

That's Entertainment? How teachers represent their work with CP artists

Presentation presented at the Discourse Power and Resistance Conference

Manchester Metropolitan University 2008

This presentation refers to the work of the Creative School Change Project, managed by the Universities of Nottingham and Keele between 2006 and 2008. The project aimed to explore how schools have understood and mobilized Creative Partnerships (CP) to construct school change of various kinds. To do so it takes account of the relationship between schools, CP regions and national CP policy, and, centrally, looks at the processes through which CP has become embedded, in a range of schools. The research team consisted of Pat Thomson, Christine Hall, Ken Jones, Naksika Alexiadou, Susan Jones, Jane McGregor, Lisa Russell, Ethel Sanders and the author.

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Its just one of the sad mistakes that sort of surrounds the arts - that it's just entertainment...

(Teacher, Acacia Primary School)

Redesigning the teacher: an über-teacher in the making?

At the national Creative Partnerships conference in November 2006, a student film, *System Upgrade*, opened the conference in which three children are shown to visit various classrooms and encounter various clichés of 'old school' such as a teacher wearing a mortar board and threatening a cane and classrooms composed of desks in rows. The children retreat to a basement and switch on a computer which provides various questions relating to what their ideal school might look like. In this scenario, the role of the teacher in elucidating children's' desires and needs is replaced by a computer. The young people are offered various pieces of advice by the computer on how to design space for learning (e.g. '*the use of music is an aid to learning*') and how to think about '*resources*' which could be used in many areas of the curriculum. The computer asks them '*who would you like to be taught by?*' and a comic sequence ensues which shows a prospective teacher being advertised for a teaching job by playing out various roles (multitalented sportsman, comic, dancer, musician). They all agree, computer and humans, that it would be useful to other skills to come into schools to show different perspectives, offer new approaches to learning and provide a range of stimulating educational opportunities. *Teaching will never go back to chalk and talk* was a commonly heard aphorism during that conference, and indeed, during the research for this project, the implication being that teachers may now be able to address many more different learning styles in the classroom due to the extra skills they have developed by working with artists was often encountered. As artist-catalysed, *über-teacher* they are expected to deal with every need, enquiry, learning style, attitude and behaviour. But is this the only scenario that teachers are faced with in their relationships with artists? Might other scenarios exist in which teachers are able to resist and subvert the *system upgrade* which seems to flourishing within contemporary school cultures?

Creative Partnerships: the policy terrain

The Education Reform Act of 1988 and subsequent educational policy reforms since 1997 have led to considerable contested discourses on the identity of teachers. On the one hand, some argue that teachers have become passive, deskilled technicians, shorn of agency and professional judgement whose function is to 'deliver the curriculum'; others see these contemporary reforms as the means to reskill teachers, making them 'fit for purpose' for 21st century educational requirements. (Fielding, 2000; Fielding, 1996; Jeffrey and Woods, 1996; Hannon, 2004.) This paper intends to explore the deskilling-reskilling relationship via a focus on the educational initiative funded largely by the Arts Council, Creative Partnerships (CP).

This paper uses data drawn from interviews with head teachers, teachers and other education staff from 40 schools involved in the Creative School Change project to identify how these policy movements play out on the development of relationships between visiting artists and resident teachers. It will demonstrate that a deficit model of the technicised teacher which places the artist as a 'special one' who can provide a portal to reconfigured relationships, enhancement of skills and elaborated expertise is common place in many

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schools. However, it will also propose that the CP programme has led to an alternative model of teacher - artist engagement in which teachers approach the prospective relationship from a position of strength, competency and agency. The CP programme doesn't only reskill teachers with techniques, it more importantly allows for - perhaps inadvertently - for teacher to reconfigure or rediscover their critical thinking capacities.

It places these findings in the context of work undertaken by Hall and Thomson (2007), Ledgard (2003), Pringle (2002), Griffiths (2008), Galton (2006), Stronach et al, (2002), House (2000); Hextall, Gewirtz, Cribb and Mahony (2007); and the TDA Professional Standards for Teachers (2007). This alternative model allows for the work of the teacher - artist relationship to shift from '*the sad mistake*' of mere entertainment to significant enrichment for all parties: educators, children and artists. It thus suggests that there now exists a significant space for change within school practices that have for a long period been subject to close regulation.

Redesigning, reskilling or deskilling? Playing out policy in the classroom

In referring to the article, *Why No pedagogy in England?* (Simon, 1981) in his article *Still no pedagogy? Principle, pragmatism and compliance in primary education* (Alexander, 2004), Alexander argues that educational discourse in English primary schools has *tended to make pedagogy subsidiary to curriculum* which means that teaching essentially has become a process of judgement rather than:

the wider sphere of morally purposeful activity, of which teaching is a part, which we call education – teachers become technicians who implement the educational ideas and procedures of others rather than professionals who think about these matters for themselves.

(Alexander, 2004: 11)

The concept that teachers have become more like technicians in their practice in contrast to a view of them as professionals echoes the view that teachers have become reskilled in their practice since the onset of the National Curriculum in the later 1980s and the implementation of education reforms since 1997 (Stronach et al, 2002; Fielding, 2000: 53; Fielding 1996, Jeffrey and Woods, 1996: 325, House, 2000).

