



Creative Partnerships National External Evaluation Audit Report 2009

**A report for Creative
Partnerships**

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Executive Summary

This is the third and final national audit of Creative Partnerships project planning and evaluation processes and practices. It is designed to:

- analyse the planning and evaluation process across the country, i.e. are reports rigorous, fit for purpose, consistent, comparable;
- validate and disseminate regional strengths and good practice in planning and 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);
- visited six representative ADOs to observe evaluations taking place and interview key staff;
- made visits to three further ADOs, to look in particular at how the Creative Partnerships Creative Schools Development Framework (CSDF) was being used by schools;
- scrutinised a range of supporting evaluation material from ADOs.

During this final year of our audit a new body, *Creativity Culture and Education* (CCE), took responsibility for managing Creative Partnerships nationally. In discussion with Creativity Culture and Education about the best way to present the evidence from this year's audit and offer a reflective summary of the key themes we agreed to:

- review and scrutinise the whole planning and evaluation processes this year, rather than evaluation only;
- look at the Enquiry Schools and Change Schools Programmes only, as Schools of Creativity have separate arrangements for external scrutiny;
- offer a summary narrative about the major recommendations of audit 2007-9 and how Creative Partnerships responded to this both at national and regional level;
- structure the central sections of the report around the main processes in planning and evaluating Creative Partnerships projects.

In order to put this in context we have summarised below, the key datasets we accessed on the Creative Partnerships database.¹

The Regional Local Eligibility and Selection Criteria which each ADO articulated in order to establish criteria for assessing schools' applications.

For Enquiry Schools:

The school's application
Feedback on the application from the ADO
The Project Planning Form
The End Point Evaluation Form
The Project End Form

For Change Schools

Application forms
Creative Schools Development Frameworks
The Project Planning Form
The Mid-point Evaluation Form
The End Point Evaluation Form
The Project End Form

This report is structured according to these requests. In addition we agreed with Creativity Culture and Education that we would follow up the use of the Creative Schools Development Framework (CSDF) as a particular theme.

Finally we have followed up two key themes which emerged last year:

- the extent to which student participation and 'voice' plays a part in Creative Partnerships projects;
- how creative agents (CAs) are prepared and trained for their key role in advocating, monitoring and evaluating Creative Partnerships projects in schools.

We have devoted short sections to both of these themes in this report.

During the three years of audit we have visited all ADOs in either their new or their previous incarnation as regional Creative Partnerships offices and have scrutinised around 900 Creative Partnerships projects.

¹ Because ADOs and CCE were uploading a backlog of forms onto the database at the time of the audit the full set of forms for each project was not always available on the database. Apart from two ADOs which sent their project material by post we relied on the available datasets.

Introduction

Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creativity programme for schools and young people, managed by Creativity Culture and Education (CCE) and funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). 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 31 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.

During the 2007/8 academic year Creative Partnerships introduced three major new schools' programmes: *Schools of Creativity*, *Change Schools* and *Enquiry Schools*. A new body, Creativity Culture and Education, took over responsibility for the management of Creative Partnerships nationally and in April 2008 it formally entered a new phase, delivering a broader national programme designed to reach 70% of English state schools with high quality cultural and creative learning programmes by 2014. Most former regional Creative Partnerships offices changed in status, merging with or establishing independent entities, known as *Area Delivery Organisations* (ADOs) responsible for delivering Creative Partnerships regionally.

Creative Partnerships'² National Office at Arts Council England originally 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 **third annual audit**, covering projects evaluated by ADOs in the 2008/9 academic year. The same team of five people have conducted all three audits. 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:

² In this report we use *Creative Partnerships* to denote the entire Creative Partnerships initiative. We use *ADOs* to denote the regional offices and their processes.

- analyse the Creative Partnerships project planning and evaluation process across the country, commenting on the principles of the national framework and whether completed planning and evaluation reports are rigorous, fit for purpose, consistent, and comparable;
- validate and disseminate regional strengths and good practice in planning and evaluation;
- synthesise and interrogate issues common to ADOs.

The audit methods used

The audit team undertook to review a sample of ten projects in each ADO. In 2008/9 we almost always analysed projects by directly accessing the Creative Partnerships database. Our target was to look in detail at six Enquiry School projects and four Change School projects in each ADO. However, because of a backlog of work to upload data onto the database, in several ADOs there were fewer than ten completed 2008/9 projects uploaded in time for this report, in which case we looked at what was made available. So although in 2008/9 we accessed up to six completed forms for each project, and so gained a much richer picture of the genesis, development and evaluation of a Creative Partnerships project, we looked at fewer projects overall than previous years. However, typically in an ADO, we could access seven completed bundles of project forms by the end of the reporting period.

In 2008/9 our brief was to look at a set of forms covering the whole project process including application forms, ADO feedback forms, mid-point and end-point evaluations and final reports. We also read – when these were accessible - the corresponding CSDFs and Local Eligibility and Selection Criteria (LESC). We made visits to a sample of nine ADOs in the summer of 2009 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 Creative Partnerships with teachers and heads at Creative Partnerships schools (see fig 1 below). In three ADOs we concentrated particularly on how the CSDF process was used. To ensure consistency, we developed a standard template for our visit questions. This is included at Appendix A (below), and is based on Creative Partnership’s key objectives, as described in the prospectus for each of the new schools’ programmes. We sent our field notes on the visits to each ADO to check their accuracy, and made changes where errors were pointed out.

Notwithstanding the change from regional Creative Partnerships offices to the establishment of ADOs during the three years of audit, the Oxford Brookes University audit team have looked in depth at every ADO at some time over the three-year period. In this final year of the audit we were able to meet and interview the largest representative sample of people involved in Creative Partnerships as illustrated by the following chart:

| Fig 1 Number of people interviewed during 2009 Creative Partnerships Evaluation Audit visits | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|---|---------------|--------------|----------|-----------|
| CP Directors | CP Programmers | Creative Agents | Teachers/ Creative Partnerships Co-ordinators | Head teachers | Pupil groups | LA staff | governors |
| 8 | 16 | 16 | 36 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

It was disappointing that we were not able to meet more groups of pupils in our visits. However we did look in detail at pupil participation and 'voice' described in reports.

3 - The Development of Creative Partnerships evaluation 2007-9

In this section we offer a brief overview of audit recommendations and Creative Partnerships' responses over the three years of audit.

It seems to us important, at this final stage of audit, to re-state *why* Creative Partnerships commissioned this work and how the audit team responded in bidding for it. Creative Partnerships projects were subject to a pilot *self*-evaluation scheme between 2005 until about 2007. There was no standard evaluation process for the first three years of activity – it varied considerably across the first 16 pilot areas. What emerged is a process by which teachers, creative practitioners, creative agents and pupils reflect on their own project's impact and on creative learning and teaching more generally. Creative Partnerships National Office conceived of audit as an external interrogation and validation of the principle of self-evaluation it had established. The audit team's specific brief was to find out if:

...reports are rigorous, fit for purpose, consistent, comparable...

The principles which Creative Partnerships advocate are clear in this extract from the original tender: that each self-evaluation should have a rigour and integrity which could inform work at the local level; and also that self-evaluation should be consistent so that comparisons can be made and information shared across the country. The Oxford Brookes University bid emphasised the *former* over the *latter*, i.e. that self-evaluation should, first and foremost, have intrinsic integrity and worth for participants, rather than simply comply with the demands of national accountability.

Mature and candid self-evaluation can take place when the evaluators recognise...their own ownership of the process in the interests of self-improvement...So we would seek to promote...self-evaluation as necessary to their continued improvement...rather than as a phenomenon of external control.

OBU bid for audit 2006

Our bid quoted the 2006 Aporia report for Creative Partnerships in support of this:

In participatory evaluation, members of the program community are involved in defining the evaluation, developing instruments, collecting data, processing and analysing data, reporting and disseminating results and taking corrective action towards the program goals. This process builds organisational capacity by deepening the conceptual understanding of the programme components, interrelationships and consequences within the organisation...to move beyond superficial descriptions to analysis of the work, with attention to how well and in what ways this programme is (and is not) addressing the objectives. (Aporia 2006)

So, ideally self-evaluation of Creative Partnerships projects should involve:

- better understanding of creative teaching and learning;
- formative enquiry i.e. acting on and making use of information that emerges during the project;
- the pursuit of enhanced practice;
- articulating and disseminating lessons learnt.

In our experience, an opportunity is wasted when Creative Partnerships coordinators or creative agents simply go through the motions of self-evaluation simply to satisfy bureaucratic demands for information.

It is worth re-stating that our three audits have sought primarily to characterise and identify good self-evaluation practice in classrooms and staffrooms. This is why we have devoted attention to issues such as the nature of deep conversations and the clarity of enquiry questions. We were also tasked with auditing consistency and comparability; how a consistent means of reporting – through the database – could contribute to our accumulated knowledge about the impact of Creative Partnerships across the country. But we believe the latter is only as effective as the former. Creative Partnerships can only account for its work overall if school-based self-evaluation is probing, rigorous and systematic. Moreover, in our experiences of the best work we have seen, robust self-evaluation is its own reward.

