

**The arts in primary initial teacher education**

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## Executive Summary

University ITE providers saw understanding creativity and creative teaching approaches as an important foundation for a teaching career. They reported that they were generally able to embed creativity throughout their courses. However, despite being keen to include creative arts they had insufficient time to provide both theory and practice.

Universities provided variable creative arts experiences with most PGCE courses offering an average of ten hours, School Direct routes six hours, and undergraduate courses 24 hours. Undergraduate courses also had time for extension choices - creative arts electives or specialist pathways. Universities that offered less time almost always focused on practical experiences that could form the basis of classroom activities. Universities that offered more time were able to provide some theoretical framing as well as practical exemplars.

All universities relied heavily on school placements for practice in creative arts experiences. Thus, the experience of students on placement was variable because it was highly dependent on school commitment to and practices. Students from one primary PGCE course largely supported this view: while most had an opportunity to teach and observe at least one creative lesson and an arts subject, the majority reported feeling a lack of confidence in covering all of the creative arts.

Teach First seemed able to do more. They provided an online resource with a theoretical framework, a bank of practical resources, and ongoing support beyond the training year.

The handful of SCITT directors who responded to the research invitation largely supported the view that creative and creative arts practices varied widely across schools. It seemed likely that where arts rich schools were involved in teacher education, students could have a sustained engagement with the arts, but this was not the norm.

## Research context

This research is a response to long-standing concerns in the arts and arts education communities about inequity of access to arts education in primary schools. The focus of this project was on the foundational learning offered to primary school teachers in the creative arts. The research was conducted in the context of wide-ranging changes to initial teacher education; these changes have the potential to address long standing concerns. Or not.

This initial section of the report summarises both of these issues.

### Arts education in primary schools

The arts community have a strong interest in arts education in schools. They have invested time and money to ensure that children and young people are able to engage with the arts. The tangible commitment to the arts can be seen for example in the development of a national plan for music education<sup>1</sup>, arts charity funding programmes for teacher development<sup>2</sup>, the education programmes of national priority arts organisations<sup>3</sup>, the Arts Mark and Arts Award schemes<sup>4</sup> and the sustained work of regional youth arts organisations<sup>5</sup>. There is a similar arts community interest in creativity, with recent Durham commission and current funding of Creative Collaboratives<sup>6</sup>.

However, the commitment of the education community is less clear. The national policy agenda for local management and academisation has shifted the responsibility for ensuring arts access and participation from local authorities to schools and trusts (Ball, 2018). The arts education that children and young people receive is thus highly dependent on the commitment of local governors and trustees. The arts are foundation, not core, subjects in the national curriculum, but they have only recently been incorporated into the school inspection framework<sup>7</sup>.

There is also a significant variation between school phases. Creative arts are generally offered as discrete subjects in secondary schools. In primary schools the creative arts can be separate subjects with dedicated time and space, as well as being integrated into other subject areas. There is strong anecdotal evidence and some research which suggests that primary arts education provision is patchy (Downing, Johnson, & Kaur, 2003)<sup>8</sup>. In secondary schools, the arts are taught by specialist staff. By contrast, the arts in primary schools are taught by generalist teachers. Only some primary schools choose to employ art specialists and establish ongoing partnerships with arts organisations.

This research investigates one aspect of the arts education in primary schools. There is an abundance of anecdotal evidence about the low status of the arts in initial primary teacher education. We set out to see whether this was indeed the case.

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<sup>1</sup> National Plan for Music June 2022.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1086619/The\\_Power\\_of\\_Music\\_to\\_Change\\_Lives.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1086619/The_Power_of_Music_to_Change_Lives.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.phf.org.uk/funds/tdf/>

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Royal Shakespeare Company <https://www.rsc.org.uk/learn>; TATE Learning <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/learning-programmes>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.artsmark.org.uk>; <https://www.artsaward.org.uk/site/?id=64>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/children-and-young-people/bridge-organisations>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dur.ac.uk/creativitycommission/> and <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/children-and-young-people/creativity-collaboratives>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework/education-inspection-framework>, in use from September 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Our related arts rich primary schools project will document the best primary creative arts practices.

## Initial teacher education

The purpose of initial teacher education is to provide the foundational learning necessary for beginning professional practice. It is, as its name states, initial. There is an expectation that teachers continue to learn throughout their careers. The initial phase of teacher education aims to form values and attitudes, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to begin to teach.

Initial teacher education is expected to support primary trainees to, inter alia:

- understand and appreciate the arts as a domain of knowledge and practice that is made up of several discrete arts disciplines
- understand the specific pedagogies associated with the arts disciplines, and the traditions and debates that underpin different approaches
- have both sufficient expertise and self-belief to teach arts subjects to the children in their class
- develop an understanding and the habits of a reflective professional practitioner. (e.g. Clandinin & Husu, 2017; Mead, 2023; Menter, Hulme, Elliott, & Lewin, 2010)

There have been ongoing concerns about whether teacher education in England is up to this task. Since the early 1980s, the government has pressured university providers to provide training which supports teacher to learn and perfect 'best practices' for improving student learning and performance (Helgetun, 2022). This is sometimes described as the de-professionalisation' of teaching (e.g. Buchanan, 2020) - teachers are expected to unreflectively adhere to specific educational techniques handed down to them, rather than draw on their own professional judgement and ongoing engagement with research and theory from the broad field of 'educational studies' (e.g. Mayer & Mills, 2021).

Over time, there have been significant changes to the ways in which teacher education in England is organised. Greater priority has been given to (1) time spent in schools, (2) the existing national curriculum, and (3) (selected) research-based evidence which teachers are to use. These priorities have been accompanied by the growth of school-based teacher education providers. University providers have been required to increase the amount of time spent on the immediately practical and reduce formal studies of education (Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, & Whitty, 2020).

Increased diversity in provision and providers and the development of multiple routes for teacher education and league-tabled inspections did not however ease policy makers concerns about the apparent quality of initial teacher education. There are ongoing tensions between universities and the government around the meaning and scope of teacher education. Terminology reflects these tensions - while the government uses the terminology of teacher training, universities in particular prefer to use the broader notion of teacher education. Universities are particularly concerned to hold both theory and practice together (Burn, Mutton, & Thompson, 2022; Loughran & Menter, 2018).

The Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework, issued in 2020, set out the minimum requirements for what trainee teachers should be taught. The university ITT sector strongly challenged the framework on the grounds that it unduly narrowed the scope of initial teacher education to government priorities of effectiveness and promoted a narrow range of pedagogical models taken from cognitive psychology (Turvey et al., 2019). Universities argued that the emphasis on strategies for effective teaching came at the cost of producing teachers able to reflectively develop their practices through drawing on a 'reservoir' of knowledge based in a wide range of educational disciplines and their own values as educators (Brooks, 2021).

The most recent government intervention has brought further changes. A National Institute of Teaching and Education has been established<sup>9</sup>. The government's stated intention is to reduce the number of providers and to further standardise training provision. The government intends that the new NIE will provide the bulk of teacher education, against which other providers can be benchmarked. Existing ITE providers have had to apply for reaccreditation - not all are expected to be successful. This is arguably a risky commitment to thinning the sector at a time of significant impending teacher shortages.

It remains to be seen whether and how the explicit government support for the arts as a foundational domain subject to inspection plays out in this new teacher education landscape. However, it should be noted that this report is reflective of arrangements which will almost certainly change. If the new teacher education environment is more hospitable to the arts and creativity it will be going against the trend to focus on the core that was established some time ago.

### **Associated research**

This research project has investigated an area which is under researched in England. While there is strong anecdotal evidence about the parlous state of arts teaching in primary teacher education, there is little evidence. Researchers have documented and interrogated the current trend to tie teacher education strongly to current government policy agendas (see previous section). They have documented two different approaches to teaching, teachers as professionals and teacher education. We signpost these here as two different possibilities for what might constitute a teaching professional:

- (1) teacher as reflective and activist professional (Evans, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Sachs, 2000, 2003, 2016). Teachers are knowledgeable about the histories and social functions of schooling, about children and their development, about disciplines and how these are, and can be, taught as subjects in schools. Teachers not only know how to teach the mandated curriculum at the time, but can develop aspects of curriculum and pedagogies that are not yet mandatory, that are important for their specific students. They are well-versed in pedagogical principles and debates and see teaching as a practice which mobilises both theory and practical skills and know-how. They develop a repertoire of teaching strategies over time through continuing professional development and learning, and their own reflections. They engage in practitioner research and are well informed about current education research. They are actively involved in discussions and actions designed to make schooling more equitable and inclusive. The job of teacher education is to provide foundational knowledge and experience which complements the role of school partners take in proving experiences in how academic knowledges are made practical.
- (2) teacher as skilled and knowledgeable delivery agent (Barber, 2017; Barber, Moffit, & Kihn, 2010) . Teachers are knowledgeable about disciplines and how these are and can be taught in schools. Their role is to ensure that the mandated curriculum is taught well. They are immersed in current research evidence about teaching methods, and apply evidence about the most effective practical applications derived from the learning sciences. They value subject expertise and ensure that they engage in continuing professional development about their subjects areas as well as teaching practices. The job of trainers is to ensure that teachers know the mandated curriculum, current evidence about good teaching and have a sound grasp of foundational

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/nite/>. See also <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-institute-of-teaching-set-to-be-established> and <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/why-does-the-system-need-a-national-institute-of-teaching/>.

learning science applications in use in schools. School practice is highly significant as teachers can only learn in situ current expectations and practice standards and norms.

The two exist variously in international contexts and are often more blurred (Evetts, 2008) (Evetts, 2011). However, in England the two are more distinct positions which exist in tension. University and some school providers hold the first position as does the Chartered College for Teaching, while government policy is strongly in favour of the latter. Arts education researchers are also strongly in favour of this view of teaching (e.g. Addison & Burgess, 2021; Baldecchino, 2019).

