Inside Out: Positive
Integration Beyond The Walls Through Visual Arts

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This paper describes a program employing visual arts learning as a vehicle for community engagement by juvenile detainees.

Being
LETU
Students are enrolled in the Lincoln Education and Training Unit (LETU) as detainees of the Orana Juvenile Justice Centre, in Dubbo in central New South Wales. A male only facility, students range in age from 10 to 21, although the average age would be 16-17 years. Most come from the central, western and north-western area of the New South Wales, although occasionally detainees will arrive from metropolitan, coastal or southern areas. The boys are primarily of Aboriginal descent. According to the schools website, LETU provides quality education and vocational programs to help prepare students to participate effectively, positively and independently in society. The programs are designed to improve students' education and training standards and their confidence and skills to re-enter education, training or the workforce. All abilities and standards of education are catered for including fundamental literacy and numeracy skills through to the school certificate and higher school certificate. LETU has close links with Juvenile Justice, TAFE, Distance Education and local community representatives.

Delivery
In 2005 I designed and continue to implement a Vocational Education and Training (VET) program at LETU. The program is created from selected units in Certificate II in Visual Arts and Contemporary Craft and is administered by TAFE NSW Western Institute, under supervision from Janice Navin, Correctional Centre and Juvenile Justice Liaison Officer. The program aims to integrate physical outcomes to community objectives where possible. This strategy remains consistent with Training Government Australia (TGA) learning outcomes as well as the community reintegration goals of Juvenile Justice and Lincoln Education and Training Unit.
Scope
The program is known in the school as “Digital Graphics” and is shaped for the circumstances of fluid student movement that exists in LETU. It contains 5 short time-frame blocks of study of skills attainment in digital image processing and manipulation. Students could expect to achieve competencies at national standards in up to 8 integrated units of study if completing the 90-100 hours of class time per semester. Teaching is by integrated unit delivery in a computer lab as a simulated workplace, by tutorial, demonstration and self directed work. Assessment is by student demonstration, teacher observation, short answer tests and folio presentation.

Students are instructed primarily in Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Word and Windows Movie Maker. Other skills are introduced into the program depending on specific project objectives. These may include screen-printing, mural painting and large format poster making. Students develop familiarity with computer use protocol, printing and presentation of work. Students will engage in a collaborative group, developing an understanding of teamwork, sharing resources and responsible use equipment. The process of forming an idea, generating a vision, making the vision substantial as a negotiated design and bringing that design into the public domain is the guiding concept behind the program.

Pathways available on successful completion of selected units would enable the student to continue study in Certificate II, III, IV in Visual Arts and Contemporary Craft. Alternatively successful completion of selected units would enable the student to commence employment and further training in the fields of graphic design, computer generated fine art, commercial photography, sign-writing, web design and desktop publishing.

Case Study 1: “You, Me, Us”
A large format digital poster, “You, Me, Us” was produced as a collaborative digital exercise with students in my Digital Graphics TVET Class at LETU. I gave the team an archive of cloud photographs and asked that they digitally cut, paste and edit to create the perfect cloud. Using skills delivered in the Photoshop learning sessions I asked that they then make digitally interpretive changes to their impression of a perfect cloud into themes of You, Me and Us, as three separate versions. These thematic cloud images were then shared to a central accessible folder.

Using a Smartboard (a classroom projector with an interactive screen), the tiles used in the poster were retrieved from the pool of images and negotiated collectively to compose
the final image. The work references the “Cloud” series work of aboriginal artist Michael Riley, and addressed the theme of the 2011 NSW Reconciliation Schools Challenge of You, Me and Us.

The poster, submitted digitally, then printed and framed after selection, won first prize in the years 9-10 category, with each of the six boys winning a gift pack of NSW Reconciliation Council and FM Triple J merchandise. The award ceremony and exhibition was held at the Australian Museum from 27 May- 5 June 2011. The exhibition is still touring New South Wales.
Kerrie Murphy, Co-Chairperson (Non-Indigenous) of the NSW Reconciliation Council has said of her adjudication of the work:

“I found the work very engaging. It abstracted the concept of You, Me, Us, into a dimension that allowed the audience to engage with it according to one’s own background, thus it was a very inclusive statement. To me it sang loudly the words, ‘same, different’ - in that, it highlighted alikeness and at the same time difference and yet together the whole was complete. It was through the wholeness that the work held together so well”.

Belonging
Flexible delivery
My experience teaching in the Juvenile Justice system has required acceptance of and patience toward un-notified change. Students can be placed into the group with little more suitability than the availability of a place. A wide range of literacy, numeracy, age, emotional disposition and social background must be accommodated.

