



Creative Partnerships National External Evaluation Audit Report

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Executive Summary

This is the second of three national audits of Creative Partnerships (CP) evaluation processes and practices. It is designed to:

- analyse the evaluation process across the country, i.e. are reports rigorous, fit for purpose, consistent, comparable?
- validate and disseminate regional strengths and good practice in evaluation;
- synthesise and interrogate issues common to Creative Partnerships' Area Delivery Organisations.

The audit team from Oxford Brookes University:

- reviewed ten sample evaluation reports from each Area Delivery Organisation (ADO)¹;
- visited five representative ADOs to observe evaluations taking place and interview key staff;
- made fact finding visits to two further ADOs, which took over CP work from former phase one CP regional offices;
- scrutinised supporting evaluation material from a different group of five ADOs.

Because of the introduction of three new schools' programmes and the establishment of several new ADOs during the academic year, CP National Office asked us to adopt a 'light touch' approach to this year's audit.

¹ During 2007/8 the term ADO was adopted by CP National Office to encompass the new independent organisations delivering CP regionally as well as the remaining CP Area offices. The term ADO will be used throughout the report to denote any of the local organisations delivering CP.

The CP National Office has considerably improved its system of evaluation in 2007/8. The new Evaluation Framework builds on the former 'Toolkit,' is fit for purpose and adds appropriate refinements to CP evaluation. The 'Creative School Development Framework' which the National Office designed this year is a useful and familiar approach to school self-evaluation and to securing the legacy of CP. There is widespread support at ADOs for the Evaluation Framework. The majority of evaluations report very positively on the impact and influence of CP projects. This year, there is more information on the impact of CP on schools. As a result of Creative Partnerships projects, creative practitioners report more gains this year in their teaching expertise, in their understanding of schools and even in their artistic practice.

In the light of the audit team's investigations we make the following recommendations for evaluation in 2008/9.

To meet the needs of ADOs, CP National Office should undertake further development of 'cascade' training materials and programmes for creative agents, designed to promote effective evaluation and 'deep conversations.' It should also continue to monitor the ease of use of evaluation forms and the available resource earmarked for evaluation.

ADOs should strengthen evaluation training programmes for their creative agents, ensuring that they absorb and build on the expertise of the specialist external evaluators who produced good quality analyses in 2007/8. They should also initiate regional - and contribute to national - CP debates about the nature and features of 'deep conversations.'

Schools should capture more direct evaluation evidence of the 'voice' of pupils and devote careful thought to planning and monitoring the impact of CP projects. They should direct evaluation more strategically to a local and regional audience.

Teachers and creative practitioners should always match claims about the gains attributable to CP to some form of evidence. In the Enquiry Schools Programme they need to work with creative agents to formulate simpler, less abstract enquiry questions which can be more directly researched and addressed to CP objectives.

Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creativity programme for schools and young people, managed by Arts Council England and funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)². It aims to develop:

- the creativity of young people, raising their aspirations and achievements;
- the skills of teachers and their ability to work with creative practitioners;
- schools' approaches to culture, creativity and partnership working; and
- the skills, capacity and sustainability of the creative industries.

Creative Partnerships was initially designed and funded as a pilot programme (Phase 1) from April 2002 to 31st March 2004. This phase had a budget of £40 million. Sixteen pilot areas were selected by Ministers from a list of the most economically and socially challenged neighbourhoods in England. In the July 2002 Comprehensive Spending Round, Arts Council England was awarded funding for Creative Partnerships to continue beyond the original pilot programme. DCMS committed £70 million to continue to support the existing 16 Creative Partnerships and to develop 20 new Partnerships in 2004-2006.

In April 2008 Creative Partnerships formally entered a new phase, delivering a broader national programme designed to involve 80% of English schools by 2014. During the 2007/8 academic year CP introduced three major new schools' programmes: *Schools of Creativity*, *Change Schools* and *Enquiry Schools*. Several former regional CP offices changed in status, becoming new independent entities, ADOs. All of the ADOs we visited had started working with more schools than they had done prior to April, and had started to manage pilot Enquiry School projects.

For this reason the Evaluation Audit report this year reflects the 'light touch' approach we were asked to adopt by the Creative Partnerships National Office. The core of this approach was that the audit team should recognise that ADOs were in a period of transition, and that practice and processes might not be as consistent as might be expected once the new programmes bed down. So the key conclusions of this year's

² Formerly the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

evaluation audit indicate the direction we recommend for the succeeding years of CP, once the new systems are established.

Creative Partnerships' (CP)³ National Office at Arts Council England commissioned Oxford Brookes University to conduct three annual audits of the project evaluation processes and practices in Creative Partnerships across England. This report summarises findings from the **second annual audit**, covering projects evaluated by ADOs in the 2007/8 academic year. A team of five Oxford Brookes staff conducted the audit. The audit team was essentially the same as that which reported on continuing professional development in CP in 2005. Former HMI Peter Muschamp acted as 'critical friend' to the team, refining the audit process and commenting on drafts of the report.

The purpose of this external audit is to:

- analyse the evaluation process across the country, i.e. are reports rigorous, fit for purpose, consistent, comparable?
- validate and disseminate regional strengths and good practice in evaluation;
- synthesise and interrogate issues common to Creative Partnerships.

We presented our 2006/7 report at a consultation conference for key staff in all of the ADOs in October 2007. The CP National Office accepted our key recommendations. They commissioned a re-design of Evaluation Toolkit and its on-line reporting system in late 2007. The Oxford Brookes audit team hosted two conferences in March 2008 to consult ADOs on the re-designed evaluation system.