This view is however contested by Hannon at the launch of FutureSight at the International Schooling for Tomorrow conference in September 2004, which, in presenting a description for educational reform thus:

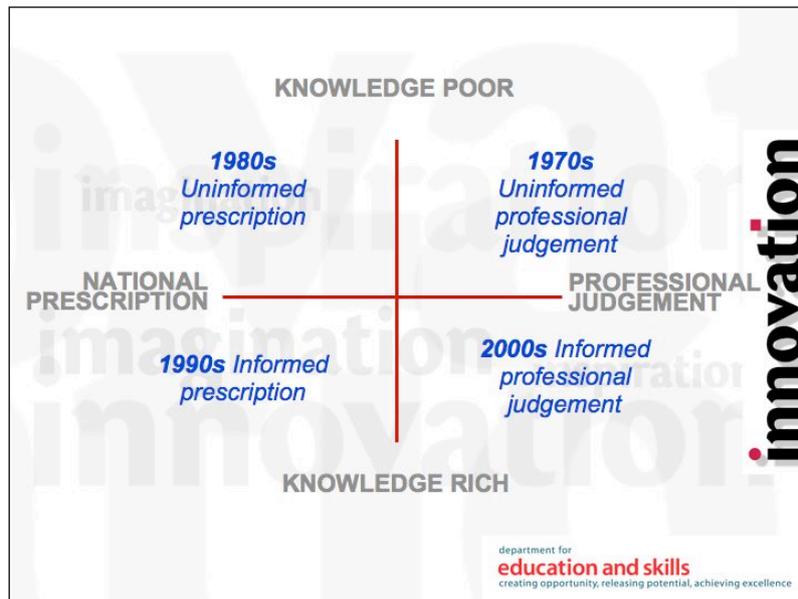
Our goal is to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the system. We will do this by building capacity and providing flexibility at the front line, backed by an intelligent accountability framework and by targeted intervention to deal with underperformance.

(Hannon, 2004)

demonstrates the terms of current policy discourse about 'reskilling' teachers, within Barber's model of contemporary education reform, This model suggests that development has been characterised from a shift from uninformed professional judgement through uninformed prescription to informed prescription to informed professional judgement: informed that is by DCFS-

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approved evidence-based research, rather than by some notion of autonomous professional judgment (see figure below):



It is within these deskilling / reskilling discourses that CP was launched in 2002. Charged with aiming *to develop the skills of teachers and their ability to work with creative practitioners*, the success of the CP programme thus hinges upon effective working relationships between school 'insiders', such as teachers or teaching assistants, being established with 'outsiders' to those schools such as artists or other creative practitioners. Whilst the CP initiative is significantly less prescriptive than the National Literacy Strategy or other national initiatives, this lack of prescription has enabled a startling diverse range of practices to be established under the CP brand. This paper attempts to identify the spectrum of practice that flourishes within that brand and discuss what effects different practices have upon the deskilling / reskilling agenda.

Alternatives to the skills obsessed agenda: why is this necessary?

The very diversity of the CP programme means that the clinically efficient model of the Hannon / Barber agenda only partially helps an increased understanding in what's happening with CP-encouraged relationships between teachers and artists. Other presentations of 'teacher skills' need to be looked at - cognitive as well as technical - and we need to explore ways in which they can help us understand this aspect of what Hannon chooses to call capacity building in education.

One problem we encounter in this search for alternative presentations of teachers skills however is the tendency to view the argument about the shaping of teachers identities in starkly polarised terms, commandeered by either academics or policy makers which leave little space for nuance or complexity. Alexander, for example, presents an extended pedagogy - a counter to what might be determined as a skills obsessed agenda - in which he argues that the teacher engages with a number of distinct but related domains and values concerned with Children, Learning, Teaching and Curriculum.

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He adds layers of context with their own characteristics, requirements and expectations concerned with the nature of the school, policy, culture, self identity and history. (Alexander: 2004: 11 -12). In considering these additional elements in his extended pedagogy, he argues that this model marks *the transition from teaching to education* (Ibid: 12) and refers to further conceptual elaborations such as in the field of teaching, recategorising this concept as frame (boundaries set by space, pupil, organisation, time, curriculum, routines, rules, rituals); act (defined by task, activity, interaction, assessment) and form (for example, the lesson).

Clearly, pedagogy is a somewhat more complex enterprise than may be recognised by those who reduce effective teaching to 'what works', or 'best practice' lessons downloaded from government websites.

(Alexander, 2004: 13)

His disdain for those who espouse effective teaching through adopting *what works* and following *best practice* is further articulated by Saunders:

...what works is a matter of discussion and debate, not simply of data; what works is a value statement not simply an empirical statement... what works for whom, with what resources, under what conditions, with what impact on other groups, with what unintended consequences, and what cost / benefit ration' is a rather less immediately amenable question than 'what works'.

Saunders (2004: 10 -11)

However, whilst coupling disdain of *what works* with the concept of *best practice* may provide the solace of an rigorous, intellectually coherent space, it may not be of much use to the struggling Newly Qualified Teacher on a wet Tuesday morning in a Sunderland school when faced with an emotionally distraught young child who has just seen their mother walk out of the nursery class for the first time, who perhaps has little conception of when they are likely to see her again and is faced with the sight of an actor role playing the wolf who's about to dismantle the houses of the three little pigs. *What works* in this case to represent Saunders, is no longer a matter solely of discussion or debate but is highly empirical, immediate in its effect and of the moment. Years of training, CPD or contextualisation may be leached away for the teacher in that single, first felt moment of anguish.

Luke however provides some useful indicators as to how theoreticians and practitioners may be able to begin to describe a settlement in what constitutes effective artist and educator pedagogical practice:

Profound and sustainable educational change and innovation require that we move beyond a search for a 'correct' and accurate meaning and practice of pedagogy from a less causal and linear model of educational effects to an ecological model that explores the complex embeddings and mediations of teaching and learning within cultures and discourses, systems and everyday practices.

