Editorial: Special Issue on Creative Higher Education Curriculum and Pedagogy

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Research in Art, Design and Media (ADM) Higher Education matters because it has the potential to enhance educational practice from the perspective of creative pedagogies and the cultural and creative industries. Specifically in practice-based ADM education, there is often a tension between theory and practice, and a lack of opportunity to reflect critically on our curriculum and pedagogy (Orr and Shreeve, 2017). In this special issue of *Makings*, we wanted to explore challenges, debates and practices across contemporary ADM Higher Education. We sought to reflect a diverse range of national and international contributions, from established researchers to academics whose main role is to teach, and who have no or little experience of academic writing. For that reason, the call for this special issue included a writing workshop to encourage and support those with less experience of academic research and writing. The outcome is a range of contributions including conventional articles, blogposts and an audio piece.

These are challenging times for Higher Education, at least in the UK where we are experiencing cost cutting measures resulting in the shutting down of arts, humanities, and social science courses (Jack Grove, Times Higher Education, May 2022). This will inevitably have an impact on the cultural and creative industries workforce. Furthermore, Covid-19 coronavirus resulted in additional difficulties for teaching creative subjects which tend to rely on access to specialist resources, collaborative practices and experiential learning. As Terri Newman (2020) points out, our usual teaching habits changed dramatically since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly collaborative and practical methods of teaching such as those used in many Art, Design and Media courses. ADM teaching and learning often requires a dynamic relationship between space, those collaborating within that space (learners and teachers) and the culture which they create collectively. Much of this has come into question, causing academics to reflect on their teaching practice. Bridgstock (2019) suggests that there is already relatively little literature which reviews how and what we teach, including the extent to which our curriculum reflects cultural and creative industries work. This special issue, which began at the tail end of the pandemic, is an opportunity to reflect and process the educational developments which have taken place over the last few years. The contributions in this special

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issue, encompass a range of concerns, ideas and opportunities, for creative Higher Education teaching and learning practices. As a collective body of work, and as individual contributions, these can be considered through three intersecting lenses: *contexts, spaces and approaches*, offering insights for ADM educational development.

Contexts

The landscape of Higher Education, and within it, the range of experiences across ADM practices, forms the wider backdrop for the *Contexts* of the activities discussed in the contributions. As we highlight, this backdrop is punctuated by social and economic forces and tensions within the environments of both Higher Education and the cultural and creative industries, and is marked by the unexpected and seismic changes caused by the Covid-19 global pandemic. In addition, a further interplay of contextual factors apply that are specific to individual institutions and to particular subject areas and fields of practice.

Conflicting social and economic dynamics are discussed by several contributors. Wills' blog piece, in the *Studio* section of this special issue, presents arguments that consolidate ideas within discussions and debates about social mobility and the art school, connecting with notions of class and widening participation and social deprivation. Drawing on Banks and Oakley (2016), who discuss class in relation to the history and absorption of formerly independent art schools into further and higher education UK institutions, Wills considers the transition of the art school into Higher Education and the implications of increased neoliberal approaches in universities. The Art School, also referred to by other contributors in this issue, is broadly understood within the context of contemporary further or higher education as primarily offering study in a variety of visual arts subjects, or in affiliated creative subject areas. Wills identifies barriers that reduce the arts school's ability to facilitate social mobility, particularly in a creative and cultural industries context marked by sector precarity and inequalities. None the less, Wills is hopeful for a future in which arts education is valued less narrowly and where the creative and cultural industries are characterised by greater diversification and inclusion.

In examining animation teaching and learning, Ternan explores tensions between the objects of education and the objects of industry (Orr and Shreeve, 2017) in shaping and informing Art and Design curriculum design. In doing so, Ternan draws on the concept of signature pedagogies (Shulman, 2005), representing common features of Art and Design teaching and learning approaches, including ideas about what equipment, technologies and methods are deemed to be most relevant. His case study reflects on the educational benefits of integrating of a 'lost' animation method that had been replaced by new technologies used by industry. Furthermore, Ternan interrogates a technocratic emphasis that risks neglect of questioning, a capacity which, he underlines, education should foster, particularly in Art and Design areas where tech and software are often a central focus.

Ternan's work is valuable in highlighting the tendency in Art, Design and Media courses, and higher education more widely, to prepare students as 'industry-ready', focusing on skilling students and nurturing enthusiasm for cultural and creative industries work, with sometimes less opportunities for engagement with critical, ethical and socially engaged debates. Yet, as Sorrentino's action research demonstrates, working with industry can be a fruitful way of

developing curriculum when all involved are fully engaged in the process. A truly collaborative approach, involving the co-design of curriculum with students and industry partners (in this case M&C Saatchi) can address critical issues such as diversity and under-representation in the creative workforce. Working closely with industry and external organisations is a feature of Peterson's curriculum which aims to help students understand the role of the cultural and creative industries in the context of social and economic challenges including issues relating to sustainability and the environment. As Peterson states, this brings together employability with critical thinking, encouraging students to see themselves as actively involved in shaping the cultural and creative industries.