2 - The Audit Methods Used

The audit team – as in 2006/7 - reviewed a sample of ten completed evaluation reports from each ADO. We made visits to a sample of seven ADOs in the summer of 2007 and observed evaluation taking place through interviews with teachers, creative practitioners and pupils. During each visit we also interviewed key ADO staff, usually the ADO Director and two or more other staff such as creative agents or programmers. We were able to discuss CP evaluation with teachers and heads at each school. To ensure consistency, we

³ In this report we use *CP* to denote the entire Creative Partnerships initiative. We use *ADOs* to denote the regional offices and their processes.

developed a standard template for our visit questions. This is included at Appendix A (below), and is based on CP's key objectives, as described in the prospectus for each of the new schools' programmes. We sent our notes on the visits to each ADO to check their accuracy.

Finally, in a different sample of five ADOs, we audited corroborating or supporting evidence of evaluation, such as Creative Self-evaluation Forms (C-SEFs) pamphlets, DVDs, school improvement plans and Self-evaluation Forms (SEFs). Again, we used a standard set of questions to guide our survey of the supporting evidence. This is also included in Appendix A. So twelve ADOs were subject to more in-depth scrutiny in the second audit, and this rolling programme should ensure that the audit team cover every ADO in more depth at some time over the three-year period.

This audit report is organised in sections, corresponding to the various agencies and individuals actively involved in CP evaluation. So, in each succeeding section, we outline evidence, findings and recommendations about the contributions to CP evaluation made by:

- the CP National Office;
- regional ADO offices and staff;
- schools;
- teachers;
- creative practitioners.

3 - How CP National Office Contributes to Evaluation

During 2007/8 the CP National Office developed the 'Creative Partnerships Evaluation Toolkit,' and abandoned the XA online database which collected evaluation data. To refine these tools it commissioned a rewrite of the Toolkit, replacing it with what is now known as the *National Evaluation Framework* and the *Creative School Development Framework (CSDF)*. In this section we describe and analyse the evidence about these developments initiated by National Office.

CP National Office provide a set of guidance documents and forms to support the National Evaluation Framework. These were subject to consultation and revision at the March 2008 CP conferences. The resulting documents, in our view, clearly set out the reasons for evaluating CP and how evaluations will be used. For example, the purpose of the National Evaluation Framework is to provide:

a collective sense of how this national programme is achieving wider impacts...so that work happening across the country with a range of creative practitioners can be considered through a single evaluative lens.

Change Schools and Schools of Creativity Project End Form

The aggregated information from evaluations is expected to make:

a valuable contribution to our understanding of impact, to the quality assurance of the programme and to the dissemination of best practice.

Change Schools and Schools of Creativity Project Planning Form

The guidance:

is a way of reflecting on a set of common questions so that work happening across the country...can be considered through a single evaluative lens.

Enquiry School Project Form

For Schools of Creativity and Change Schools the National Evaluation Framework has nine questions for pupils & young people, teachers and creative practitioners, derived from the original Toolkit. But each project team is required to focus on only **three areas of learning for each group** in any one project. This gives scope for evaluators to choose the most relevant areas of questioning and potentially provides a well-defined insight into the project.

The framework also contains a section of questions about the input process & quality of the project and the 'distance travelled' and sustainability of the project; ie its longer term impact and legacy.

A simplified form of this framework is designed for Enquiry School projects.

It is intended that creative agents conduct conversations at the project's midpoint and end point, so partially doing away with the largely predictive initial evaluation stage used in the old Toolkit. At the end point a summative prose report of 1000-1500 words is required.

The planning form prompts teachers and creative practitioners to anticipate and plan impacts and state *what will count* as evidence of impact and *how* they will collect it, so steering respondents away from making unsubstantiated assertions. The CP School Project form for Enquiry Schools is well structured and contains explicit sections, for example, on the links with 'Every Child Matters', and with the School Development Plan. It asks how well objectives have been met and, crucially, how respondents know this.

In our view the design and content of the new CP Evaluation Framework not only builds on the Toolkit, thereby maintaining a continuity of evaluation practice, but also improves on the Toolkit in several important respects which had previously attracted criticism by regional CP staff. To test this view we asked ADO staff about the new system during our visits.

Five of the ADOs we visited were broadly positive about the new Evaluation Framework. They felt that they had been adequately consulted on its detail and design, and that their suggestions had been incorporated into the final version. They drew particular attention to how it strengthens pupil voice, the consistency it would bring to evaluation and the authority which a national system would convey to schools. The response of one ADO programme manager is typical of the broad assent to the new framework:

The Programme Manager reported that the Evaluation Framework is now much better, more accessible and simpler. It values pupil voice – in the past schools disliked the Toolkit since they had to answer on behalf of pupils. They liked the tight focus on three questions in the new Evaluation Framework, believing that the region could usefully focus on such things as communication skills or confidence. They also felt that the authority conveyed by the contractual obligation to follow the evaluation framework helped them do their work.

Six ADOs explicitly expressed concern about what they perceived as the overwhelming paperwork burden of complying with planning and evaluating a CP project. One ADO claimed that CP National Office requires project teams to complete a total of ten forms⁴ in order to monitor the system. This aggregation, in their view, creates an unnecessary burden and, for Enquiry Schools with just a £3000 budget, it represents a disproportionate demand, especially since government policy is attempting to drive down administrative

⁴ It should be noted that the Enquiry Schools Programme is light touch and requires fewer forms.

demands on schools. These ADOs claimed that CP contract funding allows just six days' work and much of this is spent ensuring compliance with the bureaucratic demands of the system rather than on the quality of evaluation. Whilst evaluation is a necessary part of the allowance they felt that there are currently inadequate funds to allow them to moderate evaluation, do sufficient training, or commission outsiders to evaluate their work. The solution, according to one ADO Director, was that CP commissioning should be based on outcomes, not processes as represented by the forms and systems. This would make compliance less onerous and more established within existing school monitoring and assessment procedures.

Whilst this impression about the bureaucracy of CP evaluation was sincerely held, CP National Office guidance contrasts with this impression:

...care needs to be taken to ensure that excessive demands are not made on staff time...the evaluation process will not be characterised by extensive form filling.

Change Schools and Schools of Creativity Planning & Evaluation Guidance.

