

# EXCHANGE

enhancing collaborative models of learning and teaching in the performing arts with HEIs and their professional partners



## The Context of the Research Project

Writing ten years ago, David Boud and Nicky Solomon suggested that higher education (HE) was ‘in the midst of an unprecedented era of change’, where the imperative to increase the number and diversity of the student body was being implemented within a ‘[looming] crisis in the nature of knowledge for which universities previously stood’ (Boud and Solomon 2001). In 2011, the picture has changed, but arguably only to become more acute. The introduction of increased student fees and the announcement of government funding cuts to the arts and humanities in HE has, once again, raised questions about what should be taught, which is placing enormous pressure upon the performing arts. Not only must these subject areas demonstrate their fitness for purpose, contemporary relevance and capacity to recruit (within a growing competitive market), but increasingly the performing arts are being judged on their capacity to produce graduates who are demonstrably employable.

In a time of rising student fees and increased student debt, students are entering HE with their eyes firmly fixed on the employment opportunities awaiting them on graduation<sup>1</sup>. This era of enforced austerity has forced higher education institutions (HEIs) into a more competitive market, where performing arts departments are no longer being judged on their academic prowess alone, but also on their capacity to market themselves and generate employable graduates for an arts industry that is increasingly - financially speaking - under threat. One creative response to the implacable drive towards the commodification of HE is a renewed interest in collaborations with industry partners<sup>2</sup> which not only seems to promise high quality experiential learning opportunities, but also the acquisition of transferable skills which ultimately enhances graduate employment. It is not surprising perhaps then that our research revealed more performing arts departments than perhaps ever before are seeking to include placements and other forms of work-based learning within their course delivery.

Potentially, collaboration and partnership is beneficial for both parties and could be seen to offer a productive way forward, not only for HE performing arts courses wishing to distinguish themselves from their competitors, but also for embattled publicly funded arts organisations which are currently attempting to absorb dramatic cuts in their funding<sup>3</sup>. Yet while more and more performing arts courses are developing relationships with their arts industry partners, what has become clear from our research is that the structure and design of these collaborations differ considerably as do the models of learning and teaching that emerge as a result.

#### **How do collaborative models of learning and teaching work?**

Very early on in our research, it became clear that there was a wide range of different models of practice that are being described as a 'collaboration' between a HEI and an industry partner. These include formal and informal work placements, outreach projects, apprenticeships and other less formal collaborative activity (such as a theatre company or director in residence within an HEI). In some instances the work undertaken by the student in collaboration or on placement with the industry partner was a distinct component of the student's assessment; in other instances this was one element within a wider set of other assessment tasks.

Defining exactly what we mean by collaboration within the context of HEIs and their performing arts industry partners is a complex task, not every collaboration is the same, and each relationship is established upon different expectations from the (different) stakeholders. The founding principle underpinning most of these collaborations is rooted in the concept of experiential learning and the belief that students learn different skills and acquire new ways of learning, thinking and problem-solving when experiencing 'real' issues within the workplace.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Jessica Shepher education correspondent for The Guardian newspaper 'a fifth of recent graduates are unemployed - the highest proportion for more than a decade' (Shepher 2011).

<sup>2</sup> In the context of this report the term 'industry partner' will be adopted to describe the many different professional organisations that HE performing arts students collaborate with for example placements, 'outreach' projects and apprenticeships. Within our use of the term 'industry partner' we would include professional theatres, dance and music companies, orchestras, community arts organisations, schools, and the other health, therapeutic and social settings in which the arts are practiced.

<sup>3</sup> In March 2011 the BBC reported that 'About 1,300 venues, theatres, galleries and arts groups applied for grants from the council, which had its budget cut by £100m in October's Spending Review.' ([www.bbc.ac.uk](http://www.bbc.ac.uk) 2011).

The recognition that learning can be more effective when acquired through experience was first brought to the attention of educationalists in the work of John Dewey (*Experience and Education* 1938) whose ideas were then later developed further by David Kolb (*Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development* 1984). Dewey's approach to experiential learning responded to what he felt to be the increasingly 'segregated' approach of formal education where 'learning occurred in isolation.. disconnected from the rest of the child's experience' which rendered it ultimately 'impossible to retrieve'(Beard and Wilson 2006:3).

