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Understanding The Ambiguity And Uncertainty In Creative Processes When Using Arts-Based Methods In Education And Working Life*

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Abstract

This article is based on the understanding that every human being has a creative potential and that a deliberate use of longitudinal artistic work and creative processes in everyday life can enhance individual and group creativity and expand arenas of competence when dealing with most of life's challenges. It examines the ambiguity and emotional challenges involved in the creative process. It explores whether an understanding of the Cycle of the Creative Quest, an educational tool which combines phases in the creative process with phases of learning, can promote sufficient courage and trust in non-artist teachers, students, leaders or employees to utilize arts-based methods in other processes of development and change. The model and the dramaturgical curve are explained. The different phases of a creative process are presented and illustrated through an artist's personal experiences with working with art. The article finishes with a condensed version of how the Cycle of the Creative Quest can be a helpful educational tool and fill the gap of uncertainty when introducing creative work to non-artist.

Keywords: Arts-based learning, Creative expression, Non-artists, Creative Processes, Reflection, Deep learning, Process experience, Process awareness, Personal and Professional competences and development

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Understanding The Ambiguity And Uncertainty In Creative Processes When Using Arts-Based Methods In Education And Working Life

Most people define themselves as non-artists or non-creative. This feeling of non-creativity can sometimes be expressed as a longing for more creative living and, other times communicated as an uncertainty as to how to approach, discover or develop their individual creativity. This paper is based on the understanding that every human being has a creative potential - has the ability to combine inner and outer experiences in new ways and bring them to expression. The paper is furthermore based on my personal experience that an individual can expand his or her arena of competence through the deliberate use of creative work, where a more playful and experimental approach to themes and challenges can open solutions not imagined or thought of before.

The word "creativity" has many definitions and many attempts have been made to capture what the word implies. I, in this paper, base the definition of creativity on the definitions provided by Storr (1991) and by Popova (2015). Storr's broad definition states that creativity is "the ability to bring something new into existence" (Storr, 1991: 11). In this paper, I add to this definition the following modified version of Popova's thoughts: "creativity is a combinatorial force: it's our ability to tap into our 'inner' pool of resources - knowledge, insight, information, inspiration and all the fragments populating our minds - that we've accumulated over the years just by being present and alive and awake to the world and to combine them in extraordinary new ways" (Popova, 2015).

Dewey (1934) defined "an experience" as something complete in itself, as something that stands out from what went before and what comes after (Dewey, 1934). In creative work, the different acts, episodes and occurrences in the process melt and fuse into unity and yet do not disappear nor lose their own distinctive character during melting and fusing, as "every work of art follows the plan of and pattern of, a complete experience, rendering it more intensely and concentratedly felt" (1934: 54). Creative processes are not separate or independent experiences. They are the consummation of a movement, independent of the length of time involved. They are therefore experiences that can contrast the everyday working lives of many people, in which the increasing pressure to achieve and perform can end in repetitiveness and experiences of fracture and loss rather than unity and coherence.

According to Eisner (2002), experience is the medium of education and is a key factor in growth (Eisner, 2002). Education "is the process of learning to create ourselves" (2002: 3). Eisner, as Dewey (1934) before him, promotes the use of arts because working "in the arts is not only a way of creating performances and products; it is a way of creating our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our dispositions, satisfying our quest for meaning, establishing contact with others and sharing a culture" (2002: 3).

May (1994) states that the ability to create can be found in any profession, technology, engineering, diplomacy, business, science and education, as all require some form of creative thinking (May, 1994). McNiff (1998) conveyed a similar understanding when he wrote that "a person's license to create is irrevocable and it opens to every corner of daily life" (1998: 2).

Creative activity and process work demand curiosity, stubbornness and stamina. This is because deliberate involvement can be emotionally and intellectually demanding. Deliberate involvement therefore sometimes activates frustration and feelings of suffering because the experiences are often outside the individual's comfort zone.

Artists are professionals in creative work. They are therefore familiar with the challenges inherent in the creative process and experience these challenge as a natural and integral

part of the production of art. Non-artists however, who become involved in creative work, might find that these challenges lead to feelings of defeat and meaninglessness, sometimes resulting in the non-artist completely avoiding this way of working. My experience has been that non-artists can end their involvement in creative work at this point unless they are given a tool that helps them to understand that these emotional and intellectual experiences can represent a field of growth and that they are transferable to other types of developmental work.

Those experiencing their creativity in this way need to develop a more profound trust in their involvement in the creative processes, despite the challenging emotional and intellectual phases this involves. They also need to develop the ability to endure periods of suffering, an ability which is highly valued in many types of developmental work (Danish Business School, 2010; Partnerships, 2010). According to Darsø (2004: 30) however, "little is known about the actual process as, in general; artists prefer to conceal it and are hesitant towards articulating it". The reason for this lack of words can be that most artists have difficulties in articulating the process of being creative, as it represents tacit knowledge.

I, as an artist, teacher and arts-therapist, have a great deal of experience with arts-based methods and how they can lead to "deep learning". The aim of arts-based approaches to learning is not the development of new artists or the production of pieces of art. The process of creation and the final result or product are however seen as being an immediate response to subjects and themes and as the starting point for further examination, questioning and reflection. Providing non-artists with the opportunity to become involved in creative expression and process work can therefore allow them to experience new ways to collaborate, communicate and reflect on their own learning and to find new ways to discover themselves, their inborn talents of playfulness and creativity, their resources, knowledge and skills. It is a deep way of learning that can show them options and possibilities and prepare them for real life. An arts-based approach can also, where attention is focused on the process and the created product, enhance a person's ability to listen and to be aware of the emotions and sensations that they experience. This way of learning promotes a noticeably different learning outcome than more general cognitive techniques (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009). It is this approach to deep learning that I refer to in this paper when describing my work.

The Cycle of the Creative Quest is a model that attempts to capture the interwoven emotional and cyclic stages involved in artistic and learning processes. Forming a linear model however deviates from the idea that creative work involves the unexpected and the intuitive. The need to understand the non-linear aspect of creation is thoroughly discussed by McNiff (McNiff, 1998). He sees creation as a complex interplay and the creative process as a route: "Sometimes it is tangled and other times it opens to us with the directness, speed and pleasure of a water slide" (1998: 3). He describes how "the elements of creation work together in endless combinations" and that he, for this reason, avoids "the conventional strategy of laying out a series of steps or developmental stages" (1998: 2).

I created the Cycle of the Creative Quest despite agreeing with McNiff (1998) that the creative process is tangled and does not necessarily fit into a linear model. I developed and have used the model as a theoretical educational tool to help me communicate better with my non-artist students when they experience frustration when working longitudinally with arts-based learning processes and to explain how the non-linear creative process unfolds. The aim of this paper is to present the model and explain the emotional and mental challenges involved in creative work and phases of learning. It describes how a recognition and understanding of the thoughts and emotions inherent in creative processes can allow the individual to access tacit knowledge. It also helps increase courage and trust to the level required to explore free experimentation, both

being important when involved in any type of developmental work. I will use graphical or pictorial models to illustrate and explain my points.

