

CREATIVITY, EDUCATION AND
THE ARTS

Series Editor: Anne Harris

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**ETHNOTHEATRE AND
CREATIVE METHODS
FOR TEACHER
LEADERSHIP**

**Jerome Cranston and
Kristin Kusanovich**



Creativity, Education and the Arts

Series Editor
Anne Harris
Monash University
Melbourne
Australia

This series emerges out of recent rapid advances in creativity- and arts-informed research in education that seeks to reposition creativity studies within (and in conversation with) education as a multi- and interdisciplinary field.

This series takes as its starting point the interrelationship between arts-based research and a growing neuroscientific, cultural and economic discourse of creativity and creative industries, and the need for education to play a larger role in these expanding discourses. It also takes as a priori an invitation to creativity scholars to move more robustly into theorizing the work of arts- and creativity-based research work, bridging a historical gap between ‘science’ and ‘art’, between ‘theoretical’ and ‘applied’ approaches to research, and between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms.

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Jerome Cranston • Kristin Kusanovich

Ethnotheatre and Creative Methods for Teacher Leadership

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Jerome Cranston
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Kristin Kusanovich
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, California, USA

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ETHNOTHEATRE AND CREATIVE METHODS FOR
TEACHER LEADERSHIP BY *JEROME CRANSTON*
AND *KRISTIN KUSANOVICH*

SERIES EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Beginning with their prologue *Stage Fright*, this new book by Jerome Cranston and Kristin Kusanovich follows their previous valuable and creative contributions to the field of arts-based and creative leadership and administration in education. They frame educational leadership in terms of its ethical and imaginative potential and pitfalls, not unlike the legendary creative education scholarship of Anna Craft (often in collaboration with Guy Claxton). Cranston and Kusanovich thus join a line of distinguished creative scholars who seek a more holistic approach to the business of making education creative, or what Craft, Gardner, and Claxton have described as a calling into question of the “unproblematized, value-neutral position on creativity as it applies to education in particular” (Craft et al 2008, p 3).

The question of transferability of creative “skills and capacities” learned most directly in the arts has been around for a long time. Creativity has gone through many ups and downs in education, from being considered a “feel good” non-academic endeavor for the well-rounded student to our current commodification approach to creativity as an employability skill for twenty-first-century “creatives” who will develop the next Pixar, Google, or Apple megacorporation or suite of innovative products. And as with any “popular kid,” tensions and debates within education lead many to claim that creativity really prefers my discipline to yours. But creativity is both bigger and smaller than these kinds of debates, and so it continues to shape-shift and avoid easy categorization. Indeed, this is one of its

strengths, and Cranston and Kusanovich identify an important if under-researched area of this mercurial field of study.

As Cranston and Kusanovich note, their book fills a gap in the body of literature concerning teacher leadership and education more generally. In particular they ask important questions for how to nurture creativity as a leader, not just as a practitioner. How might creativity in educators' work, not just in our students', be measured—or should it? We in arts education have not always been our best strategists or advocates as we celebrate the rigorous work we do while at the same time striving to improve our practice. Whether as teachers, teacher educators, school leaders, or education researchers, creative thinking and practice show us the enormous payoffs of intellectual risk-taking.

Foundational creativity scholar Robert J. Sternberg conceived of leadership as a basis for the education of children, or what you might call “small l” leadership (not unlike Anna Craft’s well-known “small c creativity”), in his recognition that, “we need to teach for leadership....In the end, true creativity in leadership requires solving not just any problems, but the important ones” (Sternberg 2008, pp 144–145). His model of creative leadership (WICS—*wisdom, intelligence, and creativity, synthesized*) points to a more holistic notion of success which, according to Sternberg, means an ability to attain the goals one sets out for oneself, an often especially challenging goal in educational settings. Is success measured by standardized testing and ranking success, as the neoliberal education wave would have us believe? And in such a restrictive educational environment, what can truly be called successful leadership in a school?

