

LOOKING OUT:

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENTS WITH CREATIVE
AND CULTURAL ENTERPRISE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

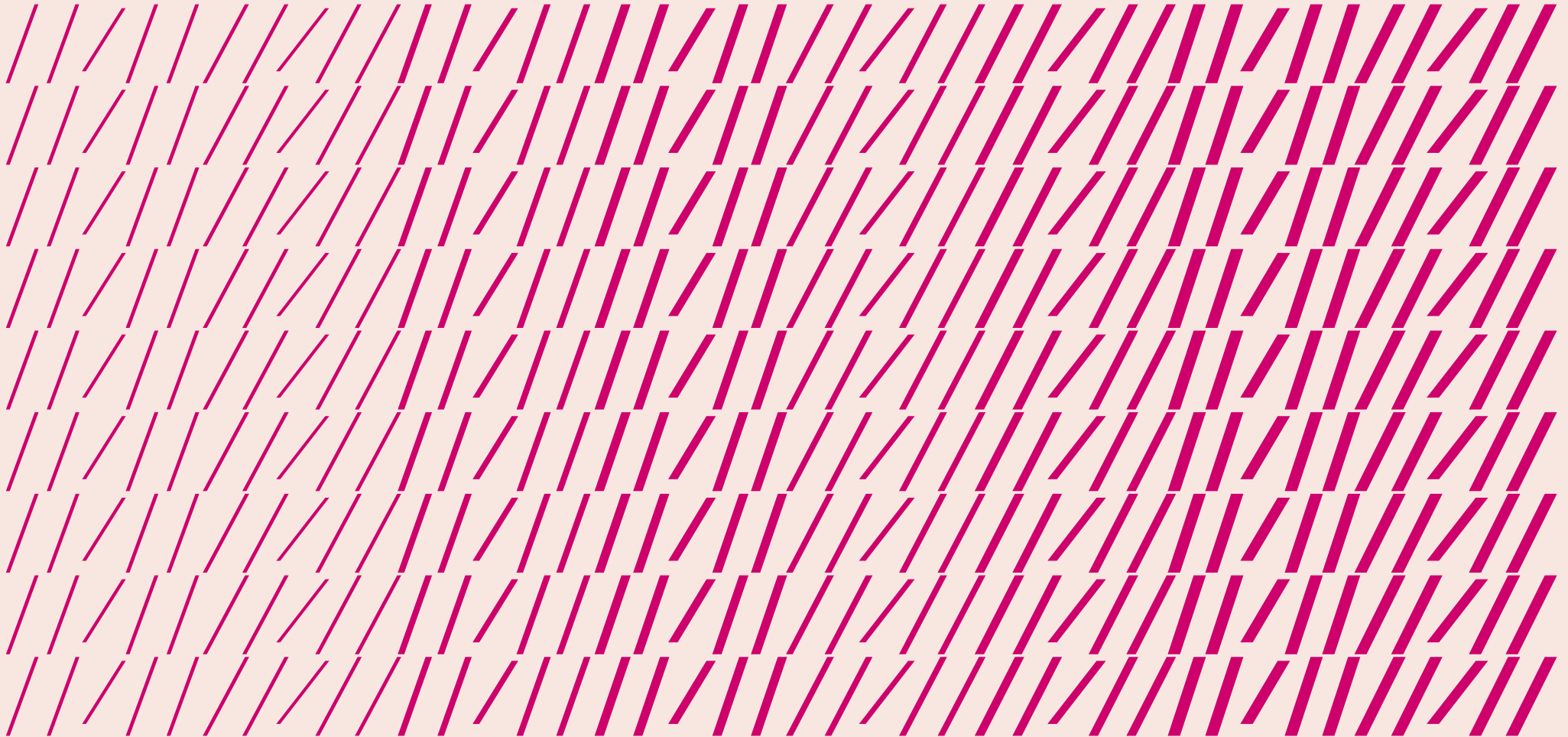
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education Academy Art, Design, Media Subject Centre (ADM-HEA) undertook this research with the support of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

There is a popular view that there are low levels of engagement between art, design and media Higher Education schools, colleges and faculties on the one hand (throughout this report these are referred to collectively as Arts HE) and creative and cultural businesses, organisations and individuals on the other (throughout this report these are referred to collectively as creative industries). Even a cursory review has showed that this view, that there are low levels of engagement is far from realistic.

