REFLECTIVE PRACTICES IN ARTS EDUCATION

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REFLECTIVE PRACTICES IN ARTS EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

It is an exciting time to be an artist and artist educator. Networks of schools and artists are being motivated by arts partnerships, a relatively new phenomenon in a field which whilst disparate in its character and practice, is marked by a common intention, to respond effectively and critically to politically driven agendas of accountability, school improvement and pupil attainment. More than ever artists and educators alike have begun to realise the need to develop practices which offer the development of artist educator pedagogies as agencies for change and political action. Understanding the function of reflective practice, the conditions which support it and its impact on learning, are addressed throughout this book. We hope that the book will motivate readers, with a diversity of interests and needs, to engage in reflections of their own professional practices and of the practices of the communities in which they work This book is about reflection. The thesis about the field it covers and major premise of this book is that reflection matters at every turn in arts engagement and even more so in educational settings where artist educators share a passion for facilitating and understanding the 'how' of learners engagement with particular art forms.

It aims to show ways in which reflection can inform and transform practice in terms of what, when and how reflection is embodied in arts engagement. It is about what we do every day in talking and thinking about and engaging with the arts, but trying to do it in better ways through reflective practice.

The challenge to improve arts education lies at the heart of education. It also lies at the heart of arts educators' who strive for reflective time and reflective spaces to nurture reflective cultures.

To serve these aims we invited a range of artists-teachers-scholars who were able to mesh practical expertise and interest in particular fields of art, with an extensive knowledge both of teaching and of research and development. They bring with them cultural perspectives from the UK, Canada, USA, Australia, Africa, Hong Kong and Brazil. Each is attentive to and brings into focus the significance of particular dimensions of reflective teaching in the arts. Each chapter offers insightful observations in and conceptions of reflective arts practice from a broad range of cultural and pedagogical contexts.

This book makes a contribution to the theory and practice of arts education illustrated by the experience of children of different ages, young people, artists and teachers and professional partnerships in varied formal settings including schools, universities, and less formal community settings, including galleries, recorded by artists,

teachers and researchers.. The arts under consideration include visual art, and the performing arts of music, drama and dance, along with multimedia.

The book looks outwards from the work of a multidisciplinary group of experts who position reflection at the centre of educational and arts endeavour, and advocate a global concern for reviving its potential for enriching practice. It provides perspectives on *what* reflection is, *why* reflection is so important, illustrated with case studies which provide research-based forms of understanding what reflective arts practice looks like and *how* it can feed into all areas of the arts curriculum and enrich all aspects of learning. It argues how reflection provides possibilities for nurturing reflective cultures and communities.

The book is organised into three sections.

Section 1 is concerned with affirming the attention to reflection and its importance. Reflection is conceptualized through multiple lenses including the cognitive, the phenomenological, the cultural and the sociological. It provides necessary historical and theoretical background to frame issues arising from the current curriculum landscape and to offer rationale for a revival of attention to reflection in arts education.

Section 2 provides explanations and discussion of particular tools or instruments for reflecting along with ways in which reflection is central to the process of enquiry. The uses of particular strategies in facilitating reflection are mapped anew.

Section 3 presents case studies which have sought to document, describe develop, facilitate and illuminate reflective practices in arts teaching and learning.

We hope that it will stimulate personal reflection and collegial dialogue and inspire readers to practice reflective teaching of the arts. We hope it will help artists who work in schools, and arts practitioners for whom the building of reflective cultures depends upon reflexive arts curriculum and pedagogies, and researchers who are interested in introducing himself or herself to this important area of research and development.