In 2007 the Creative Partnerships National Office recommended the use of a nationwide Creative Partnerships project evaluation system known as the Creative Partnerships Evaluation Toolkit. Use of the Toolkit was patchy across Creative Partnerships, although most area offices were broadly using its principles. Creative Partnerships staff were widely critical of the Toolkit, claiming that it had been hurriedly introduced without sufficient consultation. Whilst we endorsed the Toolkit as fit for purpose, valid and potentially

reliable as a means of evaluating Creative Partnerships projects, we recommended a consultation to refine the Toolkit, and the abandonment of the database which was the repository for Toolkit responses, and which was limited in its presentation and reporting functions. The Audit Team hosted an audit report consultation day for Creative Partnerships staff across the country in October 2007, and Creative Partnerships National Office adopted all three of our recommendations by commissioning a former HMI, Ken Dyson, to review the Toolkit and develop a commissioning framework for software houses so a new database could be designed.

Nevertheless there was a wealth of predominantly positive testimony and feedback about the impact of Creative Partnerships and Creative Partnerships staff regionally and nationally tended to accept our view that large scale evaluative data could and should be accumulated in order that reliable and legitimate comparisons across the work of ADOs, schools, and regions could be made.

In March 2008 the Audit Team hosted two training and consultative days attended by a total of 49 delegates, representing all of the new ADOs. National Office staff and Ken Dyson introduced the proposed new Evaluation Framework and the delegates contributed to the redesign of the Framework. In April 2008 Creative Partnerships National Office produced a final version of guidance documents and forms covering what it termed the *Schools' Programme Planning and Evaluation Framework*³. The content of these documents embraced several of the recommendations we made in previous audits. Together with the wide consultation, there was subsequently a much broader acceptance and ownership of the national system, which we confirm in the 2008 and 2009 reports.

We also endorsed the *Creative School Development Framework* which the National Office introduced in 2008 to contribute to school self-evaluation and to secure the legacy of Creative Partnerships in schools. The majority of evaluations reported very positively on the impact and influence of Creative Partnerships projects and there was more information on the impact of Creative Partnerships in schools. During that year creative practitioners reported more gains in their expertise in working with children and young people, in their understanding of schools and even in their artistic practice.

The 2008 report found evidence that independent external evaluators provided some of the most robust evaluation. Creative Partnerships National Office, however, advocated building internal capacity through developing the evaluation expertise of ADO programmers and creative agents. The core of evaluation practice in the *Schools' Programme Planning and Evaluation Framework* was the so called *deep conversation*⁴, initiated by creative agents.

³ A list of the Framework pro-formas is included at Appendix B.

⁴ Enquiry School Guidance p7, Change School Guidance p10

This was only briefly described in the Framework so our report offered some suggestions as to what it might mean in practice.

In the 2008 audit we recommended that ADOs should strengthen evaluation training programmes for their creative agents, which is why we followed up this issue as a particular theme in 2008/9.⁵ This year there was significant progress in this respect: CCE offered a *Special Learning Fund* and a *Creative Agent Development Fund* to ADOs which responded in a variety of ways. Each region was eligible to receive up to £50,000 in 2008/9 to provide professional learning for creative agents. The expectation was that the region would run at least two professional learning programmes in 2008/9 for up to 20 creative agents in each programme. One objective was to fund *innovative* development programmes and we certainly found innovation in creative agent training and development in 2009.

For example, among the enterprising training strategies used, 25 creative agents in one ADO maintained a blog to discuss good practice and challenges in their work. There were also half-termly 'one-to-one' appraisal type interviews with each creative agent, designed to maintain the quality of their work. Another ADO staged a regional creative agent course comprising eight-half days. There was also a large scale conference event for creative agents and regular networking meetings. The creative agents in another ADO undergo a performance management process and are allocated a mentor. A feature in several ADOs was training in, and the use of, 'action learning sets' for creative agents to support and challenge practice in schools. Moreover, some ADOs included useful and appropriate topics and themes in their training programmes. For example, one ADO, as part of creative agent induction, covered a range of techniques to engage members of the school community in Creative Partnerships projects (students, parents, governors etc.). Another offered a two day course for all creative agents and co-ordinators about pupil involvement in evaluation.

A further feature in the development of the creative agent role was courses for teachers which explored the role and function of creative agents. In one ADO, the induction course, which is compulsory for head teachers and their Creative Partnerships School Co-ordinators, explores the role of the creative agent in challenging the school's strategy and philosophy. Another provided an induction course which was compulsory for the Creative Partnerships school co-ordinator and head teacher. This course highlighted the CSDF through a 'visioning exercise, and explored the role of the creative agent in challenging the school. The evidence from the sample suggested that significant progress had been made in training and developing creative agents, although more could have been done to help creative agents challenge schools by following up weaknesses in enquiry questions, planning outcomes and evidence gathering (see section 10 below). For example in two

⁵ Audit 2008:20

ADOs, creative agents spoke of Creative Partnerships outcomes only vaguely in terms of changes in 'attitude'.

Training case study

A new ADO staged a half-day introductory session for nine new Enquiry School Creative Partnerships co-ordinators. The session was skilfully led by an experienced lead creative agent and a member of the local authority advisory service. They used photos and the metaphor of types of buildings to prompt an analysis of why schools were opting into Creative Partnerships and how it fitted with their development plans. They then set up a clinic or 'speed dating' format so all the co-ordinators could move from expert to expert and receive feedback and advice from the lead creative agent, local authority adviser and an experienced co-ordinator on the school's plans, intended outcomes and enquiry questions.

Teacher feedback on the course was very positive and those delivering the course had a sophisticated understanding of good practice: setting objectives, articulating questions, determining types of evidence, and relating the Creative Partnerships work to whole school objectives.

Nearly every ADO we visited provided such a programme of regular training events for their creative agents, a wide variety of training strategies were used and a few ADOs developed useful training publications. Creative Partnerships National Office also promoted a set of creative agent competences, originally developed in one ADO⁶.

Also in 2008 we noted the paucity of direct evidence of pupil participation and contribution to Creative Partnerships projects and recommended that creative agents should work with schools to formulate clearer more precise and workable questions within the Enquiry School Programme.

By the time we began the work on the third and final audit of 2008/9 we were able to access and analyse Local Eligibility and Selection Criteria, CSDFs, project planning and report forms via the new online database. The audit team found this straightforward to access and easy to navigate. It should, therefore, provide a very useful resource for the Creative Partnerships community to refer to once the backlog of data has been uploaded. ADO staff received training on using the new database and most were steadily uploading their reports. Inputting the backlog of data has been a significant challenge across the country and extra staff have contributed to uploading the backlog nationally and regionally.

Part of the database function is formative programme management – that is to provide schools, creative agents ADOs and Creativity Culture and Education with access to details about ongoing project planning and

⁶ Dunne & Haynes (2007)

evaluation so that it can be monitored and, if necessary, refined. Another function is summative in that comparable data across the country can be interrogated in order to make judgements about the impact of Creative Partnerships. Both functions are described in the guidance to the programmes⁷. At the time of writing, however, the database cannot generate a range of reporting functions, although a wide range of reporting functions were planned and commissioned in May 2008. Whilst National Office has had a commitment to the principle of generating analyses of the data it collects it is regrettable that a range of regional and national data analyses on the impact of Creative Partnerships has not been produced, during the three year period of this audit.

⁷ e.g. Change Schools and Schools of Creativity Planning and Evaluation Guidance (p4&7)

4 - The Schools' Programme Planning and Evaluation Framework

The process of applying to be a Change or Enquiry School, and the process of planning and evaluating a Creative Partnerships project is governed by the Schools' Programme Planning and Evaluation Framework, introduced in 2008 (see section 3, above). The Framework is contained in a very substantial bundle of pro-formas, guidance and background documents. In this section we summarise the opinions of interviewees at our ADO visits about how fit for purpose the Schools' Programme Planning and Evaluation Framework is.

The Framework contains detailed application, planning and evaluation pro-formas, supported by comprehensive guidance which also explains the need for the information required in each pro-forma. The Framework's formative function is described in the guidance:

...Creative Agents should aim to develop a culture of reflection around each project, recording significant observations and comments themselves and encouraging others to do the same as they arise. In the spirit of enquiry, the question 'What improvements and changes are taking place here?' should be asked regularly.

Enquiry Schools Planning and Evaluation Guidance (p7)

The formative rationale for the Framework extends to ADOs and the National Office so that projects and trends can be monitored and adaptations made as necessary. The framework also provides precise guidance on the time to be spent on evaluation and emphasises that this process should not be overly bureaucratic or time intensive:

...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.

