



Education and Skills Select Committee: Inquiry on Creative Partnerships

Memorandum by the General Teaching Council

Executive Summary

1. The General Teaching Council for England (GTC) welcomes the Commons Education and Skills Select Committee inquiry into Creative Partnerships and suggests that some of the key characteristics identified in the Ofsted evaluation of Creative Partnerships have lessons for teaching and learning as a whole, particularly regarding strategies for the personalisation of learning.
2. Ofsted's evaluation of the effectiveness of Creative Partnerships initiatives in its first phase reveals an enthusiasm and appetite among pupils and teachers for styles of teaching and learning that make greater use of creativity and that exercise and challenge the imagination. Creative Partnerships has been able to harness the curiosity, experimentation, risk-taking and imaginative reach that defines creativity to the significant benefit of teachers as well as pupils. The most successful programmes transformed the experience of learning for children and young people.
3. The GTC is the independent professional body for teaching. Its main duties are to regulate the teaching profession and to advise the Secretary of State on a range of issues that concern teaching and learning. The Council acts in the public interest to help to raise standards in education.
4. Creative Partnerships is one of a range of national organisations working with the GTC Teacher Learning Academy (TLA). The TLA is the first national system to offer public and professional recognition for teachers' work-based continuing professional development.

GTC's proposals

Teaching and learning roles

5. One of the key findings of Ofsted's report *Creative Partnerships: initiative and impact* was *"most teachers gained an understanding about teaching that promoted pupils' creativity and creative teaching by learning alongside pupils"*.
6. Current education research and practice around the personalisation of learning and the notion of pupil voice – defined as real pupil participation in learning - treats the process of teaching and learning as a collaborative dialogue where pupils in some contexts can be participants in the co-production of education outcomes as well as consumers of education services.
7. The view that the content and conduct of courses of study are the exclusive territory of teachers is changing, thanks in part to Assessment for Learning (AfL) and the Government's emphasis on personalised learning. The GTC has identified pupil voice, alongside AfL and continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers as the critical levers for changing the teaching and learning culture to open the way for personalised learning.
8. The GTC is aware of a vast amount of research evidence on innovative approaches to teaching and learning and the expression of pupil voice, including the PELRS: Developing Pedagogies for E-learning Resources project which was co-funded by the GTC. This research shows the benefits that can result from learners taking responsibility for their own learning through a process of negotiation between teachers and learners whose roles are not fixed. The PELRS project showed that classroom roles could successfully be redefined so that learners could take on the role of teacher for a specific issue, or the teacher could be recast as a learner. The effect was to foster more creative ways of learning which, it can be argued, equip young people better for the creative and knowledge economy of the 21st Century.
9. The GTC Council believes that involving pupils in teaching and learning approaches leads to higher attainment and that national standards of attainment are only going to be further raised through the redirection of resources via schools into ways of developing personalised learning. This view is grounded in many research studies, including the linked studies within the ESRC's Teaching and Learning Research Programme, led by Jean Rudduck, whose team examined the benefit and practical applications of the principle of pupil voice.

Creative Partnerships and Pupil Voice – parallel characteristics

10. Pupil voice explicitly encourages young people to believe that what they say and do makes a difference, that they are active agents in the way their lives take shape and that their ideas and experiences matter. Ofsted also identified pupils' demand for authentic experiences as important in the success of Creative Partnership initiatives.
11. Rudduck found that pupils were quick to discern tokenistic, inauthentic consultation around pupil voice. Equity and authenticity were necessary to fill the space where the traditional power relationships in schools would normally be, but where this was successfully achieved pupils felt more positive about themselves as learners, could understand and manage their own progress better and felt more included in the school's purposes.
12. Those elements that characterised successful Creative Partnership initiatives – improvisation, risk taking, collaboration and unpredictability – also define creative teaching and learning, the exercise of the imagination and are the keys to a rich and happy childhood. It is no accident that pupils, for instance, displayed high levels of social responsibility where Creative Partnerships gave them the opportunity to make a positive contribution to their community. This approach demonstrates the inter-dependence of the five Every Child Matters outcomes and how personalised approaches to teaching and learning can develop and integrate them.

Curriculum Development

13. Ofsted reports that *“most of the teachers involved in the projects identified a shift in their planning towards more open-ended outcomes while remaining clear about learning objectives, pointing to instances when teachers adapted published schemes of work to provide greater “ownership”*”. This potential for curricular flexibility has important parallels in new approaches to teaching and learning across the board, enabling teachers to apply their professional judgement and tailor teaching to the needs of individual pupils via personalised learning.

Creative Teachers

14. In order to improve and refine their professional practice, teachers as well as pupils need space to experiment, take risks and explore what it feels like to take on different roles. Within the GTC's call for an entitlement for all teachers to access to high quality continuing professional development opportunities, the Creative Partnerships report brings into sharper relief the GTC's recommendation in its response to the 2020 Vision report *that "teachers need structured, supported opportunities to enquire into effective and creative uses of new technologies for learning, and to develop their teaching practice accordingly."* New pedagogies need to develop in tandem and in line with new technologies: few teachers currently have the time, knowledge or permission to experiment to make this happen.

Assessment

15. Ofsted reports that "some of the schools offered evidence to suggest a correlation between pupils' involvement in Creative Partnerships and improved achievement more widely, but this was largely anecdotal." That schools found it challenging to quantify improvements in achievement is unsurprising. Evaluation tools to enable schools to assess the attributes of creativity as well as those of social, emotional and behavioural development do not sit happily with the current, knowledge-based assessment system.

16. The GTC has argued elsewhere for an urgent and fundamental review of current testing and assessment in schools. We have asserted that the assessment system is the most significant barrier to developing pupil voice as a critical element of personalised learning. Given the parallels between Creative Partnership initiatives and pupil voice it can be argued that current assessment is a similar barrier to the development of Creative Partnerships.

Conclusion

17. The GTC would like to see Creative Partnership initiatives retained and developed to enable as many children and young people as possible to have the opportunity to work in a structured way with creative practitioners. However, by its nature, only a proportion of our children and young people can do so. We advocate the Committee's examining those elements of Creative Partnerships which can be carried over into mainstream teaching including personalisation of learning and pupil voice, to enrich and energise teaching and learning across the board.