The Routledge International Handbook of Creative Learning

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The grit in the oyster

Creative partners as catalysts for school reform in the UK and the US

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Long-term partnerships: CAPE and CapeUK

The Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) in the US and CapeUK in the UK are both dedicated to school improvement through long-term partnerships between schools and creative practitioners. CAPE was founded in 1993 and CapeUK in 1997. Although completely independent, the two organisations have a strong collegial relationship – regular transatlantic visits and dialogue enable sharing and refinement of practice and comparison of approaches emerging within different contexts.

CAPE in the US is a nongovernmental agency, initiated by a group of philanthropic foundations and corporations, that supports long-term partnerships among artists and arts organisations (representing all arts disciplines) and kindergarten through secondary educators and schools in Chicago, with a focus on schools in disenfranchised neighbourhoods. One of CAPE’s primary strategies is ‘arts integration’ – an approach to teaching and learning in which artists and teachers co-plan curricular work that connects arts learning and learning in other academic areas.

CapeUK is a not for profit company based in the north of England. Initially inspired by the model of sustained partnerships in the US, CapeUK explores how such long-term partnerships between schools and external agencies can bring about sustainable change in schools by influencing leadership, curriculum design and pedagogy (Cochrane and Cockett, 2007). Over the past twelve years CapeUK has supported both national and regional school-based partnerships, acting as the initial model for the national Creative Partnerships programme. Between 2008 and 2010 CapeUK was commissioned to advise government in England on creativity in education.

Both organisations work to prepare children and young people for ‘an unknowable future’ and the challenges of the twenty-first century, forming networks of schools that nurture and support the development of creativity in young people in all areas of their learning and lives. Partnerships are encouraged to move beyond the safe space of traditional arts education partnerships, where a visiting artist ‘delivers’ an experience, to a more conceptual space in which innovative approaches to pedagogy can emerge, focused on the capacities of the children, and enabling them to be active agents in the process (ibid.).
By attending to creative and peer to peer learning in an era of top-down national curriculum in England and an increased focus on testing in the United States, both models were initially working against the current of their times. Both organisations experienced similar frustrations with hierarchical curricular models that constrained the development of capacities that would sustain children and young people in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world, and both initiatives explored the links between in-school and out-of-school learning.

Creativity rhetoric in the policy environment

Over the last ten years, creativity has become increasingly prominent in policy in both countries. In the UK there has been a gradual but significant shift of policy since All Our Futures (DfES, 1999) argued that creativity is a core capacity for twenty-first century learning, defining creativity as: 'Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value'. Since then initiatives such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority Creativity (QCA) Creativity: Find It Promote It research project, the Creative Partnerships initiative and a new secondary curriculum in which the creative development of young people is a specified aim have supported schools in developing creative approaches to learning and teaching.

In the United States the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) published a report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, entitled Tough Choices or Tough Times, in 2007. The report describes a new world that depends on

a deep vein of creativity that is constantly renewing itself, and on a myriad of people who can imagine how people can use things that have never been available before, create ingenious marketing and sales campaigns, write books, build furniture, make movies, and imagine new kinds of software that will capture people’s imagination and become indispensable to millions.

(NCEE, 2007: xxiv)

School leaders, practitioners and researchers in both the US and the UK are working to develop appropriate approaches to the observation, documentation and assessment of creativity, which has been increasingly recognised as an important dimension of developing pedagogy for creative learning (HMSO, 2007; Ofsted, 2010). This effort has become increasingly urgent in the US, where more and more school reform efforts are becoming focused on ‘data driven’ teaching policy and practice.

We outline here four sets of shared principles which CAPE and CapeUK have adopted to sustain creative development within shifting, at times contradictory, policy contexts.

Shared principles

Sharing creative responses to standards and policy mandates through documentation and public discourse

The launch of CapeUK in 1998 coincided with the introduction of national literacy and numeracy strategies that directed primary schools to spend an hour a day on literacy and numeracy. Many schools cut the time spent on other subjects, leading to the charge that the curriculum had become impoverished. Although schools were advised to maintain a ‘broad and balanced curriculum’ (DfES, 2003), inevitably there was a tendency to focus on those areas which were tested, subject to scrutiny in nationally published league tables, and supported by national
guidance and waves of top-down, centrally organised and led training. A similar narrowing of the curriculum was experienced by educators in the US in response to the national *No Child Left Behind* legislation, which officially endorsed arts education but, by focusing on testing literacy and numeracy, had a chilling effect on the teaching of the arts, social studies, science and physical education (Crocco and Costigan, 2007).

