Engaging Gen Z through Adventurous Learning

My thing — Our future
Lahti, Nov. 2017

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- ✤ Students

- ✤ Teachers

- ✤ Youthworkers

- ✤ Managers

- ✤ Parents

- ✤ Researchers

What is my 'thing'?

Helping others grow through adventure

My aim:

To offer you an 'adventurous' framework for engaging young people that you can adapt for your own practice.

Outline

* Defining adventure

* Today's world

* Today's learners

* A framework for Adventurous Learning

Who has recently had an adventure?

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Basic definitions of adventure

* 'An unusual, exciting, or daring experience' (The Oxford Concise Dictionary, 2008, p. 18)

* 'outcomes cannot be predicted to any great degree' (Higgins, 2001, p. 102)

* Involves 'a degree of uncertainty' (Mortlock, 1984, p. 14)

* '...a challenge that will demand the best of our capabilities — physically, mentally, emotionally' (Mortlock, 1984, p. 19)

More nuanced features of adventure

- Individually relative
- Culturally relative
- Planned
- Pro-social

Adventures are planned, challenging experiences that feature a degree of unpredictability and which demand certain physical and mental skills to undertake.

Today's world is a crazy place!

- Constantly evolving technology and communications — more and more, faster and faster (Elliot & Urry, 2010)

- 'Risk culture' dominates (Giddens, 1991), as people are obsessed with 'minimising bads' (Beck, 1992)

- Daily life is increasingly complex (Morrison, 2008)

- 'Liquid times' (Baumant, 2007)

There is no more 'grand narrative'….

Further 'ills' of society…

✤ Terrorism

✤ Forced migration

✤ Neo-liberalism — influence of market forces on education and public services

✤ Increasing socio-economic inequality

✤ Climate change

We are living in uncertain, rapidly changing times.

Our world is markedly different from the one in which most of us grew up, and it is shaping a fascinating generation of young people.

Meet Generation Z

The most materially endowed, technology saturated, globally connected, formally educated generation the world has ever seen.

(McCrindle, 2014, p. 15)

Four features of Gen Z

* Affected by global uncertainties and worried about the future

* Digital natives who are highly networked

* Decreasing levels of physical and mental health

* Non-linear education and work trajectories

Uncertain childhoods and fairer futures

✤ Global financial crisis, environmental disasters, terrorism, 'videoed violence'

✤ In the USA, many are very cautious and 'sensible' —smoking less, drinking less, wearing seatbelts more than 25 years ago (JWT, n.d.)

In Finland, smoking and alcohol consumption is down (Youth Barometer, 2015)

✤ More likely to be risk minimisers than risk takers (McWilliam, n.d., Twenge, 2017)

✤ Very concerned about the future -- they want to change the world (Sparkes & Honey, n.d. 2; JWT, n.d.)

✤ Low tolerance of discrimination based on gender, race and sexual orientation (Twenge, 2017)

Highly networked digital natives

* Have only known a wireless, hyper-linked world (McCrindle, 2014; Williams, n.d.)

* Inhabit a 'networked public' (Boyd, 2014) and are in contact with people 24/7 (Ford, 2015)

* Have low tolerance for being without digital resources (Ford, 2015) and expect instant access to information (Williams, n.d.)

* Find answers to questions in Google and YouTube (Rothman, 2014)

* Getting and maintaining attention is very difficult — love 'snack media' (Sparkes & Honey, n.d.)

Networked digital natives (cont'd)

✤ Have made close friends on Instagram, Tumblr, and Facebook — prefer messaging over email (Cook, n.d.; Sparkes & Honey, n.d.)

✤ Communicate with emoticons and emojis, images, icons and symbols

✤ Abundance of data makes Gen Z go for quick answers (Rothman, 2014)

✤ Many lack skills to appropriately gather, critically evaluate, and systematically curate information (Rothman, 2014)

Decreasing physical & mental health

* Very inactive

    i. 27% of waking time on screen (McCrindle, 2014)

    ii. USA teen obesity tripled between 1971 and 2010 (Sparkes & Honey, n.d.)

* Less accustomed to unstructured leisure and 'childhood' (McCrindle, 2014)

* Sports are a health / fitness tool, not for play

* Gaming is 'king' (Sparkes & Honey, n.d. 2) and games are <u>inside</u> (Cook, n.d.).

