Developing creativity in learning - Linking Cultural Forms; Olympic Inspiration for Raising Standards in Art Education

Art education is a contested field, justifying the place of creativity in education (Klopper and Power, 2010, Grierson 2011, Peers 2011). Rarely, however, has the value of the subject been studied in its relationship with other cultural forms such as sport to exploit a wider creative potential. Linking subject areas to develop divergent thinking and learning has largely been limited in secondary school contexts. Developing relationships connecting the different cultural interests of young people can arguably be exploited within the curriculum to stimulate learning. The Olympics/Paralymics 2012 provides an opportunity to explore the potential for a major sporting event that has generated excitement in youth to be used within an educational context. To this end, the Youth Sport Trust has established a curriculum legacy programme in which Olympic athlete, Roald Bradstock (‘The Olympic Picasso') delivers workshops disseminating ideas and concepts for art pedagogy. This research investigated the immediate efficacy and potential legacy of this approach.

The work analysed a case study school in the year following a sport in art workshop. Interviews were conducted with an advanced skills teacher (art), head of department (art), head of specialism (sport) and a group of year 8 and 9 students (n=8). Questionnaires were completed by year 8 students who had engaged in art curriculum study emanating from the workshop (n=44). Attainment records were accessed to evaluate achievement. Analysis was made of the cognitive and affective processes in which young people became engaged; the perceived cultural relationship between sport and art and the resultant impact on learning potential.

The cross curricular value of the Olympics/Paralympics was identified in terms of skill; common creative processes and the demands of character required to achieve in sport and art. Motivation was perceived as rising significantly, as was attainment. The work was considered of particular value for those children functioning on the periphery of art education in other contexts. Creating links between different subject areas and common cultural forms can potentially lead to improvements in divergent thinking, meaning and attainment in education.

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Klopper, C and Power,B (2010) Illuminating the Gap: An overview of arts education research in Australia International Journal of Education Through Art, Vol.6 no.3, pp293-308

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