Research on primary teacher education adds another dimension to this framing, that of the generalist versus specialist teacher (see the previous section). While most primary teachers do have a specialist area, or are given one by their school, only some are specifically trained as specialists. Undergraduate teacher education courses have declined over the years and these typically did provide options for specialisation. And some primary teachers have a first degree through which they have acquired specialist disciplinary knowledge. There has been widespread international concern about the preparedness of generalist primary teachers to teach the arts (Cutcher, 2014; Rogers, 2003; Temmerman, 2006). Some US research suggests that children who work with generalist arts teachers have poorer arts learning outcomes than those who can work with specialists (Brewer, Xu, & Diket, 2017). Researchers argue that initial teacher education in the arts must be improved, together with more systematic continuing professional development for primary teachers<sup>10</sup>.

Researchers have long documented the problems that generalist teachers have in working in areas where they have little prior experience and expertise. Researchers have also investigated various schemes designed to address expertise gaps – key among these are school-based continuing professional development programmes, school-based subject leads and subject mentoring, practitioner research programmes, lighthouse schools, subject-based networks, professional networks and partnership projects. All of these can be seen in action in English primary schools. Generally, researchers agree that professional learning that does not address teachers' own practices and knowledge is more likely to be ineffectual (e.g. Cordingley et al., 2018; Cordingley et al., 2015).

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<sup>10</sup> Secondary teacher professional development is often not school based but dependent on professional and arts organisations.

## The research project

The research objective was to produce a comprehensive picture of how primary teacher training providers approached teaching the creative arts and creativity in primary teaching. We wanted to know:

- how much time was devoted to creativity and the arts,
- who taught about creativity and the arts
- what was taught about creativity and the arts
- how this teaching was organised and how it fitted in the overall programme
- whether ITE providers knew what arts backgrounds students had and
- how they monitored what arts and creativity experiences students had during their school placements

The research was survey based. We anticipated that it might be difficult to get some people to fill out an online survey so we decided to offer a recorded interview as an alternative. Our email to schools and universities thus offered both online questionnaire or online interview. During interviews we were able to ask more about what was taught and why. Interviews became our preferred method as they facilitate the exploration of the issues in more details. The survey was slightly modified for SCITTs, in order to reflect the different organizational form. While we had initially planned on contacting only university course directors, the pilot study showed that we needed to speak to ITE arts leads who had direct knowledge of the programme.

## Research Challenges

The research faced four difficulties:

1. Producing an accurate list of ITE providers in universities and schools was challenging. Many institutions use a generic email. An in-person contact was always more likely to yield a response. It often took considerable time to find a person who we could contact. However, we did contact all of the university ITT providers (62) and the vast majority of primary SCITT providers ( $\approx 100$ ). All providers were contacted three times.
2. The research was conducted during the first period of lockdown and the post lockdown period. Universities were teaching remotely. Schools were very stretched dealing with ongoing closures. We suspect that our requests to answer questions about arts education may have seemed very unimportant compared to the challenges institutions were facing. Schools in particular were reported to be highly survey-weary.
3. The turbulence in teacher education (see previous section) may have contributed to some providers thinking that there was little point in the survey.
4. The underlying concern in the project is about how much creativity and arts education are valued. This may have affected the way that people responded to our requests for participation. If the arts are seen as important, providers might be more likely to respond to our request. Providers who did not think the arts were important may have been less likely to respond.

Unfortunately, there was a significantly different response rate between university and from SCITT providers. This report is primarily based on surveys and interviews with staff in 31 universities and Teach First (see Fig 1).



|               | University ITE course directors | University ITE arts leads | Total number of universities |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Interview     | 15                              | 17                        | 25                           |
| Questionnaire | 3                               | 3                         | 6                            |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>18</b>                       | <b>20</b>                 | <b>31</b>                    |

Figure 1: Total number of University Primary ITE staff and universities

### The research process

We initially invited the directors of primary ITE courses in all university providers (62) to either complete a survey or to be interviewed. We heard back from 20 - three completed a survey and 15 agreed to be interviewed. We then contacted primary ITE arts leads either through details provided by the course directors, or through research team direct contacts. Three arts leads completed the survey, with a further 17 agreeing to be interviewed. In some cases we were able to interview both the arts leads and course directors. When arts leads and directors are added together, a total number of 31 universities responded making the total university response rate 50%. We also interviewed the course director and curriculum lead at Teach First.

The next stage of the research focused on school-based provision. We contacted all of the school-centred initial teacher training providers (SCITTs) for whom we could find a contact. Successfully contacting SCITTs is a more complicated process than contacting universities, for three main reasons:

1. SCITTs are constituted as a consortium of schools, rather than existing as a standalone organization in their own right.
2. SCITTs have been in a state of flux, with recent regulatory changes meaning a number of SCITTs have merged or ceased to train students
3. Staff at SCITTs have extremely busy professional lives, with teaching and managerial duties at the schools in which they are based alongside their teacher training duties.

Additionally, there is significant variation in SCITT size, with some SCITTs only serving a handful of student teachers each year. Overall, the more fragmentary nature of the SCITT landscape meant that contacting and gaining a response was a much more complicated process compared with universities.

We sent out three rounds of emails to the SCITT contacts that we were able to source ( $\approx 100$ ), and also arranged for the survey to be promoted by the SCITT professional association, the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers. We heard back from two SCITT directors who agreed to be interviewed (they were also the arts lead at the SCITT), with a further five completing the survey.

We also sent out questionnaires to primary trainee teachers at the University of Nottingham, asking about their experience of the creative arts and creativity on their courses, with a particular focus on their placements in schools. 27 students completed the survey.

### Caveat

The research results must be read with some caution. We have far less data from SCITT staff and of student trainee teachers than is ideal, with the perspectives of university staff forming the basis of

the project's findings. Further, because of the current changes in ITE it is possible that the values and practices of university staff in the near-future may have significantly changed, and/or that some of the universities involved in this research project will no longer be involved in primary initial teacher education. However, the snapshot of the values and approaches of university teacher education staff, at a time when they are facing the prospect of the field being transformed, is still of interest. Their results may be helpful in thinking about the direction of change needed in overall ITE landscape.

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## University based ITE

This first results section shows that the directors of the university initial primary teacher education position creativity at the heart of their courses, and attribute great importance to the creative arts. The second section addresses the arts. It explores how the university arts leads attempt to develop capable creative arts teachers within the limitations of the time available to them within the framework within an environment where there is huge variation in school arts programmes. The third section looks at how the directors and arts leads attempt to instil social justice values in the course, in particular in relation to creativity and the creative arts. Each section shows that the directors and arts leads in the study are attempting to protect and maximise the emphasis on creativity and the creative arts within an arguably inhospitable policy environment.

### **1. Creativity in university ITE provision**

University ITE directors were more able to talk about creativity than the arts. They saw creativity as a core value and a key component of an equitable pedagogical practice.

#### ***Directors' views on creativity***

Most directors that we spoke to had been in teacher education for some time. They had 'risen through the ranks' to take on a leadership role. Many remembered the pre 2010 education policy environment in which creativity and the arts had a higher profile. Despite the current emphasis on use of evidence and data, school leadership, the core subjects and behaviour management, they saw that it was important to maintain a creativity focus.

The directors all expressed a strong personal commitment to the arts and creativity in primary ITT. Six of the interviewed directors had a background in creativity in education or the creative arts, with one director typical in describing themselves as '*a big, big promoter of any kind of arts in education*'. Another director reported that creativity was a significant influence on course design, saying that '*my background is creativity which is ahead of IT and it is probably where this driver comes from really*'.

For the directors, the focus of creativity was on the agency and thought process of the students, rather than the final result. The directors frequently used the words *open-ended*, *problem solving* and *collaboration* in relation to creativity. One director spoke of '*the importance of taking risks*' for pupils and for '*thinking flexibly*'. For another it was about developing students who can '*see a wider picture. They can make connections between things, and they can use things in new ways*'. For others, creativity was about developing '*independent thinkers*', '*about critiquing and being open minded*' and related to '*philosophy*'.

A number of directors nominated English and Maths as places where creative learning activities could complement and expand the more standard approach of setting narrow learning objectives and measuring students against them. For example, they said that they ensured that students covered how a maths topic could be examined through an '*open ended activity rather than look at another summative assessment*' (CD 3). In English, creativity was reported as '*allowing them (pupils) to bring their own ideas to writing and writing lessons, not to be all formulaic*' (CD 25).

As independent institutions, university ITE providers are able to set their own mission statement and values. While these need to be broadly compatible with the government's vision for ITE, there is considerable scope for universities to set out their priorities. Although they weren't directly asked about them, a number of directors chose to talk about how creativity was at the heart of their mission statements (see Figure 2) .

| Statement   | Summary  |
|---|--|
| Our vision statement for primary PGCE is that they when they're newly qualified teachers, they'll be critically reflective, informed by evidence, professional, committed to every child as an individual. And then finally confident to be creative so you can see that creativity is fundamental to what the programme is all about. So in terms of creative teaching, I would say that that is something that is embedded into almost all of our subjects. You know we are wanting to support students to understand that you know taking risks, being creative, you know, using innovation to support their practice. (CD 16) | Creativity is an underpinning priority that informs course design. It also underpins graduate practices and attitudes.   |
| What we what we say in our vision and mission statement is all about creativity. So one of the things that we try with all of our sessions. I know you're talking specifically about the creative arts, but we try to have a creative strand that runs through maths and science and we've got this commitment to kind of embedding creative pedagogy throughout all aspects of the university side of things. (AL 7)   | Creativity is one of our aims and informs teaching across courses. We have particularly ensured creativity is integrated into teaching about the core subjects but it is generally embedded. |
| There's three main teacher values [on the course], and one of them is creativity. There's creativity, social justice, and intellectual curiosity. So in a sense, when we design any of our programmes and we've just gone through a two year process of reviewing our primary programmes and secondary as well one of the aspects that we really talk about is creativity. (CD 23)  | Creativity is one of our core values and underpins all course design. We have recently recommitted to this approach.   |
| Two years ago, we redesigned the PGCE so we've framed it around creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, care. (AL 1)  | Creativity is a core course design principle which we adopted two years ago.   |

Figure 2: Creativity as a value that informs course design

Despite creativity not being a government priority, ITT directors viewed the development of student teachers able to foster creativity in pupils as a very specific contribution of the university.