Non-artists' need for a tool when working with transformative processes

My teaching passion and preferred educational approach is based on my lifelong experiences from working with art and twenty years of practice using arts-based methods as part of transformative processes. I have used these methods in my work at Oslo and Akershus University College (OAUC) in Norway for the last six years. Introducing arts-based learning processes require me, as the person leading the process, to be able to perceive and understand the sometimes unspoken expressions and events that affect and direct the emotional movements of individuals and groups. When students are involved in aesthetic expression I need to maintain an awareness of and receptiveness to their comments and reactions. Sensing their responses challenge me to adapt, improvise and modify my teaching approach. This means that I, in response to perceived changes and to accommodate the needs of a group act like an artist in the process of creation. In my lessons I exhibit a willingness to deviate from preconceived ideas or set plans, to adjust direction and reshuffle the prepared content or scheduled program.

Some students express unease and feelings of vulnerability when invited to take part in creative activity. They doubt their creative abilities and communicate a lack of confidence in expressing themselves artistically. Some feel awkward about displaying their lack of artistic skills, most having stopped expressing themselves creatively around the age of twelve. They have, for example, forgotten basic skills such as how to mix colors and how to handle the tools. They share past uncomfortable experiences, describing incidents from primary and secondary school art classes and the feeling of failure to achieve what their teacher expected, which was often further reflected in how their work was assessed. The way we work at OAUC also presents a challenge. Most artists work on their own. Students are however required to express themselves creatively in a class of 20 or maybe 30 other students. There is therefore no room to hide when they experience feelings of failure or fall short of their original goals. This makes it difficult for some students to accept my invitation, let go of control and move out of their comfort zone.

I can appreciate that students need to understand why they are being introduced to activities such as painting, drawing or modeling as a part of a curriculum that is designed to allow them to explore and gain an understanding of learning. I envisioned a space where artistic amateurs could, within set frames, have a complete process experience, the idea being that arts-based process work can be transferable to other types of developmental work. The students' discomfort, arising from their being unaccustomed to this type of work, were clear signals to me that they needed additional support and courage to let go and be creative.

There was furthermore a need to enhance a sense of meaning of why they should indulge in creative work that activates frustration and feelings of hardship, if they were to be able to fully trust the process. I therefore initiated my own "carving" project to explain and clearly describe students' experiences and to transform my own tacit knowledge from working with art into words. This has led to a search that has taken a number of years in which I, via my own and others visual illustrations, texts describing process work and students and my own and other artists' experiences from working creatively, arrived at the model the Cycle of the Creative Quest presented in this paper.

Methodology

The students

My data is based on the approximately 130 students that have, over a period of six years, participated in one of eight different part time courses in Creative Communication or Teachers Training at OAUC. The one, two or three year courses are all designed as block study courses with six to eight meetings per year on campus, each of them lasting between three to five days. The students are required, as part their training, to carry out development projects at their workplaces or teacher training in upper secondary schools. This is to bind their experiences from course days at the university with their everyday working life and provide genuine experiences in how to design and implement developmental projects in "real" working life.

The students, aged between 30 and 60, had different vocational backgrounds. Backgrounds included specialists in leadership and employee development, engineers or researchers in large contractor and property developer firms and leaders or instructors in companies providing services to unemployed people. Other students were out of work and in the process of changing careers and seeking new employment and some were teachers working at different levels in the educational system, had vocational backgrounds such as florists, hairdressers or tailors or were training to become teachers in upper secondary schools.

One group of creative communication students enrolled onto the course because they wanted to learn more about the use of arts-based learning methods. They carried out their periods of practice in their workplace or suitable other workplace and used arts-based methods to initiate developmental processes with groups of fellow employees, job seekers, immigrants etc. A second group of students consisted of teacher training students training to become teachers in upper secondary vocational schools. These students had not specifically chosen to deepen their knowledge of using arts-based methods, but attended because the course was a mandatory part of the curriculum of their second year of training. My main role for this group was to enhance their experience and appreciation of their professional identity as journeymen and raise their awareness and ability to reflect upon their role as future teachers. When I refer to students in this paper I however refer to both groups.

My teaching approach

An arts-based approach to creative work sharply contrasts students' school experiences from art or handicrafts classes. The emphasis of this course is not the production of skilled artifacts or the development of new artists. The work the students carry out is process-oriented rather than product and goal-oriented. What they end up creating is not evaluated as right or wrong in relation to a given standard, but rather seen as a unique and original sensory and emotional response, reflecting their sense of Self, the origin of their response and the process of creation they pass through at that point in time.

There is a need to create a non-evaluating space, to foster a safe environment for creative expression. The students are therefore instructed to not comment or discuss each other's work. In the time set aside for sharing they are, however, encouraged to be curious, ask open-ended questions and help each other find the words to describe what they see and have experienced. The students are always encouraged, regardless of the size of the group (which can vary from 6-36) to work in silence. Mobile phones are to be muted and no one is to listen to music unless it is part of the exercise. The working sessions are quiet to deepen the opportunity to be attentive of and focused on their own processes.

My teaching approach varies. Sometimes I use short term arts-based exercises as a way of learning through the arts. I can for example, and as part of the methodology, use fairy tales, artistic postcards, animal figures and trash or introduce them to modeling, drawing, painting, drama or creative writing. My aim is to inspire and empower the learning process in the activity we are involved in (figure 1). I encourage students to follow detours through different forms of creative expression and reflection, to allow preconceived ideas to be challenged and to examine new possible solutions. This can be through describing what is seen in the artifact, fantasizing and playing with what the image expresses and reflecting upon the relevance of these answers and the possibilities that occur in relation to the theme in question.

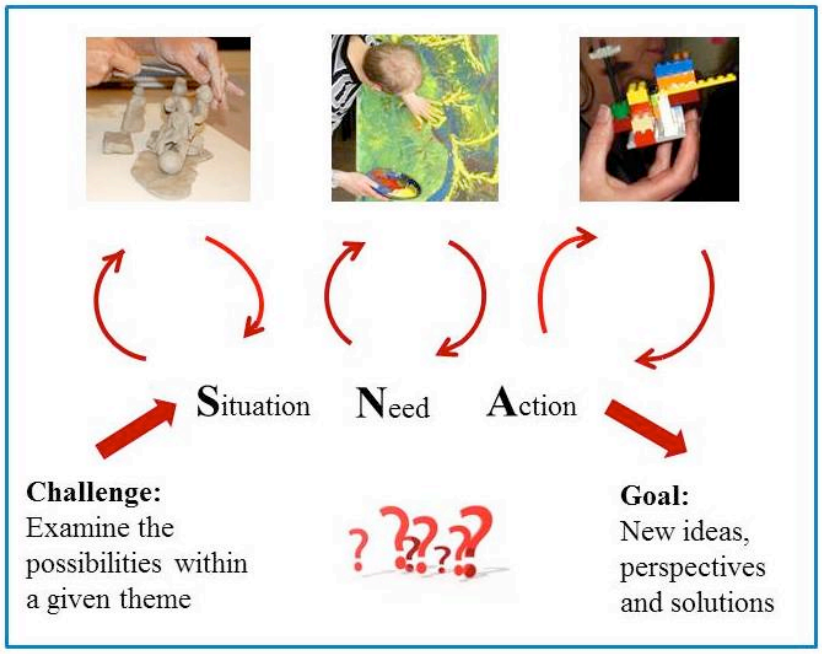


Figure 1: An illustration of how through short interventions, using creative expression, one can examine a situation, the potential need and find new ideas to what action can be taken.