Creative Britain¹ made a commitment to gather intelligence about what engagements existed, how these could be enhanced and how further engagements could be facilitated. This report is aimed at government departments and agencies, sector agencies, higher education institution (HEI) strategists, individual curriculum developers, teachers, organisations and individuals in the creative industries.

¹ DCMS, (2008). *Creative Britain: New Talents for a New Economy*, Department of Culture Media and Sport, London.

METHODOLOGY

The research included:

- A review of a wide range of literature from government, sector agencies and academic sources to inform the questionnaires and shape the discussions and conclusions.
- A survey of Arts HE departments to determine their size in terms of number and types of courses, number of students and teachers, and range and types of engagement. This generated 108 responses from 75 HEIs.
- A survey asked teacher practitioners who work as teachers and have substantive roles in the creative and cultural sectors to identify the proportion of their time spent on teaching and in their 'professional' role. This survey generated 239 responses.
- Ten semi-structured group interviews with 122 participants.
- Case studies on a range of engagements between Arts HE and creative industry businesses, organisations and individuals.

KEY FINDINGS

Enquiries revealed that over 120 Arts HE and/or creative industries projects have been delivered singly or jointly in 70 HEIs with the support of 16 sector-based organisations.

- 85% of departments and faculties are actively engaged with industry bodies and organisations in student projects, in curriculum development and course validations.
- 64% of courses include an assessed work-placement. However, the majority are relatively brief. 46% are less than four weeks long and 37% are between four and ten weeks long.
- 65% of respondents undertook five or fewer joint research projects. 80% undertook five or fewer knowledge transfer projects during 2007/8. Around 90% of projects involved five or fewer people.
- 85% of responding departments employ creative industry practitioners, 98% of these work as teachers and 51% as external examiners. Visiting lecture series delivered by creative and cultural sector practitioners are in place in over 90% of departments.
- 93% of responding teachers work in creative and cultural industries and organisations. 80% consider themselves freelance or self-employed.
- 15% of teacher practitioners have between ten and fifteen years experience in HE. 23% had more than 15 years HE experience. 72% have worked in creative and cultural businesses and organisations for more than ten years.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The most substantial form of direct engagement is the employment of creative industries practitioners as teachers. Reviews of vacancies from mid 2007 to 2009 show that substantial experience in practice is an alternative to a track record in research. Teacher practitioners are experienced in both worlds and take responsibility for curriculum development.

Student placements are a common form of engagement with creative industries. Along with opportunities to learn from teacher practitioners, placements are the most frequently cited way in which students learn professional skills. Many teachers and practitioners believe that most placements are too short to be effective.

Nearly all the courses surveyed formed links with creative industry and organisations as a means of shaping curricula. This includes external examiners who participate in validation and re-validation of courses.

Many projects and initiatives are brokered and supported by sector agencies including NESTA, the Design Council, Regional Development Agencies and Skillset. Projects support graduate enterprise, business growth, workforce development, knowledge transfer and joint research. However, most projects are small scale and dependent on initiative funding and have low levels of sustainability.

CHALLENGES, BARRIERS, SUCCESSSES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGES

Projects are initiated at local levels and ‘fly below the radar’ of the institution. They therefore have little impact on strategic development. Lack of visibility extends to external agencies, which in turn contributes to perceptions of low levels of engagement. HEIs need to build mechanisms to support and evaluate engagements and to transfer their benefits across the institution.

Most engagements are formed and sustained at local levels by teachers and course leaders. Their concerns lie in the design and delivery of courses, making sure that their knowledge and skills are up to date, and that facilities and learning spaces have relevance to students’ future practice in creative industries. The general perception in Arts HE is that engagements are for the enhancement of undergraduate skills. Workforce development is not well understood or a major aim for those developing engagements.