(Luke, 2006: 3)

What Luke's ecological argument points to is that pedagogy is a living, dynamic concept which changes according to culture and context, and is not an immutable doctrine which is something to be guarded from attack. Given the flux of cultures in the schools we have observed, pedagogical considerations of

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artists and teachers working together need to be fluid enough to respond to the changing environments they are operating within. This paper now sets out to explore the ecologies of teacher artist relationships in CP-encouraged programmes and identifies the potential substrates from which deficit, deskilling and technicising models of teachers identities can be resisted and transformed into models of agency and self determination.

The artists are coming! Expectations, desires, hopes and wishes

The prospect of an artist coming to work in the school can be an ambiguous prospect for those host teachers. Arts practice can be perceived as frivolous practice which whilst it may offer entertaining *divertissements* in the short term, offers little value to the mainstream curriculum in the long term. Artists themselves are frequently viewed ambiguously. Cautionary tales of artists using schools for their own artistic or financial benefit abound, mythic stories of artists working with no regard for children or teachers haunt classrooms and the casualties of those short term experiences are quick to relate the risks taken in classrooms which backfired on both children and staff alike. The question of whether arts practice is a question of *enrichment or entitlement* is a question which is thrown into sharp relief by the insider - outsider relationships which Creative Partnership projects establish.

In this project, schools motivations for engaging artists to work with were variable, complex and contradictory. Some teachers saw the engagement with CP as little more than providing them with the case to re-position the arts further up the internal school agenda than had been previously allowed; some artists were seen as *extra help* in the classroom, with no other function than to provide ancillary crowd control mechanisms for over stressed teachers. In some cases, the instrumental nature of artists and arts practice was seen as providing a panacea for dysfunctional staff relationships, *brought in to create a family feeling* and psychological benefits for children - the constant refrain of *increased self esteem and confidence* from several teachers points to CP artists working with emotionally impoverished children and staff; the walking wounded of the school corridors whose desperate existences are provided with spiritual sustenance through their interaction with the iconic, catalytic figure of the visiting artist. The visiting 'creative' is seen as offering the portal to skills, learning, funding and a better life for all.

However, this is not the whole story. For every teacher who sees an imminent saviour entering the staff room early on a Monday morning, there are other perspectives which have emerged from this research which indicate that rather than adopting the role of needy, compliant and passive aggressive object of the latest government initiative, there are pockets of resistance to that stereotype which lead to more equitable, sophisticated and longer lasting effects and consequences. The roots of that resistance can be found in the cynics in the staffroom who witness the arrival of the Monday morning messiah with suspicious, distrust and doubt:

NA, who is our catalyst.... came in and engaged with the children in the school... the first time she came in to assembly, and actually taught the whole school, children and adults, a song in a way that almost took people's breath away... it also needs to be said that during the time that Angeline has been in the school (it) has been through some difficult

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times, in that we have a dispute with the National Union of Teachers going, a quite serious dispute including strike action, pickets on the gate... I think Angeline, in a way was viewed by some people with suspicion.

(Head teacher, Baytree Primary School).

The viewing of NA with suspicion in this instance became coupled to a response which perhaps stems from resistances to changes which arise from the implementation of other government policy directives:

I think the suspicions... probably on one level it was, well, is this person sent here to spy on senior management to see what we are up to?... other attitudes are a determination that it wouldn't work.. instead of looking at it as an opportunity... it is just something else we've got to do and don't want to do...

(Head teacher, Baytree Primary School).

However, suspicion, secrecy and stealth metamorphosed elsewhere as a learning tool for children who are struggling with their reading. In Aspen Primary school, the artist AM developed the Secret Agents project which relied on children keeping the purposes of the project secret from other children and teachers for its efficacy:

if you make something secret and hide it from someone; it generates an awful lot more of interest doesn't it? (laughter) If you say, 'Come and see this, come and see this', people go 'oh'.... the fact that you're not showing it makes people more interested to see it.

(Head, Aspen Primary School)

First contact, first relationships: from community to society

I was very much into the arts and when CP was first introduced to schools in Sunderland, it was introduced by the arts advisors and schools that were involved in the arts in a big way were invited to apply, and I applied, largely because I thought here's £20,000 for the arts in my school.

(Head teacher, Acacia Primary School)

The head of Acacia Primary assumptions about the introduction of CP to her school were a common feature of many teachers initial responses when faced with the potential huge investment that CP offered: an opportunity to reinvigorate struggling arts practice in their schools; the chance to welcome skilled artists into their classrooms, the possibility of reprofiling the arts in the school and enhancing the school's reputation to prospective parents. Many artists too saw CP as a potentially longer term meal ticket which would provide more regular income than they were accustomed to, a chance to develop new arts work and call the aesthetic shots of how teachers and students would respond to their imaginations, endeavours and creations. But, as the head of Mimosa Nursery School pointed out in his assessment of how artists first encounter schools:

"...you know you're self-employed and you work in your way, you do your own thing, you wear what you like, you look what you like, you think what you like and you behave how you like and that's sort of not how schools work."

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(Head teacher, Mimosa Nursery School)

The artist's condition of self employment generates a working culture where:

autonomy and self-expression are highly prized, (and) many practitioners prefer to remain outside of the employee job market and pursue freelance or self-employment.

(Burns Owens Partnership, 2006: 8)

and this pursuit of the freelance or self employment condition gives rise to a series of potentially interesting unexpected consequences. The Online Etymology Dictionary¹ describes the origin of the term 'freelance' as being synonymous with the term "medieval mercenary warrior" (i.e. *free+lance*) – all three aspects of which might come as a surprise to artists working in schools – particularly with its implications of working for financial gain, irrespective of the ethical aspects of the contract. Playing the role of free+lancer also leads a particular type of pedagogical relationship between artist, teacher and student - that of the apprentice, although this is not as straightforward as the term 'apprenticeship' might suggest.