In *Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development* (1984), David Kolb developed Dewey's work further and argued that Dewey's approach was still one very much based on a segregation and separation between the learner and their environment (Jowdy and McDonald 2008). Instead Kolb proposed a more fluid interaction between the learner and their experience of the world, which was self- reflexive and therefore potentially transformative. As Jowdy and McDonald explain:

Kolb's 'concept of transaction implies a more fluid, interpenetrating relationship between objective conditions and subjective experience, such that once they become related both are essentially changed'.(12)

For Kolb then, experiential learning in the workplace was not simply about using the experience of work-based learning to support or guarantee the relevance of a curriculum, but more about forming what he called 'critical linkages' between the world of work, the formal learning that takes place in education settings and the learner's personal development. The workplace then becomes a 'learning environment', which has the capacity to 'foster personal development through meaningful work and career development opportunities' but equally, Kolb argued that formal learning could also play an important role in 'lifelong learning and the development of individuals to their full potential as citizens, family members, and human beings' (Kolb in Beard and Wilson 2006: 31).

If we apply these ideas to the collaborative models of learning and teaching that are being developed by performing arts HEIs and their industry partners, it encourages us to reflect on the 'critical linkages' that can be formed between the HEI curriculum, the competencies required in the performing arts work place and the student's own personal development. If we perceive the industry partner-HEI collaboration as an exemplar of experiential learning, we could perhaps suggest that 'innovation' or 'best practice' in this mode of learning and teaching would be based on a fully integrated approach that is structured less as a partnership between an HEI and an industry partner, but more as a triadic relationship which places the learner (the student) at its heart.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology had three interconnected phases.

#### **Phase one: 'mapping the terrain'**

The first phase of the research was a survey of the current collaborative practice taking place across performing arts' HE departments across the UK. This was undertaken by an online survey that was distributed on SCUDD<sup>4</sup> and sent out to a

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<sup>4</sup> An email mailing list for the Standing Conference of University Departments

number of other performing arts HEI and industry staff. Twenty two HEIs and twelve performing arts industry partners participated in the survey providing us with information about what kinds of collaborations they are currently involved in and the different models of learning, teaching and assessment they have developed.

**Phase two: gathering data**

Out of the thirty four participants in the survey the researchers identified six HEIs and six industry partners to participate in the second phase of the research. The determining factors in the selection of these participants was firstly, evidence of interesting and/or innovative practice and secondly, geographical spread ( the research aimed to incorporate participation from across the UK). This stage of the research involved a visit from the project’s lead researcher Susan Oman, and an in depth interview with staff and/or students involved in collaborative models of learning and teaching.

**The participants in this phase of the research were:**

<b>For the HEIs:</b>	
<b>Professor James Thompson</b> Director of Research	Manchester University
<b>Dr Jenny Hughes</b> , Lecturer in Drama and Co-Director of the Centre for Applied Theatre Research	
<b>Kate Buchanan</b> , Director of Professional Studies	Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester
<b>Scott Anderson</b> , Programme Leader, Costume Design and Construction	Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
<b>Charlotte Stuart</b> , Project Leader <b>Frank Dawes</b> , Associate Director, Postgraduate	Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts
<b>Nick Hunt</b> , Head of School of Design, Management and Technical Arts	Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance
<b>Dr Caoimhe McAvinchey</b> , Director, Taught Postgraduate Programmes	Queen Mary University London
<b>Susan Oman</b> , Placement Coordinator	Central School of Speech & Drama, London

<b><u>Industry Partners:</u></b>	
<b>Simon Ruding</b> , Director	TiPP (Theatre in Prisons and Probation), Manchester

<b>Lesley Smith</b> , Principal Arts Officer	East Lothian Council
<b>George T. Cairns</b> , Director	The Edinburgh Liqueur Company Ltd
<b>Adam Annand</b> , Associate Director, Creative Learning	London Bubble
<b>Jacqueline Greaves</b> , Head of Dance Development	Ludus Dance, Lancaster
<b>Debra Glazer</b> , Creative Learning Director	Hampstead Theatre, London

### **The Interviews**

The interviews of varied length and were loosely structured, allowing the interviewer and the respondent to talk at length about specific projects that were of interest or issues that were particularly challenging. In general the focus of these interviews included:

- the discussion and exploration of significant case study models of learning, teaching and assessment that have been developed
- significant changes, enhancements and innovations that had been implemented within or emerged from these models of learning and teaching, and the impact of these on the relevant programmes of study
- the opportunities and challenges of this type of collaborative learning and teaching.

