HEARTS – the Bath Spa Experience
Dan Davies, Penny Hay, Rachael Jefferson-Buchanan and Pat Black

Introduction

Higher Education the Arts and Schools (HEARTS) is a project established in 2004 to address a perceived deficit in training primary teachers to teach arts subjects. Based on surveys of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England (Rogers 1998, 2003) offering primary initial teacher education (ITE) – revealing that the time allocated to the arts during one year programmes varied between four and 12 hours – the Esmee Fairbairn Trust and Gulbenkian Foundation offered funding for a series of pilots to demonstrate and stimulate innovation in this area of the primary training curriculum. Administered by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), three HEIs were funded in 2004-5, a further three in 2005-6 and a final cohort of six in 2007-8, including Bath Spa University.

The background to the HEARTS initiative can be traced to the 1998 Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) Circular 4/98, requiring courses of primary initial teacher education in England to follow a tightly prescribed curriculum in the ‘core’ subjects of English, mathematics and science. It also specified a minimum of 90 days in school, reducing the university-based taught component of many programmes to around one third. Combined with a punitive inspection regime focused exclusively on English and mathematics, this had the effect – as documented in the surveys above – of dramatically narrowing the primary training curricula in many HEIs and effectively marginalising Arts subjects alongside other non-core areas. The increase in school-based training may have been based on the assumption that students would learn to teach the arts during their school practice, but Green and Chedzoy (1998: 105) found that they were “… not encountering regular opportunities to practise arts teaching or learn from their class teachers,” and that difficulties were particularly acute in dance and drama. Indeed, Barnes (2001) found no opportunities for the majority of primary students to observe the arts being taught in schools at all.

Ironically, alongside the throttling of initial teacher education came a growing awareness of the marginalisation of cultural and creative education in primary schools, following ten years of an increasingly constraining national curriculum. This awareness found expression in the influential All Our Futures report (NACCCE 1999), widely regarded as a lobby for the reintroduction of the Arts in primary education, though its definitions of creativity and culture were inclusive of other areas of the curriculum. Initially it was the dearth of creativity in primary schools which was picked up in a string of UK government initiatives through the early 1990s, including the incorporation of Creative Development as a core area of learning within the new Foundation Stage (QCA/DfEE 2000); an emphasis on creativity and flexibility within
the curriculum in the Primary National Strategy *Excellence and Enjoyment* (DfES 2004) and the establishment of the national Creative Partnerships (CP) programme in 2005. CP, involving schools working with artists, illustrates how the vaguely-defined notion of creativity within these initiatives has remained muddled with – and not clearly distinguished from – the Arts. More recently, the government has turned its attention towards the cultural strand of *All our Futures*, with the announcement of a ‘cultural offer’ of five hours per week per pupil – *Find your talent*– piloted nationally through CP.

Whilst the veneer of creative and cultural education has been applied in the last few years across a primary education system still geared towards national testing of ‘the basics’, primary teacher training has tended to lag even behind schools in re-emphasising the centrality of the Arts. Whilst apparently liberated from the restrictive curriculum of Circular 4/98 by successive sets of National Standards (TTA 2002, TDA 2007) – the first of which actually required providers to include a subject called ‘performing arts’ in their training curricula – our previous research in this area (Davies et al 2004) has suggested that primary student teachers lack confidence in their own creativity and that many headteachers consider them lacking in the flexibility required to plan creative experiences in the classroom, whilst Bore (2006: 31) found that “exposure to school culture appears to inhibit (students’) ability to plan imaginatively.” Fearful of being deemed ‘non-compliant’ in preparing students to ‘deliver’ the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (DfEE 1998, 1999, DCSF 2007), HEIs have tended to play safe in continuing to allocate the vast majority of the taught programme to core subjects, leading to a generation of new primary teachers ill-equipped to teach the Arts or combine them innovatively. It is these perceived deficits which the HEARTS project has sought to address, by providing funding for HEIs to re-invigorate the Arts components of their programmes.