I think at the moment there is a real danger that the curriculum is getting so closed down with "knowledge" and you know, and this is where at the moment is so important to get the word out there again because creative activities have been dropped..., and Ofsted don't really look at it, and actually I think it's essential for children to be able to think flexibly and take risks. (AL 7)

Directors argued that creativity was understood by primary schools as valuable. Many saw that university ITE support for teaching creativity as a foundational approach was thus supporting teachers and schools.

We think it's a good approach because it replicates some of the approaches to teaching that we might see in schools, and it also moves away from this sometimes instrumental approach to teaching which is about progress of pupils and, you know, a lot of the experiences of kids as the students in school is teaching English and maths in the morning and then just touching on things in the afternoon. But afternoon sessions in school are very often reproducing you know key themes and key skills in relation to literacy as well. So we try and be very supportive and reflect what's needed in schools...so sort of what's driving the agenda and we think creativity is a really important part of that. (AL 23)

It was clear that the leaders of university ITT provision were squarely in favour of developing a creative primary arts teacher, and were attempting to do so in the face of government demands to focus largely on the core curriculum.

### ***Embedding creativity***

According to the accounts of all directors, creativity was successfully 'embedded' in every subject and every module of their ITE course.

Creativity is integrated into everything, so even our core modules are designed to be creative so they make links and are all designed to develop the creativity. (CD 22)

So we try to be creative across all the subjects and we try to embed it across all the subjects. So for example, our Maths leader will talk about how you can even be creative in subjects like Maths which sometimes surprises the students and you know she talks about creative teaching and child-led teaching. And so we very much embed the idea of creativity all through the programme. (CD 14)

Some directors explained that in recent years, they had deliberately moved away from teaching creativity as a separate area. They wanted to avoid creativity being siloed away and/or seen as an optional extra.

Creativity is embedded across, so we used to do a separate subject, a separate session, on creativity. But we found that was against our principles in a way as our principles are very much for creative teaching and how creativity can be much broader than some people think it is. (CD 14)

Some universities had retained a generic creativity module but also emphasised that creativity was additionally taught across all the different subjects. We were told that the advantage of a separate module was that theories and languages about creativity can be taught and critiqued. The disadvantage was that there can be a disconnect between an abstract study of creativity and its specific applications within subject areas.

There was a divide between the university directors about the extent to which it is possible to develop creative teachers. A minority felt that it was possible to try to teach students about the importance of creativity, but that, given the pressures on being a trainee teacher and fulfilling government policy requirements for NQT<sup>11</sup> status, it was quite another thing to develop creative teachers. They saw a pragmatic and practical problem:

It's quite difficult, because we have so little time in University. So we have a dedicated two weeks when we cover the wider curriculum. And that whole time... We used to label it 'creativity in primary schools', but the students really struggled with it because they often didn't see what we taught them reflected in schools. [We] changed to 'inspiring primary learners', but the themes that they look at are all the creative themes. So during that fortnight we would have eight lectures where we either have people from University lecturing or we have schools come in and lecture and they lecture on creativity in this kind of setting or, you know, from a University academic perspective. (CD 18)

One director saw that some ITE students were more inclined to creative approaches than others, perhaps a reflection of their own leanings and their own schooling.

I suppose some students would [learn to think creatively] more successfully than others. Understand that this is about thinking creatively as a teacher, taking a creative approach to your professional responsibilities. so some would make that connection. It's made explicitly to them, but some get that connection more easily than others. (CD 11)

On the other hand, other course directors believed that it was possible to go much further than making the importance of creativity explicit to students. We were told that it was possible to *challenge* students

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<sup>11</sup> NQT stands for 'newly qualified teacher'. This is someone who has completed their initial teacher training and gained qualified teacher status (QTS) in England and Wales.

from the very earliest stages of the course to ensure that creativity was integral to their basic approach to teaching. This group of directors wanted courses where it would not be possible to either accept or reject creativity, or see it as an extra string to a teaching bow. Rather, ITE students would be immersed in creative activities so that creativity and teaching would be inseparable.

At one university, students were challenged even at the recruitment stage to be creative:

So in our interview we asked the students to do a piece of creative writing. We asked them to bring along an object that is meaningful to them and we used that as a stimulus for creative writing. So that's the first thing. Obviously, at the moment we're doing everything remotely. Everything's done, done via Teams but under usual circumstances, if we were able to have students in a room we actually get to make an object out of newspaper and we give them newspaper and tape and things. So we actually want to see how they can kind of think creatively themselves right from the very start. That's the interview stage that's before they get on the programme. It kind of sets our stall out really. (AL 7)

Many other universities ensured that students were engaged in cross-curricular, creative activities from very early in their primary ITE course. In the following example, students were challenged to understand that creativity is not something that the teacher can simply ask students to do (as they might teach a particular Maths skill), but that it requires the teacher to adopt a particular pedagogical approach

I do a day with them which is like an introduction to the foundation subjects and they do creativity as part of that. I asked the students *what do you think creativity is* and we do a little exercise at the beginning. Usually where I just give them all a piece of paper and a pen and I say right, *Okay, you've got 10 minutes and I want you all to be creative* and they're always like *aarghh*. We talk a little bit about that, about how primary school children might feel about that and how. What does creativity mean and how do you? How do you feel about creativity? Did you feel you are creative person? and then we try to broaden their outlook of what creativity is cause sometimes they think well it's just art. And how you can approach life creatively and what have you done in your day today that is actually creative. And we then embed it into all the subjects after that, that session comes quite early on in the first two weeks, but it's more about an introduction to all other foundation subjects, but within that I also say 'And of course you can be creative in the core subjects as well'.

One director of an Early Years ITE course talked about starting off with creativity, reporting how creativity was embedded in the course through the universal use of artefacts and experiential learning:

We ask our students to think very creatively about their own philosophy of teaching and learning as we bring that into all of our modules. We are creative in our approaches in sessions so we will use a lot of artefacts, a lot of photograph opportunities with our students. We like to call it experiential learning. So instead of talking at them we do lots of activities that help them experience what it's like in the classroom so that they can have some empathy and so set up their classrooms in particular way. We are very creative in our approaches and we don't just tell students that's the way it is. You know, we ask them to think about lots of other scenarios. (CD6)

In this early years course, students were not only taught about creativity in teaching, they were also expected to think about creativity whenever they thought about teaching:

Science geography, history are all be part of [teaching creativity]. But again, we wouldn't talk about it so that the students would just do it, so we would say, okay if you're gonna teach children the components of painting, what do you take – do you use a story or use a photograph? How are you going to do that? We try not to tell our students how to teach, but get them thinking about how they can use the curriculum more creatively. (CD 6)

Many directors talked about the importance of using picture books, or another stimulus, as a starting point for students to think about creative activities based on topics and themes, rather than designing an activity that would only demonstrate that pupils have achieved a narrow learning objective.

There's one particular project called the Flotsam Project which is linked to sustainability, which is one of the other Values, where students use a book which is only pictures. It's a picture book linked to flotsam as in things that have washed up in the ocean. And the students, I mean under normal times face to face, but we haven't done that since February last year... under normal times the students would create sculptures and they would create activities and materials that they can use in school linked to this particular book. (CD 23)

University providers were keen to provide students trainees with the kinds of multi-purpose experiences that could foster relationships and encourage wellbeing as well as explore creative practice.

We tend to start with children's picture books as a central point for everything. So whether we're doing Maths, English, Science, whatever, there's a book that we will use that we read to them and then we will develop ideas and then the things that come from them. One of the examples I can think of this year, because of Covid, we thought they needed to work on building relationships with children when they enter school, so we bought in some huge sunflowers and they just looked at sunflowers for a while. We had music so we built music lists so that they could think about the sort of music that would link with this and they looked at poetry. They drew them and then they started to build links. It developed into them writing their own stories so they did their own creative writing from it. (CD 22)

While one director said that creativity had a (false) reputation as a soft and vague concept, directors were clear that creativity could be taught to students with rigour. One director explained how creativity can be taught systematically as part of teacher training:

We start with the point of the teaching training that we're doing is how to do more than see subjects individually. So we're not doing what I did in my teacher training. It was great, we had an afternoon of doing drama and we had great fun. But yeah it didn't teach me anything. We are talking about teaching students to teach by seeing how things connect together and how creativity, how imagination, how reflexivity and all these skills feed into these subjects. And then we allow them to develop their subject knowledge. And we teach them how to teach and as they're going into schools, they should be able to apply that. (CD 21)

The above data suggests strongly that university ITE directors are not only committed to the importance of creativity in ITE, but that they have a considered approach to embedding creativity across the primary ITE curriculum. Creativity is conceptualised not as an add-on to teaching, but as an integral feature of it, and directors report that they design the course so that creativity is at the heart of all aspects of teaching.

However, directors do not teach all of the students. Nor is creativity the same as the creative arts, although there are clear overlaps.

## **2. Arts based provision in university ITE**

This section focuses specifically on arts education. The arts are not the same as creativity. When well taught, the creative arts support students to create novel artefacts and texts, imagine possibilities, be innovative, solve problems and take risks. However, good arts education is primarily disciplinary learning. Each arts discipline has their own histories, genres, knowledges, platforms, traditions, narratives, languages, conventions and taken-for-granted assumptions. ITE arts education has to provide enough foundational learning in ITE that beginning teachers can offer a meaningful arts curriculum to children.

The section first of all examines ITE students' backgrounds and confidence in the arts and then how the arts are incorporated into university ITE programmes and school placements. Basic problems - time, prior experience, confidence and patchy placement experiences - are identified.

