Wise Humanising Creativity: a goal for inclusive education.

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Abstract.

This paper argues that given the radical uncertainty of the early 21st century, educators need to consider what sort of preferred educational approach they might adopt in the inclusive classroom and what capabilities are important. The need for creativity which attends to the impact of actions and which is informed by empathy and collective need is explored and wise, humanising possibility thinking proposed as a vital element in such provision. The integration of digital media characterised by the 4P's of pluralities, playfulness, possibilities and participation within 21st century learning approaches is a key dimension in classroom practice which encourages the generation of 'quiet revolutions'.

Key words: wise, humanising possibility thinking; four P's; quiet revolutions.

Resumen. Este artículo argumenta que ante la gran incertidumbre del siglo XXI, los educadores necesitan considerar el tipo de enfoque educativo que podrían llevar a cabo en un aula inclusiva y las capacidades que son importantes. Se explora la necesaria creatividad que require el impacto de las acciones y que surge de la empatía y la necesidad colectiva, humanizando la posibilidad de pensamiento propuesta como un elemento vital en dicha provision. La integración de los medios digitales caracterizados por las 4Ps de 'pluralities, playfulness, possibilities and participation' en el siglo XXI los enfoques de aprendizaje es una dimension clave en las prácticas de aula que animan la generación de 'revoluciones silenciosas'.

Palabras clave: humanizando la posibilidad de pensamiento; 4 Ps; revoluciones silenciosas

1.-Introduction.

At the start of the 21st century, children and their teachers engage in learning and teaching in a wider context of radical uncertainty (Facer et al, 2011). Deep challenges include including global economic uncertainty, the rise of fundamentalism, impact of globalisation, nascent technological capabilities, climate change-induced natural disasters, overpopulation. The educator's challenge is to survive, thrive and nurture others in a period of radical uncertainty for the planet alongside a desire among human communities to harness greater certainty (Craft, 2012, Craft 2013).

Educators must engage with the possible futures their students may face and in seeking to provide learning opportunities relevant and appropriate to these, such futures may be framed (borrowing from Bell, 2010) in terms of the probable, the possible and the preferable:

Probable futures – ones which we can see emerging (for example greater uncertainty, environmental change, population growth) which when applied to education might include higher achievement, need for responsible, creative, critical global citizens)

Possible futures - ones which we can imagine (for example imagining what will be possible with technological advances, what kinds of roles young people may play in the economy, exploring what it means to talk about successful learners)

Preferable futures – ones that we think would be better than other possibilities.

These are relevant to educators (whether themselves student teachers, teacher or teacher trainers), as they mediate learning opportunities for their students. Whether they are most concerned with probable, possible or preferable futures, educators may foreground *curriculum* (what is to be learned). *capabilities* (what it is they want learners to be able to do better) or processes (how education is organised and learning nurtured). This article, which reflects the Keynote given by the author at X CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL EDUCACIÓN INCLUSIVA: DESAFÍOS Υ RESPUESTAS CREATIVAS focusing on inclusive education and creativity, held at Universidad Zaragoza in March 2013, focuses on capabilities and processes involved in possible futures, arguing for particular kinds of preferred educational future for all learners.

2.-Possibility Thinking as a 21st century capability.

In considering preferred educational futures, the aspect of capabilities foregrounded in this paper is what can be seen as being at the heart of creativity, i.e. **possibility thinking or PT**. Inherent to PT is transition from what is (tradition) to what might be (new ways of doing things). This is a way of thinking about creativity that acknowledges the 'what if?' dimension to creative action (imagining possible consequences) as well as the 'as if' aspect (taking on other roles). Coined by the author (Craft, 2001) in the context of developing creative educational practice in England, PT is a 'democratic' notion of creativity, focusing on the everyday. As such, the framing of PT acknowledges that all are capable of creativity.

In a world characterised by radical change and continuous, often unexpected, decision-making and the balancing of dilemmas, undertaken both individually and

collaboratively, it could be argued that PT is a core capability of responsible and imaginative citizens and so a core element of what educators need to offer all students.

