
An Intra- and Inter-Cultural Deepening

Reflections on the IKTE-led Training

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Aiden Sisler - 31 Mar 2015

“We all have creative sources available to us that can help preserve, restore, or renew our psychic, social, and spiritual well being. (In our view) every human being is an artist, and everyone’s life is a creation, a piece of art. In our work we focus not on aesthetics of expression, but the process of creation itself, and the personal meaning revealing itself for the creator.” - *Reviving the Hidden Artist Within Workshop: Basic Concepts*, ITKE, Hungarian Association for Expressive Arts and Dance Therapy

Reflections on the Intercultural Stimulation Training

Facilitated by IKTE

Many Tribes, One Culture Within

Nurturance conditioned, we found our roots
In acceptance, centered
Spots of embodied truths
Spirited respect
So deep
It danced its way
From air to breath to bone
And made collective presence known
To individual practice
Take home lessons to share
Change to ignite
Passion to spark
Soft flame to candle
Our meditations interwoven
Continuing cultures of Compassion.

Overall Reflections:

From the mission statement of the joint venture 'The Artist Within: Applied eMOTION, Dance and art expression in formal and non-formal education for developing entrepreneur skills - best practice sharing between sectors and methods', one could suppose that such a broad remit would be easy to draft up and envision in theory but ever-challenging to actualise in practice and praxis. In my firsthand account of participating in such a lofty endeavour, I can not only state that the organisers, stakeholders, IKTE staff, and my fellow participants have succeeded in their mission. This success spanned multiple domains, but, more importantly, the instigators have taken a bold move toward establishing a genuine interdisciplinary and multi-sectorial approach. Such innovation ought to be disseminated to other potential initiatives who strive to make good on creativity-driven personal, professional, and social change. While a host of past works pay lip service to such ends, often lost in vague 'creative' means, a clear 'social return on investment' was gained not through over-emphasis on the outcomes but rather, by seeing the holistic picture, and through deep understanding of the processual nature of critically and compassionately pushing beyond the bounds of comfort and into the 'zone of proximal (optimal) development' (Vygotsky). In the following, I briefly reflect on and

outline my personal insights regarding professional-, self- and research programme-development in light of the training.

Particularly Valuable Contributions:

Overall, from my position as a developmental researcher, and a developing one at that, the workshop was clearly aligned to its humanistic, holistic aims and methodology, with clear interlinking and flow between thematically-aligned units. For instance, the “Discover the Dancer Within” was a logical beginning point, allowing each of us to find our individual centres and balance, to fully arrive within the group and initiate the discovery process through mind-body centring techniques and dynamic movement exercises. These solo, pair and group practices were ultimately uniting, and assisted in doing rid of the dualism which typically plagues office-bound, stationary workers! Indeed, recent research (e.g., somatic psychology) attests to the importance of developing interconnectivity and dynamic flow between often competing brain-body signalling, or, alternately described, in head-heart duality.

Moreover, I was so thankful to feel trust and mutual respect with an overarching sense of freedom and autonomy on the part of the group facilitators. This allowed for stretching physically, mentally and emotionally beyond previously held beliefs and barriers. As dancer, philosopher, and scholar of religion Kimerer LaMothe illustrates in *Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming* (2015), dance is an activity humans evolved to do as an enabling condition of best bodily becoming; it serves as a catalyst in the development of human consciousness, compassion, ritual proclivity, and ecological adaptability. I’d add that the overall cultivation of individual and collective skills for adaptability and resilience are best attained through the explorations of the of body-mind-environment interconnections, as in ecological neurophenomenology accounts (e.g., Varela & Thomspon), and that creative cultural practices tapped into through the workshop (i.e., painting, dancing, performing, improvisational movement, etc.), allowed for successful actualisation of the perspective’s complexity.

Application to Future Research and Praxis:

While I’m still continually arriving at fresh insights rising to the conscious surface after some internal rearranging of sorts, I can confidently state that the transformational potential of the workshop’s method and implementation has had a wide-reaching impact not only on my professional pursuits, my co-partnered organization’s participatory practices, but as well for my personal life and the relationships around me. I’ve made artistic expression a more vital component of my daily life and now turn to the blank canvas for creative inspiration, synthesising ability, or simply for a form of ‘ecstatic relaxation’, stress reduction, and resilience building. This is most evident in a room now being devoted to artistic materials and, more subtly, in a recent article written attempting

to investigate the interface between neuroscientific and cultural evidence for transformational holistic practices (see attached). I've begun to work with dancers and moral scholars and educators with the view to develop aesthetic and democratic education in tandem, thereby making good on true interdisciplinary education for all types of individuals. In fact, Finland, consistently cited as the top nation for educational excellence has recently implemented an aim toward no singular subject studies, rather encouraging naturalistic holism in education. As a form of STEAM (Science, Tech, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), these trainings would seek to borrow some of the insights gained from kinaesthetic representation, creativity, improvisation, and spatial, verbal, and holistic integration of various bodily modalities. It is with this in mind, that I see great import from the workshop at-hand through the partnership of: IKTE – ARM-BG – CRN Berlin – EURO-NET – SAN – Theater Vision, and sponsored by the ERASMUS+ program.

It is vital that valid and reliable evaluative studies be undertaken in order to maximise the learning gains made from the training specifically, and to compare and contrast those with foregoing findings and those of the different component workshops. It is my hope that a clear interlinking be made between these parts, as, one piece of criticism would be the lack of clarity between the conjoined workshops, on the whole. I do trust, should the partners issue such a clarifying document, and made available for public dissemination, that the maximum utility of the Partnership and Learning Mission would be achieved.

On that end note, I sign-off, saying many thanks to my inspirational fellow participants and sponsors.

Best regards,

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