### ***ITE candidates' entry level arts experiences***

ITE candidates gain entry ITE through a combination of academic track record and interview<sup>12</sup>. Interviews generally focus on attitudes and motivations. Interviews may or may not canvass whether applicants have any arts education experience. Most of the ITE directors we interviewed were not certain about the percentage of trainees with an arts background. Prospective ITE students were generally not specifically asked about the arts in initial interviews, although candidates might themselves nominate the arts as one of their interests. It seems likely that institutions with a reputation for being strong on the arts might attract more students with this interest. However the evidence for this is not available and would require a specific study of students across the various institutions and programmes.

Arts leads in ITE courses, and not every institution had such a position, were more knowledgeable about their students' backgrounds. Most students did not have much arts experience. Arts leads described an unproductive cycle in which students' lack of experience did not position them to be creative arts teachers for the next generation of students, who then in turn did not have positive experiences. Arts leads reported two interrelated challenges, the first was confidence.

They lack confidence. We do a lot of work on helping them to feel comfortable in doing art, especially if they've had sort of experiences where they've been told, you know, they're not very good or they don't think they're very good. So we're really trying to boost their confidence all the time. It's not just about what you need for teaching it's about what you need to be able to be an artist of some description and, you know, in your own practice. (AL 17)

Secondly, because of lack of experience and confidence, students also had limited views of the arts, their scope and potentials. Arts leads worried that these limited understandings would play out in restricted opportunities for children.

I found particularly with art that they've got a very narrow, this is a bit of a generalisation, but most of the students have a very narrow understanding of art in general. They think things that look like they are like realistic equals good art...

Arts leads saw that these two problems needed to be tackled together.

We don't have the amount of time to be able to unpick students' narrow conceptualisations of the creative arts, unless they've been engaged with creative arts at school level or they've taken it. Too many of them haven't taken it during secondary education. Then certainly from the creative arts, one of the major roles for me, at undergraduate, is about encouraging students to see themselves as creative because that feeling of openness to being creative is often, as we know, eroded through some secondary experiences of school...(AL 23)

The question of lack of confidence, attitude, background and knowledge is widely reported in the international literatures (e.g. Hennessy, Rolfe, & Chedzoy, 2010; Russell-Bowie, 2012). Arts leads did

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<sup>12</sup> Some primary teacher education is offered as an undergraduate degree but most is now at postgraduate level and applicants need a recognised first degree. It is also possible to enter via a teaching assistant route. Candidates must have achieved minimum requirements in GCSE English Maths and Science. The previous skills test in English and Maths is now replaced by a provider-led approach. However, candidates who do not reach acceptable literacy and numeracy levels will not reach Qualified Teachers Status, a separate assessment of suitability conducted through the Teacher Training Agency. It is possible to have QTS without a teacher training qualification such as PGCE.



all say that it was possible to tackle the issue of confidence . However, the major stumbling block was time, as noted by the respondent above.

### The arts in ITE courses

The survey showed that there are significant variations in the amount of time devoted to the arts in the different primary teaching routes (Figure 3). In the undergraduate route, which typically lasts for three years, there is considerably more time available for all subjects, and generally, after the first year, students can choose to study arts teaching as an optional module. By contrast, the PGCE and School Direct routes generally offer limited choice for students, although optional arts modules do exist in a very limited number of PGCE programmes.

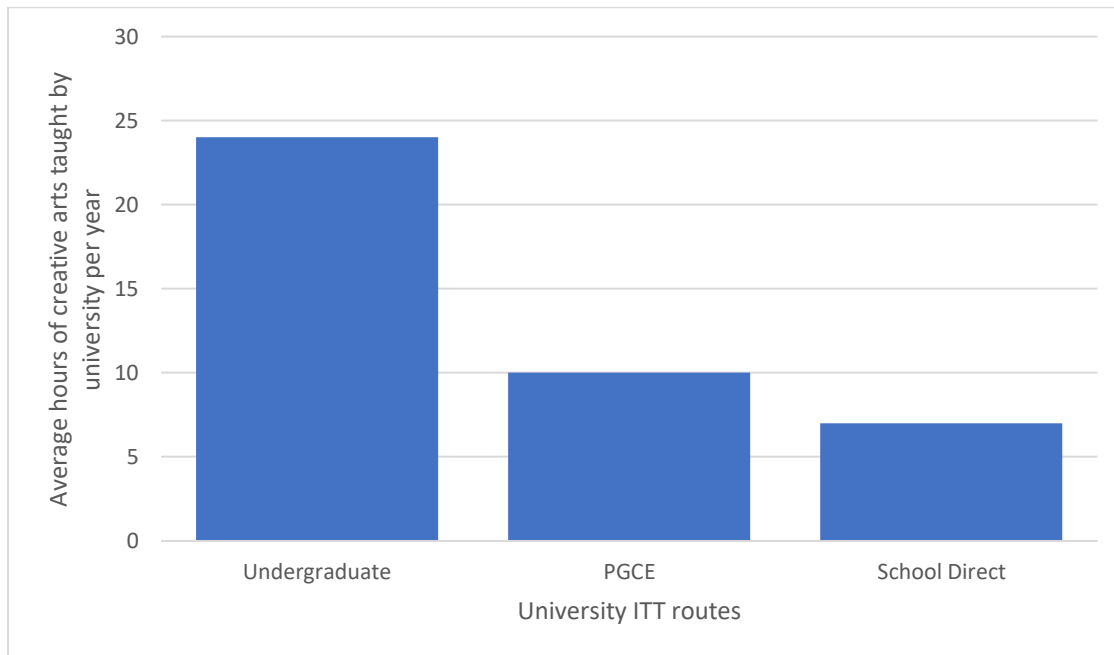


Figure 3: Creative arts teaching across different university-based ITT routes

In almost all cases the course directors reported that they provided the maximum amount of creative arts training possible, given the constraints of the ITT core content framework and the limited time students spent at university. However, there was considerable variation between the number of contact hours for PGCE arts across different institutions ( Figure 4, but note that not all institutions surveyed provided this data, perhaps treating this section of the survey as optional).

The majority of universities in the study were able to provide at least 12 hours of creative arts teaching. At the top end, two PGCE courses offered twenty hours while at the other end of the spectrum, one course offered only three hours.

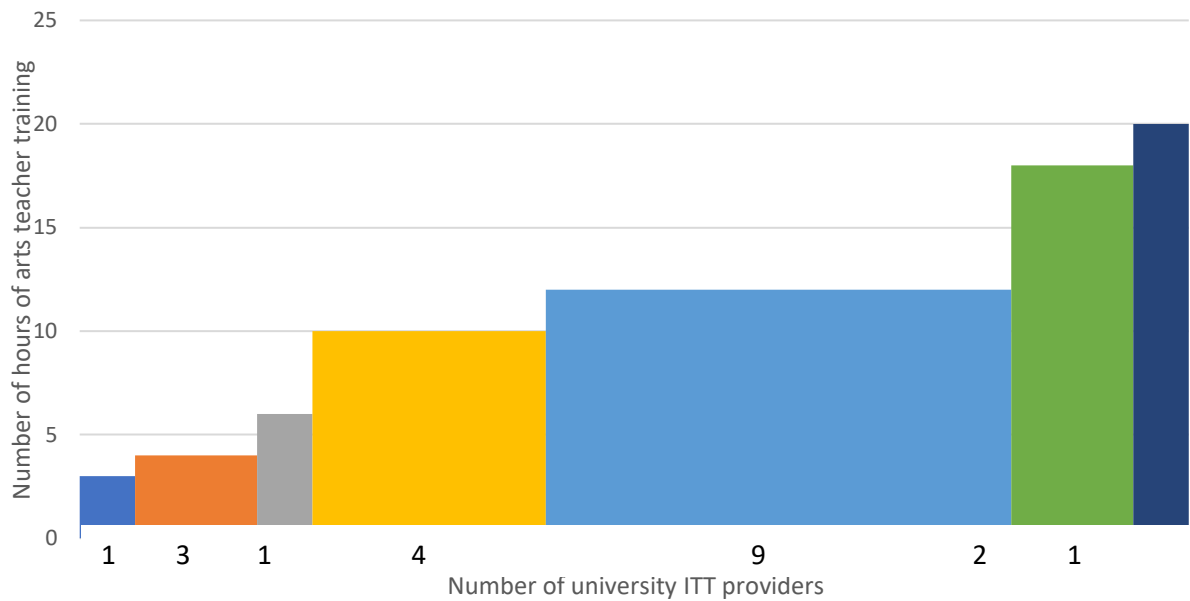


Figure 4: Creative arts teaching to primary PGCE students

Arts leads were clear that time was a major problem particularly with students with very varied experiences, skills and interests.

In a post grad arts module, it's quite diverse in terms of what I have to do, so it's about trying to get across kind of everything with a small, you know, with limited time. So PGCE students have at least three hours of training in art and that again is quite challenging for the tutor because you want them to go out with something at the end of three hours, feeling proud and confident about themselves as well as thinking about how they might be able to teach it. So it is quite a challenge.  
(AL17)

Even twenty hours for arts education does not stretch very far. Each separate arts subject receives relatively little time (Figure 5). While some universities devote two full days to music and art, in general each arts subjects receives a maximum of one full day (6 hours), and often considerably less. In many cases, trainees merely receive a taster for a selection of arts subjects (1-2 hours).

|       |        | Subjects   |       |       |       |       |       |             |
|-------|--------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
|       |        | Visual art | Music | Dance | Drama | Craft | Media | Photography |
| hours | 1-2    |            | 3     | 4     | 3     | 2     | 1     |             |
|       | 3-4    | 6          | 4     | 3     | 1     |       |       |             |
|       | 5-6    | 5          | 3     | 2     | 3     | 2     | 1     | 1           |
|       | 7-8    | 2          |       |       |       |       |       |             |
|       | 9-10   | 2          |       |       |       |       |       |             |
|       | 11-12+ | 5          | 5     |       |       | 2     |       |             |
|       |        |            |       |       |       |       |       |             |

Figure 5: Hours of creative arts taught by university ITE providers

Arts-leads had a range of suggestions for how to ameliorate the problem of limited time. Some suggestions were directed to institutional change. One university was planning to develop a PGCE in which students were able to specialise in the arts. Other suggestions were directed to practice. Some arts leads said that they encouraged interested students to engage in their own self-study beyond the arts sessions, and they provided reading and resources to explore in their own time. Others were aware of the limitations of the arts education at ITE level, and were involved in delivering arts continuing professional development to local schools.