The guidance specifies that ADOs have the latitude to determine what resources go into evaluation:

It is vital that space for dialogue is factored into project budgets.

Change Schools and Schools of Creativity Planning & Evaluation Guidance

Four ADOs we visited specifically criticised the Evaluation Framework training offered to date by CP National Office. They believed that it had centred on the bureaucratic processes of form filling and compliance, rather than on the nature of effective evaluation. Another ADO noted, in their overview of evaluation, the negative effects of providing training based on completing forms:

The clear structure we provided seems to have had a negative impact on creative agents...making them feel they have to follow the forms in a dry way – only one asked if he could do it in a creative way.

The four ADOs felt that the National Office had not provided them with sufficient material effectively to cascade evaluation training to their creative agents. We noted, however, that

the expectation at CP National Office (see footnote re. May, 2008 below) is that ADOs will also play their part and take the initiative locally to appoint and train creative agents with well-developed evaluative skills. At the time of writing further training for creative agents is planned for 2008/9.

The National Office also developed the 'Creative School Development Framework' (CSDF) this year. Intended as an annual self assessment return, it mirrors other DCSF tools in that it offers a way for schools to self assess in 3 categories: 'beginning,' 'progressing' and 'exemplary.'

The Creative School Development Framework (CSDF) is a diagnostic tool to help schools on their journey towards becoming a creative school. We define a creative school as a place where a number of critical factors are developed so that every pupil has an entitlement to a rich and varied experience of creative learning and a broad range of structured opportunities to develop their creativity.

CSDF Guidance Notes and Descriptors.

The CSDF is split into six sections:

- Section 1 Leadership and ethos
- Section 2 Curriculum development and delivery
- Section 3 Teaching and learning
- Section 4 Staff learning and development
- Section 5 Environment and resources
- Section 6 Programme Plan

There are descriptors for each section. For example, a school rating its **strategy on creative learning** as exemplary would fit the following descriptor:

Ways in which creativity can deliver on wider school objectives are highlighted throughout the School Improvement Plan. Performance against these objectives is monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

On **dissemination**:

The school proactively advocates its practice in creative teaching and learning through networks, events, publicity and representation on decision-making bodies, widely exerting influence outside of its own authority. Lesson plans, schemes of work and other ideas are shared with other schools.

Whilst we have not yet seen completed CSDFs we believe that CSDF self-evaluation is very accessible and familiar to schools, being similar in structure to other self-diagnostic tools developed by DCSF and OFSTED, and characterised by sharp and precise descriptors. We therefore believe this is a useful and appropriate response to last year's very sparse data on the impact of CP on schools and a major development in monitoring and securing the legacy and sustainability of CP.

Recommendations

We recommend that CP National Office considers:

1. the further development of 'cascade' training materials and programmes for creative agents designed to promote effective evaluation and 'deep conversations;'
2. a further review of the ease of use of evaluation forms and the available resource earmarked for evaluation.

4 - How ADOs, their Programmers and Creative Agents contribute to evaluation

In this section we outline our findings about evaluation policy and practice at the regional ADOs in 2007/8. We wanted to find out whether regional CP was maintaining and improving effective evaluation as part of their wider use of the Evaluation Framework as a programme management tool. Although we report some weaknesses in regional CP practice in this section, we acknowledge that 2007/8 has been an intense period of transition in ADOs, when they were starting new programmes and working with more schools than previously.

We were sent a very balanced and objective sample of evaluations, and so the promotional and purely positive tone of some sets of evaluations last year has almost completely disappeared. Nevertheless, in a substantial majority of the evaluations, teachers and creative practitioners reported positively about their experiences of CP

projects. This confirmed that CP often makes a significant contribution to creative learning and teaching.

Nine ADO's contracted substantial elements of their evaluation out to independent consultants, universities or companies. In almost every case these external specialists produced tighter evaluations than internal ones, with a sharper focus on the evidence, impact and legacy of CP. For example, in a CP where we conducted a scrutiny of supporting documents we found an external report to be the most rigorous, balanced and valid documentation scrutinised; it demonstrated a consistent and critically reflective approach to planning, delivering and assessing the impact of the project, against a baseline indicated by the research question. Pupil voice was an integral part of the project.

The best external evaluations designed valid and relevant methods of analysis:

Case Study - An evaluation report concerned a dance project, designed to raise the profile of dance and movement in a group of primary schools, to develop creative learning practice among teachers - which resulted in a book of workshop activities for them - and to provide physical health benefits for pupils. The external evaluators conducted a baseline survey of teachers and pupils to ascertain the level and range of physical activities pupils undertook. They then conducted a further survey, and produced evidence that the teachers were building on the work of the Dance company:

Encouragingly, almost all (93%) of the 46 teachers who responded to the survey also implemented the programme on their own with their year group. The proportion of [pupils] undertaking some form of physical activity every day had increased to 58% an increase of 14 percentage points from the baseline position. Even taking into account the margin of error inherent in a sample based survey, the extent of change is significant and can in part be attributed to [the project].

In another ADO the evaluator – who had recently been seconded part-time into the ADO - read the most recent OFSTED reports on each of the project schools in order to identify references to CP. These provided an external validation of CP's impact:

Ofsted (2008) observed “All classrooms are bright and welcoming places where pupils like to be. Children are exceptionally well supported in a very attractive and stimulating learning environment, boosted recently by the creation of a superb outdoor activity area.”

Ofsted (2008) noted “The school's innovative curriculum is creative, inclusive and provides enjoyment through its variety.” Behaviour and attendance statistics clearly show improvements – the new approach has had a significant contribution to this. There have been profound logged improvements in Behavioural Instances (reduced by 2/3rds), Exclusions and Attendance (where there has been a 2% increase). Unauthorised absences are now below the Local Authority average.

“The school has a very interesting curriculum with a lot of emphasis on creativity.” (Ofsted 2008).