Griffiths and Woolf in 2005 who researched an Apprenticeship model in arts, creative and cultural education and its impact on learning on all participants in a Creative Partnerships project in Nottingham.² Their proposal of apprenticeship model is where *everyone learns from everyone* although this is not a model of apprenticeship that traditional 'master - apprentice' relationships would recognise. The use of the term apprenticeship as well as begging the question 'who is the apprentice?' also suggests that the Creative Partnership model being tested in Nottingham had as much to do with importing a particular work ethic into the school's learning space as it did with the development of creativity of its host children: in this instance, the work ethic being inculcated being the culture and practice of the free+lancer.

The surprise here is not that this programme is about enhancing employability; the employment and economic agenda of Creative Partnerships has always been evident. The irony in this model is that the protagonist who is offering a model of employability are the artists whose working practices are more erratic and less stable than those of the teachers they work with. Although Griffiths develops her argument that an apprenticeship model most closely reflects, and is more educationally valid, learning through creative practice she also highlights several ambiguities which arise from the seemingly straightforward process of an artist working with children in a classroom:

The children are not learning to be artists; they are not studying a curriculum focused on producing professionals. Yet, like apprentices, they are expected to observe and take part in practical activities. It is not surprising if there is ambiguity about what kind of learning is going on.

(Griffiths, 2008, in publication)

¹ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php,a> accessed 21 May, 2006 19.33hrsGMT

² Griffiths M., Woolf F, (2005) Report on Creative Partnerships Nottingham Action Research, Nottingham Trent University

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So perhaps this is where the limits of the apprenticeship model are to be found: the concept of the master whose working practice is to be emulated is frail given the nature of the 'master's' working practices; the 'apprentice' is in a learning space which they have not intentionally chosen; the pedagogy of artists and teachers in this model is thus the becoming of compliant future employees or free+lance individuals who work for no one organisation but who are engaged as and when required within a volatile and unpredictable market place: a trainee urban creative who, to refer to Peck: *can not only cope with, but positively revel in, this environment of persistent insecurity and intense, atomized competition* (Peck, 2005: 764) or trainee cultural entrepreneur who, according to McRobbie:

becomes his or her own enterprise, sometimes presiding over two separate companies at the same time... (and for whom...) social interaction is fast and fleeting, friendships need to be put on hold, or suspended on trust and when such a non-category of multiskilled persons is extended across a whole sector of young working people, there is a sharp sense of transience, impermanence and even solitude
(McRobbie, 2002: 519 - 529)

The militaristic overtones of the free+lancer are echoed particularly strongly by the artist, OK, working at Silver Birch High School:

I tend to use people who work in the industry. I charge a lot for what I do. I mean CP rates are CP rates but all my guys are more commandoes: they work in the industry as well as teach as well as have the street respect and the ability to speak at street level to the kids. So that's why I charge a lot. I only work with very few people because I find it hard to find commandoes in this field.
(OK, artist at Silver Birch High School)

and the presentation of rough and tough, rugged commandoes engaged perhaps in a war against (educational) terrors is found elsewhere in other secondary schools in which artists, or creatives, are described as *embeddables*; and in one particular case, due to the large number of them over a particular week, an *army of embeddables*:

CP has also provided us with lots of materials and an army of embeddables and they've been coming into the school with project lighting teams and, at key points during the start of the projects we've had huge amounts of input from schools creatives. This week, for example, there were probably up to a dozen people in here working in the ECC area: some of them were trying to resource us; doing some joined up planning for teachers and making sure we were getting our hands dirty doing some of the projects that we run.
(Teacher, Sycamore Comprehensive)

The head of the school was equally enthusiastic about the value of the army of embeddables in her school. Whilst many schools still refer to artists in residence, fewer speak confidently of creatives in residence and yet in this school - a BE specialist college - have made an explicit connection between creativity and entrepreneurship and in doing so generated the role of entrepreneur in residence (who is also part of the embedding process):

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the entrepreneurs in residence that we've had – I mean on occasions we've had thirty crawling all over us on one day which is just amazing and so much so now because they are totally embedded. We've got a laughter consultant with us and she came on our residential as well so she got involved in the evening activities that we did and because of that she got to know the staff and I think that is fundamental to success.

(Head, Sycamore Comprehensive)

The artist warrior comes home: the hankering after relationships of Gemeinschaft

This is not intended to give the impression however that a significant number of CP schools are engaged in a surreptitious process of employing cheap, cut price labour which can be summonsed at will and who are cast as opportunistic, mercenary, militaristic warriors. Heaven forbid. Even free-lancers want to come in from the cold after a while and feel safe in the bosom of an organisation who have their best interests at heart and who subscribe to developing relationships in which artists and teachers work alongside each other, in which artist and teachers collaborate to reframe starter and plenary sections of the 3 part lesson plan, in which children are able to develop group working skills as a result of teachers and artists modelling collaboration, in which the relationship is seen by both parties as a *partnership not an affair* in which artists become the *children's friends* and which in some cases teachers in the school might be seen to be falling in a long term permanent love affair with their visiting artist:

She is just outstanding. We just have a fantastic relationship. It was like, I guess, some of these people that pair folk up you know, relationship agencies and so on. Because it was just a marriage meant to be. Mandy came into school and...I mean she's a very astute lady who soon saw what potential there was and I think there was a huge amount of potential here with the staff that we've got and the children, the parents and the governors are all very, very supportive. She was able to tap into that. She was very tuned in to what we wanted, where we wanted to go.... the honeymoon period isn't over..... I think we're going to make our silver wedding. In fact I was with AM recently. There was a head teacher and producer morning at one of the hotels last week, and we were actually talking about sustainability because of course, you know, this isn't going to continue and we've got to look at ways that this can become firmly embedded in our school.

