

Institution: Bath Spa University		
Unit of Assessment: 23 - Education		
Title of case study: Developing and embedding innovative creative pedagogical approaches in creative arts education		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2001 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
June Bianchi	Senior Lecturer in Art and Design Education	1/9/1994 - present
Dr Penny Hay	Reader in Creative Teaching and Learning	20/12/2005 - present
Prof Bambo Soyinka	Professor of Story	21/10/2013 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Bath Spa University's innovative creative pedagogical approaches to creative arts education have had a significant impact in both formal education and informal, community learning settings. This work has transformed the practices of 120 primary and secondary schools, approximately 540 teachers and over 125 community educators since 2014. The research team has worked with approximately 9,000 school pupils and community learners, increasing participation and including those often excluded from mainstream creative learning. Engaging with these creative pedagogical models has increased learners' happiness and wellbeing, as well as engagement in learning, confidence and literacy, and increased practitioners' confidence and wellbeing. These pedagogical models have been embedded into the practice of 24 regional and national cultural organisations including the Royal Society for Arts, the National Association for Writers in Education and Bath Cultural Education Partnership.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>How can new understandings of creative practice lead to innovative pedagogical approaches to creative arts education? Creativity and the creative arts are often regarded as an individual endeavour within formal education, associated with innate talent or ability. Creative subjects are marginalised in the school curricula, which focus on core subjects (English, Maths and Science) and high stakes individual testing and accountability, with children constructed as passive receivers of the arts and culture. Equally, the creative arts are often associated with privilege and exclusivity, with engagement higher among those who are already class and race privileged and non-disabled. BSU's research in this field over the last two decades has challenged this view, demonstrating that engagement and learning in the creative arts can be collaborative and inclusive in both formal schooling and informal community learning settings.</p>		
Research focus and methods		
<p>This interdisciplinary research combines work on arts education and learning in creative subjects including creative writing. The research has focussed on investigating the conditions required to allow creativity to flourish and exploring how these conditions can be fostered and recreated in both formal education and informal, community learning settings. The research asks, what are the characteristics of a successful creative learning environment? How can educators, facilitators and practitioners in both formal and informal learning settings be supported to create successful creative learning environments? How can participation in creative arts education be extended and diversified?</p>		
<p>The research has been conducted in schools and at community learning programmes using qualitative methods including action research cycles, developmental workshops, micro-ethnography, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, participant and non-participant observations, analysis of documentary evidence, documentation of artists' and participants' experiences of community creative arts initiatives such as <i>Forest of Imagination</i> and <i>StoryTown</i>.</p>		

Since the approaches and pedagogical models are both trialled and integrated into the work of schools, creative artists, and community learning programmes, research and impact are fully interwoven, iterative, non-linear and responsive to partners and users.

Contribution of the research: Creative pedagogical models for learning in the creative arts

The research has shown that learning and engagement in the creative arts can be fostered using the following creative pedagogical approaches and models:

- collaborative working in community settings (R5)
- with practising artists and/or cultural and artistic institutions collaborating with teachers, parents, pupils and members of the community (R1, R3, R4, R5)
- transforming previously familiar spaces (such as the classroom, city, park or village) into sites for experimental creative learning (R4)
- in conjunction with the use of inclusive pedagogies and models for inclusive practice. Examples of the models created and co-created with partners include:
 1. *The Writer's Cycle* (R5) by the creative writing incubator, *Paper Nations*, which follows a map for creative writing in both formal and informal learning settings involving the cyclical process of discovery, connection, craft and transformation.
 2. Pedagogies for creativity (such as *5x5x5=Creativity*) in early years settings and primary schools based on principles of co-construction, promotion of children's agency, integrated themes and topics, and a focus on exploration rather than a final product or output (R2, R3).

The research has demonstrated that these approaches both extend participation generally, and also enable those who are often excluded from mainstream cultural spaces and institutions, and creative learning and engagement to participate in creative arts education. Groups have included teenage mothers-to-be, school-excluded students, homeless young people (R1), children in early years and primary education (R2, R3, R4), individuals with disabilities, BAME individuals and individuals from rural communities (R5).

The research and its results have been disseminated via events, exhibitions, publications, websites, workshops, film and group poetry.

