

Fundamental to our work is a belief in the power of the creative process to liberate, inspire and heal.

'Creative Education' Programme

Outline by Graham Peebles

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Introduction

A fundamental method of bringing lasting change to the lives of disadvantaged individuals is through education. The programme initiated in Addis Ababa is aimed at a specific group of children & young adults living in extremely disadvantaged circumstances. It is an educational work, using creative activities to stimulate a process of self-enquiry, generating self-respect, leading to self-awareness and creative freedom.

The participating children and young adults in the group have lived acutely difficult lives, many are without parents, some have fled abusive families, and all have been subject to extreme hardship. Their self belief and psychological/emotional well being has for many been badly affected, it is our goal, to support the ongoing work of our partner NGO's, to enable a positive sense of self to be re-established and build in fundamental strength, which will aid in the transformation of their lives.

The aims of the programme will be met through a range of objectives using various visual and performing art activities.

The workshops should be approached by those involved, as a creative work in themselves, the whole programme being seen as an interactive creative exchange, a 'work of art' if you will.

A programme of creative endeavour, a group work, free from authority. In which those involved are encouraged to think and act in a creative, uninhibited way within a structured, disciplined environment. Those delivering the programme should beware of any assumed authority, all authority is a hindrance to true creative thinking and it is important that no figures of authority are established. Let the group, both beneficiaries and co-workers, discover together the nature and meaning of creativeness.

The programme is a group work, made up of the organisers, co-workers and the beneficiaries themselves. Active creative participation from all will enrich the work, creating diversity and will help to dismantle any sense of authority. Regular meetings will be organised in which all will be represented, students will be asked to select their own representatives who will be invited to attend any meetings. In this way it is hoped the students will begin to feel the programme is 'theirs' and that they have a valued voice in its work.

The primary aim is to generate self-awareness in all involved, the children & young adults, the co-workers and organisers.

Conditioning imprisons us all, unless those responsible for

educational programmes are seeking to understand the workings of the self, to become self aware through observation and growing self knowledge, then students will continue to be the victim of another's conditioned ideas and values.

An educational programme, in which, the spirit of discovery should be fostered. Free from any conditioned system or fixed method, for we see that no method can free an individual, it may establish a 'new' set of beliefs or values but it cannot bring freedom.

Independent creative thinking is both the aim and the objective.

Aims & Objectives, in brief

Programme aims

- ✓ Bring about self-awareness
- ✓ Encourage creative, independent thinking
- ✓ Engender self-belief
- ✓ Foster hope
- ✓ Empower individuals to improve their lives
- ✓ Support the psychological & emotional well being of the group
- ✓ Create a sense of group relationship

Working Methods

- ✓ Agree working title/s for the workshops, to form the Theme of the programme, currently 'Identity'.
- ✓ Design creative workshops, using visual art and drama activities, using various mediums; painting, drawing, photography, collage, mime and theatre performance work.
- ✓ Organise group discussions, based on topics relevant to groups lives from suggestions made by the students
- ✓ Encourage students to participate in regular group meetings, with all involved in the programme.
- ✓ Establish structured disciplined means of working based on mutual respect.

Healing Through Art

There are a great many problems facing humanity, both individually and collectively and of course the two are not separate. Throughout the world the importance of education as a means, perhaps *the* means, of solving our difficulties is increasingly recognised.

Educational reform is under discussion in many countries, 'new' educational structures are being looked at and governments everywhere are debating how to change the existing, inadequate methods. If there is to be change, whether in our individual life's circumstances or collective change, we must first transform

ourselves. Which means we must become acutely aware of our own actions, our thoughts and the manner in which we live our lives. For there to be change we must become self aware, consciously aware of the way our lives are habitually lived. Understanding comes about only through self-knowledge, which is awareness of ones psychological and emotional process. It could be said that true education is the understanding of oneself, not simply a means to produce scholars, technicians, salesmen and job hunters, as is often the case now, but integrated creative human beings, free from fear. This is our goal for the children and young adults taking part in this programme.

To understand conflict, in order to be free from it there needs to be an awareness of the mechanism of the conscious and perhaps more importantly, the unconscious mind.

The age-old injunction to... 'Know thyself' is valid now more than ever.

Self Awareness, is the primary aim of the programme. The understanding of oneself is fundamental in the pursuit of freedom, and without freedom there can never be creative thinking.

Therefore freedom is our goal, freedom to think, freedom to act, freedom to create, freedom to BE.