Many of those in educational leadership—from schools to boards to policy-writers—are trying to model creative leadership in finding new ways to make the business of education more responsive to the rapidly changing learning and working environments of the global economies in which we all participate. These are not only the challenges and opportunities presented by technology and digital networking, but also by the workforce uncertainty that has seemingly become an unavoidable part of global working life. Like Anna Craft and Cranston and Kusanovich here, creative education leadership scholar Jacquie Turnbull draws useful parallels between the challenges of creativity in education institutions and creativity in workplaces, with the strategy of revealing the creative practices that have always been present to some degree in good leadership. But unlike Turnbull, Cranston and Kusanovich drill deep into drama and embodied performance as a toolbox for fostering those qualities, not just naming them.

The old adage “desperate times breed desperate measures” is not a sufficient response to the evolving nature of creativity education today for scholars like Cranston and Kusanovich, who have seen the flexibility of creative solutions at work in their workshops and classrooms. Sometimes it is as much a matter of creative problem-*posing* (Tan 2007; Harris 2014) as it is problem-*solving*. If more teachers had the artistic training and fearless commitment to creative pedagogies on display in this volume, creative education in the twenty-first century might look very different than it does, and these so-called desperate times might move toward being the unprecedented creative and innovative teaching and learning times they promise to be. Fortunately, this book can serve as a practice guide to those teachers and educational leaders who wish to embrace these creative possibilities but might not know how.

At a time where creative solutions to twenty-first-century education changes and challenges are finally being celebrated, many in our field can benefit from the kind of scholarship presented here by these two authors. They rightly acknowledge that, “Even though creativity is considered one of the top personal and professional assets in any employee and one of the motivating forces behind the success of any venture, teacher education still does not embrace it wholeheartedly” and, as I argued in my book *The Creative Turn* (2014), teachers, and particularly school leaders, are coming to realize we need creativity more than ever. This is one reason why I established this book series which finds creative solutions to better education through artful practices and ethics.

Texts like *Ethnotheatre and Creative Methods for Teacher Leadership* fit that brief perfectly. Responding to an established need for texts that show education and arts practitioners how to nurture their own and others’ creative development, this book will have a wide and appreciative audience. As the authors point out, it is people not systems that determine the success or failure of schools. And as arts educators like Cranston and Kusanovich know, creativity is not only one of the most under-defined and sorely needed skills identified for success across the “education lifespan” (Harris 2016) and into the workforce, but also one which also benefits the human beings who work together in this field.

Their writing is lucid, the arts-based work they present is achievable, and the structure of this book makes it effective and easy to use in a range of contexts. The clever and creative structure they have chosen for this book only highlights the synthesis of their dramatic form, their modeling of creative leadership, and the possibilities for arts-based research to take

new and engaging directions. As only the third book in this new series, I congratulate Jerome and Kristin on their enormous achievement, and welcome them to the *Creativity, Education and the Arts* suite of texts.

Melbourne, Australia
January 2016

Anne Harris,
Series Editor

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OTHER BOOKS IN THIS SERIES

Creativity and Education
Anne Harris

Knowledge, Creativity and Failure: A new pedagogical framework for creative arts education
Chris Hay

PREFACE

This is a book about serious, creative play. The kind of play that teaches better than any lecture or one-way transmission of information ever could. And it is about plays. The dramatic scripts that hold stories and wisdom and that we turn to when we want to or need to learn about the human condition. Few dramatic scripts are centered on contemporary issues in today's twenty-first-century schools, however. Even though creativity is considered one of the top personal and professional assets in any employee and one of the motivating forces behind the success of any venture, teacher education still does not embrace it wholeheartedly. In all sectors, creativity is being discussed with more seriousness and intentionality than perhaps ever before. School leaders seem especially poised to benefit from creative, effective approaches to professional development.

