INNOVATE

Research Report

November 2023

Contents

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Executive summary

"To the artists and teachers who boldly collaborated on this project in the classroom, with no guarantee of what fruits would be born, what a wonderful job you did. This project examined the space between theatres, artists, arts organisations, schools, teaching, learning and curriculum. It is the connections that were made in that space by those artists and teachers which we celebrate in this report. This is why we do what we do, so thank you. And most importantly, thank you all for bearing witness to the brilliance of what this programme does by reading this report and exploring how you may use it in your theatres and schools. We hope it allows art to flow through the heart of how we teach and learn."

Artistic Director of the Young Vic: Kwame Kwei-Armah

INNOVATE was designed to ask the question: how can the arts enable students to engage, learn, and thrive across curriculum subjects? It is a question that has formed the nucleus for thinking about the programme since its inception in 2020. At that time, the Taking Part team at Young Vic set out to develop a programme that could respond to the needs of young people coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of schools due to the pandemic had caused unprecedented challenges for students. Many struggled with loneliness and being isolated from friends, and most students found the shift to online provision difficult, needing support to re-engage with curriculum learning on the return to school. By launching INNOVATE in September 2021, the aim was to restore an environment in schools in which young people were confident and excited to learn.

The launch of INNOVATE also coincided with wider concerns about the perceived devaluing of arts education. Changes to the secondary school curriculum, made through the introduction of the EBacc in 2010 and Progress 8 in 2016, reinforced the heavy emphasis on traditional forms of 'academic' attainment and set in place a new accountability structure for schools. Pressure to drive up standards in 'core' subjects (i.e., English, maths, science), has resulted in reduced opportunities for arts learning and teaching characterised by declining enrolments in arts GCSEs and A levels.

A further context to INNOVATE is a UK education sector affected by funding cuts with ongoing reductions in school budgets (for example, funding for SEND provision). Workloads for teachers have increased substantially, and this along with the erosion of teacher salaries has led to a series of teacher strikes across the UK. This has had the effect of creating a climate in education where opportunities to develop and support the arts in schools have been limited. The value of INNOVATE was in affording an opportune moment to demonstrate that the arts do matter, and to explore and evidence the impact of creative learning.

Overall, the programme asked four key questions:

- What happens when artists work with teachers and students to use creative activities in the classroom?
- What are the benefits of co-created arts-based knowledge to learning and teaching?
- How can creativity ignite a curiosity in students that can foster a lifelong love of learning?
- What challenges and possibilities will INNOVATE present for schools, artists, and an arts organisation?

At the start of the 2021 academic year, INNOVATE was embedded in two co-educational secondary schools: Dunraven School and South Bank University Academy. The programme adopted a place-based approach, working in the schools' local boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark. Three multidisciplinary artists were introduced to each partner school with the prerequisite to use the arts to teach across the curriculum. INNOVATE focused on cohorts of Year 7 and Year 8 students and their teachers, and centred around programme activities, including: lesson planning and in-curriculum creative teaching; termly project meetings; CPD training; free ticketed visits to the theatre. Delivery of the programme was coordinated and provided by Young Vic Taking Part and ended in July 2023.

INNOVATE research

Research for INNOVATE was undertaken by researchers at Royal Holloway, University of London, in collaboration with Young Vic Taking Part. A primary focus was the process of embedding INNOVATE in schools and understanding the potential impact of the programme. This report presents learning from the two years of programme delivery. It draws on teacher and artist interviews and focus groups with students as well as observations of INNOVATE lessons and project planning meetings.

A Summary of Success

The research identified key successes from across the life of the programme. These include:

The arts and creative approaches to learning were vehicles for change. INNOVATE was seen as a vehicle for changing students' attitudes to learning. Teachers noted that the programme enhanced student voice and student personal growth. For some students, involvement in the programme constituted change in their perceptions of learning and experiences of school.

The programme highlighted differences between theatre cultures and school cultures. Interviews with teachers and students showed that artists curated learning spaces that challenged the 'default pedagogy' in schools (Thomson et al, 2012), and 'matched the energies' of students, affording them the ability to make discoveries and take ownership of their learning.

The programme supported cultural shifts in schools. There is evidence that increased collaboration between artists and teachers not only led to artists becoming fully embedded in schools but also to sustainable change in school culture. Key facilitators to this were:

- Artists taking time to build trusting relationships with teachers
- Artists who were responsive to context, responding to opportunities as they occurred
- Artists' positionality as 'insiders' – attuned to teachers and schools' needs, and 'outsiders' – creative experts with capacity to make things happen.

The civic role was central to school engagement. Through INNOVATE, schools and students were provided with opportunities to see theatre and participate in artistic activities. There is some evidence that the programme also nurtured the talent of aspiring creative students, enabling them to acquire the necessary skills and experience to pursue creative careers.

Playful pedagogies assisted reflexive learning in schools. A consistent finding was the importance of exploratory forms of learning and playful interaction which sparked students' curiosity and facilitated connections between students, teachers and artists. There is evidence that such engagement created 'rich learning environments' (Hall and Thomson, 2017).

Overture

An Artist in the Classroom

The classroom layout has completely changed by the time of the Year 7 science lesson. The uniformity of the Bunsen Burner tables has been dismantled and carefully refigured to define a newly created theatre space within the room. For the class teacher, this reconfiguration has been a result of his collaboration with INNOVATE artist, Joseph Prestwich. A professional actor and improvisor, Joe had been partnered with the teacher in an alliance hoped to support creative practice. Collaborative work had involved the pair 'looking at the space of the classroom and how that space is utilised'. The implications of this, in terms of the potential for new learning experiences, would be demonstrated over the coming weeks.

Already, there is excited chatter from the students. Intrigued by the reorganisation of classroom space, they seem to know what is coming next. In an interview with Joe, he explained that lessons tend to follow the same structure: '[the teacher] delivers the   information that the students are going to be learning for that class, and then students are asked to apply that learning in a game or activity'. Today's activity involves students getting into groups of three to devise improvisations around the topic covered in the first part of the lesson: *Medicinal and Recreational drugs and differences between them.* Ideas for the lesson were floated at a planning meeting with Joe and the teacher days earlier. As the teacher put it, 'Joe presented one idea and I found myself adding to that idea and coming up with something. It was very much a collaborative approach'. Both had decided that the developed scenarios should form the basis of an improvisational game: *Officer, It's Legal!,* in which students convince an 'acting' police officer that the drug featured in their enactment is 'legal'. In the role of judge, Joe would deliver final verdicts on each case, with students awarded 'one point for clarity of explanation and extra points for use of accents'.

As the first group of students make their way to the theatre space, Judge Joe appeals to the class for quiet, restoring 'order' to the imagined courtroom with two strikes of the gavel he's brought in. There are a few nervous laughs from students as they begin, but it soon becomes apparent that the central character is suffering from a headache, which they attempt to relieve. We learn that the medication used to treat the headache is paracetamol, and as students reflect and ponder its legality, the educational imperative is clear. The process has also helped to 'solidify' students' learning, as the class teacher explained in interview: 'It gave a much better understanding of whether or not they've learnt what I've just taught them, because they can explain it in a different way, using a scene to articulate what they've just learned'.

The lesson draws to a close and there is reflection on what has worked and what can be improved for next time. As is often the case, there is little time between this and the next school period, so Joe and the teacher decide they will continue conversations in the 'feedback moment' of the planning meeting – an opportunity to review, as Joe suggested, 'what will be kept and what will be lost'. For today, it's decided that students will return to the activity next week as not everyone has had the chance to share their enactments. It's clear from what has been discussed today, however, that the activity has afforded the opportunity for students to explore and reflect on curriculum learning in a playful way. In fact, fun, laughter and play seem integral to the process, creating an environment which draws students into learning.