**The Performing Arts Week at Bath Spa University**

Our bid to become involved in the HEARTS project was based on a feature of our PGCE Primary and Early Years Programmes introduced in 2002-3, which we shamefacedly admit was in response to the requirements of *Qualifying to Teach* (TTA 2002) – an illustration of the compliance culture prevalent in ITE. The Bath Spa performing arts week is traditionally held in mid-February following a five-week block school experience. It originally involved student teachers participating in dance, drama and music workshops around a theme introduced in a story-telling performance. Groups of students then worked with university tutors to re-tell one of the stories by combining the art forms in different ways as a performance to their peers. The week evolved over the years, most significantly in 2006-7 with the involvement of the egg Young People’s Theatre in Bath, which students attended for a day to participate in art-form workshops (including by this time visual arts) culminating in a cross-disciplinary performance in the theatre co-ordinated by a professional director. Towards the end of the week they took this model out into partnership schools who had agreed to be involved, working in large groups of around 20 students accompanied by a university tutor to develop a cross-disciplinary performance involving every child in the school within a single day.
This proved to be a risky, chaotic yet highly rewarding experience with both students and children benefiting hugely from their participation.

With HEARTS funding, we expanded the scope of the performing arts week still further to enhance the cultural education element by including museum visits. Nine museums from Bath and North East Somerset became involved (see appendix 1), offering two-hour workshops to student teachers in the use of objects from their collections to stimulate children’s imaginations and serve as the starting points for arts-based activities. Stimuli such as museum objects and artefacts are readily accessible resources and can be used to provoke many varied ideas in the arts. Indeed, artefacts from other times and cultures can be used by teachers and their pupils to inspire rich exploration and investigation across art forms. In this way, the ‘ordinary’ can be made ‘extraordinary’.

Aims for the students during the week were as follows:

1. To gain confidence, ideas and strategies for teaching art, dance, music and drama in primary schools;
2. To take part in a range of creative and challenge-type activities, both as individuals and as part of a group;
3. To appreciate some of the learning opportunities offered by working in alliance with local schools and cultural centres such as theatres;
4. To know and understand what is possible to achieve in a range of art forms when working with children;
5. To work towards improving knowledge, skills and understanding in the various arts forms, celebrating experiences through a range of activities including performances;
6. To engage in the key performing arts elements of composition, performance and appreciation/evaluation in the context of the primary classroom.

Within the overall theme of ‘cultural diversity’, students were invited to tell stories about the objects they had encountered in the museums and the lives of people who had owned and used them. They were expected to keep a ‘visual journal’ of the week where they could record ideas and experiences. Visual journals can be used for collecting visual information, whether in the form of drawing, annotated sketches, painting, notes, designs or secondary source material. These stories, ideas and objects were then used as the basis for the arts workshops in the egg. For example, the dance workshop used paintings by L. S. Lowry as visual stimuli for improvisation and group choreographic work. In drama, objects relating to the industrial history of the region were linked to the exhibitions at the Museum of Bath at Work and Radstock Museum. The music workshop used found objects to make instruments, exploring musical interpretation of movement, colour and words. The visual art workshop focused on transforming ‘ordinary’ objects to make props for telling a story.

In the afternoon, the egg staff directed a cross-disciplinary performance using the idea of a ‘living museum’ in which different ‘exhibits’ (pieces of drama, music, visual artwork and dance) were presented as tableaux which ‘came to life’ as the ‘visitors’
(another group of students representing the audience) explored the performance space. The third day was spent back in the university, planning in groups how this model could be translated into a school context. The final two days of the week were spent in eight partnership schools, using objects the students had brought in – or schools’ own museum links – to stimulate cross-age workshops in dance, drama, visual arts and music, which were then brought together into ‘living museum’ performances for the whole school at the end of each day. Students were invited to let children take the lead in suggesting and developing ideas, resulting in different kinds of relationships and outcomes from those they had been used to during teaching practice (see findings below). With the inclusion for the first time of the PGCE part-time Early Years students in the week, the total number of participants was 240, working with eight university tutors and around 1400 children.

The Research Project

The HEARTS project at Bath Spa has been subjected to rigorous documentation and internal evaluation, in addition to the external evaluation undertaken by NFER. The internal evaluation research has adopted multi-method approach (Saxe and Fine, 1979, Patton 1990, Bennet, 2003): “an approach which contains both formative and summative dimensions, which draws on a range of research strategies and techniques, and which generates both qualitative and quantitative data.” (Bennet, 2003: 57).

The research questions which the study sought to address are as follows:

1. How is the HEARTS project at Bath Spa supporting participant students’ confidence in participation in the Arts?
2. How is the project helping students’ understanding of the value of the arts in primary education?
3. How are students’ understanding of the relationships between the arts, creativity and culture being developed?
4. How are students learning how to participate in a network of adults, taking on different roles within cultural and educational settings?
5. How is the project supporting students’ understanding the value of a multidisciplinary approach across art forms?
6. How is HEARTS helping students teach the arts in schools?

