“What has visiting an art gallery got to do with learning in a business school?”

Margaret Page, Mariana Lukaj, Louise Bowen

From *Pictures* into *Words*!  
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The Project Objectives

• Participative action inquiry using visual and narrative methods;
• Students and faculty invited to workshops to explore their constructs of ‘success’ in the business school;
• Core research team interested in developing visual inquiry as learning and teaching methodology;
• Methodological framings: Inquiry based learning (Levy, 2008); Visual and ethnographic research (Pink, 2008; Rose, 2010); Action inquiry (Reason and Marshall, 1987); Experiential learning (Boud et al, 1989)
Research process

• 3 cycles of participative inquiry
• 3 workshops followed by reflection on methodology and findings, and planning of next workshop
  – Workshop 1- induction week- 30 level 1 organisation studies students
  – Workshop 2- staff and students- optional
  – Workshop 3 –follow up workshop for welcome week students- now at level 2.
What is the Art Gallery Project?

*Began with work carried out by students and tutors on a module called Managing Change in Bristol Business School using and IBL approach:*

Students’ research change in organisations through visual media including photography, storyboards and film.

The Art Gallery Research Project research project developed as an open forum – for methods for doing 'visual inquiry' as a way of exploring how we can think critically about ways of engaging with and leading 'change' in organisations.

*A place for collective learning, the stimulation of debate and sharing of ideas, e.g. on the theme of ‘success’!*
What is visual inquiry?

• *Questions not answers as a way of learning*

• Pictures can shed a different light on the familiar-stimulate debate about different ways of seeing the same thing

• *Pictures evoke memories and emotions – a way of recognising how our past experiences inform our learning now*

• Collaborative meaning making process
The Methodology

• Participants collectively frame inquiry questions to explore; create and present visual images of success; explore and generate meanings in group discussion.

• This presentation- focus on participant learning from and lived experience of doing the research.
What we’ve learned so far...

*Using visual images allowed for spontaneity and improvisation; it is less scripted and censored.*

Images triggered more ideas, feelings, prompts

*Informal process, a space for non-expert critique, but used as a catalyst for discussion, enabling co-meaning making*

Working with visual materials provides an anchor – something to hold on to, something that can speak for itself.
WORKSHOP 1 - LADDER OF LEARNING
WORKSHOP

VISUAL FIELD TRIP
success

more agonizing—period of haggling over the fate of the family.

success /sək'ses/ successes

1 Success is the achievement of something that you have been trying to do. It's important for the long-term success of any diet that you vary your meals. ...the success of European business in building a stronger partnership between management and workers.

2 Success is the achievement of a high position in a particular field, for example in business or politics. Nearly all of the young people interviewed believed that work was the key to success.

3 The success of something is the fact that it works in a satisfactory way or has the result that is intended. Most of the cast was amazed by the play's success... Enthused by the success of the first exhibition, its organisers are hoping to repeat the experience.

4 Someone or something that is a success achieves a high position, makes a lot of money, or is admired a great deal. The jewellery was a great success... We hope it will be a commercial success.

successful /sək'sesfl/ adj.

1 Something that is successful achieves what it was intended to achieve. Someone who is successful achieves what they intended to achieve. How successful will this new treatment be?... I am looking forward to a long and successful partnership with him. She has been comparatively successful in...

succor /sək'ar/ See succour, succour /sək'ar/ succours, succored; spelled succour in AmE

1 Succour is help given to people who are in difficulties; a formal agreement to give succour to people. It is a serious conflict.

2 If you succour someone with difficulties, you help them; a...ters fly in appalling weather to mariners.

succulent /sək'jələnt/ adj.

1 Succulent food, especially juicy and delicious. Cook...en with ample garlic and a variety of early vegetables.

2 Succulents or succulent plants which have thick, fleshy leaves and other succulent parts in succumb /səkəm/ succumbed

1 If you succumb to something, you are unable to resist the temptation to have it. The Minister said his country felt the pressure.

2 If you succumb to an illness or injury you allow it to develop. He...
1. Can the same image seen at different times hold different meanings? Tell something else?