The approach I describe in this paper broadens the perspective and use of arts-based methods from being used in single and short time events to facilitating experiences with longitudinal developmental processes. The idea was that longitudinal work with individual paintings could support central goals in the official learning curriculums at OAUC, the aim being: (1) "to form and cultivate the individuals so that they can develop a critical and reflective attitude towards their own practice" and (2) "enable them to work with processes involving change and development in their own organization" (Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, 2013). Equally, and just as important is an official report, commissioned by the Norwegian Government, concluding that creativity is one of the most important future competences (Ludvigsen & al, 2014).

The aims, based on the goals in their learning curriculums and the official report, are threefold:

1. They express themselves through painting to "cultivate their creative potential", gain experiences from the inherent resources within the artifact (as the steps described in figure 1) and the different stages and changing emotional phases that can occur in longitudinal process work.
2. Based on the impression that many seem to have an unclear perception of their working identity, this work aims to "foster their personal and professional identity

through deep learning by encouraging a reflective practice through observation and sharing".

3. They also participate in learning experiences and process work through aesthetic expression in order to "strengthen their competences and courage in initiating and leading process work".

I will now focus on how I planned, organized and executed the sessions in order to fulfill the second point. I will return to all the three aims later when I refer to the students' results.

Fostering personal and professional identity through deep learning

Students are exposed, in my teaching sessions, to learning experiences and process work through aesthetic expression, by repeatedly painting on the same canvas throughout a year. The painting sessions weave together the students' learning and experiences from periods of practice and the gatherings on campus. Actual painting on canvases lasts between 20-60 minutes and is followed by an hour of reflection and sharing.

The painting exercise is presented as a task with clear limitations. The symbol of a tree is introduced as a visual representation of themselves, a building as a visual representation of their workplace and a body as a visual representation of their working identity. The reason for choosing these specific symbols and not invite free painting sessions is to help them differentiate between who they are in their working life experiences (body and house) and in experiences of who they are; their basic identity or Self (tree). They are however free to express themselves within these limits, including the freedom to decide which symbol they focus on at different times in the process and their choice of color, size, position etc. They can, at a later stage, chose to deviate from the initial instructions if they experience the task of painting a tree, a house or a body is too limited.

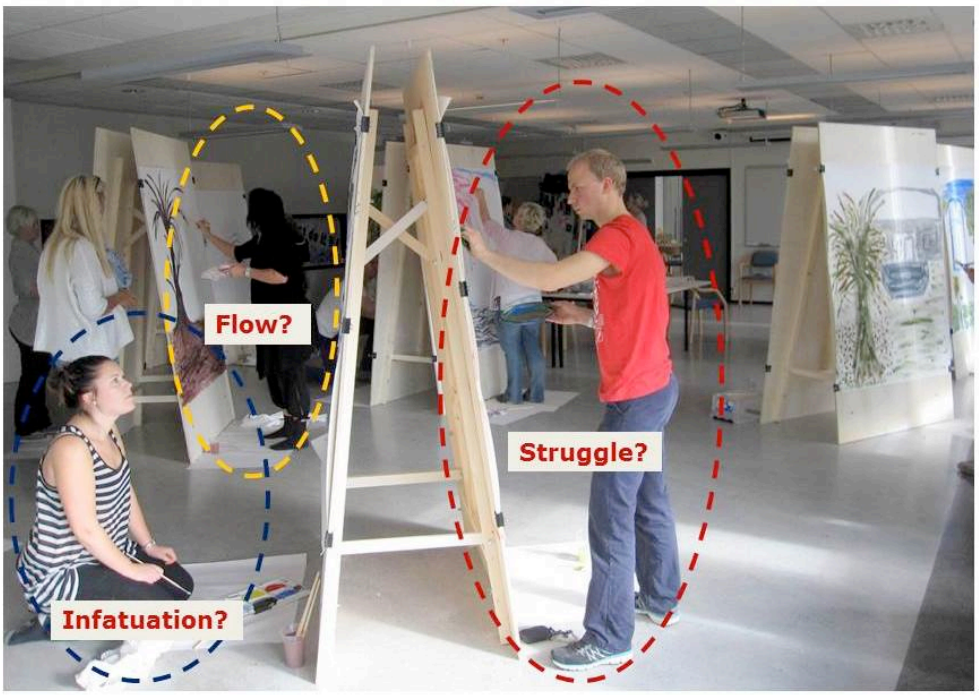


Photo 1: Students at work.

Encouraging reflective practice through observation and sharing

The students' paintings are not considered to be artistic accomplishments in themselves, as they are artistic amateurs and the goal is not to create art or become artists. Their spontaneous expression in their paintings represents a visual log which is used as a starting point for further reflection and examination. The students are encouraged to be attentive to the emotional twists and turns they experienced in this process, increasing their process awareness. At the end of each painting session, they first reflect on their work and share their experiences with a fellow student, observing the new that has been added to their paintings without evaluating artistic achievement or the professional qualities of their work. They give their paintings a working title and a feeling that describes the emotions they experienced. We then move as a group round the classroom, observing the new that has been added to everyone's paintings. Titles and feelings are shared with the group if the student feels comfortable with this. It is at this stage in the process that I receive the first overall impression of the emotions in the group.

The students also write logs to describe their experiences in more detail and these logs are made available to me as their teacher. They share, in the log, their feelings before the painting session, often colored by thoughts and feelings from their recent work on campus. They also share their thoughts about the changes that took place in their paintings.



Figure 2: An illustration of a process in which a student describes the following feelings through a school year: Sept. & Oct.: Hesitant, Dec.: Relief, Jan.: Blocked, Apr.: Better, May: Empty.

The final painting session at the end of term is conducted differently. The students bring photos from their complete painting process, the titles and feelings connected to them and their log notes that reflect their thoughts on their personal and professional development. They then, after a final painting session, reflect on the entire process. They outline, on a large piece of paper, the developmental path they moved along in the last year starting with the first session, the photo of their painting and their personal notes. Step by step they draw their individual maps, working their way through the

school year, adding photos, reading their logs and writing thoughts that relate to what they see and discover.

The primary result from teaching arts-based learning methods

A model describing the creative process in combination with cycles of learning

The model I am about to present was developed to strengthen students' competences and courage in initiating and leading process work. It was designed to help students understand why they should endure the mental and emotional challenges of working with their paintings. Models have been published that explain the creative process (Back Grønkjær, 1999), phases in developmental work (Bertelsen, 1979, 1982; Scharmer, 2010) and learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). There does, however, not appear to be a model that can:

- combine artists' explicit and tacit knowledge from creative work with phases of reflection, communication and learning

- provide an understanding of how communication and reflection upon the initiation of action, the artistic work and experiences from the process can contribute to deep learning and change

The Cycle of the Creative Quest combines my experiences as an artist and teacher with the theoretical models created by others. It describes, step by step, the natural ebb and flow of intense responses that can arise when involved in a creative activity and later phases of communication and learning.

