

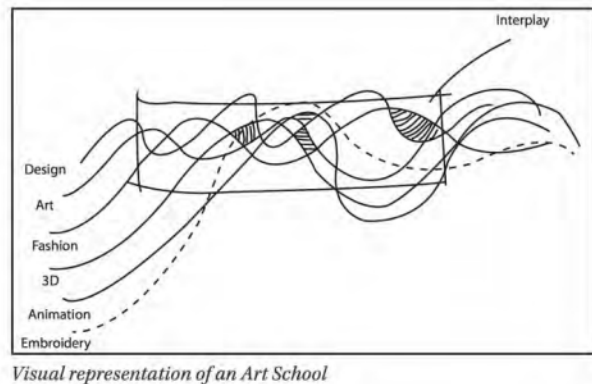
## A CROSS-DISCIPLINARY WORKSHOP EXPLORING COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS WITHIN MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART.

A Project by Rachel Kelly, Senior Lecturer, Manchester School of Art and MMU PGCHE student.

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### Introduction

“Unit X is not only a new theoretical model for the delivery of a 21st Curriculum it is an active testing ground for new pedagogical practice, a place for academics to explore new ways of collaborating, delivering and engaging with students as co-developers of the learning experience”. McCullagh, J., McFadyen, J., Holmes, A., 2013.



Our Art School has been built to enable collaboration to happen, but work needs to be done to bring students into that model and to support staff in sustaining this approach to teaching and learning.

I am exploring the benefit of collaborative teaching and learning techniques stimulated in my PGCHE studies on the Creativity for Learning Unit. I am interested in developing teaching models to enable students to work in groups more effectively.

The student group participating in my L5 Unit X workshop were from BA Fashion, Fine Art and Textiles in Practice. Their live brief was to design a group fashion collection and textile samples for contemporary fashion label James Long. The learning outcomes require students to demonstrate understandings of interdisciplinary perspectives in design practice and to demonstrate collaborative practice.

### Aim

To develop a student centred visualisation workshop to enable students to consider and identify strategies and models for successful multi-disciplinary group work.

### Objectives

1. Students will be able to construct a working group model to visualise collaborative practice within their own project.
2. Students will be able to evaluate their ideas in an open inclusive and safe learning environment.
3. That the workshop will enable creative teaching and learning to be tested.
4. That the workshop enable students to consider different group working styles relevant to the project brief and context.

### The Workshop

This workshop offered a replacement to the traditional tutorial format towards a more open and inclusive and contextually relevant model to better support collaborative practice. This work has been crucial in expanding my understanding of how group collaborative projects can work better for students and academics.

The concept for the workshop arose from Ikebana, the Japanese Art of flower arranging. I considered how Ikebana uses balance and meditations around space to enable the workshop participants to play and visualise thoughts, ideas and concepts as organic structures.

I organised the workshop as a vehicle for me to test my teaching and learning ideas by:

- Having a teaching assistant to record as notes and photograph the session.
- Asking students to reflect upon the session via their project blogs.
- Delivering the workshop to two teaching groups to enable comparisons to be made.
- Reflecting on the experience via my CFL blog and discussing the session outcomes with my teaching assistant.

I was able to evaluate the session from a number of perspectives:  
Firstly, from the immediate responses and outcomes recorded during the session;  
Secondly from my personal reflections as Lecturer after the session;  
Thirdly, from a reading of the models created and documented as drawings and photos; Fourthly, taken from the student blog reflections;  
A final evaluation can also be taken from the final project assessment outcomes.

#### Image References

Art School Model taken from McCullagh, J., McFadyen, J., Holmes, A., 2013. “Unit X, future-proofing the undergraduate curriculum” Designing Design Education for India, India, March 2013, In Proceedings, DDEI, 2013 accessed 12/5/16 <http://indiadesigncouncil.org/pdf/DDEIConferenceProceedings.pdf>

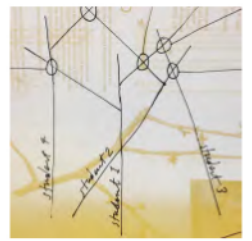
Images by Rachel Kelly taken during Ikebana teaching innovation workshop 25th April 2016 MSA.

### Evaluation

The results which emerged, enabled a number of pertinent and helpful collaborative models to be drawn. The three main models which arose from the workshops were:

#### BAMBOO

– A compositional proximity running vertically side by side, a gentle sharing of ideas.



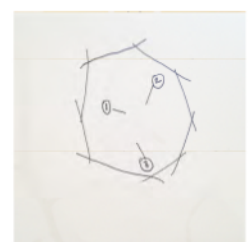
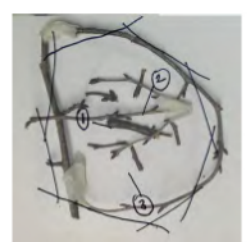
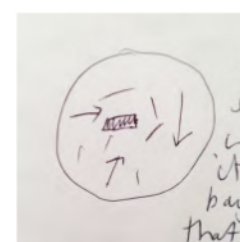
#### CROSSING FORM

– A model where individual branches cross at multiple defined points.



#### CONTAINED FORM

– A defined border representing unity but within elements remain independent.



“From this tutorial I personally feel a lot more confident with the performance of individual group members from what they were expressing in this session”.

“We felt more confident as a group after this session as we are now all clear about what needs to be done”

“The first diagram represents the group coming together with all the ideas at the beginning and then each person branching off and elaborating the initial ideas in different textile areas. However this was not good group work as everyone was going separate directions”

“the idea of using branches was a bit weird at first, but when we used them to show how our group had been working and to represent how we feel, it really was useful to see how everyone was feeling. Because otherwise I think we would have carried on and not said anything”.

Taken from L5 MSA Student blog reflections

“The workshop enabled me to facilitate and focus on the students, but also to respond instinctively and honestly, as they did. The students talked more than I did and I felt it was a positive teaching experience”.

Rachel Kelly Senior Lecturer MSA

### Conclusion

In the professional world, collaboration is the operational model that is required to facilitate production. Therefore within teaching and learning at undergraduate level, if the degree is to fully prepare students for professional practice there needs to be a supportive teaching and learning environment for this to flourish.

The result of the workshop was that each group created a collaborative ‘vision’ and were able to identify where the value within this project lay for them individually and within the greater context of their degree studies. Recommendations are summarised as follows:

1. Incorporate strategically the ideas of the More Knowledgeable Other Theory (Vygotsky) to enable cross-disciplinary practice. This can happen by reviewing the terms and definitions we use to describe collaborative practice, so for example, we can work more towards shared learning than shared practice.
2. Develop creative and innovative teaching and learning models such as within my Ikebana workshop, which can be used within cross-disciplinary contexts.
3. Construct project teaching and learning plans which support professional practice alongside academic learning outcomes.

#### References

McCullagh, J., McFadyen, J., Holmes, A., 2013. “Unit X, future-proofing the undergraduate curriculum” Designing Design Education for India, India, March 2013, In Proceedings, DDEI, 2013 accessed 12/5/16 <http://indiadesigncouncil.org/pdf/DDEIConferenceProceedings.pdf>

Visible Learning (Hattie 2009) Cited in Biggs, J, and Tang, C. Teaching for Quality Learning at University (2011) Open University Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. Mind in Society (1978) Harvard University Press.