

Creative Formats, Creative Futures

ABSTRACT As creative economies and industries continue to impact emerging markets and cultural conversations, creative education seems no more central to these conversations than it was a decade ago. Two recent Creativity Summits marked a collaborative milestone in the global conversation about creative teaching, learning, ecologies, and partnerships, signaling a turn from nation-based approaches to more globally-networked ones. This essay and the summits offer not only an international and interdisciplinary survey of the “state of play” in creativity education, but also collaboratively-generated strategies for strengthening creative research in tertiary education contexts, teacher education, cross-sectoral partnerships, and policy directions internationally. **KEYWORDS** Creativity; Creative ecologies; Interdisciplinary; Education; Creative industries

CREATIVITY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH SUMMITS

As interest in creativities education continues to rise, a consortium of creativity scholars in Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada have hosted two annual creativity research “summits” in order to gather perspectives from around the globe and review best practices and current needs in the field. The term consortium is significant in the context of the co-authors’ interests in staging these events and recent research on creative ecologies and ecosystems.¹ Creative practices are connected ecologically and impact on one another either by enabling aspects of mutuality or by constraining individual autonomy within systems of innovation and change. Each of the summits were conducted as dialogic and collaborative events involving key industry hosts, organizations, professional associations, as well as individuals and communities of practice drawn from educational contexts across the “education lifespan” (primary, secondary, higher education). The events were planned interventions in the public sphere, designed to elicit new approaches and relations within neoliberal environments and conditions. Adam Curtis describes the tensions in the arts arena with a focus on the “dangers of self-expression” and hypernormalization.² He contends that “if you

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FIGURE 1. Brainstorming creative futures at Creativity Summit 2016. Image courtesy of Alta Truden.

do your criticism through self-expression, you're actually feeding the very power structures you're trying to overthrow," and suggests the power of groups goes beyond "just talking about ourselves and our feelings towards others."³ Seeing ourselves as part of a larger entity, engaging with collective self-expression and locating "enchantment" rather than disenchantment in a bureaucratic age, are key concerns within creative ecologies. The Creativity Summits have envisioned new groups, partnerships, and collectives through contemporary media, revealing new correlations and patterning that go beyond current conceptions of individualized self-expression—the kinds of creative capacitating indicated by creativity education research worldwide.⁴

The Creativity Summits were held in late 2015 and 2016 in Melbourne, Australia, with attendance of 50–100 creative education practitioners, teachers, artists, and experts at each event. These summits profiled current creativity and

education research, and interrogated issues of relevance to policy and practice both nationally and internationally. Featuring creativity expert Kathleen Gallagher (Canada), creative industries expert Erica McWilliam (Australia), creative education expert Bill Lucas (United Kingdom), and creativity leaders Anne Harris and Michael Anderson (Australia), the 2015 summit was hosted by Anne Harris as a part of her Australian Research Council (ARC) funded project “Creativity in Secondary Schools” (2014–2016), which gathered an evidence base from four countries on the gap in creativity education during the secondary (high school) years.

Amplifying the consortium approach, the 2016 Creativity Summit, hosted by Harris, Monash University, and the Arts Education Practice Special Interest Group (AEPRSIG) of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE), was held at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image. Featuring creativity scholars Pamela Burnard and Pat Thomson (United Kingdom), as well as Anne Harris, Robyn Ewing, and Mary Ann Hunter (Australia), the summit built upon previously articulated evidence-based outcomes, as well as generated recommendations for nurturing a networked “creative ecology” approach to building creative students, citizens, and workforces.⁵

Combined, these two summits marked a collaborative milestone in the global conversation about creative teaching, learning, environments, and partnerships, signaling a turn from nation-based approaches to more globally-networked ones.⁶ Drawing participants from those working in creativity education or those concerned about the lack of coherent definitions, approaches, or valuing of creativity across the education lifespan, we gathered not only to survey the “state of play” in creativity education, but also to work toward collaboratively-generated strategies for strengthening creative research in tertiary (post-high school) education contexts, teacher education, cross-sectoral partnerships, and policy directions internationally. Celebrating the potential for this “creative moment” in higher education, the summits articulated a need to see more creativity skills and capacities in teacher and community educational contexts, and more consistent approaches to creative pedagogy and curriculum in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2015 SUMMIT

In presenting the recommendations from both summits, we note that these data draw on previous evidence-based research in creativity education and research.⁷ In these one-day think-tank style gatherings, participants worked collaboratively toward formulating a series of preliminary “asks” or recommendations roughly structured as policy or practice-focused, while acknowledging

that the development of rich recommendations requires additional time, collaboration, and cross-sector involvement. Drawing on data from Harris’s Australia-centered four-country study on creativity in secondary schools,⁸ this group proposed itself as an ongoing consortium known as the Creative Education Network to continue working to address ways to enhance creativity across the entire education lifespan. The following recommendations—in the two streams of policy and practice—were the short-term outcomes of the summit.

