

“ Does teaching creativity across the curriculum lead to young people who are better prepared for their future in a “ changing workforce?”

Penryn Creativity Collaboratives: Preparing for a Creative Future

Year One Report: Question, Challenge & Explore

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Authors:
**Ursula Crickmay,
Sarah Childs,
Associate Professor Kerry Chappell**

**School of Education, University of Exeter
Penryn College**

Contact:
**creativitycollaboratives@penryn-college.cornwall.sch.uk
Sarah Childs - Penryn Creativity Collaboratives Lead
Penryn College 01326 372379**



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of Exeter**



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Executive Summary



Creativity Collaboratives is a national pilot programme of eight clusters of English schools who are working together to test innovative practices in teaching for creativity, sharing learning to facilitate system-wide change. The programme is funded by Arts Council England with the generous support of Freelands Foundation, and launched in October 2021. Creativity Collaboratives: Penryn Partnership [CC:PP] is one of the pilot programmes, and over three years is focussed on exploring the central question:

“Does teaching creativity across the curriculum lead to young people who are better prepared for their future in a changing workforce?”

The partnership is led by Penryn College, an 11-16 school on the south Cornish coast, and incorporates the existing Penryn Partnership (the College, its 8 feeder primary schools and 2 Area Resource Base units), a Creativity Network that comprises a group of industry and cultural partners, and the research partner, the School of Education, University of Exeter. In Year 1 we set out to ‘*Question, Challenge and Explore*’, working towards creating a ‘*Preparing for a Creative Future*’ framework by addressing three questions:

RQ1: Why are creative skills needed in a changing workforce?

RQ2: What creative skills are needed to be developed by Cornish students to become better prepared?

RQ3: How do we best prepare teachers for teaching for creativity?

Methods included a literature review, focus groups, gathering post-16 destination data, interviews, meeting notes, existing pedagogic framework synthesis and the Creativity Collaboratives baseline survey developed by Durham University, alongside a similar survey for industry and cultural partners. An initial continuing professional day [CPD] day for teachers also occurred, as did the launch of the Action Research Project that will form the focus of year 2. Following appropriate transcription of qualitative data, thematic analysis was undertaken, with Durham University providing pre-analysed statistical insights into the survey data for the partnership which was then summarised as appropriate to our research questions. All ethical procedures and permissions were carried out through the University of Exeter Ethics Committee, and University of Durham for secondary survey data.

Literature Review and Ensuing Framework

The review summarises understandings from both the literature and industry reports:

An Uncertain Future

The 21st century context is widely characterized by uncertainty and change in interconnected social, political, environmental, technological and economic domains. Commentators identify drivers of change including: climate crises; innovations in science and technology; global connectivity leading to increasingly integrated global labour markets and increased uncertainty; changes in the world population changing the nature of careers. It is therefore impossible to predict future skills, meaning there is a need for continuous adaptation.

What Skills Are Needed For a Changing Workforce?

Our brief synthesis combines the predictions of a selection of key reports and follows the skills groupings outlined in the OECD Learning Framework 2030 (OECD, 2018): cognitive and metacognitive; social and emotional; physical and practical.

Why is Creativity Needed?

Arguments from the Durham Commission report are synthesized with perspectives from the literature to demonstrate why creativity features so highly in the skills demanded for the future workforce:

• ***Creativity and the Economy:*** for industry creativity is promoted for change through the facilitation of flexibility and adaptability; it is seen as crucial for a knowledge-based economy, and for economic development; creativity and technology are seen as ripe for new innovations; creativity and the creative industries are also highlighted as key.

• ***Creativity for the Future Workforce Beyond Economic Growth:*** globalisation, ecological destruction and climate change compel us to consider the value of creativity for the future beyond economic utility. Two key areas are creativity and sustainability, and creativity and wellbeing.

The Cornish Context:

The largest industry sector in Cornwall is agriculture, forestry and fishing, followed by construction, and then professional, scientific and technical industries. Cornwall has a higher proportion of businesses with a low turnover (less than £50,000) than the UK as a whole, and fewer businesses with a turnover of £1m or more. Cornwall is in the most deprived decile for both the income and employment scales for England. It is host to over 4,800 of the 1.4 million Creative Industries jobs in the UK, with its long heritage in the arts including Falmouth University. The Creative Industries are seen as a potential growth area for the UK.