* Increasing incidences of depression, eating disorders, stress-induced illnesses (McCrindle, 2014, Twenge, 2017)

* Much less face to face time with friends (Twenge, 2017)

Non-linear education and work paths

Conflicting information in the literature!

* Widening gap between formal education and skill-sets needed by industry leave many ill-equipped to find jobs (McWilliam, n.d.)

* Have very entrepreneurial ideas, but may be less likely to start a business (Twenge, 2017)

* More willing to 'tolerate' a job than Gen Y (Twenge, 2017)

* Australian Zs predicted to have 17 Jobs and 15 homes over their lifetimes (McCrindle, 2014)

Let's 'take stock'…

Life in liquid times is characterised by uncertainty, rapid change, online social networks, and complexity

- Today's young people are shaped by these factors in a way that previous generations were not.

- Services of all kinds are going in the opposite direction: they are becoming increasingly predictable, standardised, and rationalised

What is our job in all of this?!

To help equip young people with the tools to thrive in a world that is constantly changing.

Learning through adventure is one way this can be done.

Four features…

Adventurous Learning
A Pedagogy for a Changing World

Simon Beames and Mike Brown

1. Uncertainty

- Outcomes and processes should not be fully predictable

- Tasks should offer multiple possible courses of action, where there is not one right answer

- Elicits creative responses from students imagining solutions, refining ideas, putting them into practice (Robinson, 2011)

- Deep reasoning and innovation is required.

Uncertainty (cont'd)

- Draws on Aristotle's need to practice reasoning and moral decision-making, Dewey's *Indeterminate situation* (1938), Festinger's *Cognitive dissonance* (1957)

- Need to develop 'uncertainty competences' through appraising conflicting information (Tauritz, 2014)

2. Authenticity

* Concerns what is 'real' and encountered in ordinary life experiences

* Responds to 'place' — landscape and community (Wattchow & Brown, 2011)

* Starting point is a place's issues connected to young people's lives (Smith & Sobel, 2010)

Authenticity (cont'd)

* Gen Z wants to shape a better future for all (Sparkes & Honey, n.d. 2; JWT, n.d.)

* Gen Z is highly capable of self-directed learning and critical thinking, but only when topic is deemed important (Ford, 2015)

* Need to root education in present life. It is not a preparation for future living — it is a process of living (Dewey, 1897)

3. Agency

- Young people must have the power to influence what is learned and how it is learned

- The key is facilitators providing appropriate 'autonomy support'

- Young people must be given the 'right' kinds of choices: *relevant, **not too many**,* and ***cognitive*** (rather than organisational) (Assor et al., 2002; Stefanou et al., 2004)

- Facilitators need to allow criticism and encourage independent thinking (Assor et al., 2002)

- Draws on Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1987)

Agency (cont'd)

✤ Prefer to collaborate in teams and small groups — willing to express opinions in small group discussions (Rothman, 2014; Eckleberry-Hunt & Tucciarone, 2011)

✤ They want to co-create, live stream, and help to make up the activity as they participate (Cook, n.d.)

✤ Prefer trial and error, and learning by experimenting, rather than being lectured to (Eckleberry-Hunt & Tucciarone, 2011; Rothman, 2014)

4. Mastery

* Is about developing consummate skill and commanding knowledge.

* Challenging tasks demand acquisition of skills and knowledge to make decisions, take responsibility, and take action.

* Overcoming challenges requires tenacity, personal investment, and an ability to overcome setbacks .

Mastery (cont'd)

* Draws on Bandura's *Self efficacy* (1977), Csikszentmihalyi's *Flow theory* (1990), and Berman and Davis-Berman's *Autotelic experiences* (2005)

* Young people can develop their own specialist areas of skill and knowledge — their <u>thing</u>!

Putting it all together…

* First, consider a recent activity that you have facilitated for your young people.

* Second, consider the degree to which it has featured elements of uncertainty, authenticity, agency, and mastery.

