

OUR CREATIVE ADVENTURE

Research Aims:

- Does the medium of dance, and in particular improvisation, enhance adult child interaction through creativity?
- What are the mind-set and skills required to transform creative practise in its widest interpretation?
- How does the medium of dance, in particular improvisation, create zones on intimacy and grace?

Methodology

- Qualitative research tools were used and interpreted paradigms adopted.
- A case study was undertaken.
- Focus groups, videos and observations were used to generate data
- All sessions were captured by film and audio by an independent videographer. All audio and discussions were captured with voice recorders.
- A small sample of Early Years Practitioners were involved with a mix of age, gender and experience to help validate findings.
- Data was analysed using Owen (2010) Zones of Creative Development and model of the Creative Relationship

Reference and theoretical and conceptual framework:

Owen, N. 2010. Creative Development. In Palaiologou, I. 2011 *The Early Years Foundation Stage. Theory and Practice*. London: Sage

Craft, A 2005. *Creativity in schools: Tensions and dilemmas*. London. Routledge

Craft A. 2013. *Creativity and Early Years Education: A life-wide foundation*. London: Bloomsbury

Goldschmeid, E. and Jackson, S. 1999. *People under three*. London: Routledge

TRANSFORMING PRACTICE: the power of improvisation to create zones of intimacy and grace

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Findings

Effective training and continuous professional development requires protagonists to construct a relationships based on a creative pedagogy. This creative relationship is characterised by five phases (Owen 2010). Non-alignment, alignment, curiosity, interest and intimacy.

The medium of dance, in particular improvisation, is an effective vehicle to develop creative early years practice, taking practitioners from non-alignment to intimacy. High levels of autonomy were created by an experienced dance artist who had a deep understanding of the pedagogy of creativity in young children.

The zones of creative development (Owen 2010) are key to constructing an effective training package for creativity. Training that embraces the zones and allows time and space for pedagogical discussions will transform practice. The zone of surprise, (where practitioners express surprise at the capability of the children they teach) and the zone of infectivity (the ability of the artist to rupture the cultural membrane of the setting) are key drivers for sustainable and enduring creative practice.

The medium of dance, in particular improvisation, is a powerful creative process that strengthens the key person relationship making connection partially and temporarily visible. Transforming practise requires a practitioner to experience the zone of intimacy and grace through the lens of creativity. Practitioners who recognise and learn the power of dance improvisation will use it as a compelling tool in everyday practice

Discussion

There is evidence that practitioners have an impoverished experience of the creative process and lack the language to capture the learning. An understanding of the Our Creative Adventure pedagogy, the creative relationship and the creative process, with a lexicon to express and bare witness, is key to transforming practice. Innovative training with a dance artist that is built on the creative relationship is the start of the journey in developing the creative curriculum in a setting.

In centring the practice on improvisation each practitioner was enabled to take their own journey through the project. Improvisation allowed the participants to re-cast what was being brought to the project by the children and create mutually beneficial feedback loops which took them to intimacy and grace.

This research hints that dance improvisation has the potential to change the trajectory of a child life by enhancing their relationships with adults, strengthen their attachment and therefore their ability to learn and develop. In the everyday practice of tuning in we bear witness to our children's brilliant creativity and their uniqueness.

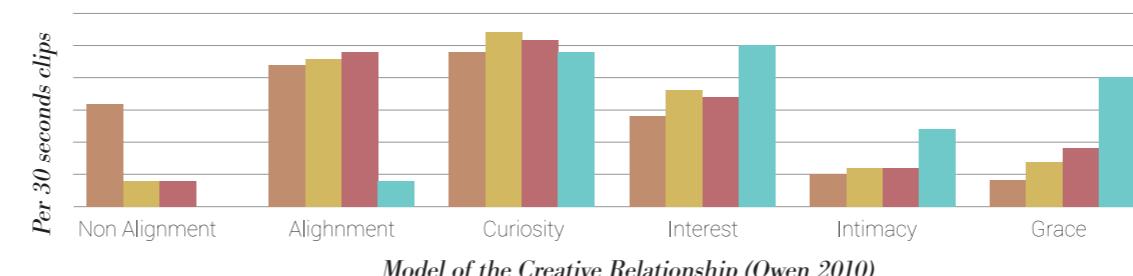
Implications

Dance needs to lead the way in the development of creative pedagogies in early years. It is our first and prime mode of communication from the moment we are born. Can the connections we make through child-centred movement be the cornerstone of learning?

Is the danger in our current political educational climate that we miss the opportunity to create the tangible emotional, spiritual and physical connections through dance? Is our desire to accelerate learning in our early years children causing a fall from grace?

The creative relationship: video footage analysed using Owen (2010) model of the Creative relationship

- 1st session
- 2nd session
- 3rd session
- 4th session



“ You have brought us a beautiful fragrance and helped us see ”

Early Years Practitioner & Room Leader.

“ It is a very powerful thing, the children feel valued ”

Early Years Practitioner

“ Whilst it was happening if felt like there was a blanket over it, protecting it, a special world ”

Early Years Practitioner

“ The mode of feedback we use is our bodies. I think that's really important. Isn't that what mirroring (improvisation) does? It says 'well done' ... he was crawling and I was mirroring. That's my way of saying 'well done' ”

Early Years Practitioner

“ When you are doing the creative adventure nothing pulls you away people don't distract you because you are engrossed... they know by distracting you it will break the magic ”

Early Years Practitioner

“ It brings out a different side to them that we could never see without this project. We could not plan this on a piece of paper as we don't know this is going to happen ”

Early Years Practitioner.