Two ADOs submitted a summative ‘moderation’ report, i.e. an external evaluator analysis of all of the internal evaluations. This provided helpful themes for the ADO to act on next year. The effectiveness of external evaluation indicates that there is a core of expertise around the country applying a well-focused and valid scrutiny to CP work. However, external evaluation will not contribute to the effectiveness of ADOs unless the skills and methods of those external consultants are absorbed and developed in the work of creative agents and programmers. Three ADOs we visited claimed that there would not be earmarked funding to continue to outsource evaluation under the new CP contracts. As long as the lessons learnt from external evaluation have been internalised by ADOs, this may not prove a problem. However, the sample of evaluations we saw suggest that programmers and creative agents need further training and assistance in evaluation methods (see section 5 below). One ADO we visited was developing an interesting potential model for supporting creative agents; it was in the process of recruiting a ‘Contracts Manager’ with a brief for compliance and quality assurance. The ADO anticipated that the Contracts Manager would be responsible for ensuring that creative agents were well prepared to undertake effective evaluation work.

Nearly all ADOs drew on the evaluation principles either of the old Toolkit or the new Evaluation Framework in this year of transition. Although this suggests that ADOs will find it easy to adopt the new Framework as it is established, nine ADOs had used forms of ‘bespoke’ systems of evaluation in 2007/8. Some of these systems have useful features; for example, one evaluative tool assesses the impact of CP through questioning the

schools' senior management teams. On the other hand, one ADO devised a system with more forms and more complexity than the national Evaluation Framework. A third commissioned an evaluation system based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority work on creativity which is widely used by schools but which was not designed to match the objectives of CP. Consequently it was not surprising that one headteacher using the system reported that it was not fit for purpose.

Case Study Two ADOs used a 'powerpoint' based format to present some of their evaluation outcomes. A powerpoint evaluation template was issued to the project team at the start of the project. Project participants could add text, pictures, video or quotes to the template at any time they wished. The slides corresponded to key issues and questions for evaluation in the Evaluation Framework, such as impacts on young people. Guidance was supplied at the bottom of the slides. The slides were printed and displayed in classrooms, as well as electronically submitted to the ADOs.

Overview	Context	Initial Questions	The Story	Young People's Creativity	Other impacts on young people	Adult Learning Continued	Whole School Change	What didn't work so well ?	Next questions
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Adult Learning – we surprise ourselves!

Like the pupils, some members of staff had never written creatively before, and found the prospect somewhat daunting.

However, once [the artist] had challenged, inspired and amused us in equal measure we had fun – and were surprised at how creative we could be!

In this video one teacher shares her experiences.



Please click the picture above to see the video. It may take a few seconds to load.

The Creative Programmer at one of the two ADOs wrote a persuasive justification for this approach to presentation:

[We] needed an alternative that people would find easy to use, purposeful and accessible... We continually seek to highlight the benefits to all of engaging in thorough and rigorous evaluation, and the powerpoint template makes for ease of sharing information with governors, inspectors, parents, Local Authority partners. If

it felt useful to them, then we believed schools would invest more time and effort into it. By promoting this relatively light touch template, we have succeeded in encouraging all partners to engage with the evaluative process, whereas previously we have struggled to achieve consistent results across the board.

This approach was well designed for reaching parents, governors and other stakeholders. It provided an eye-catching and accessible vehicle for evaluation. However, the slides were not ideal for capturing the sort of 'deep conversations' encouraged by the CP National Office guidance (see below).

So whilst some bespoke evaluation systems had useful features, some were less valid and less well designed than the national Evaluation Framework. We expected to see residual alternative evaluation systems in a year of transition. However, as we concluded last year, the time and resources devoted to devising alternative systems would be better spent if ADOs actively contribute to the collective effort to operate and refine the national system. This has been derived from two widely accepted evaluation systems and refined through the collective contributions of CP staff across the country in a national consultation. The new Evaluation Framework can now serve as a complete project management tool. So, overall the bespoke systems represent a weak allocation of resource and a poor return.

We found very little substantial evidence of the 'deep conversations' encouraged in the guidance from CP national office:

Implementation of the national evaluation framework is centred on an approach that places 'deep conversations' at its core and the art of working as a Creative Agent involves developing a highly skilled approach to asking appropriate questions within conversations.

Change Schools and Schools of Creativity Planning & Evaluation Guidance

Most evaluation conversations we observed ranged too broadly without settling on certain concepts to examine in depth. In these, and in the written sample evaluations, assertions and descriptions of work were much more common than analysis. Far too frequently there were statements about broad gains in confidence or self-esteem rather than serious professional conversations about elements of the creative process.

One Creative Programmer succinctly echoed our own concerns about the quality of evaluation:

A confusion between documentation and evaluation persists, despite the training and support we have offered... in order to get to the heart of the learning, a skilled questioner needs to lead partners through the process, bringing an objective point of view and a consistency of approach, and making sure that conversations are focussed and probe to an appropriate depth. We plan to use an evaluation partner in the next academic year to support the creative agents in the delivery of the evaluation framework interviews, in order to achieve this objectivity and consistency, and to benefit from the expertise of a skilled evaluator.

There was limited evidence in some ADOs that creative agents could develop thoughtful techniques for deepening analysis. In particular we saw creative agents struggle to obtain meaningful evaluation from foundation and key stage one pupils. There is, however, a body of literature about interviewing young people and obtaining meaningful evaluation data, much of it in the field of educational psychology, which could be of considerable use to creative agents and programmers. In the 1980s Dennie Palmer Wolf⁵ surveyed research findings about how young children perceive visual art, claiming that even 3 year olds can understand visual metaphor. Palmer Wolf goes on to recommend 'artistic learning as conversation' within which children discuss their artistic learning from three perspectives, the producer, the perceiver and the reflective enquirer. More recently, Lewis⁶ offers an overview of creative approaches to interviewing pupils and Davis⁷ has recently contrasted the traditional questioning of 7-8 year olds with asking them to tell stories. Her results demonstrate how young children's stories can yield 'authentic and contextually rich' data as opposed to the paucity of their interview responses. Most recently, from within Creative Partnerships⁸, Bragg identifies several sources of ideas about gaining evaluation data from children and young people.

