Hall, C., & Thomson, P. (2017). *Inspiring school change: Transforming education through the creative arts.* London, UK: Routledge. Pages; 208. ISBN 9781138914001

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In *Inspiring school change: Transforming education through the creative arts*, Christine Hall and Pat Thomson summarize their substantial body of research into school reform through the arts. In arguing that the creative arts disrupt the status quo, their nuanced discussion(s) of several investigations, in a variety of schools in the United Kingdom, draws a clear picture of the impact of Creative Partnerships, which is the largest and longest running initiative of its kind in the world (from 2002 to 2011). In a contemporary context, where creativity is highlighted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development as essential for 21st century learners, such findings are of particular importance for educational leaders both because of the exemplary standard of Hall and Thomson's research and because few school reform projects work through the arts.

Creative Partnerships was part of a "cultural turn" in UK national policy-making after the second election of the New Labour government in 2001. Education policy responded to "a rising tide of criticism about the sterility and joylessness of the standards curriculum: parents were complaining, and significant numbers of teachers were feeling de-professionalized, dispirited and concerned about the impact of school on children" (Hall & Thomson, 2017, p.20). In this context, Creative Partnerships was tasked with building sustainable partnerships between schools, artists, and cultural organizations. It was crucial to demonstrate the benefits of collaboration and find ways around systemic obstacles. Practical projects gave thousands of students and teachers opportunities to explore creativity through assigned work with creative professionals. A second mandate of the initiative was to increase the numbers of cultural and creative practitioners and organizations involved in education and to build the capacity of this sector to work effectively with schools.

The authors offer a brief historical overview of arts education policy in which they trace a move from arts education to creativity. The latter concept helps to inform educational debates about the inclusion of elite versus popular culture in the school curriculum, and connected the arts to the economy and employment. From Raymond Williams, the authors understand culture as "being both what is known and collectively experienced and what is remade through the creative capacities of the individual" (Hall & Thomson, 2017, p. 12). The authors also note Anna Craft's (2001) point that cultural (arts) learning differs from creativity in that the former is about exploring continuity, while the latter is about change.

Early on, Hall and Thomson define creativity as "a capacity that is shared, routinely manifested and susceptible to being nourished" (Hall & Thomson, 2017, p. 12). While this definition seems somewhat inadequate, given the title and aspirations of the text, their review of the literature reveals that the concept of creativity is elastic, slippery, and hard to define. Indeed, there is no universal meaning of the term *creativity*. The authors survey research into both (1) creativity in teaching (may involve innovative and interactive pedagogies with corresponding changes to curriculum and assessment), and (2) the promotion of creativity in learners. While these two foci are likely interdependent, a further area of interest is whether creative teaching relates predominantly to the arts.

The authors focus on the concept of creative learning (Sefton-Green, 2001) which involves attending to a type and degree of personal "challenge" for youthful learners, and the production of a type of subjec-

tivity. A new place for authority and knowledge within learning is hereby framed. Curriculum is actively produced rather than consumed and creative learning is an experimental and destabilizing impulse which can render schools permeable to alternate ways of being, doing, knowing, and thinking. Change occurs because uncertainty and open-endedness do not frame creative learning as a process or a means to an end. Hall and Thomson conclude: "Where curriculum and pedagogies promote choice, inquiry and exploration, a degree of self-direction, feedback and assessment that supports intrinsic motivation and the sense of breaking new ground-these are the conditions in which creative learning takes place." (Hall & Thomson, 2017, p. 123). While these conditions build character, they also promote collaboration and respect for others. For educators, curriculum planning, sequencing, and pacing can combine rigour, being demanding in learning, and high creativity.

Creativity is often associated with the arts, and an understanding of creative learning distinguishes between learning in art (i.e. about a particular art form) and learning through art (i.e. outcomes are beyond an art form).[1] While it is common in contemporary education to hear instrumental reasons for the arts such as "music helps math learning," Hall and Thomson found no consistent evidence that teaching the arts in schools relates to the overall attainment of higher test scores. Therefore, the arts should not be taught for these reasons. Additionally, this course of action reduces the arts to a second-order subject area destined to be cut when test scores are no longer high enough. Perhaps most significantly, such an approach does not recognize the type of thinking the arts nurture within the learner. So, the authors ask, how are the arts taught and what do students learn? They note the work of Hetland et al. (2013) who observed four studio structures and eight studio habits of mind. The studio structures include: the demonstration-lecture; students-at-work; critique (important for discussion and reflection); and exhibition. The studio habits of mind are: observing; envisioning; reflecting; expressing; exploring; engaging; persisting; and understanding art worlds. Hall and Thomson argue that such studio habits of mind demonstrate the concept of learning through the arts; therefore, arts learning engages and enables creative learning. Finally, to sum up their case, the authors cite Elliott Eisner's argument for the arts in schools as a mode to gain a fuller experience of the world (2002).