There is also evidence of this in posters about 'Magnetic Forces' that populate the classroom walls. One poster featured (an ode to a magnet), describes the 'irresistible pull' of magnets, which along with other posters students have produced as part of the programme, appears to have provided them with new ways of thinking about what they have learnt.

Science classroom during an INNOVATE lesson. Photography by Joseph Prestwich

1. Introduction

This report presents key learning from the INNOVATE programme. It was commissioned by Taking Part, the creative engagement department at the Young Vic. Described as the theatre's 'beating heart', Taking Part provides creative and artistic opportunities for young people, schools and communities in Lambeth and Southwark. INNOVATE sits within the department's Learning strand, which programmes a range of free, participatory activity that invites students to explore 'all aspects of theatre making and theatre doing'[1].

1.1 Policy and Practice Context: creativity and education

In the year preceding INNOVATE's launch in 2021, UK schools closed their doors to most students as part of national lockdowns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic[2]. This had a considerable impact on young people. A report published by the Children's Commissioner in 2020, shows that young people's education and wellbeing was deeply affected[3]. Many students found the switch to home learning challenging and struggled to engage with online provision. By the time schools reopened in Spring 2021, young people had faced almost a year of online and disrupted learning. It is also clear that the return to school presented new challenges. Reporting by the National Foundation for Education Research revealed that the disruption to young people's education during school closures led to lost learning for many students, particularly young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.[4] Schools had to prioritise education recovery, while working within a difficult context of social distancing requirements, supporting students to settle back into school and reengaging them with learning.

INNOVATE was established in direct response to the challenges schools faced following the pandemic. It aimed to restore a creative environment in schools in which young people were confident and excited to learn. This aim also corresponded with an ambition set by the Durham Commission at the time,[5] to embed teaching for creativity in schools through integration into a 'recovery curriculum'. Among the recommendations made in their report published in 2021, was the need for schools and cultural organisations to develop partnerships that could support both curriculum learning and the health and wellbeing of students.

The benefits of cultural and creative learning is recognised by many schools, who engage with cultural organisations like the Young Vic to expand creative learning opportunities for their students. There is now a considerable body of research demonstrating the impact of creative interventions in school settings, much of which emphasise improvements in young people's soft skills, confidence, and creative thinking[6]. This has been echoed by evidence from policy initiatives seeking to support and develop creativity for school improvement. Perhaps the most ambitious of these, Creative Partnerships, ran from 2002-2011 and built sustainable partnerships between schools and creative professionals.

Arts Council Bridge organisations (2012 - 2023) capitalised on learning from Creative Partnerships, encouraging and supporting schools' access to cultural opportunities (for instance, through engagement with Artsmark and Arts Award). A New Direction[7] is London's lead agency for connecting schools and cultural organisations. Other initiatives aimed at encouraging schools' and young people's engagement include Burberry Inspire (2018 - 2022), a programme of arts and culture activities delivered to a cohort of secondary aged students in Yorkshire; and Creativity Collaboratives (2021 – 2024), a national pilot aiming to develop the creative capabilities of children and young people through networks of schools and trialling innovative teaching approaches.

However, as noted in a think piece published by A New Direction[8], a series of secondary school curriculum, assessment, and accountability reforms, introduced in 2010 – 2016, have affected the place of arts education in school priorities. These reforms include the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)[9], which measures students' achievement at GCSE in six subject areas (arts subjects are not included); changes to GCSE subjects and grading; and new school accountability measures, such as Progress 8[10], which emphasise subjects other than the arts – i.e., English language and literature, maths, the sciences, history or geography, and a foreign language. English and maths are given double weighting to reflect their importance.

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1   https://www.youngvic.org/taking-part/learning

2   To help limit transmission of the COVID-19 virus, schools were closed to pupils other than vulnerable children and children of critical workers: from March to July 2020 and again from January to March 2021. See: Institute for Government report (2021) for a timeline of school closures: **https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/schools-and-coronavirus.pdf**

3   Children's Commissioner (2020) Childhood in the time of Covid:

4   **https://www.futurelab.org.uk/schools-responses-to-covid-19-the-challenges-facing-schools-and-pupils-in-september-2020/**

5   **https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/creativitycommission/DurhamCommissionsecondreport-21April.pdf**

6   See, for example, Burberry Inspire: **https://www.ideasfoundation.org.uk/pdf/burberry-inspire/Burberry-Inspire-Report.pdf**

7   Arts Council funding for the Bridge Network ended in March 2023.

8   Tambling, P and Bacon, S (2022) 'The Arts in Schools: a new conversation on the value of the arts in and beyond schools'. **https://artswork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Arts-In-Schools-report.pdf**

9   The EBacc measures how well a school is performing and is a mark of achievement for students. It certifies that a student has achieved grades C or above in six different subjects: Maths, English, two sciences, history or geography, and a modern or classical language. As a performance measure schools are judged on the percentage of students achieving the award. See: Research Briefing Paper (2019) English Baccalaureate: **https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06045/#:~:text=The%20English%20Baccalaureate%20(EBacc)%20is,mathematics**

10   Progress 8 is a measure of the average progress students make in each secondary school from year 6, at the end of primary school, to the end of year 11.

The effect of these reforms has been a more tightly controlled curriculum with a reduction in the status of arts subjects (i.e., art and design, dance, drama, and music) and specialist arts teaching. The Cultural Learning Alliance[11], which has been monitoring GCSE arts results since 2012, has reported a continuing fall in arts GCSE entries, with recent research[12] highlighting a decline in entry rates for GCSE arts subjects of 40% between 2010 and 2022. Similarly, arts A level entries have fallen by 31% since 2010, and there has been a drop of 23% in specialist arts teachers.

Nevertheless, there have been important developments for creativity in education. **The Durham Commission**, a collaboration between Arts Council England and Durham University, is drawing on international expertise to identify ways in which a creative cultural education can play a larger part in young people's lives. Their second report, published in 2021, sets out both the challenges and opportunities for creativity presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The new **National Plan for Cultural Education**, outlines the Department for Education's ambitions to work with the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England.

The contribution of INNOVATE is highly relevant in the current education climate and in the context of ongoing challenges young people face post-pandemic. It offers learning for those with an interest in driving the progression of cultural and arts education in schools, through partnerships with creative and cultural organisations.

1.2 Developing a creative programme

INNOVATE emerged from conversations between the Director of Taking Part[13], Shereen Jasmin Phillips, and Lorna McGinty, the team's Participation Producer. Their shared concerns about the pandemic's impact on young people in particular, led them to reflect on how the team could engage with schools in a way that was beneficial to teachers and their students. They wanted to develop a programme that could transform learning experiences for young people while at the same time supporting teachers to use creative activities in the classroom.

The work of Dorothy Heathcote MBE and Sir Ken Robinson served as an influential starting point for INNOVATE. Heathcote's drama for learning (which encouraged children to be playful, take responsibility and act pro-socially in exploring issues across the curriculum)[14] and Robinson's writing on the arts in schools (which advocated a broad and arts-rich curriculum focused on igniting curiosity through creative teaching)[15] aligned with the ethos of Taking Part and initial thinking behind the programme.

INNOVATE – using the arts to teach across the curriculum

In developing a creative programme, the aim of using the arts to teach across the curriculum was key. Recognising that this was best approached through a partnership between schools, professional artists and themselves, YVTP set about designing a programme that could support curriculum learning and engagement. The programme was underpinned by four key questions:

- What happens when artists work with teachers and students to use creative activities in the classroom?
- What are the benefits of co-created arts-based knowledge to learning and teaching?
- How can creativity ignite a curiosity in students that can foster a lifelong love of learning?
- What challenges and possibilities will INNOVATE present for schools, artists, and arts organisation?