Recommendations: Policy

1. Attention should be paid towards establishing consistent **language**, definitions, and approaches to enhancing creativity in teacher education and compulsory schooling
2. Greater value should be placed on **key skills and capacities** of creativity (including collaboration, experimentation, ideation for example), through curriculum assessment and Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
3. Support, including ministerial **policy statement and support for cross-sectoral approaches** including government/industry/education
4. **Update teacher education** in collaboration with principals and professional organizations to include creativity skills in training programs and professional standards

Recommendations: Practice

1. **Develop the “creative confidence”** of teachers and principals across all subject areas, and acknowledge in teacher education that all subject areas can use creative teaching and learning practices, as well as arts educators
2. **Improve and increase teacher education** in creative pedagogies (especially concerning assessment, and in senior secondary years)
3. **Promote collaboration** between principals and higher education for increased training and professional learning in creative teaching and learning

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2016 SUMMIT

The following observations and recommendations emerged from a group activity in which all 80+ participants collaborated. A snapshot of the actions and priorities as a relational set of key strategies involving creative ecologies across pedagogical, environmental, curricular, and organizational interactions is detailed below.

Creativity education **pedagogy and curriculum** involves:

- risk-taking (acknowledging productive failure)
- multi-modal, embodied learning; enjoyable, pleasurable, fun learning journeys (lifelong learning)
- contextually-driven pedagogy and curriculum (inter/intra/disciplinary as appropriate/authentic) that is more than “art” and avoids premature closure

In addition, collaborative and co-creative **learning environments** need to:

- foster more opportunities for spontaneous and informal interaction
- de-institutionalize learning and work spaces to suit multiple uses and user-types
- construct new built environments that foster self-direction, curiosity, and interdisciplinary cross-pollination

Priorities for action involving organizational and curricular enhancements must include connections/voices from across the field (teachers, pre-service teachers, students, communities, industry hosts/businesses/organizations), as well as asking questions—What are we doing well? What can we learn from?

Organizational ecologies need to prioritize:

- consulting with stakeholders
- inspiring and motivating dialogue, determining the way to do the action, creating a place of doing creative communities
- belonging to the action, ownership of action
- insisting on space in the curriculum in early childhood school and pre-service teaching
- including parents and pre-service teachers in the dialogue about urgent needs
- dispelling myths, curriculum action at the state level, mentoring, supporting, collaborating with people, practices, sites, and materials
- claiming the language and reporting on creativity
- researching to support advocacy
- building and sustaining alliances, enlisting support (intergenerational, artists as catalysts)
- interrogating National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy and other national standards-based testing regimes

- creative arts within testing cultures as a “third space”
- usefulness of a national Creativity Index
- engaging pre-service teachers and collaborative partners in creative processes
- questioning and enhancing curiosity in the face of the overwhelming
- educating, agitating, organizing across cultural and community development linking individuals to wider ecologies of learning

Priorities for policy involving organizational and curriculum enhancements must include:

- creating new national policy position papers to be submitted and shared internationally, enhancing interdisciplinary approaches in all areas of education
- continuing integration of key creativity skills into education policy
- promoting creativity as multifaceted, diverse, and inclusive, broadening “literacies” to include the wide range of creativities literacies, seeing assessment of creativity skills as just as important as other literacy skills
- sustaining policy critiques, actively speaking back against audit cultures
- researching evidence on demonstrating impact of creative arts and education
- working with school leaders to create conditions for creativity to occur
- using the concept of “ecology” in creativity education and industries policy, ensuring terms about creativity are documented, including creativity in various (national) teaching standards worldwide
- building arts and creativity alliances
- reviewing funding for strategic provision of arts education in schools
- providing government support through research versus data
- promoting advocacy within wider educational contexts
- working the arts and creativity into other discourses and policy areas
- linking creative education to sustainability and wellbeing agendas
- using creativity as a foundational base in early educational years
- supporting partnerships among schools/arts partners/universities, co-producing resources and strategies for the creative thinking

general capability in the Australian curriculum, continuing to call out the “schizophrenia” of the policy–practice gap