(Head, Aspen Primary School)

In short, establishing relationships within discourses of human relations which are borne of *gemeinschaft*: a theme endorsed by Fielding in his discussion on the development of professional relationships in schools:

Sergiovanni argues for a professional ideal which is made up of four different dimensions which sit more comfortably in the move towards Gemeinschaft. These are:

- 1) a commitment to practice in an exemplary way;*
- 2) a commitment to practice toward valued social ends;*
- 3) a commitment to the ethic of caring; and*
- 4) a commitment, not only to one's own practice, but to the practice of teaching itself.*

(Sergiovanni, 1994 in Fielding, 1996: p152)

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But relationships borne of Gemeinschaft are perhaps both simultaneously desirable and notoriously elusive to establish; and this is no less true of relationships which are established in schools during these times of performative mania and the accompanying ever present urge to compete, to achieve and to come as high up the league tables as possible. Relationships between artists and teachers which arise from conditions of Gesellschaft on the other hand are no less susceptible to pressure, tension and strain:

AL and AN moved towards becoming artists in residence and they started to do some work in the corridors because that was the only space we had left to put them in... we looked at our relationship and I think that we've tried to make them fit in with the school and the pace of school and actually that was less productive. They couldn't keep up with the pace of school; their visits couldn't keep up with the pace of the school and, I think, that's when our relationship became strained.

(CP Co-ordinator, Oak Tree Primary School)

In times of stress and strain, of pain and pressure, the consequence of taking risks, of exhibiting risky behaviours and of chancing your arm with an artist with whom you have had no prior experience can backfire:

OR created a piece of music which aimed to capture the student's sense of belonging and we took a dance group over there to perform. And his brief was to impact on creativity so that it would spread in the school and he had a small impact with a small group of students but (he) was taking risks and asking the children to take risks which were well outside of his remit and the children realised this and they knew it wasn't right. And they flagged this up and OR was withdrawn and Creative Partnership were very good in supporting us through that withdrawal actually and very quickly we then moved on to other projects

(Teachers, Ash College)

Talk of embedding practice, of impact, of the short term casualties of gesellschaft determined relationships is never far away, even in the occasional urban primary school:

If you walk in you'll see that star and constellation outside – it's that clay pattern tile. It was one of the first things we did and we had a very talented potter and ceramic artist come in and she cut out all of the stars the children made some marks on it and then she painted it and then she fired it and she came back and stuck it on the wall. So the children had almost nothing to do with it.... I'll be interested to know, when the research comes out, how much long term impact there has been and what the casualties have been in terms of those short term experiences: have they had any real effect?

(Head, Birch Primary School)

Emerging relationships, hybridising identities

*The gag may be waving the flag
That began with a mystical hand
Hip hooray, the American way
The world is a stage*

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The stage is a world of entertain...ment...

(That's Entertainment, Deitz and Schwartz, 1952)

If the world's a stage and the men and women merely players, then questions concerning what play artists and teachers make with each other and with their children and what players they become, emerges as a theme of interest, an unexpected consequence of desires to understand multidisciplinary approaches to developing new talents in the classroom.

Artists have appeared initially to be artists but are later seen to be performing like teachers and in some contexts are asked to operate - however briefly - as proxy head teachers; some teachers lay claim to the identity of *teacher* and yet claim to think like artists; some practitioners admit to seeing themselves as teacher, artist and learner. This project, in its desire to understand how teachers represent their work with artists from the CP stable, has found a complex, multilayered and contradictory state of affairs when it comes to trying to assess how the identities of artists and teachers play out together; and indeed whether there is any significant difference between the two identities at all.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues: *There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; ... identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results.* (Butler, 1990: 25) which Gauntlett interprets as *gender is a performance; it's what you do at particular times, rather than a universal who you are.* (Gauntlett, 2007). Day et al (2006) also challenge the concept of identity as being intrinsically stable and argue instead for its intrinsic fragmentation, arguing that *teacher identities may be more, or less, stable and more or less fragmented at different times and in different ways according to a number of life, career and situational factors'* (Day et al, 2006: p.601). *If as Butler suggests the professional identities of artist and educator are chosen and performed then the ambiguity which arises from these choices means that the requirement to distinguish between teacher and artist is perhaps a futile proposition.*

Men in tights: a case of mistaken identity

A more useful stance might be to accept the phenomenon of multiple, contradictory appearances and the interplay of masks, destabilising choices and shifting identities which arise from differing performances, depending on the cast members being performed with and the audience being performed to. AJ, a dancer at Rowan Tree Primary school exemplifies this case of shifting identities leading to different performances particularly clearly. From being introduced into the school as a dancer, he was able to develop new dance techniques which he was able to apply to other schools:

There's another technique that I developed here which is actually working with elastic.... a huge elastic band which means we're all connected, all part of the circle and same group. That's a lot of fun. We do movement based to music and the routines we do with the elastic...which (now informs) my work everywhere else.

(AJ, dancer, Rowan Tree Primary School)

His role since has become extended with ever increasingly elaborate functions: he became creative advisor to the school, sponsored governor, chair: a veritable cornucopia of roles, functions, identities and headspaces which

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required a wearing of a multiple number of hats, perhaps far more than could have been conceived of by deBono's 6 Thinking Hats strategies for learning:

I came into the school, I've been involved with CP as a creative advisor right from its inception, so with one hat on I've been about trying to develop creative practices in schools as an advisor.....so that's with one hat... I've worked as a creative artist, creative practitioner, dance artist, call it what you will... I'm now a sponsored Governor by creative partnerships... I'm the governor who became the chair of governors... I became the first national sponsored governor for the arts council and creative partnerships working in a school.... So in a way my relationship with this school is actually quite unique.

(AJ, dancer, governor, Rowan Tree Primary School).