Pamela Burnard and Sarah Hennessy
Co-editors

ENDORSEMENTS OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICES IN ARTS EDUCATION

Reflection, the arts and education go hand in hand. In *Reflective Practices in Arts Education* edited by Pamela Burnard and Sarah Hennessy, international contributors take a reflective stance upon their understandings of what it means to be a reflective arts-based educational practitioner. The volume is rich with engaging opportunities to consider reflection as a form of judgment, conversation, practice, process, and even as self-knowledge, a mode of cognition, and political action. By engaging with a wide range of perspectives, the editors have successfully portrayed the diversity of viewpoints that guide arts educators today while also addressing issues that plague classrooms, communities and teacher education programs. What constitutes reflection is multidimensional. Practitioners desiring to create communities of practice dedicated to realizing the potential of 'collective reflection' are destined to pursue educational change at a deep and mindful level. In the act of reflection, we grasp the meaning of something significant. Through gestures, sounds, images, and actions, we may gain insights that echo our literal understandings, yet, it is more likely that these sensory and expressive based reflections will compliment, extend, and perhaps even refute the engagements we have accepted through text. *Reflective Practices in Arts Education* will provoke readers to think more deeply, to engage with others more often, and to pursue educational change in ways they may not have imagined before. After all, artists thrive on transformation and educators thrive on creating meaningful environments and opportunities for learning. For those who embrace reflective practices in the arts, this volume will be necessary companion to their scholarship, practice and artistic endeavours

Rita L. Irwin
University of British Columbia, Canada

Until now, no single publication has succeeded in capturing the depth and breadth of what reflective practices can mean in arts education. Until now, critical conversations on where reflection *in, on* and *for* action can lead, have been lost in the evanescence of competing needs, space and time for many arts educators. As a result of sustained

dialogue, debate and discussion, the authors take fine coloured threads of reflective theory and practice and weave a vivid tapestry, rich in meaning, and garnered through experience and wisdom. In an era of calls for increased competencies, accountability, evidence-based work and good practice in education, Burnard and Hennessy get to the heart of the matter by examining the power inherent in reflective practice and bringing the attendant imperatives to the fore. If reflection is a catalyst for change, then this reflection-on-reflection is where the transformation begins. With scholarly contributions from across art forms, artists and educators, settings and contexts, this exceptional collection of viewpoints is timely and critical, and an absolute essential for those engaging in any arts discipline at any level of education.

Regina Murphy,
St Patrick's College, Dublin City University, Ireland

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We would like to thank Professor Liora Bresler, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A. for her keen interest and encouragement to produce this book.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the community of scholars who have contributed to this volume, each of whom share a passion for examining and translating what, how and why reflection is as important as it is multi-faceted, complex, dynamic and central to artistic practice.

We acknowledge also the valuable assistance of Millie Glennon who contributed significantly to the final stages of typesetting and to Bernadette Deelen-Mans of Springer for her patience and support.

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SECTION 1

PERSPECTIVES ON REFLECTION

PAMELA BURNARD

1. RETHINKING THE IMPERATIVES FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICES IN ARTS EDUCATION

Professional reflection is central to the development of new awareness, knowledge and value shifts which lead to more effective practice in arts teaching (Harland et al., 2005). As individuals, and collectively, we are constrained only by our willingness to engage with and our capacity to use reflective processes effectively as a source and resource for professional agency.

In the present global context, artists and arts educators face the challenges of politically driven agendas that, most commonly, focus on accountability and pupil attainment. It is timely to open the debate about whether a focus on reflective activity should dominate our thinking about arts teaching and learning, not least in an understanding of what reflective practice discourses might mean within the context of developing arts communities.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, I wish to consider what characterizes reflective practice discourses. And secondly, as an arts community, to consider collectively the impact of reflective arts practices and what we need to do to connect reflective cultures and communities of practice at the arts-education interface.

So, what is distinctive about reflection in educational discourse?

Reflective time engages us intrinsically in a sharply focused attentive mode of functioning. Artists in particular give themselves over to virtually continuous reflective time, placing reflection at the heart of the creative process.