### ***Specialist pathways***

Students who take optional arts courses are highly likely to become arts leads and specialists when they become full-time teachers. All the undergraduate courses that led to QTS status had optional modules in the arts, but some went further. One HEI provided a 'specialist' pathway where students could focus on arts optional modules in each of their three years on the course (although this is not branded as a 'primary with arts' pathway). A university that did not take part in this research project does have a PGCE course specifically in primary arts, while others do have undergraduate courses providing QTS specialising in primary arts.

### ***School placements***

Because students spend the majority of their time in schools, arts leads said that the schools themselves were highly significant in enabling or limiting the arts education that students received.

The universities in this study appeared to have relatively loose monitoring systems when it came to the arts. Across the sample of schools that we studied, we heard of various approaches to monitoring school experiences in arts education and other foundation subjects. It seemed that partnership concerns and documentation were focused primarily on classroom management and the core subjects. Students often filled in a log of experiences they had of teaching the different subjects, rather than the schools being asked to report what experiences they had ensured for ITE students on placement.

All university ITT leaders suggested that they prioritised arts-rich schools as teacher education partners. Two leaders of smaller institutions indicated that they were able to exclusively work with schools that value the creative arts and creativity. Larger institutions said that in practice it was impossible to ensure that partner schools had good arts programmes. Instead, they instituted a system where, if students had not had the opportunity to teach the arts in their first placement, the university would make a request to the second placement school that the student teach arts. Alternatively, if students felt that they had not gained sufficient experience of teaching the arts, they had the opportunity of catch-up sessions at the end of the course. One arts lead reported that there is now a general shortage of expertise in arts teaching in primary schools, and that despite any efforts that the ITT provider might make in partnering with arts-rich schools, in practice it was unlikely that a trainee would have the opportunity to observe and be supervised by a 'high-quality arts teacher'.

However some university arts leads were in close contact with schools and understood the patchy nature of arts education across their partnership.

We've got such a lot of diversity in our schools. So actually we know for consistency, we need to have more centre based training, but also actually in terms of capacity and expertise in schools. You know, schools don't have the capacity to be doing sufficient amounts of

training and in the arts in particular. You know, they do require quite high level of (arts) expertise...

These university arts leads had developed programmes where PGCE students would have the experience of teaching an arts project in a school or educational setting under the mentorship of the arts lead. This was arranged through the arts leads' contacts with previous students. This approach meant that ITE students were engaged in a purposeful arts activity, and developed the capacity to make decisions and reflect on their arts teaching in real-time, under the guidance of the arts lead.

These results strongly support the view that the arts education that ITE students get in schools can only be as good as the school itself. And schools are under considerable pressures to perform well in core subjects and inspections as one school based provider told us.

I know within our partnership that there are still some real stalwart schools that really value creativity in the arts and go to the end of the earth to make sure it's there. But there's other schools where it's all about SATs results. It's all about catch up maths, and then they might throw in a token gesture of let's do a bit of creative activities and nobody really knows what they're doing. And their expertise has gone. And the curriculum. Pretty appalling. If you look at our national curriculum against any kind of, you know, good quality arts based curriculum, it wouldn't stand up very well. (SCITT CD 1)

The variability in student experiences meant that arts leads spent as much of their limited time on addressing misconceptions about arts disciplines as teaching generative arts pedagogies.

You have to unpick [students' narrow understanding of art] really because we know that they're going out into an environment which is quite rigid in a way, depending on the school. Obviously some schools are amazing but.... It makes it makes me sad I know I work with some schools, they've got outstanding in terms of Ofsted, but actually the way they work is not creative. You know it's not giving children those skills that we know they're going to need. So yeah, their (ITE students) values and their confidence is important to me (AL 23)

How then did ITE students experience their arts education?

### **Students' perspectives**

We surveyed 27 primary PGCE students (89% female, 97% White) in one institution about their experience of learning about creativity and the creative arts, We asked them about their university course and their experiences in their placements.

A large majority of students reported that they had learned about the creative arts (24/27) and about creativity (23/27) while on the course, and on school placement. Figure 6 shows that most students did have the opportunity to teach (21/27) and observe (18/27) lessons in the creative arts.

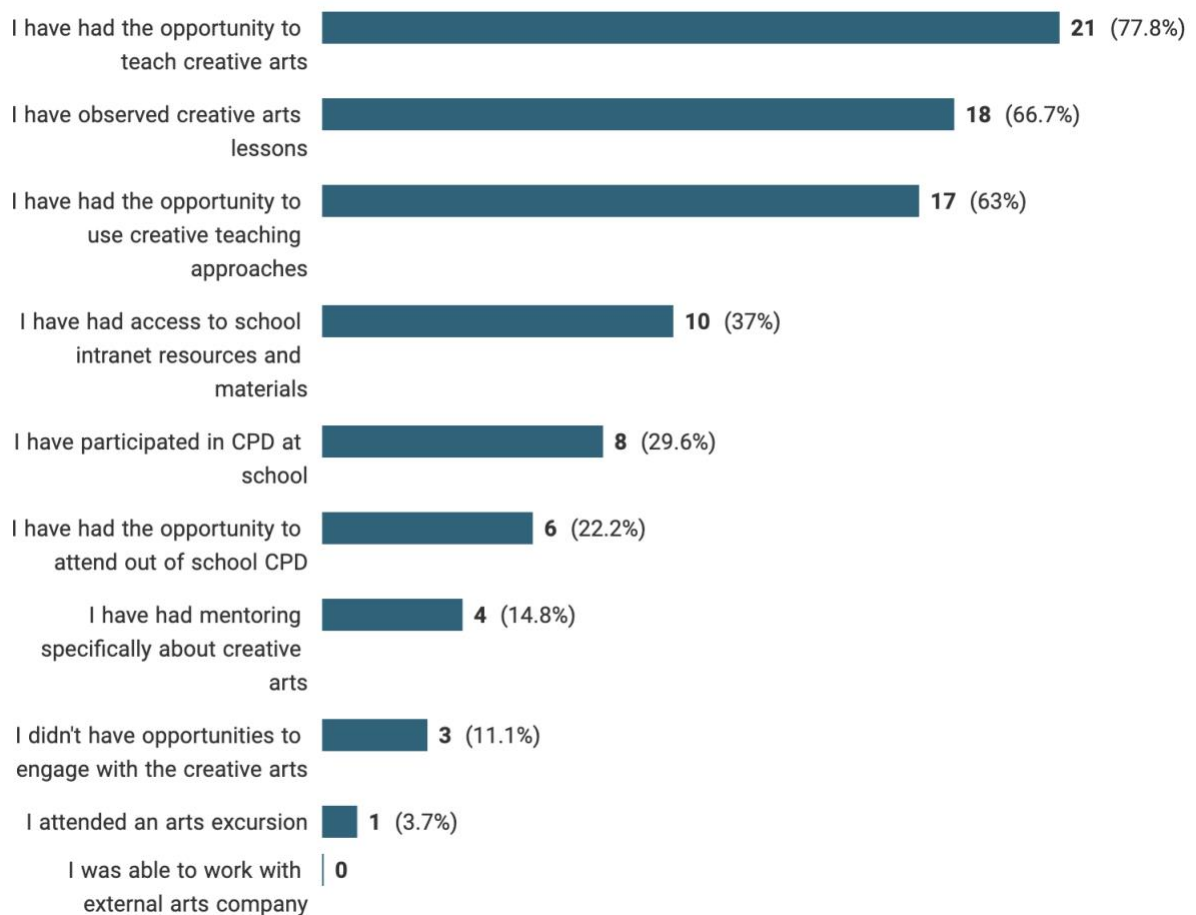


Figure 6: Creative arts opportunities to students on placement

Although 24/27 students did have the opportunity to teach and observe at least one arts lesson on placement, Figure 7 shows that only a minority of students felt confident in teaching each arts subject in their first year of teaching. This lack of confidence perhaps can be attributed to their limited opportunity to teach in their training year. The disparity in between the opportunity to observe and the opportunity to teach Music and Dance for example may reflect the common practice of having Music taught by a specialist, rather the class teacher who is mentoring the student. But the same lack of confidence is reported in visual art where the majority of students had both observed and taught visual art.

|                    | <i>Opportunity to observe in training year</i> | <i>Opportunity to teach in training year</i> | <i>Confident of teaching in QTS year</i> |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Visual Art</b>  | 14   | 11   | 7  |
| <b>Dance</b>       | 12   | 4  | 4  |
| <b>Drama</b>       | 8  | 10   | 6  |
| <b>Music</b>       | 18   | 5  | 4  |
| <b>Media</b>       | 0  | 1  | 4  |
| <b>Photography</b> | 2  | 1  | 5  |
| <b>Craft</b>       | 7  | 9  | 7  |

Figure 7: Creative arts opportunities for students by subject

The survey tells a similar story about students' experience of creative teaching and learning, held as important by university providers. Only 7/27 students felt that they had plenty of opportunity to design creative lessons in core subjects, a figure that rose marginally to 9 /27 for foundation subjects. Nevertheless, 15/27 students did feel confident or very confident in using creative approaches to teaching when they began their QTS year.

When speaking about their course overall, 15/27 students indicated that their expectations for creative learning were met, with 10/27 students indicating that their expectations were not. In a written response, five students indicated that they wished they had more opportunity to observe more creative teaching on placement.