Freedom is experienced when there is an absence of fear, when all conditioning has been put aside in the light of self awareness, then is there freedom

Self-awareness grows from non-judgemental observation of the ways of the personal self, in fact it could be said that uncluttered observation *is* self-awareness, for in such observation awareness simply is.

We will use creative activity, visual and performance based artwork, to establish a space in which self-awareness becomes possible.

However it should be understood that it is not possible to 'give' self-awareness to another. We will however remove the factors that restrict self-awareness and actively encourage free expression.

In order to understand how creative thinking takes place, it becomes necessary to examine what the obstacles to freedom are.

The key inhibiting factor to creative, independent thinking is conditioning. Psychological conditioning - conscious and for the most part, unconscious, denies creativeness and restricts any sense of freedom.

From the moment of birth we are fed information about the world around us and ourselves, this information forms a body of knowledge, which conditions our experience of life. It is this conditioning that we take to be the personal self and to which we became deeply attached.

Conditioning limits and restricts our life experience. It reduces creative thinking to a manipulative movement of what is already known, often very cleverly, however this conditioned 'creative' thinking is not true creativeness. Psychological conditioning, with its perpetual movement and need for security, forms a constant barrier to independent, creative thinking. One could say that all psychological conditioning, no matter the type or indeed source, inevitably negates any relationship with freedom, it is a breeding ground of fear and where there is fear there cannot be freedom. Moral values, the notion of 'right from wrong', basic modes of social behaviour needed to structure a 'civilised' society, are of course essential. However what is important is how these 'values' are established. By what means a human being comes to believe in them, are they his own, borne out of his own experience, his uncluttered relationship with himself, or are they part of a sociological structure into which he has been born, and has been conditioned by. Individual experience is the only real source of true knowledge; people must experience 'truth' for themselves in order for its reality to be true.

Self-knowledge, awareness of those complex psychological processes, which govern our lives, is largely, (certainly to begin with) awareness of this psychological conditioning. In order to be free, to think creatively and to be empowered to actively change our lives, we need to understand the ways of the self through awareness of our conditioning. The creative state, in which independent thinking and the intelligence to transform our lives is found, can come into being when there is self-knowledge, for only when the ways of the self are known and understood will there be freedom.

Creative workshops will be structured around a particular theme/s. The volunteers group will be asked to suggest working titles, which will form the underlying theme/s for the activities.

Activities will be designed in which the fundamental aims of the programme, i.e. self-awareness and freedom are the guiding principles.

This work of designing creative activities for the workshops should be seen as an integral part of the work. The means and the end are not separate. Whatever the means are imbued with, therein lies the end, and within the seed is to be found the nature of the fruit.

It may be interesting for the volunteers, themselves art & drama students to connect their own art practice to the programme; perhaps activities could be designed leading from that practice.

This would encourage an integrated approach to the creative process and could be beneficial to both areas of the volunteers work. Creative thinking should not be seen as an isolated activity,

relating to a specific area of life, but allowed to demonstrate in an integrated life, through constant self-observation - itself a creative work.

Activities; various strategies will be found to be helpful when designing and planning activities, in order to accomplish the key aims of the programme;

1. *Space to observe*; self-awareness comes about, as has been said - through observation of the ways of the personal self. We will therefore design activities, which create a space which afford the opportunity to observe oneself.

There are various ways to accomplish this, for example.

a) Activities which asks an individual to talk about themselves, their lives, feelings, thoughts etc - indirectly, through one or other creative medium (thus taking away any 'pressure'), is one means. As one makes work about such topics, a space is established in which it is possible to look at the subject matter, in this case the person themselves, in an objective, dispassionate manner. Self-knowledge, *conscious* awareness may then become possible.

In order for such observation to take place it is essential there is no judgement or negative criticism of any kind, an atmosphere of trust is required throughout the programme.

b) Work, which seeks to directly, discuss and describe the emotional world. We are all, to a greater or lesser degree subjected to the impact of the emotional body. 'Feelings' are it seems universal. Finding an individual/personal visual language to express such feelings can create a space between the individual and the feeling. Such a space offers the possibility of becoming consciously aware of different emotions and not simply at the mercy of their force. We are able to create forms for them, can thereby see the differences in them.