I have drawn many models through the years, all of them attempts to shape and visualize my own and other artists' intuitive knowledge and emotional experiences from working with art. The models have been modified, redrawn and changed as a result of input from others and a repeated reflection and sensitivity towards my own responses and thoughts. This gradually emerging model has been reintroduced to initiate reflection and discussions in new groups of students as part of a continuous spiral of investigation and learning. Our sharing of thoughts and reflections have been evolving round why they were experiencing the well of different emotions, how they could be understood and handled and what learning that could come out of this kind of work.

The outline of the model

The graphic outline of my model, the "U", was inspired by Bertelsen (1979). Bertelsen's model framework intrigued me, as it describes the developmental phases of dreams and individuation processes as a gradual interaction between the conscious and the subconscious part of the mind. I have adapted Bertelsen's ideas to my model. His model has nine steps. I have added an additional two steps to my model.

The titles and the corresponding emotions at the different stages in the model were inspired by and developed from sources that describe creative work stages (Back Grønkjær, 1999), steps in myths and stories (Campbell, 2008; Høgh, 1996) and cycles of learning and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984).

Any learning process should, however, be understood to be a part of a developmental spiral "where the learning from one cycle stimulates the beginning of a new cycle etc. and thereby providing us with a process that allows us to reconstruct our knowledge and skills in light of new experiences" (Dewey (1933) cited in: (Slesser, Morago, Bruce, & Macmillan, 2006)). I therefore stress that the model I am about to present should be seen as being an explanatory map, developed to provide a broad outline of a process that in real life never appears streamlined. For this reason and the understanding that

the process can be all but linear, the numbers at the different stages in the model are solely used as practical reference points.

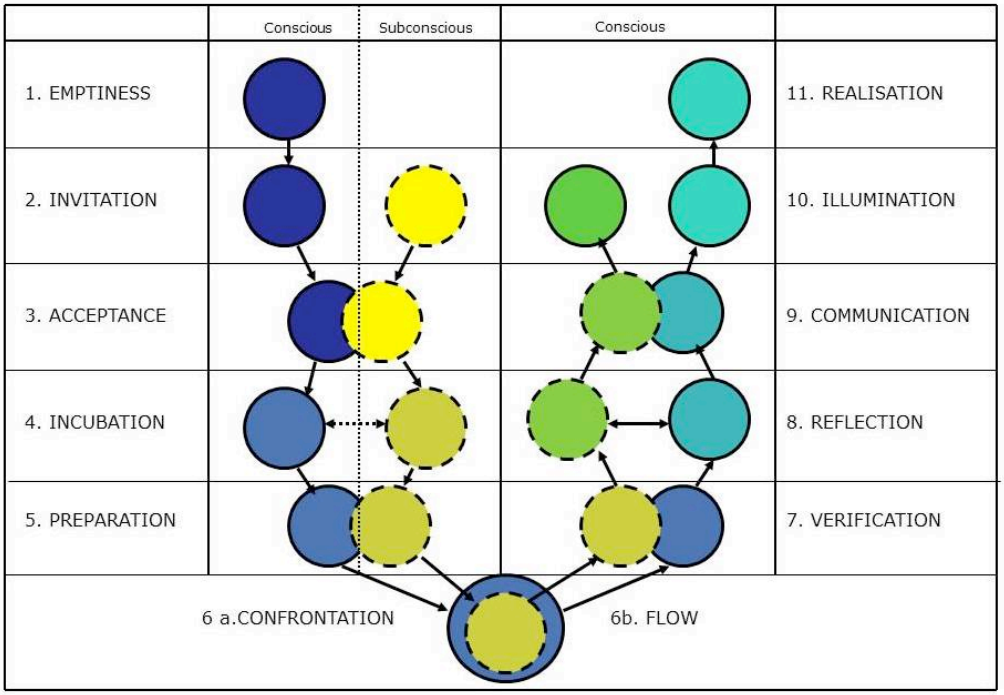


Figure 3: The model the Cycle of the Creative Quest illustrates how the creative process and process of learning can develop as a gradual interaction between the conscious and subconscious part of the mind.

The Cycle of the Creative Quest illustrates a complete cycle in which inner material is expressed, transformed and understood (stage 1-11). The outer circles in the model (figure 3) represent the person's ego, the part of consciousness that thinks that it can decide, structure, plan and take control of life. The inner circles reflect the subconscious part of the mind, the part of consciousness that sends energy to invigorate and activate creative activity, whether artistic or scientific.

The first phase of stillness and inner listening (1), illustrated as a dark blue circle with solid lines, leads to invitation (2), the yellow circle with dotted lines representing the drive or impulse arising from the person's inner pool of resources (Popova, 2015). This drive or impulse attempts to inspire the person to find solutions to existing challenges or conflicts. If the person accepts (3) the invitation, he or she enters a developmental process. The process will gradually move through confrontation and flow (phase 6a & b) to the right side of the model.

Verification (7) represents the point where most artists, after publishing their book, staging their play or exhibiting their artwork, return to the first stage and start a new cycle of creation. This means that they do not necessarily question why they created what they created or what the result actually expresses. Recognition, insight and possible change can however be reached by deliberate reflection and communication, through a willingness to examine the initial impulse to act, the developmental process and the result. This practice is found in arts-therapy, the process continuing after the artifact has been created through reflection (8) and communication (9), towards a deeper learning and understanding of the theme in question (phase 8-11). The dotted line in the inner circle changes to a solid line in stage 10; illumination, illustrating the point where previous subconscious material and the experiences during the process are fully understood and ready to be set free.

An outline of the dramaturgical curve

I drew the dramaturgical curve of the model in order to illustrate the gradual build-up of emotions towards a climax involved in creative work and in deep learning processes.

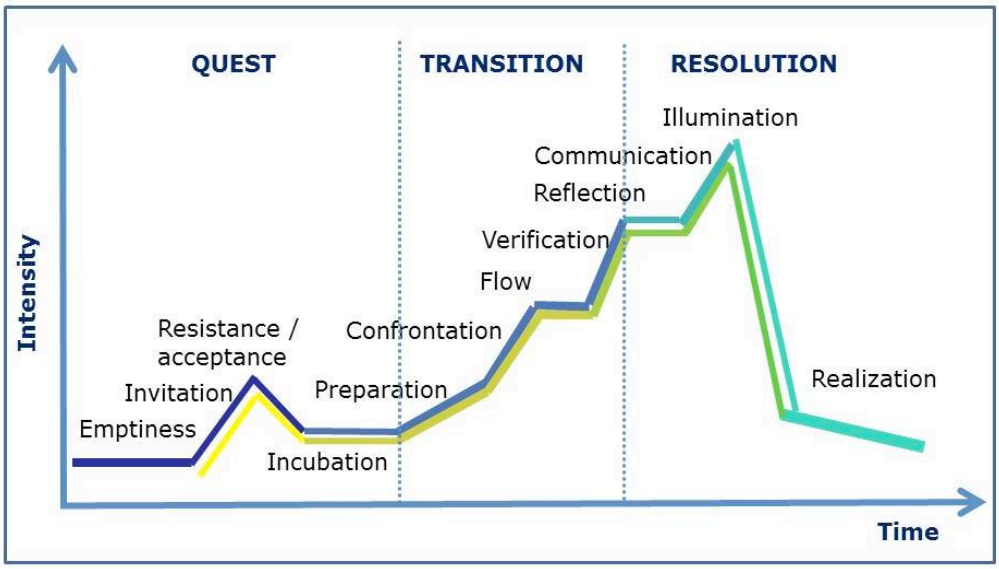


Figure 4: The dramaturgical curve of the Cycle of the Creative Quest illustrates how intensity builds up through the creative process and cycles of learning. The colors in the model reflect those described at the different stages in Figure 3.