Strong relationships between HE and industries are set up with the intention of delivering higher level skills to the workforce. The relationships also open

up a new line of income for FE and HE. This in turn delivers benefits in terms of enhancements to curricula, greater opportunities for knowledge transfer and joint research. In contrast, HEIs continue to struggle with a decade of growth in student numbers, poor quality environments as well as reductions in funding over the next few years. Currently they are focused on their core business of undergraduate education.

In parallel with this, industry is reluctant to invest in training in times of recession, especially in untried environments. Agencies that invest in workforce development projects are also operating with reduced funding.

BARRIERS

There have been perceptions of special pleading for Arts HE that have hindered development. The creative industries are uniquely different to other industry sectors in their range of business models, their variety of scale, and their standing in the mixed economies of private and public sector investment. Claims for unique differences in Arts HE are more difficult to

sustain; Arts HE needs specialist learning spaces but so does engineering, for example. It has a curriculum mix of occupational, intellectual and academic components, but so do biosciences. It also has a wide range of pedagogies, but so does medicine. The task is to be clear and articulate about the differences, why they matter and what should be done about them.

Presenting creative industries as a special case in the UK economy is problematic. The failure in the 1980s to recognise the emerging importance of creative industry marginalised creative industries in the development agenda whilst continued emphasis was placed on science, technology and engineering as the engines of innovation and growth. It is important that creative industries are integrated into debates on the economy as a whole. The case is made by agencies in the sector, but key voices like the Confederation of British Industry, the Association of Graduate Employers rarely speak for the creative industries. Efforts need to be taken to redress this.

All sectors of industry are reluctant to invest in training and education during recession investment in training and education particularly challenging for the predominantly small-scale business and organisations that make up the bulk of creative industries. Metrics

for the impact of engagements are limited and favour engagements with commercial sectors, large-scale and homogenous businesses and occupations.

This leads to perceptions of low visibility and impact for engagements with creative industry consequently limiting access to funding and other support.

Levelling the playing field, for example, ensuring that breadth of participation: several small-scale projects across several HEIs is a metric for investment in workforce development will assist Arts HE/creative industry engagements.

There are examples of initiatives for workforce development that are specifically aimed at creative industries. Funding is aimed at meeting development costs and is often used to subsidise participation in start-up phases. However, project managers report that even where participants give good feedback and there is growth in revenue and jobs, participation declines sharply when subsidies end. It is difficult to build sustainability into these initiatives. Individuals and businesses are keen to participate, but are unable or unwilling to meet the full economic cost of these programmes.

The management languages and processes endemic to HE discourage engagement. This may be true

across all sectors, but extreme differences in scale between the HEI and most creative industries may be an additional barrier. It may be that HE is over-bureaucratic and over-encumbered with compliance and quality assurance processes, but the differences between a large hierarchical organisation with highly structured management systems will not be readily reconciled with creative industries. These operate on fluid, loosely organised networks. However, there is evidence that effective engagements are supported when the HEI forms ‘arms-length’, free-standing units or local networks as the interface between the HEI and creative industry partners.

SUCCESSSES

There are a variety of forms of engagements with a range of purposes. When working well, they shape the students’ learning experiences and impact on graduate attributes. Students learn from being in contact with teacher practitioners and from participating in placements. They learn skills and practices that will support them in getting jobs and starting their own businesses. Students benefit from the ways creative industries shape the curriculum; they do this by participating in quality assurance, acting as external

examiners, through industry liaison groups and through validation processes.

Perhaps the most effective engagement in shaping the students’ experience and curriculums towards relevance for creative industries is the employment of teacher practitioners. Looking Out shows that the majority of teachers in Arts HE are either teacher practitioners or have sustained effective links with creative industry. They work in a range of educational roles from general studio teachers to technical and professional specialist subjects. They have a significant impact on curriculum development. Teacher practitioners are experienced and have been central to learning in Arts HE for over half a century, they are drawn from all sectors of creative industries.

