

## CHAPTER D4

### How do Students in the Creative Arts Become Creative Professionals?

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#### Summary

This is one of a complementary pair of papers reporting on the findings and implications of research into how students in creative arts subjects learn to become creative professionals. The research was undertaken as part of the Creative Interventions Project: a collaborative National Teaching Fellowship Project led by the University of the Arts, London which examined creative arts student experiences of work-related learning activity in the public and third sectors. It set out to explore how such experiences contribute to students' employability skills and their development as a professional (Ball et al 2010).

In this paper I consider the putative value of creativity in Higher Education, and some of the theoretical issues it raises, before examining students' perceptions of what creativity and professionalism imply, how and where they learn to become creative professionals. Their experiences and views are discussed within three domains: the curriculum (their programme of study); their co-curriculum (hobbies and activities related to but separate from their programme of study); and their extra-curriculum (their life-wide activities). A clear distinction emerges between the value they place of professional development in the formal context of the curriculum and that in the informal, life-wide context. Jenny proposes that the explanation for this lies not in a real, but rather in a perceived, difference, resulting from students' unfamiliarity with reflecting critically on the learning that takes place informally. In the companion paper I present a case study of how the University of Surrey's Life-wide Learning Award, being trialled in summer/autumn 2010, may provide a framework to help students to analyse, appreciate and articulate their life-wide learning and the role of creativity in this process.

**Key words:** creativity; curriculum; lifewide learning; professionalism; values.

#### Background to the research

##### *The political agenda*

In 2002, the UK government's Department for Creativity, Culture and Education (DCCE) launched the Creative Partnerships initiative. Under this scheme, long-term partnerships are forged between schools and creative professionals, e.g. artists and performers, aimed at raising children's aspirations and equipping them for the future (Creative Partnerships, 2010). There is explicit recognition of potential individual benefit, but beneath this lurks a spectre of social responsibility:

Creative learning empowers young people to imagine how the world could be different and gives them the confidence and motivation to make positive change happen. This helps young people to engage with their education and to achieve. (Creative Partnerships Programme 2002:4)

By the time that interest in creativity had extended to Higher Education, with the inception of the Imaginative Curriculum project in 2001 whose primary aim was simply to cause higher education to think more deeply about the role of creativity in students' development.

The importance of creativity and innovation to the national economy in an era of global competition have become increasingly overt.

Work in the modern British economy will increasingly involve creativity and innovation as a mass and everyday activity. (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2006)

The preoccupation with collective and economic needs is far from an alternative focus to concerns for individual self-fulfilment (e.g. Winnicott, 1971; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999), though objectives are not mutually exclusive, and employability may contribute to personal realisation. Indeed, sponsorship for the present research was provided by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), thereby enabling us to bring together different agencies and their various priorities through a study of the experiences and perceptions of creative arts undergraduates.

### ***Creative Interventions***

*Creative Interventions*, a collaborative project led by the University of the Arts, London, in partnership with the Arts University College, Bournemouth, and Surrey Centre of Excellence for Professional Training and Education (SCEPTrE) set out to understand how students in the creative arts developed employability skills and professional capability and attitudes. The final report of the *Creative Interventions* project (Ball et al 2010) points to the lack of understanding and value placed on some aspects of creativity. This prompted the research since:

Creativity is a core quality valued in graduates. Creative arts education has been found to enhance entrepreneurial ability (Carey & Naudin, 2007); however a recent study found that students in creative subjects 'are uncomfortable with a narrow definition of entrepreneurship focussed entirely on commercial success' (NESTA/ADM, 2007). Creative arts graduates are known to have a predisposition for work of social and educational value (Blackwell & Harvey, 1999), yet social enterprise and voluntary work are often under-valued and un-recognised within the curriculum. (Wareing et al., 2010:4)

*Creative Interventions* recognised the need for today's graduates to have the widest possible awareness of professional opportunities for which their undergraduate studies have prepared them. This chapter reports on the findings of SCEPTrE's contribution to the study, *Learning to Become a Creative Professional*. Table 1 provides an overview of the Creative Interventions project, with SCEPTrE's contributions highlighted in blue.

**Table 1 The Creative Interventions Project, 2008-2010**

Case study	Data collection and facilitation tools	Timeline
1 Young Design Programme	Focus groups (n=7) Interviews (student=6, tutor=3, WRL provider=3) Documents Observations Reflective journals (n=3)	October 2008 - March 2009
2 Design Thinking workshops	Facilitated engagement of staff Use of design thinking tools Video capture – film for disseminating techniques	January 2009
3 BA(Hons) Arts and Event Management	Focus groups (n=8) Interviews (students n=2 and tutors n=3) Documents	November 2008 - September 2009
4 Leeds Met-Festival Republic Partnership	Focus groups (n=6) Interviews (students=4, tutors=2) Documents	July - November 2009
5 Creative Transfer Between Practice-based Arts Education and Work	Video interviews (students n=19)	November 2009 - June 2010
6 Learning to Become a Creative Professional in the Creative Arts	Interviews (students n=7) Questionnaires (respondents n=40) Video film production (students n=2)	March – July 2010
7 Learning to Become a Creative Professional in the other disciplines	Interviews Questionnaires Video Film	October-November 2010

Before we examine the project itself, some thought must be given to the complexity of the issues addressed. The following is an abridged version of the discussion that can be found in Willis (2010b).

## Critical issues

### *What is creativity?*

There is no single definition of 'creativity': its assumed meaning will be influenced by the individual's values and experiences. For this reason, many writers (e.g. Cskiszentmihalyi 1999, Edwards, McGoldrick and Oliver 2006) believe that discussion of creativity must be grounded within the traditions of a given field if it is to have meaning. So, for instance, Marxist theorists focus on the power associations between creativity and common culture (e.g. Eagleton 1967; Rosen 1982) and the potential for market exploitation (Willis et al. 1990), whilst others follow Bergson (1911) in questions of individual identity.