Choosing schools and artists

In October 2020, secondary schools in the boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark were invited to submit an expression of interest to become an INNOVATE school. This was followed by a competitive selection process involving application and interview. As part of the process, schools were asked to state what becoming an INNOVATE school might mean to them and their local school community. Two schools were chosen: South Bank University Academy and Dunraven School. Although there was previous contact between YVTP and the partner schools (for example, through the department's learning initiatives, in-school workshops and free-ticketed schemes), they were brought to work together in a formal partnership through INNOVATE. The schools themselves were committed to the work and ethos of INNOVATE, as they reflected:

> "We are delighted that the South Bank University Academy has been selected to partner with the Young Vic in this innovative project. We look forward to collaborating on developing creative and engaging lessons with the theatre team. We are excited about the prospect of enhancing creativity across the whole curriculum as it will further our efforts to embed the importance of the arts."

> "We are thrilled to be chosen to participate in the project and look forward to a productive and innovative partnership with the Young Vic. Dunraven always strives for 'Excellence for All' and we are excited to see how our work and planning with the artists can support our curriculum principles and how our students understand the stages of learning. As a school where the arts truly matter, we look forward to discovering and sharing with others what can be achieved when artists, teachers and students bring their talents together."

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11   The Cultural Learning Alliance (2022): **https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/arts-gcse-and-a-level-entries-2022/**

12   Ashton, H & Ashton, D (2022) Creativity and the curriculum: educational apartheid in 21st Century England, a European outlier? **https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10286632.2022.2058497**

13   From here on the abbreviation YVTP will be used to refer to Taking Part.

14   Dorothy Heathcote: **https://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/blog-post/dorothy-heathcote-four-models-for-teaching-learning/**

15   Ken Robinson **https://www.sirkenrobinson.com/about/**

Six artists were recruited to work as Project Associates in the schools. Each from diverse arts disciplines, including theatre making, drama, dance, improvisation and film, but all of them sharing a vision of how creativity could help inspire learning. Visiting Project Associates were also commissioned to work in schools as part of the programme. This offered more diversity in terms of artists' backgrounds and the kinds of artistic disciplines on offer and improved the ability to respond to the needs and requests of schools. Please see Appendix A for more details on the Project Associates and Visiting Associates.

An Advisory Panel of experts

An Advisory Panel of experts from creative, cultural and educational sectors was convened to inform the development of the programme (see Appendix B). Their role was to act as critical friends, to contribute their expertise and experience and ensure the programme was being implemented effectively. Meetings occurred typically once termly.

Beginnings of a collaboration

YVTP required schools to commit to a two-year relationship, which involved them signing a Partnership Agreement. Integral to the relationship between schools and YVTP was Melanie Anouf. As Learning Producer in the Taking Part team, she was responsible for the coordination and delivery of INNOVATE, including supporting artists in their schools and everyday management of the programme.

Schools selected a school lead from senior leadership to act as a key contact for the duration of the programme. Orientation meetings were held with senior leaders and school leads. YVTP worked in collaboration with schools to develop their individual priorities for INNOVATE. Participating teachers also attended an induction meeting which supported discussions about INNOVATE and any questions about their involvement before the start of the intervention. In parallel to the meetings, YVTP and Project Associates visited schools as part of 'listening days', which supported classroom observations, introductions with students and discussions with members of staff within the departments artists were assigned to work in. While also practically focused on the planning of lesson content and delivery, listening days facilitated opportunities for YVTP to listen to schools and engage them on their own terms.

Structure and focus

INNOVATE focused on cohorts of Year 7 and Year 8 students and their teachers. Planned activities included:

- **Artist-in-residence** – Three Project Associates working in each partner school, supporting teachers and students to bring the creative content of lessons to life.
- **Lesson planning** – Co-designed lesson plans which aimed to help teachers and artists understand what and where creative activities could be embedded.
- **In-curriculum creative teaching** – typically, through co-delivery of an INNOVATE lesson within a single lesson period (i.e., 55 minutes).
- **Termly Project Engine meetings** - designed to provide opportunities for the schools alongside YVTP, to critically reflect on INNOVATE activities and jointly develop ways forward.
- **CPD training** – to upskill teachers in the effective use of creative approaches in and through teaching.
- **Free ticketed visits to theatre** – for the schools themselves and their local school communities.

2. Researching INNOVATE

Researchers at Royal Holloway, University of London were commissioned to undertake research of INNOVATE in March 2022. A primary focus was understanding how INNOVATE was embedded in schools and the programme's potential impact. The research took place between April 2022 and July 2023 and aimed to capture insights from the two years of programme delivery (September 2021 - July 2023).

2.1 Research aims

The research was designed to support the Young Vic's learning about INNOVATE to inform decision-making around further development and implementation of the programme. It was structured by a number of reflexive questions that aimed to capture the following:

- What does programme success look like, for whom and how do programme activities achieve success?
- How can artists and arts organisations collaborate with teachers and students to centre creativity in teaching and learning?
- What are the benefits and challenges of using a creative, place-based approach to learning?
- What is the role of the Young Vic within local schools and the wider community?
- What is the civic responsibility of artists and arts organisations in education and in the lives of students and teachers in the Young Vic's local boroughs?

2.2 Data collection

The qualitative study comprised the following elements:

1. **Desk-based research** was undertaken of the broad subject areas, supplemented by analysis of review documentation.

2. **Ethnographic Observations** of INNOVATE lessons. More general observations of project planning meetings at schools and the Young Vic were also undertaken.

3. **Interviews with 3 school leads[16], 14 teachers and 5 artists** asked questions about their motivations for taking part in INNOVATE, what worked well and less well, their perception of the benefits of participating and sustainability of the programme. In addition to these discussions, **2 interviews** were conducted with **Young Vic Personnel.** These interviews broadly covered challenges and opportunities for young people involved in INNOVATE, reflections on Years 1-2 delivery, views on the creative place- based approach taken and programme sustainability.

4. There were also **4 focus groups with students** which asked questions about their experiences of taking part in INNOVATE, including what they liked and did not like, and their perception of the benefits to being involved.[17]

These activities were supported by **researcher fieldnotes** and **data collected by YVTP**. YVTP collected observation data from INNOVATE artists. These were based on weekly reflections on what went well, what might be improved and students' engagement with learning.

2.3 Analysing 'creativity'

Analysis of qualitative data involved the following steps: interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed.[18] The data was thematically analysed and coded to build a 'grounded theory'[19]. This involved building an understanding from the data of what creativity looked like, including how it was used and understood by participants. Anna Craft's[20] work offered a useful framing for understanding creativity in education. She advocated for what she called 'little c creativity', in which 'problem solving' and 'questioning' are part of an approach to creative learning[21]. She stressed the importance of openness to possibility, or 'possibility thinking' in creativity, which is characterised by self-determination, innovation, risk, imagination and play. This resonates with the conceptual approach to creativity developed by Ken Robinson, whose popularisation of creativity as constitutive of imagination, purpose, originality and value, also informed the analysis. These themes, along with broader themes identified in the analysis were cross checked for similarities and differences in the data.

2.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from Royal Holloway, University of London's Research Ethics Committee ahead of recruitment and data collection. Participants were given clear, detailed information about the interviews and how their information would be stored and used. It was also explained that the data collected would be published in a report for the Young Vic.

