



'Creative Revolution'

Creativity 5x5x5 Conference

June 2015, Bath

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CASE STUDIES

LEYMN core member, Marjorie Ouvry feeds back from the Creativity Conference held at Bath Spa University in June. She shares the keynote, presentations and her reflections from the day.

[Creativity 5x5x5](#) Conference was entitled Creative Revolution having as its guest speaker Sir Ken Robinson whose famous TED talks are the most viewed in the history of the TED organisation. I am one of over 300 million people who have been inspired by these talks on YouTube and so was very grateful to LEYMN for giving me the opportunity to hear him.

Sir Ken spoke engagingly, introducing the idea of creativity as a process of co-constructed original ideas that have values. These ideas are constructed in the context of our culture and beliefs. The present system of education based on an out-dated model militates against creativity in the dominant culture in three ways:

1. Conformity; predicated on certain sorts of academic ability. The tension between basing an education system on conformity and in doing so suppressing the unique child disaffects a great many children.
2. Compliance; characterised by specific rules and standards. Sir Ken stated that the testing industry in the US fuels compliance asserting that the testing industry is now out of control. Costing \$16 billion, testing is worth more than National Football industry (\$9 billion) and the Hollywood film industry (\$11.2 billion) I couldn't help realising that England is heading in this direction, with more and more testing, adding to the commercialisation of education in this country.
3. Linearity; the idea that you are on a set course. Our education system should not be encouraging a linear approach, as we have no idea what the world will be like in ten years time.

There is no shortage of creativity. In fact human imagination in the form of technological advances cause the problems, e.g. using up precious resources. There is a race between civilisation and disaster. How can I change this educational system? Sir Ken answered his own question, 'change your bit of it'.

He then gave us an example of how people have a view, come to conclusions and make decisions according to their cultural mind-set. Children's imagination is suppressed or nurtured according to the way in which problems are framed.



He finished by showing us a [film](#) of the inexhaustible human imagination which founded an orchestra in Paraguay with instruments made from the human detritus in rubbish heaps. It is called the Landfillharmonic.

Sir Ken Robinson's talk was inevitably too short to go into the depth which is necessary in any worthwhile discussion on education. He stated the problems with the present system without having time to exemplify an alternative system based on agreed ethical values, that capitalises on children's creativity.

There was sadly no time to have a Q&A session at which some of these issues might have been aired.

The next session showcased some of the wonderful projects that 5x5x5 have been, are, and will be funding and supporting, including concepts familiar to us, as early years practitioners such as observing children and extending *their* interests, an integrated curriculum, using drama and drawing to initiate and consolidate learning, making distinction between learning and teaching. All were highlighted in fascinating presentations. Sadly there was no music making in any projects. I didn't get an opportunity to ask why not.

[The Power of the Arts in Primary Education](#): A very insightful reception teacher gave an excellent presentation confirming that children don't need to be given ideas as they are brimming full of them. Her staff devised a common framework of words, as a shared base for noticing what is of worth e.g. I can be curious; I can make links; I can question; I can communicate; I can evaluate. Creativity came from curiosity and freedom of choice. Art Gallery visits that fostered observation and direct experience, curiosity, self-belief, co-construction and collaboration.

Phrases that helped me to think more creatively, and that I will use when recognising potential starting off points to extend children's thinking were, 'moments that glow'; 'listen, linger, wonder and speculate'; and 'observing what is of worth'.

The other projects that were presented included a short film featuring a formerly agoraphobic mother talking about the impact a project had on herself and her child.

[Sense of Place](#), Early Years research project, Bristol. Under the guise of learning to write, this school concentrated on drawing, challenging the 'I can't do it' culture. They observed how the act of drawing altered states of emotion, moods and behaviour. 'You can't do the picture until you've done the writing', was reversed.

[School without Walls](#), where primary and secondary school children inhabited the Egg Theatre for weeks at a time integrating all their school studies through theatre based experiences. WOW! How innovative! No disaffected students here!

[Forest of Imagination](#) is a current project where artists, teachers, parents, researchers, schools, thought-leaders and change-makers as well as multi-disciplined businesses, individuals and local authorities want to re-invent Bath as a city of imagination and creativity, leading to a future commitment to contemporary arts in Bath.

Sir Ken was invited to launch the Forest of Imagination project after which a young poet, Toby Thompson ended the conference by reading the poem he'd written reflecting the impact of the day on him.