We shall return to the culture/Culture issue, and individual capacity for being creative. For now, let us acknowledge another difficulty in attempting to define the concept: creativity is so omnipresent and apparently integral to our human nature that it is often referred to disparagingly as 'motherhood and apple pie' (e.g. Edwards et al. 2006:62); in other words, it is too 'normal' to warrant analysis.

Pope (2005:xv) adds to the complexity of the debate by opposing the process of creativity to the product created, reminding us 'there is no creation from nothing': there is always something prior to and after the creation. This forces us to confront another common assumption: that creativity implies novelty. According to Pope's logic, absolute novelty is impossible. Sternberg and Lubart (1996) ascribe this preoccupation with novelty to Western cultures, in contrast to Eastern conceptions which value recreation of the old.

These brief references cannot do justice to the wealth of literature produced on the theme, and are inevitably selective. Interested readers will find fuller accounts in Pope (2005), Jackson (2008) and Jones (2009).

So what is an appropriate definition of creativity? Is it a skill, a competence, a disposition, a quality? A starting point is offered by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority:

We believe creativity is the wider ability to question, make connections, innovate, problem solve and reflect critically. These are skills that are demanded by today's employers.  
(QCA online Creative Partnerships Information booklet, page 2)

In other words, it implies cognitive skills and, for the QCA, is related to employability. This statement leads to our next question, the value of creativity and the purposes it may serve.

### ***Why is creativity valued?***

We have already noted the contribution creativity makes to individual self-fulfilment (Marshall 1963, Scruton 1987) and to our common culture (Williams 1963), bringing social cohesion and affective enrichment. Bentley and Selzer (1999) recognise its functional value beyond the workplace, enhancing self-confidence, and begging questions of challenge and support. Jones (2009) and Pope (2005) offer ready-made accounts of the historical values attributed to creativity, and trace these in the contexts of changing political and social contexts. Notions of creativity and culture merge as products are at one and the same time representations of their context and, over time, become established as symbols of their context (culture/subculture). Returning to political interest in the subject, Smith-Bingham (2006) specifically distinguishes between creativity (associated with art) and innovation (associated with business).

In short, these various expectations reveal three underpinning values: creativity for

- Personal development and wellbeing
- Social identity and affective wellbeing
- Economic and industrial productivity

### ***Is creativity universal?***

Implicit within the political interest in creativity is an assumption that the nation's economic prosperity and cultural prestige rely on it. The responsibility lies not with a few highly talented individuals alone but with us all, as observed by this writer:

The fundamental shift from focusing on individual traits and abilities to concentrating on organisations, climates and cultures has had the effect of universalising creativity... The shift has encouraged perspectives that suggest that everyone is capable of being creative, given the right environment. (Craft 2005:7)

Where once creativity was associated with brilliance, an exceptional ability, related to Culture and the Arts, now it becomes an attribute which is common to us all and is no longer confined to that higher domain (cf. Jones 2009). The notion of high Culture is being superseded by that of culture, as expressed in the Creative Partnerships Programme quotation cited above. A policy for creativity is rooted in different values from that which sees Culture as high, and the pursuit of novelty risks upsetting the *status quo*: using Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) notion of cultural capital, novelty requires a shift in the dominant form of capital valued. It is for this reason that Csikszentmihalyi (1999:327) proposes working at the level of values before that of individual creativity.

### ***Can creativity be enhanced?***

This discussion leads us to another question: if creativity is within the grasp of everyone, albeit to different extents, can it be taught or, at the very least, enhanced through appropriate learning opportunities? The research is founded on the belief that a greater understanding of how and where creativity occurs will help us to offer enhanced opportunities for its development. This assumes that creativity is accessible to most people as opposed to the notion of innate, rare, genius (e.g. Galton 1869, Tusa 2003) or of something extra-ordinary (Pope 2005), whilst recognising the existence of some exceptionally creative individuals (cf. Winnicott 1971).

Not only does this perspective change the conceptualisation of creator and creative product: it challenges traditions and will be seen by some as an erosion of quality. Even those who are drawn towards the flattening of hierarchies may be suspicious of the motives for doing so: is it for purposes of control or really egalitarian?

## ***Creativity in Higher Education***

Jackson and Sinclair (2006:132-137) propose the following reasons for seeking to develop creativity in HE students:

- Creativity is important to individuals' sense of identity
- It can lead to creative outcomes
- Creativity blends with other capabilities to enhance motivation and self-belief, essential to success
- It provides a reference point for HE pedagogy e.g. a cognitive apprenticeship model
- HE is increasingly seen to have a responsibility to prepare students for complex, lifelong, learning where critical reflection and self-evaluation are required

Attempts to conceptualise creativity are extensive: for instance, Perkins (1981) envisages a 'snowflake' model, where six generic traits are identified (high tolerance for complexity; problem finding; ability to view issues from multiple perspectives; risk taking; critical thinking; self-motivation). Others, such as Taylor (1959) and Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), focus on engagement and the levels of skill acquisition, whilst Sternberg and Lubart (1996) seek a balance of competence in three domains (analytical abilities, creative abilities, practical abilities). More recently, Biggs (2002, 2003) is concerned with 'constructive alignment', the relationship between student, teacher and task. Oliver et al. (2006) examined the perceptions of students and academics, and Greene (2004) identified eight capabilities associated with successful individuals. There is one common message in these diverse models:

we have to see creativity not as a stand alone skill but as part of a package of dispositions, qualities and capabilities for being successful in whatever domains learners choose to live and work. (Jackson 2008:3)

Although Oliver et al. (2006) and Greene (2004) share some views, the latter places greater emphasis on valuing and preserving novelty. He proposes a questionnaire comprising 60 models of creativity, which respondents rate individually to show their personal significance (Greene 2004). This questionnaire has greatly informed in our research instruments.