Both organisations work to assist schools in responding to such policy mandates in ways that support on-going school innovation and growth. CAPE coined the term ‘radical compliance’ — a pedagogical stance in which externally imposed literacy and numeracy strategies become opportunities for exploration and creativity through enquiry-based investigation of content, and through the representation of student work processes and thinking in multiple media — an attitude of ‘uncovering’ rather than ‘covering’ content standards. Both organisations challenge the prejudice that ‘creative learning is not rigorous’ by implementing research-based approaches to teaching closely aligned with indicators of creative learning: joint productive activity, literacy across the curriculum, connecting school to students’ lives, challenging activities, and teaching through conversation and dialogue (Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence website).

Both CAPE and CapeUK are committed to sharing their investigations of teaching for creative learning with multiple audiences (peers, parents, communities, policymakers, etc.) through multiple media (print media, digital media, exhibitions, reports, presentations, performances, conferences, etc.).

The emergence of new technologies has made possible online documentation for capturing both the products and processes of creative learning. This documentation can subsequently be accessed by a broad base of teachers, artists and other stakeholders to reflect upon and share effective teaching practices, and to explore rich and varied portraits of student learning in action.

*Layered research* involving practitioners in collaboration with professional researchers

Both CAPE and CapeUK support sustained partnerships among schools and creative practitioners as a mechanism for transforming schools into creative spaces for learning, and both have discovered that a key to that transformation process involves re-visioning teachers, artists and learners as co-researchers exploring, representing, and re-representing their teaching and learning. Both, independently, initiated a practice of *action research* (educators developing *enquiry* questions about their practice, and then systematically collecting data from their practice to answer their questions in order to share insights with their peers and the field). CAPE theorises that arts integration provides a wider range of languages for students and teachers to investigate and represent their thinking, thereby creating a richer and more nuanced data set for action research on creative learning, and greater engagement by teachers in rethinking how they teach.

The particular innovation that both CAPE and CapeUK had implemented was in not only conducting action research as a regular part of on-going professional development, but also creating a system of ‘layered research’ — in which practitioner research is informed by and informs research conducted by professional researchers studying both creative learning in students and teacher growth as educators for creativity.

Such an enquiry focus also seems to have a particular impact in arts-based partnerships, where the energy can tend to focus on the excitement of project delivery rather than interventions which have the potential to lead to long-term developments in pedagogy or practice.

To help schools and external partners think through what kind of partnership was most helpful for them at a particular stage of their development CapeUK outlined a continuum of
arts partnerships practice ranging from a visiting artist running a one-off project in a school to the process of enquiry-based practice (see Table 37.1).

Analysis of the Creativity Action Research Awards (CARA) – a national CapeUK-led programme of over 300 small scale action research partnerships between a teacher, a creative practitioner and a research mentor – suggested that the enquiry process itself, when supported by an external mentor maintaining an enquiry focus, was a powerful driver of change and sustainability. The impact on professional development and shifts in organisational thinking were found to be more significant than had been originally anticipated from a relatively small investment of time and resources (Craft et al., 2007). Enquiry was emerging as the ‘grit in the oyster’ of effective creative partnerships.

Explicit attention to what is meant by creative learning

At the heart of the enquiry was the ‘grit’ of being explicit about what we mean by creativity. If we want to develop the creative capacities of children and young people, then we have to be explicit about what we mean by that. In 2003 the QCA in the UK published a simple set of indicators which characterised children’s behaviours when being creative. These were:

questioning and challenging; making connections and seeing relationships; envisaging what might be; exploring ideas, keeping options open; reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes.

(QCA, 2003)

Although this didn’t include some of the more challenging and uncomfortable aspects of creativity, such as risk-taking and handling uncertainty, its simplicity was helpful to many teachers and practitioners in assessing the impact of their practice. Cape UK adapted these indicators for use within the CARA programme to stimulate teachers and practitioners to focus on the developing creativity of the young person, rather than design of a creative project or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 37.1 From artist into schools to layered research – a continuum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artist into schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher apprenticeship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint working</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enquiry based practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layered research</td>
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</table>

Source: Adapted from guidance developed by P. McGuigan, for CapeUK.
activity, and to support the conceptual shift from ‘teaching creatively’ to ‘teaching for creativity’. These were further adapted in the US to drive reflection in the CAPE partnerships.