Students may also be removed with little or no notice due to court appearances, court rulings, health issues, behavioural issues outside of class, accommodation levels within the centre and transfers to other centres or release. Fluid entry and exit points must be designed into the program for juvenile detainees. To enhance broad scope learning in a teaching environment where students may start and leave without notice, short blocks of 20 hours or 4 teaching days are defined to maximise potential unit completion.

Completion barriers
While not all students at LETU are of Aboriginal descent, overcoming the cultural and learning barriers of Aboriginal boys is applicable to most student detainees. The reasons for incarceration are wide and varied and not the subject of this paper. However, most have a disjointed schooling career and many do not see success in school as consistent with their needs. The traditional “competitive” school environment has not served the education of the students well. “Cooperative Learning Theory” as researched by David and Roger Johnson, and Spencer Kagan has proved more successful in my work in juvenile justice.

I first came across the process of cooperative learning when working with a small school circus program that my ten-year old son was attending in the mid 1990’s. Circus West was devised
and directed by Paul Woodhead at West Dubbo Primary School. The primary motivation was to increase attendance by disaffected children and reduce truancy, particularly on sports days. The program attracted interest from parents and businesses alike, and soon became a popular and mainstream part of school life, with regular community performances. After a few years the number of participants had increased to include students from other schools, but was still run by the original director with no other staff. With performance and practice days having up to 80-100 kids doing some precarious stuff like silt walking, juggling, balancing and mono-cycle as well as choreographed clown routines, I asked Paul how he managed. “The culture of the circus training is based on two principles: 1) Sharing- what you have and what you know, and 2) Respecting- the gear and yourself”. This is cooperative or circle learning in practice. As a participant passes a determined skill level, they are obliged to train someone from a lower skill level, should they wish to learn that skill.

I also found these principles at work in the KOTO restaurant in Hanoi in 2007. KOTO Hanoi was founded in 2000 by Australian Jimmy Pham and has since evolved from a small sandwich shop to a 120-seat restaurant. KOTO stands for Know One, Teach One and reflects Jimmy’s belief that assisting those less able is good citizenship. Disadvantaged kids are given stability in housing and opportunity through progressive training and employment in this not for profit enterprise. There is structured and sequential training using cooperative learning principles, so that a new team member might start sweeping floors and progress through to chef or front of house depending on skills and inclination. Koto has graduates that are sought after by the leading hotels and restaurants of Vietnam.

**Case study 2: Apollo House**

Apollo House is a community centre in a disadvantaged area of Dubbo East a regional service city in western New South Wales. The Apollo Estate is a public housing community of which the students at LETU are familiar. The opportunity to work in this community was important to understanding the circumstances of life outside the Juvenile Justice Centre. The engagement process was somewhat more difficult as there was no imperative to participate. By allocating a larger amount of time for community consultation than in painting the mural, I was able to engage local youth in capacity building, graffiti mitigation, create ownership through participation and generate pride and cultural investment through inclusion.

As the project artist, I was working with young people in initial consultation and brainstorming, gathering ideas. After drafting mock-ups in a digital format, follow-up meetings for comment, appraisal, changes and final approval was undertaken. At this
stage my role was as a designer or architect might relate to clients, negotiating the best balance of ideas, materials and objectives. Upon final approval by both the youth participants, centre staff and other interested parties, the project was drafted in full scale and painted in a series of supervised workshops.

As artist project manager, I made technical adjustments to the paint finish at the end of each session. High gloss clear is applied to the completed surfaces and the project is unveiled to the media, local dignitaries and the community.

Apollo House Mural 2009-2011
a collaborative project on 3 exterior walls of a community centre, acrylic polymers on weatherboard

Simulated workplace
The creation of a simulated design and production studio at LETU is aimed at rehabilitation through the recovery of social confidence by dissolving the “teacher/student” roles using co-operative and collaborative strategies.

As a working tradesman sign-writer during the 1980’s and 1990’s I had trained eight people into the sign industry. Throughout the period there were significant technological changes in most industries with computerisation of traditional skills. Even today sign-writing apprentices
are obliged to learn brush techniques and letter-craft, but most will never apply these skills commercially. One of the ways I was able to maintain an active and interested skills base in my business, as well as adopt necessary technological change, was to have senior apprentices responsible for juniors rather than diverting tradesmen who had become specialist employees in areas not related to traditional trade skills. Of course training specific to the workplace was the responsibility of supervisors and management, but the routines of step-by-step learning and practice of traditional craft skills was made the responsibility of older apprentices. The most apparent benefit in this arrangement was to the older apprentices, who got to revise their own, recently acquired skills by forming the dialogue necessary to transfer that knowledge. The juniors benefited by being tutored by people of a similar age, whose skills were current by virtue of having only recently been acquired. We were then collectively able to create a culture of cooperative values where success was nurtured, respected and shared.