### **The Interim Symposium**

The interim symposium which was held at Central School of Speech & Drama on 13 January, 2011 provided an opportunity for HEI tutors and industry professionals to discuss collaborative learning and teaching and to share their thoughts about the challenges and opportunities of this mode of working. It also provided an opportunity to hear about practice from outside of the performing arts as Julie Laxton, Teaching Fellow at University of Leeds, presented on a competency driven model of assessment that has been specifically designed to assess practice undertaken by students on placement.

The speakers at the symposium included:

**Amanda Stuart Fisher** (Project Leader), **Susan Oman** (Lead Researcher) and **Jessica Hartley**, (Research Assistant) Exchange: enhancing collaborative models of learning and teaching in the performing arts with HEIs and their professional partners, Central School of Speech and Drama

**Presentation title: *Reflections on the research findings so far***

**Simon Ruding**, Director of TiPP, Manchester

**Presentation title: *Managing Tensions: Competency, Creativity and Assessment (or why working hard doesn't necessarily result in a first)***

**Jessica Bowles**, Principal Lecturer, Creative Producing and Collaboration, Central School of Speech & Drama

***Presentation title: Collaborative Learning and Learning from Collaboration: An overview of a HEFCE Leading transformational change project which sees collaboration between Central, The Roundhouse and Hampstead Theatres.***

Julie Laxton, Teaching Fellow, ALPS (Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings), University of Leeds

***Presentation title: Practice-based assessments: The ALPS perspective***

Luke Pell, Head of Learning & Development from Candoco Dance Company

***Presentation title: Filling Whose Gap? Two models of placement offered by the leading company of disabled and non disabled dancers***

**Areas of discussion included:**

- *Apprenticeship model of learning and teaching*
- *Assessing Practice*
- *Bridging the gap: how do we improve industry and HEI collaboration?*
- *Doctoral Study and its Relationship to Industry*

**Phase three: dissemination**

There are three main points of focus for the dissemination of the findings of this research, these are:

- **This report** which will be posted on the Palatine website and also on the project's own website ( see below for details)
- **Exchange Collaboration Website** (<http://exchangecollaborations.org>)  
This website is hosted by Central School of Speech & Drama and contains information, documentation, and useful policies related to the project. It also provides an online closed forum which is managed by the project's leaders (over the next year). This has been set up to enable HEI staff and industry partners to share good practice, problem solve and to discuss the challenges and opportunities of collaborative models of learning and teaching.
- **Conferences:** Amanda Stuart Fisher presented some preliminary reflections on the findings of the research at the SCUDD annual conference which was held at Glasgow University in April 2011, she was invited to be on the Creative Partnerships Panel.

**Research Findings**

**Collaborative Partnerships: Relationships and Expectations**

It soon became clear from our research that a wide range of different models of partnership were being developed between performing arts HEIs and their industry partners. In some instances these partnerships were very formal and were embedded firmly within the curriculum, other collaborations were however less formal and were more likely to be established on a more ad hoc basis in response to a particular project.

Whilst the more formal arrangements (such as a formal placement for example) seemed generally to offer students a more integrated experience (in terms of the experience being embedded in the curriculum), the more informal arrangements enabled HEIs and their industry partners to work more fluidly and, creatively together, enabling a more spontaneous response to current initiatives and funding opportunities. A more informal relationship also enabled more flexibility in terms of

the structure and design of the collaboration (with regards to assessment for example).

Interestingly, some HEI tutors suggested they felt these less formal arrangements to be ultimately more effective: not only because they freed the HEI from the formality of assessment but also because HEIs were able to avoid student complaints about a lack of parity<sup>5</sup>.