2.5 Report structure

The reminder of the report is organised as follows:

Section 3, Key learning, provides an overview of learning from Years 1-2 of the INNOVATE programme. This covers:

- motivations for taking part in INNOVATE;
- drivers and obstacles for successful implementation and delivery; and
- programme successes.

The findings are presented with a selection of 'vignettes' that share further reflection on the themes addressed. Case studies of promising practice are also provided.

Section 4, Concluding remarks, reviews the achievements, challenges and possibilities presented by INNOVATE.

Section 5, Recommendations, provides recommendations for cultural organisations and schools wishing to take part in, design and deliver arts education programmes.

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16   School leads were generally part of the schools' senior leadership teams. Where school leads were also head teachers, we refer to them as senior leaders.

17   Interviewees are not named in the report as the consent process included an assurance of anonymity.

18   Participants were given the opportunity to have information removed from the analysis if they did not want it included.

19   See: Anselm Strauss (1987) Qualitative analysis for social scientists. New York. Cambridge

20   See: **https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242488227_Documenting_'possibility_thinking'_A_journey_of_collaborative_enquiry**

21   The advantages of a broadly conceived notion of 'creativity' is extensively discussed in Hall and Thomson (2017). However, in this report 'creative learning' is used to highlight active ways of knowing, thinking, being and doing, which are derived through a particular approach to teaching (Safron-Greene et al., 2011). This is to be distinguished from 'arts education', which refers to the provision of subjects such as drama, art, dance, music in the curriculum / co-curriculum, and which are subject to tests and assessment.

3. Key Learning

The four learning sections that follow provide analysis that is based on the experiences of participating INNOVATE teachers, students and artists. Their experience is not intended to be representative, but it is nonetheless significant in shedding light on the possibilities presented by INNOVATE. The analysis attempts to provide a balance between inevitable positive responses to the programme and need for the research to take a critical reflexive stance. To do this, the following sections draw on current research exploring the arts and creativity in schools, most notably, Christine Hall and Pat Thomson's work (2017), *Inspiring School Change: Transforming Education through the Creative Arts*, which informed thinking about the pragmatic lessons that can be drawn from the programme.

3.1 The appeal of INNOVATE

Interviews with senior leaders, school leads and teachers indicated a range of reasons for taking part in INNOVATE. Teachers' motivations were underpinned by a perception that involvement would offer opportunities for them, their schools and students while school leads and senior leaders' motivations primarily focused on anticipated educational benefits for students. These are summarised below:

A particular interest in creative learning and teaching - including its emphasis on developing empathy, confidence, and oracy.

> "I was interested in what creative artists could bring to my teaching and my practise and to see how we could combine creativity with science." [Teacher, Dunraven School]

Collaboration with a professional theatre company. School leads and teachers in both schools mentioned the value of working with a professional theatre company, which they felt would give their schools access to high quality arts provision and positively impact their students. One school's motivations to work with Young Vic was also linked to their ambitions to obtain an Artsmark.

Benefits of arts participation. School leads recognised and valued the positive benefits associated with arts engagement and felt involvement in INNOVATE could encourage students' creativity and critical thought. One senior leader was particularly motivated to be involved in the project and said the offer was appealing as their students had limited access to creative or cultural activities outside of school.

Need to actively engage students in the core curriculum. Some teachers had particular concerns about lower levels of student engagement in their school. They felt that integrating creativity into the core curriculum would help improve levels of engagement. As one teacher stated in relation to a Year 8 maths class:

> "My year group is really struggling with maths at the moment and actually engaging with that subject... [I]f INNOVATE were coming in and actually focused on maths and how students can then engage with that - engage them a lot more in that subject..." (Teacher, South Bank University Academy)

Professional development. Teachers felt involvement in INNOVATE would be useful for them professionally, as it would involve work with skilled artists. Many thought that collaborating with artists would provide opportunities for upskilling and enable them to develop their curriculum and practice. One teacher interviewed explained that participation in INNOVATE counted towards CPD targets and training in their school:

> "[Name of Line manager] really sold the project to me. She said that taking part in INNOVATE would count towards my CPD and the PLC [Professional learning Community] here, which seemed like a no-brainer" (Teacher, South Bank University Academy).

Broaden student horizons. A few teachers felt INNOVATE would give creativity a greater profile within their school and 'open students' eyes' to the possibility that pursuing creative subjects at GCSE and working in the arts were feasible options.

3.2 Implementing and delivering INNOVATE

Drivers

Observations and interviews with school leaders, teachers and artists identified a number of drivers for successful implementation and delivery of INNOVATE, including:

Preparedness for delivering INNOVATE helped drive programme delivery. Teachers reported that the induction and orientation meetings held in Year 1 of INNNOVATE were helpful and provided a good overview of the programme. It gave them a chance to ask questions and feel confident about how INNOVATE would be embedded in their classrooms. Similarly, school leads said they received comprehensive information about INNOVATE during the set-up phase and regular contact from YVTP.

Several teachers interviewed who had been involved in INNOVATE in Year 1 disseminated some of the creative strategies they used to other teachers within the school that were not involved in delivering INNOVATE. This was especially helpful for encouraging departmental buy-in to the programme but also facilitated learning about INNOVATE, preparing new teachers for what they could expect. Teachers observed that a whole-school approach would help reinforce creativity throughout the school and be of greater benefit to students.

The Artist in residency model was most successful when artists were integrated into school life. Having an artist who was resident in schools, on a regular and ongoing basis, drove implementation forward. The account that follows shows first, how this was dependent on artists being able to form relationships of trust, which took time; and secondly, how such relationships were vital for artists becoming a part of the school family – which was key to the success of INNOVATE as a whole:

AN ARTIST IN SCHOOL

The creative arts office at Dunraven is a cosy welcoming space. It has the feel and look of creative activity, with one corner devoted to an ensemble of mannequins, costumes and props. These visible reminders that art lives here are juxtaposed with a printer, recording equipment and desks that have been coupled with computers.

Teachers in this space specialise in drama, dance and media. They are often beavering away at their computers, pausing for an occasional chat. They are a friendly bunch. They share this space with trainee teachers, artist Sheryl Malcolm, and me.

When I come in on Wednesdays, Sheryl is sometimes making last minute tweaks to a lesson plan. Or she's giving advice to one of the teachers and acting as a sounding board for trying new things out. Occasionally, a teacher will come in to talk to Sheryl about the structure of an INNOVATE lesson. There is discussion about how and where creative elements will be embedded, and a checking in and showing of care for how each is doing.

There is usually just enough time for Sheryl to take a gulp or two of tea before we make our way to the first lesson. We'll pass students on the way that say 'hello' to Sheryl. On one occasion, I recognise two as rushing into the creative arts office weeks before. A teacher had wasted no time in telling them to - 'Go back out, knock on the door and start again'. Today, Sheryl asks a young person we pass if 'they are Ok'?

What artists like Sheryl's regular and visible presence in the school might mean was vividly illustrated in an interview, where she explained how an unexpected and chance happening, solidified relationships between her and an INNOVATE teacher:

> "So, it just happened that we were walking back and then she [the teacher] was sitting down to have her lunch, so I sat with her for about an hour... And we sat and talked for an hour about anything and everything. And then yesterday, as I left the [project engine] meeting, she said as I was going: 'Oh, I was really inspired by your idea'. And she's gonna do the pie baking. She's already got the posters up. She said, 'the kids are gonna come and they're gonna do a pie baking competition'. She said 'last

A pie made by a student as part of a cross-curricular enrichment activity for maths. Photography by Claire Boardman

year, we had to learn the numbers of $\prod$ [pie], but I'm just going to have them decorate with maths symbols on the pie'. And she said, 'I just felt really inspired'..."