**Becoming**

*KOTO*

The Know One, Teach One (KOTO) principal is deployed to offset doubt and resistance. It is culturally adaptable and is, in the case of my work at LETU, Orana Juvenile Justice Centre, Dubbo, consistent with mutual responsibility and sharing concepts expressed to me by aboriginal elders. As new students move into the program they are paired off with an existing student who will be encouraged to pass on his already embedded skills in a mentoring relationship. There are two primary pedagogical outcomes from this strategy.

*Skills acquisition and adoption*

1) The new student acquires basic skills in his own language style, by someone who he can closely identify with by age, culture and circumstance. His receptivity to the *acquisition* of new information is higher under these terms, than if delivered by “some old white guy”. The willingness to *adopt* new skills and practices is motivated by compliance with his peers, by his own need to fit in. With these young men, disenfranchisement from the mainstream is the norm, but the pressures of teenage conformity are the same as in any group of peer motivated teenage boys. Traditional competitive schooling has not worked in most cases with these boys for a variety of reasons. The fear of failure is no motivator, but the desire to fit in is. The advantages of winning are foreign due to social and economic circumstances, but the desire for acceptance is high.
Substantive revision

2) The mentoring student performs substantive revision of embedded skills. This process as observed is an assessable task. The higher level student is motivated by the same teenage desire for acceptance and may occasionally pass on incorrect information, but this can be adjusted in due course as mistrust of the teachers agenda is eroded, and dialogue with the teacher is established. Once levels of choice and authenticity are established between new student and student mentor, the process of change, acceptance of difference and responsibility is extended. The new student witnesses exchanges of trust and rapport between the student mentor and the teacher as the more advanced student goes about his own work.

In this manner a culture of shared information, respect, flexibility, creativity and shared goals are developed. The group management is more self-governing and the learning trajectory more individually defined. The teacher needs to be more nuanced toward understanding, which sometimes requires deep listening and testing for clarity. The program needs to be flexible enough to allow for frequent reframing, accommodation of individual interests and bridging gaps between longer-term detainees and short stayers. The teacher needs to be a principled negotiator employing respectful disagreement rather than strong willed judgments.

While there is some empowerment passed over to students, the culture of cooperative agreement and respect closes the commitment to positive community reintegration more successfully.

Case study 3: The Biladurang Platypus Mural for Taronga Western Plains Zoo.

The Biludurang Mural (Biladurang -Wiradjuri for platypus) was a collaborative project. The digital graphics students of Lincoln Education and Training Unit negotiated the design between themselves and their client Taronga Western Plains Zoo. The mural was painted from a pool of ideas, with assistance and guidance from aboriginal artist Allan Shillingsworth –Murrawarri, and myself as project artist.

Allan contributed some traditional designs and came up with a unique interpretation in dots of the Taronga Western Plains Zoo concourse. The painting process has been simplified by careful design work, enabling a range of skilled and unskilled people to participate. From a core group of six students, over twenty people, including Orana Juvenile Justice, Lincoln School, Taronga Western Plains Zoo staff contributed to the production of the mural. The process of forming an idea, generating a vision, making the vision substantial as a design and bringing that design into reality is what artists do. My aim was to guide this process in a group of young men. We have all learnt more than the acquired technical skills. We have formed
individual and shared respect for our subject, Biladurang, the platypus, as well as a new respect for the creative process. With Taronga Western Plains Zoo providing a high profile public location for the mural, and the support of our other partners, Lincoln Education and Training Unit, TAFE Western, River Smart and naturalist Paul Kirk we have added a new component to the cultural asset of our community.

Biladurang Platypus Mural 2011
a collaborative project, acrylic polymers on Alupanel, 120x480cm

References:

Johnson, D., Johnson, R. and Holubec E. 1998, *Cooperation in the classroom*. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, USA


KOTO is a social enterprise model that can be applied anywhere in the world. Vocational training is the key to a sustainable future for street kids and disadvantaged youth…. It is a model based on not only providing youth with training and jobs but providing them with valuable life skills to ensure they can contribute to their community.

Mosely, John, principle, Lincoln Education and Training Unit. Dubbo, NSW, Australia

Training.gov.au (TGA), the database on Vocational Education and Training in Australia. TGA is the official National Register of information on Training Packages, Qualifications, Courses,
Units of Competency and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and has been developed for experienced training sector users. http://training.gov.au/ 20th September 2011

Woodhead, Paul. Interview by the author 19th September 2011
Circus West, a school circus program developed in 1991 and run by Paul Woodhead at Dubbo West Primary School, Dubbo, NSW, Australia