AJ's recognition of himself as occupying a unique, special role in the school is an interesting phenomenon, reiterated in other schools with other artists who also wear many hats; although for AJ, this can be problematic:

And for me personally, to know which hat I'm wearing at any one point, can sometimes get a little bit confusing. So basically I forget about the hats I wear, forget about the hats, work out what you think is right at the right time.

(J, dancer, governor, wearer of many hats, Rowan Tree Primary School).

Frivolously referred to within the project team as the *Mourinho Effect (the Special One)*, the concept of some artists achieving special, unique and indispensable status in some schools has emerged in other settings too. At Cherry Tree Primary for example, their artist, AM:

has continued to work with us and he's been absolutely fantastic. He is our lynchpin to everything and is always looking out to make sure that we are alright as a school.

(Head teacher, Cherry Tree Primary School)

This is not solely a phenomenon of primary schools either: the special creative agent is also to be found in some secondary schools:

I'm very clear that none of this could happen without EJ because he is absolutely unique. As far as I'm concerned he's an extra member of staff. He loves our school; he loves the kids and he loves working with us.

(Head, Chestnut High School)

and the head is determined that EJ's special place in the school should be maintained, even if funding from CP is eventually winds down:

We have to find a way of being able to continue working with EJ.... the work that we do with EJ is very important and he is part of the fabric of this school and the governors and I are making financial provision to continue working with EJ when the funding runs out from other sources.

(Head, Chestnut High School)

Would that teaching staff could be assured of such attention and devotion! Interesting in its insistence on the role of a particular kind of individual, within a particular kind of set up, this privileging of a special one is perhaps a natural

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consequence of the deficit discourse of teacher's professional identity and status. The *Special One* discourse has taken the de-skilling / re-skilling debate to an uncomfortable conclusion: the teacher is redundant, surplus to requirements and can only operate effectively if they are coupled to the efforts and energies of a special, free, lancer: an entrepreneurial, quixotic force for change and transformation. The collegiate relationship which was emergent during those early, first points of contact has been replaced with dependency, anxiety and a focus on sustaining the unsustainable. Asked what the school would do if EJ was run down by a bus one day led to silenced interviews by both the Head and EJ himself. As Mazzei suggests:

The silences are pregnant with with what is to be said but cannot be said, just yet, of the ought-to-be-said, but that which is unutterable due to the possible repercussions, and the what-is-said, the meanings conveyed more loudly in silent speech.

(Mazzei, 2007: 35)

Reskilling or deskilling: or relearning and reconceiving?

Whilst the *Special One* may be suitable for some schools in some contexts, its valorising the impact of one individual - whose immortality, after all, is likely to be no more heightened than any other lesser mortals who work in the school - not only puts at risk any possibility of sustaining any advances schools are able to make with the support of CP, but its discourse of deficiency also fails to recognise the real advances in teacher skills, knowledge and competency that have working within CP programmes have unearthed.

The value of artists has not solely been in the arts expertise or techniques that they introduce to teachers and children although the acquisition of arts based technical skills which have immediate application is frequently welcomed. It is not even in their supposed innate 'creativity'. Some teachers recognised that the artist is not necessarily any more 'creative' than the teachers whose skills they are supposed to be updating or the children whose disconnection with their schooling they are meant to be re-establishing. RA, in describing a less than satisfactory experience with a visiting musician not only identifies the absence of creativity in the visiting artist but simultaneously demonstrates confidence in her own creative capabilities; a significant aspect of artist teacher relationships where discourses are frequently about 'creatives' working with teachers in schools (who presumably are defined as 'non-creatives' by association) are commonplace:

they experienced some of the language of a different culture, but they didn't go into the art or the creativity, it was: this is what you are going to do, it wasn't creative and I feel that, I know I am a creative person by the type of mess that's in here, it doesn't bother me all this mess, because I know that underlying it is a very strong system and I've got things filed in different colours and in different places and the organisation and planning is there... I felt that as a creative person myself that the creativity wasn't coming out there - it was too structured.

(RA, teacher, Elm Tree Primary School)

The more significant value of artists working with teachers is powerfully expressed in terms of broadening teacher's critical thinking capacities; particularly with regard to matters of space, time and communication. BE at

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Walnut First School makes the connection between the physical space that dance requires (and the development of dance motor skills) and the mental space that emerges when working together with dancers which allowed for children's cognitive development:

We had Dance and Rhythm... that definitely developed my approach to teaching dance and giving them more space. It made me realise that dance gave them more freedom and space. So, in terms of skill base, I think our skill base had improved. And mental space – so they were allowed more time to develop an idea.

(BE, Teacher, Walnut First School)

Teachers at Cedar Special School are able to conceive of their dance and physical theatre work in communicative and emotional literacy terms:

I have done a few assemblies in front of Key Stage 2 where I haven't said anything for the whole of the assembly: I've just done it in mime and engaged the children and did something and they've come up and done something.... It's more than mime..... But we are also seeing the development of emotional intelligence.... in the school to give them the language in order to explain how they are feeling.

(EM and VY, teachers, Cedar Special School)

Dance in education has become significantly *more than mime* and elsewhere, teachers are begun to be seen as *more than teachers*. As the CP Co-ordinator and Head at Birch Primary acknowledged, in referring to their thoughts about how to recruit personnel for the CP programme:

CPCo-ord ...we began to think who was this amazing person who could do this job. So a) you would be very creative and have this fantastic skill and b) you would be fantastic at building relationships with children c) you would also be able to understand the educational value of it and be able to talk to staff and train staff. And we were thinking: who is this amazing person? And we would have people come in who could do a couple of those things but there weren't these all singing, all dancing amazing people...

Head We were kidding ourselves. The people who were doing it were the people who were here.

