

Minding the Elephants on the Common Ground

This Paper is the first of three 'State of Innovation' Papers written by Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy¹ for the British Council-led CENTRES (Creative Entrepreneurship in Schools) project 2012-14 (www.centres-eu.org). This paper was written following the first Centres conference held in Kraków in September 2012.

CENTRES (Creative Entrepreneurship in Schools) is a multi-country project co-funded by the European Commission, British Council and eight organisations across Europe.

CENTRES is being delivered in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Finland, Poland, Slovenia and the UK.

The project creates a European forum for issues relating to **entrepreneurship education** specific to the **creative industries** and for **sharing innovation and best practice** in this area. All of the partners involved in the consortium see a need for increased international networking and a combined European approach in this area, which is currently lacking.

*"Creativity is not 'the arts'. Creativity is a fundamental attribute that underpins all thought and all learning. Creativity needs to become 'ordinary' – a part of the everyday life of everybody" (Anthony Sargent and Katherine Zeserson - *Beginning at the beginning, the creativity gap*).*

This conference came nearly 14 years since the publication of Sir Ken Robinson's groundbreaking and much celebrated report for the UK Government: '*All our Futures – Creativity, culture and Education.*' Since then, in the UK, across Europe and globally, there has been a sea-change in recognition of the need for education to better mirror and support the economic, social and cultural environment that young people live in and will be joining as (hopefully) workers in the future. This was recognised at the conference by Krystyna Szumilas, the Polish Minister of National Education, who stressed that creativity and entrepreneurship were now recognised across the EU as part of the eight key competencies necessary for a 'decent life.'

Sir Ken has gone on to be one of the breakout stars of TED, with over 12 million views on YouTube alone for his talk on how schools kill creativity¹. In the UK we have seen various initiatives and schemes designed to capture elements of the report. These include, most

¹ http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html

particularly, Creative Partnerships: a £280 Million pound investment in boasting creative learning in schools². And more recently we have seen the establishment of 'Bridge' organisations by Arts Council England to continue building the connections between schools and arts organisations. In Europe, the importance of developing education systems which will help provide the talent and skills that our rapidly globalising economy requires, has been recognised in a series of Green Papers and policies³. While in other European countries (most notably Sweden and Finland), considerable investment has gone into developing education systems that will produce the types of worker we need to succeed. Globally, even countries perceived to have 'excellent' education systems and which are eyed enviously by others, like Singapore, have realised that something is missing if only a narrow definition of academic attainment is measured⁴:

"Singapore's schools have become global role models, with consistently high results in international tests. But now they want to move beyond this - towards something that cultivates creativity and what they term as "holistic education" (Minister for Education, Heng Swee Keat, said this is "less about content knowledge" but "more about how to process information". He describes this challenge to innovate as being able to "discern truths from untruths, connect seemingly disparate dots, and create knowledge even as the context changes").

Now, with the launch of this important EU-funded CENTRES project, which is bringing together partners from across Europe to deliver a range of projects in and out of the classroom, it is especially timely to look back on some of the things we have learned about fostering entrepreneurship specific to the creative economy and to look forward to what still needs to be done. What is the established common ground for creativity, entrepreneurship and schools and where are the battles still being or to be fought? What does the report card for creativity, entrepreneurship and education look like today and what can we look out for in the future? This paper explores these agendas.

1. 'Known knowns on the importance of creativity and entrepreneurship'

There are really three 'big takeaways' from Sir Ken's landmark 1999 report: that we aren't producing young people with the right types of skill and knowledge for the evolving world of work, that we aren't preparing them for the different way that work is and will be structured, and that we very successfully marginalise creativity. **So what does the '2012 innovation report card' say in terms of progress in each of these areas?**

A) The top ten in demand and jobs in 2010 did not exist in 2004...⁵

At the top of any report card on the need for creativity and entrepreneurship in education is the often-quoted truism that our schools and education systems are set-up and designed to service a past age. In most countries this is widely agreed to be the Industrial Age with perhaps the more advanced countries now meeting the needs of the Information Age. No where it seems is really meeting the needs of the knowledge economy, innovation age, and experience economy or however else we wish to categorise the economic reality we are

² Creativity, Culture & Education The Costs and Benefits of Creative Partnerships July 2010

³ Most recently "Unlocking the potential of our Creative and Cultural Industries".

⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-17891211>

⁵ In Demand 3.0 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp_oyHY5bug&feature=related

increasingly moving towards. This is a world in which competitive advantage is created not through having administrators and middle-managers, but by having more creative thinkers and innovators. Sir Ken Robinson makes this clear in line one of his report half a generation ago:

*"Policy-makers everywhere emphasise the urgent need to develop 'human resources', and in particular to promote creativity, adaptability and better powers of communication. We argue that this means reviewing some of the basic assumptions of our education system."*⁶

Since then, the pace of change in business and more widely across society has accelerated. Google was only incorporated as a company in the year Sir Ken was writing and the delights and wonders of mobile internet and social networking were still a while off. Unfortunately, while everyone is agreed that current education systems largely don't meet the needs of the creative economy, with some rare exceptions, we are not really any nearer to tackling those 'basic assumptions of our education system'. In the UK, we still have an education system whose success or failure is judged on the passing of exams in core subjects (which have not changed). Across the rest of Europe, the economic crisis and huge rise in joblessness for young people, is starting to see more thought going into ensuring that we produce the workforce we will need to compete globally. But in most countries this is not filtering down to the classroom or wider learning offer.

What we are seeing emerge instead is organisations external to schools who have the freedom to operate in ways which not only promote creative learning but provide progression routes directly into the creative industries. One such organisation in the UK is Contact in Manchester, which has developed informal and formal learning courses based around theatre with the simple vision that young people *"are empowered by creativity to become leaders in both the arts and their communities."*⁷ It does this by offering a fluid and flexible range of courses, with crucially many of the assistants on these being only a couple of years older than the students. The end result is that young people learn about work through working on live projects and working as consultants to a range of organisations.

At the Centres conference Jerzy Miller and Aleksander Palczewski from the Polish state of Małopolska emphasised how they believe introducing the process of organising a real event, with a timeline, marketing and business plan, securing partners and sponsors was something they were keen to see rolled out in more schools.

Report card verdict: Could do far better – we are only scratching the surface of what needs to be done to gear our schools for the creative economy. A shorthand of looking at it is to reflect that we are teaching young people on ipads – but not tackling how the ipad (and other related technology) massively effects the what, why, when and where of learning.

B) A current school age American will have 10-14 jobs by the time they are 38⁸

If we are not tackling the basic assumptions in education around the changing world of work; and we are also not dealing with the fundamental changes to individual careers and

⁶ National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education *All our Futures – Creativity, Culture and Education.*

⁷ http://creativecities.britishcouncil.org/files/data/kbfcj/fcj_case_study_8_contact.pdf

⁸ US Dept of Labor statistic

working life trajectories. Sir Ken described the need to produce workers who would not do one or two jobs in a life, but many (sometimes consecutively as freelancers) through describing the skill-sets business was looking for:

"The business community wants education to give a much higher priority to promoting young peoples creative abilities; to developing teamwork, social skills and powers of communication."

The report card here would say that elements of this have been recognised and some progress made. We teach young people in schools how to use communication tools like Word and Powerpoint and work-related learning (and work experience) is now a statutory requirement in many curricula across Europe. Certain schools are going much further than this, recognising that to teach these interpersonal and non-academic skills and excite more young with learning, a new pedagogy is needed that reflects a changing world. This can be summed up as moving towards a culture of 'we' and 'with' rather than the traditional 'to' and 'for' – less instruction, more collaboration and partnering on projects.⁹ One great example of this in practice is through schools establishing social enterprises:

"All schools should be the base for a productive social enterprise so that children associate learning with work, get pleasure from working productively together and contributing to a business...Education is too cut off from the real world. One way to provide children with more opportunities for real-world learning is for all schools to become productive social enterprises."

Rio (The Real Ideas Organisation¹⁰) whose Director Lindsey Hall spoke at the first Centers Conference, has been pioneering this approach and is advising on the launch of the first school in the UK to have its curriculum and philosophy structured around running a social enterprise. Rio has also pioneered a qualification in Social Enterprise which is part of taking radical ideas into the mainstream. Professor Krzysztof J. Szmidt from the University of Lodz in his presentation emphasised that the role of the teacher was to ensure that the learning process was properly structured so that students could unleash their passions and develop their strengths. For him a critical issues was the fact that too many teachers are failing themselves to keep up with the changing nature of the world.