The 'idea' that inspired the teacher - cross-departmental working - was posited during discussions at a project engine meeting and had subsequently led to a collaboration between food technology and maths. Building trust - the foundation of a good relationship - had proven difficult for Sheryl and the teacher in the beginning. The particular dynamics of the INNOVATE class – behaviour issues, 'lower-level' ability, high levels of physical energy – demanded all of the teachers' attention, leaving little room to develop the trust needed for relational working. The opportunity presented by the unplanned conversation over lunch facilitated trust and encouraged the teacher to think about her work in other ways – something that was warmly welcomed by the teacher.

It is significant in this respect that Sheryl had a base at the school, could be there for the whole school day, and had a regular 'visible' presence. She could be regularly seen within the school, attending school assemblies and helping out at school events (for example, the Yr 11 Drama GCSE performance). She had forged particularly strong bonds with teachers in the creative arts office, which crucially allowed her to broker relationships between different school departments. For instance, a collaboration between the history and media department which resulted in student-made online revision resources; and work between the secondary and sixth form school to develop a maths pilot intervention (see, vignette entitled, 'Maths peer mentoring').

As a researcher, I have given some thought to how artists make positive impacts on their schools and become, as one teacher described, 'a part of the fabric'. Several features emerge as important:

Having a Base: Artists referred to a subtle but crucial difference between being visible - that is, seen - and having a base in schools. Having a permanent base meant that artists had a 'home' in schools. They were therefore often able to make connections with other teachers (for example, through introductions from teachers with whom they shared an office) which did not happen in staffrooms. It also made it easier for artists to act as a key link between school departments and INNOVATE.

Living locally to schools seemed to have a similar effect. One of the artists lived very local to the school meaning the one INNOVATE day in school was spread over 3 – 4 days. They were also able to pop into the school at realtively short notice.

Opportunistic moments: Artists were able to postively benefit their schools by making the most of unplanned encounters. As in the pie baking example given above, such moments could lead to snippets of learning which assumed greater significance further down the line.

Creative and emotional intelligence: The relational aspect of INNOVATE has been integral to its success. Teachers found it easy to work with and also appreciated artists who were able to combine a sensitivity of approach with a creative energy.

Knowledge of school cultures: Artists with previous experience of / and or knowledge of school processes and culture were able to navigate the terrain of schools and understand some of the challenges schools were grappling with.

A Place-based approach was important for school engagement and connecting schools with arts, youth and mentoring provision. The value of a place-based approach was recognised by senior leaders. They appreciated that the Young Vic is based in the localities of their schools and felt this gave YVTP a 'good' knowledge of the area - its needs and particular challenges. Schools were reassured that YVTP would have insight into some of the challenges they faced as well as the particular strengths of the school.

Engagement with schools was considered key to YVTP's place-based approach. Senior leaders and school leads believed YVTP listened to what they had to say in shaping priorities for the programme. They said they were involved in designing what INNOVATE would look like in their schools, which was appreciated. One senior leader also felt the approach facilitated a longer-term relationship with their school and students:

> "I think them [YVTP] being here for quite a long period of time and the kids getting used to them, that's that relationship building that I think sometimes when you get projects running when people come for maybe one or two sessions, and then they go…. So I think it's been nice that we've had similar people working in the school to build up relationships, both with the staff, but particularly with the students" (Senior leader)

The close proximity of the Young Vic to schools (South Bank University Academy is 15 mins away) was also seen as beneficial. In the early implementation phase of the programme, for instance, being local ensured meetings with schools were regular and in person. The Learning Producer reflected that the regularity of meetings with one school facilitated the planning and scheduling of lessons in the beginning:

> "So whenever [School SENCO] had questions or we were trying to work out stuff with the Inclusion Hub, being able to just go and see her in person had a huge impact". (Learning Producer, Young Vic)

The significance of this was realised later into the project, when in-person meetings at the school were less frequent. The Learning Producer felt that this was when a 'breakdown in communication' happened. She reflected that a valuable learning point was prioritising face to face meetings for long-term engagement. In-school meetings also meant that 'things move[d] much quicker' and the Learning Producer was able to make the most of unplanned opportunities to catch up with teachers.

In adopting a place based approach, YVTP provided guidance on the various resources on offer to schools in the local area. Schools were not always aware of the support available to them which could be tapped into. YVTP facilitated links to wider provision such as arts, youth and mentoring organisations.

A place-based approach was also integral in enabling the Young Vic to fulfil its civic role (see p.20).

The consistency of the INNOVATE offer underpinned successful delivery. For instance, regular timetabled delivery of INNOVATE lessons; artists having a visible presence in schools, was seen to facilitate implementation of the programme.

Promotion of INNOVATE enhanced the school offer. Promoting involvement in INNOVATE was considered beneficial for both schools, according to observational data collected by the project researcher. Schools welcomed that the programme developed creativity across the curriculum and promoted project work via newsletters to carers and parents. This was seen to bolster schools' reputation for working with external organisations and providing outreach opportunities for students.

The programme plugged gaps in school knowledge and strengthened creative capacity. There is evidence that INNOVATE helped to plug gaps in creative expertise and capacity, as the following reflections suggest:

> "INNOVATE is helping us to re-engage students in the arts after extra-curricular activities took a hit due to covid. It is supporting staff in new skills to help them teach their students in new ways" (Teacher, Dunraven)

Some teachers identified a particular need in their school they struggled to address but felt could be approached creatively through the programme:

> " [Name of teacher] was always quite clear on what she wanted out of the project. When I talked about improv with her, she was like, 'Sounds great, that fits exactly with what I want' (Artist).

There was a view amongst some school leads and teachers that INNOVATE supported the delivery of curricular and extra-curricular arts activities, both in and outside of schools. They felt YVTP acted as a cultural broker, connecting schools with artists and cultural organisations (for instance, The Royal Court Theatre, Brixton House, the BBC and work with photographer Myah Jeffers), and providing opportunities for collaboration. A senior leader in one school felt that they would not have had the necessary levers to achieve this.

Obstacles

A number of challenges arose which affected successful implementation and delivery of the programme:

Institutional readiness to take part in INNOVATE shaped programme delivery. The research identified a range of benefits associated with schools being ready to receive INNOVATE, including: support from school leaders to effectively communicate the requirements of the project; adequate ring-fencing of teachers' time for planning and delivery; and less timetabling issues. However, there were occasions when institutional readiness hindered the programme. A particular challenge in one school, for instance, was the changeover in three school leads, who acted as key contacts for programme activities. This also had a bearing on the coherence and identity of the project within the school and the ability to recruit teachers to the programme, particularly at the start of Year 2.

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic brought pressures on schools, which affected the programme. The impact of Covid 19 has been a key consideration in understanding the context in which INNOVATE was delivered in schools. Senior leaders reported increased pressures on their schools post pandemic, particularly in relation to exacerbated learning needs, student mental health and staff attrition. Schools balanced such challenges while also finding ways to fit programme activities into existing plans and priorities. This sometimes proved challenging for programme implementation.

Deviation from the INNOVATE model limited the creative content of lessons: Feedback from artists suggested they were not always able to deliver the intervention as intended. Involvement in INNOVATE placed additional demands on teachers' time, which sometimes made the planning of lesson content and delivery difficult. This raised issues for artists, who, in the absence of planning, were unable to effectively model or use creative activities in classes. Some teachers were also hesitant to engage with the programme if the creative content of lessons was less easily adapted to meet curriculum needs and priorities.

Engagement with the programme varied between schools and across school departments. School engagement was more successful when there was support from senior leadership, teachers' time was protected and information about the project was clearly communicated, which was not always possible.