In order to provide data against each of these questions which could be triangulated against each other, the following data-collection strategies were employed:

1. Participant student survey, involving Likert-type attitude scales (quantitative) with the opportunity for further commentary (qualitative), administered at the beginning of the full-time PGCE programme in October 2007 (n = 189) and again at the end of performing arts week in February 2008 (n = 189). Although several questions were repeated, enabling direct comparisons to be made of individual participants’ shifts in attitude (n = 134), the February 2008
version did include some additional questions to gauge responses to the performing arts week.

2. Planning documentation (n = 9), including minutes of meetings and student handbook to capture the decisions taken to enhance participants’ experience of the week and develop their confidence in teaching the performing arts.

3. Digital photographs of participants involved in museum visits (n = 27) arts workshops and performance at the egg (n = 239), planning (n = 4) and school-based elements (n = 46) of the week.

4. Digital video of the above elements, totalling six hours

5. Audio-recorded interviews with participant students in small groups (n = 37), tutors and museum educators (n = 10), teachers (n = 11) and children in participating schools (n = 4) during the week.

Quantitative data were analysed using Excel, whilst qualitative data, including interview transcripts and digital photographs, were analysed using Atlas.TI software.

Findings and Discussion

Participant students’ confidence in participation in the Arts

We were surprised to find relatively positive responses to the statements in the initial questionnaire (Oct 07) relating to students’ prior experience of and participation in the Arts. A majority (63%) felt that the arts had been an important part of their own education, whilst a more modest 37% claimed to still participate in the arts as an adult (see figures 1 and 2). We did not pre-specify a definition for ‘the arts’ at this stage, so some respondents may have included activities such as going to the cinema within their own definitions, whilst others restricted this to playing a musical instrument or other performance activities.

Figs 1 and 2: Students’ response to statements in initial questionnaire (n=189)

These relatively positive attitudes appear to have influenced the ways in which the students approached the arts workshops during the week, surprising their tutors:
“The response from the actual students themselves in the workshops did actually surprise me to some extent. I anticipated that as classic students in PGCE Music there were going to be some confidence issues and there weren’t.” (music tutor, day 3)

We did not repeat these items in the February survey as the first statement was retrospective and it was too early to ask about the impact of the HEARTS project on participation in the arts outside their professional studies. Given the intensity of teacher training it would seem likely that fewer were participating in the arts at the time! We did however repeat the item relating to students’ self perception as an ‘artistic’ person (however they chose to define this) since we felt that this may have an influence on their confidence to participate in arts education in schools. The results indicate a slight increase, from 49% in October to 59% in February (figures 3 and 4), suggesting that the HEARTS experience had developed their self-image as competent participants in the arts to an extent.

Figs 3 and 4: Students’ responses to statement in Oct 07 (left) and Feb 08 (right) (n = 134)

The degree of confidence in their artistry even before the programme had begun contrasts with the student attitudes reported by one of the first cohort of HEIs involved in HEARTS:

“…students in HEARTS were concerned about their own perceived lack of artistic ability...” (Barnes and Shirley 2007: 173)

However, there appears to have been a difference in confidence levels even between the first and second HEARTS cohorts (2004 and 2005 respectively), which perhaps reflects the changing climates in schools at the time (Excellence and Enjoyment had just been published):

“… perhaps the most pronounced difference was the degree of initial apprehension surrounding the three earlier HEARTS projects compared to those in the later ones. Fewer students in the later group resisted involvement as those before had done.” (Downing et al 2007: 34)
Our cohort – an additional two years later – appears to have continued this trend, which bodes well for future generations of primary teachers. However, even with 49% regarding themselves as artistic there was clearly room for improvement and the survey indicates that involvement in an arts project during their training – albeit a short one – has the potential to enhance self-image as artistic; only 17% disagreed by the end of the week. This shift was reflected in student interviews, in which some referred to “…being outside your comfort zone and then realising that you can actually do something.” (student, day 4). 88% reported having enjoyed the experience, reflecting findings from other HEARTS projects which reported enhanced enjoyment, self esteem and confidence in participating in the arts (Downing et al 2007). However, a note of caution is raised by Barnes and Shirley (2007: 174) who observed that “…such change has not yet had the expected effect of driving the desire to raise standards of attainment and in encouraging the students to transfer and build subject-specific knowledge.” This issue will be considered under ‘confidence to teach the arts’ below.