There are similarities between the first part of my model (figure 3: stage 1-7) and the dramaturgical curve of a drama, as they both reflect processes of strong emotional and mental content. In the classic drama the structure is defined as containing a beginning, middle and an end, and the story as being driven forward by a hero, a protagonist. The protagonist, before he or she can complete a task or reach a goal, has to solve a conflict, a process that involves struggle and resistance, so engaging the audience mentally and emotionally as the story builds up towards a catharsis, a turning point. This opportunity for change or breakthrough is an important dimension in every drama, as it provides the grounds for further development (Haug, Jamissen, & Ohlmann, 2012).

Dewey (1938) described how involvement in artistic work activates a drama containing a plot, "a plot requiring a stage, a space, wherein to develop and a time in which to unfold" (1938: 43). In my model the individual involved in the creative work is the protagonist - the person who experiences the inward drama, feelings of struggle and of conflict as the process evolves. Here the creator, throughout the creative process, alternates between feelings of sorrow, hope, fear, anger, curiosity, struggle and conflict. According to Dewey, these experiences have a quality and can be enjoyed and give meaning to the creator, despite the changes and movement of emotions during the creative process.

The last four stages of the model (figure 3: stages 8-11), the stages linked to reflection and communication; involve recognition of what has been expressed and the potential for deep learning and change. These phases are comparable with the last steps in Moxnes' (2012) communication diagram. According to Moxnes, all communication can be seen as being the constant balancing of feelings of security with those of anxiety. Sharing that involves authentic exchanges and reflection increases anxiety, as this type of communication is more personal, genuine and sincere. The individual can gain clarifying insights at these points of sharing if he or she is open to seeing things from a new angle. These insights can, as old ideas of Self fall, lead to understanding and change - a position from where one can end up handling situations not mastered before.

The different stages of the model

Being unfamiliar with the processes involved in creative activity, the students' experiences described in their reports and logs from the sessions do not necessarily mirror the step by step process explained in the model. Being unaccustomed and inexperienced they struggle with this type of process work. Equally their reflections and reactions rather illustrate ambiguity and questions of how they can acquire sufficient courage and trust to continue the process. Artists however, as experts in creativity, are able to be more reflective and create a more cohesive narrative when working with art. For the same reason it is natural to use an artist's experiences from creative work when I illustrate the steps in the process.

To make the text more "alive", I introduce each step by presenting personally communicated notes from Ploug (2014) that describe the thoughts and emotional encounters that she, as an artist, experienced at different stages in the creative process. When she refers to others, she means the painting workshop we both have attended twice a year for the past twelve years. Her notes have, as far as possible, been aligned with the different phases of the model (Ploug, 2014).

I will therefore present below in brief the themes, feelings and the essence involved in each step. For practical reasons, and as illustrated in figure 4, I have divided the presentation of model the Cycle of the Creative Quest into three main phases; the quest, the transition and the resolution. Eleven steps in total. The headings in the model and in the descriptions below reflect feelings recognizable to an artist in his or her work process. Likewise they represent emotional reference points when I refer to the model in my teaching.

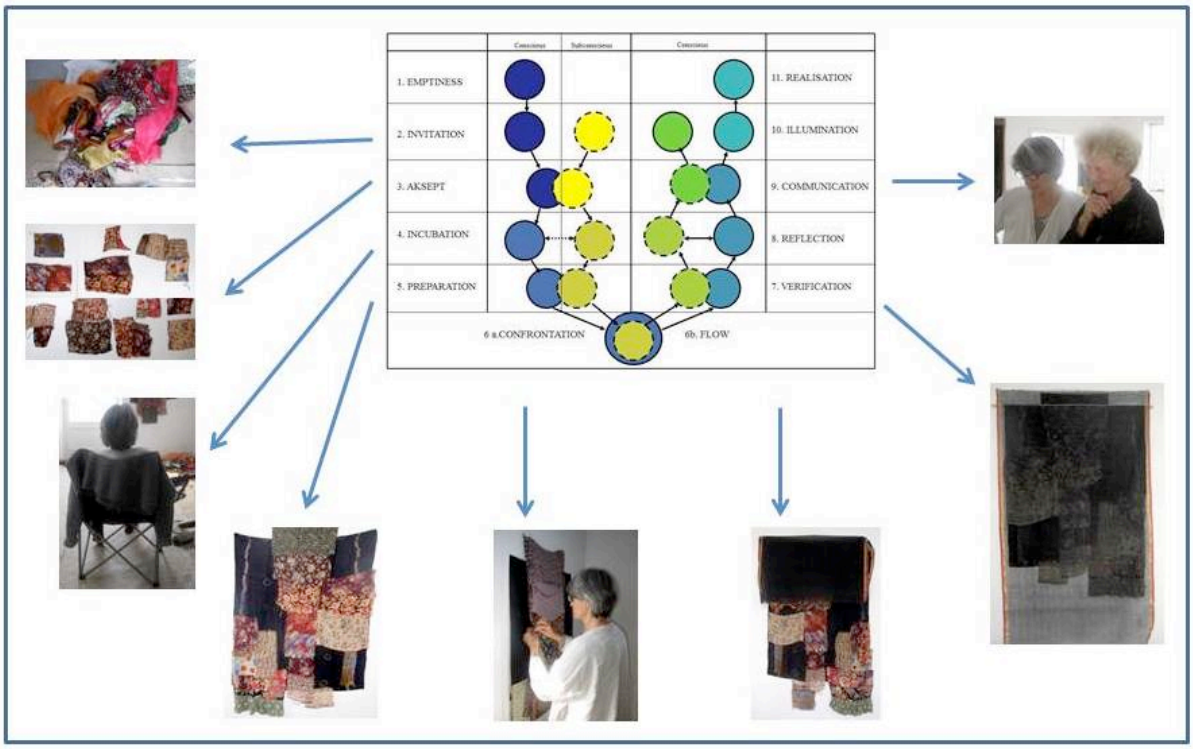


Figure 5: A pictorial illustration where I combine the artist's process about to be described and the phases in the model.

The quest

1. Emptiness

> "In the four months before the workshop I felt drained and miserable, listless and indifferent".