In sum, the small student survey confirms the view of university course directors and arts leaders that the opportunity to observe and practice creative arts teaching and creative teaching is patchy. The survey also shows that many students want and expect more training in the creative arts and creativity from their courses, and that many students are left not feeling adequately prepared to be excellent creative arts or creative teachers.

### **3. Arts ITE curriculum**

The first part of this section deals with different approaches to teaching the arts in ITE. The second part reports how questions of social justice are being addressed by university ITE programmes and arts leads.

#### ***The generalist primary teacher***

All of the arts leads wanted trainees to develop into capable and confident primary arts teachers, despite the limitations of time and competing demands. They all saw the arts as separate disciplines, with specific subject knowledge and pedagogies that the students needed to be aware of. They all also often spoke about creativity and the arts together.

*By the time they leave us, we want them to be the kind of teachers who are confident in their own creativity, but also in inspiring children's creativity. We want them to be able to go out there and recognise that they need to work in a particular way to facilitate that creativity. So I do a lot of talking about making sure that children have got the opportunity for making their own creative choices. It's so important particularly with the with the curriculum the way it is at the moment. We do a lot of telling children what to do and how to do it. All the time 'you've got 20 minutes. We want you to use these particular kind of words. You need to write a paragraph really tight'. By the time they go out into school and they've got their own class, I want them to be the sort teachers that see how important it is to give children headspace and that flexibility and the confidence to make their own decisions about their learning. (AL 24)*

However, the questionnaires showed that there were different approaches to achieving the goal of creative competent arts teaching. While all arts leads reported that they taught art skills and teaching methods, theory was not universally taught ( Figure 8<sup>13</sup>).

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<sup>13</sup> Note: there are only 18 responses in this section of the survey as some respondents treated it as an 'optional' rather than core part of the survey.



Figure 8: Breakdown of arts teaching content

Furthermore, the arts leads reported a range of time spent devoted to teaching theory. For some, theory was something that was touched on, while for others, up to half of the time was spent covering theory ( Figure 9).

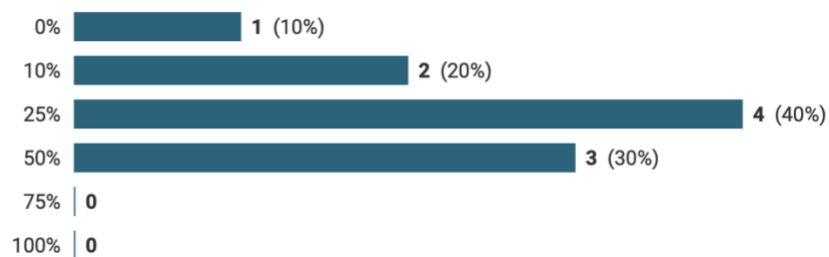


Figure 9: Theory taught in different courses

In interview, arts leads spoke of two different approaches:

- (1) A theory-focused approach that emphasised the importance of providing students with a conceptual framework for the arts and arts education, so that NQTs could then develop their own teaching practices in school.
- (2) A more practical approach that emphasised the importance of providing students with a beginning repertoire of creative arts techniques and teaching practices to implement and develop further in school.

The rationale for the theory-focused approach was that since many trainee teachers would be placed in arts-poor schools, it was necessary for them to have a conceptual framework which they could then apply and develop in school. Theory-focused arts leads said that if ITE students did not have a framework, it was likely that they would use any plausible arts activity in their lessons.

[It] is about trying to increase the confidence of primary teachers so that not only are they familiar with a wide range of different types of art, different ideas of art as well, traditional modern and contemporary, but also they are able to convert that to something that is teachable... One of the problems that I see not just in primary but in secondary, is that the curriculum is being rapidly and haphazardly shaped by the internet by what's available on the Internet, so it sort of seems to be that teachers just go to the internet to find examples of artworks and maybe ideas for teaching, and so they and they do that rather passively If I'm honest with you. So, and this is why I think it's really important that they take a more critical and reflective approach so that they are actively being curriculum makers. Rather than simply passively pulling it, you know reaching for what is most conveniently available via the internet? (AL7)

Theory-driven approaches were designed to provide some basic criteria for choosing between the ready-made arts resources available to teachers.

The rationale for the practical approach was the same as that for theory – that student teachers were likely to develop in their career in arts-poor schools. Arts leads told us that, given that they would receive relatively little support in their schools in teaching the arts, and given that they might not have a background in the arts, the limited time available in the university should be used to equip the students with some practical techniques. Having some practical strategies at their disposal would make ITE students more confident to provide a basic arts curriculum.

I want them to understand why creativity is important and that children can be creative and they need to understand the difference between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity and to understand that even if they're not the most creative person in the world, they can enable children to be creative. And then I think they just need to know like a few things in each art form that they feel really confident to do. So a few lessons so that they think yes, I can go and teach that lesson. With trainees that I worked with in the past, once they've had a go at a bit of music, they realise that it's easier than they thought and that they can do it. So it's just trying to set them up with activities that they can definitely do. So that's showing them resources that I really just step by step work through. (AL11)

It is important to reiterate that the difference between these two perspectives is not about the importance of creativity or the arts within primary education – all leads (and directors) were committed to this unreservedly. The difference is about what is possible to achieve given the constraints of ITE, the national curriculum and school priorities. Arts leads worried about whether the goal should be to create teachers confident of independently devising and teaching creative arts lessons, or to equip teachers with the capability and confidence to do more than the minimum required in schools. This dilemma was clearly laid out by an arts lead who did not teach theory:

I would teach theory and integrating arts with other subjects if I had more time. I feel the pedagogy and practice is most important given limited hours - students may not experience this at all otherwise...We are teaching non-specialist primary teachers, so I make sure that the teaching is inclusive, non-elitist and 'do-able' by everyone... in the hope that they do, in fact, follow through in their classrooms. (AL25)

The choice between a theory-driven or a practical approach can be exemplified by looking at the two arts forms most commonly taught in primary schools, (1) music and (2) visual art. It is important to note that classroom music teaching is expected to be taught by generalist teachers. Music hubs do not generally support classroom music - they support additional complementary music teaching. There is no equivalent to music hubs for any other arts form.

Figure 10 presents two accounts of practical approaches to teaching the arts (one focusing on music, the other on visual art).

#### **Visual art**

I have practical sessions with each group for two hours and you can imagine doing practical subjects, the preparation and the cleaning down at the end takes up most of that. You know quite a lot there. So they probably get taught for about an hour and a half, which for art honestly is not enough time. Most of the ITE students that I teach will tell me they're no good at art. That's their perception and most of them, apart from about three or four students here, haven't done art all through secondary either, so. It's very frustrating...

So it is about teaching them what to do in the classroom. Any work that I teach them, any of the drawing skills I then follow up with '*This is what you could do with children in the class*' One of the projects that I have done with almost all the students I've been with is to draw faces - portraits. So I teach them the proportions of the face and I get them to draw their own face. Not looking in a



mirror, but doing their own face. And I've said, then we've simplified it so how we're going to teach this to children, small children. Key Stage One, Key Stage 2, and the proportions of the face and the measurements and the colours and their language that we use about the face. So what I'm doing is there's a skill, but then this is how the skill is applied across lots of different things. (AL 4)

### **Music**

I just had one day with the post grads and it was very quick...we did some training on how to use the Charanga (commercially available music curriculum resources to teach recorder) and then they all practised and tried to learn themselves, so that was quite good, but I was trying to cover a lot in one day, so I had to prioritise what was going to be the most meaningful and useful for them. I mean, it's very limited, the time on the PGCE

I think typically they're nervous about teaching music. I always ask them what they want from the sessions, and there's always a lot of uncertainty about instruments, so they often ask how do I teach instruments if I don't know how to play an instrument myself. So I obviously address the fact that they don't need to play an instrument, and that specialist instrumental teaching will be done by an expert. Generally, I find that after even just a couple of sessions, their confidence is much higher than it was and they realise that music is something that they can do. So I've tried to make the sessions really accessible and not to cover too much kind of detail. (AL 11)

Figure 10. Practical approaches to arts ITE teaching

Practical sessions focussed on developing the trainees' confidence in the basic techniques, whether it be playing an instrument or drawing a face. Alongside that, students were taught how the instrument or form of drawing could be practically taught to students. The arts leads generally had advanced qualifications in the arts and arts teaching so they had not adopted the practical approach because they themselves lacked a sound theoretical framework. Rather, they saw this as the only way to overcome the limitations of time and the urgency of ensuring that ITE trainees could at least do something when they went into schools.

Time was also a key factor for arts leads who took a theory-driven approach. In our sample, arts leads with theory-focused approaches had considerably more time with the students. In the case of visual arts, the PGCE students had two days (rather than one in the Figure 8) and in the case of music, the arts lead in Figure 11 is describing an undergraduate module rather than a single day on a PGCE course.

### **Visual art**

The first day is inquiry based and very discursive. So we think about what is art, what's good art, what's bad art in relation to the national curriculum which talks about great art. So we explore all of those questions and I also do some work on a cognitive perspective of art. I'm trying to move away from only the technical aspects of teaching art to what's actually happening to your thinking and your learning while you're making art or while you're experiencing art.

In the next day, they do lots of visual representation of their ideas. They do lots of exploration, as much exploration as possible of other artists' work, so that's built in throughout just to try and expand their repertoire. ...so we do the 3D modelling, but for me it just happens to be 3D modelling. The point is that they're making a piece of art and thinking about making a piece of art in response to what's happening somewhere in a Gallery, so it's to enable them to think about how they would use a Gallery and how they would use other artists' work to inspire the children. (AL 19)

### **Music**

Within music, focusing in on being aware of the dimensions of music, so being aware of the ideas of pitch and rhythm, tempo, timbre, texture, and that they need to be able to identify those in music. To be able to encourage the use of those means to be able to plan activities that develop those and to consider in things like composing, which ones they might be focusing on, and encouraging the children to use. We have a session on singing that looks particularly at different ways that you can use the voice. And different ways you can encourage children to experiment with their voices. How you can compose with your voice. How you can build harmony and layers with voice as well. ...in the performing session I'm really introducing them to what the instruments are, how to play them, how to get various noises out of them, but then also how they can use them to experiment making different sounds, how they can compose with them, and encourage the children to fit them into structures, how they can marry up singing and performing and composing.