A longer lead time in subject areas was important for building relationships but slowed programme development. Some artists reflected that it could take more time to build trusting relationships with teachers before they were able to work collaboratively with them to introduce creative activities in the classroom. One reported that, initially, they performed a TA role, supporting individual students and assisting with classroom activities. They felt that this allowed them to get to know the students and gain their and their teacher's trust. This created building blocks that led to successful collaboration;

however, it slowed development at the start. In other cases, a long lead time was seen as valuable to both teachers and artists and artists sometimes found it hard to leave subject areas where particularly strong bonds were forged with students and teachers.

Engaging and recruiting teachers worked best when they felt well prepared to take part in the programme. Teachers identified the induction and orientation meetings that prepared them for their involvement in INNOVATE in Year 1 as an achievement of the programme. Evidence shows there was some work to be done in Year 2 in terms of the consistency of approach to supporting new teachers joining the programme. An Advisory Panel meeting prior to the launch of INNOVATE identified factors that would successfully prepare the ground. These included:

- Artists and teachers meeting 'as humans' over a cuppa (as illustrated in the 'Artist in School' vignette);
- Importance of attending 'listening days' as part of 'preparatory research' and to understand different classroom contexts;
- Being reflexive; actively monitor situations and anticipate challenges and solutions.
- Being clear about what the programme is about.

Approaches to behaviour management varied between schools and artists, which sometimes hampered delivery. Artists from both schools described school approaches to behaviour management as differing from (and sometimes conflicting with) their own more arts-centred strategies. This meant that boundaries for what behaviour would be tolerated in class sometimes differed, with students being sent out of classrooms or activities brought to an early end. In their book, *Inspiring School Change: Transforming Education through the Creative Arts,* Christine Hall and Pat Thomson (2017) use the idea of 'signature pedagogies' to identify key ways in which artist's 'manage behaviour differently'. Importantly, they do so, not to "suggest [a] deficit in teachers' practice", but to identify aspects of artists' practice which are distinctive. For example, in managing behaviour, the authors highlight how artists often rely on students' commitment to 'collective endeavour'; used 'praise and careful listening' techniques and tended not to interpret rules at the classroom level but instead to achieve very particular goals (such as engendering young people's participation in setting ground rules).

Similarly, when behaviour in INNOVATE classes hindered delivery (as it sometimes did), or when class work was resisted by students, artists found that they sometimes had to change tact. One strategy artists drew on was to play games with students. Whilst playing games tended to be used as part of warm up / break-the-ice activities, they were also employed in lessons to encourage participation and deal with interpersonal tensions. One artist reflected how she had - 'really learnt the power of ball games' through her involvement in INNOVATE. The next vignette explores this idea in more depth.

THE 'POWER OF BALL GAMES'

In *The Young Vic Book: Theatre Work and Play*[22], games are commonly employed in theatre workshops with young people to engender a sense of playfulness, ownership and collaboration. This idea can be applied to the context of schools, where ball games were used for a number of reasons:

While ball games were useful as warm up activities, they were also important in building student's confidence and reducing inhibitions – as artist, Lerato Islam, reflected:

> "It's just to get them [students] into that space of fun and enjoyment and using their bodies, and also to help them start to express themselves, because some of them really had a lot of barriers to their self-expression"

Working with Year 7 and Year 8 Inclusion students at Dunraven school, the artist found that ball games were well suited to young people's high levels of physical energy, especially in classrooms where the special needs of students meant that sitting down for long periods was untenable. These games, however, often generated a lot of excitement and noise and unfolded at a tremendous speed:

> "They would get so excited that sometimes it would just descend into chaos…"

One game that proved incredibly popular across the INNOVATE classes Lerato facilitated was a goal scoring activity, requiring goal scorers to use their hands to score goals. Students first formed a circle with their legs apart and with the edges of students' feet touching the edges of the person they are standing next to. The goal of the game is for goal scorers to shoot the ball through the open legs and for goalies to use their hands to prevent goals being scored.

The Inclusion students insisted on playing this game every week. However, because of the very real potential for things to get out of control, Lerato found that the students responded best to a level of structure and set out careful boundaries and expectations for behaviour. As she explained:

> "I said, 'yes, we can play it every week, but as soon as someone does something, I'm gonna stop the game'. And that was such a great process because by the end of it, they got it, you know, they were like: 'Alright, alright, if we start screaming and like throwing the ball in each other's faces and stuff, the game's gonna be stopped, so like I better play it properly'… And I think installing that structure for them works really well".

As Hall and Thomson (2017) contend, using ground rules to achieve specific goals – in this case, being able to play the game - gives young people agency to deal with issues themselves, without adult intervention.

Working with older students in the school, ball games appeared to cut through group tensions and bring about consensus, even if momentarily. Lerato was not exactly sure why, but there was something about the kinetic and performative nature of ball games that drew young people in. Involvement in the games also relied on collective endeavour and working together for the collective good. They were productive of a kind of alternative atmosphere that lifted and transformed students' moods:

> "There's nothing like just getting a ball out to like any young person, no matter how rubbish they're feeling. Suddenly they're kind of like, 'OK, fine, we'll play this game'".

Source: Interview

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22   In this book, published in 2004, Ruth Little introduces young people to the theatrical processes behind the scenes of the Young Vic.

Paper birds made during an INNOVATE lesson. Photography by Lerato Islam

Challenging behaviour was approached by artists in a way which enabled them to step back and depersonalise the behaviour. In one school where disruption from a maths class was continuous rather than sporadic, the artist made small adaptions to delivery, attempting to work with individual students rather than the class as a whole. In the beginning, they had to work hard to establish a rapport and build the trust of students. They perused the internet for creative activities which could be adapted as simple maths games that were played with students in class. They also began to recognise some of the opportunities associated with the challenges. For instance, the next vignette describes a maths peer mentoring initiative, which grew organically and in response to the needs of a class of Year 8 students (see also, vignette, entitled 'Gemma' p.18):

MATHS PEER MENTORING

Prior to the setup of the peer mentoring pilot at Dunraven school, artist Sheryl and the teacher had spoken about finding new ways to engage a class of Year 8 maths students. In an interview, the class teacher described the class as representing a mix of characters with a diversity of needs:

> "There are a lot of kids with special educational needs and there are kids with ADHD, moderate and specific learning difficulties…There are some very loud students who are very willing to share and there are some silent ones [students] who are very much not. And then there's a lot of students who are just distracted…" (Teacher).

The idea for peer mentoring came out of wanting to respond to this level of diversity and to also help students with numeracy skills. The artist had suggested inviting Year 12 maths students from the schools' sixth form to assist in the class, with an aim to develop their 'confidence with basic maths operations'. The artist's role would be to mainly facilitate the student volunteers while also helping them become effective mentors to the Year 8s. Mentoring took place on a Wednesday afternoon for six weeks. It was built as part of enrichment activities in the sixth form school, which interested Year 12 students could sign up to if they wanted to be involved.

The pilot began with an introductory session for three Year 12 maths students which covered the following discussion topics:

- Strategies and language to motivate pupils
- How best to encourage pupils correctly and sensitively
- Hopes and concerns of mentors
- Information on Safeguarding
- Issues arising when working with younger pupils.

A guiding principle was that the student volunteers should also benefit from the experience. There is a myriad of research[23] highlighting the value of young people's volunteering, such as improved educational outcomes, language and interpersonal skills. As the teacher put it:

> "[The] students signed up to become [peer mentors] because they actually thought, this looks really good on a CV and it's something different."