Colour, sound and line are all effective ways of objectivising emotional feelings. Such a visual language system establishes a 'safe' space in which dialogue about, what is often a very difficult subject can begin.

c) Familiarity dulls ones sense of discontent and breeds complacency. Living conditions, patterns of behaviour can easily become habitual and accepted. An effective tool in enabling one to see, as if for the first time, is photography. The use of the camera creates a temporary space between oneself and that which we are seeing through its lens. This 'seeing' can reveal that which was, oh so familiar and perhaps such sight will generate the desire to change it.

2. *Control through composition*; the desire to control, borne from fear - albeit unconscious, is strong in many. Creative activities are a powerful tool in revealing such tendencies and breaking these destructive inhibiting patters of behaviour.

a) Group work, designing activities which require individuals to work together, to compromise, to listen and respect one another's views, to cooperate - not compete, are useful in this area.

b) Seeing the manner in which work has been made, this is often more important than the formal representation. If the desire to make e.g. a 'pleasing' drawing has been the desire of the student, then the process of conformity (control) will have been followed - conformity to that which the student believes to be 'pleasing'. Whilst such work may not be 'individual' or creative, it does succeed in revealing the ways of the self - the student's conditioning and in order to be free from conditioning, one must firstly become aware that it exists.

c) 'Freeing the Line'; Activities which deny the individual the facility of fully controlling their work and thus allow the 'line' - drawn, painted, acted etc to move more freely. To inhibit one or other of the physical functions, e.g. to make-work blindfolded, or using the other hand that one would 'naturally' draw with. This can reveal the strength of desire to control the composition of the work, a desire that has its root in fear and conditioning. Resistance to 'letting go' can be seen as a sign of the desire to be in control - of oneself and sometimes of others.

Working methods, there is no specific system or educational method being employed in these programmes, there are however certain qualities which will encourage freedom of expression in the children and young people, these we will cultivate, other methods which have a negative effect will be avoided and which all should be mindfully aware.

1. Competition is a tool used throughout education and is to be found in all areas of human endeavour. Its effects are, destructive, divisive and crippling, it creates the circumstances in which comparison and fear are inevitable; it destroys self worth and self-belief. Competition is to be avoided completely in any creative work, particularly when dealing with fragile, sensitive individuals - and who is not such.

In place of competition we shall actively encourage co-operation, group work, decentralising activities, which promote a sense of, inter dependence and relationship. Well-being for the many, the group, over individual advancement at the expense of others.

2. Reward & punishment, is connected to competition and the two function to compliment one another. To offer reward for a particular action, which we want another to perform, and which they are reluctant to carry out, or to threaten punishment, perverts action. It may succeed in persuading an individual to act in a manner you would like, but in so doing a manipulative, self-gratifying, dishonest process of thought and action has been established. If behaviour is

motivated by gain, it is dishonest, corrupt action and can never lead to creativeness and freedom. Reward and its opposite - punishment as a tool for motivation is to be eschewed.

3. Control, reward & punishment and competition are both methods used to maintain control, of individuals and groups. External agencies of control quickly create internal states of repression; creative thought, self-awareness and freedom will not flower in such an environment.

We will not compel anyone to do anything, but rather encourage ceaselessly, include indiscriminately and support continuously.

4. Discipline is essential, however it is important we understand what is meant by discipline. Clearly it is not a system of coercion, based on reward & punishment. For creativeness to be, there needs to be order. The physical space in which the work takes place should be ordered, the sessions need to be clearly structured - ordered, all of this will help to create internal order and a disciplined group. The other key factor, which will help build a disciplined environment and should be shown by all to everyone, is respect. Let respect and order be the keynotes of discipline throughout the programme

5 affection, genuine warmth and affection, free from irritation and impatience, will encourage an atmosphere of trust in which people will feel unthreatened. In such an atmosphere the fear of failure, itself borne out of competition, will not be present and discovery of the 'new' may be possible.

6. Creative process, anyone who has seriously tried to make creative work, of any kind, will be aware of this. The creative process is an extraordinarily powerful movement, it reveals limitation, whilst suggesting freedom and as one works the dismantling power of the creative process becomes evident. The making of work will uncover conditioning, for it is conditioning, which causes limitation. If undertaken in an atmosphere free from competition and judgement, the creative process will function as a powerful tool of observation and self-awareness.

Creative thinking is clearly not restricted to the world of visual or performing arts. Creative thinking will find expression in all areas of human affairs, the nature of its formal expression will vary depending on the individual's particular nature and inclination, however its source remains the same.

Present educational systems, based as they are on competition do not enable creative, independent thinking, but rather encourage conformity to an accepted pattern of thinking and acting.