PT occupies a particular place in the spectrum of creativity articulated by Beghetto and Kaufman (2007) from mini-c (personal meaning-making) to big-c (changing the world) in that its originality and impact may be more limited than a scientific, artistic, technological or other breakthrough that changes the world, but yet greater than a mere re-positioning of personal understanding. Recognising that creativity involves both originality and impact, and that the bigger the originality and the bigger the impact, the higher the form of creativity (or the bigger the 'c') generated, PT can be understood as 'little c'. Fig 1, adapted from work undertaken by EdSteps in the United States of America, shows the location of little c and therefore PT, on the spectrum of creativity.

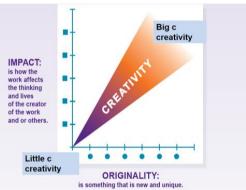


Fig. 1. Creativity Spectrum, adapted from work undertaken by EdSteps www.edsteps.org

Research on PT, mainly undertaken in England, has been qualitative and coparticipative and much of the core research has focused on primary-aged children and their teachers (Burnard et al, 2006, Cremin et al, 2006, Chappell et al, 2008, Craft, Cremin, Burnard, Dragovic, Chappell, 2012, Craft, McConnon and Matthews, 2012, Cremin, Chappell and Craft, 2013), although studies have also been made of older learners¹. Over the last decade two major themes have been explored: the nature of PT (including the role of questioning and narrative) and how PT is nurtured. **The nature of PT:** This strand of study shows that at its core, PT involves 'what if' and 'as if' thinking. This is perhaps best illustrated through two vignettes, one from the early years and one from secondary school.

Lighting the bonfire

Two boys, aged four approach an unexpected provocation that has been placed in the nursery garden by their teachers. Enacting the

¹ For example, doctoral studies by Ting, focusing on secondary schools (completed 2013), Greenwood, focusing on secondary-aged students excluded from regular schools (completed 2013), Yeh, focusing on pupils of all ages in one to one tuition (ongoing).

unspoken question, 'what if we investigate this?' as they peek underneath a large tarpaulin cloth, they discover a variety of smooth logs waiting to be explored. Immediately the boys enter an 'as if' space as one exclaims: "Ooh! Logs! Like a fire!" and together they enact another unspoken 'what if' enquiry as they start to work out what to use as matches to 'set fire' to their pile of logs.

Investigating Planet Earth

Having travelled to a nearby nature reserve, a group of 25 students, aged 14, are provided with white suits by the scientist who is working with their teacher. Having donned these, they are briefed on their 'as if' roles and tasks. They have landed on earth from another planet and their task is to explore Planet Earth with caution, collecting specimens and samples to test and to draw conclusions from. They work carefully collecting flora and fauna, generating their own 'what if?' questions to drive the investigations undertaken back in the school laboratory. Maintaining their 'as if' roles they report back in a blacked-out school hall (their spaceship) to the rest of the year group, their teachers and the scientist, all of whom take on the roles of fellow visitors to planet earth as to what they have found.

As can be seen from these examples, each involved both 'what if' and 'as if' thinking and action. In each case the PT emerged within an immersive, often playful and emotionally enabling learning context and each vignette involved a mix of individual, collaborative and communal activity; a framing drawn together by Chappell (2008). The distinction between collaborative and communal activity is important; Chappell et al (2011, 2012) note that whilst collaborative activity involves working together, communal activity involves a sense of shared ownership. Thus although the two boys in the bonfire vignette are on their own creative journeys they are also collaborating in developing the narrative and their roles, and ultimately their concern is a shared one – a communal endeavour to 'light the bonfire'. And whilst the students investigating planet Earth each generate their own questions and individual roles, they work together in collaboration in their investigations and they generate results which they take communal ownership of and which become part of the wider knowledge of their peer cohort. Just as it does in these vignettes, PT often involves two or more simultaneously as shown in fig 1.



Fig. 2. PT as involving individual, collaborative and communal activity (adapted from xyz DPC PRAC RESOURCE NEED REF]

Inherent in individual, collaborative and communal activity are key features of PT which are a mix of processes, outcomes and process AND outcome, as follows.