Drawing on these notions and values, how can HE increase students' creative capacities? Edwards et al. (2006:64-65) identified some desired outcomes to be built into curriculum design. There should be opportunities for

- Development of critical thinking
- Encouraging lateral thinking and problem working
- Movement between the University and outside context
- Giving space for group work
- Increasing student confidence in staff and peers
- Having fun

But as always, these objectives must compete with discipline-specific knowledge and skills. Sadly,

the specific problem of students' creative development in our higher education system seems trivial compared to the mega problems the world is trying to deal with – like the current recession (Jackson 2010:3)

and it is doubtful whether, under prevailing budgetary constraints, *Creative Innovations* would receive central sponsorship (The Stage, 13 May 2010). Furthermore, we recall Barnett's 'will to learn' (Barnett 2009): students must want to engage with the creative curriculum. Hence the challenge for HE institutions is to motivate, support, value and provide appropriate learning experiences in a competitive environment where expectations will vary and resources may be tight.

Then there are problems associated with if and how to assess creativity in a system more used to predictive, outcome-based achievement. Beyond the ethical dimension lie the practical difficulties of devising a reliable measurement. This research aims to investigate perceived learning contexts, and the factors conducive to creative development, thereby offering some evidence for future curriculum planners and assessors.

### ***Creativity as a life-wide experience***

The discussion has hitherto focused on the formal curriculum offered through programmes of study. In most disciplines at the University of Surrey, undergraduates will have the opportunity to undertake an extended period of integrated work

experience, generally assessed separately from the degree (Willis 2009, 2010a), but in an area relevant to the degree. This and other programme-related activity we describe as the 'co-curriculum'. England's universities are increasingly recognising the importance of life-wide experiences, those gained through part-time employment, community and volunteering activities, roles as carers and so on, which we term 'extra-curricular'. At the time of writing, SCEPTRe is piloting its Lifewide Learning Award (see <http://www.surreylifewideaward.net/> and Jackson 2010), which allows students to gain accreditation for their co- and extra-curricular achievements. The companion article to this chapter, Chapter D4, takes up the implications of the research findings for life-wide experience.

### ***Creativity: a wicked problem***

Creativity is therefore emerging as a highly political, as well as complex and elusive, subject. We are in the domain of what Jackson has termed 'wicked problems':

Wicked problems emerge from the technical, informational, social, economic, political and cultural complexity that we are immersed in. (...) Such problems cannot be solved through rational, linear thinking because the problem definition and our understanding of it evolve as new possible solutions are invented and implemented. (Jackson 2010:2)

Snowden (2000) provides us with an alternative, but equally messy, conceptualisation of subjects such as that studied in this research. His Cynefin framework differentiates between four types of situation, graded according to their degree of cause and effect, from simple → complicated → complex → chaotic. Under these terms, we are dealing with issues located in the complex sector, where cause and effect make sense only in retrospect, and the multiple factors contributing to a situation are unlikely to come together again in exactly the same form. Nevertheless, we are able to learn from such situations and derive principles for the future.

We recognise that today's world is in constant flux and that the nature of work and leisure for which we are preparing our students is unpredictable. It is insufficient to develop subject knowledge and practical skills. We believe that professional and personal fulfilment can be enhanced through offering students opportunities where they may use their creativity and develop positive attitudes and dispositions, in addition to acquiring their disciplinary specialist training.

## **The research questions and methodology**

### ***The research questions***

It was in this context that two research questions were formulated:

1. Where in creative arts students' personally determined life-wide curriculum are they able to express and develop their creativity so that they realise their creative potential?
2. What does being professional mean to creative arts students and how do they develop professional attitudes, capabilities and confidence to be a creative professional through their life-wide curriculum? This will identify the experiences through which they develop their capabilities within and outside the credit-bearing curriculum.

The first question would examine students' activities in the curriculum, co- and extra-curriculum, whilst the second explored their perceptions of creativity and professionalism in their fields of study. There were three levels of enquiry:

### ***The research instruments and respondents***

#### ***1 On-line survey***

All undergraduate students of Dance and Culture, Music and Film and Theatre Studies in the Faculty of Arts and students at the Guildford School of Arts (GSA) were invited to complete an anonymous, on-line questionnaire, delivered via the Values Exchange platform (see <http://sceptre.values-exchange.co.uk/>).

The questionnaire sought qualitative and quantitative data. It drew, with the author's permission, from the 60 models of creativity designed by Greene (2004), whereby respondents assess the importance to them of different aspects of creativity. The questions were grouped into the following sections:



1. Personal and study data
2. Learning and development within the programme of study (curriculum)
3. Learning and development outside the programme of study but related to it (co-curriculum)
4. Life-wide learning and development (extra-curriculum)
5. Views on creativity and professionalism

This tool would provide the initial data for analysis against theories of creativity and of professional development both within and beyond the programme of study. A copy of the questionnaire can be found at Annex A of the full report (Willis 2010a), available on line at: <http://learningtobeprofessional.pbworks.com/Becoming-a-creative-professional> .

40 undergraduates completed the questionnaire, representing each subject area, all levels of study, male and female, Home and Overseas students, and with ages ranging from 18 to 30 years.

### *2 Interview*

A representative sample of students was selected from those respondents willing to proceed to interview stage. Semi-structured interviews lasting 45-50 minutes were audio-recorded and fully transcribed. Individual interview schedules were prepared around the following themes:

- personal definition of creativity
- factors that facilitate the development of creativity e.g. who, what, where
- factors that inhibit development of creativity, context as above
- examples of creativity and creative individuals, experienced in any context
- examples of creativity they have experienced in curriculum design
- relationship of assessment and creativity

10 students were selected for interview, of whom six honoured their commitment. This inevitably affected the intended balance of level and discipline.

### *3 Video resource*

Two of the interviewees were re-interviewed on camera. Films were edited in order to create a series of brief monologues to complement the other project outputs using a different medium, which can be accessed by students, academics and anyone interested in creativity. They discuss individual perceptions of creativity and professionalism, students' experiences and aspirations. The films can be viewed on line at <http://learningtobeprofessional.pbworks.com/Becoming-a-creative-professional>.

## **Creativity**

In order to explore where and how respondents learn to become creative professionals, we must first ask, what do they understand creativity to mean?