(Head, CP co-ord, Birch Primary School)

In short, the *Special Ones* were the teachers: and it needed experience of outside perspectives, languages and techniques for that realisation to set in. *we've been doing this stuff for years* is another common aphorism amongst teachers interviewed in this project particularly those who trained before the 1990s. It is important that those memories of earlier expertise, artistry, creativity and specialness are not forgotten: and in some cases, it is the artists that are responsible for re-kindling those memories in teachers which they did by offering new perspectives, reigniting critical thinking and nurturing new conceptions of space, time and the curriculum.

Finding a happy medium: the soil science of growing effective artist teacher relationships

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Before that we decided to make a little garden area, so that was our first project. We learnt a lot of things – it was a challenge, a much greater challenge than we had anticipated.... Basically, we didn't know what we were doing – we had our expert, practitioner, in and we didn't always understand each other, again we wanted to involve too many children at the initial onset, we thought we'll use two classes to create this garden and you can't really manage 60 children with one adult and one practitioner and the rota system wasn't ideal so we learnt about the numbers, practicalities... also soil is so heavy.

(Head teacher, Pine Tree Primary)

Whilst the Head of Pine Tree Primary is forthright about the difficulties her school faced with the first artist on their first CP project, her allusion to the soil of the school garden being *so heavy* may as easily refer to the heavy soil of the curriculum, timetable and other determinants which make up the cultural medium within which the school, its teachers and children are trying to grow and flourish. Lightening a heavy clay soil with the chalk of enrichment activities, increasing its porosity and extending its capacity to prevent nutrients being leached from its medium through introducing cultural changes is a demanding job for any educational horticulturalist; and yet many teachers have developed mechanisms which are able to resist the leaching out of pedagogical influences which they sense have arisen in recent years due to the ever present centrally derived dictations of centralised government policy. This holds true for certain aspects of CP experiences for teachers too.

AR, a teacher at Elm Tree Primary, was described earlier as providing a counter voice to the discourse of 'creatives' visiting schools to set about working on 'non-creative' teachers. Her resistance comes into sharper focus in the example below where the artist was trying to develop children's awareness of life and social roles in an African village:

She said – oh no you are hunting, but of course they haven't any experience of hunting or seeing hunting – so of course when she said you are hunting, they were just chasing round after each other – she said oh no, no, no – you have to go down low and be quiet and of course they didn't know and she was expecting too much knowledge of them...

AR, teacher, Elm Tree Primary School

She continues to describe how she reacted to the cultural assumptions that the visiting artist was bringing to the classroom which she saw as being in opposition to the values she was aiming to inculcate in her class:

... the other thing that really riled was she said the girls you all have to cook and clean the house – boys you go off and do the hunting – and I just thought NO – that might be the way you are used to in the way you were brought up in Africa but that is NOT what I want to do for positive role models in this class, where I have got three quarters boys and one quarter girls. I want the girls to have positive role models, not that they are the little girls that stay at home.

(AR, teacher, Elm Tree Primary School)

AR's resistance is also noted in terms of how she has received the playing out of the national curriculum:

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the art QCA which was awful, and is awful... year 2 art is the most dry curriculum you can ever imagine, there is no talk of an artist there, it's looking at line...

(AR, teacher, Elm Tree Primary School)

She subsequently claims to subvert the guidelines by *surreptitiously* introducing the work of Paul Klee into how she has been teaching drawing:

'scuse me – looking at houses is how the buildings speak to us – mother nature, designer, yes don't put it like they've written it in there, but go out there we can look at fur, patterns, camouflage, lines in trees and stuff.... look at it, look it, evaluate it, no give them a pencil, let them draw it, they should be trying to evaluate it, trying to do it. But you see, how I surreptitiously got Klee in there... he does these line drawings... he goes over a little blip and that's what the pictures are that went up this morning...

(AR, teacher, Elm Tree Primary School)

AR's desire for shaping the creative practice in the school also stems from a perceived lack of knowledge of her and other staff's skills by a former head teacher:

the final thing I really wanted to get rid of was music express, which we had a head who was not a music specialist brought in who couldn't do music and because she couldn't do music she assumed everybody couldn't do music, so instead of doing your own thing, which at least three of us were really comfortable about doing.

(AR, teacher, Elm Tree Primary School)

The assumption of an absence of teacher's knowledge or skills by their own colleagues is exacerbated where that assumption of absence has been expressed by visiting CP practitioners. Mulberry Primary School in Leicester spent some considerable time in dialogue with its CP partners who they perceived as assuming that there was a dearth of drama expertise in the school - with the consequence that relationships between all parties became fractious until CP was able to accept that the skills present in the school could be complemented by CP and not subsumed within a more acceptable practice which was being proposed by the practitioners. The theme of teachers developing confidence to tell visiting artists of the kind of partnership they wanted is emphasised at other schools. At Elder Tree Primary, teachers are additionally note the skills that the artist themselves have acquired through the partnership,

But we also learnt and expressed to any artist that came into school that we wanted it to be a partnership in the classroom. It wasn't them coming in and taking a session: we wanted them to come in with us and to do it very much together. To be honest when the artists left us they were more skilled as well because they were skilled in managing children and we learnt from the skills they gave to us so it was a very good partnership and we started to see the benefits of that straight away because the teacher and the artist were working together.

CP Coordinator – Elder Tree Primary School.

As the work at Elder Tree Primary developed, the school started to call the shots as to what they expected of the residencies and how they expected

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artists to conduct themselves. The free+lance mentality was increasingly called into question:

And we did a lot more planning; a lot more communication and we made sure that people were here on time and things like that because you really need that in a school.

CP Coordinator – Elder Tree Primary School.

Through their increasing capacity to resist, challenge and critique practice and policy, teachers' capabilities to embrace change, welcome new ideas and test innovative models of practice starts to emerge.