Enquiry Schools Planning and Evaluation Guidance (p6-7).

Nevertheless, the guidance also stresses the need for using a variety of approaches to secure rigorous evaluation:

Finding creative ways of gathering [young people's] feedback is a key element of creative Partnerships' practice. When setting up conversations with young people a high degree of creative thought and imagination will need to be employed so that this process has genuine meaning.

Enquiry Schools Planning and Evaluation Guidance (p6).

This is repeated in the Change School guidance.

The documents include detailed examples and descriptors, such as the three categories, *beginning*, *progressing* and *exemplary* in the CSDF self-evaluation tool for Change Schools.

During our visits we asked interviewees whether the Schools' Planning and Evaluation Guidance and forms were easy to use and fit for purpose.

Those with positive views tended to be well-established ADO staff and creative agents who had experienced the evolution of Creative Partnerships evaluation formats. For example, one programmer said the forms were now:

Really tight and really structured and we needed that. The questions...are really structured clear and concise. There are a couple of repeats...which is fine because reiteration shouldn't be an issue. The firmness of the structure that they've put on the database – they can't get to the planning form before they've done the CSDF for Change Schools is absolutely brilliant...you need to assess and evaluate where that school is...before you actually move on to start planning something that hits those targets.

Two programmers in the same interview believed that the tight paperwork is needed in the interests of consistency and that the occasional repeated questions help to consolidate responses to key issues. They felt that the CSDF is an excellent diagnostic tool, and they felt that the database is now correctly configured in so far as it prevents data input from proceeding until each systematic step is complete. Creative agents in another ADO expressed the view that the tight paperwork helps to establish the credibility of Creative Partnerships and cement the relationship with heads, although they believed that the forms were repetitive.

On the negative side, some school co-ordinators thought that the whole process felt top heavy; over-burdensome, with too much duplication of paperwork between the CSDF, project forms, and the school self evaluation forms (SEFs) required by OFSTED and school development plans. Whilst we predicted in the 2008 audit that the familiar format of the CSDF would make it more acceptable as a self-evaluation tool, one school co-ordinator saw the similarity of the CSDF to other school self evaluation tools in education as a disadvantage, claiming that her colleagues perceived it as 'more of the same' and 'a paper exercise.'

One creative agent said that excessive Creative Partnerships paperwork constituted 'no invitation' to review and evaluate, thus reducing the engagement and interest of the participants. A group of five interviewees in one ADO all believed the paperwork requirements to be excessive with the result that school leadership teams simply go through the motions of completing them. Interviewees at two ADOs cited particular deputy heads who are deemed to be good at form-filling and who therefore complete Creative Partnerships forms on their own rather than involving a wide consultative group of teachers.

An ADO programmer added that the:

Amount of paperwork...has been challenging and a lot of work, particularly when it's an uphill struggle to encourage certain schools to see what they're getting out of it. Some of it can feel quite repetitive at times.

In two ADOs the requirement to complete a mid-point conversation entry was seen as unnecessary with the result that their forms were incomplete and several sections simply stated 'insufficient evidence at this point'. ADO staff here were unconvinced about the format and particularly the detail required for the database entry. Despite their criticism we found ample evidence of the need for a mid-point conversation to change or refine initial project planning - there were good examples of projects reframing from a negative start to a positive end report as a consequence of a productive mid-point conversation.

Concern about the information required for the database was not exclusively confined to those completing forms in the field, since one ADO Director also felt that some un-necessary information was required.

Staff in one ADO believed strongly that the focus on paperwork and ticking the boxes was the reason school staff increasingly perceived creative agents and programmers as 'policing' the system, simply making judgements on projects and school performance, rather than fulfilling their wider roles in facilitating, brokering and developing creative learning and teaching.

Some responses to our questions about the paperwork, however, proved to be partially inconclusive and inconsistent: in one ADO, three creative agents all believed the CSDF paperwork to be burdensome and repetitive, yet all three went on to describe the ways in which reviewing and planning processes had been meaningful and useful. Moreover, there was clear evidence that this was also happening in the two schools visited in this ADO.

Overall in interviews, opinion was almost equally divided between those who perceived the forms and questions to be too dense, bureaucratic and/or repetitive, and those who felt that it was broadly appropriate and effective. Because of the wide ranging nature of the interviews we conducted (see Appendix A) there was insufficient time for the individuals who criticised the forms for their repetition to provide us with specific examples.

No one group of interviewees – ADO staff, creative agents, school staff - emerged as either more negative or positive. One possible explanation for negative views might be that it is common, perhaps a learned discourse, to dismiss public sector paperwork. Moreover, it is possible that those with negative opinions might have been more positive if they had been provided with reports and analyses from the database. We also emphasise that some interviewees were inconsistent insofar as they complained about the

paperwork burden but then claimed that the processes prompted by the forms were very valuable.

So it is difficult to reach firm conclusions about these responses; opinion is divided, there is some inconsistency in individual responses and assertions about repetition in the forms were not supported with specific examples. However, a useful response to the variety of opinion about the Schools' Planning and Evaluation Guidance and forms would be to gather a representative group of end-users to go through the structure and content of the forms and review them, looking at the nine elements of creative learning as well as the questions posed.

Significantly, only one or two interviewees commented that a national planning and evaluation framework was unnecessary.

In the majority of visits a common criticism by school co-ordinators and school senior managers was that the language of the Creative Partnerships forms was occasionally obscure. 'Co-construction of learning'⁸ was frequently cited as particularly oblique. There were, however, about a dozen examples of projects where co-construction was clearly understood. In one project report, for example, year one pupils assert that they were co-constructing by shaping a story with their own ideas and suggestions. Moreover, two creative agents and a senior ADO programmer reported, from two separate ADOs, that the term co-construction was one that teachers should become familiar with, and the experience of longer term engagement with Creative Partnerships project work demonstrated that teachers did indeed quickly understand and apply the terminology. So we conclude that no language in the Creative Partnerships forms is too obscure and that it is a reasonable expectation that teachers – as professionals – should be willing to familiarise themselves with evolving educational concepts and terminology and to interpret them for pupils, especially when their schools have opted to apply for funding in order to adopt the Creative Partnerships initiative.

In four interviews ADO staff expressed some bemusement that no regular composite reports or analyses of the data which they had submitted onto Creative Partnerships databases had been generated by the database to inform their strategic and policy decisions. One ADO expanded on this theme; ADO interviewees said that the National Office was 'disenfranchising' the regions and new creative organisations by failing to disseminate enough about the practices of creative learning emerging from the aggregated data. They believed that there was a 'fantastic opportunity to share with other partners,' which was currently being missed.

⁸ This denotes the active participation of pupils, creative practitioners and teachers in the planning and evaluation of Creative Partnerships projects and indeed in wider discourses about creative learning and teaching.

When we followed up this point we learnt that National Office had always planned to generate analyses from the data they collected. In May 2008 National Office identified and planned the types of analyses which would be useful to produce and commissioned reporting software but there have been delays and technical problems in designing these software functions within the database. The planned reports include, for example, the use of search terms such as 'Special Educational Needs' to identify projects focussed on this area, and aggregations of the number of teachers experiencing continuing professional development as part of projects. We recommend that Creativity Culture and Education works towards generating such relevant reports as a matter of priority.

Additionally some reports could be collated by concordance software, for example:

- What broad categories comprise the most popular types of enquiry questions?
- What are the most common weaknesses in schools' application forms as shown in ADO feedback forms?

Before we summarise evidence about how effectively the Framework is being used, we offer below an explanatory summary of the planning and evaluation process and of the roles of those individuals who contribute to the process.

Area Delivery Organisations

Consider applications from schools to join the Change School or Enquiry School programme and appoint creative agents to work with the successful schools. They are responsible for training creative agents and inducting schools to the programmes, and monitor the project planning and evaluation forms produced by schools.

Creative Agents

Are assigned to work with a school to oversee and manage the use of the national evaluation framework in projects. They challenge the school's thinking as projects are planned and broker the appointment of creative practitioners. They monitor programme management and evaluation particularly through their skills in facilitating the development of a reflective learning culture.

Creative Partnerships Co-ordinators

Are senior staff in Enquiry or Change Schools. They identify school priorities, co-ordinate projects, and participate in every stage of planning and evaluation within the Framework. They work closely with creative agents as

well as with the school staff, pupils and creative practitioners attached to the project.

In addition, teachers, pupils and creative practitioners involved in each project are expected to participate actively in planning, end of session reviews and evaluation.

Local Eligibility and Selection Criteria

In this process ADOs draw up their local priorities in selecting schools' Creative Partnerships applications.

The Creative Schools Development Framework

This is a self evaluation tool by which Change Schools assess how well creative learning and teaching is embedded in the school. Change Schools must complete the CSDF annually. The self-evaluation format is supported by detailed descriptors of three levels of development, '*beginning, progressing and exemplary.*' This form was a key focus for three of our visits in 2008/9.