In positioning their commentaries and analyses, many contributors refer to the context of the coronavirus pandemic. For example: Papadopoulos & Schreibman position Covid-19 as an educational disruptor in relation to the redesign of a praxis-based media master's course; McLeod reflects critically on the challenges and opportunities posed for teaching and learning by Covid-19 in relation to possibilities for reimagining the teaching of art studio practice; Pescod highlights increased interest in online tooling, exacerbated by Covid-19, through evaluating different methods of providing student guidance to support a newly redeveloped institutional online blogging platform.

Additionally, some authors refer to other combinations of contextual factors that inform and shape ADM teaching and learning. For instance: Portfolio careers and entrepreneurship have long been important aspects of the curriculum, preparing students for work in the wider CCI (Agusita & Naudin, 2021) and this is discussed by Charles and Nichols whose article highlights issues of culture and identity when teaching entrepreneurship. Their research suggests that taking into account the underpinning values and cultures which drive creative students can be a fruitful way of adapting curriculum to suit a creative industry context. Fallon and Wetherell explore individual cultural heritage as the context for encouraging students to use their personal experiences as part of their research for fashion design. They argue that this puts the student at the heart of their learning and empowers them, creating a link between creativity and motivation, as the student brings to bear their 'authentic-self' to the learning environment. The authors argue that this prepares students for the world of work by encouraging them to see their background and heritage as an advantage and source of inspiration.

The relationship between courses in film production and employability is explored by Nunn, who challenges the discrepancies between enticing students onto a university programme and the realities of working in the sector. As Nunn states, there are well documented structural inequalities in the film, television and wider creative industries, creating barriers to entry. Our role as educators is to balance a fine line between a curriculum which supports students' employability while engaging in critical debates about the sector workforce. Nunn's article describes an approach to engaging students in these debates, including a diversity of voices and bringing wider policy contexts into the curriculum through an interactive process.

Spaces

Ongoing social, cultural and economic shifts and developments have seeded and prompted changes in educational *Spaces* in which ADM teaching and learning takes place. The includes

the creation of *new* kinds of spaces and the rethink and redesign of existing spaces and places for academic work and study.

Thinking about creative spaces is at the heart of McHugh and Whitaker's article which reconsiders hierarchies by drawing attention to the home as a curated space. The Covid-19 pandemic and the idea of working from home resulted in an opportunity to review the home and objects in our home as a space for learning and teaching. Their article is a fascinating collaboration between a ceramicist and an art psychotherapist which draws on interdisciplinary literature to reflect theoretically on the lived experience of using home as a learning space. Deliberately engaging with domestic and personal spaces, allowing us to question blurred barriers between work and home, professional and amateur, as a context for creative higher education.

While acknowledging the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic, McLeod identifies the space which it caused to open-up in art education in order to address those challenges; 'a space to do things differently'. In her autoethnographic account, McLeod discusses the dematerialisation of art school studio practice in higher education during lockdown. She observes that the need to create different sites for making and exhibiting work; dematerialising and rematerialising the studio space in new ways, fuelled innovation of teaching and learning, by drawing on and adapting pedagogies from the past and the present. Via the practice of dérive and engagement with other radical pedagogies and historical perspectives, which consider artists' encounters with precarity and resilience, McLeod finds value in the exploration of the unknown and signals optimism about imagining new and different possibilities for arts education.

Pescod also considers increased migration of creative subject teaching and learning in higher education into digital and online spaces, fuelled by Covid 19, resulting in growing demand for online tooling. Pescod offers a case-study of a university blogging platform which was reimagined and reinvented to address the needs of practice-based subjects being delivered at distance. In considering how best to provide more effective technical guidance to students, a range of challenges, solutions and lessons learnt are indicated, with wider lessons for higher education as online teaching and learning becomes increasingly integrated. For instance, Pescod finds that student's digital literacies are often overestimated, and that existing tools, rather than newly procured educational technologies, can be re-examined and re-purposed to produce new benefits for learners.

Approaches

Contextual factors for ADM Higher Education, especially those shaped by wider imperatives and recent world-events, have propagated, forced and inspired changes in pedagogical and curriculum design *Approaches*. This has opened up possibilities for new modes of engagement, new curricula and new pedagogical forms as well as creating opportunities for adaptation, rethinking and re-repurposing of existing and older technologies, thinking and practices.

Acknowledging the importance of interdisciplinary work, Patrão and Rodriguez describe a method of teaching collaborative work across different year groups. The students in their

study develop skills and knowledge in creativity and autonomy, with relatively little intervention by teachers. Drawing on Freire's pedagogy of autonomy (2008), the authors encourage students to take responsibility for their learning, acknowledging the messiness and unpredictability of this approach. Interdisciplinary practices are also central to McMahon, Ribchester, Brown and Randell's approach, who write about increasing student's employability by engaging them in collaborative work. But as the authors discuss, with hindsight, assumptions about the students' ability to communicate and work collaboratively resulted in some challenges. The authors discuss some detailed recommendations for overcoming these difficulties which could be applied to a wide range of teaching and learning contexts.

