



'name-checking'

- Keri Facer
- Kieran Egan
- Gert Biesta
- Nick Lee
- Ken Robinson

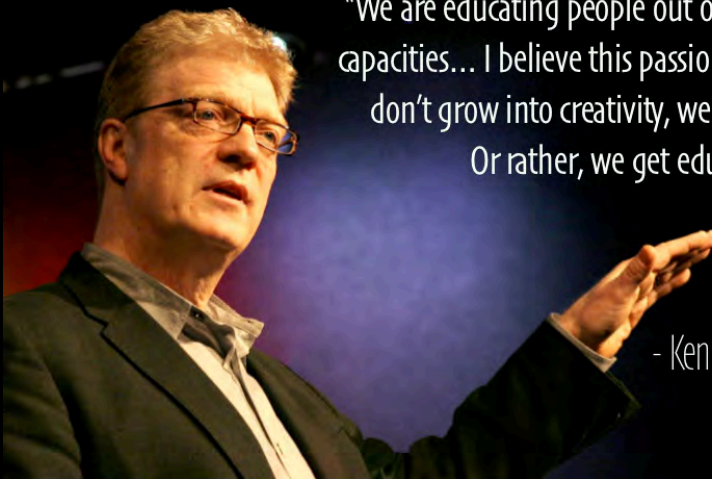
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Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know, while imagination embraces all there will ever be to know and understand. Albert Einstein

First they said they needed data about the children to find out what they're learning.
Then they said they needed data about the children to make sure they are learning.
Then the children only learnt what could be turned into data.
Then the children became data.

Michael Rosen

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"We are educating people out of their creative capacities... I believe this passionately, that we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it.

- Ken Robinson -

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The purpose of education

- Education not merely about handing on what we know, not merely about preparing a work force who can read and write but about preparing children for *their* future (not *our* pasts), a future as yet unknown and unpredictable – and the search for a good and just society – in the face of growing inequalities, excess use of resources, climate change, techno-sciences
- For that purpose learning in the arts – music especially - is about imagination and new ideas, for connecting with others and working towards social justice, for values of beauty, peace, love and for knowledge and for wisdom - - a good and just society.

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A measurement-fixated system

The age of measurement. Children are reduced to numbers, statistics – even brain cells! – search for simple cause and effect relationships, impacts and outcomes.

Education as investment for the labour market – imposes ever tighter rules and greater demands on the present as a security for the future

We lose what matters most — the messy, complicated hurly burly of empathetic, emotional, imaginative work with live children - -

We need a better political climate for education than the current basics- focussed, linear, information-obsessed, measurement-fixated system

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Complexity

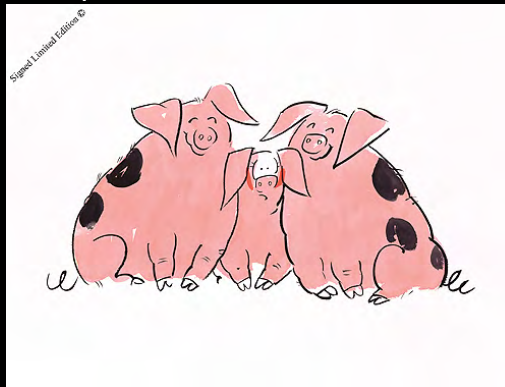
The more we learn about children, about play, about imagination and approaches to pedagogy – the more complex and diverse it all becomes

But we work in systems that impose goals and strategies to reduce complexity and diversity, to simplify, to control

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Squashed in the middle

Educators and artists are caught between the complexity of real-life, 'bottom-up' practice with real children and trying to make it all fit simplistic, 'top-down' requirements -





- Children don't need to learn 'stuff'
- What children need is to learn how to think
- And they need the thinking tools to be imaginative

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Ken Robinson

- Imagination is about taking risks and sometimes being wrong
- Small children aren't afraid to be wrong
- But they become frightened of being wrong – and grow into adults who can become very frightened of being wrong and don't take risks

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Imaginative Thinking

What could this be? What can I do with this? What are the possibilities? To think about the possible not just the actual

Imagination greatly enriches all learning, not just 'the arts'

False separation - reason and imagination are thought to be different things - 'the arts + literature' - - 'maths + science'.
Hierarchy of subjects.