The Adventurous Learning Framework
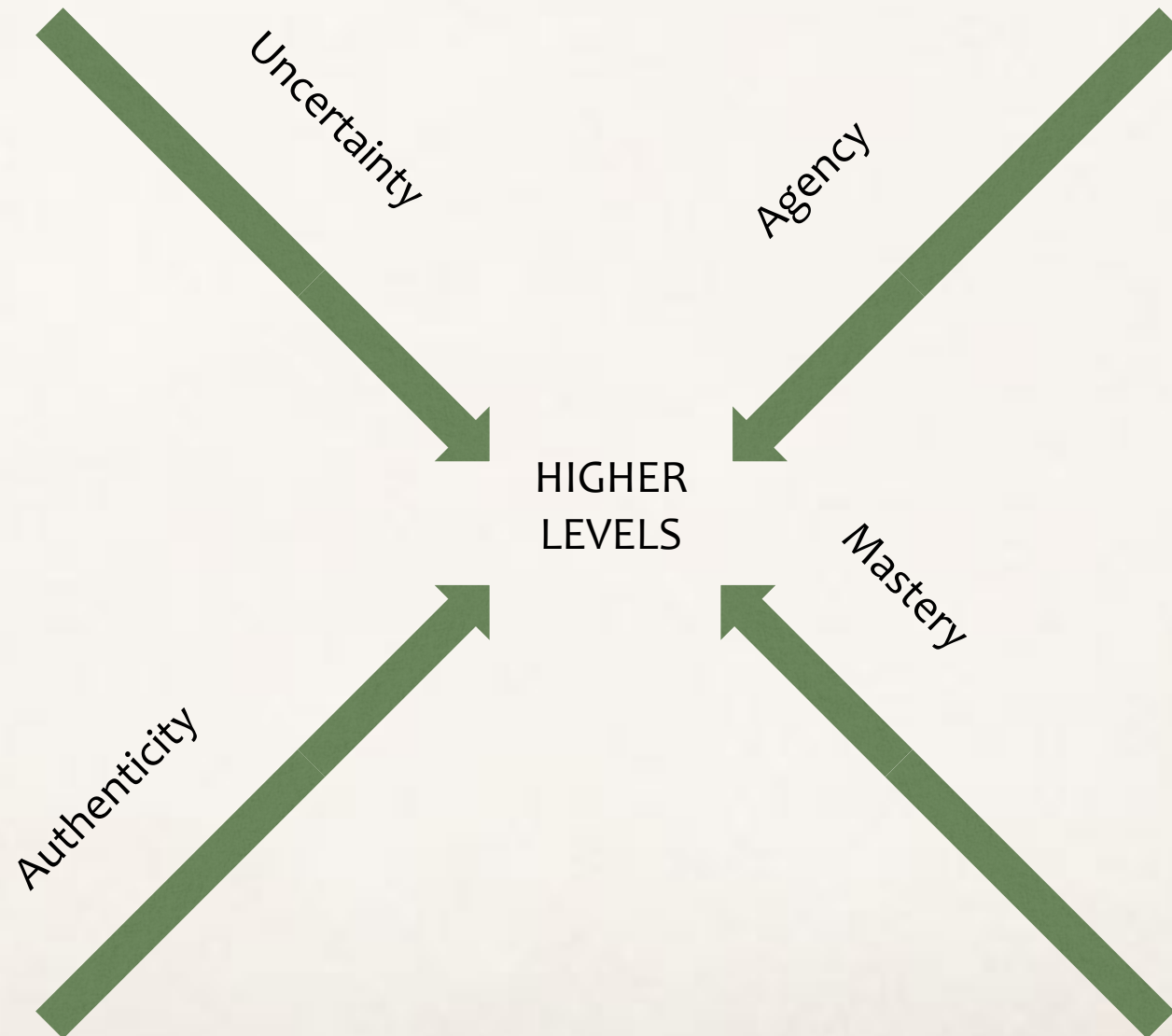
My principal points…

* Educational and recreational programmes for young people have become too rigid and prescriptive: this limits learning and growth.

* Learning and growth can be increased by making our programmes more adventurous.

* The four features of adventurous learning can be used to interrogate the degree to which our practices could be more adventurous.

One more thing: Digital de-tox!

Today's young people need deliberate time out from screens -- **digital detox!** (Sparkes & Honey, n.d. 2)

They need technology-free periods (Eckleberry-Hunt & Tucciarone, 2011)

Medical concerns about 'digital junkies' (Kardaras, 2016)

Some children of technology gurus attend 'no tech' Waldorf and Montessori schools (Kardaras, 2016)

www.amchara.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/juice-cleansing.jpg

We need to make informed decisions about approaches to youth development that will deeply engage young people while equipping them to be flourishing, responsible and caring citizens of the world.

