

Editorial: **Creativity and Learning**

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What is Creativity? What is Learning? Can we in any certain way distinguish one from the other, or is creativity the same as learning and vice versa? How does learning relate to education, can we have one without the other? The questions are many and the answers not at all clear as we all in this brief space of seven or more decades travel from the maternity ward to the crematorium. How do we live this all too short stay in life and how do we grow? This special issue of *Chara* deals with Creativity and Learning in all their varied forms and seventeen authors from Africa, Brazil, Portugal, USA and Denmark share their results, thoughts and theories on this subject. Throughout the fifteen articles the continuum between the poles of learning and education is a central theme, and it could be argued that the formative effect of education is to be found 'in the school of the school' whereas the formative effect of learning is to be found 'in the school of Life'. For some, the meeting of learning and education is a meeting of opposites.

A Meeting of Opposites

In the life of every child the first crucial years spanning from nursery to elementary school, is also the story of a life of self forgetting, spontaneous, asynchronous and undirected *play for play's sake* that gradually turns into a life of directedness, purpose, duty and self awareness. In this continuum the preschools and early elementary schools can be said to mediate the care and timelessness of the nursery with the ambition and the goal directed education in the school. This is a meeting of opposites: a self forgetting, non directed and spontaneous play for play's sake confronting a self conscious, directed and preprogrammed educational practice. Today, it is thought by many that the traditional teaching approaches do not accommodate our needs; and according to this analysis we must find new ways of learning and being creative.

A way forward is suggested to be an implementation of art and the widely acknowledged 'creative' features of artistic practice. It is assumed, that our traditional theory of learning can be revitalized by the creativity of artistic mindsets. Artists usually are charismatic, vibrant and they often express a sensation of joy and free spirit that must stem from the very practice of their artistic

creation. Artistic practice is a powerful practice with strong vocational features, and this kind of *drive* would be welcomed in any institutional practice, where the creative minds of both children, teachers and leaders all too often diminish into a relation of compliance and a sense of futility - the futility of spending the better part of ones life on preprogrammed skill-producing activities, coaching for tests, taking tests and reviewing test results.

In 1971 the English psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott wrote:

'...It is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living. Contrasted with this is a relationship to external reality which is one of compliance, the world and its details being recognized but only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaption. Compliance carries with it a sense of futility for the individual and is associated with the idea that nothing matters and that life is not worth living. In a tantalizing way many individuals have experienced just enough of creative living to recognize that for the most of their time they are living uncreatively, as if caught up in the creativity of someone else...'

Winnicott is focusing on the consequences of compliance for the individual, but what about the futility of the preschools as they are forced to show compliance with the pressure on schools to guarantee that all students will meet the minimum skill levels? A compliance syndrome is immanent, and as the American developmental psychologist Irving Sigel puts it: *'...a devastating effect of this is what a child comes to believe about himself. Children come to believe they are valued for what they memorize or produce or achieve...'* We promote a culture where human beings are valued for what they achieve and not for what they are.

Is the path of compliance a path that we should pursue or do we need to rethink the meaning and foundation of our understanding of Creativity and Learning? It is my hope that this special issue of Chara will facilitate further investigation into this most important topic.

Welcome to the third issue of Chara!