It also became apparent that successful collaborations are generally person-led, often evolving from personal contacts and shared interests. The academic staff member's research interest was also significant because collaborations often developed from practice rooted within a specific research activity. Whilst this can often lend passion, commitment and momentum to the development of a collaborative project this person-driven focus can also threaten the sustainability of these kinds of projects, which can break down and dissipate when one of the original staff members is no longer involved in the work.

Equally the person-driven focus of collaboration means that although partnerships might often seem to offer a cost effective mode of curriculum delivery, the reality is that they are often resource heavy in terms of time spent on communication and the nurturing and development of particular relationships.

What is also evident is that the expectations of the different stakeholders involved in collaborative learning and teaching varies considerably. The success of attaching a particular student to a particular organisation is reliant on a bespoke process and acknowledgement of both stakeholders. For as the research into experiential learning suggests it is impossible to disaggregate the learner's experience of the world from the learning process that take place either within the classroom or within the work place. Each student will come to an industry collaboration with a particular and unique perspective, as researchers Boud, Cohen and Walker explain:

'[it is] meaningless to talk about learning in isolation from experience. Experience cannot be bypassed; it is the central consideration of all learning.' (Boud, Cohen and Walker in Beard and Wilson 2007: 19).

Furthermore, for the industry partner, the sustainability of a collaborative partnership with an HEI, is often - at least, in part - dependent on the possibility of some kind of reciprocity. Collaborations are more likely to be productive and sustained if they offer some kind of tangible benefit to the industry partner, such as the opportunity for new research and development to be undertaken or the production of a new or improved resource such as a website or a report.

One of the biggest differences that shaped the dynamics of the partnership was the question of remuneration (i.e. funding hosts). Whilst most partnerships tend to operate partly on an expectation of reciprocity and partly on goodwill, in some instances the professional partner is remunerated for their role in the collaboration (for example, teaching mentors). The impact of remuneration upon collaborative models of learning and teaching is complex and raises issues that are perhaps too expansive to be fully addressed by this research. However, it was noted that remuneration can substantially change the dynamics of partnerships; for example,

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<sup>5</sup> If collaborative activity ( such as placements) form part of an formally assessed unit of work HEIs are required to carefully manage these relationships to ensure that the learning opportunities are adequate for each and every student-industry partnership.

the exchange between the HEI and industry partner is no longer an 'exchange' but becomes instead a remunerated task (albeit one that the professional partner themselves may not be directly remunerated for). Furthermore, the collaborative partner is no longer in role as a voluntary mentor but is instead engaged in a contractual relationship that exceeds the parameters of the relationship that is directly forged with the student. The remuneration of some partnerships and not others and the status conferred by this can also further complicate the process of establishing an effective learning, teaching and assessment model of practice; especially when the industry partner is working collaboratively that more than one HEI at any one time.

A similar issue was raised in relation to student travel expenses and whether or not the HEI arranged formal visits to each student placement/ collaboration. Whilst many of those we spoke to expressed a desire for more funding to be made available to cover these kinds of expenses, others pointed to the lack of flexibility this model produced (due to funding cuts, for example, the students choice of placement might be restricted because tutors are unable to afford to undertake visits to venues that are far away; alternatively, in rural HEIs, some students find themselves having to travel large distances to placement settings, forcing the HEI to reconsider the viability of placement learning given these prohibitively large travel costs, especially for students from widening participation backgrounds.

### **Models of Learning, Teaching and Assessment within Collaborations between Performing Arts HEIs and their Industry Partners**

It was clear from the different stages of the research that the issue of assessment was a crucial distinguishing factor in the way collaborative partnerships were established and developed.

Generally speaking, very few HEIs directly assessed their student's work whilst on placement<sup>6</sup>. What was more common was for HEIs to assess work that students completed solely for the HEI in response to their experience (for example, the completion of a portfolio, a case study report or an essay about a particular company or collaborative project). This finding was somewhat surprising for not only is reflection now considered a valuable tool for professional development and life long learning (see Moon 2004), in recent years we have witnessed new developments HE performing arts about the value of practice as research<sup>7</sup>. Interestingly, several research participants suggested there was a good reason for this because by not directly assessing practice students were able to take more risks with their practice, something which is often curtailed in the student's pursuance of a 'good mark'. Similarly, it also became clear that the less formalised and un-assessed collaborations with industry partners often enabled a more instantaneous engagement with a project because it is freed all parties from the pressure of parity and assessment.