While we have traditionally attributed to certain fields, artistic ones in particular, a certain claim on creativity, the fact is all disciplines can regularly harness creative *forces* to expand or fine-tune their thinking, strategies, and attitudes. But do all fields that could be highly creative regularly engage in learning the actual techniques to think and act creatively? Which analytical techniques from the performing arts can transfer and enliven school leadership as a creative act? Which disciplinary sensibilities from the arts can be used to improve the perceptive, empathetic capacities of school leaders? And how might the study of leadership through a creative, arts-based lens lead to additional desired outcomes like professional and personal development for school staffs? We wrote *Ethnotheatre and Creative Methods for Teacher Leadership* to grapple with just such questions.

One of our goals in researching and conducting workshops that we entitled “The Drama in Teacher Leadership” over the last few years was to move beyond abstract notions of educational administration and to create a simulation to learn how leadership feels and how leaders from diverse ranks think and act in relation to other adult professionals at schools. The authors’ transdisciplinary approach has helped participants to concretize the highly relational aspects of leadership, creating a laboratory for safe play and experimentation, deep thinking and community building. A seamless synthesis of ethnotheatre, drawn from the applied theatre branch of the performing arts, and contemporary educational administration practices, the Drama in Teacher Leadership workshops have served to demystify and unveil leadership dynamics without oversimplifying the challenges. This book shares these methods with a wider audience, an audience capable of applying any or all strategies that are suggested here to their own context.

Relationships make or break a school. Although much has been written about school improvement initiatives over the past 30 years, it has been suggested that insufficient attention has been given to the important relationships among the adults within the school and how the social dynamics of those relationships support or hinder the efforts and energy required to commit to improving student outcomes school-wide. We feel this is a timely work as we move into an era in which persons rooted in the twenty-first century will lead schools. With some alarming regularity, studies showing a decrease in empathy for upcoming generations point to opportunities missed for face-to-face interaction and whole-person development in a community. Tools for expanding our empathetic selves will be greatly needed.

Teachers have long been seen as major contributors, if not the most critical factors, to a school’s success. But a resilient, productive teaching force is only possible inasmuch as school administrators are able to effectively serve and lead school staffs in ways that are compassionate, ethical, and take into account diverse paradigms and viewpoints.

This book helps fill a gap in the discourse around teacher leadership. It provides strategies for active learning experiences that help us perceive teacher leadership in the broader context of relational dynamics between adults at schools. We hope that readers will be encouraged to think creatively about how to perform their roles in schools to better support and advocate for high-quality teacher-leadership training and teacher-leadership initiatives. Both are needed to help schools flourish. We hope you will share your responses and results with us.

2016

Jerome Cranston
Kristin Kusanovich

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ALSO BY JEROME CRANSTON
AND KRISTIN KUSANOVICH

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jerome A. Cranston PhD is the Executive Director Student Engagement and Success and is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. He has spent much of his professional life practicing and studying educational administration. He serves on the Advisory Committee of the University of Manitoba's Centre for Human Rights Research, and in 2014 was recognized by the American Educational Research Association's "Peace Education Special Interest Group" for his peace education research in post-genocide Rwanda. His Five-By-Five mini-documentaries on India's Barefoot Teacher Training Program have been screened at the University Council for Educational Administration's Film Festivals. He researches and teaches as part of an interdisciplinary, international "community of inquiry," and uses critical perspectives to uncover how organizational structures and behaviors can act as blinders to social injustice and inequity in the education system. He is committed to examine what can be done to lift the blinders to create more just schools and communities.

Kristin Kusanovich, MFA is a director, choreographer and arts education specialist. She has created and produced an extensive body of original work in modern/contemporary dance, drama, musical theatre, opera and film. She received her MFA in Choreography and Performance from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and is Senior Lecturer at Santa Clara University. She served as Artistic Director of Kusanovich Dance Theatre of Minneapolis and has led master classes and workshops in dance and theatre performance at conservatories in the USA and Canada. A seasoned

performance coach, presenter and arts education advocate, she currently serves on the Executive Board of California Dance Education Association. Ms. Kusanovich has been awarded artistic and research grants supporting her teaching, creative and scholarly work, including the Brutocao Curriculum Innovation Award and a National Endowment for the Arts grant in Arts Engagement. She is committed to enlivening discourse around issues of justice, ethics and civic engagement through the arts.