### ***Student conceptions of creativity***

Students' perceptions of creativity were invited through an open-ended question, before they were asked to rate the significance of specific dimensions. Their collective views raised many of the issues touched on above. They cited a variety of personal qualities, dispositions and skills, some of which can be acquired and developed and others arguably innate. Their suggestions included:

- Originality, flair
- Inspiring or provoking others
- Coping with different situations
- Quick and lateral thinking; thinking outside the box
- Open-mindedness, willingness to compromise
- Responsibility
- Self-confidence
- Risk-taking, bold choices

- Sensitivity, understanding others
- Being organised and directed
- Cultural awareness
- Expression
- Self-motivation
- Self-discipline
- Technical ability
- Integrity, respect
- Dedication, commitment
- Ambition, resilience

For many, creativity is associated with ‘thinking outside the box’ and being ‘quirky’. It is generally seen as something which can be nurtured, though views vary as illustrated by these two interviewees:

I think you have to practise it, I don't think you can just have it like that, I think you really have to practise it. But whether you can learn it, I'm not sure ... (E, Level 1 Music)

I think that creativity is definitely something you can improve. On the other hand, there's obviously like musical prodigies that have, er, you know, like a ridiculous amount of creativity like instinctively, which through teaching you could never really achieve. (O, Level 3 Music)

### ***Creativity through co-curricular activities***

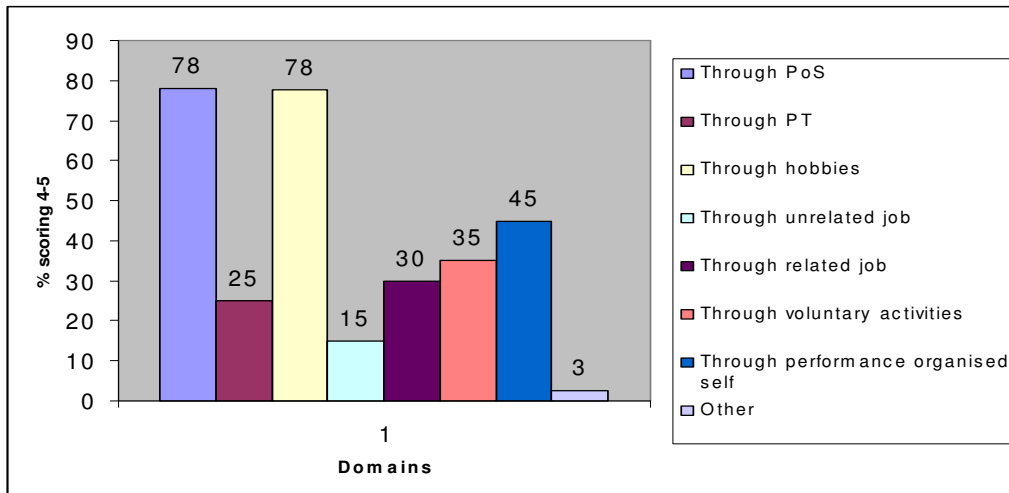
Respondents listed an array of co-curricular activities that they engage in and which enable them to exercise their creativity:

- studio and recording work
- teaching
- entering competitions
- joining ensembles, societies, clubs
- member of local and national orchestras
- volunteering e.g. at a festival in the USA; charity work e.g. for elderly
- ran own business/company; set up own group/team
- other performance training
- student representative in department
- part-time work involving social interaction and management
- participation in performances (theatre)
- practicing other forms of creative art
- keeping abreast of local and national tours
- getting to rehearsals on time
- psychology of learning – exercise and healthy living
- music arranging and transcription
- choreography for other companies
- mentoring

The questionnaire asked them to rate, on the scale 1 = of very little importance to 5 = very important, a series of activities through which they might be developing their creativity. Table 2 shows the percentage of respondents who scored each factor 4 or 5.



**Table 2 Domains of greatest perceived significance for creative development**

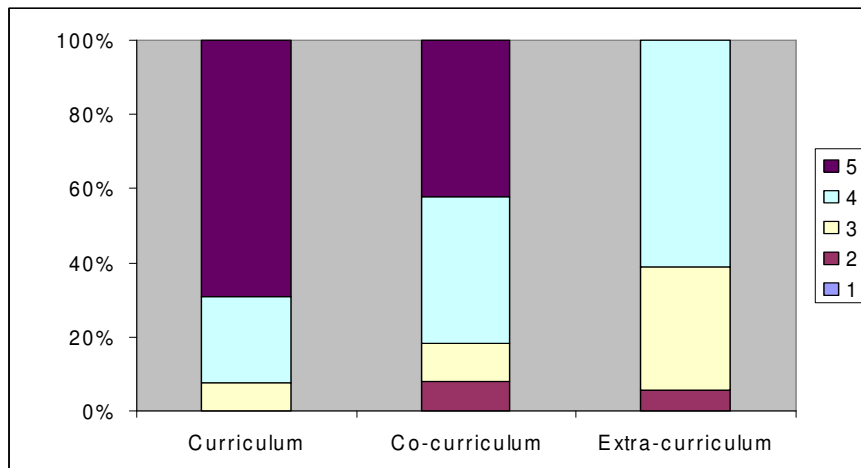


This indicates that their programme of study and (co-curricular) hobbies are most significant, but surprisingly, having a discipline-related job scored only 25%. We hypothesised that this may be indicative less of little learning being involved and more of respondents' failure to appreciate the learning achieved in informal contexts. To test this, we compared perceived creative development in each of the three domains (Table 3).

**Comparative domains of creative development (Table 3)**

The curriculum is clearly recognised as the most significant domain, with co-curricular activities (i.e. for these students, activities closely related to their disciplines), highly rated. By contrast, creativity in their wider life context (extracurricular) is scored considerably lower, apparently confirming students' non-recognition of development in informal learning contexts.

**Table 3 Perceived development of creativity in the 3 domains**



**Enhancing creativity**

Respondents were asked what was conducive or obstructive to their creativity. They identified both external and internal factors.