⁵ Palmer Wolf, D. Artistic learning as conversation, in: D.J. Hargreaves (1989) *Children and the arts*. Milton Keynes: OUP.

⁶ Lewis, A. (2002) Accessing, through research interviews, the views of children with difficulties in learning, *Support for Learning*, 17(3), 110-116.

⁷ Davis, P. (2007) Storytelling as a democratic approach to data collection: interviewing children about reading. *Educational research*, 49(2), 169-184.

⁸ See for example, the ideas in section 3.7 of Bragg, S. (2007). *Consulting Young People*, Creative Partnerships Literature Review. London: Arts Council England.

However, we did find a few instances of creative agents working in an innovative way to deepen conversations; exemplary work which could be used as the basis for training. In one sample evaluation, for example, the creative agent had used metaphor to deepen the reflective conversation:

At the start, AG asked each person to imagine the project as the invention of a machine...and asked them to make a sketch which they could then explain to others.

In another, the creative agent asked teachers and creative practitioners to select from a bank of photos to prompt the following reflections:

The first image is the one of the upside down piano. Music education in our area is changing and I feel like we are turning it on its head...

The image of the wrapped fruit and veg is because pupils at our school 'compartmentalise' their learning. They would not take what they learn in Geography on to their French lesson, for example...

The second image is the one way sign. This makes particular reference to the behaviour of one of our pupils who was always known as One Way Down. Since he has been involved in this project his behaviour has really improved. Now it looks as if he will be going One Way Up...

I chose the image of the little girl in the role of teacher, because we involved pupils in the process of interviewing our creative practitioners and that really changed how we perceive them.

The work of Creative Labs also involves more extensive evaluation⁹. Clearly this interesting practice by creative agents needs to be widely discussed and disseminated so that deep conversations become the norm, not the exception. Chris May has described the expected influence of creative agents conducting deep conversations¹⁰:

it is anticipated that this creative professional learning community will mature over the next few years as a powerful force for educational change.

⁹ See for example, the report on Creative Science Teaching Labs <http://www.creative-partnerships.com/resources/resourcefiles/166479>

¹⁰ May, C. (2008) *Professional Transformation through Creative Agents*. Teaching Times www.teachingtimes.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=327&Itemid=56

Reflecting on this issue led us to consider what a 'deep conversation' might sound like? We turned first to the four values articulated by CP:

Question – so a deep conversation would identify precisely the challenges of the project, **how** it was experimental and innovative;

Connect – it would identify the **features** of successful partnership and collaboration, particularly those applicable to other settings;

Imagine – it would suggest alternatives for how the project might have been (or be) otherwise;

Reflect – it would focus on **how** to ensure the legacy and sustainability of creative learning and teaching in the curriculum.

So a deep conversation would be a serious professional engagement between all project participants. It would focus on concepts and ideas, naming and describing putative elements and stages in the creative process. With teachers and creative practitioners a deep conversation might try to identify and describe examples of risk taking or divergent thinking. With pupils it might focus on how they set about a particular problem differently in maths or an investigation in science. It might examine their responses to experimenting, failing, trying something different, learning. The new Evaluation Framework seems to us to be well positioned to catalyse these deep conversations, not least because no more than 3 questions are selected for analysis in the new Framework. Nonetheless, we believe that ADOs need to prioritise evaluation training and professional development for creative agents and programmers.

A few ADOs sent sets of evaluations which, though meticulously collected, only just did enough to comply with CP National Office requirements. There is a danger, in any quality assurance system, that the process – the Evaluation Framework in this case – becomes an end in itself rather than a vehicle for serious and ultimately enlightening professional discourse and debate.

Around half of the ADOs sent evaluations using the CP National Office grading or numbering system to denote value, but there was no evidence of ADOs making use of it, for example, comparing interim scores with end scores or analysing across the scores of all creative practitioners or teachers. The advantage of such a standard 'Likert Scale' coding system is that the same sort of data can be analysed across projects, so

contributing to reliability. It is a missed opportunity if the data is not aggregated and analysed.

A significant majority of evaluations were anonymous. This may be because the authors are generally modest or because it is felt that the work is really authored by 'learning communities.' In practice, however, the absence of an author(s) name or contact details means that the research community in CP cannot easily seek further information, question the research or challenge the findings.

One way of addressing the last few issues is for ADOs further to consider and target the local and regional *audiences* for their evaluations, beyond the obligation to submit evaluation to CP National Office. Sending evaluation in strategic directions – for example to local authorities, governing bodies and school senior managements – will contribute to the legacy and sustainability of CP.

All but one of the ADOs we visited were working in partnership with two or more local authorities (LAs). The links they had formed with them were mostly productive and cordial. ADOs reported that a small minority of LAs were apathetic about CP – one ADO reported a problem of communication with its LA, despite occupying the same building. However, many more strategic links with groups of LAs were being formed and ongoing partnerships with LAs were much stronger in this year's sample than last year's.

Recommendations We recommend that ADOs give priority to:

1. drawing further on the expertise of specialist external evaluators primarily to train and develop the 'in house' expertise of creative agents and programmers;
2. strengthening evaluation training programmes for their creative agents;
3. contributing to a regional and national CP debate about the nature and features of 'deep conversations.'

5 - The Role of Schools in the Evaluation of CP

Schools contribute to evaluation through hosting and managing CP projects, and through the contribution of leadership teams and other staff to CP. Schools sometimes enhance

evaluation with information and analysis drawn from their own data banks. In this section we summarise the evidence about CP evaluation at the whole-school level.

As last year, there was some evidence that not all schools were meeting their contractual obligation to evaluate their funded CP projects. In one ADO, creative agents reported the difficulty of scheduling evaluations in schools in seven out of ten cases:

One person just laughed out loud when I mentioned [evaluation] and said, “you can look at my diary if you like.”