Schools' application forms

Within this form schools describe their local context and priorities and how they intend to benefit from a Creative Partnerships programme. They broadly sketch out their initial plans and project(s).

Feedback forms

ADOs respond to applications to guide the development of schools' planning, and point out omissions and refinements which could be made to the application form and to the work it describes. The feedback form thus offers pointers to the school and its creative agent as they embark on project planning.

Project planning forms

These are detailed forms which describe and categorise a Creative Partnerships project, stating aims, target subjects and pupil groups and predicting planned outcomes and evidence.

Project evaluation forms.

There are three types of evaluation form. An optional form provides an opportunity for participants briefly to reflect on an individual session. There are two further project evaluation forms. In each case there is an opportunity for teachers, creative practitioners and pupils to contribute and express their opinions on impact, input, process and quality, distance travelled and

sustainability and the form records the impact on the learning of each of the above groups. For Change Schools a mid-point evaluation form serves the purpose of reviewing whether the project is on track and making changes to a project if this is thought necessary. Both the mid and end-point evaluation forms for Change Schools include a facility for participants to grade how far the project has improved learning on a scale of 1 (no value) to 4 (significant value). The end-point evaluation form is used to record the reflections of pupils and young people, teachers and school staff, and creative practitioners on their own learning and others' learning, as well as the project's objectives.

Project End Form

This summative form brings together all aspects of evaluation in a more succinct form and is designed to record conclusions about the impact on learning and distance travelled.

5 - Local Eligibility and Selection Criteria

Creative Partnerships requires ADOs to draft *Local Eligibility and Selection Criteria (LESC)* to focus the application process for Change Schools. We found no evidence of a national approach to the LESC, since the format and detail of these LESC varied widely. For example, one ADO used a precise points system to prompt threshold information on eligibility. Another contained the most specific criteria for participation in the country: primary schools below 65% in KS2 maths & English, and under 30% 5 A*-C GCSEs at secondary level. By contrast, another ADO reported that they had used a light touch approach to describing and applying LESC to their school selection.

Usually the LESC included the national criteria for Creative Partnerships and articulated its sympathy with the principles of combating disadvantage. Only one ADO provided evidence of liaison with their local authority by quoting the priorities of the Secondary School Development Team at the authority. There were some notable features in the selection criteria: some LESC prioritised Change School applications which aligned closely with school self-evaluation and improvement plans, which also described the active involvement and 'voice' of young people, or gave priority to schools facing deprivation, limited access to cultural opportunities, or rural isolation.

It seemed to us that the variety of LESC formats and criteria is appropriate in order to meet local need; however, ADOs should take more opportunities to articulate the LESC in partnership with their LAs and other educational institutions in their region.

6 - Change Schools: the CSDF

This year we looked particularly at a Creative Partnerships self evaluative and diagnostic tool designed to help Change Schools embed creativity, the *Creative School Development Framework* (CSDF). Three of our visits were designed to elicit opinions about the CSDF and the practice of using it.

In the Change School Planning and Evaluation Guidance (p8) it is recommended that as many members of the school community take part in the CSDF self-assessment as possible and that there are a number of methods for involving them. We had evidence that a wide range of stakeholders were involved in CSDFs this year. We met a governor who had been centrally involved in the preparation of the CSDF and in another school the Co-ordinator had staged a CPD session for governors and staff on Creative Partnerships. As well as whole teaching staff involvement, this school had involved the caretaker, their priest and even the kitchen staff. We visited two other schools where governors had helped to complete the CSDF. Clearly if the CSDF is to be widely owned there is a case for involving parents and pupils as well.

During our three visits, the interviewees made a variety of points: that some senior staff were good at form filling, that it was at least a systematic process, that it allowed staff to go through the motions without thoughtful engagement, that the form was less important than the process. Although creative agents and school co-ordinators often worked on the CSDF as a pair, two schools we visited had been able involve their whole staff in completing the CSDF. Examples included twilight sessions on Creative Partnerships and the completion of a draft CSDF, inviting comment. In a big secondary, one creative agent reported that they put the CSDF for comment on the INTRANET and circulated paper copies round the school. Clearly this inclusive approach is more likely to secure staff ownership and commitment.

In one ADO a creative agent commented that the CSDF was similar to other forms of school self-review, but as such it was antipathetic to any creative approaches to completing it. However, a much more common view was that the process of school self evaluation would be more coherent and time would be saved if the CSDF fitted OFSTED's Self Evaluation Form more closely – perhaps by including cross references in the CSDF. A few of the interviewees who expressed their enthusiasm for the CSDF process also expressed some disappointment that OFSTED inspectors were not already required to report on Creative Partnerships and the work schools were doing on their CSDF.

These two views imply an accord between Creativity Culture and Education and OFSTED in relation to the CSDF. We understand that this is an issue which Creativity Culture and Education has taken up with OFSTED. Moreover OFSTED has recently acknowledged again the contribution of Creative

Partnerships to creative learning in schools.⁹ Another strategy to align the Self Evaluation Form and CSDF in school self review would be for the creative agent to track and emphasise points of synergy for school co-ordinators.

In another ADO we interviewed a group of nine co-ordinators. The three secondary co-ordinators felt that the CSDF was about hoop jumping and box ticking to get project funding, was not about their needs or useful to them and duplicated Self Evaluation Form data. However, the majority of this group felt that the CSDF was a very useful document and a helpful and reflective start to their Creative Partnerships programme and the process of planning and evaluation. One Creative Partnerships director estimated that the CSDF reviewing and planning process had been 80% successful across all Change Schools.

Case study CSDFs and OFSTED

A very powerful case was presented by one school co-ordinator around how she had used the CSDF to great effect during an OFSTED inspection that happened mid way through the year. She had been able to show evidence of baseline evaluation through exemplar discussions with the school community, surveys of parental and pupil views, discussions around the nature of creativity, and generally show how a school self-evaluates holistically, supporting a shared vision and direction. OFSTED reported positively on this clarity of direction as a feature of the school.

Creative Agents said that some senior staff were simply good at filling in forms and cut and pasted sections into the CSDF from the other school planning documents. However, one Creative Partnerships director said that usually the creative agents were able to turn a form filling approach into a more genuine reflective process.

Two school co-ordinators interviewed in one ADO had considerable involvement in managing the CSDF process, and reported that they involved all staff in the CSDF by preparing the first draft and inviting all staff to comment. The schools had both involved governors. In one school the co-ordinator did the CSDF work with her head and deputy and then showed it to her creative agent. The creative agent appeared to have a moderating function here since the Co-ordinator reported that the creative agent had suggested raising the grading in a couple of areas. This had contributed to raising the school's confidence in what it was doing.

One creative agent we interviewed had used another way to interpret the CSDF, by conceiving of school change and development as a tree, and inviting the staff to discuss and explore the metaphor of the tree, by drawing

⁹ OFSTED (2010)

it with roots to represent management and leadership, leaves to represent dissemination outside the school and birds to represent future planning. Another creative agent referred to an early evening session she had attended in which the CSDF was interpreted using a red, amber, green traffic light metaphor. She noted that this approach was used in other school self-evaluation processes. However, among these examples of a good and inclusive approach to self-evaluation there was virtually no evidence of the involvement of local authorities or local cultural/community organisations such as theatres, regionally funded organisations, galleries, or museums in the CSDF and this might be considered in future.

7 - Programme applications

Nearly all schools¹⁰ in our sample linked their projects and enquiry questions to school improvement, development plans or their OFSTED reports and occasionally all three:

There has been a recent OFSTED report following the submission of the application form for this project, comments from which correlate with the feelings amongst staff in the need for this project; the improvement plan's highest priorities are to improve the quality of teaching and learning in English across the school; develop areas of speaking and listening; and to improve literacy and writing. The OFSTED report states that children generally achieve "below average, especially in writing", and commented to children in their communicative letter that they have "asked your teachers to help you to improve your writing". The proposed project confronts these issues in an exciting and interesting way, providing opportunities for under-achieving young people to engage in writing through methods that will also use skills in ICT, multimedia, design...

Moreover, the majority of application forms contained a detailed articulation of how the school wished to use their Enquiry School project. For example:

We wish to explore creativity through the curriculum by linking children's spoken and written English with all other areas of learning. Our evaluation of children's learning this year and knowledge of children suggest that next year we need to focus on children's acquisition of vocabulary and to give them more opportunities to speak for extended periods. Adding more drama into the curriculum would, we feel, facilitate this in an exciting way. We already plan through topics to link curriculum areas together in a creative manner but would like to include more literacy development into the process, rather than seeing literacy skills as a separate area.

Some of the applications contained inventive ideas, such as this one at secondary level which aspired to develop the qualities of creative agents in their teachers:

One possible approach is to look at creative curriculum remodeling based on the concept of our existing Key Stage 3 "Total" curriculum structure and to investigate learning methodologies that could be transferred to Key Stage 4 and 5 students.