The symposium in particular raised a lot of questions about the assessment of professional practice and how this might be defined and measured. Speaking from a medical perspective, Julie Laxton's presentation on the use of a competency driven

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<sup>6</sup> For a model of practice of how this is achieved please refer to the course specification for the B.A. (Hons) Drama, Applied Theatre and Education at Central School of Speech and drama ([www.cssd.ac.uk](http://www.cssd.ac.uk)).

<sup>7</sup> For example, the University of Bristol undertook a five year AHRB funded research project into this, see *Practice as Research in Performance: 2001-2006* (PARIP) at the department of Drama: Theatre, Film and Television, Bristol University ([www.bris.ac.uk/parip](http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip)) for more details.



model of assessment for students in health and social care offered an interesting perspective here. The ALPS<sup>8</sup> model allows students to instantaneously acknowledge moments of learning in practice, it also encourages reflection and target setting which is particularly useful in the context of the acquisition of the softer-skills of communication, empathetic engagement, professionalism etc. An assessment framework that identifies applied theatre-type competencies was also presented at the symposium by Simon Ruding, Director of TiPP. This raised some interesting questions about the issue of failure and the symposium delegates reflected on the importance of allowing for the possibility of failure and the value of risk taking, as well as acknowledging the difficulty of communicating possible failure to a student whilst continuing to work with them on placement.

What was also revealed by the research was the very different ways that industry partners are invited to contribute to the assessment process of a student who is working with them in collaboration.

Approximately 36% of hosts who took part in our initial online survey acknowledged that they didn't know how the student they were working with would be assessed in relation to the placement.

Given the time resourcing that has been invested in the nurturing of many of these collaborations, this lack of involvement at the point of assessment feels like something of a missed opportunity. Certainly, if the learning undertaken in collaboration with an industry partner forms part of a formal work placement, then it becomes crucial that all partners involved in the project are made aware of what their responsibility is with regard to establishing an appropriate learning opportunity with regard to the assessment procedures, this is echoed in the QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education guidelines. In Section 9: Work-based and Placement Learning ( 2007), the QAA suggests industry partners should be encouraged to actively support the learning opportunities they are provide for an HE student, the QAA states:

Work-based or placement providers are encouraged to play an active role in the opportunities provided for the student. To support them in this role they need clear information from the awarding institution about the objectives of the work-based or placement learning, their particular roles and responsibilities, the nature and scope of the activity involved and how responsibilities are to be fulfilled. They will benefit from guidance about their involvement in the procedures for the monitoring of the progress of students and mechanisms for reporting to the awarding institution at the end of the work-based or placement learning opportunity. (QAA 2007:18)

Furthermore, another finding revealed that approximately 83% of the hosts who participated in the survey, worked with students from more than one HEI or course (some were working with as many as four different HEIs at one time). This suggests a high likelihood for confusion with regards to the expectations of the different stake holders involved in a collaboration with regard to assessment and learning opportunities.

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<sup>8</sup>For more information about the Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings project see <http://www.alps-cetl.ac.uk/maps.html>

### **AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Study**

This particular mode of study (whereby an industry partner, along with an HEI both invest in a jointly negotiated, AHRC funded research project) raised some particularly complex questions for those who participated in the research. Perhaps one reason for this is the number of different stakeholders involved in this kind of collaboration. In this model of practice, not only are students negotiating a research project in partnership with an organisation which has its own internal rhythms and pragmatic concerns, the project also includes several supervisors with potentially contrasting agendas (one based in the HEI and one or even two based within the partner organisation). If we include the AHRC as a partner in this context (as funder) we potentially have at least four different stakeholders in this collaboration, each with different expectations and agendas. Furthermore, again, the issue of remuneration and funding can also complicate the dynamics of this collaborative process and students can feel as if they are both being employed by the partner organisation whilst also making this 'employer' the focus of their research. Another key challenge expressed by one of the academics we spoke to was the difficulty of working within the organisation whilst also been able to maintain a critical distance from it. Moreover, unlike other PhDs, the research project is often - to some extent - pre-determined by the organisation and the HEI prior to the student engaging with it. There then follows a period of negotiation as the student begins to explore the context and parameters of the project and, to some degree, re-direct and define the research.