Feeling: Standstill, solitude, depression, inner listening

Essence: The model shows no contact between the conscious and subconscious mind. This initial stage is comparable to an artist's first encounter with the blank canvas. He or she only sees the white surface, does not know what to do or what it is going to be about. This stage of inactivity can be referred to as the end of an achievement. It can however, as in my model, be seen as being the starting point for new inspiration. A stage in which the creator, despite a feeling of standstill, is paying close attention and listening to the inner.

2. Invitation

> "I didn't want to meet the others and didn't feel like creating anything. Another part of me knew that I should go as I knew, from previous workshops, that things can change when we are together. Therefore and despite my reluctance, I went up to the attic and found some old silk fabrics, some dresses and scarves which I brought along with me".

Feeling: Inner turmoil and despair. Feeling stuck. Yet something is on the move.

Essence: A "disruptive" element emerges from the subconscious; an impulse or invitation which is not necessarily understood but which feels like a kind of opening towards something new. It can occur as a strong sensation, an image in a dream or a bodily discomfort. Or, as described by Ploug (2014) above, as an invitation from the outer world that one cannot turn down.

3. Acceptance

> "Our commitment to each other to attend the workshop was my salvation - this time too. When I arrived (at the workshop), I reluctantly unpacked my silk fabrics. Seeing them on the floor made me happy. They are mine and some of the colors are exciting".
>
> "I had no idea what to do with these old fabrics. Many of the colors were almost embarrassing for me to look at. I fumbled around and found a dress that I last wore many years ago. I picked up a pair of scissors and started to cut it up into large and small pieces. It felt good. I spread the material out on white sheets on the floor. They looked great - and so what now?"

Feeling: Hope, relief, obsession

Essence: A willingness to enter into a dialogue with the subconscious through the acceptance of an "invitation" and an acknowledgement that there is a need for change. This is the point at which the first real encounter with the "blank canvas" takes place. Expression, at this point, can be perceived as being something completely alien, as a pure and spontaneous manifestation from the subconscious. The alternative response at this stage is to suppress the signs, decline the invitation and return the feelings of unease back to the subconscious.

4. Incubation

> "I look solemnly at the beautiful pieces of fabric that lie on the floor. I can't get myself to touch them and have no idea what to do with them. Should I hang them in the trees in the garden? I give it a try, but it doesn't feel right".
>
> "I go back and start again. Slowly and gently, one by one, I pick up the fabric pieces from the floor. Should I sew them together or tear them to pieces? Should I burn them? I have no idea. The thought of burning them is appealing and helps me to think about what I CAN do. It's my material. I am the one who decides".
>
> "What should I do now? I had no idea. I felt completely EMPTY as I stared at the fabric pieces on the white paper. Is this art?"

Feeling: Peace and withdrawal

Essence: The spontaneous need for expression has been met, but without any understanding of what it is about. There is a need, at this stage, for total trust. Trust that things are the way they are and that the significance of what has been expressed will, sooner or later, be understood. An awareness and understanding of the process and of the unfolding of the work depends on how attentive one is. Sometimes it takes a long time; sometimes it can go a lot faster. There may be a phase of silence, waiting for an understanding of what is about to evolve.

Transition

5. Preparation

> "I start, gently and hesitantly, by pinning pieces of material to the wall with needles, so that I can move them around. I continue in this way, slowly and evaluatingly. I take a step back, look at the composition, at the color arrangements and an "image" emerges. During this process I return to my old pattern of being well behaved, doing what I usually do. I compose, arrange and decorate".

Feeling: Expectation and excitement

Essence: The creator now has sufficient courage to enter into new encounters with the impulses emerging from the subconscious. There is an inner inclination to continue working, still maybe not knowing what it is all about. Something is on its way and there is a stronger contact with the will and ability to meet whatever might come. Later one might see that the emerging material had been on its way for a long time.

6a. Confrontation

> "Is it good? I am excited to hear the others' comments. They meet me with silence: 'It's as if you repeat yourself, as if the only change is that the dress has been assembled in a slightly different way'".
>
> "My eyes darken. My mouth goes dry. It felt as though I had failed an exam. I feel extremely upset. I am close to 'death'".
>
> "That's enough! I tear down the silk pieces; flay them down, almost all of them".

Feeling: Arousal, being out of your comfort zone, chaos, letting go of control, struggle and combat
Essence: The previous cautious approach to expression has been replaced by acceptance, a willingness to let go and to meet what is there. It can be experienced as being chaotic, as it involves completely letting go of control. Strong feelings are expressed, feelings that may have been felt earlier but were not expressed.

Sometimes one can move directly into this phase by accepting whatever comes. At other times there is a need for a longer period of incubation to prepare the ground for radical change.

6b. Flow

> "The wall-pins fly everywhere. I have no sense of time and place. I collect the pieces in a daze".
>
> "Now I'm done. I look at my work from a distance and can no longer recognize it. It has been given a life that has nothing to do with me".
>
> "Inside me I can hear a voice saying 'If this was a painting, I would take some black paint and cover it'. But this is not a painting..."
>
> "Suddenly I discover the thin, black sari that I bought when I was in India. I fold it out - it is wide and long and precisely fits the width of the artwork, covering the pieces with a thin black fabric."

Feeling: Being at one with passion, focus, energy, inner clarity, serenity, feeling of timelessness

Essence: The buildup of energy and frustration have grown to a point where the urge to act overrides any regret of maybe destroying everything produced so far. The only focus of the creator at this point is to follow the release of energy and ride the wave, resulting in a totally transformed expression.

7. Verification

> "I'm satisfied – yes, almost happy. I do not change the work, but continue in the same style with a smaller format. 'From distant regions' is the title of the artifacts that were created for me/by me in this workshop".

Feeling: Intensity and calmness

Essence: An experience of balance between inner feeling and outer expression. The worst of the storm has subsided and there is more time for deliberate study and experimentation with what has emerged. There is time to go back to the work, examine it and experiment with different aspects. New images might occur spontaneously to reinforce and further develop the work that has already been created.

Resolution

8. Reflection

> "What was it that died? It was the old me, the good girl, the decorator who's greatest ambition was to please others. She died that night".

Feeling: Quiet consideration

Essence: The act of creation is over and there is a feeling of calm, of satisfaction, amazement and astonishment towards what has actually been expressed. This moving away from what has been produced provides an opportunity for self-observation of what has been created and reflection on the process.

9. Communication

> "Through our sharing, I came to understand why I had been in a state of depression. I associate being seen by others with great anxiety. My work from our previous workshop was, instead of being exhibited, packed up and hidden away under my bed."

Feeling: Contact and closeness

Essence: The dialog and exchange between the creator and a partner can become genuine and authentic, sharing experiences from the process, examining the artwork as a visual illustration of that which originates from the makers' conscious and subconscious mind.

10. Illumination

> "I later realized that the 'death' of the good girl in me resulted in a new application to exhibit my work".

Feeling: Acknowledgment, clarification, letting go, release, death and rebirth

Essence: The exchange with another person and closeness to one's own creation can open up greater understanding. The components and experiences along the way fall into place and make room for clarification and new insights, opening a possible letting go of previous habitual thoughts and patterns of behavior.