Process: *guestion-posing* and *guestion-responding* (both verbal and non-verbal) are what drive creative activity; generating exploratory engagement through which new ideas, actions and products emerge. PT research has revealed a taxonomy of guestion-posing which comprises leading guestions (which frame the enguiry), service questions (which enable the leading questions to be explored) and followthrough questions (about practicalities of enacting the leading and service questions). and questions span the spectrum of broad to narrow inherent possibility. Thus in the 'Investigating Planet Earth' vignette, the leading question, which is possibility moderate and defined by the teaching staff, is 'what can we find out about Planet Earth?' whereas in the 'Lighing the Bonfire' vignette, the leading guestion, whilst triggered by the provocation placed in the garden by the staff, belongs to the children and is possibility broad: 'what shall we do with this pile of logs?' In each case the children generate service questions which enable them to explore the leading question (in 'Lighting the Fire' vignette, the question was 'how shall we light the fire?'), and follow-through questions about the nuts and bolts of the enquiry (in Lighting the Fire, follow through questions included 'what if we try this special match?'). The research has also generated a taxonomy of guestion-responding, with children testing, accepting, rejecting, predicting, compensating, undoing, evaluating, repeating and completing. Question-posing and question-responding occur in an immersive context enabling both 'what if' and 'as if' activity.

Outcome: intentional action and development emerge from these immersive, questioning journeys of exploration, which reinforce children's self-determination whether this is individual or collaborative. Such outcomes occur through 'what if' and/or 'as if' activity. In the 'investigating planet earth' vignette, the scientific investigators from outer space undertake intentional investigations of materials using their knowledge and skills in order to develop understandings to share with their co-

travellers. Their investigations rely on and also reinforce their individual and collaborative self-determination.

Process and outcome: *play* is a context and an outcome for PT, providing vehicles for being *imaginative* through 'as if' activity. PT also involves and generates *innovation* and *risk* (though this latter is seen mainly in the context of children risking their own journeys beyond adult expectations and is sometimes absent). In both vignettes we see playful, imaginative activity which generates innovation although in neither innovation is risk seen. Risk-taking is, in our research, rarely witnessed in the classroom.

The features of PT occur through individual, collaborative and communal activity, with one blending into the other. In the 'Lighting the Fire' vignette, the children move quickly from individual engagement with the logs provocation, to a shared venture with communal goals. The 'Investigating Planet Earth' vignette is established by the teaching staff as a shared adventure with communal goals at the outset, and demands collaborative activity harnessing individuals' ideas, for it to be successful. The blending of individual, collaborative and communal activity is frequently simultaneous as it is in these two vignettes. And with this blending comes interaction between children and adults as playmates / co-explorers which has been described by Craft, McConnon and Matthews (2012) and discussed further below (within how PT is fostered).

As may be clear in these vignettes, narrative (developed either by children, teachers or a combination of the two) plays a vital role in PT. A recent re-analysis of previously published work on PT has reinforced understanding of the dynamic between adults and children and the role of child-initiated and adult-initiated narratives in PT. Re-analysis revealed how narratives emerge from immersive play located in fantasy, everyday and historical contexts. The narratives are driven primarily by questioning and imagination, with self-determination and action-intention also present. There was little evidence of risk. Characteristics of narrative seem to be use of <u>characters</u>, plot, <u>sequence</u> (beginning, middle, end), <u>significance</u> to the players and <u>emotional investment</u>. Narrative integrates individual, collaborative and communal creativity just as questioning does (Cremin et al, 2012).

How PT is nurtured. Ten years of research reveal that PT is nurtured in an <u>enabling</u> <u>context</u> where <u>learner agency is valued</u> and <u>time and space are given for children to</u> <u>have ideas and see these through</u>. Teachers <u>stand back</u> enabling children to step forward.

In the Lighting the Bonfire vignette discussed earlier, the adults stood back as the children stepped forward to light the fire, giving the children time and space and valuing their agency as they developed their own narrative about the bonfire. In the second vignette, Investigating Planet Earth, the adults stand back as the students step forward to investigate the part of the planet where their spaceship has landed, and as in the Lighting the Bonfire vignette they offer time, space and profile the students' agency in undertaking their investigations. But in this case, their but standing back is balanced with <u>'meddling in the middle'</u>, meaning that teachers work closely with children to value uncertainty and to design, assemble and edit alongside their students. In this way in <u>children imagine with adults</u>. In the vignette their students alongside their

students, forming part of the wider community that is learning about the Earth. A democratic concept, recognising that all children are capable of creative activity, PT is relevant in all classrooms, and for educators seeking to devise and develop preferred educational futures. It reflects a perspective on childhood that recognises children's capabilities (rather than focusing on the risks that childhood carries). It foregrounds children's capacities to generate novelty which is original, valuable and

3.-PT as part of the learning design compass: the Four P's of digital media.

has impact.

