

🌐 **IRNIE Planning Meeting Report**
July 17th and 18th, 2006
Vancouver, BC

Meeting Summary

Supported by a SSHRC grant to Dr Mark Fettes of Simon Fraser University at SFU, the inaugural meeting of IRNIE (International Research Network in Imaginative Education) was held at the Coast Plaza Hotel, Vancouver, on July 17th and 18th, 2006. A total of 37 participants from many parts of the globe took part in this ground-breaking meeting, which laid the foundation for further and future collaborative work.

At the meeting, participants were introduced to each other's work in short presentations. This first meeting was deliberately conceived to be inclusive of all kinds of educational research involving imagination, and thus a broad range of issues and contexts was represented. Individuals also had a chance to participate in roundtables which provided the opportunity to brainstorm areas of commonality for a broad-based collaborative research project. Further, discussions were held on approaches to research and methodology, on possible funding agencies such as SSHRC, and on the establishment of IRNIE's online database of researchers, research projects, publications and resources..

At the roundtable debriefing held on Tuesday afternoon, three major research areas for the network emerged. These were:

- A. imaginative **curriculum and pedagogy**, extending from the preschool years to high school and postsecondary education;
- B. imaginative **education for marginalized groups** of many kinds; typically extending beyond curriculum and pedagogy to include issues of school organization, community involvement, power and identity; and
- C. imagination in **teacher education and teacher development**.

It also became clear that many members of the network have expertise in alternative educational practices, which could inform collaboration in many ways.

Cutting across these three major research areas were a number of common needs and objectives, which can be summarized under the headings of Theory, Research Methods, and Praxis.

1. **Theory:** Diverse theoretical frameworks and languages for conceptualizing the role of the imagination in learning and development — including, for instance, the Vygotskian tradition, Kieran Egan's recapitulation theory, and such educational movements as Waldorf schooling and Saito pedagogy — need to be further investigated, compared, and elaborated. While a single unified theory may be neither possible nor desirable, these various approaches can enrich one another and lessen the risks of oversimplification. We should also anticipate and foster theoretical dialogues with other areas of the social sciences and humanities.
2. **Research methods:** Investigating the role of the imagination in teaching and learning is methodologically challenging. We need to work towards common understandings of what counts as adequate evidence and adequate description —

e.g. of imaginative engagement, of the cultural and educational context, or of a teacher's understanding and application of particular theoretical ideas. Also needed are strategies and models for productive research relationships between academic institutions and educational settings of various kinds.

3. **Praxis:** The network's ultimate objective is to help bring about changes in educational practice on a wide scale. Thus tools specifically designed to inspire and support imaginative educational practice are needed, including books, handbooks and teaching guides (both text and video), curriculum materials and resources, and workshops, courses, and programs for teacher development. Work is also needed on the translation of materials and approaches across languages and contexts. We need to be aware of the risk of cultural bias and unequal power relationships in all international and cross-cultural work, and to be willing to question ourselves and each other as the work moves forward.

Tentatively, then, IRNIE will focus on developing a research program that is concentrated in research areas A, B and C, above, and which fosters the sharing and elaboration of theoretical frameworks, research methods, and educational praxis. Over the next year, members of the network will seek opportunities for major collaborative initiatives that might bring together a number of projects and institutions in several countries under a common theme and set of ideas. The meeting concluded with the signing of a letter to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation outlining the case for research funding on a large scale.

Detailed Summary of Sessions

Day 1: Monday, July 17th

1. Introduction/Welcome
 - Dr Mark Fettes began the meeting by welcoming all participants and reviewing the agenda
 - He explained that the aim of the meeting was to have groups map out research priorities for the joint research network and to determine how to allocate remaining funds
2. Introductions of Participants
 - Participants introduced themselves. Present at the meeting were, with their interests in brackets:
 - Andrea Gallant [integrality, new teaching methods], Australia;
 - Phil Riley, Australia [secure basis for learning, making teachers feel supported];
 - Ana Angelica Albano, Brazil [teaching art teachers. Psychology of art];
 - Jeanne d'Arc Gaudet, Canada [feminist and critical pedagogy];
 - Pennti Hakkarainen, Finland [meaningful learning in a narrative environment to enhance child development, early childhood];
 - Milda Bredikyte, Finland [research with young children];
 - Liane Brouillette, USA [national geographic photo project];