Students’ appreciation of the value of arts education

It might be expected that a group of students who had valued the arts components of their own education and regularly participate in the arts as adults would regard them as important within the primary curriculum, particularly given recent government initiatives in this area (see above). Indeed, 37% agreed that the arts should be at the centre of the curriculum (figure 5), whilst an overwhelming 93% were convinced that participation in the arts is fundamental to children’s learning (figure 7), citing the development of skills, knowledge, emotional intelligence and self esteem as key learning outcomes.

Figs 5 and 6: Students’ responses to statement in Oct 07 (left) and Feb 08 (right) (n = 134)

As asked in interviews why they felt that an arts education was important, several pointed to the habit-forming influence of exposure to experiences children may not be able to access from home:

“I think that if you don’t get that as a child I don’t think you then want that as an adult necessarily, you aren’t interested in it.” (student, day 3)

Encouragingly, even these positive attitudes became more positive by the end of the performing arts week, with 45% agreeing that the arts should be at the centre of the
primary curriculum (figure 6) and 47% strongly agreeing that the arts are fundamental to children’s learning (up from 38% in October – see figures 7 and 8).

Figs 7 and 8: Students’ responses to statement in Oct 07 (left) and Feb 08 (right) (n = 134)

Again, these shifts in attitude reflect findings from studies of previous HEARTS projects (Downing et al 2007), which also provide clues to the importance of working directly with children in an arts project of this nature:

“They commented that their perception of the importance of the Arts in primary education had changed as a result of observing the children’s representation of ideas…” (Barnes and Shirley 2007: 174)

Students’ experience during the project, compared with their observations in primary schools during their previous teaching placement, led them to be increasingly critical of the position of the arts in the actual taught curriculum (figures 9 and 10):

Figs 9 and 10: Students’ responses to statement in Oct 07 (left) and Feb 08 (right) (n = 134)

The increase from 12% to 24% of students feeling strongly that primary schools fail to devote sufficient time to the arts further underlines their greater appreciation of children’s arts entitlement, and stands as a significant challenge to schools in our partnership.
Students’ understanding of the relationship between the arts and creativity

Much has been written about creativity in primary education (e.g. Craft 2005) and the majority of the literature links children’s creative development to participation in the arts in some form, a theme reflected in government documentation. In some respects this is unhelpful for student teachers as it tends to confuse the two in their minds and can muddy definitions. Our own work in this area (Davies et al 2004) found that students selected art lessons as those most likely to offer scope for creativity; an expectation frequently confounded as they discovered other less promising areas of the curriculum such as mathematics actually provided more scope for innovative thought. Interestingly, the students in the HEARTS survey were less convinced of this close relationship than the previous group, with only 37% agreeing that creativity is ‘mainly associated’ with the arts (see figure 11).

During the performing arts week, many agreed that the various experiences and activities had allowed them to use their creativity:

“Yes, we were very creative when we were designing those shops. You know I sent her things like scratchy/smooth and you said ‘no, this is Ann Summers’.”

(students, day 1)

However, this did not have the effect of strengthening the link in their minds between creativity and the arts, with only 29% agreeing with the statement at the end of the week, reflecting perhaps a broadened and more developed understanding of the term.

Figs 11 and 12: Students’ responses to statement in Oct 07 (left) and Feb 08 (right) (n = 134)

This broadening of their view of creativity was also observed in previous HEARTS projects (Downing et al 2007).

Students’ understanding of the relationship between the arts and cultural education

When asked to define cultural education, student’s responses contained three distinct strands. The first of these we might term a multicultural definition, concerned with living in a plural society and developing children’s respect for each other:
“And it’s the central aspect of today’s teaching isn’t it because our community is so multicultural. You have to have the knowledge and the respect for all the different cultures for the children that you might have.” (student, day 1)

“Recognising the differences and appreciating them.” (student, day 1)

Clearly, the project overarching theme of cultural diversity linked closely with this definition. Related to this, culture was seen as something other; a transformative experience taking children out of their everyday experience:

“Something out of your normal, to experience or to try and create an understanding of something you’ve not encountered before and to perhaps broaden your own opinion or perhaps to broaden your mind about how other people live or work…” (student, day 2)