All of These Logics should and can be Critiqued in the Context of the CC:PP.

With creativity an inherently change-based process, there is potential for young people to respond to workforce need by acquiring creative skills, but also have the ambition to contribute to shaping Cornwall's creative and entrepreneurial workforce.

Defining Creative Skills:

Research has shown that teachers often find it hard to define creativity or to recognise it in students. We have therefore identified producing a definition of creative skills as a priority. Our report draws on a range of rhetorics of creativity; and notes our intention to recognise it in every discipline. We acknowledge key historical definitions from the NACCCE report and the Durham Commission. We have synthesised these understandings together with other key creativity theories (Possibility Thinking, Wise Humanising Creativity, Posthumanising Creativity, Five Dimensional Model of Creativity, the Australian Curriculum model, the UK Qualifications and Curriculum Authority Framework) to produce a draft Penryn Partnership Model of Creative Skills structured as follows:



Findings for RQ1

Why Are Creative Skills Needed in a Changing Workforce?

Findings showed pertinent discussions of the particular creative skills needed for a Cornish workforce, and broadly reflected the literature review themes. The wider context of the needs of the workforce were thematised as follows: creativity for change, creativity and wellbeing, creativity and sustainability, creativity and collaboration, and creativity and communication. The needs of specific parts of the workforce were articulated within the themes: creativity and the knowledge-based economy, creativity and innovations in science and technology, and creativity and the creative industries. Themes that did not emerge are also notable: global interconnectivity was not discussed, nor was diversity or the diversification of the workforce; wellbeing was only mentioned by one child.

Findings for RQ2

What Creative Skills are Needed to be Developed by Cornish Students to Become Better Prepared?

The data collected from the focus groups and survey of industry and cultural partners was analysed using the 'Creative Skills Framework' as presented in the literature review as a thematic structure. The majority of the comments made by participants related well to the framework, but some data fell into other areas, including: associating creative skills with specific subjects and types of activity, primarily with the arts; creativity was often described in terms of problem-solving skills, as well as making connections; creativity was seen as contributing to young people connecting to the world around them, to the environment, and to seeing the bigger picture; it was closely connected with transdisciplinarity. These emergent themes and other RQ2 analysis were used to develop the Creative Skills Framework. It is important to note no one skill is more important, and that the five skills meld together to identify creativity in the CC:PP, at the end of Year 1, as follows:



Dialogue and Collaboration

Drawing in notions of dialogue, questioning, communicating and collaborating, in both verbal and embodied ways. Features of this skill are:

- *Posing and responding to questions, including finding and solving problems.*
- *Working individually, collaboratively and within a community.*
- *Negotiating difference, responding appropriately to others' ideas.*



Honing and Developing an Idea

This combines the skills needed to develop creative ideas, incorporating aspects of self-reflection together with development of techniques and understanding of the rules, and the persistence needed to progress creative ideas and actions. Features of this skill are:

- **Reflection:** *analysing, evaluating and considering alternatives.*
- *Understanding the rules and consequences of different kinds of creative action, developing the techniques needed to progress.*
- **Persistence:** *sticking with difficulty, tolerating the unknown, crafting and improving work.*



Empowered Action

Foregrounding pupils' own agency in creative action, as a skill this includes the ability to take risks and question accepted ideas, the capacity to be immersed, and the ability to act on creative ideas. Features of this skill are:

- **Risk taking:** *challenging assumptions, making mistakes, delivering surprising ideas.*
- **Immersion:** *being immersed in activity and focusing, concentrating.*
- **Taking action:** *being a self-determined, active learner, putting ideas into action.*



Being Imaginative and Playful

This is the ability to utilise imagination, to improvise playfully, and to generate and try out possibilities: as with possibility thinking, it is the ability to go beyond an understanding of 'what is' to consider instead 'what might be'. Features of this skill are:

- **Play:** *improvising (responding on the spot), trying things out, purposefully playing, being open-ended.*
- **Imagination:** *going beyond the obvious with curiosity, considering different perspectives.*
- **Considering possibilities:** *asking, what if?*



Generating New Ideas that Matter

This includes the ability to combine innovation with critical attention to the consequences of ideas, considering the ethical impact of creative actions, and understanding diverse values. Features of this skill are:

- **Innovation:** *exploring / generating ideas that are new (to the student).*
- *Considering the ethical consequences of creative ideas and actions.*
- *Understanding diverse values and how they matter differently.*

This process concluded in the development of a Preparing for a Creative Future Draft Framework which identifies progression through the five key creative skills from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4 – this is available in the main body of the report.