Altogether then we've got one session that's named composing where we really focus on some different structures that you can use to compose. Again pushing the idea that actually that's easier for you as the teacher. Then the final music session year one is looking at how you would combine all of these into a single lesson and a sequence of lessons. They often will just focus in on one thing, but music you can't really say 'I'm just going to sing' or 'I'm just going to compose'. You know, you can't compose really without performing it and listening to it and evaluating it. So I show them a couple of lessons where they all fit together and saying you can do this all in one lesson. And if you don't feel up to doing it in one lesson, here is how it can spread out over a sequence of work. But they all work together. (CD3)

Figure 11: More theoretical approaches

Where additional time was available it was used to ground the students in the more theoretical aspects of the subject – in visual art on what art is, and on art as a creative and reflective act, and on the different 'dimensions' of music. These concepts need time if they are to be taught, experienced and understood by the trainees. But the theory driven approach did not eschew the questions of confidence and practice – arts leads also addressed the personal and the practical, but were able to do this within an explicit disciplinary framing.

The arts leads interviews not only suggests that a limited amount of time (one day) is insufficient to provide trainees with a conceptual framework to teach the arts but also that the more time that is available to arts teaching, the more it is possible to address the theoretical aspect of the arts and the arts teaching.

### ***Cultural capital and social justice***

The national curriculum and the Ofsted guidelines address the importance of cultural capital and all students having access to "the best that has been thought and said"<sup>14</sup>. For the university providers, acquiring cultural capital meant more than simply teaching ITE trainees about elite knowledges. University ITE providers reported that their courses needed to also address questions of social justice – in particular inclusion and decolonisation. Most of the ITE courses that we saw had these as key goals, together with creativity.

Four visual arts leads placed particular emphasis on the arts' role in supporting children to develop as citizens and to be aware of the world around them. This aim was sometimes put into practice through partnerships ( Figure 12). Another institution organised the ITE course around social issues that the students themselves wanted to explore; this was used as a model for how meaningful arts lessons could be created in the primary classroom.

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<sup>14</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/381344/Master\\_final\\_national\\_curriculum\\_28\\_Nov.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/381344/Master_final_national_curriculum_28_Nov.pdf)

I'd say that everything that we do in relation to creativity is about social justice. So they would have key lectures on that, they'd have live case studies on it from the work at (arts organisation) and our own practices based on that and all the schools that we bring in. All of our projects focus on creativity for social justice... in our next children's book we're looking at positive representations of disability. All those stories are about the creative arts offering opportunity to celebrate diversity and difference, but also not to erode difference, but to celebrate it. (AL 9)

A lot of my work around that probably comes through artists that we look at, so I will look at quite a diverse range of artists and I do focus on contemporary artists both with my post grad and undergrad trainees, because I find that using contemporary artists are really effective way of exploring issues such as racism for example. (CD/AL 2)

Figure 12: Creativity, the arts and social justice go hand in hand

The union of arts and social justice generally led to questions about how to manage discussions with children. Arts leads were keen to ensure that ITE students understood how to present information and allow balanced and educative discussions.

Primary teachers do those sessions with children when they pick the questions that they want to discuss. I will say to the students you've gotta be prepared because children will ask those things that are important to them and there might be things that are being discussed at home as well. And on the news. You've got to be ready and open. So those discussions, if you shut them down, that might be the last time they ask about that then and in some communities particularly, we work on the on the East Coast with these communities that have been badly let down in a lot of respects and in terms of social justice and poverty and a sort of white underclass... I say to the students right, you are telling me that there's no black and ethnic minority children in your class or in your town. It doesn't mean that there's no social justice issues. That there's no Black Lives Matters issues, that there's no political issues. In fact it's even more important that you're going in there and raising their awareness. And you can come about it in a way that it's not going to scare that community. Not oh Miss has been saying this, that and the other. Instead, they come home and say we've looked at artwork from this part of the world, and we've looked at this black female artist. It is just a way of starting those conversations. (CD3)

Arts leads and ITE Directors were certain that their role was to encourage ITE students to learn about diverse forms of culture in a spirit of equality and celebration, as well as to build a pedagogical repertoire that was inclusive. They wanted trainees to develop their own understanding of social justice; they also provided some practical advice on what students could do in schools. They were concerned about the 'deficit' model presented in policy, in which disadvantaged students are seen as 'lacking' in cultural capital.

So two years, three years ago I talked with my tutors and we worked out what we felt was cultural capital. They've now developed that into their programmes, developed that into all of their curriculum studies programmes and the tutorials and the professional studies. We give it a bit of a critical angle as well because we question whose cultural capital? (CD 22)

Interviewees from seven different institutions described how their 'whole definition of cultural capital is very different from the government's agenda (CD 18). They were nevertheless clear that ITE students had to work within the current policy framing.

Well, culture capital as defined by E.D. Hirsch ... giving children the knowledge they haven't had because of their cultural background. That sort of cultural deficit model is one that we were all a little bit distrustful of but we don't very explicitly teach about Bourdieu and cultural capital. We have to keep an open mind on everything we do, but also what we are required to be is becoming even more explicit and the kind of checking up on, accountability. So there's now a core content framework, which has been around for a year or so, but was statutory

from September 2020 - that takes up so much time in terms of mapping what we have to do - and it's quite it's quite focused on, as you might put it, the learning sciences. But we certainly do talk about children in relation to different backgrounds and social disabilities. So we're quite explicit about social disadvantage and that's in one of our central modules, which is called professional enquiry. So there are aspects around cultural capital about how certain children might be privileged by their backgrounds and their experiences as well. (AL23)

Arts leads in universities in particular had nuanced, in-depth understandings of cultural capital and debates about its interpretation (Figure 13)

In the first year an academic module that we do - one of the topics that we address is cultural capital and Ofsted's definition of it, which is a highly contested definition. But also Bourdieu's definitions of it. And also we have the debate about it. We link it to the debate about the music curriculum in terms of Stormzy versus Mozart and people say. ... if some people said Oh doing Stormzy on the music curriculum is denying them their culture and you say well actually you can teach the music curriculum equally as well through Stormzy as you can Mozart but it's not one or the other is about all those representations. So we start that debate with them when they first come. (AL 24)

Cultural capital - it's quite a fluid thing. One of the things that I do is we explore barriers to children's engagement in art and design. So we're looking at pupils who are from a disadvantaged background or SEND. And I talk about how we need to look at this from a local perspective, but look at it contextually, how it did will differ from school to school. So I teach about inclusivity, developing pupils' confidence through art and design and how art can support the development of social and personal skills, how it can boost children's self-esteem and nurture that sense of belonging to a community. So it's about awareness of the place of the art society as well. We talk about the value of the creative industries as well as talking about artists. I think cultural capital is a bigger picture than just looking at artists. It is about that sense of belonging, and I think that comes from understanding the context of schools and the children and the family in the communities within where that school is situated. What does that school need? How do you develop cultural capital within that schools context as well? (AL4)

Figure 13: Developing cultural capital through the arts

However, one arts lead told us they were concerned that lack of time meant that they didn't have time to fully develop ITE students' understandings of the term cultural capital and the various interpretations and debates.

A number of arts leads described how they encouraged their students to engage with arts institutions, something they saw as integral to the acquisition of cultural capital.

*There's a project that we do where students go to the Barber Institute, we say to them *It's really important that you take children to places like art galleries and historical sites of interest and museums because not all children get those experiences in their family situation. Now I'm not sure if we actually use the words cultural capital.** (AL19)

They also saw that visits were insufficient to build cultural capital and offered associated pedagogies that were useful in the primary classroom.

Students also get the input in 'mantle of the expert' and one of the benefits of that pedagogy is that it seems to be very beneficial for pupils from poorer backgrounds. We work very closely with a local school that is a mantle of the expert training school. And it's in one of the poorest wards in the whole country, so there's an awful lot of deprivation in the catchment area of that school, and yet in terms of standards, achievements, certainly engagement at school, also creativity those pupils at that school do as well as at any other school in the city. It is really astonishing what that method does. So it's really important for our PGCE students to spend a day at that school. They get the input at the university about mantle of the expert and a little bit of experience of how it works, what it does, but then they tend to be completely amazed at how successfully that method is used at the school with a very high percentage of

children from very poor backgrounds. So there's a strong link there between inquiry based learning, imagination based learning and social justice.(AL19)

The quotation above also points to the productive potential of university and school ITE partnerships. The university has a particular strength in teaching theory and providing personal experience of its application. The school shows how the theory is made into a pedagogy tailored to the needs of particular students in a particular place.

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## SCITT provision

SCITTs are consortiums of schools that provide postgraduate teacher training. They consist of a lead training school with a number of associate schools. In each subject, training might be provided by staff from the lead school, an associate school, or by an outside expert. In a SCITT, trainee teachers spend one day a week at the SCITT centre, and the rest of the week in an associate school in a classroom with a mentor teacher. SCITTs vary significantly in size, from centres that train a handful of student teachers each year to centres that train over a hundred. Even the largest SCITTs are significantly smaller in size than the average HEI provider.

There are two caveats to our research on SCITTs:

Firstly, because of the very low response rate from school-centred initial teacher training centres (SCITTs) (five surveys and two interviews) it is necessary to be cautious about the results. As well, the few Directors who responded to our invitations were interested in the arts (self-selection bias).