We hope to create a model for the flexible use of staff as "creative agents" whom students can access as the needs of curriculum projects develop and so provide a more student centred approach to the use of curriculum time.

¹⁰ In this report we use these terms to indicate approximate percentages in our sample : nearly all = c90%, a large majority = c80%, majority = c60%, minority = c 40%, small minority = c15%

8 - ADO Feedback on Applications

ADOs submit their feedback on Schools Programme Applications on the database. These point out the strengths and weakness of applications and contain guidance on how the application and planning can be refined. There was evidence in the sample that ADOs challenge school applications and planning, particularly through the approval process and through feedback on applications. Common feedback to applications was that it should address creative learning more specifically. There were frequent examples of a robust challenge to Enquiry Schools' applications in the feedback forms from ADOs:

Relevance to school development plan could be further developed. Willing to involve young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of programme but could be much more inclusive in some areas. Would benefit from further developing partnership working rather than focusing on one-off individual projects, as well as better linking creativity to achievement and progression rather than simply focussing on experience.

Wider focus for professional development opportunities. Vision for the project needs to be clarified and much less arts focussed. Clarification of main focus would be helpful.

Occasionally ADO feedback failed to address clear weaknesses in the application. For example, one school application described an almost meaningless enquiry project:

Creative Arts project linked to an expanded creative curriculum including MFL, Outdoor and Adventurous Activities in PE; Geography; Art and Design activities; PSHCE and core subjects – Literacy, Numeracy, ICT and Science.

*Please summarise your enquiry as a question**

Where Am I? – Where Are We?

Although the feedback on this said that there were not links to the School improvement Plan or to CPD it did not address the clearly unmanageable breadth of the enquiry nor the incoherent question.

We used an open coding system to analyse the text of the ADO feedback in response to a representative sample¹¹ of Enquiry School applications. About 60% of the feedback was specific and challenged the creative agent and school to provide more focused planning or clearer evidence. Whilst giving specific feedback was a strength in ADO practice, creative agents rarely followed up and addressed the ADO feedback explicitly. For example, ADO

¹¹ All enquiry projects in a mix of primary and secondary schools in an 'urban' and a 'rural' ADO sample.

feedback on one application pointed out that the project listed no continuing professional development activities. This issue was nowhere followed up in the planning and report forms and the end form recorded no continuing professional development taking place.

Nevertheless, the evidence from our visits confirmed rigorous quality assurance in practice in that it was common for ADOs to reject school applications and occasionally even to reject and return unacceptable evaluation forms.

9 - Project Planning forms

Although all ADOs we visited reported that they had provided training to help creative agents to challenge schools, a large majority of project planning forms still contained weak enquiry questions which would either be difficult to match with outcomes and evidence at the end of the project, or too broad and multi-faceted to manage effectively or both. For example, in one ADO, two of the planning forms recorded that the school wished to address five different issues in its enquiry. There was no evidence in the evaluation reports to suggest that this was done in a systematic way. Yet Creative Partnerships' wording of the pro-forma is very precise and simple, and so provides a clear prompt for planning groups, including young people:

'What do you want to understand better?' (Planning form Section 2)

Other enquiry questions were too diverse to be workable; one muddled application form named literacy as an aim, and focused on both severe learning difficulty and gifted and talented pupils. Yet the enquiry question was:

How can school create more enriching and meaningful experiences, which are relevant and meaningful to the children whilst, at the same time, build on their development of key skills? (Application Form, Planning Form)

The ADO feedback form responds to this muddle in part:

While there is an understanding of impact on pupils, project would benefit from identifying impact on teaching. Enquiry question needs re-focusing with creative agent support. Lack of evidence of the importance of young people in leading project. (ADO Feedback form)

Even when questions were reasonably focused:

The project will explore the hypotheses that:

a) creative approaches to the management of the learning process can engender greater independence in pupils at the same time as having a positive impact on achievement.

b) there is a link between lack of independence in the classroom and the difficulties of transitioning post-16.(Planning Form)

teachers and creative agents found evaluating the outcomes and impact of the enquiry difficult to address systematically:

However, the project was too ambitious, in several ways: it was a whole school project; it tried to cover too many related areas; and there was too much emphasis on observation and research.

and:

Both teachers and practitioners acknowledged that the focus was too wide. (Project End form)

On the other hand, a minority of enquiry questions were specific and focused:

The schools plan to investigate how standards in writing, particularly boys, can be raised by providing 'real life' experiences for these pupils. The schools are in an isolated rural location, which results in many of the children not gaining access to experiences that many take for granted.

or

Does a more creative approach to writing based activities improve and enhance the experience for boys, and therefore raise attainment? (Planning forms)

To complement these examples of the focus of enquiries and build a more complete picture, we coded enquiry questions on a 1-4 scale in a representative sample of schools where 1 represented a question with a tight focus which could be matched with clear outcomes and evidence and 4 a vague or compound question which would be difficult to address systematically or support with evidence.

In the sample, 25% of questions came into a top quartile of clear focused questions, while rather more - 36% - came into the lowest quartile of vague and multi aspect questions. We looked at the types of outcome in the same sample of schools using the same 1-4 calibration where 1 represented outcomes which could be corroborated by evidence and 4 represented general assertions from observation. In the sample 73% came into the lowest 2 quartiles of evidence which could not easily be corroborated. As might be expected it implies that it is virtually impossible to match evidence to poorly constructed enquiries.

The most focused and systematic planning forms stood out as examples of good practice. For example, one Enquiry School created a good, detailed and varied schedule of activity:

*creative CPD for 4 key staff begins
1:1 support for senior management team (SMT)*

start coaching skills workshops x 3 for 10 key staff
creative curriculum mapping with school councils
creative curriculum mapping with staff team
The plan is to work with the Senior Management Team of 6 people, plus two Governors, 4 other teachers and 2 Teaching Assistants.
We are looking at working with the School Council in the Infants, which has approximately 14 YP - and the Juniors, which has approx 20 YP.

In a special school the evidence to support outcomes was clearly set out:

individual behaviour records and behaviour plan reviews. And a new curriculum model identifying areas of a cross-curricular approach to learning in K.S.3.

Also Creative Partnerships was sometimes the vehicle for highly original developments in schools:

Plaza style learning is part of the BSF [Building Schools for the Future] programme and will see teachers in redesigned large spaces teaching up to 120 students at a time. In [Academy], this will involve up to 5 teachers working together, possibly with one lead teacher and several teachers supporting them.

This analysis begins to imply that more training and development is needed at the axis of creative agent and school co-ordinator discussions to sharpen enquiry questions and to ensure that they relate clearly to planned outcomes and the evidence which might support claims that the project had been a success. Although the planning form requires projects to be articulated in the form of a question we do not wish to imply that a project stands or falls on the basis of an enquiry question. More accurately it is the clarity and focus of the enquiry topic which is critical to identifying outcomes, distance travelled, and the evidence for this at the end of projects. The Framework and guidance itself is designed to prompt just that systematic approach to projects, in section three of the planning forms on *anticipated learning outcomes* and *anticipated impacts*. We discuss the issue of clear forms of evidence in section 10, below.

There is plenty of material to help teachers. For example the National College for School Leadership published a guide to the Japanese approach to classroom enquiry, *Research Lesson Study*¹². The structure of *Lesson Study* emphasises the need for teachers to be precise and specific about school improvement outcomes and the evidence which corroborates them.

¹² CfBT (2005)

Work hard to establish real clarity about what you have improved in pupils' learning through your new teaching technique. When you're sure you know and can describe it – do so.

A further link could be made to the National Strategies' approach to *Assessment for Learning*. All schools are expected to use Assessment for Learning approaches and so teachers should be familiar with constructing (and co-constructing with their pupils) a clear learning intention for a lesson or series of lessons, displaying this prominently, breaking the intention down into success criteria (*must, should, might* statements for differentiated learning) again co-constructing this with pupils and reviewing evidence of success and setting targets for improvement.

It seems to us that this approach also lends itself to identifying a clearly focused enquiry question which establishes from the outset the kinds of evidence needed for successful learning. Furthermore it builds in as an expectation, elements of co-construction¹³. It seems particularly important that ADOs and Creative Partnerships schools draw on and link together other curriculum initiatives available to teachers, such as assessment for Learning.

¹³ <http://nationalstrategiesstandards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/assessment/assessmentforlearningaf/> The strategy equally applies to secondary schools.

10 - Project Evaluation Forms

One of the most notable developments in project evaluations over time has been the development of a more balanced description of the successes and failures in projects. In our first audit, evaluations were very often unequivocally positive, occasionally across the whole sample from a Creative Partnerships area. Since it is not likely that all projects will be completely successful, we assumed that selective project reporting was taking place. Now almost all reports seem to be candid and balanced:

Case study – balance and rigour

The main weakness of this project was the lack of communication. The lead teacher felt she was not able to have much of a say in what was taking place: her role had not been made clear to her. Looking back, she needed to have been more insistent on expressing her concerns about the project as it was taking place. The teachers both felt that weekly evaluation meetings needed to take place with the practitioner, but as the practitioner had to leave before the end of school because of other commitments this did not happen regularly.