Findings for RQ3

How Do We Best Prepare Teachers for Teaching for Creativity?

We developed a framework for teaching for creativity which was synthesized from two prior creative pedagogies reviews:

Empowerment, Autonomy and Agency:

- Learners and teachers both have a sense of agency and are allowed to express themselves.
- Students are empowered to act independently and with agency (exerting power), developing and trying out their own ideas.

Risk, Immersion and Play:

- Teaching/ facilitation creates space for these three processes to occur.
- A trusting space is developed in which mistakes are possible and failure can be accepted.

Possibilities:

- Multiple possibilities are allowed both in terms of thinking and spaces.
- 'What if' questions are used to narrow or broaden these possibilities.

Generating and Exploring Ideas:

- There is a climate of openness – a high degree of acceptance of children's ideas.
- Tensions between openness and structure – a need to balance openness with structure to support learning.
- A sense of both stepping back and stepping in, to balance control and freedom.

Individual, Collaborative and Communal Activities for Change:

- Co-constructing teaching and learning in relationships.
- Group work and collaborating (recognised as real life skill).
- Dialogue – between people, disciplines, creativity and identity, and ideas; acknowledging embodiment and difference and allowing for conflict and irreconcilable difference.

Problem Solving

- Using real problems to motivate and engage learners.
- Transdisciplinarity – responding to real-world problems by integrating different ways of thinking, including knowing that (propositional knowledge), knowing how (practical knowledge) and knowing this (aesthetic or felt knowledge).

Ethics and Trusteeship:

- Learners and teachers consider the ethics of their creative processes and products.
- They are guided in their decision-making by what matters to them as a community, acting as 'trustees' of that decision-making and its outcomes.

Professional Wisdom:

- Teacher creativity – as background presence, model and source of authenticity, or strong force, underpinning both teaching creatively and teaching for creativity.
- Common educational tensions and dilemmas of accountability/assessment, marketisation and resource/time pressures are acknowledged and navigated creatively.

Data Analysis Related to RQ3 Showed that:

Teaching for creativity can be grounded in this creative pedagogies synthesis as a starting point for understanding the teacher/student creative relationship in Year 2.

What we know about how teaching for creativity is currently understood in the partnership: teaching for creativity is perceived by many to be taught through the arts subjects. Additional subjects such as technology, English and PE were also often cited, where they could explore creativity using their imagination, innovating and thinking creatively to solve problems. It was felt that both strong subject knowledge and skills are required for creative thinking to occur. The industry and creative partners championed creativity beyond the arts and suggested that examples of creativity in action would be useful outside of traditionally creative subjects.

How is teaching for creativity currently implemented: Staff and senior leader responses highlighted the challenges around the current implementation of teaching for creativity. Teacher time, budgets and teachers' skills were identified as recurring barriers. Students were able to articulate the pedagogies used across their schools, including for example exploring possibilities and solving problems in maths.

Senior leaders and staff identified key structures and approaches for developing teaching and learning within which creativity might be facilitated: National Curriculum based; focused on deep learning; distributed leadership structures; curriculum maps and pathways; primary level topic-based curriculum; communality of approach across key stages; developing practice through in-school training days, day-to-day learning and resources; using staff meetings, INSET days, governors' meetings and CPD across Multi-Academy Trusts.

Penryn Partnership colleagues shared the following steps to best prepare teachers: continued sharing of existing best practice; exploring together a shared creativity definition, securing a language for learning leading to a clarity around the teaching for creativity in schools; sharing resources and sharing research; including senior leaders in action research to deepen understanding through a research-informed approach before sharing and building into whole school CPD offer.

An aspiration is to develop a matching pedagogies framework to complement the skills progression outlined in the 'Preparing for a Creative Future Draft Framework' above.