Some authors consider that reflection is a *recollective form* constituted in a thought or action that is already passed or lived through (van Manen, 1990). Other theorists consider reflection to be constituted in action in different time frames. Such dimensions include reflection-*on*-action (Schön, 1987), reflection-*in*-action (Schön, 1983; Killian and Todnem, 1991), reflection-*in* and *on*-action (Zeichner and Liston, 1996) and reflection-*for*-action (Norlander-Case et al., 1999) with each drawing upon and utilising different time frames. These can be rapid and immediate, as automatic reflection or thoughtful reflection in the moment (called repair). Reflection can occur at a particular point in time (called review) or be more systematic over a period of time (called research). A long-term reflection can be informed by established theories (called retheorising) (Schön, 1983, 1987).

Reflections situated *in* time can be deeply concentrated; an intensified experience where one becomes totally absorbed in the consummatory moments of thought and action, with attention centered on a limited field of awareness. Reflections situated *over* time occur when actions and thoughts are recovered, reviewed, revised, re-evaluated, reordered and embodied in time's containment.

P. Burnard and S. Hennessy (eds.), Reflective Practice in Arts Education, 3–12.

When reflecting back in time we look critically to learn from previous work. When reflecting forward in time we anticipate—even envision—what might happen, making judgements and new connections in the framing of an arts encounter or learning experience.

Inevitably, reflection makes a major contribution to professional practice.

Reviving our concern with *reflection*—whether as artists, artist educators, arts organizations, learners researchers or parents—requires us to look back critically and constructively (*analytic self-reflection*) and draw from one's experiences (*normative reflection*[1]). This helps to build and sustain professional communities: a central aim of this book.

We do, however, engage in and learn from *reflective conversations* with self and situations differently in different circumstances. This book[2] is one such example of professional reflection.

1. A REFLECTIVE CONVERSATION WITH SELF

One example from my own experience illustrates the multidimensional nature of reflection.

> *An exemplar of the reflective self* Consider for instance, an ethnographic research project involving a lunchtime Creator's Club with a group of 12-year-old children over a period of 6 months. In the final week of the project a 'concert' was held in the school hall. The idea was to bring together the head teacher, music teachers, parents, peers of the Creators Club with compositions and improvisations performed on instruments and in settings chosen, managed and led by the children. Up to this point, in the role of researcher, I had not performed for or with the children. It was close to the end of the concert when an invitation made publicly and unexpectedly by the children came for 'Pam to make a piece on the spot for us'. I was frozen with panic and pleasure—panic at the pressure of performing without warning, and pleasure at being asked to perform. It was both politically correct and right to accept the invitation, and I would naturally be judged. At that moment I was struck by the extent of risk that participation in any spontaneous improvisatory form requires. I hadn't anticipated this. What I also felt was discomfort and stress. I needed some reflective time. The key question was 'What to do?' I was not sure which instrument to play; I had given no thought to the possibility of improvising at this concert. I asked if they had any preferences for 'which instrument? what setting?'; questions they had asked themselves over the past 6 months as part of the study. At this stage, the cameraman (a musician and friend!) volunteered to play a duo with me. A collaborative spontaneous improvisation based on a reflective conversation in musical action followed.

[1] Terms coined by Uljens (1997).

[2] The book comes out of a long and sustained conversation and dialogue between contributors following a symposium on 'Reflective practices in music education'. The idea was advanced as key to extending and connecting evidence-based knowledge of how reflection occurs in arts teaching *across* art forms.

> Our improvisation featured a reasonably well constructed beginning and ending with varied textures, pitch clusters, abrupt shifts of rhythmic dissonance, varied metric groupings and other impetus and decay devices featuring in between. There were sufficient continuities and regularities in events and patterns to unify the piece. Musical disruption and interruption also featured. I recall interpreting and responding to expectations implicit in musical exchanges played by my partner. I also recall critically reflecting on when and how to make the piece sound a little more agreeable. I felt an expectation to continue until we had resolved some of the musical tension. Some sounds were anticipated, others were not. There was much role shifting. We shared a fluid sense of possibility. The musical exchanges were borne out of a musical narrative lived reflectively (Burnard, 2000a/b).