Authors Cranston and Kusanovich have led dynamic intensives in Canada and the USA for principal and vice-principal teams, teacher leaders, superintendents, teacher educators, and graduate students. They offer co-facilitated workshops in ethnotheatre that examine interpersonal and ethical challenges around teacher leadership (The Drama in Teacher Leadership) or on school leadership in general (The Drama in School Leadership). They have co-authored 18 ethnodramas for various sized ensembles based on material that would usually be presented as a case study. Their work has been presented at American Educational Research Association (AERA), University Council on Educational Administration (UCEA), the International Confederation of Principals (ICP), California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE), Congress: The Canadian Federation of the Humanities and Social Science, Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools, Mississippi State University, University of Manitoba's Faculty of Education, and Santa Clara University's Markkula Center for Applied Ethics and Graduate School of Education.

A trailer for their work using drama (as in art) to study the drama (as in strife) in school leadership contexts is available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOHXS-JitCs>

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Prologue: Stage Fright

Abstract *Prologue: Stage Fright* sets into motion the use of theatrical analogies, metaphors, and guideposts for thinking about educational leadership as a performative act and teacher leadership in particular as an under-supported performance. Authors Cranston and Kusanovich share challenges related to how teacher leaders' initiatives are perceived, received, and ultimately played out.

Keywords Performative • Performativity

Andover feared the sound of the words of the workshop facilitator before she uttered them. Now, deep into the first afternoon of the workshop, he knew what they were headed for. He had read it on the agenda provided earlier that day: "Afternoon Session: Putting our Learning on Display." Robert liked to know how things were going to work out. He often flipped, as casually as he could, to the end of any agenda the moment it was handed to him. The idea of putting his learning on display sounded simply dreadful to him. He didn't generally like to be a part of any display.

"What role would you like to play?" he imagined her asking over lunch. With a slight lilt to it, her way of speaking was both gentle and sharp. He guessed this was because she was from the "East Coast" and let it go at that. Even though he had not actually heard many of the instructions,

such as that the casting of roles would happen mid-morning, he noticed how she could turn an “o” sound into a “wa” sound, so “off” was more like “woff.” In listening for this, he had missed much of the facilitator’s explanation of role play. She had generally sounded pleasant to him, but now, in this imaginary dialogue, her voice sounded a bit frightening.

“Pardon me?” would be his planned response as he feigned a hard-of-hearing routine.

“What role? I’m not sure I’m following?” He would try to say casually as if he had not read ahead on the agenda or heard anything about a play he was to be in.

He figured that she would smile and say something like, “Are you trying to tell me that you did not remember that I told everyone that we were going to role play the leadership case we’ve been studying?” She would stand there, hands on her hips, planted like a tree, and hold that smile. Then she might add, “And not to worry if you don’t get a leading role. Remember, there are no small parts...only small actors.”

“Oh, Robert, you idiot,” he thought. “No one ever really says that. Do they? Okay, she won’t say that!”

He temporarily landed on: “Uhhhm, I sort of forgot about it.” He rehearsed these words in his mind. But in a sudden flash of inspiration he topped himself.

“Sorry I must have missed that part. Say, can a person just sort of watch the play? I think I learn better that way, you know, I can take it all in that way.”

He wondered if maybe he should add a slight shrugging of his shoulders. Maybe then with the addition of some body language, some “BL,” she wouldn’t know this was just a cover for his disdain for participatory learning, especially when he was the participant. Perhaps it would not appear to be an outright fib or at least he hoped she wouldn’t know he had rehearsed all these responses.

He could feel the perspiration pooling under his armpits.

“Never let ‘em see you sweat.” He could hear the faint voice of his middle-school drama teacher who had enthusiastically told the cast this once prior to the opening night of the spring festival performance.

“Did she really say that?” He couldn’t recall now if he ever really heard her actually say those words.

“Where the hell is Jaimie Young when I need him?” he thought. Jaimie was his childhood chum from back in drama class and right about now he needed him. Andover always needed to check with him back in eighth