Well the enthusiasm in our school for new and innovative ideas astounds me really but having said that I like new ideas. I never think: this is it. The staff in the school do embrace new ideas even if they might come back and say they are not sure about that one. But they will embrace new ideas and have a go at things and we do have a very open forum so that if things aren't working then we will re-evaluate them

CP Coordinator – Elder Tree Primary School.

Whilst on one level this may not be particularly surprising, the experience at L Primary is a welcome reminder that the requirement for creative, innovative and experimental thinking is a core requirement of any teacher's calling. Whilst many teachers will cite a consequence of CP as *giving them permission to be creative again*, many teachers have rejected the offer of permission (and its corollary of submission) but demand admission to the decision making processes, the aesthetic judgements and the criteria for what constitutes an effective artist and teacher relationship. Teachers know what they want and what they need and are increasingly capable and skilled in asking for it:

If I'm going to be absolutely honest I said to Creative Partnerships that we know what we want and we know where we can go and get it so can we just get on with it? I think that if we hadn't had the ideas I would probably have turned to them a bit more but we have, ourselves, had a clear idea of what we wanted.

CP Coordinator – Elder Tree Primary School.

From object to subject; from adoration to agency

Alternative artist teacher relationships, new skill sets and increased understandings in what's happening with CP-encouraged relationships can be encouraged by artists to develop in a manner which refocuses the attention from the artist to the teacher and children. Beech Tree High School for instance employed an architect, OR, as their creative practitioner. OR emphasises that his approach to the school was being effective as he was engaged in a process of asking questions, and not necessarily focusing solely on his design techniques as such:

The one thing that I think I am good at is responding to any given stimulus and responding creatively to that and bouncing ideas back and lateral – or eclectic – thinking is probably my forte. So it's design in the broadest sense because we haven't actually achieved any spatial designs yet. We are considering concepts and ideas.

(OR, architect, Beech Tree High School)

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He felt he was more use to the school as an eclectic thinker as opposed to being an architect although he also stressed that his professional capabilities are intimately linked to his cognitive predispositions:

for me, as an architect, my eclectic thinking is part of my architectural design and the way I approach projects. Other architects may not be as free thinking as I am so, yes, it's probably more to do with my broad range of interests which cover outdoor activities, music, film, literature, whatever. As well as my ability as a designer which, at its crudest, is solving problems in some manner to also having an interest in how space affects people and how to best use the space that you've got.

(OR, architect, Beech Tree High School)

Whilst the experience in Beech Tree High was tentative at our stage of research, a more fully developed alternative model had emerged at Oak Tree Primary School in Derby. As the CP Co-ordinator points out in reference to the work the school undertook with **um** architects,

because they know the size of our classroom and they've seen the problems we have in getting all of our staff to sit down together so they were saying that actually the school just doesn't belong to the children. Now that's quite a strange thing for us to comprehend because most of the teachers actually feel that the school is for the purposes of the children and we forget that actually it's our workspace and we need to have places in this which are just for us.

(CP Co-ordinator, Beech Tree Primary School)

In this instance, the artists, **um** signal that ownership of space belongs to teachers, not just children. The artists have become empowering agents as opposed to catalytic agents, recognising teachers as active subjects with desires, preferences, tastes, choice and agency - not merely appreciative receptacles of wondrous experiences. Here, the artists have offered conceptual tools for staff to use and wield in their own favour, not simply the cudgels of absent-technique which they all too frequently hit themselves over the head with. **um** continued to extend their model of empowerment by giving work back to the school for further provocation:

*the document that **muf** produced went to the Think Tank and the Think Tank actually were in charge of making the decision about what we were going to concentrate on in schools so they had the document; read it and then, as a group, we decided to focus on the space issue and that led to things like the yellow ribbons; the proposals for the new entrance and to further work on the playgrounds.... I think it was probably the very first time that they'd been actually asked their opinions about things.*

(CP Co-ordinator, Beech Tree Primary School)

In this school, **um** have amongst many other outcomes, changed the perception of teachers of teaching. They offered new perspectives, skills, tools, vocabulary and questions and worked with the creative imperatives of teachers and children, not in contradiction to them.

Concluding remarks

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Two lovers kissing amongst the scream of midnight -

Two lovers missing the tranquility of solitude -

Getting a cab and travelling on buses -

Reading the graffiti about slashed seat affairs -

I say

That's Entertainment, That's Entertainment.

(That's Entertainment, Weller, 1980)

Artists coming into a school come into a context in which their presence - whilst benignly intended - stimulate a range of responses from the enthusiasts whose motivation is about raising the profile of the arts in the school, through to suspicion as a consequence of a culture of scrutiny, evaluation and judgement. Knowingly or unknowingly, artist become the rhetorical cloak for government policy which professes on the surface to be about re-skilling but which frequently masks a deep per seated distrust of the identity and purpose of the teacher; a distrust which presents itself as the an agenda of re-skilling but perhaps is more closely aligned to a notion of de-skilling, deprofessionalisation and technising.

However, perhaps a reskilling process can produce the unexpected outcome of generating pockets of resistance to other governmental policy agendas - the CP programme doesn't just reskill teachers with techniques, it more importantly allows for - perhaps inadvertently - for teacher to reconfigure or rediscover their critical thinking capacities : from a stance of compliant, submissive, passive aggressive acceptance of control policy initiative, the 'reskilling' agenda of the workforce produces a counter reaction in the emergence of a resistant, questioning and active agent for local policy development; sustainability in this unexpected outcome is perhaps the flowering of pockets of critical resistance which can lighten the *heavy soil* of curriculum, timetable and school improvement agendas.

Nick Owen

Creative School Change Project / Universities of Nottingham and Keele

March 2008

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