In a digital world, children are increasingly empowered (Craft, 2011) with the entry of digital technology into their lives, homes and pockets. The characteristics of digital engagement in children's lives has been called 'the four P's' by Craft (ibid). Such technology enables their creativity and demands it through *pluralities* (in play, learning, socialising, places, people, personae, activities, literacies), *playfulness* (co-exploratory, improvisational), *participation* (in dialogic space as playmate, friend, performer, audience, author, maker, critic, fan) and, last but not least, PT or *possibilities* (birth of ideas to action).

Classrooms are increasingly permeated by digital technology and with it comes opportunities for educators to foster PT through digital as well as other media. So, classrooms which foster learner creativity do so through a range of contexts that include a focus on how digital technologies can enable learning and exploration (eg Plowman, Stephen and McPake, 2010). For the growth of digital media, whilst unevenly experienced by way of access, and bringing increased vulnerability, is pervasive, emancipating children and young people (Montgomery, 2000, 2002).

It has been argued (Craft, 2011, Craft, 2013), that the four P's offer both a landscape and a compass for empowerment of children and young people through education. The *digital landscape* is characterised, by plurality (of places, people, personae, activities, literacies) and by playfulness (in relation to make believe, connectedness and consumerism). It is suggested that plurality and playfulness contribute to learning beyond the classroom as exciting, fun, interactive, engaging and enticing. This landscape is both portable and far-reaching.

Meanwhile, participation and possibilities provide a form of *compass*, or navigational tool for educators in orienting creative education futures through their learning design as suggested by Fig 3.

learning design? future Positive Participation Shared leadership Sensitivity to consequences High trust Uncertainty -> co-construction Diversity igh Trust, Wise Learning Design dialogic -> scrutiny of present Positive Negative Possibilities Possibilities past **Negative Participation** wise, humanising PT: quiet revolution Craft, in press

Fig. 3. The intersection of participation and possibilities in learning design

The space of positive participation and positive possibilities is enabled, it is argued, through learning design which is high trust and wise. For in the wider context of radical uncertainty, it is argued that educators need to nurture PT that pays close attention to values and purpose.

4.-What kind of PT in an inclusive and digital classroom?

Paying attention to the kind of PT that is being fostered in an inclusive and digital classroom takes educators into different territory from that mapped out in policy terms. For whilst creativity has been increasingly been recognised in education policy frameworks across Europe and indeed the world in the last twenty years², this is generally couched with reference to the need for economic competitiveness (Craft, 2005). This call is steeped in values that highlight acquisition and competition (Craft, 2008). Yet, it has also been argued (Chappell and Craft, 2011) that the radical uncertainties of the 21st century demand a different form of creativity, one which is more aware of its impact: wise, humanising creativity. Chappell and Craft bring together two conceptualisations of everyday creativity. One of these is humanising creativity (developed by Chappell, 2008 and drawing on the arts, and further developed by Chappell et al 2011, 2012), foregrounding 'becoming', and recognising the blend of individual, collaborative and communal engagement. Humanising creativity highlights the importance of communal creativity with its strong focus on group identity and empathy, and shared ownership. Humanising creativity recognises communal creativity in the arts as involving both making and being made, the

² Although this direction has been reversed in England since 2010

emotional highs and also lows. It reveals how valuable new ideas emerge from working creatively together but that this involve conflict as well as shared struggles.

Wise creativity (developed by Craft, 2008) draws in the notion of trusteeship and is positioned against marketized, individualized and culture-blind creativity. Embracing creative stewardship toward the collective good, wise creativity, it is argued, has the potential to develop a 'quiet revolution' (Chappell, Rolfe, Craft and Jobbins, 2011) which generates change for wider good. Such a revolution is thus critical yet ethically grounded and aligns personal with wider values, seeking sustainability through emotional, physical and aesthetic as well as virtual learning

Wise, humanising creativity then, drawn from humanising and wise creativity, challenges the individualised, marketized focus of creativity focusing on collective rather than individual action, emphasising expression over competition and being ethically, not market driven. For educators, it is important to respond to the extreme challenges of the early 21st century by considering the role of '*wise, humanising PT*' as opposed to '*marketised PT*' which, with its focus on performance and short-term goals and gains, pays little attention to the wider impact of actions. As a consequence, marketised PT can be seen to be foregrounding what Inayatullah has called 'used futures' NEED REFERENCE. Wise, humanising PT is more focused on the collective, on ethics and on wider impact, than marketised PT which is more focused on the individual and on competition / performativity.