Another ADO abandoned their entire version of the Toolkit because of the difficulty of getting questionnaires from project partners. In this area, only 50% of schools returned evaluation data by the deadline. One CP co-coordinator described the status of CP evaluation as ‘loosely connected rather than holistic’ in its relationship to the school. External evaluators in two ADOs recommended that funding for schools which did not honour evaluation commitments should be withheld or cut, and there was evidence that some ADOs were taking a robust approach to this. One ADO we visited had a robust regime for rejecting applications where there was no confidence in the commitment of the SMT. However, some ADOs regarded this as a problem which they could do nothing about.

Only a handful of evaluations described or analysed CPD activities. Among these only one or two described projects which were specifically designed to provide teacher CPD. CP projects can clearly add to teacher expertise in teaching both arts subjects and the wider curriculum. The enrichment of teaching skills should form a key element of CP’s legacy.

Last year, many evaluations failed to identify the project’s impact on the school. However, this year the sample evaluations usually captured the effects and impact on the school and in our visits, time was specifically allocated to CP’s school-wide influence. Almost all teachers and heads we interviewed articulated the impact of CP positively and perceptively. However, some schools had clearly failed to give sufficient thought to the nature of impact in the CP context. For example at one college 30 pupils attended a CP project for three and a half days during a half term – an unprecedented commitment in the school’s experience of engagement with out of school projects. However, the school’s CP

co-ordinator omitted to record this evidence of impact until our audit visited prompted a discussion of impact.

Case Study One twelve-week project took year four pupils and staff on a time-travelling adventure through history in order to improve reading skills:

Results in reading were dramatic. After the project 56% of pupils went up two sublevels in reading. In the following term 70% of pupils went up an additional two sublevels. This is exceptional progress for children in this school; nationally children are expected to progress two sublevels per year and many have doubled this. Although other factors were at play teachers believe that this project has contributed significantly to this increase and has had a major impact on motivating children to read.

Clearly to associate the impact of CP solely with attainment data is mistaken since impact can be observed in a host of ways, including through engagement, as noted in the college example above. In a CP publication, Sefton-Green points out:¹¹

[the] engagement indicator needs to be measured in terms of attendance, retention and other kinds of participation statistics.

Sample evaluations also identified impact in the development and introduction of new materials, curriculum changes and changes to school timetables. Despite this good practice many reports still simply asserted gains in pupil confidence or positive responses from teachers as evidence of impact without supporting evidence.

Case Study A CP project conceptualised what they called pupils' 'enterprise capability' in three ways and devised a framework, which became known as the 'Enterprise Capability Observation Framework,' for assessing it. They devised a user-friendly format for observation, which they illustrated on a page of A4. Project teachers worked in pairs, using the 'Enterprise Capability Observation Framework,' to observe pupil activity in lessons and they graded these characteristics when they were displayed, 'always,' 'often,' 'sometimes'

¹¹ Sefton-Green, J. (2007) *Thinkpiece: the challenge of defining impact* London: Arts Council England

and 'never.' Teachers also devised a points scoring system for learner creativity which a working group at the school analysed, finding, after the project, that scores had improved to over six for half of the Foundation Stage pupils – a doubling of the higher scores since the beginning of the project. So they had evidence to claim that their project had contributed to enhanced enterprise capability, even if other variables were taken into account. This project undoubtedly drew on traditional methods of the social sciences by turning behaviour into scores. However this is one way of evidencing impact clearly.

The impact on the school as a whole is usually heavily dependent on the commitment of the SMT. In most cases the commitment of the SMT was evident, although SMT apathy hampered impact in a small number of cases:

...apart from the Head, no senior management came to see any of the work in progress. Whilst in some ways this allowed the project to move ahead in the direction that felt most natural, it was felt that if senior staff had observed some of the work taking place, the potential for the working practices being developed spreading to other parts of the school would have been maximised.

Despite last year's criticisms from CPs that the Evaluation Toolkit denied 'pupil voice' and the attempts to strengthen pupil voice in the new Evaluation Framework, direct evidence and quotes from pupils were absent from most evaluations. Three ADOs failed to provide any direct evidence of pupil feedback. One CP enquiry project about pupil voice had no direct evaluative quotes from pupils. Some creative agents had noticed this; during an evaluation session, one claimed 'pupil voice is not loud enough.'

In the best practice, schools identified the broad nature and extent of pupil voice:

Case Study *Pupils' voice was embedded within the project from the start. At the beginning of the project pupils were taken on visits to a range of gardens...and afterwards were encouraged to analyse their experiences to help them identify how they wanted their own school grounds to develop. Staff were surprised with the pupils' criteria and commented they would never have thought of some of the features. A client group of nine pupils of varying age ranges were chosen to liaise with other school councils to investigate their external school spaces and report back to staff and pupils. Pupils remained involved with the consultation of the*

project at every stage and every level over three phases. Pupil voice was measured at the end of the project through a questionnaire distributed to those in the client group.

...the project had allowed pupil voice to impact directly on the project process and outcome. This interaction had developed the pupils' vocabulary and their thinking skills; staff noted pupils are now demonstrating more independence, collaboration, ability to problem solve and creative thinking.

The widespread absence of direct pupil voice in CP evaluations suggests that schools should give much more thought to their strategy for involving pupils in CP evaluation. This has been outlined recently in a Creative Partnerships publication:

A strategy should be drawn up at the start to address issues such as: What happens to young people's views once they have been gathered by whatever means? How will it be interpreted and disseminated, and by whom? What is realistically to be achieved? Is it just an exercise in making all participants feel good?¹²

Recommendations We recommend that CP school co-ordinators and senior managers should consider, with the assistance of CP staff:

1. strengthening direct evaluation evidence and participative 'voice' from pupils;
2. devoting careful thought to conceptualising, planning and monitoring the impact of CP projects;
3. determining the proposed audience for evaluation.

