behaviors in both of those situations? Our argument is there are more quilts in the world than there are jigsaw puzzles, and so we want to teach people to put things together in ways that haven’t been done before. Frederick Leichter*

Source
Example of a studio maker space and thinking in scientific disciplines

The Parallel Practices experiment at Kings College, London University was described by Kate Dunton in the November issue of CAM7A. It involved two resident craft-makers specialists in metalwork and automata and in glass, who set up residence in a maker space in a scientific laboratory that was equipped with various tools including a 3D printer and a sewing machine. The idea was to create a vibrant, student-owned [studio maker] space outside the formal curriculum where students from the Faculty of Natural and Mathematical Sciences could experiment and play alongside peers in different departments and at different levels of study. By embedding artistic makers with skills in traditional crafts, and scientists in the same space it was hoped that students would develop the confidence to experiment and learn by making, as well as the opportunity to learn new skills that would otherwise be inaccessible to them in the formal teaching of traditional science and engineering disciplines.

The craft makers used two pedagogical approaches: a workshop approach, where the makers would directly engage students in structured activities that might broadly support their subject-based learning, with a more traditional residency where the makers pursued their own work in the space thus allowing for more informal open-ended, curiosity-driven conversations, through which new ideas and activities could emerge. It was the reciprocal need for both the students and the craft makers to take something from the encounter, and the process of making and experimenting that lay at the heart of their shared inquiries, that provided the impetus for creativity and learning on both sides.

The space itself was crucial and was specifically designed to encourage students to express their creativity. It embodied the ethos of the maker studio space; that is, a space to imagine, take risks, play, tinker, experiment, collaborate and develop ideas that have personal meaning to the individual, making use of the abundant resources and without fear of failure. This space, and the resources within it, provided the ‘affordances’ for personal creativity but crucially participants had to recognize these affordances and be willing to act on them. But the space needed to be animated by human communication and interaction, and that’s where the craft makers and their academic partners were key.

Erica McWilliam’s idea of teachers as meddlers-in-the-middle helping, enabling and challenging learners and themselves to create in ways that have personal meaning reflects the way the craft makers modelled their own creative processes and behaviours, constructively disrupting the students usual expectations and approaches, offering a glimpse another world, was an important element in fostering this collaborative ecology for learning and creative achievement. The way that the space brought together and connected students across departments and at different levels of study, removing some of the usual hierarchies, encouraged the sharing of resources, including participants prior ideas and knowledge as well as those which were developed collaboratively through making and practical experimentation. The undeniable truth - that our most creative ideas and achievements cannot be predetermined as a set of learning outcomes so typical of the way we manage learning in higher education, contains the fundamental wisdom in this experiment.

Source:
In his article, 'Studio for All', Andrew Middleton highlighted the importance of studio spaces in enabling people, who know how to use such spaces, to create their own ecologies for learning, exploring, developing, creating/co-creating, making, performing and achieving. Higher education has an important role to play in providing such spaces and developing learners thinking and practical capabilities to make productive and creative use of the spaces and the resources they contain. In this short article I want to explore how studio spaces and the pedagogies that are used in such spaces encourage learners to create their own ecologies for learning in which they are able to use their creativity.

The affordance of a studio

An empty studio is just an enclosed space (usually a room) and it is only given meaning by the people who use it. Studios come in all shapes and sizes (see below). They are often given a name to reflect their purpose and the types of activity that is undertaken in the space, for example dance studio, design studio, recording studio, painting studio, photographic studio, animation studio, TV or film studio.

A studio’s dedication to a purpose implies that it has particular qualities and characteristics that support and enable these purposes to be achieved. The affordance in such spaces is a matter of how individuals perceive the space and the resources it contains. Understanding how a studio space might be used and developing the capabilities to use it in some form of cultural practice eg photographing, dancing, designing, painting, making, playing and recording music etc., is developed over significant periods of time through the purposeful inhabitation of the space usually with other users.