Sketching changes, related to the art(s) projects they investigated, Hall and Thomson present portraits of several schools in a variety of communities with different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. A focus on narrative and imagination promoted inclusion, well-being, recognition, and respect. The authors were informed by the humanistic values of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's four pillars of learning: to know, to do, to live together, and to be. Additionally, the authors note that in Woodlea, a school on the outskirts of a Midlands city, children and youth said that their most important learning was on how to work with other people. The authors define and explore the creative learning, and pedagogical practices, of artists who teach. As well, their pictures of schools include the physical environment (schools as places and the importance of place-making) and the teachers' aesthetic pedagogies.

Hall and Thomson work within a theory of vernacular change recognizing that although each school is unique, and connected in complex ways to its place and to the community it serves and thus ways of changing will differ, schools can learn from each other. Their book, they argue, facilitates such sharing. For Hall and Thomson (2017), "Change is not an event but an ongoing localized process" (p.167), however, they add that "the inherent characteristics of the creative arts-their affordances-can be harnessed by leaders to generate productive change"(p. 168). Arguing against the concept of "best practices" in school reform, which implies a one-size fits all approach, they also discount the idea of singular "transformational" change. Instead, Hall and Thomson employ notions of design and redesign.

The concept of distributed leadership has held democratic promise; nevertheless, the authors are skeptical since the approach can be reduced to the delegation of responsibilities as determined by school senior leadership or policy mandates. Instead, they see schools as ecological systems. Positions can be complementary and collaborative rather than simply hierarchical. They emphasize relational practices: "the work of leading and managing creates the conditions for other people in the school to do things" (Hall & Thomson, 2017, p.169). In the several examples they discuss, school leaders used the arts and artists in particular ways: (1) to construct a formal leadership team; (2) to rally a whole school to imagine conceivable and

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[1] Often these learnings overlap, however, since previous decades had seen arts education pushed to the margins, which resulted in less learning in the arts, the possibilities for learning through the arts were correspondingly reduced.

positive futures during which purposes and values were clarified; and (3) to signify a change in direction which may elevate morale and interrupt deficit thinking. The implications of Hall and Thomson's views for school leaders and managers include an emphasis on hope and optimism.

The role of creative agents, often artists who teach but who were not educated as teachers, was important to the Creative Partnerships initiative, and I was left wondering about the response of the UK teacher unions; Hall and Thomson say nothing on this point. Yet, from this Canadian reviewer's perspective, teacher unions are a significant player in school reform, and a broader discussion would have been helpful. Were the unions supportive of the big picture intentions? Were they observers or players in the process? Did they seek a collaborative role, at least, to ensure teachers' professional roles and autonomy?

The text is clearly written and well organized overall. However, it could benefit from further editing. There is an unevenness of voice, which may be the result of one author writing a section and the other writing the next. Alternatively, since parts of the research have been previously published, considerable sifting, and cutting, and/or pasting of several works aimed at a variety of audiences may have occurred and the patchwork effect is somewhat evident. This begs the question: who, or what, is the audience for this publication? The writing is generally pitched to researchers and teacher-educators, but, in some sections, I discerned a patronizing tone (e.g. p.17), one that is sometimes found in texts aimed at pre-service teachers. As well, there is a UK-centric flavour to the work. For example, we find an assumption that *Ofsted*, an acronym, can be used without an initial definition of the full name (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) (e.g. p.40). While all UK educators may be familiar with both the acronym and the name, a global audience does not necessarily share this point of reference.

As to fact checking and copyediting, some errors are more damning than others. For example, despite the fact that the well-known American poet Emily Dickinson died in 1856, we find this sentence: "Writing in 1914, Emily Dickinson expressed…" (e.g. p.18). This is no doubt a mistake relating to when the poem was published, as opposed to when it was written. However, it reveals a lack of basic research about poetry, and the effect is not helpful for the authors' cause. If we use the arts to represent research, we should use them in a true, accurate, and sensitive way. To do otherwise falls back into the tired practice of employing the arts to illustrate points that are first made with the rational use of words, or to use the arts as decoration; both practices reduce the arts to "handmaiden" status. Finally, from time to time, sentences are marred by missing words (e.g. pp.31, 38).

Despite these relatively minor limitations, Hall and Thomson's text is of considerable value. In a dynamic global context where schools strive to adapt to critical economic, environmental, and social demands, the authors summarize new findings about the complexities of transforming education. Their convincing argument is that the challenge of reforming schools might best be met if educators, creative agents, and students alike embrace the creative arts to disrupt the educational status quo.

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