- Jeanne Kentel [teacher education], Canada;
 - Kiyotaka Miyazaki, Japan [Japanese pedagogy; sociocultural process of producing children's art];
 - Tony Sherborne, England [science curriculum, power of storytelling and games in science education];
 - Louis Porter, Mexico [policy analysis, self-study];
 - Marni Binder, Canada [holistic education, art education];
 - Patricia Monzon, Argentina [physics, relation between art and science];
 - Gladir Cabral, Brazil [childhood, memory of childhood, children's museum, memory and imagination, cultural diversity];
 - Dalene Swanson, Canada [math education, imaginative education to engage students];
 - Thomas Nielsen, Australia [imagination and values, imagination and culture];
 - Gadi Alexander, Israel [technology and theory of imagination]
 - Wilma Maki, Canada [imaginative education in Japan];
 - Kieran Egan, Canada [imagination];
 - Mark Fettes, Canada [First Nations Education, keeping First Nations' languages vital, cultural diversity, role of imagination in community];
 - Sean Blenkinsop, Canada [philosophy];
 - Stefan Popenici, Romania [cultural diversity, imagination];
 - Kym Stewart, Canada [LUCID, media education];
 - Anne Chodakowski, Canada [teacher education];
 - Catherine Broom, Canada [alternative pedagogies, history of education, evolution of social studies];
 - Renata Grassiotto, Canada [teacher education];
 - Adele Diamond, Canada [development psychology, self regulation, preschool education based on Vygotsky, storytelling, arts learning];
 - Concettina Manna, Italy [autobiography in teaching/learning];
 - Guisepppe Cardone, Italy [relation between imagination and teaching math];
 - Catalina Ulrich, Romania [imaginative education];
 - Lucia Sosa, Venezuela [art education and learning]
 - Susanna Ruebsaat, Canada [art therapy, mythic disposition, underlying mythic narrative in creative education].
 - Lourdes Arenas, Mexico [high school]
 - Carlos Arozamena, [art and education, art related to human development]
3. 10 minute presentations.
- Thomas Nielson: value education is linked to quality teachers with values; imagination as transcendence; reaching a mind through capturing a heart
 - Questions and answers: values are part of the general curriculum and then made conscious; they are related to teacher education and curriculum
 - Phil Riley: education is lighting a fire; the importance of a healthy relationship between teachers and students; need for didactic care; imagination as a powerful tool that can be used positively and negatively
 - Questions and answers: need to mentor teachers so that they can look after students, as Bowlby said re: Mothers, some

- flawed diagnosis of ADHD (perhaps other causes), new teacher education curriculum called “pedagogy of actualizing” based on personal development
- Jeanne d’Arc: feminist research and epistemology, critical pedagogy for social change, professional identity of teachers
 - Jeanne Kentel: quick teacher education program, difficulties in engaging students beyond “technicity”; taking into alternative spaces to foster development
 - Questions and answers: not sure whether their approach is spreading to others, need for baby steps
4. Group discussion on teaching: considering how each individual’s research agenda is related to teacher education.
- Conclusions of groups:
 - Group 1: need for an openness to change
 - Group 2: need for a latitudinal study; how can imaginative education be translated into practice: what does it look like, its outcomes, and how it is measured; teachers want practical ideas that translate into concrete practice; start with existing teachers—those open to new ideas and give continuing support
 - Group 3: cultural difference with regard to teaching; clear that political and economic power shapes context: Brazil: poverty and inequality of access; Japan: teachers well respected and work independently, changing as the government moves to increased control
 - Group 4: making the silent curriculum of imagination visible: key points: all we have in common, exploring, constraints, evolution, identity, relationship, ADHD, maths anxiety, exclusive/cultural, holistic
 - Summary: need to specify the context, which highlights notions of what teaching is, and to spell out unspoken assumptions, as well as to consider defining imagination and the values inherent in programs and teaching, in a cultural context. A working definition of imagination is adequate; it should consider imagination’s many sidedness and connections to other factors, such as emotions; consider the “knowledge” it is embedded in; a fluid definition embedded in values; consider the impact of ideological shifts to “neo liberalism” and its impact on implementing imaginative ed; need for a framework that can metamorphosize; consider the context of the definition in order to frame the question and focus on the larger picture and concrete actions; disrupting technicity with new tools and techniques; students have imaginations but are often “captured” by the wrong medium; the LUCID project as an example of research that addresses many issues in a community way
5. Presentations by researchers who work with teachers
- Milda Bredikyte: Early childhood is a university subject; creative play club where research is conducted on play, imagination, and early development; dialogical and social nature of learning, where children learn by creative acting and which provides new theories and opportunities for multi-dimensional teaching and learning