How can you make ‘your thing’ more adventurous?!

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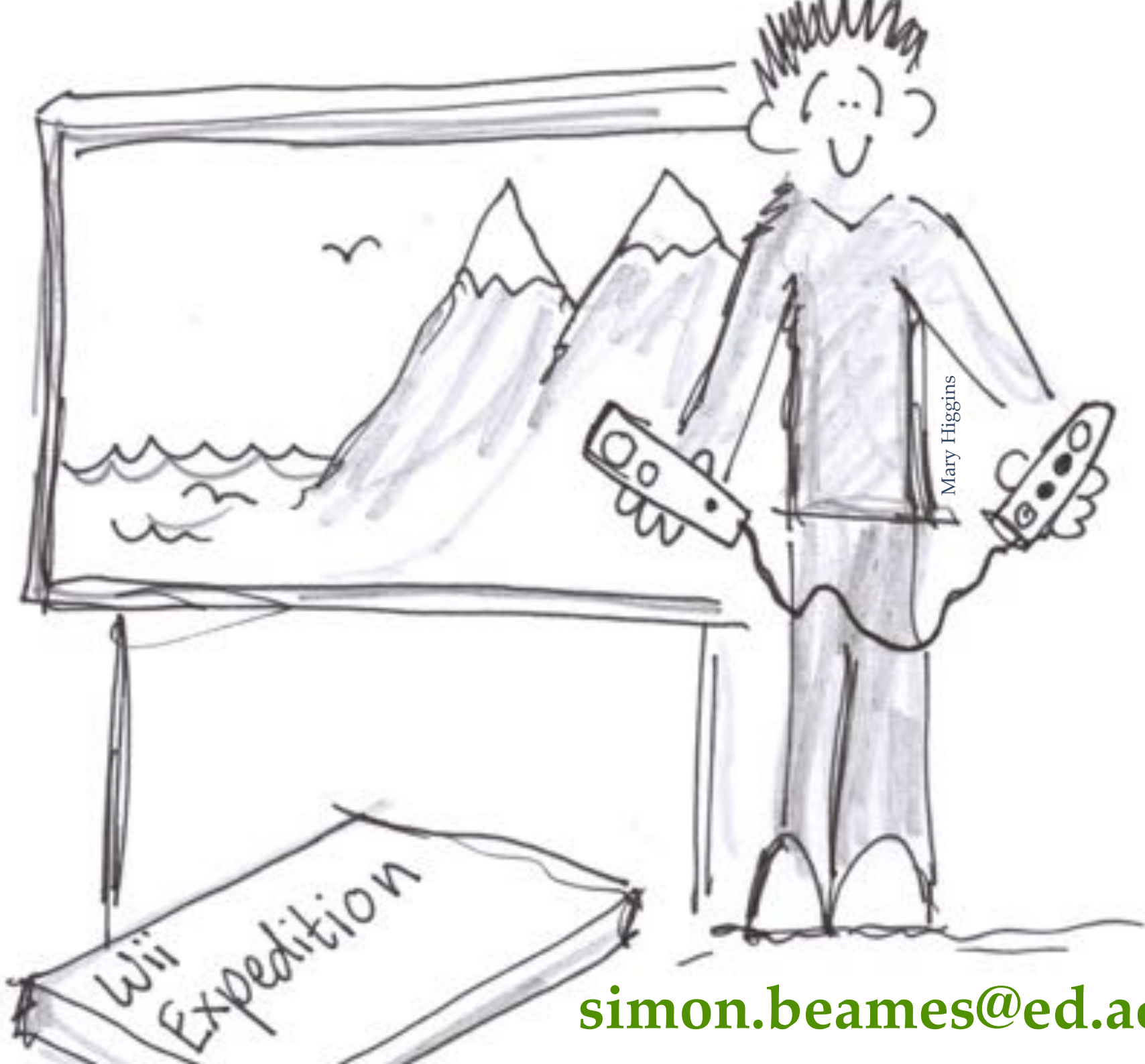
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