Long-term analysis of children’s engagement in Creative Partnerships programmes suggests that when actively engaged in creative learning (Raw, 2009) children will demonstrate a range of behaviours, including: fascination, risk-taking, confidence, divergent thinking, seeing and solving problems, co-learning, and improved language and verbal reasoning. Creating learning contexts in which these capacities are nurtured in children and young people is central to CAPE and CapeUK’s practice.

Professional development incorporating enquiry

Practitioners engaging in action research is a powerful means of professional development (Cordingley et al., 2003; Doherty and Harland, 2001; Furlong and Salisbury, 2005). Research into CAPE’s methodology strongly suggests that the value added by integrating the arts into teacher action research rests in the capacity of creative partnerships to accelerate the effectiveness of professional development in transforming teacher practice (Burnaford, 2007).

CAPE and CapeUK both chose to provide professional development to teachers and artists together, seeing the discourse between teachers and artists during the process as perhaps the most powerful element of professional learning. Teaching for creative learning involves an element of risk, exploration and uncertainty that may lead to friction between creative and sometimes experimental approaches and the more regulated nature of education systems. However, such friction can be productive. The differences in approaches to teaching and learning between teachers and creative practitioners form a generative tension that expands the practice of both, creating a safe space in which both teachers and creative practitioners can try out new teaching strategies that challenge the habits of all partners, and make room for student initiative (Jeffery and Ledgard, 2009).

A cascade approach to professional learning, in which a strategy is presented to a selected group of practitioners who are then responsible for sharing it more widely within a school community or network, is unlikely to be effective in supporting creativity or innovation (Elmore, 1996). For teachers to be able to support children’s creative development, they need to have an understanding of a creative process which can only be developed by individuals experiencing and practising being creative themselves – or exercising the ‘muscles of creativity’ (Claxton, 2000). Effective professional development for the teaching of creative learning tends to combine the following:

- immersion in a creative process – in which participants experience risk-taking, facing and working through challenges, working collaboratively and towards an outcome or presentation of some kind;
- analysis of this personal experience of creativity, relating this to implications for teaching and learning;
- designing, applying and reflecting upon approaches to creative learning with children and young people;
- documenting new practices and insights, and sharing those findings with audiences that matter to teachers and creative practitioners through a variety of media – what CAPE calls ‘going public’.

Enquiry is an essential ingredient of this process. Teachers and partners develop their own questions about a compelling issue in their own context, but alongside this the core question in
relation to creativity is: ‘What is it that as a teacher leader I am doing to support the children’s creative development? How do I know that they are becoming creative?’

**Principles in practice: layered research in action**

The following description of nurturing networks of enquiry is drawn from the US experience, but the approach of generating on-going discussion and exploration with practitioners is common to both organisations.

‘Veteran’ CAPE artists and classroom teachers have been engaged in enquiry with the CAPE staff and the CAPE research team for many years (Burnaford, 2007; Burnaford and Aprill, 2008). The partners are now being challenged to discuss how their arts integration work reflects creative thinking, and how that creativity can be documented. Partner artist and teacher teams were introduced to indicators of creative thinking based on the model developed by the QCA and adapted by CapeUK (Cochrane and Cockett, 2007).

Across the CAPE network, teachers and artists are asked to discuss and document how they, as artists and teachers, might see these indicators manifested in children and young people. They are also asked to brainstorm how they as adults in classrooms might intentionally teach to scaffold these indicators of creativity. These cross-school discussions are useful for teachers in stimulating reflection with their colleagues back in their own schools (see Box 37.1).

Teachers and artists are then asked how they might illustrate or provide evidence of creativity in one or more of these areas. Their comments contribute to CAPE’s efforts to document and describe creativity in arts integration projects. Other data sources include: student interviews conducted by the research team; culminating performance and exhibit artefacts; and online documentation of student, teacher and artist work in schools. Finding patterns across classrooms and grade levels concerning student thinking and learning is one credible and rigorous response to the essential question, ‘What are students learning through arts integration?’ Researchers in arts education have consistently called for assessment that is authentic and responsive to the arts

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**Box 37.1 Veteran Partnerships Professional Development Discussion Questions**

What does ‘learning to be creative’ mean in your CAPE project work?

What do students do when they are being creative?

What do you do when you are feeling or being creative?

Some questions to guide your conversation:

- When do these creative moments happen most often?
- Under what circumstances?
- How do artists and teachers actively teach for these moments to happen?
- Can you recall when those moments of creative energy have happened in your CAPE work? Were they planned?
- How can you work toward making these moments happen more often in your classes?