6 - The Role of Teachers and Creative Practitioners in Evaluation

Teachers and creative practitioners run CP projects and provide the direct feedback which comprises project evaluations. In this section we survey the contribution they made to evaluation in 2006/7.

¹² Bragg, S. (2007). *Consulting Young People, Creative Partnerships Literature Review* London: Arts Council England

The new category of Enquiry Schools prompted nearly all ADOs to centre their projects on school-based enquiry questions. Teacher enquiry has its roots in the 1990s when, in a celebrated lecture for the Teacher Training Agency, David Hargreaves argued that educational research had failed to provide a sound evidence-base for successful learning and teaching or to resolve the classroom problems that teachers face. As a solution, he recommended that teachers should play a more central role in setting the agenda for research and in carrying it out. This prompted the DfES to introduce, between 2000 and 2003, the 'Best Practice Research Scholarship' programme (BPRS) to support teachers' school-focused research. The CARA (Creativity Action Research Awards), managed by CapeUK for Creative Partnerships, reflect this trend towards emancipatory teacher research, in this case to investigate the effect creativity has on pupil learning and motivation. As the largest CP Programme, Enquiry Schools will probably dominate the work of ADOs in the coming year.

However, in the early enquiry projects submitted as part of this year's sample, there was little evidence of creative practitioners and teachers producing precise, tightly focussed robust and valid questions for enquiry. They were not asking themselves, 'can we answer the question, how would we answer the question, how might the answers contribute to our understanding of creative learning and teaching?' Enquiry questions were, therefore, often very imprecise. For example, one high school's pilot enquiry project was designed to find out:

How can creative thinking about war, conflict and Vietnam develop learners' understanding of cross curricular links, skill transference, and their learning processes.

To answer all elements of this complex question, teachers would need to monitor a wide range of learning behaviours and demonstrations of skills and provide evidence of causal links between the project on war and pupil thinking about cross curricular links. Another enquiry question, in a notably successful school, was nevertheless far too broad to attempt a response:

How can we continue to open the gateway to creative learning for our pupils? How can we develop their learning journeys so that they achieve their full potential in

Literacy and are equipped with the confidence, skills, talents and attitudes to succeed in the 21st Century?

Other enquiry questions were so abstract that it is hard to identify what might count as evidence. For example:

In what ways does an investigation of creative thought within process affect learning and teaching?

This problem was specifically acknowledged in a debate in one ADO:

Ways to extend critical reflection amongst teachers was an area discussed at length; how the CP could train teachers and creative agents in reflective approaches such as how to write an effective research question and implement and analyse research methodology/data. To encourage them to model critical thinking to pupils will enhance the quality of impact from the projects.

And another ADO had recognised this:

...it must be noted that wording a research focus as a question instead of a description would help with the analysis and conclusion of the impact in a more rigorous way. Triangulation of data in relation to the research question is also advisable.

A scrutiny of supporting documents in an ADO revealed that enquiry topics frequently lacked focus and did not adhere to basic research principles, questions were unformed, unclear or just too vague, as were outcomes, aims and objectives. To address this sort of problem, another ADO appointed a research 'mentor.' He found that the enquiry projects had too many aims and research questions were too broad. In our sample of enquiry projects, teachers regularly reported that the enquiry had not really been addressed by the project. The imprecise framing of enquiries, as we have illustrated above, is almost certainly the reason for this.

Moreover, in the early examples of enquiry projects, there was a tendency to lose sight of the objectives of CP and to see the enquiry question itself as the objective of the project or

indeed of CP. Although teacher enquiry is a welcome development in schools since David Hargreaves' intervention about educational research, teacher enquiry is only a CP *objective* insofar as it might address creative learning and teaching. The enquiry and its underlying question is, strictly speaking, merely an interrogatory focus, a *vehicle* for addressing the aims and objectives of CP. But one ADO had clearly been sidetracked by the Enquiry Programme to focus on monitoring school research practice. The stated aim of one of this ADO's forms is to:

build a picture of the progress of research activity in the school.

The activity of monitoring the progress of the school and its teachers in social science research would almost certainly displace the objectives of CP in this case.

So, whatever enquiry question creative practitioners and teachers formulate, to align legitimately with CP objectives the evidence and the answers must illuminate something about creative learning and teaching. Moreover, teachers and creative practitioners may need to undertake some social science research training if they are to create well-designed enquiry projects and address the questions posed.

There were also, naturally, some precisely designed enquiry projects, tied to the objectives of CP:

The project focused on the four creative thinking and learning skills of: divergent thinking, use of analogies and metaphors, imagination and intuition and reflect and refinement. The aim was to embed the skills as tools that pupils and teachers can use in order to be able to channel creative freedom within curriculum areas. The project worked within six curriculum areas in six different classes.

Though this project was not entirely successful it had useful intentions.

And:

How can children become more confident in using Maths so that they develop a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts?

As last year, many feedback statements by teachers and creative practitioners were characterised by some rather broad and bold assertions unsupported by evidence:

We saw an improvement in conversation, communication, memory recall, children being able to express themselves, listen, use their imaginations, generate original

thought, work independently, work in groups, and take more risks when it came to 'thinking' and 'saying' new words and ideas.

The frequent statements about gains in confidence or self-esteem were not convincing when they were not backed by clear palpable examples of pupil progress.

On the other hand, this year's sample contained much more evidence of the gains made by creative practitioners working in schools. They made frequent references to better understanding schools, their timetables and how they operate. They reported improvements in their expertise at managing classrooms and behaviour, in pitching work better matched to age or ability and in understanding the demands placed on teachers. On a few occasions creative practitioners even made reference to using new techniques or developing new creative directions, inspired by their work in schools. So, in the most positive feedback, practitioners had gained artistic as well as educational benefits.

The project had a major impact on the practitioners' future creative development and working practices. Both practitioners felt that the project had inspired them to continue the work ... and extending it further into their own work.