11. Realization

> "It's no longer important to me what others think about my work. A 'yes' or a 'no' do not matter anymore. Submitting the work for evaluation was the important part. I did it and it felt right and good".

Feeling: Joy, growth, sense of 'Being', the cosmos

Essence: Freedom from what has been, being attuned and present, of openness towards the moment. The possibility to change and learn from the emerging future instead of repeating patterns from the past.

Student feedback

The results I am about to present are based on the students' written feedback in their logs after each gathering, their annual reports and final surveys. In addition I will refer to the outcome of a recent survey reflecting the participants most important learning 3-6 years after completing the course Creative Communication (C.C.).

Cultivating the students' creative potential. My initial understanding was that experiences and skills in handling artistic work processes could be transferable to other arenas and be used to release creativity in other fields of life. By introducing arts-based learning as an alternative methodological approach in my classroom teaching, I experienced that students who previously described themselves as non-creative, rediscovered their own creative expression both in their private life and working life.

The students in general describe an experience of becoming more creative in their lives. This can be exemplified through a former student's feedback on what she experienced after taking part in artistic work: "I experienced an inexplicable redemption, as if a part of me returned, a part I didn't know I was missing. It felt as if I got back my language, the language that covers the wordless universe".

Students describe how they challenge themselves in painting sessions at the gatherings and for example experiment with new colors or the tools they use. They also describe surprise when they let go of control and find that their hand, despite their preconceived ideas and plans, takes over the forming of the painting.

A number of the teacher training students used short-term arts-based methods in their periods of practice at upper secondary schools. They used the methods I introduced them to or developed their own. They describe, in their reports, positive feedback from their supervisors and that their pupils enjoyed a different approach to learning.

The students refer to how they have used arts-based approaches in the development of new ideas or products in their organization. They also share how they have discovered or rediscovered ways to express themselves creatively in their private lives through writing poetry, making music or involving themselves in painting sessions.

Fostering personal and professional identity through deep learning. The final gathering, where the students examine their longitudinal process from a meta-perspective, seems to represent the point when their previous struggles and doubts come to a close. By taking a step back, they discover how their painting process and their logs can represent an experience that is complete in itself. They realize how their paintings and log notes amplify and describe changes in their personal and professional identity and illustrate how their learning on campus interconnects with their experiences from their periods of practice. They describe how their longitudinal paintings communicate and accentuate present or previous life experiences, making them aware of underlying thoughts and feelings that influence how they live, how they see themselves and the decisions they take in their everyday lives.

Former students describe personal and professional changes and how they have experienced increased self-insight and a feeling of self-esteem, so trusting themselves and converting performance anxiety and self-criticism into creative assets. They also experience an increased self-awareness in their professional identity, a confidence that enables them to convey who they are and what they believe in as leaders or employees.

A number of former students, who originally had planned to retire, also share how they have discovered ways of implementing arts-based teaching in their work or found employment in workplaces that appreciate their creative abilities, a further positive outcome.

Strengthening competences and courage in initiating and leading processes. Creative communication students used arts-based methods during their studies to increase collaboration between employees, develop ideas for new products, improve the psychosocial environment, establish meeting places, clearly define individual or group resources, motivate individual or group involvement in personal development or initiate projects that increase participants' artistic potential. They report how the use of these teaching tools in their developmental projects in the workplace led to positive changes.

They also share, in later feedback, how they gained a trust in and respect for the creative process and describe how they used arts-based methods to activate developmental processes in their organizations. Such as to create a reflective organization based on a collective understanding of values and goals.

Discussion

My most important finding has been that students who previously defined themselves as artistic amateurs, through following my course and working with arts-based methods, experience that they become more creative in their lives. A number of students have used arts-based methods in their work in schools and organizations and report personal and professional changes such as increased self-insight and feelings of self-esteem. They, through trusting the process, activate general processes of change in their private and working lives.

Only a few students referred directly to the model in their feedback. This could be because presentation of the model was closely integrated in my teaching with other illustrations and theory. They do however make more general statements about how these presentations were experienced, for example describing the presentations of visual illustrations and theory as "magical moments".

Phases in which the Cycle of the Creative Quest deviates from other models

Some of the phases in the Cycle of the Creative Quest deviate from similar phases in other models (Back Grønkjær, 1999; Bertelsen, 1979; Campbell, 2008). I will present two of these stages, phase 1 and 6 in my model. They reflect the stages in which creativity arises and in which process awareness can be achieved.

Phase 1. Campbell's (2008) model describes the developmental steps in the monomyth. He does not include standstill as a separate position or situation, but starts his descriptions at the point where the hero hears the call to adventure. The hero's or the heroine's starting point is referred to as the home ground or ordinary world. This home ground is presented as being a place of few possibilities for growth and of old concepts, outgrown ideals and fixed emotional patterns (Asbjørnsen & Moe, 1953; Campbell, 2008; Rebillot & Key, 1993; Vogler, 2007). The heroes are often presented as individuals with low social status, for example the Norwegian Askeladd (The Ash Lad), sitting inactive by the fireplace, lazily digging and raking the ash (Asbjørnsen & Moe, 1953; Fugelli, 2014; Høgh, 1996).

Those who tend the fire however represent, in symbolic language, individuals that listen inwardly and are open, have a mature approach towards their subconscious and are in direct contact with the source of life (Bolen, 1984; Høgh, 1996). The heroes' home ground and state of mind can therefore represent a place from which he is preparing to face his life challenges; to conquer his false and destructive sides and become a whole person (Høgh, 1996). This state of inner duality between standstill and inner listening is comparable with what many artists and creative people refer to as a starting point when working with art (Storr, 1991). Storr (1988) found that artists or philosophers, instead of being stuck in states of depression, sought periods of solitude for inspiration as "an irreplaceable opportunity for personal development in isolation" (Storr, 1988:154).

Artists can describe periods of inertia, standstill and depression after months of work for example finalizing an exhibition or getting a book published. Depression can also occur as a result of not listening and following up initial impulses, as illustrated earlier in the example describing the artist's process. This stage of inactivity is often referred to as the end of an achievement, but can also, as in my model, be seen as being a part of an evolving spiral or as the starting point for new inspiration.

These references call for an awareness and an appreciation of phases of standstill. These phases can, instead being avoided or quickly bypassed, be seen to be a necessary and important starting point for action and innovation. Enduring this stage of process work and respecting it as an important part of creative work can make a difference to how processes evolve and outcomes. Creativity is not about repeating what has been done before. Scharmer (2010) similarly emphasizes the need to be attentive to and examine the place from where the initiative to action arises from, to ensure patterns are not repeated. Being attentive at this stage of non-action, combining stillness and quiet listening, is the door opener to "the potential room", a resourceful place from where artists initiate their work or children enter play (Storr, 1988; Winnicott, 1971). Students were therefore encouraged, in the painting sessions, to focus inwardly and be attentive of the impulses that came spontaneously, instead of being in full control and having preplanned ideas of the outcome.

