

# Creativity - A skill for life?

It seems that Creative Partnerships has had a reprieve. According to a recent address given by Margaret Hodge<sup>1</sup>, we can look forward to Creative Partnerships (CP) becoming a more sustainable, independent, and embedded organisation which will be charged with driving the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's 'creativity in education' agenda in a coherent and coordinated way for the foreseeable future.

This is great news as every where you look the 'Arts' are getting in on the act.

Arts projects (and the organisations providing them) are motoring despite the recent creaks and groans from the Arts Council England. Arts projects are happening in school on a level never seen before and they are catching up those young people who slip through the educational net. The 'Arts Project' is a success story and as a consequence has become something of a panacea when addressing social issues, difficult-to-deliver curriculum and the personal development of disengaged young people.

All this since the Government commissioned Policy Action Team 10 Report<sup>2</sup> (almost a decade ago) decided that participation in the Arts is a good thing.

But now there are new calls for 'Creativity' from Leitch<sup>3</sup>; we evidently need more innovation across our industries. In other words we need to learn the creative process more widely: to experiment, to accept failure as a part of the creative journey and to try again in the pursuit of originality. Are we talking about 'teaching' creativity as a 'generic skill'?

And then again, one of our very fastest growing sectors in the UK economy is the Creative Industries.

The creative industries are "those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation

of intellectual property". These have been taken to include advertising, architecture, art and antiques, crafts, design, fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software and computer services and television and radio.

British creativity is a world-class asset and creativity is no longer an add-on but an essential ingredient for success.

## Are we talking about 'teaching' creativity as a 'generic skill'?

Creative Industries in the UK generate revenues of around £112.5 billion, employ some 1.3 million people, account for over 5 per cent of GDP; their exports contribute around £10.3 billion to the balance of trade, and their output is growing at more than double the rate of the economy as a whole<sup>4</sup>.

## So what's the problem? Progression.

It seems at the moment the Arts have got the engagement of young people in the bag. They have tackled unpopular curriculum and have injected new energy into the classroom generally. They have even shown how both vocational and transferable skills can be developed through arts activity delivered by a professional artist. But the Arts (or more accurately arts providers) are still a bit clunky when considering their role in lifelong learning and crucially creative progression routes from school to college, University and beyond.

The CP4P (Creative Partners 4 Progression) project identified this gap and Aimhigher funded the first phase of a plug-in partnership with CP. Very recently, and partially as a consequence of this major national project, several key strategy documents from government, across the DIUS, DCMS and beyond, have highlighted the need for some joined up thinking between Higher Education and CP to consider and enable potential ways forward.

The National Arts Learning Network (NALN) is a HEFCE-funded lifelong learning network, set up to support students on vocational qualifications who want to progress to higher education and employment in the arts. It is comprised of specialist art, design and performing arts institutions in England, and its overall aim is to provide the Creative Industries with a diverse and continually up-skilled workforce.

As the 'Arts and Creativity in Education and Skills' agenda develops, educationalists must be astute as to how to reap the benefits associated with participation in the creative arts. However we must also be mindful of the need for sustained pathways based on progression and the investment this requires. The arts are not to be used as a bandage - just to veil the nasty bits. The arts used properly, as part of a Cultural Entitlement, can provide a portal to the economic and social prosperity we desire.

**Rosi Lister** - Executive Director, Tees Valley Arts

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### Creativity - A skill for life?

North of England Conference celebrating the dissemination of Creative Partners 4 Progression

Venue: The Sage, Gateshead

Date: 17th March 2008

For more information, please contact cp4p@teesvalleyarts.org.uk

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### Widening Participation in the Arts: What next?

The Second Annual Conference of the National Arts Learning Network

Venue: The Royal Institute of British Architects

Date: 4th and 5th February 2008

For more information, visit [www.naln.ac.uk](http://www.naln.ac.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Address given at Funding the Future, Arts & Heritage Conf.

<sup>2</sup> PAT 10 Report

<sup>3</sup> Leitch

<sup>4</sup> GONE