Learning to inhabit such specialised studio spaces to create or reproduce cultural artefacts and performances requires apprenticeship: enculturation and instruction in ways of thinking, knowing, being, acting and performing in a social context involving other practitioners both novice and experienced. Such apprenticeships are accomplished through formal education and professional training and lots of informal self-determined experiences. The pedagogies (how a person enables another to learn) of apprenticeship in these disciplinary domains are necessarily signature pedagogies. “the types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions”. For example the signature pedagogies of designers working is the design studio involves experimentation, collaboration, the practicing of skills, a focus on artefacts, and dialogue/critique, while ‘conversation, criticism, evaluation and the generation of ideas’ are key activities in the signature pedagogies used in art and design studios. ‘the studio in [art and
design] education mirrors the practice of the profession and helps to create the habits of mind associated with the profession.$^5$

The role of spaces in a person's ecologies for learning and creating

In a recent article$^6$ I tried to show how field geologists, use the landscape and the rocks contained within it [ie natural space], to create an ecology in order to produce a geological artefact - a geological map. The authentic creative products of the geologist's physical, intellectual and emotional endeavours (his own learning and his geological maps and reports) grow out of his purposeful, reasoned and intuitive interactions with the landscape and the rocks within it. A view of how creativity emerges through our interactions with the world that is consistent with Carl Rogers concept of personal creativity 'the emergence in action of a novel relational product growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life'$.^6:350$. We might apply similar reasoning to disciplinary specialists who use studio spaces in order to be their authentic, productive, creative selves and posit that these spaces constitute an essential component of their ecologies for learning, developing, collaborating, creating and co-creating, making and performing.

A person's ecology for learning, creating and achieving is simply the set of interactive relationship between themselves and the things in a particular physical and mental space, that exists or is created by the person in order to learn, develop and achieve something$^7$. Applying the idea of ecology to learning, personal development and achievement is an attempt to view a person, their purposes, ambitions, goals, interests, needs and circumstances, and their physical, cognitive and emotional relationships with the worlds they inhabit, as inseparable and interdependent$^8$. Figure 1 shows the important components of a learning ecology$^7$.

Figure 1 Important components of an ecology for learning, creating and achieving$^7$

Studio spaces are 'man-made' spaces—they often have characteristics that uplift and inspire. Traditionally, they are the spaces in which people like designers, artists, artisans, dancers, actors, musicians, photographers and animators - work, practice, explore, experiment, collaborate, rehearse and perform. In such contexts they are used by a person for a particular purpose like 'I'm training to become a dancer' or 'I am preparing and rehearsing for a performance' or 'I am executing a design brief', or 'playing and recording a song', or 'painting a picture' or 'making something'. The studio space provides a physical environment containing the resources, tools, technologies and other artefacts, and if appropriate, other people, that support and enable the person to achieve their purposes. Because users of the space have had many past experiences of studio spaces they readily perceive the affordances in the space and the resources it contains and use the whole of themselves to act on these by creating processes, activities and practices through which ideas are generated, problems are imagined, tackled and solved, and new cultural artefacts are developed and created in the unfolding present. Conceptually, a studio space is no different to any other space in which people, with specialised ways of knowing and doing, embody their creativity in authentic practices as they pursue their goals, utilising the affordances and resources that are available in their environment. But to the creative practitioner who inhabits the studio, it is the space in which they can be the person they want to be: a state of being that was captured well by a former professional dancer, 'when nothing other than the dance is relevant or important' (Roisin Cahalan).
It is clear from the stories that shared by the people who use such spaces that they form a deep, enduring, relationship with the studio spaces in which they work, create and perform. In ecological terms the studio space encourages and facilitates the sorts of relationships and interactions - physical, social, intellectual and emotional, necessary for the making of such artefacts and performances. Creators derive inspiration from their surroundings and they are able to embody who they are by drawing on their deep intrinsic motivations, harnessing their imaginations, intellect and emotions, immersing themselves in their creative work to tackling and solve the problems and challenges they set themselves and create the artefacts and performances they are seeking.

Sources
8 Jackson N J (2016) Exploring learning ecologies Lulu

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The main feature article in the September issue will be a synthesis of the creative disciplines, the diversity and interconnectedness of the disciplines, and how this is reflected in the needs for appropriate pedagogical models and consequently spaces for learning, both formal and informal.

Creativity, Pedagogy and New Learning Spaces
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Curtin University, Perth, Australia
Creative Academic - Links & Resources
http://www.creativeacademic.uk/

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