Because we are trying to document learning this year, how might you share these creative moments on your documentation template? What might illustrate or provide evidence of creativity in one or more of these areas for your students?
themselves. This investigation of creativity and creative thinking is an attempt to further define such assessment.

Engagement of the participants in the design of the research initiative is essential to the continuing enrichment of the projects and the learning of the adults and the students involved. Discussions among teachers and practitioners underscore the importance of awareness of the 
creative process in arts education, and provide essential data for the research process.

The discussions are analysed by the CAPE researchers, and then fed back to the teacher/artist partnerships, enabling them to build on their practice (see Table 37.2).¹

**Partnerships as a sustainable structure for creative school reform**

The dialogue between CapeUK and CAPE in the US has validated both organisations’ commitment to supporting creativity in schools by organising professional communities that build teacher, artist and student capacity to ask hard questions, and to reflect on their work in an open-ended but systematic manner. Both the supportive structures and the generative tensions between practitioners in well-facilitated partnerships stimulate the necessary risk-taking and the crucial energy needed to sustain the on-going professional development and collective action research necessary for meaningful change at scale.

A growing body of research is showing that when effectively managed and implemented, creative partnerships have a positive impact on children’s learning, motivation, judgement, and ability to engage with concepts and complex reasoning. A significant contribution could be made by further comparative analysis of:

- methods for investigation and examination of student work;
- approaches to analysing progression in creativity;
- what the practice of teaching for creativity looks like and what approaches to professional development support this;
- how creativity manifests itself in different domains of learning or subject disciplines.

The challenge that both CAPE in US and CapeUK face is: ‘How does one scale up an initiative based on intense inter-relationships?’ Guidance documents and audit processes are unlikely to drive a process of change. The target culture has created a climate in which practitioners from all spheres become adept at satisfying audit requirements and apparently complying whilst resisting real change. Change in teaching and learning comes about when practitioners develop an integrated, profound and authentic understanding of pedagogy for creativity based on co-constructed learning. Professional learning and enquiry are key to this process.

The results of CAPE Chicago’s veteran partnership creativity studies and the findings of the CapeUK Creativity Action Research Awards both speak to the power of effective partnerships to scaffold creative thinking. The on-going collaborative reflection made possible by sustained partnerships generates collective enquiry, resulting in practice-based school reform – the only form of school reform that actually makes a difference for student learning.

Shifting from an industrial economy model of education, which tended to devalue creativity, to an information economy model of education, which seeks to foreground creativity, requires scaffolds and engines to propel and assist the transformation. What are our sustainable natural resources that can serve as these scaffolds and engines for creativity? It is the belief of CAPE and CapeUK that sustained partnerships make possible continuous innovation and creative thinking through on-going dialogue among creative practitioners (who are eternal ‘problem-seekers’), educators (who are eternal stewards of learners’ development) and the learners themselves.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creativity in student thinking: Data collection and analysis categories</th>
<th>Veteran partnership outcomes by indicators</th>
<th>Future considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Questioning, challenging</td>
<td>Attention to compelling inquiry questions and an Action Research stance by adults increased opportunity for students to challenge and question. Teams that focused on student ownership had more student work that questioned or challenged the norm. Questioning and challenging was related to the degree of student decision making</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for artists and teachers to showcase where and when students make decisions. Design documentation to incorporate student questions. Attend to student inquiry questions, not just as a frame for the unit, but as entities to be answered during and at the end of the unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Connecting, seeing relationships</td>
<td>Connections framed in student work appeared in four categories: 1) Linking recognized extreme opposites 2) Highlighting dueling symbol systems 3) Juxtaposing unlikely/unexpected pairs 4) Introducing new symbol systems</td>
<td>Encourage teachers to take the lead on connecting arts and non-arts documentation of learning. Share the four categories of creative connections and ask teams how they address them in their units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Envisaging what might be, Imagining, Innovating</td>
<td>The CAPE methodology (working with the organizing principle of Big Ideas) encouraged conceptual thinking Teachers who explicitly asked “What if” encourage students to imagine and be innovative.</td>
<td>Return to the Big Idea and encourage innovative ways to deal with concepts. Use documentation of past projects as examples of innovation, engaging teachers, artists and students in discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Coping with uncertainty</td>
<td>Requires process documentation in order to capture; student work may not yield evidence of how and when students deal with uncertainty during units. The more student-directed the learning, the more opportunity students had to cope with uncertainty and solve their own problems creatively.</td>
<td>Build documentation opportunities around in-process work, not just end-of-unit requirements. View documentation as a place for feedback, discussion and ongoing deliberation on dilemmas, rather than a static repository. Provide documentation opportunities for illustrating when students direct, make decisions, and make choices.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>e. Reflecting critically</td>
<td>Artist and teacher reflections were documented; student reflections were seldom documented. Student reflections tended to be unit evaluation statements rather than critique/feedback statements that indicated creative thinking about the units. Documenting class discussions was a promising tool for showing evidence of reflecting critically as well as collaboratively.</td>
<td>Provide professional development on critique and feedback approaches for use with students. Work on questions and possible approaches to deepen and embed processes of critique in projects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Categories adapted from Cochrane, P. and Cockett, M. (2007) by Gail Burnaford for Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education
Although external agencies with a strong commitment to enquiry, layered research and long-term sustained investment in professional development can have a significant influence on individual teacher practice and pupils’ experience, sustained and systemic change is ultimately dependent on the climate of leadership within each school. The capacity of the head teacher or school leader to act as the ‘lead enquirer’, nurturing and enabling partnerships, supporting others to engage in reflective practice, creating space for experimentation and teacher leadership, and pursuing enquiry themselves is key to school reform.