The second strand emerged perhaps because they were being asked these questions in museums; this might be termed an historical definition, though it also incorporated elements of a multicultural perspective:

“I think looking at art, music or history of other cultures so whether it be African, American Indians, Japanese. Just looking at different countries or even British, I suppose, Victorians or Georgians, the way that things were done.” (student, day 2)

It was seen as important by students that this historical dimension of culture was related to something that children were more familiar with, to enable them to make sense of the other:

“that might be a nice way to start with the children’s culture and then perhaps say well this is your culture how does that tie in with what might have been cultural at a different time, a different generations culture or a different country’s culture.” (student, day 2)

Museums, with their real, tangible objects, were seen as important in helping children to make these links:

“The fashion museum was quite interesting because you could immediately see how you could really engage them in terms of their clothing and what they consider fashionable now then in if you bring in examples of even just your older clothes or your parents’ older clothes.” (student, day 2)

The museum educators in the project greatly valued the opportunity to work with student teachers and open their eyes to the educational potential within cultural centres such as museums:

“I think for me getting students at PGCE time then you can open doors which they can use throughout their teaching career. As I said, when you get your first job
make friends with the education officer in your local museum because they will certainly want to be your friend and they will help you and it can be a very joined-up sort of learning.” (museum educator, day 2)

The third strand in students’ definition of culture could be termed an *artistic* strand, in which they recognised the role of the arts in enriching cultural life:

“Our teaching them about the history, artistry and everything, up to where we are now, art, music and drama.” (student, day 2)

Responses to the statement ‘the arts are fundamental to children’s cultural development’ suggest that a high proportion (86%) already recognised the strong relationship between the arts and culture at the beginning of the programme, with a strengthening of this conviction following the HEARTS project (37% strongly agreeing with the statement compared with 27% previously – see figures 13 and 14).

**Figs 13 and 14: Students’ responses to statement in Oct 07 (left) and Feb 08 (right) (n = 134)**

Given this close linkage in students’ minds between culture and the arts, it is perhaps surprising that they struggled to make links between their museums experience and the arts workshops in *the egg*. When asked which aspects of the arts they were experiencing during the museums visits, most had to think quite hard before coming up with fairly superficial answers:

“Well I suppose we’re going to draw the gloves so we’ll be you know getting children to sort of do that as well so that incorporates art, and I suppose trying the objects on, the corsets and skirts on, we could have gone more into… drama…” (student, day 1)

The most difficult aspect of the week for many was using cultural objects as stimuli for arts activities, which is reflected in these comments from the workshops:

“I just found it very difficult yesterday to try to find an object and something I could relate back for today.” (student, day 2)
“I think if we had been doing in a traditional sense creating a picture or sculpture or something I think that would have been very easy just to pick something that we’ve seen something that we enjoyed to see and draw on it or created a sculpture from it. But in terms of trying to create a piece of music from something we saw yesterday I can’t, I don’t know how to do that.” (student, day 2)

Even when asked later in the week, when they were undertaking activities in schools, many did not relate the museums experience to their work in the arts, despite finding it valuable in its own right:

“I really enjoyed the day at the museum and it was really good for seeing how we can use teaching - taking the class into museums and how we could structure our teaching around that… But I don’t think particularly I’ve used it today… Really this has all been from the egg experience, very much so.” (student, day 4)

This however was not a universal response. Some had been able to make effective thematic links, and where the school had already been working with a museum or gallery collection – as in the case of the ‘blue and white’ exhibition at the Victoria Art Gallery, the links seemed less strained:

“I went to the Roman Baths and the Holburne, so we had the canal with the water. We looked at the water in the canal and we looked at the water in the Roman Baths and of course the steam and bubbling and its all trickling down the …. So I can see how the music, we could use the music to represent water perhaps. So its one of the links I’ve made.” (student, day 2)

The reasons for this mixed response could be twofold. Possibly the breadth of the museums represented on the project – necessitating a very broad overarching theme – made it more difficult for students to see links, a point made by one of the arts tutors and echoed by one of the headteachers of the schools involved:

“I just, I think maybe the breadth of the museums that are covered has made it a bit more, a bit too confusing and if it had been married to maybe just two or three museums we could have made our focus more specific and made clearer links within workshops rather than having to be very generic.” (music tutor, day 3)

Another factor could have been the quality of the input students received in the various museums, which raises an important issue for museum selection in future years:

“The impression I had from talking with students yesterday is that they were – some had really quite strong input which they were able to pick up and run with, others came away not actually having made too much connection between the activities.” (music tutor, day 3)
Students’ participation in a network of adults and ability to take on different roles

Participants already had an awareness at the beginning of the programme of the value of different types of adults, such as arts professionals, working alongside teachers in primary schools (figure 15) and this appreciation of the role of the artist in education increased from 67% to 75% by the end of the project (figure 16):

Figs 15 and 16: Students’ responses to statement in Oct 07 (left) and Feb 08 (right) (n = 134)

In terms of negotiating their own role in a team of their peers, tutors, teachers and artists, they had to make a rapid adjustment from the ‘class teacher’ role they had been expected to take on during their school placement which immediately preceded the week:

“I think, it’s not as much as a teacher because obviously I’ve just had my school experience, it’s more of working with other adults on the same level as me.” (student, day 4)

Following the joint planning day in the middle of the week, several students were still understandably anxious about working in a team within an unknown school:

“Quite nervous ‘cause we weren’t really sure what was going on and we didn’t know anything about the school or anything like that.” (student, day 4)

This anxiety is reflected in findings from previous HEARTS projects, where it was seen to be related to a reluctance to take on the levels of responsibility required:

“Students were reluctant to take control of their own projects. They were unsure what would be accepted as ‘right’ or ‘good’ and they were afraid of making mistakes.” (Barnes and Shirley 2007: 171)

However, in our case students had just emerged from a situation in which they had been required to take on large amounts of responsibility, and the new situations in which they found themselves brought out latent leadership potential, as observed by tutors:
“Directing and leading from students I wouldn’t have ever thought would direct and lead. Particularly ones I know well from school experience and my own tutor group. I’ve seen them taking on that kind of role.” (music tutor, day 3)

The importance of taking on different roles within a collaborative group was stressed by another tutor, who saw this beginning to happen during the planning process:

“Well you very much have your organisers and your leaders that come to the fore very quickly. I think you also see those that like to take more of a backseat and kind of flesh out the detail so someone will have a grand idea but then somebody needs to bring everything together so you see the kind of the ones who had the big ideas don’t like the devil in the detail I suppose and those ones that will graft away and produce the resources and the whatever is required for what they’re doing.” (tutor, day 3)

Once they got into the schools, some groups found it difficult adapting to a team teaching situation given their previous solo experiences:

“It’s weird because we’ve all got our different teaching styles and we keep tripping over each other and stuff.” (student, day 4)

However, others felt that the team situation was supportive in the ‘risky’ situation in which they found themselves:

“I feel more supported especially a day like where it’s more creative and it’s more kind of out of control than say a normal lesson so it is nice to have support.”

“We’re working very well as a team actually. We don’t seem to be standing on each others toes. We’re taking it in turns to do our little bit and its all working quite well actually.” (student, day 4)

One of the outcomes of group support in the school settings was the opportunity for students to allow children to take on more responsibility for the decisions within the project, thus enhancing their learning and sense of engagement:

“…we’re saying what we expect but it’s not as clear set, it’s a bit more open.” (student, day 5)

“I was thinking shall I do some modelling with them, show them how to do it? But then we all sat down and said actually let them do it for themselves.” (student, day 4)

This commitment to an open-ended style of working with the children was noticed and appreciated by the staff in the schools:
“I can see that they clearly planned what they’re going to do but they don’t know
exactly where it’s going to go because they’re actually including the children in the
decisions in what they’re going to do.” (teacher, day 5)

So, broadly speaking, most students were able to take on the roles of participant,
planner, artist, teacher, group member and co-professional alongside their more
experienced teaching colleagues. Some of these they found more comfortable than
others, but all of these will undoubtedly be of value to them in the changing
professional landscape of primary education.

Students’ understanding the value of a multidisciplinary approach across art forms

At the beginning of their programme, most participants were unsure of the value to
children’s learning of combining different art forms (figure 17), however by the end
of the performing arts week they had observed the impact of cross-curricular learning
in the arts, resulting in a more positive response (51% by comparison with 33% -
figures 17 and 18):

Figs 17 and 18: Students’ responses to statement in Oct 07 (left) and Feb 08 (right) (n = 134)

When interviewed, students pointed towards the director’s workshop at the egg as
having been significant in helping them to see the links between the art forms:

“…Incorporating the whole of the culture and the drama and the dance bringing it all
together, bringing something to life so we were very comfortable doing that
yesterday.” (student, day 3)