The second reason is more complex. Our survey showed that HEI providers were generally in agreement that creativity was a crucial foundation for teaching. They also saw government ITE policy and inspection frameworks as inadequate, a necessary but not sufficient basis for their programmes. In critiquing policy, they drew on the academic commitment to autonomy and freedom, long histories of and debates about teacher education, and research, including their own. They often argued that they took a long term view rather than the short. By contrast, SCITT consortia were primarily concerned with current government policy and the immediate needs of their school. SCITTs were established in 2010 as part of the government initiative for more 'effective' teacher training, They have not historically been independent from strong government framing. This is not to say that SCITTs are necessarily slavish devotees of the government's agenda, even though some of the larger academy chains with SCITTs, such as ARK, Harris and United Learning, are known to have agendas broadly aligned with the government's. However, the current range of approaches taken to creativity and the arts within schools is likely to be reflected in the teacher education programmes they provide.

Given these caveats, it is striking that the number of hours for the creative arts were significantly higher in the handful of SCITTs than in the universities (Figure 14). One SCITT, where the Director had a strong professional background in the arts, provided double the number of arts teacher training hours compared with any other SCITT or university.

|                | Visual art | Music | Drama | Dance         | Craft | Creative writing | Totals |
|----------------|------------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|------------------|--------|
| 1              | 5          | 5     | 2     |               | 5     | 5                | 22     |
| 2              | 6          | 6     | 3     | Home learning |       | 3                | 18     |
| 3              | 2.5        | 2.5   | 2.5   | 1             | 2.5   | 4                | 15     |
| 4              | 6          | 6     | 3     | 1             |       | 6                | 22     |
| 5              | 6          | 4     | 4     | 2             |       | 6                | 22     |
| 6              | 12         | 12    | 3     | 6             |       | 12               | 45     |
| <b>Average</b> | 7          | 6     | 3     | 2             | n/a   | 6                |        |

Figure 14: Creative arts ITT training in SCITTs

Two of the seven SCITTs reported that finding adequate staff to teach the arts was more challenging than other subjects. SCITTs tended to use a far higher proportion of external staff for arts education ( Figure 15). This is a particular issue in relation to dance, perhaps reflecting a lack of expertise in P.E.

in primary schools. As with music, dance is increasingly a subject that is covered by external organizations in primary schools.

By contrast, most of the ITT HEI providers in this study did not report any staffing issues and do not rely on external staff to cover creativity or the arts. This may be because universities can generally employ staff with specific expertise to cover the creative arts and because the schools in SCITTs may not have specialist arts staff.

|          |              | Art | Music | Drama | Dance | Creative writing | Totals    |
|----------|--------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|------------------|-----------|
| Internal | Subject lead | 5   | 5     | 2     | 2     | 3                | <b>17</b> |
|          | SCITT tutor  | 1   | 2     | 2     | 0     | 1                | <b>6</b>  |
| External |              | 2   | 2     | 2     | 5     | 3                | <b>14</b> |

Figure 15: Staff teaching creative arts at SCITTs

Given that SCITTs are consortia of schools, it might seem that SCITTs are in a much stronger position to manage the relationship between the central training and the experience in the classroom. However, this was not supported by the data. All seven respondents indicated that there is a high degree of variation between how much partner schools emphasise the arts, and indicated that, even when the creative arts are valued by the central SCITT, this is not necessarily reflected in the opportunity for trainees to observe and be observed by high-quality arts teachers in the partner schools.

The SCITT director who strongly valued the arts reported in interview that there is the central SCITT had little authority over a partner school, especially if the partner school is not in the same academy chain ( see Figure 16). While the partnership between the SCITT and partner schools is theoretically stronger than the partnership between universities and partner schools, this does not appear to necessarily translate into greater integration of centre-based and classroom-based training.

|                   | Variation between how much partner schools emphasise the arts | It is unlikely that trainees will observe high-quality arts teaching in their training school | It is unlikely that trainees will be observed by high-quality arts teachers in their training school. |
|-------------------|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree    | 2   |   |   |
| agree             | 5   | 3   | 6   |
| disagree          |   | 4   | 1   |
| Strongly disagree |   |   |   |

Figure 16: Variation between partner SCITT schools in creative arts training

## Teach First

Teach First is separate route into primary teaching. It is largely school based. After a training summer school, primary trainee teachers go straight into teaching on a 60% workload. They have additional days with a university partner during their first year of training and access to a Teach First developed bank of resources, support groups and networking events. As in the PGCE, trainees are supported by a school mentor and a university mentor but also an additional Teach First expert. Teach First trainees achieve NQT status at the end of their first year but take an additional year to be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma of Teaching and Leadership. During their second and third years, trainees attend weekend training.

Teach First initially focused on general classroom teaching and the core primary subjects. However, they now train primary teachers in foundation subjects. The director for primary ITT at Teach First told us that they had concerns about the patchy nature of foundation subject expertise in schools. In order to realise its social justice mission, *'foundation content has to be of an equal quality and rigour to our core content'*. But like universities, Teach First has limited time to teach the theoretical and conceptual underpinning of the arts and primary arts teaching, a concern given the aim to produce teachers who are reflective, rather than merely reactive, teachers. Teach First use a common structure in their training modules designed to promote discussion and reflection.

All of our courses follow the same structure we have a section on purpose, scope and context of the curriculum so why is art in primary, why do we teach it, where is the time. They're (trainees) talking about creativity, talking about entitlement to art, talking about empowering children to find out what they're good at and what they enjoy and the impact that will have on their relationship with school and engagement, things like that. Then we do subject knowledge, then we do specific pedagogies, and then we have a live session preparation task.'

When we spoke to Teach First, they were in the middle of developing new curriculum modules, including art subjects. They had employed additional specific subject specialists to work with Teach First curriculum staff to ensure the modules were well grounded in current disciplinary knowledge and pedagogies.

We're trying to reduce the Google factor. So, when they( trainees) find out they're doing self-portraits, and they aren't an artist and they think they can't draw, rather than going on to Google and ending up finding some bizarre worksheet with someone else's learning objective on it or a test, they come back to that art course.

Teach First aimed to develop capable and active arts teachers in three ways:

- (1) The theoretical aspects of each arts subject are covered through an online course: *'we have asynchronous self-study content which is on our learning platform called Brightspace. That is a two-hour course, but with a heavy amount of signposting. So our goal for the Brightspace courses is that they provide enough contextual and theoretical knowledge for the trainee to come to their live session informed and able to have an educated conversation.'*
- (2) Practical resources and activities were provided to support trainees to take their first steps into arts teaching. We were told that each subject module on Brightspace would become an ongoing resource for teachers to use beyond their first year of training. Teach First aimed to build a resource bank for each module which could extend beyond the initial teaching time.
- (3) Through Teach First 'Ambassadors' (alumni) a professional development community was formed around each different subject, including the arts. These communities were available to students throughout their two years training, and beyond. Teach First's aim was to ensure that trainees had access to expert practitioners; even if there were no colleagues in their training school who were experts. Professional development communities met half-termly, but also operated via discussion boards.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

This research project provides evidence that universities and Teach First hold creative teaching approaches as foundational to a successful teaching career and embed them throughout formal training. HEIs and Teach First also see foundational subjects as a vital aspect of initial teacher education.

However, the creative arts are patchily served in initial teacher education. There are some notable exceptions, but overall the results demonstrate that

- (1) there is insufficient time allowed within the national ITE framework to provide a sound arts knowledge base from which beginning teachers can choose and adapt arts resources, develop their own arts expertise and decide what professional learning opportunities to pursue.
- (2) school placements and school-based teacher education is heavily dependent on individual school commitments, priorities and practices. ITE students in arts rich schools are likely to have exceptional grounding, but many will get very little arts observation or teaching practice during their school experiences.

Although Ofsted now expect schools to ensure students make good progress within foundation subjects, including the creative arts, it is likely that many NQTs begin their careers without the necessary knowledge and skills. Students from one university ITE reported a lack of confidence in covering all of the creative arts, a picture congruent with international research on generalist arts teacher practices. An already variable primary arts provision is thus perpetuated.

Overall, the research results support the view that the quality of arts education in English schools is not only patchy, uneven and inequitable but also unlikely to be transformed in the near future.

Of course, teacher education alone cannot change this situation. However, as the teacher education landscape in England changes, and as the government prepares its cultural education plan, there is an opportunity for improvements to be made. Based on this research these might include:

- (1) the development of more arts electives and specialist pathways in primary teacher education.

As a first step, arts organisations might become partners in a national pilot scheme to increase creative and arts theory and practice in primary teacher education. Such a pilot scheme could be based with arts organisations with highly successful school partnership programmes.

- (2) bursaries for practising artists to become primary specialist teachers
- (3) support for arts rich schools to become involved in teacher education
- (4) a requirement for all ITE school placements to include a meaningful arts learning experience, with schools reporting back to lead providers on what was done
- (5) a guarantee that all NQTs have access to ongoing arts specialist support during their NQT year. This support might be developed as a pilot through local Cultural Education Partnerships which include both arts organisations and schools.
- (6) support for a national initial teacher education arts innovation programme designed to address the confidence and knowledge lack of student and beginning teachers.

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## Appendix

### Universities that participated in the research:

Bath Spa  
Bedfordshire  
Birmingham  
Birmingham City  
Bishop Grosseteste  
Brunel  
Canterbury Christ Church  
Chester  
Edge Hill  
Goldsmiths  
Kingston  
Leeds Beckett  
Leeds Trinity  
Manchester Metropolitan University  
Oxford Brookes  
Roehampton  
Sheffield Hallam  
St Mary's  
Staffordshire  
UCL  
University of Brighton  
University of Greenwich  
University of Newcastle  
University of Nottingham  
University of Plymouth  
University of Portsmouth  
University of Sussex  
University of Warwick  
University of Winchester  
University of Worcester  
York St John University

Teach First  
Essex and East London Teacher Training  
West Midlands Consortium  
Mersey Boroughs ITT Partnership  
East of England Teacher Training  
North East Partnership SCITT  
Keele and North Staffordshire Teacher Education  
Wildern Partnership SCITT

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