But maths and science require imaginative, possibility thinking -



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Abstract ideas -

- Young children are abstract thinkers – non-material, non-concrete
- One of the myths of education [a legacy of Piaget] is that young children are only concrete thinkers – and that they need lots of material things to play with – they also need lots of ideas to play with
- We think about the world in all the ways that we experience it. We think visually, we think in sound, we think kinesthetically. We think in abstract terms, we think in movement and images, and shapes, patterns.

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Imaginative thinking tools -

1 Synaesthesia – cross-modality - metaphor

2 Humour and 'funniness' – surprise, the unexpected, the ridiculous

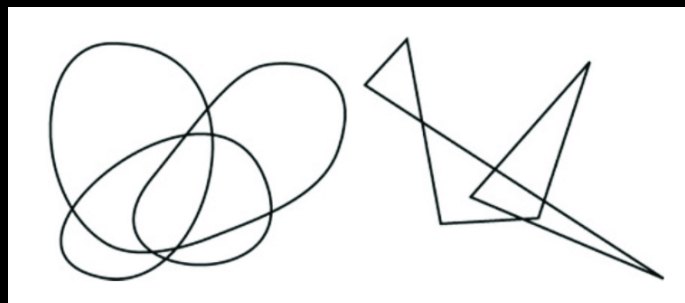
3 Emotion, powerful feelings and affection, love

4 Rhythm, pattern, structure – and how things unfold in time and space

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1 Synaesthesia + cross-modality

- Experiment of Kohler, 1929
- MALUMA and TAKETE



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1 Cross-modality

Flexibility and creativity of children's imaginative thinking is tied up with this ability for syncretic, cross-modal thinking – to shift dynamically from one mode to another

To understand meaning that translates across imagery, sound/ language, shape/pattern, gesture/sound

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2 Humour



Children love humour – it 'tickles' the imagination

- Surprise and the unexpected
- Combinations of fantasy and reality, the ridiculous
- When were you last funny & silly with children?
- Children's theatre - playfulness, comedy, humour,

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Humour

- Humour and fun ties us into relationships with others
- Michael Rosen said: "Humour is a serious business . . . Schools need to be full of laughter instead of Standard Assessment Tests."

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3 Emotions

- Learning is SUPPOSED to take place in an orderly environment, discipline, restraint. The 'good' educator is the one with a quiet, still, well managed group – Foucault talked of 'docile bodies'.
- Restraint often means that learning has become dull, boring, unexciting and unengaging and has little room for the emotional and embodied life of children
- Creating knowledge that is meaningful – that connects with children's current hopes, fears, feelings of joy and excitement
- Risky work with children – on the edge of chaos and over-excitement
- Empathetic work – that has time to listen, create bonds, is open-hearted
- When did you last teach/work with children on the edge of chaos?

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Emotions



A Small Story was aimed at children aged 2 – 4 years and is all about the small stories which make up big stories life – love, marriage, babies, friendships, everything! From everyday objects a magical world evolves...a wall full of boxes, each box containing a memory, a moment in time. A marriage, a birth, a death, a divorce, a birthday and Christmas. Tenderly re-enacted by our two guardians. Small objects representing big moments; gentle, reflective and fun. Using visual storytelling Andy Manley and Ania Michaelis take audiences on a tender journey exploring the little things that make a big difference.

- We perceive, we feel and we think together
- Feelings are part of everyone's experience of learning – particularly for young children
- We tend to think of children as minds (brains!) – but they grasp what they learn with their emotions and bodies
- Their minds embody their emotions and emotions are embodied –

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Where the wild things are

POWERFUL, MYTHIC
OPPOSITES

- Big and small
- Fear and security
- Courage and cowardice
- Wildness and control



- Emotional engagement - 'and Max was lonely and wanted to be where someone loved him best of all'
- Too much early childhood education is 'safe' and 'in the middle' – 'cute', innocent . . . dull

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Strange and wild creatures

- Dinosaurs, monsters, robots, giants
- Fantasy cartoon creatures
- Fairies, mermaids, ghosts, spirits
- A hut on chicken legs
- Kieran Egan - they are hybrids, talking animals and imaginary creatures – half one thing and half something else –
- Powerful, binary opposites that are abstract and engage children



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4 Rhythm, pattern, structure