3. References to the research

- R1.** Bianchi, J (2008) ['More than a body's work: widening cultural participation through an international exploration of young people's construction of visual image and identity.'](#) *The International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 27 (3). pp. 293-308
- R2.** Craft, A, Cremin, T, Hay, P and Clack, J (2014) ['Creative primary schools: developing and maintaining pedagogy for creativity.'](#) *Ethnography and Education*, 9 (1). pp. 16-34
- R3.** Bancroft, S, Fawcett, M and Hay, P, eds. (2008) ['Researching children researching the world: 5x5x5 = creativity.'](#) Trentham Books, Stoke on Trent
- R4.** Paris, G and Hay, P (2020) ['5x5x5=creativity: art as a transformative practice.'](#) *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 39 (1). pp. 69-84
- R5.** Soyinka, B (2021) ['The Writer's Cycle' and 'Dare to Write?' - Adaptable pedagogical resources for educators developing inclusive writing environments \[research portfolio\]](#)

Funding

- Bianchi (PI), *More than a body's work* (2004), Arts Council England, GBP5000 (independent funding)
- Soyinka (PI), *Paper Nations* (2015-2018), Arts Council England, GBP600,000
- Soyinka (PI), *The Literary Platform* (2018-2021), Arts Council England, GBP409,957

4. Details of the impact

Engagement with the creative pedagogical models for learning in the creative arts has had significant impact on 3 levels: it has transformed the practices of institutions and practitioners (teachers and community educators) and improved practitioners' confidence; it has increased confidence, wellbeing, literacy and engagement with learning among approximately 9,000 learners; and it has been embedded into practices of 24 regional and national cultural organisations across the arts sector. The impact spans both formal education and community learning, and includes children, young people and adults.

Transforming the practices of institutions and practitioners

The creative pedagogical approaches have been applied within 120 schools and transformed the practices of 53 schools, 2 partner universities (University of Bristol, Plymouth College of Art) and approximately 540 teachers (E2, E3, E4, E10). Over 330 community educators and artist/educators have engaged with the research and the practice of 128 has been significantly changed (E10), improving their confidence and wellbeing (E8).

Engagement with these creative pedagogical models has transformed the practices of educators and artists to create more collaborative installations and work more collaboratively with children (E3), for example via *Forest of Imagination (Fol)*, a free public contemporary arts and design event created by BSU and local creative, cultural and educational partners including House of Imagination (formerly 5x5x5=creativity) and the Holburne Museum. *Fol* has taken place every year since 2014 and reimagines a familiar space to inspire creativity and heighten a sense of nature in an urban environment. Participating practitioners reported that:

Forest always makes me work more spontaneously and ambitiously than in my day-to-day practice. (E3, 2019, p14)

This walking with sounds was a great success and I am already using elements of the experience in my professional practice. (E3, 2019, p30)

The Designated Schools' Days as part of *Fol* offer new understandings of the pedagogical role of the artist-educator working with teachers and other educational professionals and has transformed the classroom practice of 80 teachers since 2014 (E2, E3, E10).

Teachers are more likely to engage in creative co-inquiry, and have their perception of children's capacities to be independent learners transformed (E4) through participation in *Schools Without Walls (SWW)*, a 5 week creative residency which involves teachers and children working with an artist based in a cultural setting such as a gallery, museum or theatre:

Hay has made an exceptional contribution to improving the quality and impact of teaching and learning in order to improve children's life chances. Through *Schools Without Walls* whole schools are indeed transformed. (Former Director of Education, Bath; E1)

Penny's [Hay] work has profoundly influenced both my students and my own work. In addition, through developing reflective and creative pedagogies and engaging with children, students and communities as researchers, she has significantly raised the profile and standard of creativity in education. (Professor, Department of Education, University of Oxford; E1)

BSU's creative writing incubator, *Paper Nations*, has worked with approximately 188 creative educators (E10) working in community learning settings through the creation of research and pedagogical models such as *The Writers' Cycle* and *Dare to Write?* The evaluation of the project highlighted significant and sustainable changes to their practice for at least 28 of the creative educators (E8).

In 2018 BSU co-established and co-lead *StoryTown*, a new annual literary festival with partners, Corsham Town Council, which employs models for supporting the creative writing process (E9). As part of *StoryTown*, *Paper Nations'* pedagogical approaches are embedded into artists' and practitioners' practice (E8). The founder of a new inclusion fiction studio described *Paper Nations* as

pivotal in changing my perception of my work both as a writer and a producer [...] engagement with this body of research has enabled me and other writing producers and educators to create opportunities for writers from underrepresented backgrounds. These impacts have been achieved both through the sharing of their research and through their innovative research-informed initiatives that have opened up access and networks of support. (E9)

Community educators also use the models for their own continuous professional development, and engagement with these models has led to increased confidence and mental wellbeing for many (E8). A writing educator notes on her website that she has used *The Writer's Cycle* model to develop best practice for creative writing teachers:

The writing cycle is really helpful. It takes the pressure off. It helps you to take the space for yourself, to say: I am a writer. Sometimes, you feel like an imposter. (Educator at Novel Nights; E9)

As a writing mentor, I also use the Writers' Cycle to support my own continuous development. I value the overall guidance and appreciate the clear design and accessible layout used too. (Founder of Inkpots Writing Workshops; E9).

Impact on learners' confidence, wellbeing, happiness and subject skills

Since 2014 the research has engaged with approximately 9,000 learners in both formal and informal community settings, with evidence of a range of different types of impact, for instance, improving confidence, happiness, wellbeing, literacy, agency and engagement in learning and the creative arts (E10).