### Tables summarizing CAPEUK and CAPE principles for creative classrooms

**Table 37.3** Long-term partnerships that share their creative responses to standards and policy mandates through documentation and public discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Teaching and Learning</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of external creative partners</td>
<td>Short-term, one-off visits, workshops, performances</td>
<td>Long term collaborative relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher role in curriculum design</td>
<td>Teachers as receivers of pre-designed teaching and learning strategies</td>
<td>Teacher as co-creators and leaders of teaching and learning strategies to scaffold creative learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The audiences for teacher work</td>
<td>The classroom as sole audience for teachers’ work</td>
<td>The school, the community, the profession as audiences for teachers’ work on teaching for creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiences for student work products:</td>
<td>Teachers as sole audience for students’ work</td>
<td>Peers, communities, the world of real work as audiences for students’ work as creative learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representations of student and teacher work</td>
<td>Reliance on display of final products and grades as representations of learning</td>
<td>Documentation of both creative process and products through multiple media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 37.4** Layered research (involving practitioners in collaborations with professional researchers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Teaching and Learning</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of professional researchers</td>
<td>Research on teachers and creative partners</td>
<td>Research with teachers and creative partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of practitioner action research</td>
<td>Action research limited to professional development for practitioners</td>
<td>Practitioner action research informing professional research, and professional research informing practitioner action research on teaching for creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 37.5 Professional development incorporating enquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Teaching and Learning</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional development content</td>
<td>Predesigned teaching strategies in delivery system model</td>
<td>Enquiry into strategies for teaching for creativity as part of a layered research design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receivers of professional development</td>
<td>'One size fits all' professional development delivered to select teachers, separate from professional development delivered to select creative practitioners</td>
<td>Teams of teachers and creative practitioners who enquire together to develop original approaches to creative learning for their whole school contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development provision</td>
<td>Professional development to practitioners by 'experts' external to the school or partnership</td>
<td>Professional development between enquiring practitioners that encourages professional community and teacher and creative practitioner leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 37.6 Explicit attention to what is meant by creative learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of teaching and learning</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student agency in learning</td>
<td>Students as receivers of 'instruction'</td>
<td>Students investigating content as creative thinkers taking action in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of learning and teaching process</td>
<td>Attention to creative teaching</td>
<td>Attention to teaching for creativity and students' behaviours, attitudes and habits of mind when being creative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note

1 For a similar analysis of process in the UK, see Raw (2009) and McGuigan et al. (2005).

References


Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (1999) *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*, London: DfES.


**Websites**

CapeUK out of school hours learning programme, [http://www.outofschoolhours.org.uk/](http://www.outofschoolhours.org.uk/)

Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence, University of California, Berkeley Graduate School of Education, [http://crede.berkeley.edu/research/crede/standards.html](http://crede.berkeley.edu/research/crede/standards.html)

Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), [www.capeweb.org](http://www.capeweb.org)

Creative Partnerships, [www.creative-partnerships.com](http://www.creative-partnerships.com)

Creative Partnerships in Education (CapeUK), [www.capeuk.org](http://www.capeuk.org)