The pilot started tentatively with the volunteers working with tables of Year 8 students, focusing down on maths activity. As might be expected, there were some teething issues, as the teacher explained:

> "The only issue is that they're [Year 12 students] not trained TAs and they don't necessarily know how to interact. Sometimes when we're doing things like whole class explanations and they're still be talking to the student and they don't necessarily understand that 'OK, I need them to stop' as well. It's 'oh, we're just finishing off. I'm just explaining this'."

Besides the issues experienced in the early stages of the pilot, the teacher was encouraged by what she saw in class. One successful approach was mentors sitting with students to go through returned assignments, helping them build learning strategies and solve problems. Another approach was to target support to specific students. In this way, the teacher described a student who was "capable but did an awful lot of procrastinating", being supported to focus down with his work, with the mentor using prompts to direct the student's attention to their work.

The hope was that the peer mentoring would continue with the class, as it supported inclusive practice and student engagement.

Source: Teacher and Artist interview

23   See, for example: Ellis Paine, A, McKay, S and Moro, D (2013) "Does Volunteering Improve Employability? Insights from the British Household Panel Survey and Beyond", Voluntary Sector Review 4 (3): 355-376.

Project Associate, Sheryl Malcolm, during a KS3 creative academic intervention. Photography by Aaron Imuere

Artists reflected that differences between schools and theatres are inevitable and inescapable. And while certain behaviours were clearly problematic and required action, they would have benefitted from a shared approach to managing behaviour, which was developed and articulated at the start of the programme:

> "I think that it would be nice for artists and teachers to have open discussions around discipline. Before the project even starts so we are on the same [page], like we know whose responsibility is what; we know what approaches we're using and what we're not using. And we can also have open conversations at the end of sessions to be like, I feel like this worked or oh, I feel like maybe that we could have dealt with in a slightly different way." (Artist).

The programme encountered difficulties which compromised the consistency of the offer. School timetabling sometimes presented challenges to scheduling INNOVATE, for example, where a change to a school's timetable meant that the programme clashed with a core subject. This was the case with the Inclusion Hub project at South Bank University Academy which clashed with science and had to be moved to a different day. The week A/B timetable cycle meant students could only attend the project on a fortnightly basis because on one of the weeks the project happened at the same time as PE – a favourite with the group of students. This discontinuity was experienced as less than ideal for the artist and students.

A further challenge was absence due to teacher / artist illness, planned teacher training and the wider context of the national teacher strikes. Additionally, the high student turnover of some classes made it difficult for artists to build longer term relationships with students. The reasons for student turnover varied and in one instance could not be prevented due to the nature of the class. Whilst the high turnover of students was an issue in Year 1 of the Day 10 project at South Bank University Academy, this was addressed in Year 2 and activities focused on a regular group of students, resulting in a positive experience for students and artist.

3.3 Defining success

An aim of the research has been to understand what programme success looks like, for whom and how INNOVATE achieves success. As explored below, this raised interesting questions about the nature of INNOVATE's impact and how its value was perceived in schools.

One view among senior leaders was that understanding the success of the programme required explanation of what constitutes 'creative'. One noted that teaching is an 'inherently performative' discipline in which teachers

> "…are constantly reevaluating their practice to come up with innovative ways to teach and enthuse students in the classroom…" (Senior Leader, South Bank University Academy).

Some teachers felt that the broad use of creative to describe the programme's methods and approach, implied that creativity was exclusive to the arts rather than being developed across the school curriculum. A number commented that they were 'already teaching creatively', as the following quotation from a senior leader suggests:

> "I think there's some misjudgement that [artists] have come in and delivered all these ideas on creativity. I think quite often the ideas that we're talking about exist in education…" (Senior Leader, Dunraven School).

Senior leaders and school leads suggested that it would be easier to assess the extent to which INNOVATE had 'added value' if 'creativity' and / or a 'creative approach' was defined. However, and as a number of commentators[24] have noted, defining creativity is notoriously difficult. Rob Elkington (2012) has suggested that this is because "there is no universal fixed or shared meaning of creativity. It is a concept constructed in specific and particular contexts so will mean different things in different contexts…"[25]. As outlined in section 2.3 of this report, the model of creativity that INNOVATE embodies sees imagination, originality and playing with possibilities as part of a creative approach to learning. Significantly, Hall and Thomson (2017), see the 'elasticity' of creativity as helpful in making the case for *what* the arts can do for schools and *how* they do it.

For senior leaders and school leads, understanding what INNOVATE had achieved depended on the extent to which the programme was seen to have educational benefits. This was important, as was being able to demonstrate that pathways to academic attainment were 'very clearly defined'.

24   For a debate, see, Neelands, J and Chloe, B (2010) The English Model of Creativity: Cultural Politics of an Idea, International Journal of Cultural Policy, 16 (3) p287-304
25   Quoted in Hall, C and Thomson, P (2017: p.12) Inspiring School Change: Transforming Education through the Creative Arts. London: Routledge.

One senior leader spoke about the challenges of meeting indicators of success set by Ofsted and indicated that parents at their school were interested in initiatives like INNOVATE, in as much as they 'made a difference to their children's attainment'. In this way, the value of INNOVATE was seen to derive from its ability to produce outcomes. Several teachers interviewed felt that the programme had potential to improve students' approach to learning and their 'soft skills', and some recognised that students' ability to work together as a team, cooperate, express themselves and empathise had improved. In this way, impacts derived from the process of being involved in INNOVATE were valued.

As will be seen in the following section, the research found qualitative evidence of key benefits for students, teachers and artists involved in INNOVATE, revealing clear impacts from the process of being involved in the programme, and individual breakthroughs.

Indeed, the success of INNOVATE has in a large part been down to the efforts of the Learning Producer. Crucially, she has brokered positive and sometimes difficult relationships with schools, with a spirit of trust and generosity embodied in her interactions. She has provided constant support for the artists and offered helpful guidance on the research.

3.4 Programme success

Group photo: INNOVATE students at Dunraven School pose as part of Dr Aasiya Lodhi's collaborative project with the BBC exploring the contribution of Black British Actresses. Photography by Myah Jeffers

The arts and creative approaches to learning were vehicles for change. Creative practice was often seen as a vehicle for change, particularly in relation to oracy and student voice (i.e., increased participation in class) and student personal growth. One teacher interviewed described the change she saw in a student previously reluctant to participate in class:

"[T]here is one girl in that group... and she came in, and me and [artist] both originally said she's very quiet, she's very shy, she didn't want to speak. And then I changed the seating round a little bit, she didn't want to speak and then on the last – was it last lesson?

Last Wednesday lesson, her in her group work, she was outspoken... I sat there, and I was like, I can't believe she is now leading the group ..." (Teacher, Dunraven school).

Similarly, a student that struggled with maths learning described being 'able to do maths' when working creatively with the artist. Another student – 'Gemma'[26], who received maths interventions as part of INNOVATE, was described as having improved in confidence, putting her hands up and answering questions. As following vignette details:

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26   This is a pseudonym

'GEMMA'

Gemma had been struggling in the mainstream maths class for a while and it was suggested she might benefit from one-to-one working with the INNOVATE artist. The teacher had described Gemma's learning needs as 'mild', however my own and the artist's observations had revealed a basic level of understanding. Gemma found maths a real challenge. But she put up a front in class that could be perceived as having a 'bad attitude' or 'not being receptive to learning'. There was a lot of eye rolling with Gemma and she often sat in class with her face screwed up.

Intervention work with Gemma revealed her investment in at least the ideal of education. She said she knew she needed to 'do better' and was embarrassed that 'she didn't know her times tables yet', confiding that this was something she 'should have known in primary school'.

