

THE FEAR OF THE QUESTION WHY?

WHY IS THE QUESTION OF “WHY” SO IMPORTANT?

The basic answer to, why we fear the question of ‘why’? is due to the fact that it is a lot easier to just focus on the how and what questions and this is because it doesn’t require ourselves to invest in understanding our own motivations and inspirations; the reason behind doing something. In context to being creative, the most fundamental question to answer and understand for ourselves is *why*. For Sinek (2009) the question of why is paramount for communication, understanding and identifying a sense of identity; “when the ‘why’ goes, ‘what’ is all you’ll have left” (Sinek,2009:202).

Asking questions, as Maeyens (2018) illustrates that “asking questions is a powerful tool, it is a key that can unlock many doors, it is a key to understanding the world, other people and ourselves” (Maeyens,2018). Without understanding the why, there is no intrinsic purpose, motivation and inspiration. There are two key terms that are important to identify here; intrinsic and extrinsic. When something is intrinsic, I am referring to something that has value because of its basic nature, rather than something that is valuable as a result of its connection with other things (Collins, n.d). Whereas, when I am referring to something that is extrinsic, it means something that it exists outside of itself (Collins,n.d).

Therefore, taking this model and applying it to questions of why, what and how. When we focus on the what and how we are predominantly focussing on the extrinsic factors of those questions thus, when we are focussing on the why, it is predominantly intrinsic (PS, 09). The students need the teacher to be their motivation and inspiration, not only in context to this experience but also with how the students attach themselves to the teacher’s own intrinsic motivations as well. What is my ‘why’ and how can that be used to motivate my students? (PS 10,11,12).

WHY IS THE QUESTION OF “WHY” IMPORTANT IN ART EDUCATION?

As Peavey articulates, “Questions can be like a lever you use to pry open the stuck lid on a paint can...If we have a short lever, we can only just crack open the lid on the can. But if we have a longer lever, or a more dynamic question, we can open that can up much wider and really stir things up...If the right question is applied, and it digs deep enough, then we can stir up all the creative solutions” (Vogt, Brown and Isaacs, 2003: 3).

In context to Art education, because of its nature and its personal intrinsic investment, the question of ‘why’ is fundamental. By establishing and understanding your ‘why’ you are able to build from it and transcend it to a tangible outcome (PS 13).

For creativity, the ‘why’ acts as the foundation for where things grow from. “... The concept of creativeness and the concept of the healthy, self-actualising, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together, and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing” (Petty, 2017:182). By returning to an older model of learning, ‘experiential learning’ first developed by Dewey explores a more intrinsic relationship to the learning process: learning by doing (Dewey, 1997). This is something that the Arts encourages through experimentation of materials and ideas and that through the creative process can be manifested (Petty, 2017).

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INCORPORATING QUESTIONING INTO THE WAY TEACHERS TEACH ART?

As Einstein illustrates, “If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first fifty-five minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes” (Vogt, Brown and

Isaacs, 2003:1). The example above can be used to illustrate not only the importance of asking questions but also the fundamental benefit of it too. With the right question, you get the right answer. With the right question, it becomes clearer. Whether that is establishing your meanings behind your work, establishing your (intrinsic and extrinsic) motivations to pursue or do something, or even establishing your “why”. As teachers we must facilitate a culture of learning that allows our students to feel that they can do this; a space where they have freedom to try things out, fail and experiment. To develop and discover their own identity and autonomy (PS04,12,13). By adapting to this, it will also ensure that the students are more motivated and inspired to learn, as it will give them more responsibility and autonomy over their own learning too (PS01,11). Studying and being in a creative space, whether it is in an Art lesson or another creative space the students are actively engaging in the creative process of discovery and development. As Carl Jung articulates, ‘the great joy of play is that for a time we are utterly spontaneous in a state of pure being. No thought is unthinkable, no image is unimaginable. Every good idea and all creative works are the offspring of the imagination’ (TEDxTalks, 2015) and the role of the Art teacher is to facilitate this engagement between the individual and the creative process and between imagination and creativity. To enable the students to grow and develop their own autonomy and voice through asking the right questions and allowing the student(s) to answer it; by marrying extrinsic and intrinsic inquiries (PS17,12,13).

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