Paper Nations' Creative Writing in Schools (CWIS) project, involving 3,000 participants and 100 schools through a series of workshops, events, seminars and interventions, has generated a new community of young writers, increased confidence and agency among young people, and introduced learning opportunities beyond formal learning contexts (E6). An independent survey auditing 1,500 participants also noted that, "Young people writing less often than their peers at the beginning of CWIS wrote more often by the end of the involvement" (E6).

As a creative writing facilitator, the Paper Nations Writers' Cycle is an extremely helpful resource. I work with young writers aged 10 - 16 years and one of my challenges is helping them to understand the creative process and appreciate the ebb and flow of creativity. The Writers' Cycle helps them to understand how their work may develop and to not feel frustrated if their stories aren't 'right' straight away. We are also starting to use the term 'emerging writers' to describe the young people in our groups - it is a phrase which they enjoy using and appreciate too. (Founder of Inkpots Writing Workshops; E9)

Involvement in *SWW* (over 1,100 learners) has resulted in both primary and secondary school children's increased confidence, wellbeing and happiness. There were positive effects on children's approaches to learning core subjects, particularly literacy, and their ability to work as a team, independence, engagement in learning, ownership of learning, sense of active learning, oracy skills, learning resilience and preparedness to take risks (E5). Teachers referred to breakthroughs with children who had previously been disengaged learners (E5). Involvement in *FoI* and *Storytown* has increased the inclusivity of creative and artistic learning, with a particular focus on groups often excluded from mainstream creativity, such as children with complex special needs (E3; E9).

Following participation in *SWW* participating staff reflected:

It was a moment to pause, for the children to think about what they've done. They were blown away. There was a realisation of what they had done. One pupil who struggles with writing, when we were writing outside wrote for 30 minutes said, 'I've never written this much before.' She had the idea and [knew] how to write it. (Teacher; E4, 2016-2017 p10)

Our lower achieving children in particular greatly developed in confidence and independence – even when they returned to school. (Deputy Headteacher; E4, 2016-2017, p11)

Hay's research is creative and adaptable to circumstances and context, displaying innovation in learning that is leading the way in our understanding of the role and significance of the arts in the Primary and Secondary curriculum. (Deputy Head of School of Education, University of Bristol; E1)

Some children developed a greater degree of connection and sense of belonging in the cultural centres they engaged with as part of *SWW* and were more likely to visit these independently with their families (E4).

In response to COVID-19, the team initiated the *Stay-at-Home Literary Festival*, an event which aimed to facilitate connection to combat loneliness during lockdown. 20,000 people attended this festival which was Highly Commended by *The Bookseller* in their Best Event of Lockdown Award (E5; E10).

Impact on the practices of regional and national cultural organisations

The creative pedagogical approaches have been embedded into the practices of 24 cultural organisations including the Holburne Museum, the Egg Theatre, House of Imagination, Bath Cultural Education Partnership and South West Creative Education Hub and external bodies, including the Cultural Learning Alliance, Royal Society for Arts (E2; E3; E4; E8; E10). The new pedagogical models for creative writing have been recognised by Arts Council England:

We are delighted that Paper Nations and First Story will be sharing replicable delivery and business models as the legacy of the Creative Writing in Schools programme, to inform, inspire, and support more children and young people to write creatively and for pleasure, in and outside school. (National Director for Literature, Arts Council England; E7)

In response to findings emerging from *the Writer's Cycle*, the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) set up a regional sub-committee for Writers in Education with a specific focus on community writing (E9):

The Paper Nations research was a real turning point for NAWE. We were given the opportunity to test out ideas emerging from the research collaboratively and directly with grassroots projects. [...] As a result, we've now developed a series of Regional Network meetings [...] and we plan to run similar interventions across the UK (Director of the National Association of Writers in Education; E9)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

E1 Testimonials attesting to the impact of our work: National Teaching Fellowship Application (Hay, 2020)

E2 Yearly evaluation reports from 2014 to 2020: 5x5x5=creativity/ House of Imagination

E3 Yearly evaluation reports from 2014 to 2020: Forest of Imagination

E4 Yearly evaluation reports from 2016 to 2020: School Without Walls

E5 [Bookseller Award Recommendations](#)

E6 [LKMco Evaluation of Creative Writing in Schools](#) (commissioned by Arts Council, 2019)

E7 [NAWE Creative Writing in Schools Page \(2020\)](#)

E8 [Paper Nations Impact Reports:](#)

- Evaluation by The Centre for Education & Youth (2016-2018)
- Paper Nations Impact Report (2018-2020)

E9 Case studies and statements from creative writing practitioners and organisations on the impact of our Paper Nation's research on their practice

E10 Overview of participants, organisations and practitioners involved in the projects described in section 4