- Pattern learners – ‘music’ in its broadest sense is pattern learning, shapes in time, narratives – abstract things that happen across time and space
- Narrative – how things unfold, what happens over time – the story – this happens, then this, then it comes to an end – shaped to bring out the emotional importance. To be able to hold patterns and structures in your mind and transform them is central to imagination
- Art is something shaped to bring out the emotional importance, the joy, the humour, the human significance
- That language, music, visual imagery, dance, can enlarge the pleasure you can get from life – and also the sensitivity to the situation of others [I think it is because education is losing the function of educating for joy, pleasure and sensitivity that children are starting to suffer emotionally – the current concerns about well-being]

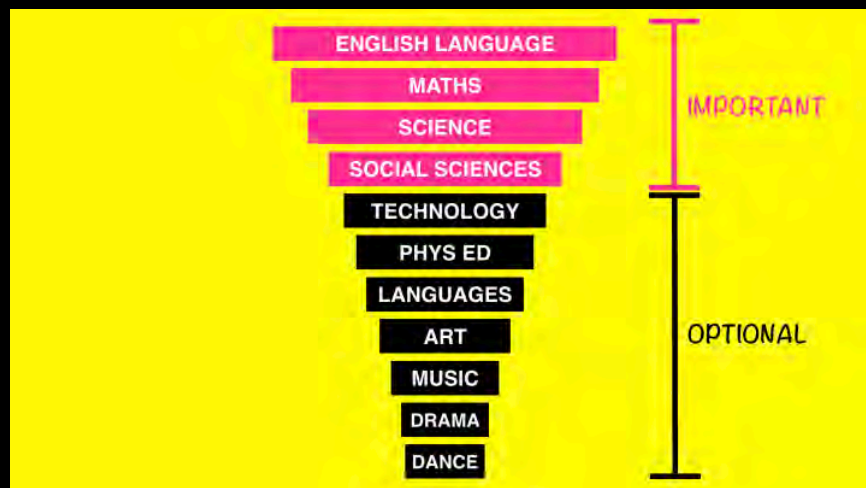
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SO -

- Children are abstract, dynamic, mode-hopping, metaphoric/transformational, humorous, emotional, wild-things, pattern/narrative – thinkers –
- Our task as educators/artists is to evoke patterns, narratives, images, with emotions, with humour, that can transform, cross-modally into other things – we move it, dance it, draw it, sing it, see it, put it into words

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Hierarchy of Subjects



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The 'benefits' of the arts argument

- The arts are argued for in instrumental terms – as promoting learning in literacy and number, as good for whatever is currently on the policy agenda – wellbeing, health, brain development – the list will never end, and the argument will never 'arrive', it's chasing its own tail (to use a metaphor!)
- Need to argue for a curriculum that is NOT hierarchical, narrow and instrumental –

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'Children need to express themselves' argument

- 'free expression', free play, child-centred, 'naturally' creative argument also has weaknesses
- But weaknesses which are harder to recognise because they fit with progressive, liberal ideals + romantic conceptions of the child
- Gert Biesta - Children express something, they learn something, they learn it for a reason, and they learn it from others



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Imaginative with something -

- Creative play is NOT about providing resources and leaving children to 'express themselves'
- Self-initiated play may have elements we don't want to encourage as a society – aggression towards others, self-centredness, stereotypes, sexism, racism
- Children aren't imaginative from nothing – they are imaginative with something, with ideas – it needs to 'go somewhere', with guides, with adults

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The adult role -

- The role of the imaginative adult working with children is the greatest challenge – it needs specific understandings of the role and of how children think and how to connect, foster, interact, develop their ideas -
- Different areas have different traditions of teaching – e.g. visual arts (provide materials, stimulus and leave the children to it), music and dance (adult must lead, children follow). Two opposites.
- Children's own music and own made music and musicality – knowing what it is, how it sounds, what it looks like. Providing for it, responding.
- Knowing how to adopt a more adult-centred role in visual arts work.

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Hawking: 'remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet'

- Feel and think together
- Be funny and silly
- Take risks
- Be on the edge of chaos
- Be open-hearted
- Play and be imaginative with patterns, structures, narratives – transform them from mode to mode, sing them, dance them, move them, visualise them



Learning in the arts is about imagination and new ideas, for connecting with others and for values of beauty, peace, love and for wisdom - - and our hopes for a good and just society.

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