Report card verdict: "See me after school – preferably in an after-school club run social enterprise". Much more needs to be done to get schools partnering with social and private businesses as part of their core activity.

C) Creativity is not the arts...

Getting wider acceptance that all this 'creativity stuff' should not be seen as add-on for young people in schools – something sweet to eat after the hard work of consuming the 'greens' of maths, science and technology – seems to be a thankless and always uphill task. In terms of our report card it really can't score more than a C-minus for progress. Sir Ken Robinson recognised that the danger his report faced was that it would be marginalised to

⁹ See Charles Leadbeater 'What's Next? 21 ideas for 21st century learning.'

¹⁰ <http://realideas.org/>

the borders of the school curriculum, so he adopted a somewhat cautious approach to promoting the all-encompassing nature of creativity as a must have:

"In our view, creativity is possible in all areas of human activity and all young people and adults have creative capacities. Developing these capacities involves a balance between teaching skills and understanding, and promoting the freedom to innovate, and take risks."

Curiously enough, it is often those that have succeeded most in 'serious' scientific fields who understand and value creativity the most. Sir Harry Kroto, winner of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry and discoverer of Buckminsterfullerene, recently gave a lecture entitled 'creativity without borders' - with his central tenant being the four things all teachers need to instill in young people. Without mentioning the Periodic Table once, he states the challenge as:

"To sum up teachers have a lot to do: a) Catalyze the creative potential for every child; b) Foster the ability to decide what they are being told is true; c) Encourage curiosity about everything; d) Make sure children do not accept unquestioningly what people tell them; and e) Encourage children to work things out for themselves. In fact it is vital that they accept no one's word without question on major issues including their parents, their teachers, and most importantly themselves."¹¹

While this approach is undoubtedly one taken by the best teachers in the best schools, it is not something that is often inscribed within the system, but rather a way of thinking or philosophy that external organisations bring. In Slovenia, Studio Pešec¹², a pioneering design company that works with young people at college has developed a method called the 'scrum' - which sees everyone engaged on a project, including the client, engaged in a review process which openly critiques and questions what has worked and what still needs to be done. Thereby it teaches from the start that an open approach to challenging and questioning is what is needed for success in the creative economy.

Report card verdict: Must concentrate harder – on bringing together partners who will actively challenge the status quo – and provide young people with experiences that mirror what they can increasingly expect in work.

2. 2020 vision: Three Themes for the Future

What then of the future for creativity and entrepreneurship in schools? In view of the poor report card on dealing with the big issues to date, clearly it is a case that there is much fundamental work to be done. But what about the exciting and new? Here there are three potentially big themes that we should see played out, if we are to produce young people more suited to the world of work in 2020 and beyond.

A. Personalised and individual

Just as most of us expect to watch the TV programmes we want, when we want, and in a way that suits us (on our mobiles, tablets or the screen on the wall), so education is becoming increasingly personalised for young people. In developing countries, where necessity is so often a driver of disruptive innovation, things are advancing faster and further

¹¹ <http://www.asianscientist.com/features/nobel-laureate-sir-harold-kroto-buckyball-discovery-science-education-and-creativity-2012/>

¹² http://creativecities.britishcouncil.org/files/data/kbfcj/fcj_case_study_4.pdf

than Europe. Charles Leadbeater cites an example from Brazil, where the Lumiar institute has created two model schools - in Sao Paulo and in the mountains outside of the city

"In Lumiar Institute schools, learning is organized around key questions and themes, agreed with the children at the start of the term, rather than around a set curriculum. Teachers are supported by adults who bring specialist, non-teaching skills, like video production. Children are grouped by the stage they have reached rather than their age. They acquire literacy and numeracy skills through their projects. The schools are modelled as self-regulating learning communities. Modern technology, especially the web and video, is woven into the way children learn, even in the rural school where many of the children do not have electricity at home"¹³.

As Leadbeater acknowledges, such approaches count for little if the child is not supported outside of the classroom, but this type of radical, child-centred and individual method is clearly better suited to the needs of the creative economy.