Phase 6. The phase in the Cycle of the Creative Quest that involves *confrontation (6a)* and *flow (6b)* also deviates from other models. These stages are closely linked in my model, challenge often being followed by flow, a state referred to as the "secret to happiness" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004). Csikszentmihalyi also states that this stage can be reached by being sufficiently aroused to push beyond one's comfort zone or by increasing the challenges if control mechanisms are too strong. I have described earlier an artist who, when she did not get the expected response to her work, was pushed out of her comfort zone and reached a state of flow. Students experience this challenge in their painting projects when their feeling of intensity reaches a peak or when they are sufficiently frustrated by their own need for control and are willing to let go.

May (1994) argues that we need courage to create, as the process of creativity requires the courage to leap into the unknown. He states that "this requires a degree of courage for which there is no immediate precedent and which few people realize" (May; 1994: 12). Artists are trained in handling the feelings of distress which arise when working with art. According to Meltzer (1998), artists' experiences of flow can represent a driving force that can explain why they continue to work with art despite the challenges it involves (Meltzer, 1998). This stage is, however, an especially vulnerable one for non-artists, as they are inexperienced in the challenges involved in creative processes and the intense frustration they can experience can result in withdrawal and the complete abandonment of their project.

The Cycle of the Creative Quest in a broader perspective

Campbell's (2008) description of the hero's journey reflects a symbolic drama in which the protagonist, for example, overcomes beasts or trolls to win the princess. This can, broadly speaking, be seen as being a masculine way of conquering the world. Sennet (2008) however describes a more feminine approach, where the act of being playful, taking part in creative processes and making physical objects can open a more symbolic level of consciousness and establish a gateway to a deeper and more profound understanding of life (Sennett, 2008). The Cycle of the Creative Quest similarly reflects a journey, seemingly not as dramatic, involving the emotions and the inner challenges we meet when engaged in creative processes.

Dewey (1934) described how working with art can render an experience complete in itself. Experiences from a returning involvement in creative work can be transferable to

other types of processes in working life which demand change and development. Non-artist students can similarly gain process awareness by involving themselves in unpretentious and non-committal longitudinal painting projects. The Cycle of the Creative Quest can here represent a link that can turn surrender into the courage and trust needed to endure the process.

Scharmer (2010) describes future leadership in his Theory U. He argues that every leader, actor or group, like an artist in front of the blank canvas, has a choice to either repeat a pattern from the past or connect to their deeper intentions and explore the emerging future. In his U model he calls the point at the bottom of the U for "presencing", a constructed word combining the words being present in the now and sensing. He describes presencing as being in contact with one's inner source or authentic Self, a place from where it is possible to form the emerging future free of previous habitual patterns. Step 11; Realization, in the Cycle of the Creative Quest can be comparable to the bottom of Scharmer's U model. According to Scharmer (2010), being in this position means being in contact with the source of one's inner understanding, one's creativity and authority.

Equally Ray, founder of the leadership program "Creativity in Business" at Stanford University, saw the ability to be creative as a way to bring "your essential Self – your soul and passion – to your work and, indeed, to everything you do" (Ray, 2011). The artists Gilbert and George (1970) describe in their painting "To be with art is all we ask" how working with art became an arena for self-discovery (Gilbert & George, 1970). They covered their work with text that addresses art directly, honoring its meaning in their lives. These two artists' call to art portrays how involvement in artistic work makes their lives both meaningful and challenging, through being a way of self-expression and through representing a larger and more existential part of their lives. The longitudinal work I do with the students enables them to reach this inner place, a place from where they are in contact with their creativity and see future possibilities from a clearer and more authentic place. These painting projects show how non-artists can reach this source of Self. The model the Creative Quest explains the challenges it involves.

Issues and concerns when using art-based methods

This paper describes and explains how I, as a teacher, use longitudinal art work as an arts-based educational approach to enhance experience with deep learning process in my non-artist students. It is however important to emphasize that this type of learning approach and process work does not necessarily work for everyone or fit in every context. I will therefore describe some limitations, critical thoughts and important premises when using arts-based methods.

Active and voluntary participation, inner poise and a sense of safety. This educational approach encourages self-expression, sharing and reflection and a way of learning and communicating that may be personally challenging to some participants and create feelings of uncertainty. Some, due to the fear of losing control or feeling vulnerable, may avoid becoming involved when challenged to take part in activities they experience as new and strange. Some can also express performance anxiety and may be concerned, as non-artists, about what others might think of their creative expressions and may find it perplexing to be personal when encouraged to share thoughts and results with other group members.

I have already described the difference between my two groups of students. One group applied to the Creative Communication course to learn more about arts-based methods. The other group of teacher training students training to become teachers in vocational subjects attended the course as a part of their mandatory curriculum. This second group and their experiences when introduced to arts-based methods are comparable with any educational situation where pupils or students are encouraged to participate in subjects

or exercises decided by others. One of the students in this group emphasized the importance of fostering a safe learning environment, affirming that "learning can only take place when there is a good atmosphere and feeling of safety in the classroom." This statement underlines the importance of nurturing a safe learning environment where participants feel they are seen, met and respected for what they are.

The teacher's professional and personal competences. The facilitator's interest and experience in artistic work and arts-based learning processes is vital to avoid this educational approach being intellectualized or taken out of context. Teachers in arts-based methods therefore need experience from schools and/or working life from which they have derived a sensitivity to the context and, through a dialogue oriented approach, are able to perceive, facilitate, create and suggest tailored approaches to possible solutions. Practical and theoretical expertise and experience are furthermore essential to exercise this learning approach in a serious way.

Work with development processes can sometimes, as previously described, trigger demanding issues or emotions. It is therefore essential that the teacher or tutor has personal substance and acknowledges the importance of his or her own ongoing work with personal issues, to ensure that they can express confidence when others are experiencing turmoil or uncertainty. A group only can evolve to the level of the person who is leading the developmental process. A group may therefore come to a halt if the teacher or tutor is hesitant or conveys ambiguity (Rebillot & Key, 1993). The teacher's or counselor's willingness to embrace his or her self-development is considered to be of utmost importance for this same reason, when guiding others in developmental processes.

Time and structure. Short term event based artistic interventions often end up having limited effect (Bamford, 2012; Darsø, 2006). Clear structures, sufficient room for expression and time to implement activated processes are therefore required to achieve lasting change through arts-based learning processes (Lichtenberg, Woock, & Wright, 2008)

Conclusion

Being creative involves challenge and ambiguity, as the creative process is a type of quest. The model the Cycle of the Creative Quest has been my way to fill the gap of uncertainty when encouraging my non-artist students to participate in creative work. The model has helped me, as a visual learner and artist who is familiar with a language expressed through color, texture and form, to discover and express the words I have needed to describe and share what I previously experienced as being tacit knowledge. I have furthermore experienced how the sharing of this model replicates and transforms thoughts and impressions, forms meaning and fosters new ideas in myself and others.

Being aware and understanding the emotions involved in creative work can provide valuable insights. These insights can be of great significance when applied to challenges in life and working life. A returning involvement in creative work and experience with the processes involved can be a knowledge that can be transferred to working with other kinds of developmental work that requires a creative approach, process experience and understanding.

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