Significantly, the experience of seeing the ‘living museum’ performance gave the
students a structure within which they could work when taking the ideas into schools:

“Yes, very much so because we thought it was really, really good fun and it’s
made a really good structure for us to work on today.” (student, day 4)

For the students in one previous HEARTS project, the ease with which the tutors made
cross-curricular links between art forms was difficult to replicate, as their limited
experience and unfamiliarity with cross-curricular working made the links harder to see:

“An unexpected aspect of tutor–tutor cooperation in presentations and workshops with students, was that we made forging creative links between different areas of the curriculum appear too easy.” (Barnes and Shirley 2007: 173)

However, this does not appear to have been the case with our students, perhaps because three years later the climate is more favourable for cross-curricular work in primary schools and so they had more examples on which to draw. They exhibited confidence in teaching across the art forms during the school-based days, and in some cases subsequently during block school experience (see section below).

**Students’ confidence in teaching the arts**

In their overview study of the first six HEARTS projects, Downing et al (2007: 35) noted a shift from the first to the second cohort towards: “projects which were more directly orientated towards practice and the development of new teaching ideas and better understanding of how to teach the arts in the primary curriculum.” The inclusion of a school-based, student-led component in the Bath Spa project continues this trend, leading to confidence amongst 86% of the students to include the arts in their own teaching by the end of the project week (figure 19). Significant also in relation to the discussion above was their development of cross-disciplinary arts teaching, with 58% feeling that they could bring together different art forms in their teaching (figure 20).

**Figs 19 and 20: Students’ responses to statements relating to confidence in teaching, Feb 08 (n = 189)**

![Pie chart showing student responses to confidence in teaching](image1)

![Pie chart showing student responses to ability to bring together different art forms](image2)

Although no comparative data is available from before the programme, since we felt that these statements would have little meaning for students before they had started school experience, interview data suggest that the week had positively influenced these outcomes:
“… watching it all being put together gave me lots of ideas about how to incorporate drama into everyday situations in the classroom.” (student, day 3)

Other studies reported learning outcomes for students in terms of their confidence in teaching the arts (Downing et al 2007) and their greater appreciation of how topics could be linked in cross-curricular practice (Barnes and Shirley 2007). However, the ‘proof of the pudding’ in this respect is what students go on to do in their own classrooms on subsequent school placements and in their early careers. It is here that our data collection has been somewhat disappointing. Despite inviting students to share with us examples of cross-curricular arts teaching – and asking their visiting tutors to identify such projects - on their final block school experience, only two have actually reported back. Of these, one was a project on the theme of ‘sundials’, incorporating science, mathematics, sculpture and dance. The other took the starting point of a bicycle, using this as stimulus for creative and explanatory writing, dance, design & technology and art. Both projects were carefully planned and documented, demonstrating significant learning in and through the arts by the children concerned. It is our intention to source more such examples directly from students as they move into their first year in teaching, in order to gauge the longer-term impact of the HEARTS project. This might prove more fruitful, as in the final school experience student priorities were no doubt focused on passing their school experience rather than continuing in the research process.

Conclusion and Implications

The HEARTS project at Bath Spa University has extended a pre-existing arts week to develop an innovative partnership between museums, theatre, schools and the university. There is evidence that this partnership has provided an experience for student teachers which has strengthened their self-image as artistic individuals who recognise the value of the arts in children’s education and have enhanced confidence in working with different professionals to teach the arts in a cross-disciplinary way. Although the integration of the museums element has tended to dilute the thematic focus of the week - making it difficult for some students to perceive the links between the different elements - it seems to have strengthened their understanding of cultural education and their abilities to use objects in their teaching of the arts. A more sharply-defined theme with a smaller number of museums in future years could give greater coherence to the whole experience. This kind of project within the tight confines of a one year PGCE course demands a high level of organisation and commitment amongst staff, and certainly benefits from external funding. To an extent, any ‘one week’ event is open to accusations of ‘tokenism’. Nevertheless, if the model builds upon other arts input through the course, and also spreads out into other course elements, it represents a significant enrichment of what can be a rather sterile and stressful training programme. We therefore intend to continue with our Performing Arts Week tradition and would enjoy the opportunity to collaborate with other HEIs who might be planning similar experiences. At a time when the UK government’s ‘cultural offer’ is being extended to all children, their teachers need experiences such as this to equip them to play a full part in making that offer a concrete reality.
References


National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) (1999) All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education. Suffolk: DfEE.