It was also felt that the project was rushed into and the practitioner feels that she would have liked to have spent more time working alongside the teaching staff initially to gain an understanding of the children and how the staff worked, rather than having to come straight in and begin her delivery.

But:

The biggest, unexpected outcome to the staff was the staggering response from the parents. The sharing days were not polished performances that the school is used to sharing with the parents. It was more an opportunity to show the parents some of the activities that had been taking place. More parents and relatives than usual turned up to these sharing days and a questionnaire was given to the parents afterwards. They were all extremely positive and enjoyed this new way of finding out about their child's education. They were also impressed with the work the children had been doing.

There were also some inventive strategies for collecting evaluation data. One programmer we interviewed cited a creative agent using a mobile phone to record video clips because it forced shorter, pithier and more incisive video evaluation.

Because it's a much shorter piece of time and it actually makes them consider what they are capturing...thinking about what's important and what's not as they are doing it, rather than 3 months later with seven hours of footage.

At another ADO they used 'graffiti' or learning walls and surveys constructed by pupils as a means of sharing and accumulating the evaluation data.

Case Study – collecting data

One creative agent described how a school had installed a video booth in the school reception which they named 'the pod.' It was designed to remind the stakeholders of contemporary video culture, such as 'the diary room' in *Big Brother*. The purpose of the booth was to encourage a wide group of stakeholders to comment on Creative Partnerships and the school's work. People were asked to respond to one or more of three questions about creativity in the pod. A wide range of people had contributed, including groundsmen, parents and catering staff. Apart from one rather bizarre video entry, the pod had yielded good evaluative information.

Some quite sophisticated forms of evidence were presented in a small minority of evaluation reports. A very notable example of this was an account by the School Coordinator in a first year Change School. The school wished to improve boys' literacy so they brought in a creative writer for a year to try to inspire and develop boys' writing. This was the only factor which might have affected achievement for the group of boys working with the writer in the year and the school recorded a 30% rise in achievement which they therefore felt certain was attributable to the writing project. Evaluation evidence of this sort powerfully validates the generally positive claims that teachers make.

Another school gained evidence of project outcomes by distributing a questionnaire to parents:

The results from the parent's questionnaire on completion of the enquiry revealed that 70% of parents who replied found that their children talked more about what they had been doing at school. 90% said that they felt their children had enjoyed using [the creative techniques].

In the very best end-point evaluation forms, teachers systematically returned to the outcomes targeted by the project and to the evidence they had predicted. An exemplary passage introduces this end point form:

Case Study – Good practice in evaluation

The project was developed and planned within the context of the School Improvement Plan for 2008-2009, notably Priority 1: Enhance the learning experience of all members of the school community and Priority 2: Expand and Develop Community Partnerships. It was also influenced by the Every Child Matters Agenda particularly the outcomes of 'enjoy and achieve' and making a positive contribution'.

The focus of the project was intervention with a targeted group of passive underachievers also referred to as 'The Invisible Child'. The aim of the project was to give these pupils a voice, raise levels of confidence and motivation and enable them to become more active participants in school life. The questions upon which the Enquiry project was based were derived from this.

In addition the data and anecdotal evidence (staff emails) suggest that pupil motivation and engagement has increased (pupils were rated on a 1-5 scale with all being 3 or above by the end [the average for Year 7's was 2.6]; 1 being fully motivated and engaged all of the time). The average motivational score at the start of the subject was 3.5 (i.e. between average and below average).

Of particular note has been the large numbers of staff attending the Schools Improvement Group on Creativity which has attracted 14 staff including several Heads of Department.

In the above example the author briefly returns to what the project was trying to achieve, how it fitted with the school's priorities and how the school had devised their own approach to measuring improvement in the small group of pupils who were subjects of the enquiry. Clearly the use of numbers is not an exact science in human development, but their strategy is an attempt to build on the general impression that pupils were more motivated and engaged. Moreover they provide simple evidence that a good number of teachers are sufficiently interested in Creative Partnerships work to join the school's Creativity group. Overall this is a good example of a school effectively using the Framework as a programme management tool by keeping a focus on what the project was trying to achieve, what might count as evidence of that achievement and the tangible outcomes of the project.

The creative agents we interviewed in one ADO had a sophisticated understanding of forms of evidence and cited examples of using attendance statistics, and baseline measures of distance travelled as well as film and other forms of media. The creative agents in this ADO demonstrated a clear grasp of their role and there were examples of skill and ingenuity in carrying it out. The reason for the generally assured and sophisticated approach of the

ADO may well have been the stability and continuity of the staff team and their creative agents.

However, in the same way as planning forms often described outcomes and evidence vaguely, a large majority of evaluation forms made only broad assertions and failed to support claims about outcomes with evidence. Too often reports glossed over evidence, speaking very generally about change and impact, raised standards, teacher and pupil attitude shifts and greater self confidence without providing specific and supportive data.

This weakness in the area of identifying and reporting outcomes and evidence was one we identified in our 2008 report¹⁴. We therefore spent some time considering why this weakness is still so prevalent and how to address it. There is no doubt that ADO staff were aware of the issue in our interviews with them. Around the country the creative agent training and development, funded by Creative Partnerships National Office, is sharpening the productive challenge to schools which many creative agents can offer.

However, ADOs might usefully emphasise the need for creative agents systematically to return to analyse predicted outcomes and evidence when they facilitate evaluations. Also it would be valuable if ADOs helped schools to analyse data, exploring issues of rigour and validity. It is, moreover, likely that those involved in planning and evaluating projects can identify outcomes and evidence with growing insight and expertise as they go through the processes comprising the Framework.

It should also be emphasised that the lack of evaluative rigour in the majority of reports is a more general phenomenon, rather than a particular deficit in Creative Partnerships work. As long ago as 1996 The Teacher Training Agency launched teacher research grants and the Creativity Action Research Awards evolved from such policy initiatives to encourage grass roots educational research. But surveys of teacher research and evaluations have found little to commend them. For example, Foster 1999:

A lot of the reports made bold, descriptive and evaluative claims...which would have been very difficult to establish...teacher-researchers appeared unable to distance themselves from their preconceived views about effective practice and their findings and evidence seemed shaped to support these views

Similarly Earl and Timperley's¹⁵ research into teacher understanding of data found that schools tended to give responsibility for data analysis to one key

¹⁴ 2008. p16ff

¹⁵ The authors subsequently offer a framework for learning conversations:

- a) respect and challenge your colleagues
- b) clarify your purpose
- c) get clarity and a deep understanding of the problem
- d) pose progressively more focussed questions

person, often a senior teacher or maths teacher. Consequently few teachers understood how to analyse and present evidence in the form of data to back their claims about school improvement.

Because the development of creative practitioner skills is one of the aims of Creative Partnerships, evaluations might be expected to include comment on, for example:

- how practitioners had learnt more about school organisation and the curriculum;
- how they had developed their relationship with pupils including behaviour management;
- or about how they had learnt to work with special educational needs, gifted and talented and a mixed ability range;
- how they had developed their creative practice as a result of working in schools.

Moreover, the Framework is designed so that teachers and young people can reflect on practitioner learning as well as the practitioners themselves.

However, interviewees in three ADOs we visited expressed the view that there was a risk of marginalising creative practitioners and failing to evaluate their development as thoroughly as that of schools. One of the creative agents said that creative practitioners and their learning did not play a prominent part in Creative Partnerships evaluation. Another reported that a project had funded a practitioner for half a day in order to write up an evaluation. This had resulted in a detailed and insightful evaluative report which had not been expected.

In another ADO the director and programmer agreed that practitioners were given less continuing professional development than other stakeholders. These interviewees added that this is an area for development in the ADO which will focus on developing those creative practitioners committed to critical engagement. This ADO had therefore developed an apprenticeship scheme, *The Associate Programme*, which aims to train a small number of practitioners, enabling them to develop their own creative practice which they will then feed into school projects. At another ADO the training and development priority was to provide for creative practitioners beyond the freelance sector in institutions such as the museums service.