- seeing creativity as foundational learning and shifting the priority from literacy and numeracy to a multiplicity in meaning-making and expression
- maintaining authenticity to context and practice, inclusivity and innovation

Key strategies involving pedagogical, environmental, curricular, and organizational enhancements must include:

- giving time in the curriculum for students to go deeply into meaningful issues and personal group interests
- creating diverse embodied experiences
- seeing relations among learning, pedagogy, environment, and community
- enabling quiet risks, moving to louder risks
- mentored support
- examples and exemplars to guide and reassure
- provision of links to engagement and equal links to learning
- cross-modal participation—body, mind, spirit, narrative, imagination, movement, synergies
- enabling/supporting others and interdisciplinary spaces
- creating spaces/ecologies for divergent responses
- displacing the teacher as the sole source of answers
- understanding creative process in every discipline, planning for open-ended outcomes—multimodal and interdisciplinary
- working more with principals and parents
- making space and time in schools for a focus on creative learning and providing opportunities for pre-service teachers and other learners to be creative, understand they are creative
- knowing how to create the conditions for creativity in learners

In summary, promoting the creativity agenda requires a relational approach to creative organizational and environmental ecologies at all levels so that we:

- become visible in both practice and policy contexts

- organize strategies to get partners onside and activated (parents/careers/industry)
- utilize the wisdom of students'/children's/learners' voices and be clear about knowledge transfer by making research accessible

The creative ecological principles outlined above resonate and have synergy with conceptions of enchantment. Finally, using the words of the summit participants, by setting up tricky, juicy, tense, necessary situations that may be regarded with fear, suspicion, wonder, and awe, we open up mental, physical, and emotional spaces and paces for living and learning.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INQUIRY INTO CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training invited public submissions to its inquiry into matters that ensure Australia's tertiary education system—including universities and public and private providers of vocational education and training—can meet the needs of a future labor force focused on innovation and creativity. Following the 2016 Creative Summit, we prepared a submission for the Inquiry into Creativity and Innovation.⁹

Some of the issues identified in our submission related to teacher education and preparation. Teacher education is a field that is often not discussed in innovation agenda documents, as if it is not crucial to the cultivation of innovation and creativity for our economy. However, teachers are the ones working with children and young adults and helping to shape their perspectives and capacities. It is therefore imperative that creativity and innovation be taught and supported as part of teacher preparation. At present the Australian Institute for Teaching and Leadership standards for the profession lack any domains that recognize the importance of creativity for teachers. The increased levels of regulation and requirements for what needs to be included in teacher education programs also means there has been a reduction in the scope for offering subjects or programs that focus on creativity and innovation for pre-service teachers.

Our recommendations included that creativity, communication, and social interaction be recognized as key aspects to be cultivated through teacher education programs that seek to recognize the skills needed for the jobs of today and the future.¹⁰ We would advocate for newly conceived partnership programs, for example: artist and entrepreneur in residence programs, teacher release to (arts)

industry programs, and other such approaches. Cultivating opportunities to share and build resources and connectedness approaches to knowledge transfer, innovation, and creativity in the education and community sector is our priority, as modeled by the Creativity Summits. As best practice research shows, it is also important to move beyond reductive siloed approaches such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education as the only educational domains linked to innovation agendas. Funding programs and recognizing the key role the arts can play for enabling students to explore ideas through different forms and expressive modes—including the visual, aural, kinesthetic, and embodied—is vital.¹¹

CREATIVE FORMATS: PECHAKUCHA

One of the greatest challenges to fostering creativity in education across the entire education lifespan is the ability to work flexibly across platforms and communities and understand the productive nature of some constraints. PechaKucha styles of presentation were developed by Japan-based architects Klein Dytham to enable and constrain architects and other creative professionals to share their work, passions, and projects in a short, sharp way that consists of 20 slides that can only be shown for 20 seconds each—hence each presentation only runs for 6 minutes 40 seconds. Run in over 900 centers around the world with a focus on real-world presentation venues (bars, restaurants, public spaces, etc.), PechaKucha Nights are now a trademarked event that includes support and parameters to which the hosts agree to adhere. The PechaKucha format has also become a favorite presentation style beyond these events as visual cultures, and the compact and social nature of the form, continue to spread. They have also become an increasingly familiar presentation format in academic contexts from conference presentations to journal submissions.

