

A Rationale for the Learning Methodologies Underpinning *A Morning of Inspiration*

Stage one of a professional development programme for teachers and school leaders in Applied Creativity.

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1. Introduction

The text below attempts to offer a rationale for the learning methodologies underpinning *A Morning of Inspiration*. Taking inspiration from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the rationale explores some of the parallels and contrasts Joyce's work mirrors for education. To begin with, as standardised tests usher in a level of homogeneity, traditional maps, evidencing the diverse range of the student voice, are increasingly being erased from the narrative. Psychogeography was therefore selected as the primary medium to re-engage with a community and re-connect with students' experiences.

Second, the growth of mobile devices offers huge potential for collaborative learning locally, nationally and internationally. However, before teachers start to take this leap, they will be asked to consider their choice of mobile device as a creative learning tool within a framework of *Applied Creativity*. The camera phone is used as a simple, yet effective example to illustrate this point.

Third, throughout the morning, teachers are asked to reflect on their experience of engaging with subjects and themes that seem to bear no immediate relationship to their core subject area(s). Fashion and architecture are used to highlight the power of connections.

Fourth, the session concludes with lunch at a local community venue in west London. As a creative space, this hub lends itself to the sharing of reflective practice.

Finally, as possibly one of the last democratic spaces in London, the tube was chosen as the mode of transport for a longer journey across the city. As the London underground spreads its tentacles across a vast geographical space, it offers a non-discriminatory form of transport for both the brain surgeon and the cleaner. And so, as Stephen Daedalus transverses back and forth across the city of Dublin with an enviable level of freedom, we end our day back at our original starting point, James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

2. *Ulysses*, by James Joyce

In terms of curricula objectives, literacy was selected as the primary discipline for *A Morning of Inspiration*, upon which subsidiary learning aims were integrated. Within the context of psychogeography (see below) and adhering to the primary aims of *Applied Creativity for Teachers and Education Leaders* to widen the remit of teaching and learning to include all stories, inspiration was taken from James Joyce's *Ulysses* for the design of the programme. Indeed, the reasons for this decision were as varied and as complex as *Ulysses* itself.

- a. The inability of even our most literate citizenry to read, engage with or indeed finish *Ulysses*, despite their best efforts, symbolises the frustrations many children and young people experience when reading or handling academic

- texts. Can the integration of creative pedagogy lighten the cognitive load for students and illustrate the power and relevance of language?
- b. Virginia Woolf considered *Ulysses* “an illiterate, underbred book” (Cian 2016). Similarly, if formal education lacks relevance for children and young people, are questions they pose in terms of the purpose of education, or indeed their need to finish their schooling, valid? Can creative pedagogy in combination with design methodologies allow for the re-alignment of expectations?
 - c. Joyce’s play on syntax often presents readers with impenetrable texts. Such impenetrability symbolises limited routes to aspiration, i.e. post education. With traditional industries decimated and a growing global population competing for fewer jobs, hopelessness replaces motivation. As readers of *Ulysses* deploy strategies to navigate syntactic obstructions, how can creative thinking equip young people and their communities with the vision to look through such impenetrability to new ways of seeing and engaging with the world?
 - d. Joyce’s anarchic style and use of language prompt both a personalised and randomised engagement with *Ulysses*, where a reader may choose to read chapter three before chapter one, or skip sections before returning. With standardised assessments in the ascendancy, can the inclusion of creative pedagogy deliver personalised learning from the bottom-up, with students designing their own curriculum, based on their own stories?
 - e. Given the centrality of epiphanies to Joyce’s work, can we situate learning within the students’ own community and so allow for chance meetings and sudden new ways of understanding that foster greater teacher-student collaborations?
 - f. *Ulysses* spawned a community. The inclusion of Dublin in its entirety alludes to the democratic objectives of *Applied Creativity for Teachers and Education Leaders*. From my experience of working in higher education, it is the erosion of democratic principles within a framework of neo-liberal education that prompted the development of this training programme. As entry into higher education is increasingly based on access to finance rather than access to a genuine learning experience, today’s *student-consumers* increasingly perceive education in terms of their own sense of entitlement to wealth and social capital (Ding 2016). Indeed, this is the antithesis of how working class communities define success (Stahl 2015). Consequently, how can we re-define canons of knowledge to ensure education includes this value of learning?
 - g. Finally, *Ulysses* paid homage to the mundane and recognised value in ordinariness. It is the celebration of the everyday, of everyday people, places and happenings that makes *Ulysses* the most famous book published in the English language in the 20th Century. *Applied Creativity for Teachers and Education Leaders* seeks to champion ordinariness in all its forms and to place it at the centre of learning. How do you as a teacher situate the ordinariness of your students’ community into your practice?