These observations were borne out in the database. Planning forms very rarely described specific outcomes for creative practitioners, and only rarely

-
- e) recognise sound and unsound evidence
 - f) familiarise yourself with statistics and measurement concepts;
 - g) focus on interpretation
 - h) reserve judgement
 - i) tolerate ambiguity (Earl & Timperley 2008)

was there reference to what the practitioners had learnt. One possible explanation for this is that the profile of the three Schools Programmes is having an unintended consequence, namely a tendency to pay less attention to the Creative Partnerships objective of developing skills in the creative industries. Naturally there were exceptions to this. In one end point report there is a rare reference to the development of a creative practitioner's creative practice:

There is evidence that the project has had some impact on creative practitioners' learning: [practitioner A] felt that his discussion of photography with teachers had impacted on his approach to professional fashion shoots and [practitioner C] appreciated developing relationships [with teachers and pupils] over a longer period of time. Two of the practitioners however felt that their greatest area of learning had been in how to deal creatively with more negative feedback than usual, and developed their ability to listen and adapt...

and in another report:

The anticipated impact for practitioners was for them to identify the right point at which to completely hand over facilitator responsibility to staff. Because of the practitioners' good skills at identifying teacher levels of confidence and needs within the project they were very aware of their initial fears and paced the project accordingly. It would have been inappropriate to give too much responsibility to staff too soon as this would most likely have had the effect of disengaging them from the process. The practitioners always made sure to give the staff a role within the project and encouraged them to facilitate work with the children. They also included them in the planning and evaluating of the sessions and eventually, because of this gentle and inclusive approach the teachers were able to take some responsibility for activities between sessions...

When creative practitioners themselves were the authors of evaluative text, they tended to write about pupil or teacher learning more extensively than their own. Occasionally the practitioner's analysis was comprehensive and insightful, picking up some of the issues we address elsewhere in this report:

The practitioner felt that the project was a good idea for the school, although felt that perhaps they were attempting such a project before they were wholly ready as a school. The practitioner felt there needed to be more clarity around whether the school was looking at changing creativity and changing the outdoor environment; the school needed to be clearer around this as, although there were elements of both in the work, neither was wholly grappled with. Due to the work there has been a change in the school towards creative ideas and developing a storytelling culture, but the environmental work has not yet had the full

impact and [the] school need to continue this. The practitioner felt that the school wanted to develop a creative curriculum but also develop outdoor space and felt that perhaps the links between these two areas were slightly tenuous. The practitioner would like to see the school to do more questioning rather than completely agreeing with all of the ideas brought forward. Teachers were sometimes shy and wanted to go along with the practitioner. The practitioner felt that it would be better to have a greater emphasis earlier in the project i.e. planning stages, in being clear to identify what [the] school really wanted to achieve in a more specific sense as the brief was very wide.

So we suggest that all parties to evaluation should ensure that reflection on creative practitioner learning is as carefully considered as that of teachers and pupils.

The evaluation forms give the opportunity for respondents to score the value of aspects of creative learning in projects, using a four point scale. The guidance points out that:

...Analysis of the scoring system provides useful information about trends developing within Creative Partnerships projects together with a rapidly understandable set of indicators about the agreement or disagreement in the three perspectives of young people, teachers and creative practitioners.

Change Schools and Schools of Creativity planning and Evaluation Guidance (p12)

Whilst respondents often rated projects *good* or *high value*, these scales were almost always only partially completed. Nevertheless, fully recording the grades would help creative agents and school co-ordinators to monitor projects and check for these differing perspectives. For this reason we recommend that creative agents ensure that teachers fully complete the grades. Whilst the grades are primarily seen as formative we have always believed there is a case for analysing aggregated grades across an ADO or across the country within a mixed methods approach to analysing the impact of Creative Partnerships.

Some ADOs still commission forms of external evaluation. We were provided with published external evaluation materials during two of our visits.

Use of materials case study

An ADO provided an excellent overview of the progress of Creative Partnerships work as a result of a review conducted by representative head teachers and local authority staff. The booklet the ADO produced as a result of the review is partly a narrative but also contains some useful evidence of change. For example it tracks the examination performance of Creative Partnerships schools at 2 key stages, then compares this with the average for

schools in the region and with national trends over a three-year period. It discusses the role of creative agents. It records, for example, a high school which has seen attendance rates rise from 86% to 94% during its five years' involvement with Creative Partnerships. The same publication contains a section monitoring all 29 Creative Partnerships school OFSTED reports in 2006 -7 and recording all the OFSTED references to Creative Partnerships and to creative learning and teaching.

The booklet includes a detailed analysis of common creative processes: *'we have broken down the creative journey into a number of observable stages and then isolated specific creative signals displayed by the children and visible to the artists during these stages.'*

The booklet, whilst it ranges rather widely over psychological and neurological theories, offers some useful indicators about creative processes in young people.

Another booklet from the same ADO provides a range of useful evaluative interviews with pupils and teachers, and therefore illustrative material for others.

We looked in particular for evidence of pupil participation and 'voice' as a theme this year, and found many more direct transcriptions and descriptions of pupil feedback than in 2008. Moreover, the establishment of pupil groups and subsequent co-construction of learning was common in the sample of project evaluations we looked at:

A pupil advisory group of six children who met with myself and [creative practitioner] to produce an outline idea for the project. These pupil advisors then reported back to their classes and the views of the year group were sought. In October we invited parents to join the Advisory Group and were very fortunate to get three parents involved plus two parent-governors. This gave us a chance to consider creativity and how we could maximise it within project.

Another school had established an active Creative Partnerships Pupil Innovation Group and in two ADOs we found interesting models for involving pupils: at one, a school appointed a male and female creativity representative in every class. The representatives took part in the selection of creative practitioners to work in the school and also took responsibility for gathering evaluative feedback from classmates. Even at the foundation stage this was done with the help of the teacher and, in year six, the creativity representatives had devised a questionnaire. Some of them filmed evaluations and it was expected that they would compile a film from the evaluations.

In the sample of forms we read around half contained copied and re-pasted sections of prose at different points in the evaluation forms. In some cases this is the most logical way of including the planning context, for example. In some cases it was because the creative agent had chosen to conduct a conversation with pupils, teachers, and practitioners all together and then had written a composite record of the points made. This may be appropriate in some cases but may lead to omissions in others. In some cases it appears that the author was cutting and pasting to shortcut the evaluation process. This practice of duplicating text in the forms may support the assertions by some of our interviewees about repetition in the forms. Since their assertions are currently not substantiated with examples and since this evidence is inconclusive we suggest a review of the forms with a focus group of end-users. Nonetheless, at the time of writing a new version of some of the forms has been produced.

11 - Other issues

During our nine visits we found that most ADOs had introduced annual reviews with their schools. This is not a requirement of the Framework but seems to us to be a valuable quality control process, which contributes to review, planning and the sustainability of creative learning and teaching in those schools. Three ADOs we visited reported that their annual review process had a significant impact on practice and had led either to a complete review of processes with much tighter guidelines for schools and creative agents or a mutual 'parting of ways' between certain Change Schools and the Creative Partnerships programme as it became clear that the schools were unwilling to participate in Creative Partnerships planning and evaluation processes. This quality control process was seen as important to keep Creative Partnerships true to its aims and principles and to secure accountability of public funds.

During our visits there was a high correlation between a sophisticated understanding and a rigorous quality control of Creative Partnerships work on the one hand and the length of experience of staff on the other. For example, in one ADO there are 16 creative agents, three of whom have been in the team since 2002, seven of whom have been creative agents for 4 years and six of whom completed a creative agent training course which resulted from an National College for School Leadership-funded report. The continuity of creative agent experience was evident in the quality of their work and the level of conversation we had with them.

At another ADO the two programmers we interviewed had worked on Creative Partnerships almost since its inception. They had a sophisticated and balanced view about using the Framework and comprehensive understanding of Creative Partnership's place in school planning and improvement and of securing the legacy of Creative Partnerships. Another ADO had 40 creative agents, many of whom now had several years of

experience and who were contributing to the articulation of the values and philosophy of the ADO in an area of profound social, economic and cultural challenge. We visited ADOs which had been established prior to the Creative Partnerships national initiative. Here, teams had generally developed an admirable independence of thought and flexibility in framing working partnerships. The stability and (comparatively) assured future of such ADOs in the community seems to imbue the organisation and the partnership with confidence and resilience implying a sustainability of creative learning and teaching in schools and the legacy of a lively engagement in cultural intervention. In another ADO, by contrast, the team are relatively new yet are fully engaged in a reflective and critical debate about the quality of evaluation with their stakeholders and amongst themselves. They are committed to raising the standard of evaluation through engaging stakeholders in debates about national agendas, focused CPD training and ensuring schools are using the CSDF framework and projects strategically.

We judge that, as a result of this accumulated experience, ADOs are now better at quality management and control and monitoring schools, as well as establishing planning cycles and deadlines.

12 - Conclusions

Over the three years of our audit, the Creative Partnerships National Office has responded positively and promptly to our recommendations and the staff at ADOs and schools as well as creative practitioners have engaged with us in a productive conversation about Creative Partnerships practice. There is comprehensive evidence that the planning and evaluation of Creative Partnerships projects has been developed and refined. We are grateful for the openness to independent audit shown by the Creative Partnerships community. We hope that the following final observations and recommendations will be acknowledged in the spirit of continual improvement as the audit team completes its work.