Such conformity inhibits individuality and leads to frustration and fear.

Creative thinking we could say is, thinking freed from conditioning; it is an expansive movement of the mind in which intelligence flowers naturally. An intelligence unrestricted by the limitations of

knowledge based upon tradition, culture, ideology, religious or political dogma - conditioning.

An intelligence which has its roots in Love, not sentimental love, nor a transient emotional feeling which we mistakenly name as love, but rather that universal state of being which makes itself felt when the noise of the self is no more.

So, perhaps unsurprisingly, Love is our goal.

Another key aim of the programme is to generate self-belief in the children & young adults involved. Self-belief we see is a natural consequence of self-awareness.

The realisation that one has within oneself, the necessary resources to improve one's life, to change the external circumstances of one's life. A realisation that one does not have to live a life that others expect one to live, that they have conditioned us to believe we have to live.

Self-belief grows out of a true sense of oneself, as a creative, free, independent human being. Not a conditioned limited view based upon success and failure, comparison and conformity.

A child does not have to walk in the footsteps of his or her downtrodden mother or father, or indeed his/her successful parents. It is surely not destined, or fated that one live within the conditioned framework of tradition, culture, or belief, these restrictive mechanisms of social control are man made, and serve only one purpose - to inhibit the life of many millions of people in the world.

Within self-belief lie the roots of true hope.

Hope is not to be seen as some kind of distant, vague dream of betterment, but is present within the realisation of one's innate nature.

Freedom from conditioning, relationship with creative intelligence and a growing sense of self, which is not dependent upon any external circumstances for it's, being, will create the certainty of transformation.

True hope grows out of the present relationship we have with ourselves, for the *hope is oneself*. The future is now; it is being built constantly in the present. The hope for a better 'future', for a happy fulfilled life, lies in the way that life is being lived now.

In the realisation that one is not simply this conditioned, prejudiced, inhibited self, successful or not, clever or not, beautiful or not, freedom from this entrapment will bring hope. The *certainty of hope*, when one realises one has within oneself the power to change one's life and that change is solely the responsibility of oneself.

Let the hopes of the children and young people on the programme, be his/her own hopes, not another's set of expectations, of what the child should be, in opposition to what he/she is.

Programme evaluation

Determining the effects of such a programme as this is difficult. The effects may not be seen immediately, people will respond in various ways and will understand the work at different levels.

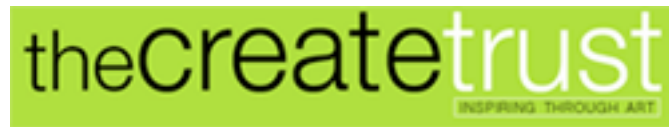
There are certain areas of the individual's life however in which it may prove possible to evaluate the value/effect of the programme.

1. Look at the various areas of the child/young person's life, e.g.
 - A) School
 - B) Home
 - C) Social
 - a. School: Speak to teaching staff to determine if there has been any change in the concentration levels, imagination facilities, creative thinking, general behaviour - more positive, hopeful etc.
 - b. Home: Talk to other family members, carers, and siblings. Enquire if there has been any noticeable alteration in the behaviour, are they more co-operative, thoughtful, optimistic etc.
 - c. Social: Speak to friends and organisers of any out of school activities, to ascertain if any behavioural change has occurred.
2. Speak directly to those involved, this may prove less valuable than other means; volunteers may also be able to offer some kind of assessment.
3. Observation of those involved throughout the programme.

Summary

This 'Healing Through Art' programme is established with clear aims and objectives. The work will proceed from the philosophical basis outlined, however it is a deeply practical work, the ideas discussed should be inherent in the activities themselves. The workshops are not a means, with some idealised end in mind, for we see creativeness and certainly freedom is beyond any such definition.

Graham Peebles
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Addis Ababa
Ethiopia



The Create Trust is a registered charity in England & Wales. It was set up in April 2005 to initiate 'Healing through Art' programmes in areas of acute need in developing countries. The main area of activity for The Create Trust is Ethiopia.

Fundamental to our work is a belief in the power of the creative process to liberate, inspire and heal.

Mission statement

We are committed to bringing aid and support to disadvantaged children and young people. Empowering individuals and groups to improve their lives through creative activity, which generates self-belief, engenders hope develops imaginative skills and facilitates intelligent learning.

To get involved or to find out more, click on www.thecreatetrust.org.

Trustees Linda Johannson. Fiona Mcinroy. David Reed. George Treves