There are numerous examples of projects that are aimed at bringing creative industries into the HEI. These engagements might be to support and enhance growth or to offer education for higher-level skills to creative industry practitioners. These projects have been supported by agencies that have worked hard to broker effective engagements. Examples emerging from this research are: The Design Hub at Coventry University, The Creative Business Catalyst programme supported by NESTA, and The Design Train CPD

aimed at design businesses in the South West of England managed by The South-West Design Forum (SWDF).

OPPORTUNITIES

Teacher practitioners with good links to their areas of professional practice, use their networks to form engagements. There are also examples of more systematic efforts to build strategic and institutional links between Arts HE and creative industries. There are risks to relying on individuals' networks as the key mechanism to forming engagements. Unless the institution or department sustains engagements once they are formed, they may breakdown if individuals making the original contact leave the institution. Potential partners who are not part of existing networks find it difficult to break into Arts HE, they don't know who to contact and there are weak mechanisms in place in the institution to assist them.

It is unlikely that high visibility, large-scale workforce development projects with industries like engineering, or large enterprises like the NHS, will be formed with creative industries. However, excellent opportunities exist for shaping existing HEI staff development to the workforce development agenda.

Teacher practitioners have pointed out that most staff development focuses on 'teacherly' aspects and would welcome staff development oriented towards creative industry professional development. As the HEI employs practitioners to bring their industry/practice knowledge to the curriculum, the HEI benefits by improving the knowledge and performance of teacher practitioners, and by enhancing the knowledge transfer processes.

Funding instruments like Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, as well as research and development funding have in some cases remained closed to creative industry sectors. There is now a better understanding of the successes of creative industries, their rapid growth, their scale of employment and their importance to the economy in publicly funded sectors. However policy makers need to develop a clearer understanding of the potential for creative and cultural sectors to contribute to economic growth through innovation, development of new products, services and practices that are transferable to other industry sectors.

The value of Arts HE pedagogies are recognised across a range of disciplines. These are adopted in different contexts to encourage reflective and creative approaches to learning, including the Re-Invention Centre at the University of Warwick and the InQbate

Centre for Creativity in Engineering. The value of Arts HE pedagogies is acknowledged in entrepreneurship education by the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship and the Council for Industry and Higher Education. Arts HE pedagogies are not particularly well articulated to external audiences; work should be undertaken to examine how they can be adapted for effective workforce development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHAPING CURRICULA

HEIs should form a better understanding of the engagements that are already in place in institutions.

They need to look for effective practice in the wide range of engagements already in place in Arts HE. This will inform a better understanding of how engagements can be integrated and supported by strategic planning. There needs to be a better understanding of how professional knowledge is developed and shapes the curriculum. This includes the knowledge brought to the student experience by creative industry practitioners and the workplace through placements. HEIs should look at opportunities to shape staff development and teacher training in the form of the Post-graduate Certificate in Higher Education to enhance professional practice knowledge and how it is brought to bear on the curriculum.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Governments, their agencies and HEIs need to be clearer and more articulate about employer engagement, in order to ensure that the full range of the economy and society is included in the initiative. All stakeholders need to be better aware of the opportunities and challenges of engaging very small businesses and non-commercial sectors in workforce development with HE. As a key player in the knowledge economy, it is particularly important that creative industry businesses, organisations and individuals are encouraged to participate in workforce development. Sector agencies play a key role in driving up and articulating demand. Non-sector agencies need to be more engaged in promoting awareness of alternative models for workforce development. In doing so they will assist the HE sector in its discussions with The Government to promote creative industry workforce development.

ENHANCING RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Teachers, curriculum developers and academic managers in Arts HE need to examine the existing and potential engagements with creative industry in their departments to maximise opportunities for research and knowledge transfer. Particular opportunities exist for examining how professional knowledge is made explicit and available in the curriculum. There are also opportunities for examining how work placements can be optimised, not only for students, but also to deliver tangible benefits to employers and other organisations involved in placement projects. The Technology Strategy Board and Research Councils have a role to play in assisting Arts HE in shaping proposals for effective Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and Research. These benefit HE, creative industries, society and the wider economy.