CCE

The Creative Partnerships Schools Planning and Evaluation Framework is widely seen by teachers, creative agents and ADO staff as necessary, and is securing largely consistent Creative Partnerships practice across the country.

- CCE should, however, continue progress in refining and streamlining reporting forms – perhaps by convening a small group of end-users - particularly to address any assertions that the forms are repetitive.

CCE has made significant progress in introducing a robust and fit-for-purpose Creative Partnerships database.

- As a matter of priority CCE should develop and disseminate large scale collations or analyses of centrally collected data through the design of database reporting functions. The resulting reports would potentially inform Creative Partnerships strategy at regional and national level, and provide evidence about the impact of Creative Partnerships. ADOs, creative agents and school staff would then begin to benefit from the database.
- CCE should continue and extend training events and programmes, particularly for creative agents.

Area Delivery Organisations:

Often offer useful feedback on schools' applications to the Creative Partnerships Programmes.

- ADOs should direct more specific advice to the creative agents who subsequently plan projects in schools, and should monitor how creative agents and schools follow that advice.

ADOs have made significant progress in developing training programmes for creative agents.

- Nevertheless, more could be done to help creative agents challenge schools by following up weaknesses in enquiry questions, planning outcomes and evidence gathering.

Many ADOs now conduct rigorous annual quality reviews of Creative Partnerships work with each of their schools. This is a useful enhancement to Creative Partnerships processes.

During our visits there was a high correlation between insightful articulations of Creative Partnerships as well as rigorous quality control processes on the one hand and the years of experience of Creative Partnerships staff on the other.

Schools

As in previous years, most schools report positively and enthusiastically about Creative Partnerships.

Nearly all schools in our sample now link their projects and enquiry questions to school improvement, development plans or their OFSTED reports and occasionally all three.

Schools report pupil participation in Creative Partnerships and 'pupil voice' much more directly and frequently than last year. There is a significant volume of evidence that pupils are productively involved in all stages of projects.

The CSDF is a broadly successful innovation for Change Schools and is working effectively in the majority of them.

- However, schools should seek to involve more staff, pupils, parents and governors, as well as the local authority and possibly local cultural organisations in discussions about the CSDF.

Only a minority of schools produce robust evidence, for example, pupil data, to support the claims they make about pupil progress and teacher development as a result of Creative Partnerships projects.

Teachers and Creative Practitioners

School co-ordinators and teachers often made detailed, thorough and comprehensive contributions to planning and report forms.

- They should focus more on analyses of the nature of creative learning and teaching, and rather less on description and assertion.

A large majority of all enquiry questions and topics in our sample were – as last year – vague, or multi-faceted. In these cases the evaluations often recorded that the project did not really address the enquiry or that the enquiry tried to address too much.

- In order to collect the evidence and test the outcomes of Creative Partnerships projects, School Co-ordinators and other teachers – assisted by creative agents - should formulate specific and precise enquiries - which can be matched by evidence - and follow them closely through project planning and evaluation.

There is a risk that the development of creative practitioners is being marginalised, possibly as an unintended consequence of the current focus on the three schools' programmes. Some ADOs noted this and are taking steps to redress the balance.

- All parties to evaluation: teachers, pupils, creative agents and creative practitioners need to ensure a balance in planning and evaluation so that creative practitioners' learning and development is given equal weighting.

References:

- CfBT (2005) *Getting Started with Networked Research Lesson Study*. National College for School Leadership.
- Dunne, N. & Haynes, A. (2007) *The Art of Looking Sideways*. Creative Partnerships, National College for School Leadership.
- Earl, L.M. & Timperley, H. (2008) *Professional Learning Conversations*. Springer.
- Foster (1999) cited in Walford, G. (2001) *Doing Qualitative Research: a personal guide to the research process*. London, Continuum.
- OFSTED (2010) *Learning: creative approaches that raise standards*. London: HMSO.
- Wood, D. et al (2007, 8) *Creative Partnerships National Evaluation Audit* Creative Partnerships, Oxford: Oxford Brookes University.
- Accessible at: <http://www.creativitycultureeducation.org/research-impact/evaluation-and-audit-of-creative-partnerships/>

Appendix A The aide memoire for visits

**CP AUDIT Visit Template 2009 (Confidential)
Visits to 6 ADOs**

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| <p>Purpose of audit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To evaluate the self-evaluation process - from planning to end project reports; are reports rigorous, fit for purpose, consistent and comparable? • Validate and disseminate regional strengths and good practice • Synthesise and interrogate common Creative Partnerships issues across the country • Challenge and support Creative Partnerships in their work • Ensure evaluation processes are serving the aims, values and objectives of Creative Partnerships |
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| Date of visit: | |
| Area Delivery Organisation (ADO): | |
| Name of Oxford Brookes auditor: | |
| Interviewees: (e.g. school co-ordinator, ADO programmer, creative agent, head, lead-teacher) | |
| Brief description of ADO e.g. when established, management structure, number of employees, number & type of schools involved (change schools, enquiry schools), distinctive local context | |
| | |
| KEY QUESTIONS | |
| 1. Who is involved (in the self-evaluation process)? | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Pupils/young learners b) teachers – | |

| | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> coordinators/lead, c) creative practitioners d) CP programmers e) senior leadership teams f) governors g) parents h) representatives of cultural organisations i) LAs j) other <p>Please comment on the extent of the participation of young learners (see 2008 audit conclusions).</p> <p>Are any stakeholders under-represented?</p> <p>What preparation did those involved receive?</p> <p>What professional development/ training has been undertaken this year? 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: CSDF, project plans, place and nature of deep conversations, end reports, other? (see in particular 2008 audit report on deep conversations) b) How were these processes managed? (Role of creative agent/role of school coordinator/role of lead teacher/role of | |

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|--|--|
| <p>creative practitioner/role of pupils?)</p> <p>c) What other information was used e.g. school data, SIPs, SEFs, SDPs, OFSTED reports?</p> <p>d) How was compliance with the requirements of the evaluation model monitored by the ADO?</p> <p>e) Are there any compliance issues? (e.g. no end point conversation, absence of project end report on database...Check against Creative Partnerships national evaluation requirements)</p> | |
| <p>3. Impact and lessons learned?</p> <p>a) Distance travelled?</p> <p>b) Evidence used to support learning of the 3 groups?</p> <p>c) Modifications to Creative Partnerships delivery?</p> <p>d) 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) Examples of good</p> | |

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|--|--|
| <p>practice, worthy of dissemination?</p> <p>c) Possible impediments to consistent use of new National Evaluation Framework?</p> <p>d) <i>(Where used) effectiveness of external evaluators (e.g. HEI, consultant, LA)?</i></p> <p>e) <i>Support and guidance from CCE/CP?</i></p> <p>NB Although these questions are primarily for the audit team, you may find it helpful to put them to the interviewees/ADO as well.</p> | |
| <p>What do ADO staff think about the Creative Partnerships National Evaluation Framework? (Include views on new database)</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p> | |
| <p>ANY OTHER ISSUES <i>Add any further reflective comments by interviewees/audit team member</i></p> | |

ADO:

Name of OB Auditor:

Are there 10 completed sets of evaluation documentation on the database? Yes / no

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| 1. What data has been uploaded and is available? (CSDFs, mid and end point conversation, end reports) | |
| 2. Is any material available for other audiences e.g. Creative Partnerships , parents, governors, pupils, LAs | |
| 3. What kinds of data does the material draw on? | |
| 4. Do any supporting documents show that the ADO is refining and developing its work in the light of evaluation? | |
| 5. Does the material add value to Creative Partnerships activity? E.g. by modelling effective evaluation, by disseminating good practice. | |

Appendix B Creative Partnerships list of pro-formas

School strand documents (April 2008) Planning and Evaluation

Section A: Overview and Guidance documents

- A1: Overview of Creative Partnerships schools programme planning and evaluation
- A2: List of documents for Creative Partnerships schools programme planning and evaluation
- A3: Enquiry Schools Planning and Evaluation Guidance
- A4: Creative Partnerships CS & SoC Planning and Evaluation Guidance

Section B: Creative School Development Framework form and descriptors

- B1: CSDF Guidance and Descriptors
- B2: CSDF Self-Assessment Form

Section C: Project Planning, Project End and Budget forms

- C1: Project Budget form
- C2: Creative Partnerships Enquiry School Project Planning form
- C3: Creative Partnerships Enquiry School Project End form
- C4: Creative Partnerships CS & SoC Project Planning form
- C5: Creative Partnerships CS & SoC Project End form

Section D: Evaluation forms

- D1: Creative Partnerships National Evaluation Framework
- D2: Schools Sample Session recording form
- D3: Creative Partnerships Enquiry Schools Project Evaluation form – end-point
- D4: Creative Partnerships CS & SoC Project Evaluation form – mid-point
- D5: Creative Partnerships CS & SoC Project Evaluation form – end-point