**Environment**

The physical environment did not normally impact on perceived creativity. As one interviewee explained:

The things I do in the programme of study and in my free time are quite similar so it's probably about the same in either place. I don't feel more creative at home or in my work experience than I did here. It's about the same, 'cos it's pretty much the same stuff. (D, Level 3 Music)

#### *Motivation*

Self-motivation emerged as a significant factor for many respondents. This student acknowledges external and internal factors in her comment:

And sometimes that's where the best bits come, it doesn't matter what the location. You could have a beautiful mirrored studio with two walls of just pure glass and beautiful scenery around you and you've still not come up with something. So I think it's the drive of yourself that brings out the creativity as well. (A, Level 3 Dance)

#### *Deadlines*

Many respondents also referred to the effect of deadlines. In general, these are seen to be helpful and practice for real professional life, though a balance is needed between constructive pressure and overload, as this interviewee describes:

It's usually when I run out of time and then all, like, if I'm under that much – there's a certain amount of pressure I can be under and then if the pressure gets too much, then somehow my creativity goes and I kind of go into a panic and I don't have any ideas. But, yeah, when you get the right amount of pressure, and the right, kind of, I suppose kind of the right atmosphere, that's when I find I have the most ideas, I'm writing things down, or doing things the whole time. (E, Level 1 Music)

#### *Quality of product*

Deadlines are sometimes felt to be detrimental to the quality of the creative product, but again, this is recognised as the professional environment for which students are being prepared. This interviewee thrives under pressure but acknowledges the negative impact it can have on his work:

obviously it's a job you've got to do but, this is one thing I've always found with creative stuff, it's not, it is enjoyable, but it's when you have to work to a deadline, which is obviously quite a realistic thing, you know in the real world, when you're working, that I find difficult, because to really create a good piece you have to be in your own freedom, and the best work is ... although I always work best when I'm under stress. (J, Level 1 Tonmeister)

#### *Intrinsic rewards: enjoyment, achievement, self-fulfilment*

There is little evidence of respondents being motivated by external rewards. The words of this student remind us of the sheer joy derived from creation:

you have a moment to yourself, and you have the satisfaction of completing something at the end, that you have done creatively. I guess it's the things that I do creatively I feel are an achievement, whether it's something small, like doing a poster for advertising something, or going on stage and doing a show, and having that satisfaction as well. (A, Level 3 Dance)

#### *Assessment*

Contrary to expectations, respondents appreciated formal assessment, seeing it as 'a chance to shine, kind of thing' (E, Level 1 Music) and preparation for 'the real world'. So long as it was perceived to be fair, they accepted the need for assessment.

#### ***Transferability of creativity***

Respondents were asked whether their creativity was transferable to other domains of their life. Some typical replies were:

- you have to be creative in how you transfer such creativity for it to be successful
- it is the attributes of creativity that makes a person successful in any field

- confidence developed is transferable
- ability to work in a team is being used in other domains e.g. part-time (unrelated) work
- resolving any problem demands analysis, group work, communication and creativity
- aspects of abstract thinking and problem-solving are involved and these are transferable
- ‘creativity is not about an art form, it is a mindset’
- thinking outside the box and being original are always transferable to new ideas and other jobs
- ‘the forms of creativity needed to be a professional musician are the same as needed to be an amateur musician – the only difference is luck’
- ‘learning to compromise and put others before me in a team helped me to live alongside my housemates and avoid any major disagreements’
- transferable from everyday situations to specific contexts

## **Creative Professionals**

We may now turn to the broader question, where and how do these students learn to become creative professionals? First, what does the term ‘professional’ denote for them?

### ***Defining professionalism***

As before, respondents were asked an open question. Their responses, in random order, identified the following dimensions:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • being creative                           | • critical evaluation of self                       |
| • assertiveness                            | • adaptability                                      |
| • technical competence                     | • communication skills                              |
| • ability to work with all types of people | • passion   |
| • good literacy skills                     | • self-motivation                                   |
| • analytical and research skills           | • resilience  |
| • problem-solving                          | • ‘am impeccable work ethic’; professional attitude |
| • leadership                               | • attention to detail                               |
| • optimism                                 | • aspiration  |
| • emotional sensitivity                    | • determination; be committed                       |
| • team management                          | • decisiveness                                      |
| • patience                                 | • responsibility                                    |
| • organisational skills                    | • self-confidence                                   |
| • appreciation of others                   | • cope with lack of sleep                           |
| • imagination                              | • be healthy  |
| • self-exploration, self-awareness         | • critical evaluation of self                       |

### ***Becoming creative professionals***

Next, respondents were asked to rate a series of possible dimensions of professionalism, using the same scale 1 = very little to 5 = very high significance. Similar questions were asked in each of the 3 domains (curriculum, co- and extra-curriculum). The factors which scored highest across all domains were, in descending order:

Looking after yourself  
 Team work  
 Being creative  
 Active listening  
 Adaptability  
 Evaluation  
 Enquiry skills  
 Verbal communication  
 Written communication  
 Subject knowledge

Self-management  
Reflection/self-evaluation

This list comprises a mixture of generic and cognitive skills, as well as personal dispositions. Let us contrast it with the dimensions perceived to be most significant in the co-curricular context:

Looking after yourself  
Organising something  
Performing in public  
Learning/playing a musical instrument

Personal management is common to both domains, but the other dimensions are much less generic than in the first list, suggesting that learning is appreciated in a defined context e.g. performance or playing a new instrument.

The most significant dimensions of the extra-curricular context were, still in descending order:

Creativity  
Interaction with others  
Verbal communication  
Listening skills  
Interaction with clients  
Critical reflection/evaluation of self  
Understanding career goals  
Self-confidence

This list echoes much of the first one, but explicitly recognises the importance of self-confidence. So *where* do respondents perceive their professional development to occur?