In Sounding Together, Bhagotra creatively explores the use of sound pedagogies and practices in Higher Education, via a podcast and contextual think piece. In the podcast, which contains excerpts from a collaborative student centred education project exploring and disseminating podcast and sound pedagogies through sonic practice, students engage in discussions about their perceptions and experiences of using educational podcasts and audio-based materials in their studies. The work considers how pedagogy and curriculum might be reimagined in relation to themes of community, DIY methodology, dematerialisation and sound practices, and via engagement with practice-based digital radio station Rounded Radio. Bhagotra's work highlights both benefits and challenges regarding the use of sound-based oriented approaches in online and digital spaces and modes of teaching and learning.

Many contributors to this special issue underline the value of problem-based learning methods in their analyses and observations of ADM higher education. For example, McCann explores methods and pedagogical processes through which educators can help and support students to adapt and diversify their screenwriting work, (e.g., film to TV adaptations), reflecting industry changes and real-world challenges. She proposes that the use of a problem-based learning (PBL) approach which harnesses methods of self-adaptation, can be used to help generate authentic assessments that reflect transferable skills the industry needs. Specifically, McCann discusses the Metempsychosis Method she is developing through her doctoral research, which aims to offer learners a creative and flexible framework to support self-adaptation. McCann identifies that this approach enables learners to understand and practically apply relevant 'threshold concepts', and encourages agile, reflective and independent learning; offering a model which could be employed across a range of art, design and media education contexts, and creative fields and platforms.

Papadopoulos & Schriebman also explore a case of project-based learning, where Covid-19 was used as both a motif and a theme to enable the reconceptualisation of a project-based course in creating digital collections within a Master's in Media Studies. They found that the redesign of the PBL course to operate online, which draws on critical making and design thinking processes, enabled the development of lifelong and transferable skills (such as digital and entrepreneurial skills), helped student to cope with the effects of social isolation and supported them to identify the social relevance of their studies. As such, Papadopoulos & Schriebman, argue that approaches used resonate with Devlin and Samarawickrema's (2022) call for the development of 'new pedagogies for unknown futures', which can assist students in developing not only discipline specific skills, but competencies which they can use in the context of future work and in their everyday lives. Developing long lasting competencies is

also a significant aspect of Fallon and Wetherell's approach to developing confidence, skills and knowledge for work in the cultural and creative industries. By embracing the idea of 'personal heritage', Fallon and Wetherell engage fashion students in reflective and independent learning, using a pedagogic tool which brings together: belief, action and design. It is common for art students to draw inspiration and ideas from personal identities but some students lack the courage or feel a sense of imposter syndrome so deeply that they are reluctant draw on their personal heritage. Yet as Fallon and Wetherell discuss, drawing on personal heritage can be a powerful way of developing research skills, of encouraging independent study and of generating enthusiasm for their learning.

Reflections

Educational development in ADM is alive and well when we consider the wealth of ideas and creative approaches described by the contributors to this special issue. Consequently, we offer the following observations of key areas that contribute knowledge and provide insights about the current state and possible future research into ADM education.

Despite a wide range of challenges and constraints, which make it more difficult to critically reflect on ADM curriculum and pedagogy, our contributors evidence an eagerness and openness to reflect on and to review their own educational practices more widely. They demonstrate a keenness to engage and experiment with new, existing and previous ideas, methods, processes, materials and environments, exploring tensions between theory and practice, with the aim of creating and delivering better quality teaching experiences.

Many contributors advocate for, and/or are actively engaged in rethinking the context, meaning and significance of the creative and cultural industries and employability therein, generating new opportunities for students. As discussed by Orr and Shreeve (2017) the contributions to this special issue of Makings exemplify the complexities of ADM education through the themes of values, knowledge and ambiguity. More broadly, the collective body of these contributions demonstrate critical consciousness of changes, sometimes gradual and at other times more rapid, that shift, shake and alter the environment of ADM teaching and learning in higher education, the creative and cultural industries and society more widely. Whilst recognising the difficulties this presents, there is a sense of optimism and a commitment to working through and across tensions and contradictions, recognising new opportunities to work towards future-building in ADM education and increasing capacity for adaptability, sustainability and resilience.

Facer (2022) argues, rethinking the future university, should not only involve critiques of current practice or normative aspirational approaches but should engage in imaginative inquiry that is reflexive, generative and emergent. The future of cultural and creative industries is unknown but the contributors to this special issue demonstrate an eagerness to respond to change through a thoughtful and reflective approach to educational development. As editors of this special issue, our ambition was to encourage and support the continued exploration of new possibilities for Art, Design and Media education futures.

Acknowledgements

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