This example implies a number of *reflective stances* coined by Schön (1983, 1987) as *reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action*, and *reflection-through-action*. The first is presented as it arose in uninterrupted time, immediately, instinctively lived through as a liberating conversation with self and situation during the consummatory moments prior to performing unexpectedly in concert. The second is represented as it arose in the transitions between and following this moment as one considers action from the perspectives of audience member, performer and researcher. The third is demonstrated when I rehearsed and analysed how my sharp-eyed observers, a group of 18 children whom I had been researching, might move. It was in the moments when I moved between *reflective thinking* that required continual evaluation and *reflective judgements*. This included consideration of audience expectation, the tolerance of the audience (that is, my role and how hard I could push) and an estimation of what would appeal to, and engage, my audience. Reflection mediated the risk I felt as a performer and researcher and ultimately this allowed me to look beyond the expected.

2. CHARACTERISING REFLECTION

Trying to define what reflection is—and what we can ask of it—requires a lot of ground to be covered as many scholars posit numerous characterizations of reflection. Using various psychological, philosophical and educational lenses, authors present multiple perspectives, where different shades of meaning appear in different contexts, each illuminating the multidimensionality of reflection. The most frequently and strongly identified characteristics and forms of reflection include the following:

- *Reflective thinking* as coined by Dewey (1933) who makes the distinction between on the one hand 'routine' thinking and on the other 'reflective' thinking, the later involving a process of continual evaluation of beliefs, assumptions and hypotheses. (themes elaborated by Kushner and Hilton, Kerchner and Younker).
- *Critical reflection as a form of judgement* has been identified by Gouge and Yates' (2002) taxonomy of arts reasoning and thinking skills and by King and Kitchener

(1994) who posit that knowledge moves from pre-reflective through quasi-reflective to reflective stages (similar themes elaborated by Rolfe).

- *Reflection as self-knowledge* has been identified by Jonassen et al. (1999) as one category of a taxonomy of knowledge along with *professional knowledge* and *pedagogical knowledge* (a theme elaborated by Cheung and Kung; Hentschke and Del Ben; Joseph).
- *Reflection as a form of conversation* turns experience into meaningful learning when a person is able to 'actively construct and find personal meaning within a situation' (Falk et al., 2000, p. 41). Arts making is a reflective process; descriptions of experience reflect the unique nature of arts learning and engagement (themes elaborated by Hilton, Peel, Younker, Rolfe, Hentschke, Del Ben and Joseph).
- *Reflection as an agent of change* concerns factors that trigger change and which helps change come about, (*a theme elaborated by Joseph*). Artists-practitioners beliefs have impact on pathways to change and development (Stenhouse, 1975). Changes can take their starting point in the nurturing of *cultures of reflection* with other people in and across school settings and in and across arts communities (themes elaborated by Kushner, Morrison et al., Glover and Hoskyns).
- *Reflective processes as ongoing* embody the interdependence of creative thought and action as a condition of the creative process (a theme elaborated by Hilton, Peel, Cheung and Kung).
- *Reflection as professional practice* concerns the manner in which we enter into, engage with, facilitate and handle, the challenges associated with our profession, i.e., art making, arts curriculum and pedagogies. How and when reflection occurs and what tools are used to articulate reflective processes in and between different art fields vary according to the inter-related conditions—social, technological, cultural—in which the act of reflection and creation is undertaken (a theme elaborated in all chapters).

What is shared is the imperative to reflect on our aspirations and practices in whatever art form(s) and roles played (as artist, teacher, administrator and/or researcher) with a critical eye to considering five fundamental questions:

1. Do I agree with these characterisations of reflection?
2. What are the implications of these (and other) characterisations for artists and artist-educators?
3. What educational and artistic purposes should we seek to attain in our reflective arts practices?
4. What common understanding should be developed, shared, and promoted?
5. How can reflective arts practice communities be effectively organised?

In what follows I shall argue for developing an *extended* professionalism[3] which is directed towards realising and supporting interdisciplinary understanding of reflective arts practices.

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[3] A concept introduced by Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) which views work in the wider context of school, community and society as opposed to restricted professionalism which promotes subject-centeredness.