### ***Domains of professional development***

To answer this question, we return to the questions from which the above lists were derived. As noted, the questionnaire asked respondents to rate a series of dimensions within each of the three domains. Table 4 brings together each question, grouping them in columns to correspond respectively with the curriculum, co-curriculum and extra-curriculum. Colour coding has been added to highlight the variety of learning, using the code given in the key. The percentages shown represent the proportion of respondents who scored each dimension 4 or 5. In the first column, respondents added dimensions of their own, so these elements have no scores attached.

The first observation must be the rainbow effect present in each domain: all three offer a wide range of developmental opportunities, including subject-specific theory and practice, generic skills, personal management, metacognition and dispositions. This would imply that professional development can be achieved in any and all domains. However, if we look at the percentages who scored dimensions as highly significant, considerable variability is found. With the exception of looking after yourself, in the co-curriculum, there are only 2 scores above 65% in the middle (co-curricular) and third (extra-curricular) columns. Indeed, the scores in these columns are generally in the 40% or less.

If we look back to the lists of highest perceived development quoted above and add their scores, there is a marked quantitative difference: they descend from 90%-80% in the formal curricular context to 55%-40% in the informal life-wide context, with the co-curriculum falling between the two. Again we must ask, does this mean that there is a qualitative difference in the degree of professional learning taking place outside the curriculum or do the figures reflect a failure of students to appreciate the learning that occurs in unstructured situations?

In order to examine this question more closely, we return to the dimensions perceived to be most important, and compare their total scores (1-5) in each domain.

**Table 4 Domains and dimensions of creative professionalism**

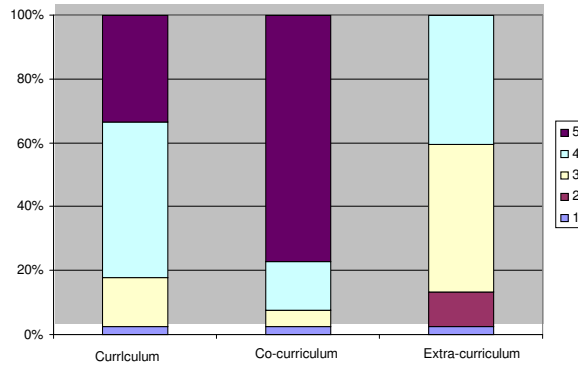
Curricular development Qs 4-5	% 4/5	Co-curricular development Q 8	% 4/5	Extra-curricular development Q 9	% 4/5
Subj Knowledge	80	8.1 Looking after yourself	90	9.1 Find/apply for job	20
Analysis	78	8.2 Being a parent	0	9.2 Interview prep	13
Evaluation	85	8.3 Caring for someone	13	9.3 Being interviewed	13
Synthesis	58	8.4 Having a job that IS related to your chosen career	33	9.4 Learning in work context	15
Problem solving	38	8.5 Participating in the professional training scheme	28	9.5 Applying classroom learning	15
Design solutions	55	8.6 Creating or running a business	3	9.6 Gaining work experience	28
Enquiry skills	85	8.7 Volunteering	38	9.7 Understand how business works	15
Research skills	68	8.8 Significant travel experience	35	9.8 Being managed	8
Written communication	83	8.9 Living in another country	23	9.9 Professional skills	30
Verbal communication	85	8.10 Meeting/interacting with other cultures	53	9.10 Written communication	35
Active listening	88	8.11 Coping with personal illness	15	9.11 Verbal communication	45
Use of IT	55	8.12 Organising something	65	9.12 Graphical/visual communication	25
Visual/graphical	40	8.13 Fund raising	30	9.13 Listening skills	45
Other communication	5	8.14 Participating in marathon/other challenging experience	5	9.14 Assess a situation	35
Experience real work	65	8.15 Duke of Edinburgh Award	3	9.15 Find out for action	33
Team work	90	8.16 Learning another language	18	9.16 Make decision with little information	33
Adaptability	85	8.17 Learning a skill e.g. to drive	40	9.17 Evaluate/reflect on performance	40
Leadership	60	8.18 Experience of performing in public	78	9.18 How to improve performance	38
Being creative	90	8.19 Learning/playing a sport	15	9.19 How to use IT skills	18
Being enterprising	50	8.20 Learning/playing a musical instrument	55	9.20 Work with colleagues	43
Ethical awareness	53	8.21 Being part of a drama group	23	9.21 Interact with others	45
Self-management	80	8.22 Active involvement in other creative enterprises	30	9.22 Interact with clients	38
Reflection. Self-evaluation	80	8.23 Being a member of a student society	48	9.23 Socialise with other cultures	33
Learning another language	15	8.24 Mentoring or coaching others	38	9.24 Manage others	20
<b>Perceived to be developing through programme</b>		8.25 Participating in skills-based USSU activities	15	9.25 Manage self	38
Acquiring greater confidence and assertiveness		8.26 Participating in Careers Service events	15	9.26 Manage emotions	35
opportunities to perform		8.27 Participating in SPLASH events	10	9.27 Behave ethically	30
learning from other students' strengths/ weaknesses		8.28 Participating in other skills-based activities	38	9.28 Negotiate with others	25
Refining interpersonal ('people') skills				9.29 Persuade others	25
listening and observing				9.30 Understand career goals	40
collaborations and social interaction				9.31 Challenging situations	28
applying academic knowledge to real life situations				9.32 Risk taking	25
'delving into our past and our personal emotions'				9.33 Managing challenging responsibilities	20
practical ('logic side') of career planning				9.34 Being creative	55
Re-establish links with cultural background				9.35 Confidence in own abilities	40
increasing motivation				9.36 Other	3
aspiring to a more professional standard					
become more independent					

**Key**  
 Green = personal management/ taking responsibility  
 Pink = practical skills and work related knowledge  
 Blue = generic skills  
 Yellow = dispositions  
 Orange = metacognition

*Personal management*

Personal management, as opposed to study management, features in each domain. Table 5 aligns the scores registered in each, showing clearly that respondents feel their greatest development in this respect comes in their co-curricular experience, though when scores 4 and 5 are combined, the curriculum is almost equally important. Significantly, extracurricular (life-wide) activities receive less recognition, which is perhaps counter-intuitive for this dimension.