The issue of failure again, becomes highly pertinent in this context. For whilst failure and risk taking could be perceived as playing a crucial role in PhD study, the risks are perhaps far higher and more complex when undertaken within a collaboration that was set up by other people. Students involved in this mode of study expressed a desire for greater transparency in terms of enabling them to fully comprehend the agendas that constituted the initial project. There was also evidence that more research could be undertaken to understand how best to support these kinds of projects.

### **Challenges and Opportunities of Collaborative Models of Learning and Teaching Challenges**

One of the greatest challenges confronting these models of learning and teaching is the question of resourcing. For whilst collaborative projects and placements are often perceived as means of reducing the cost of curriculum delivery, the arrangement and support of these kinds of learning experience are usually person-driven and therefore essentially resource heavy, at least in terms of time. This is an issue that was expressed both by the academics involved in the research as well as by the industry partners. Furthermore, although one of the researchers involved in this project was Central's Placement Co-ordinator<sup>9</sup>, this was by no means typical and it became clear during the research that very few organisations had access to this kind of specialised support. This makes the process of partnering students with organisations, and managing the quality of the learning experience whilst on placement, very labour intensive for academic staff. Furthermore, as a lot of collaborative activity develops from the research interests of specific academic members of staff, there is a potential danger that the breadth of work-based settings offered to students can become somewhat limited. In addition to this, there are also number of other organisational issues related to placement management which may be neglected if appropriately trained staff are not involved in the

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<sup>9</sup> Susan Oman is Central's placement Coordinator and undertook all the research interviews with HEI and Industry staff for the second stage of the research.

placement process (for example, health and safety inductions and the quality assurance of placement learning opportunities).

The other key challenge confronting this model of learning and teaching is the issue of parity and the difficulty of formalising collaborative experiences in such a way that allows fluidity and risk taking, whilst also ensuring students can achieve the learning outcomes of a particular unit of study through a collaborative project. Again, this has a resonance with the question of resourcing. The resources involved in maintaining and supporting collaborative relationships and the students involved with them is costly. Similarly, for professional industry partners who are working in small and under-funded organisations, the cost of supporting students can in some instances make the collaboration difficult to manage.

Another major challenge to collaborations between HEIs and industry partners is how to secure the experience of international students on placement, particularly those who do not have English as a first language and/ or come from a very difficult culture to the UK. There are two main reasons for this: firstly, many of these students struggle to set up their own placement, because they are often unfamiliar with the professional environment of the UK and have very few personal contacts from which to draw and secondly, the focus of this kind of learning is often centred around the development and acquisition of what might be termed 'softer skills' such as communication, problem solving and negotiation tasks and international students can find themselves at a cultural and linguistic disadvantage to their peers.

### **Opportunities**

What was clear from our research was that when these kinds of collaborative partnerships work effectively, each of the stake holders (i.e. the student, the industry host and the HEI tutor) find the experience very positive. Sometimes the impact of a successful collaboration can resonate throughout the rest of the cohort and through the HEI itself as the students engage in professional activities that were initiated as a result of the partnership for example.

It is also clear that many of the collaborations that take place at HE lead to employment, whether this be something temporary or more full time. This means that industry hosts can have more confidence when offering a post to an applicant (because they have worked with them) and this ultimately saves the resource of a complex recruitment process<sup>10</sup>.

Collaborative learning experiences with professional organisations enable students to make use of and develop personal skills which are perhaps rarely assessed within the more formal 'academic' HE setting, for example: communication, emotional literacy and problem solving. Building on personal and professional development within the work place, can develop confidence which in turn can impact on other areas of the curriculum.

Collaborative working relationships can also be particularly sustaining to HEI staff, facilitating not only possible connections with new research areas but also providing useful perspective on the academic curriculum.