B. The rise of the play ethic

One of the benefits of the increasingly networked and digitally connected world has been the rise of more open and collaborative forms of learning and engaging. Central to these has been the recognition that 'play', long dismissed as the 'work' of children, is actually a central component to learning and should be seen as a vital part of education. As Pat Kane writes, it is something we should keep with us for life:

"The play ethic is about having the confidence to be spontaneous, creative and empathetic across every area of your life - in relationships, in the community, in your cultural life, as well as paid employment. It's about placing yourself, your passions and enthusiasms at the centre of your world"¹⁴.

Social entrepreneurs in developing countries have been quick to realise that teaching based on play can engage those who otherwise wouldn't actively participate¹⁵. Often it is linked to concept of learning through engaging with social problems – something that RIO in the UK is pioneering. A future where play, social entrepreneurship and real life challenges are combined, should be a powerful force within education.

C. Maybe the web does change everything

Up until today, schools have, with varying degrees of success, adapted technology for the classroom - such as computers, tv and radio. Interactive whiteboards (present in every school in the UK) have moved things on even further, allowing young people to learn in ways that reflect the way they learn outside of the classroom. For the first time though there is the possibility that the internet – in its increasingly all pervasive, multi-platform and multi-device cloud form – could fundamentally change how we deliver learning. As Leadbeater writes:

¹³Charles Leadbeater and Annika Wong Learning from the Extremes

¹⁴ Pat Kane, Observer Newspaper June 2000

¹⁵ Leadbeater ibid

"It could be that web may prove to be more elusive and less easily absorbed into the establishment, not least because it puts power in the hands of users and takes control of information out of the hands of established hierarchies, such as schools."

He believes that it will be where the web is 'brought to life' by social entrepreneurs and innovators where the real impact emerges. He is looking from the perspective of the developing world where quality teachers are in short supply, but for the developed world there is clearly much that can be learnt from encouraging our own entrepreneurs to engage with young people using technology platforms.

So as we look to the future of creativity and entrepreneurship in schools, it maybe those 'basic assumptions' of Sir Ken's have to be left as 'elephants in the room', while we develop ways round them. They are, for reasons of politics, clashing philosophies and mindsets, seemingly insurmountable for many of our education systems. Instead rather, we need to think and act as do the best social entrepreneurs, seeing opportunity where others see only problems. One great example of this is Abbeymead Primary School in UK. The school wanted to redesign their curriculum to focus on learning through real experience; building effective, sustainable links with their community and the wider city of Gloucester:

"Teachers and pupils have evolved their curriculum topics to focus on social enterprise, utilising local businesses and products as a resource for real learning opportunities. Work that has come out of these topics includes rebranding the city of Gloucester with the PR agency commissioned by the Council, developing a plan to improve the lives of residents at a local old peoples' home, and working with food producers to set up and run a local food market"¹⁶.

The result is not only a school which feels in tune and creatively engaged with the 21st century world around it, preparing pupils for an economically and socially challenged environment, but one that has been recognised as 'outstanding' by Ofsted (the body that assesses schools in the UK and is charged with maintaining traditional academic standards).

Development of creative engagement between schools and their local community is we believe one of the essential ways in which they can better connect to and support the creative economy in our cities and regions. In a recent report we wrote¹⁷ that this is a 'crisis of confidence and opportunity amongst our young people' across Europe that we need to overcome if we are to

"innovate and develop a new generation of high value products and services which re-balance the economy, generate wealth, engender confidence and improve our wellbeing, then we need to provide the enabling conditions to develop the right mix of skills, attitudes and expectations amongst our young people."

The opportunity for the Centres Project is to pilot and demonstrate projects which provide new and exciting interfaces and transitions between education and work

¹⁶ <http://schoolsservice.realideas.org/node/1732?ref=1457>

¹⁷ http://creativecities.britishcouncil.org/files/data/kbfcj/fcj_final_report.pdf

encouraging schools and governments across Europe to develop their own approaches. While Creative Economy policy is often driven down from the top at a strategic level – it remains the case though that most successful creative businesses are firmly rooted in and spring-from the communities and places they are established and thrive in. The Centres Project through offering easy access to good practice (through an online knowledge bank) and the creation of a new network committed to improving policies and practices should play a major role in ensuring that the strategic and practical are brought together.

In our next State of Innovation Papers, we explore further the above and more issues, including approaches which position creative learning as an approach that ‘closes the attainment gap’ between young people from different social backgrounds. We also explore links between creative learning and the development of aspiration and skills for employment in the Creative Economy.