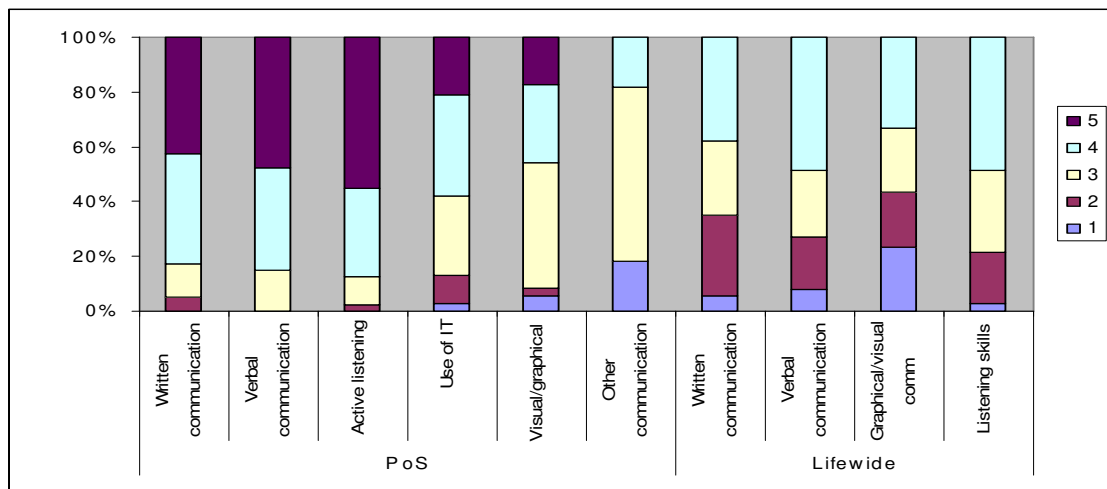
**Table 5 Developing personal-management skills**



*Communication*

Communication emerged as highly important to these students. Table 6 shows the different forms of communication and perceived development through their programme of studies and extra-curricular activities. Once more, there is a distinct difference between the domains, with the latter being rated as less significant.

**Table 6 Developing communication skills**

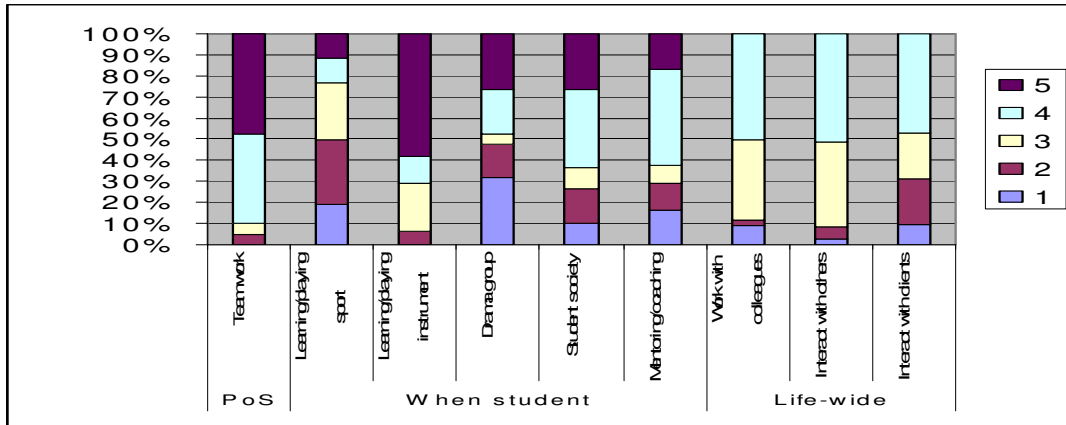


*Team work*

Closely related to communication, team work has been seen to be important for these students. Yet again, the curriculum is perceived as the most important domain of enhancement, with qualitatively different perceptions in the extra-curricular domain and the co-curriculum falling between these (Table 7).



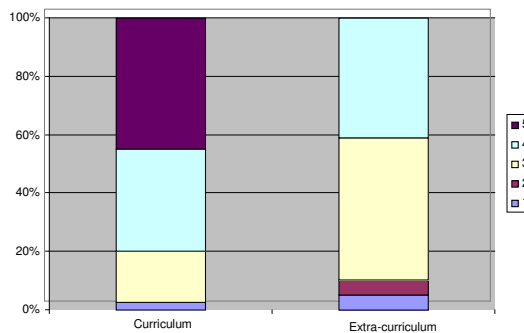
**Table 7 Learning to work in a team**



**Critical reflection**

Views on the development of critical reflection highlight the vast difference in appreciation of development in formal and informal contexts (Table 8). Do these scores really reflect lack of opportunity to reflect in the life-wide context, or do students simply fail to acknowledge the development experienced there?

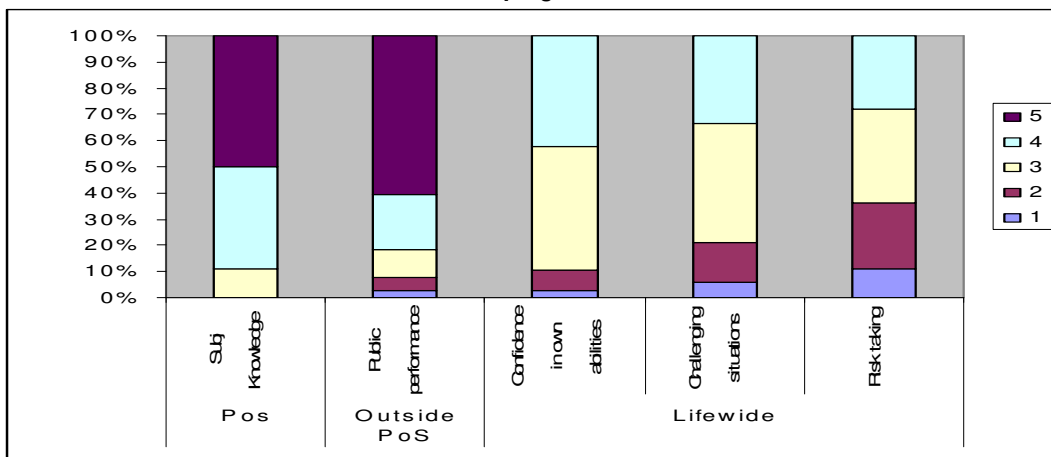
**Table 8 Developing critical reflection**