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<sup>10</sup> One industry partner we spoke to described a placement as a 'trial run' for performance and indicated that his company had gone on to employ a number of placement student who had worked with his company as part of a placement unit on their degree,

Finally, when managed effectively collaborative learning and teaching can provide innovative ways of responding to the economic hardship and funding cuts that are currently impacting upon the arts both within higher education and beyond.

### **Innovation**

In terms of innovation, the research identified several models of practice which pushed the concept of collaboration and partnership into new and interesting directions.

- At Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts, for example, MA Creative Arts Consultancy students work on a consultancy project with the cultural and creative industries. The consultancy is negotiated between an academic and a professional partner and enables the students to research generate real solutions for real problems, which sometimes lead to a considerable commercial impact for the organisation
- In another example, the Division of Business, Enterprise and Management at Queen Margaret University Edinburgh worked with local businesses to come up with a collaborative project. The result was the development of a viral video clip for the Edinburgh Liqueur company, which involved students from acting, costume and film. The sample product was also taken by QMU staff on a teaching visit to the QMU Singapore Campus within the East Asia School of Business and used as a teaching aid, case study and 'active' project with masters and final year students. The importance of the Asian market to Scottish Whisky based products made this an ideal opportunity to engage young professionals who in most cases work within a wide assortment, often the luxury end, of hospitality businesses resulting in real, focused and pertinent ideas to feedback.
- TiPP is an arts organisation that operates in criminal justice settings, it was originally set up by James Thompson and Paul Heritage, who were then both academics at Manchester University. Today TiPP is now funded by the Arts Council England, NW and is located within Manchester University. While it operates independently to Manchester University it continues to offer collaborative learning opportunities to Manchester students who are studying drama, whilst also partnering up on occasion with the academic staff there for specific projects. At the Exchange symposium Simon Ruding spoke of the importance of being physically based in an office within the University and crucially in close proximity to the other members of staff in the drama department.
- On the BA (Hons) Drama, Applied Theatre and Education course at Central, third year students undertake a placement in a professional setting. For this placement the professional host actively participates in the student's assessment. This mark, which forms part of the student's final degree, is awarded for their work on placement and is moderated by a team of assessors who visit and assess students across the year group.

### **Recommendations**

What is clear from the research is that the opportunities afforded by collaborative models of learning and teaching are plentiful and beneficial for all stakeholders. Yet, the resourcing issue is pressing for many of those involved in this kind of practice.

### We would therefore recommend that:

- HEIs and their industry partners should take the time to reflect upon their collaborative practices and seek to explore and enhance the moments of reciprocity. For example, whilst resourcing might be problematic for both parties, developing a genuinely collaborative relationship whereby resources such as space and expertise can be shared could offer interesting ways forward.
- HEIs should nurture, support and profile the different collaborative relationships they have generated. Mutual publicity will support all of the partners involved and make potential students aware of the kinds of collaborative working relationships they may encounter whilst studying.
- When establishing new collaborative relationships, it is important to strive towards a transparency of expectation. Discussing openly the issue of failure, assessment and student support will enhance the possibility for easier communication later on into the partnership.
- Although, collaborations are often person-led initially, it is important to try to broaden out these relationships to, where possible, include other members of staff. This will strengthen the relationships and enhance sustainability.
- Developing communication between the stakeholders within a collaborative relationship will strength the learning experience for the student. Sometimes it can be useful to establish formal models of communications such as a steering group that meets regularly, otherwise, implementing moments of checking in with your partner can also pre-empt moments of miscommunication between the HEI, the industry partner and the student.
- Although it can be challenging to design and implement, models of assessment that award students for their work within the professional environment of the work place will enable a more diverse range of skills and competencies to be acknowledged and assessed within the framework of the degree. This will enhance the range of learning styles that are assessed within the degree, develop the degree's learning outcomes and will open up opportunities for some students who struggle with the more formal aspects of academic study.
- HEIs should, where possible, consider involving their industry partners in the design and development of the learning outcomes and assessment tasks for a unit or module of work that involves collaborative learning and teaching. Constructing learning, teaching and assessment processes in dialogue with industry partners will begin to a generate a shared vocabulary of skill acquisition and professional knowledges that will maintain the relevancy of the course as a whole.

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### July 2011

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### With thanks to:

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