3. Psychogeography

At an introductory level, psychogeography, located within the school of geography, refers to the playful drifting around urban environments. Originally developed by the avant-garde movement seeking to remove barriers between culture and everyday life, connections to Dadaism and Surrealism alludes to a sense of play. While Guy Debord sought a revolutionary approach to architecture that was less functional and more open to exploration, contemporary wanderers seek to create works based on exploring locations by walking. Seeking to align geographical contours with the contours of human experience, *A Morning of Inspiration* asks teachers to walk and gaze at street-level to challenge the official narrative that defines the student voice. Walking through both affluent and marginal areas, teachers explore the drab ordinariness beneath the flux of daily life. Drifting aimlessly provides an opportunity for unexpected juxtapositions, or epiphanies, and the role of imagination in transmuting the original. The session will give teachers an opportunity to engage with the anonymous sections of a community, as they seek to understand the strengths, challenges and aspirations of the neighbourhood they are there to serve.

a. Creative Photography

Because of a simple camera phone, growing numbers of children around the world are now photographers. In traditional classroom planning, however, it is still the teacher who is primarily responsible for sourcing, adapting and critiquing learning content to be used in class. How can students share through their camera phones the responsibility of sourcing content that reflects their own interests? Throughout the morning, teachers are asked to engage with questions that require critical use of their camera phone to encourage a different perspective on the ordinary.

b. Fashion

A Morning of Inspiration provides teachers an opportunity to make connections between two distinct areas and explore their integration for teaching and learning purposes. High-end fashion is one such example. Sonya Rykiel, both a designer and writer, developed concept stores around the world to juxtapose her love of both books and her designs. When looking through the front window, it is difficult to identify the purpose of the store. Is it a bookshop, or a fashion store? Indeed, most teachers would question the validity of even entering. However, on walking through the door, one is immediately confronted with elements of outstanding design. Angles, shapes, colours and music that showcase literature all direct one to the strategic and subtle placement of clothing throughout the store. Having experienced such positivity, teachers are asked to reflect on how students feel walking into their own classrooms every day? What simple yet cost effective design juxtapositions can be made to enhance teaching and learning? Does your classroom inspire students to learn?

https://www.soniarykiel.com/en_uk/

c. Architecture

Over coffee, we engage with architecture. On a superficial level, an overstretched English or Science teacher may question the validity of such engagement. Returning

to Joyce's use of epiphanies, we suspect that the chance meeting of a qualified architect could present teachers with new ways of engaging with their own subject. For example, how often are students asked for a biography of their house? For those living in cramped conditions, have they ever been asked to consider the architectural and design decisions underpinning the construction of their community? As populations increase and affordable housing becomes a luxury, how can students use Science, Geography and Computational Thinking, for example, to re-design their community, particularly when dealing with the rapid advancements of technology? Can a chance meeting with an architect sow the seeds for such questioning?

<http://www.ribabookshops.com>

d. Food

Book and Kitchen in Ladbrooke Grove is the final destination for *A Morning of Inspiration*. A beautiful blend of a bookshop, café, live music and a supper club, it is a positive example of creative thinking evident at community level. An eclectic use of design takes you on a journey through the diverse history of Ladbrooke Grove. The range of authors on the shelves mirrors the linguistic diversity and life experience of children attending local schools. Indeed, *Book and Kitchen* invites school children to its venue to sample literature. The children's area offers a well-considered snug with an opportunity to simultaneously read fiction and play. Access to a garden courtyard provides space for stillness, a reminder to all that children also need quiet time during the hectic school day to reflect and absorb. The overall design of *Book and Kitchen* will provide teachers with the space to reflect on how this concept could be adapted or applied to their own school context.

<http://www.bookandkitchen.com>

e. The London Underground

On first impressions, the tube appears as a multicultural maze, a chaotic mass of randomised directions that obscure a set of highly organised pre-planned movements. While the convoluted twists and turns bear little resemblance to the topography above ground, the tube offers a Joycean spirit of criss-crossing an entire city in a single day. The daily operations of the tube give each person below ground their own part to play, their own agency. Going down a rabbit-hole only to re-surface at some distant point provides teachers with an opportunity to compare more affluent areas of London with those more financially challenged. The journey to their destination asks them to situate themselves within the ordinariness of a daily commute and to consider the constant stream of inventions. For it is this constant stream of inventions that lies at the very epicentre of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. What does invention mean to you? Do you seek to constantly invent?

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