The practitioners felt that their experience within the school gave them a clear understanding of the grammar school system and values of high achievement and attainment.

Recommendations: We recommend that teachers and creative practitioners:

1. always match claims they make about the gains attributable to CP to some form of evidence;
2. formulate simpler enquiry questions which can be directly researched.

7 - Conclusions

CP National Office responded positively to the recommendations of audit last year and has designed an improved system of evaluation. The purpose of the system is well articulated and has the support of nearly all ADOs and their staff, who feel a sense of ownership of the national Evaluation Framework which was not evident last year. The strategic challenge for 2008/9 is to ensure that the Evaluation Framework is consistently applied

across ADOs and that it is well supported by training and support for creative agents and programmers. If this can be achieved, the information derived from CP evaluation will be more reliable and the lessons learnt can be used to steer creative learning and teaching in schools and to report the benefits of CP to stakeholders.

In a year of transition it was to be expected that a residue of different approaches to evaluation would remain across ADOs. However, the plurality of bespoke evaluation systems is diverting CP staff time and resources from contributing to and enhancing the national Evaluation Framework. There is good practice across the country and, in 2008/9, the CP priority should be to develop and share evaluation practice and training materials.

There is not a common understanding about how to allocate funds for the development of evaluation. If this were clarified ADOs could continue to capture and exploit, in-house, the expertise of the external specialist companies and consultants who undertook some of the most perceptive and informative evaluations in 2007/8.

We commend CP National Office for the launch of the Creative Schools Development Framework. It presents a real opportunity, if well facilitated by creative agents and programmers, to encourage schools to analyse their creative learning and teaching. It has the potential to be a key instrument in securing the legacy and sustainability of CP.

The quality of CP evaluation in 2008/9 is crucially dependent on identifying the nature of 'deep conversations' and sharing good practice and successful techniques for stimulating serious and profound analysis of creativity and the creative process. A programme of training and discussing this issue – both nationally and locally – will be needed in 2008/9.

In some ADOs, work still needs to be done to ensure schools meet their contractual obligations to evaluation. This year schools captured too little information recording pupil voice, or direct evidence of pupil feedback. Since ADOs have expressed a desire to strengthen pupil voice, and since this is a requirement of the new Evaluation framework, this should be an evaluation priority in 2008/9.

Finally, as the Enquiry Schools programme is established, it is important, at the planning stage, that the objectives of CP should lead to the formation of purposeful, school based enquiries. At the planning stage, if the enquiry is found to disconnect or fail to relate to a clear creative focus, creative agents should broker more work to refine and develop the enquiry question. The success of the Enquiry Schools programme and its evaluation depends on the formulation of precise and unambiguous enquiry questions, which focus on learning something about creativity.

Appendix A The aide memoire for visits

Purpose of audit:

- To evaluate the self-evaluation process: are reports rigorous, fit for purpose, consistent and comparable?
- Validate and disseminate regional strengths and good practice
- Synthesise and interrogate common CP issues across the country
- Challenge and support CPs in their work
- Ensure evaluation processes are serving the aims and objectives of CP

Date of visit:	
Area Delivery Organisation (ADO):	
Name of Oxford Brookes auditor:	
Interviewees: (e.g. CP co-ordinator, programmer, creative agent, head, class-teacher)	
Brief description of ADO e.g. management structure, number of employees, number & type of schools involved (schools of creativity, change schools, enquiry schools), distinctive local context	
What evaluation format is the ADO using currently?	
<p>: the original 'toolkit':</p> <p>: bespoke system:</p>	

<p>: 2008 Evaluation Framework : a mixture:</p> <p>Why?</p>	
<p>KEY QUESTIONS</p>	
<p>1. Who is involved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) teachers, b) creative practitioners c) CP co-ordinators d) pupils e) senior leadership teams f) governors g) parents h) representatives of cultural organisations i) LAs j) other <p>Are any stakeholders under-represented?</p> <p>What preparation did those involved receive? By whom?</p>	
<p>2. What is involved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What processes were used to elicit and record views? (Outline these or refer to appended documentation) b) How were these processes managed? 	

<p>(Role of creative agent?)</p> <p>c) What other information was used e.g. School data, SIPs, SEFs, C-SEFs, OFSTED reports?</p> <p>d) How was compliance with the requirements of the evaluation model monitored?</p> <p>e) Are there any compliance issues? (Check against CP national requirements)</p>	
<p>3. Impact and lessons learned?</p> <p>a) Modifications to CP delivery?</p> <p>b) Will there be consequent refinements to evaluation practice?</p>	
<p>4. Auditor's assessment of quality of evaluation?</p> <p>a) Is there evidence of rigour, balance, validity & objectivity?</p> <p>b) (Where used) effectiveness of external evaluators (e.g. HEI, consultant, LA)?</p> <p>c) Examples of good practice, worthy of</p>	

<p>dissemination?</p> <p>d) Possible impediments to consistent use of new National Evaluation Framework?</p> <p>NB Although these questions are primarily for the audit team, you may find it helpful to put them to the ADO as well.</p>	
<p>What do ADO staff think about the CP National Evaluation Framework?</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p>	
<p>ANY OTHER ISSUES</p>	

CP AUDIT: Aide-memoire for scrutiny of supporting evidence 2008.

ADO:

Name of OB Auditor:

Are there 10 evaluations in document form? Yes / no

<p>1. For which audiences is the material designed? e.g. CP, parents, governors, pupils, LAs</p>	
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2. What kinds of data does the material draw on?	
3. Do any supporting documents show that the ADO is refining and developing its work in the light of evaluation?	
4. Does the material add value to CP activity? E.g. by modelling effective evaluation, by disseminating good practice.	

CP AUDIT: observation of ‘deep conversations’

Auditors: please respond to the following questions:

1. Who was selected for interview, and by what process?	
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2. Effectiveness of chairing/facilitating (at reaching depth)?	
3. How was evidence of conversation recorded?	
4. Quality assurance of process by CP?	