Implications

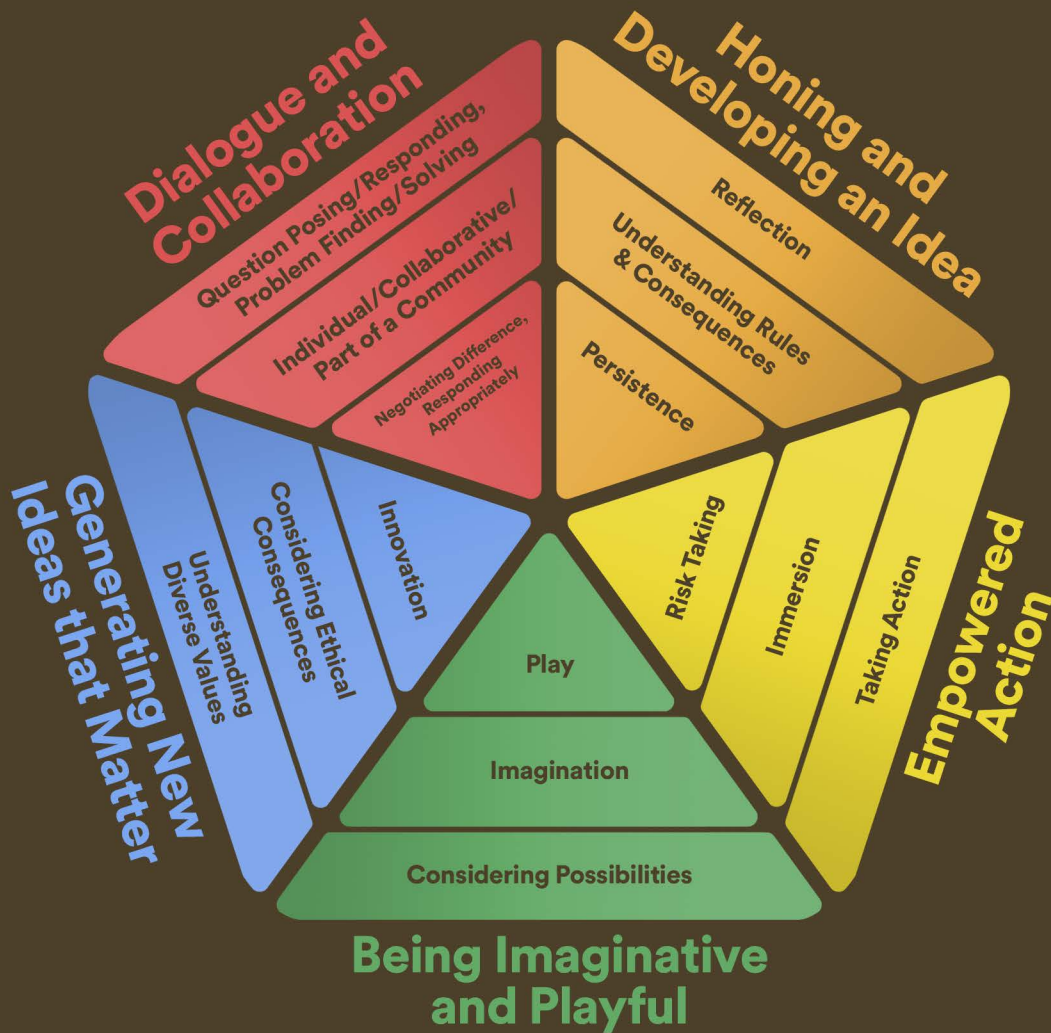
The most important implications from across the report are:

- The team are confident in Year 2 to apply the combined logic of the literature review and data analysis to underpin the refined creative skills framework and to use the creative pedagogies synthesis as a starting point for the Action Research.
- Awareness was lacking around the importance of creative skills for the climate crisis and wellbeing, areas which could be developed across the CC:PP.
- Creative skills for innovation and growth in science, technology, engineering, small businesses and the creative industries are worthy of further attention.
- Expanding the understanding of creativity as relating to learning across the curriculum is an issue for the project to address.
- It is helpful to note staff and senior leaders' awareness of the barriers to creativity; and their insights into existing supportive structures for Action Research development in year 2, and the Ensuing embedding and growing of its outcomes in year 3.
- In writing the report it became apparent that it would be helpful to understand Penryn College alumni's progression routes post 16 and further education.

Creative Skills

PENRYN PARTNERSHIP

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To read the full report please visit:

Crickmay, U. Childs, S. Chappell, K. (2023).

Preparing for a Creative Future: Year One Report Question, Challenge and Explore.

<https://penryn-college.cornwall.sch.uk/creativity-collaboratives/>