**Self-confidence**

We saw that respondents appreciated the role self-confidence plays in their being able to act professionally. Table 9 compares their perceptions of development across all three domains, revealing comparability between the curriculum and co-curriculum but far less confidence in the life-wide context. Employers expect graduates to have the capacity to take risks and face challenging situations but respondents do not recognise high development in their life-wide experiences. Again this may reflect a need for formal boundaries and support mechanisms before they are sufficient confident to take risks.

**Table 9 Developing self-confidence**



## Some conclusions

A comprehensive list of the findings relating to each of the research questions can be found at Annex A.

## Creativity

Creativity is seen as the capacity to be innovative, whether in personal or absolute terms. It requires a degree of risk-taking, since it challenges conventional norms, and this in turn demands self-confidence. Respondents favour the view that creativity is innate in most of us, but must be nurtured through exposure to a conducive environment. This validates our enquiring into the subject, and provides a basis for future curriculum planning. Clearly, assessment of the dimensions entailed is difficult: learning may have been banked for drawing upon at some points still far in the future, and, even if immediate, evidence will be hard to evaluate objectively.

We began with a discussion of the value placed on creativity by employers and economists. The data demonstrate students' awareness of this functional value but their sense of self-fulfilment and enjoyment far outweigh this. For them, creativity is associated rather with self-actualisation.

A political dilemma looms: whilst creativity is recognised as a valuable, arguably essential, element of social and economic wellbeing, funding of creative endeavours may rank low in government's priorities at a time of financial constraint. This reminds us of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, an issue to which we shall return in our companion chapter.

## Creative professionals

In brief, it has been found that creative professionals perceive their programme of study to be the greatest source of creative development, followed by their co-curriculum, leisure pursuits that are closely related to their discipline. However, they are also engaged in a vast array of life-wide experiences (extracurriculum), including part-time paid work, voluntary work, performance, caring roles, which all offer opportunities for them to develop the same skills and dispositions that they associate with professionalism. Many appear not to appreciate the learning opportunities that these activities offer when they are asked to rate dimensions of their learning, despite evidence of extensive experience and profound critical reflection when they give narrative accounts of their co- and extra-curricula experiences. This risks their under-selling themselves to potential employers, and may undermine their planning for their own personal and professional development.

It has been hypothesised that students may be unused to valuing the learning achieved in informal, unstructured contexts such as their life-wide experiences. We propose that, by providing a framework within which they may reflect and gain feedback on such experience, they can learn to appreciate the true value of informal learning and to articulate it when seeking graduate employment. Life-wide learning schemes such as the Surrey Lifewide Learning Award, currently being piloted, may offer just such a framework. The complementary paper (Willis 2010 ) examines one student's progression through the scheme.

## Where next?

Throughout the analysis it has been stressed that the findings may not be typical of students in other disciplines and that further investigation within other subject areas is desirable. The next step in this research is to use the same approach with undergraduates in non-creative arts subjects. The study will be conducted in autumn 2010 and will enable us to confirm or revise the findings to date.

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## Summary of research findings (source: Willis 2010b)

### ***Creativity***

- The curriculum and co-curriculum are the domains of greatest creative expression
- These creative arts students engage in many co-curricular activities that are closely related to their discipline
- There is no single definition of creativity: respondents associate it with a range of dispositions and personal qualities and these vary according to their disciplinary background
- Creativity is seen as both innate and something which can be nurtured
- Respondents distinguish between natural creativity and extraordinary creativity
- Natural creativity is conceived as an ability which can be transferred to other contexts
- The findings confirm much of the existing literature on creativity
- Views on nurture and transferability validate curriculum development aimed at increasing opportunities for creative expression
- The qualitative data convey the extreme personal fulfilment derived from being creative
- External approval is sought, but respondents are motivated predominantly by intrinsic rewards
- These students may not be typical of other disciplines in the importance they attribute to being creative

### ***Students' perceptions of professionalism***

- Professionalism is associated with self-management and subject knowledge
- Metacognition and critical reflection are perceived to be important elements
- Communication skills (oral, written, listening, IT and non-verbal expression) are highly significant
- Self-confidence and adaptability are important dimensions
- For these students, practice and performance were strongly related to their co-curriculum, but this finding is likely to be characteristic of their discipline and not common to all others
- The mix of skills, dispositions, knowledge and metacognition found supports the findings of other researchers on the complexity of professionalism
- If typical, these respondents point to a general lack of interest in extra-curricular activities offered by the university and Students' Union
- Once again, caution is urged in reading the data quantitatively: individuals have been cited whose unique stories contradict apparent statistical trends

### ***How and where students learn to become creative professionals***

- The programme of study is the most significant domain for learning to become professional at this stage in students' lives
- There is clear evidence in respondents' narrative accounts of extensive professional learning in domains other than the curriculum but this is not acknowledged commensurately in the quantitative data
- It seems likely that students are unused to evaluating and valuing their professional learning in informal contexts
- It has been suggested that this may reflect a need for learning in other domains to be made explicit e.g. through feedback on performance
- Schemes such as the Lifewide Learning Award may also provide a framework within which to reflect critically on their professional development
- The most significant means of learning to become professional are through developing the ability to manage their personal lives, work well with others, develop strong communication skills and hence become self-confident in their interactions
- These findings produce an image of professionalism as a 'package' which combines dispositions, skills and knowledge, as found in recent literature e.g. Jackson 2008, 2010.