Teacher Training Agency (TTA) (2002) *Qualifying to Teach: Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status*. London: TTA.

Appendix 1: Museums involved in the HEARTS project

**Bath Abbey Heritage Vaults** museum tells the story of the Abbey site from the foundation of a convent of nuns in Bath in 675 up to the present day.

**Bath Postal Museum** tells the story of 4000 years of written communication and Bath’s role in it to as wide an audience as possible.

**The Fashion Museum** is the finest museum of fashionable dress in the world. It focuses on fashionable dress for men, women and children from the late 16th century to the present day and has more than 30,000 objects in its collection.

**The Holburne Museum of Art** houses a rich collection of paintings, silver, sculpture, furniture and porcelain, with important works by Gainsborough, Guardi, Stubbs and Turner. Housed in the eighteenth-century Sydney Hotel the museum is set within the park of Sydney Gardens.

**The Museum of Bath at Work** is concerned with the commercial development of Bath since Roman times and describes the evolution from provincial spa town to modern tourist city considering manufacturing and other forms of employment.

**The Museum of East Asian Art** is recognized as one of three major UK museums specialising in East Asian art and archaeology. The collection features ceramics, jades, metalwares and decorative arts from China and other East Asian countries ranging in date from 4000 BC to the twentieth century.

**Radstock Museum** has a Victorian Schoolroom where the children can take part in role-play lessons, a Co-op Shop, miner's cottage kitchen and a re-constructed coal mine section. The museum celebrates the lifestyle of the typical Somerset coalminer and illustrates not only the home life of the mining families, but also the vibrant social, commercial and industrial structure of the last century.

**Roman Baths**
The Roman Baths Museum’s collections are designated as nationally and internationally significant. The Museum cares for archaeological and historical collections from Bath and North East Somerset. These range from architectural fragments and Roman finds from the Temple and baths to objects from the Georgian town and Twentieth century spa.

**Victoria Art Gallery**

‘The Blue and White Show’
The inspiration behind the exhibition is a collection of over 2,000 pottery pieces belonging to the Cornish family of Hickman, and many of these exquisite items form the centrepiece of the show, displayed on a vast specially designed Georgian style dresser.
Appendix 2: Interview schedules

Questions for students during week (various times)
1. Which experiences today have made the most impact on you? Why?
2. Which art forms do you think you’ve covered today?
3. What connections can you make between the different art forms?
4. Have you had an opportunity to use/develop your creativity today? If so how?
5. How can you see this working with children?
6. What does cultural education mean to you? What examples of cultural education have you experienced this week?
7. What links have you been able to make between your experiences in the egg and in museums?
8. What different roles have you played this week?
9. What has been your experience of working in a team? Have different members contributed different expertise?
10. Tell me about the planning process for school work? Has this been difficult to negotiate?
11. What have you learnt about children’s creativity this week?
12. How have children responded to your input – any particularly creative responses?
13. What have you learnt about teaching the arts this week?

Questions for Museum Educators (Monday, Tuesday)
1. How have the students responded to your workshop today?
2. Have they been able to make the links between the museum input and the performing arts element?
3. How do you see the contribution your museum can make to their development as teachers?
4. What have you got out of being involved?

Questions for the egg staff (Monday, Tuesday)
1. How have the students responded to their day in the egg?
2. What questions have they been asking?
3. What do their performances tell you about their understanding of the performing arts in education?
4. What connections have they been able to make between the different art forms?
5. How do you see your contribution towards students’ understanding of the importance of the arts in education?
6. What have you got out of being involved?

Questions for tutors (Wednesday – Friday)
1. How have the students responded to your workshop?
2. What connections have they made between the different art forms?
3. Have they been able to make the links between the museum input and the performing arts element?
4. What has been the ‘added value’ of the museum element?
5. What different roles have you seen them taking on in the workshops, in planning sessions, in school?
6. What have you got out of being involved?
Questions for teachers (Thursday – Friday)

1. How well do you feel the students have led the performance workshops in schools?
2. Has anything struck you about the ways in which they have worked with the children?
3. How well do you think they’ve been able to combine the museum input with the performance element?
4. What connections have they made between the different art forms?
5. How confident are you that these students have a good understanding of the importance of the arts in education?
6. What do you think the children have got out of it?
7. What have you got out of being involved?

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