In order to enable a wider range of presenters to share current research and practice in the field, attendees at the 2016 Creativity Summit were invited to propose presentations in the PechaKucha format, adhering to the following constraints:

- PechaKucha presentations include 20 PowerPoint slides, no more, no less, to support the talk
- Each slide can contain images, but no animation or video. It is a very visual medium and does not work well with a lot of text
- Each slide is projected for exactly 20 seconds (transitions being set to change automatically every 20 seconds). Thus each presenter has 6 minutes and 40 seconds in total

- In terms of planning how much to say, it is suggested that presenters not try to fit in more than about 50 words per slide. Some people talk to a series of slides rather than try to script it too tightly
- It is worthwhile for potential presenters to take a look at the global PechaKucha Night website to see hundreds of presentations from around the world¹²

This format was chosen not only for its strict and highly creative format, but also in order to highlight the benefits of working rapidly, interdisciplinarily, and in a public venue like the Australian Centre for the Moving Image. By adhering to a public presentation style like PechaKucha, the presenters were able to share short snapshots of their current creative education work in a way that encouraged comparison and cross-pollination. The presentations were filmed and the PowerPoint slides were edited into their videos by our colleague and videographer, Alta Truden.

Below are links to the (necessarily longer) three keynotes and an expert panel, as well as the nine PechaKucha presentations, featuring leading experts in creativity education. Significantly, these diverse presentations range across educational contexts, disciplinary areas, and creative communities of practice. We hope not only that readers will find these videos useful for their own research, but also that they might use them as exemplars for creativity education approaches, advocacy, cross-sectoral collaboration, postgraduate supervision, and teacher education. Enjoy!

Keynotes

Anne Harris, *The Creative Turn*: <https://vimeo.com/208236637>.

Pamela Burnard, *Addressing the Politics of Diverse Creativities and Reflexivities as Researchers: Defining “practice” in Relation to “Research”*: <https://vimeo.com/207055508>.

Pat Thomson, *Measuring Up—Creative Arts Learning in England*: <https://vimeo.com/208236958>.

Expert Panel

Mary Ann Hunter, Erica McWilliam, Robyn Heckenberg, and Robyn Ewing: <https://vimeo.com/208237239>.

PechaKucha Presentations

Geraldine Burke, *Arts Reach: A Continuum for Creative Agency*: <https://vimeo.com/207054237>.

- Sue Davis, *Schools (and Assessment) Kill Creativity—Or Do They?*: <https://vimeo.com/207043584>.
- Christine Hatton and Mary Mooney, *Creative Ecologies in Education: Considering the Teaching Relationships Within Sustained Artists in Residence Projects in NSW Schools*: <https://vimeo.com/207038009>.
- Shari Lindblom, *The Magic Tree of Music*: <https://vimeo.com/207042061>.
- Donna Matthewson Mitchell, *Creative Partnerships: Connection, Place and Community*: <https://vimeo.com/207035923>.
- Jonathan Purdy, *Get Outside and Explore: Higher Education Students Learning Creativity*: <https://vimeo.com/207039299>.
- Mark Selkrig and Ron (Kim) Keaney, *Making Spaces for Teachers' Creative Learning*: <https://vimeo.com/207045038>.
- Kim Snepvangers, *From Kitchen-hand to Creative Professional: Bespoke, Brokered and Self-Devised Industry Partnerships in Art, Design and Media*: <https://vimeo.com/207050926>.
- Susan Wright, *Eight Assumptions About Creativity and the Arts and Their Place in Education and Culture*: <https://vimeo.com/207052774>. ■

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NOTES

1. Anne Harris, *Creative Ecologies: Fostering Creativity in Secondary Schools* (Melbourne, Australia: Monash University, 2016), <http://creativeresearchhub.com>; *Creativity and Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); "Why Does Creativity Suck So Bad?" *NJ: Drama Australia Journal* 39, no. 2 (2015): 147–52; *The Creative Turn: Toward a New Aesthetic Imaginary* (Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense, 2014); Anne Harris and Stacy

Holman Jones, "The Ethics, Aesthetics, and Politics of Creativity in Research," *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 3, no. 3 (2014): 186–95; Leon R. de Bruin, "Journeys in Jazz Education: Learning, Collaboration and Dialogue in Communities of Musical Practice," *International Journal of Community Music* 9, no. 3 (2016): 307–25; "Expert Voices in Learning Improvisation: Shaping Regulation Processes through Experiential Influence," *Music Education Research*: doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2016.1204279; "Theory and Practice in Idea Generation and Creativity in Jazz Improvisation," *Australian Journal of Music Education* 2 (2015): 91–106; Arianne Jennifer Rourke and Kim Snepvangers, "Ecologies of Practice in Tertiary Art and Design: A Review of Two Cases," *Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning* 6, no. 1 (2016): 69–85.

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