Learning design for wise, humanising PT attends to the processes and capabilities involved in education, it is ethically grounded, critical and yet humane, seeks sustainability, aligns values, shares leadership and questions purposes of creative activity. It attends to emotions, aesthetics and multi modal expression.

As a consequence of its focus, learning design for wise humanising PT fuels **quiet revolutions**, contrasting greatly with methods of educational change that are yoked to the global marketplace as the first and foremost driver. Quiet revolutions which are instead ethically driven and generated through shared identity and ownership, expression and empathy, may be born of wise humanising creativity that inherently challenges 'what is', in other word the marketised narrative focused on the individual and on competition. To illustrate what a quiet revolution might entail I draw on a further vignette.

Keeping the Lego

Hasif, aged 5, has been playing with Lego in the corner of the classroom for some time. He has struggled to find the pieces he wants to make the shape he seems to have in mind. Eventually, as his teacher calls the class to tidy up as it is lunchtime, he seems to get into his stride and to make a shape he is content with. But his teacher is calling for him to join the class in the carpeted area of the classroom so as to go and wash his hands ready for lunch. He arrives, loudly, holding the Lego figure aloft saying 'I made this!' to which his teacher responds that he must break it up as the class rules say the building blocks must be taken apart at the end of each session so that other children can play with them. Hasif is horrified by this and entreats his teacher to let him keep his model until the next time he can work on it. In doing so he suggests that other children might like this new rule too. His challenge sparks a number of discussions in the classroom and, at the end of that week, a new rule

is introduced: models that children are still working on do not have to be broken up at the end of a lesson. A victory: the rules are changed in a way that all of the children can benefit from. Hasif walks taller as a result of this change, as do the others who benefit from it. The community has a new way of operating, and they have created this together through collaborative and communal action, by attending with empathy to the issues at stake and by expressing and listening with care. This is a quiet revolution.

Keeping the Lego illustrates how even very young children can embrace creative stewardship toward collective good, they can reflect on how responsibly ideas are exercised and they can pose the questions 'why?' and 'why not?' These young children, prompted by Hasif's problem, are enacting a quiet revolution. A term put forward by Fielding and Moss (2011, 2012) arguing for much more democratic approaches to education informed by 'the insistent affirmation of possibility' (Fielding and Moss, 2012, p3).

Fielding and Moss (2011, 2012) launch their democratic arguments against the context of education increasingly characterised as a marketplace (Ball, 2012) and where attainments are measured and compared as part of the performative judgement of provision determined by tests and inspection of pupils and teachers. Whilst they are writing about the current situation in England, the culture of measurement, comparison and judgement is widespread. Fielding and Moss lean toward possibility with this in mind. And in a world where children, young people and educators too are digital citizens, this brings a potency to the possibility of quiet revolutions for each of the four P's inherent in digital media, both enables and demands creativity within and between people. The role of digital media then in nurturing, supporting and enabling quiet revolutions in the classroom could be vast.

Classrooms which nurture wise, humanising PT are spaces where multiple voice are both expressed and listened to. They are democratic and open spaces and therefore potent forces for quiet revolutions. They foster and enable trust, encourage and embrace uncertainty, generate empathy in co-construction. They are characterised by openness to diversity and dialogue, negotiative approaches and willingness to shift. Perhaps most fundamentally, inherent to wise, humanising PT is the questioning of assumptions and of fundamental purposes. And digital media offer pervasive channels through which, with potential for deep participation in co-creativity, emancipatory transformations may occur. It is these quiet revolutions which may navigate educational visions away from Inayatullah's (2008) used futures, which are shackled to the destructive development of the planet and toward actions that attend to impact fostering what Gardner calls a community of trustees (Gardner, 2008).

Many early 21st century educators are concerned to move away from used futures in a world so fragile in the face of its self-generated evolutionary and revolutionary change. It is hard to imagine how preferred educational futures for all children would not invite and nurture the quiet and counter-revolutions fostered by wise humanising PT, and how this would not include a role for digital media.

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