2. If those images were shown to others who had not seen them before, what would they think?

3. Do meanings/values to success change at different points, from enrolment to graduation and beyond?
WORKSHIP
FRAMING THE INQUIRY
PARTICIPANT INQUIRY QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION AT WORKSHOP 2

- Is success an external or an internal construct? Tension between the 2?
- Who constructs success?
- How is success viewed at different life stages?
- How does success relate to happiness?
- Is success measurable?
WORKSHOP 2 JANE TITLEY, OUR ARTIST IN RESIDENCE AND PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR, PORTRAITS THE INQUIRY PROCESS
ORG IDEA OF SUCCESS vs. STAFF IDEAS
CONFLICTS TENSIONS
The Findings

The images were all very different, However there was at least one common theme—that success is a process, something that is worked for to achieving some kind of inner contentment which may also be reflected in external symbols and pleasures (the Mercedes!) the journey,„„) Tutor, workshop 1, 2011.
CO RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

• VI needs time- not only in the doing, but in the discussion afterwards of processes of meaning making, how visual images were selected and the posters composed, what debates were provoked in the process and how interpretations were made and negotiated.
• When images are revisited additional feelings and emotions are triggered on where you are in your journey. Others adding their observations of what they see in the image or what it might mean for them on reflection.
• I feel that VI challenges ones way of learning that one has been accustomed to for years.
VI AS LEARNING METHODOLOGY

• I strongly agree that visual and writing enquiry ought to be a key part of any balanced curriculum. It enables a different and quite powerful experience of social constructionist arguments on reality and meaning of concepts.

  *DS-tutor*

• Using visual methods again in the form of photography gave us a medium that allowed us to dig deeper, as opposed to just scratching the surface, when exploring our ideas about success. I believe auto ethnographic writing also helped us to explore and challenge our ideas in a deep and meaningful way.

  *RW - graduate co researcher*

• This workshop also reinforced the value for me of diversity when working and researching in this way. Having a diverse group of people from various different backgrounds added depth to the insights that we had about success.

  *RW - graduate co researcher*
Evidencing learning

• From passive to active learners
• From surface to deeper learning
• “a learner who has transformed from being a receiver and understander to a producer of new knowledge” Zull 2002:174.

Observation by Lesley Moore, NTLF and project mentor.
Workshop 3: Welcome week revisited one year on

• I learnt that other participants within the group were also influenced and affected by the feeling of having to live up to other people’s ideas and expectations, about what it means to be successful. The question of who actually determines what is or is not successful reoccurred at several points throughout the day.

• During this workshop there seemed to be a lot less focus on the material meaning of success i.e. nice car, big house, expensive possessions etc.

• We started to think about success in the everyday sense. Getting through each day, tackling problems that you face, making the best of what you have got. Rather than success meaning that things turn out the way you hoped they would and having things go according to plan.

RW- graduate co researcher
Collage- OS students, one year on
Collage - OS students, one year on
Collage- OS students, one year on
Collage - OS students, one year on
THE PRACTICE OF FACILITATING VI

• Attention to group process: consensus making process-inclusion/exclusion/participation/leadership and how these shaped ‘sense giving’.
• Selection of images: on what basis selection made? what was discarded? Were images used to represent ideas/ as metaphors/ as signs or containers of emergent meaning?
• Content: focus attention on reading beyond individual images, towards juxtapositions/ links/ contrasts between individual images within collages
• Aesthetics: composition, use of colour, framing, what is in the picture but not made explicit by presenters.
• Presenting: what reading is given by the verbal commentary? To what is the audience attention drawn/ not?
• Audiencing: what is provoked or evoked in the audience? What additional readings are offered? Emerge?
• Time: VI is a continuous process that requires time, endorses thinking and the space to do it.
LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

• The methods utilised in this research project of 'visual inquiry' have enabled me to be more of an evaluative thinker and writer. For example, questioning a question and answering the question/s where possible to seek understanding.

• The way I think about employment now to before is different but that may have somewhat to do with experience also. It is different in terms of, I know what I do not perhaps want, and whereas the visual methods are enabling me to get to what I want by constantly enquiring the unknown

• Learning can be encouraged in a climate, which encourages risk taking, doing things and trying out new ideas. I did not feel this occurred much at university, if anything the complete opposite, as one was made to feel apprehensive about embracing any new approaches/ideas and thus creating reluctance from a student perspective.

• This research has helped me to know myself better by allowing that freedom for being creative with my thinking and critiquing, which I do not feel I could have done before and consequently being more confident as a person who may have valuable ideas to contribute. Believing in oneself!
“It’s your attitude not your aptitude that determines your altitude!” James Caan.
success i found elusive

even after i had achieved it.