- Pentti Hakkarainen: considering how to construct practice from the ideas, use of Vygotsky: crisis at age 7 requires the use of transformative narrative play with problem solving, joint play worlds of adults and children
 - Questions and Answers: the use of narrative with the move from mythic to romantic, an integrated approach, concrete space for playing and learning; culturally different ways of seeing, trying to push change
 - Adele Diamond: Vygotsky: social-interaction and self-regulation, children learn best when doing and when given challenges that stimulate their curiosity; self regulation that comes from play, positive feedback loops, opportunity to research education in a new Montessori school to be opened in Vancouver or a study in the USA
 - Questions and Answers: need to study how it works practically, need for a secure space
6. Presentations on Subject areas
- Tony Sherborne: Science Upd8: using imagination to design interactive classroom activities that are downloadable
 - Questions and answers: creative and self directed activities, used by many teachers in the UK: upd8.org.uk
 - Patricia Monzon: conceptualizing a new way of teaching physics through connecting art and science
 - Ana Angelica Albano: teaching art teachers; played a video on sacred circle dances which illustrates how she guides her doctoral students to gain confidence and to use their imaginations
 - Kiyotaka Miyazaki: involved in three research projects: teacher education, art for education, and extension/collaboration; the first: learning the Saito Pedagogy, a Japanese pedagogy similar to Kieran Egan's: creating materials that lead to discovery; the second: the process of creating art, especially "negation"; the third: a drama play project
 - Carlos Arozamena/Luis Porter: many problems among their design students, which they aim to deal with through having students reinvent themselves through introspection and narrative
 - Questions and answers: a one year preparatory program before specializing, design requires good self esteem and self knowledge, narrative as a metaphor, the contemplative and expressive moment in art, can apply ideas in a multilayered classroom

Day 2: Tuesday, July 18th

1. Adele Diamond: video on dance used to empower students, using art; art-intrinsic value
2. 10 minute presentations

- a. Gadi Alexander: developing a mapping centre for the research network; considering an operational definition, age group, unit of analysis, focus, and context
 - Questions and answers/comments: imagination is larger than one person, involves the activity around the child, valuable framework, needs for layers of different research on imagination
 - b. Kieran Egan: education as an “educational swamp,” and not well regarded by other disciplines, thinking generally about the imagination, current school theories (maybe “socialization,” developmental psychology) and, therefore, need for a new focus based on kinds of understanding, which differ based on culture; kinds of understanding are based on “components” or “cognitive tools”; considering how to implement these.
 - c. Mark Fettes: described the LUCID project; key factor is relationships and communities; collaborative research; fostering a professional identity in which teachers are interested in their students lives
 - Questions and answers: interventions at multiple levels, teacher designed curriculum, varied implementation; influence of Vygotsky
3. Funding possibilities, described by Mark:
- a. SSHRC: begin with a letter of intent and then a formal proposal, has a number of features: scholars working together, results that impact on Canada, emphasis on working with students, disseminating findings
 - b. Strategic Research Clusters: is very similar. <Visible on SSHRC’s website>
 - Questions and answers: considering the setting up of research centres/considering relationships with schools/space
4. Participants were divided into groups in order to brainstorm possibilities, and then groups were divided by subject areas for consideration of specific details.
- a. Group comments: considering research, resources, skills, financial aspects, materials for teachers, physical structures
 - b. Research: need for an overarching sense of network research, supported in terms of adding results and methodologies from each other’s projects, use of models such as LUCID, existing research projects and theoretical work
 - c. Methods: mixed methodologies, persuasive effect of quantitative work, instruments, interventions
 - d. Importance of mutual support, exchanges, visiting scholars, books, publications
 - e. Roundtable results: considering dynamic assessment
 - f. Summary roundtables: topics (Numbers illustrate how many participants support these focus areas, helping to delimitate the research focus):
 - (a) development-focus: early childhood (5)-transition-K to 7 (10) or 7 to 12 (9), post secondary education, adult education (20);
 - (b) policy relevant research (5);

- (c) alternative/marginalized populations (15) (indigenous (6), working class, poor, inner city (12), physical disabilities (1); ADHD and special education (4);
 - (d) subject-focused: arts (10), science (5), math (4), social studies (9), language (7), physical education (1).
 - g. Comments: described different sources of funding for research, travel for research purposes and exchange programs (www.cimo.fl)
 - h. Presented the new IERG online database and its use in collaboration within projects
5. 10 minute presentations
- a. Susanna Ruebsaat: art therapy, mythical basis to her arts curriculum, imaginal (world of image), reading about myths
 - b. Stefan Popenici: students' role models in schools, who is capturing students' imaginations, need for change in school
 - c. Wilma Maki: Japan studies, imaginative form of learning for teachers from Japan, taken from nature, holistic, power in the dream of the individual
 - d. Gladir Cabral: dreams of making a museum of childhood with artefacts for, by and about children, children as producers of culture, listening to children's voices, considering children's voices around the world
6. Draft Letter
- a. Phil Riley: presented a draft letter for the Gates Foundation, very big picture: it states that a number of researchers from around the world are working on a new approach to education through imagination which is the key to unlocking change and bringing transformative change to society through education
7. Conclusion: Mark thanked all participants and hoped that this meeting would be the beginning of the development of a number of research collaborations. Mark was thanked for holding the meeting. Participants signed the letter.

Report compiled by Catherine Broom and revised by Mark Fettes, August 4, 2006.