Interventions focused on finding creative ways to do maths. The artist wove questions into card games like 'Number Rumbler', used Times table flowers, but also found that talking through maths problems helped. Gemma seemed to respond to an approach that was grounded in her individual needs and learning preferences. She also seemed to respond to being the focus of more positive attention.
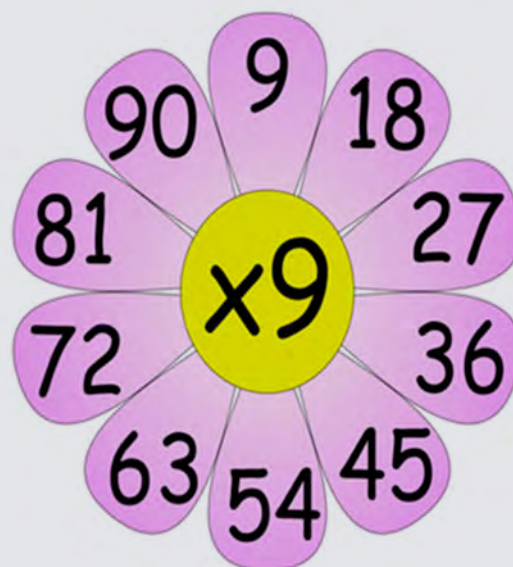
The artist reflected that she knew when things had begun to change for Gemma, explaining:

> "There was a real sense of 'I can try' and feeling confident to have a go. Putting her hand up in class, giving answers, asking Miss, 'Miss does this mean this?' And a totally different facial expression…" (Artist).

The change in Gemma had not gone unnoticed by her maths class teacher. Another teacher who worked Gemma in a different subject, noted:

> "I've got a student that I teach for [subject] that [artist] worked with in maths, and I've noticed the difference in that student. So just to see how working with this particular student, her confidence has also grown in [subject]" (Teacher).

The teacher reflected that it had been difficult to engage Gemma in her class previously, and that the artist had given her some strategies to try with Gemma in a project engine meeting. She said she had begun to use the artist's ideas in class and felt they were making a difference to Gemma's engagement.

At a catch-up meeting with the artist, she tells me that Gemma has recently received her maths assessment results. Gemma had been upset to the point of tears as she had not received the mark she hope for. It seemed that whilst Gemma's confidence had grown immensely her ability to recall information had not improved to the extent she had hoped.

The artist said she had had a long talk with Gemma and by the end of it she looked to be feeling a little better. The reality that, along with the confidence that had seen her now participating in class, Gemma would also need to regularly practice, had finally sunken in.

Gemma's time with the artist had at least given her the confidence to 'try'.

Source: Teacher and Artist interview; Observation notes
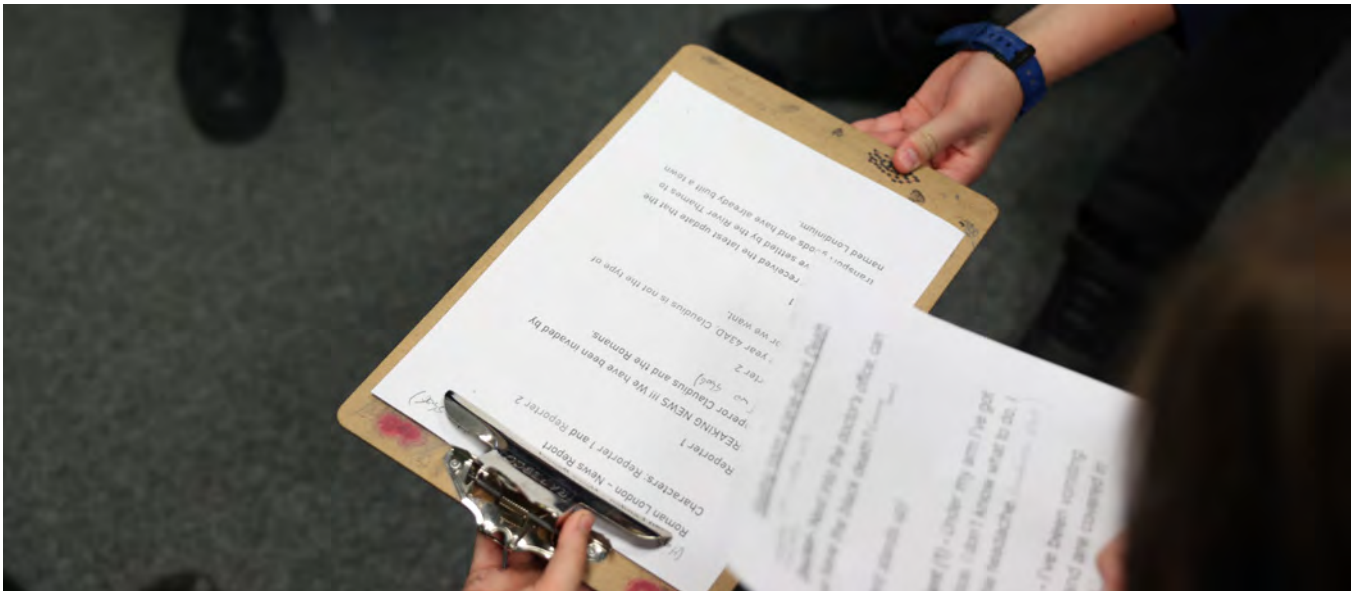
Students on a cross-curricular enrichment project making creative revision resources. Photography by Aaron Imuere

A case study of how INNOVATE was a vehicle for change for students attending the Inclusion Hub project can be found on page 23. Teachers spoke of how INNOVATE had encouraged them to use a greater diversity of creative approaches than they would typically use. They appreciated artists' professional knowledge, networks, creative practices – the fact they were distinct from their own. Artists also valued teachers' pedagogical expertise and the knowledge transfer / exchange that took place. Teachers also felt their own professional development and learning was enhanced through involvement in INNOVATE and that they had increased confidence.

The programme highlighted differences between theatre cultures and school cultures. A number of teachers spoke about the ability of artists to 'stir things up' and bring a sense of 'organised chaos' to their classrooms. They said artists tended to challenge the default learning culture of classrooms, where quiet working is synonymous with productivity. Returning to Hall and Thomson's (2017) theorisation of signature pedagogies, they expand on this idea by drawing attention to the distinct ways in which artists' practice disrupts the status quo by stretching the boundaries of established ways of working. It is this sense that INNOVATE artists often worked on an improvisational basis, which involved students getting up from their seats and moving around the classroom to contribute ideas. Anticipated noise levels and being able to manage behaviour was initially a source of anxiety for teachers; however, they felt that artists' pedagogies had translated into positive learning experiences for students, which they were learning to embrace as a part of their own practice.

"I think sometimes me, and maybe other teachers, are fearful of a noisy room because of behaviour management, and because of what we could have to deal with if we allow communication to happen. I think sometimes it can be a negative thought... You need to do it correctly, but you need to be willing to take that risk and say, 'Right, this might not go well.' Nine times of out ten I walked into [class] thinking is this going to go or am I going to have to deal with a lot of like, you know? It's very difficult to lessen control a little bit. I think, for me, I've understood now that I can actually allow the kids to take the reins and things, and I think that's impacted me in my own teaching..." (Teacher, Dunraven School).

"I think I just have to get over that fear of, you know, what if your boss walks in at this exact moment and they're all jumping up and down out of their seats and like you've always got that in the back of your mind. And I think also we've had the threat of Ofsted... but I've been trying to have more creative things because I know that it's good for the kids and the kids really like them. And it's kind of really good for that engagement" (Teacher, Dunraven School).

There is evidence of how artists' ways of working with students revealed a different side to young people that their teachers rarely saw, as the next vignette illustrates:

'A VOICE NOTE FROM AN ARTIST'

A voice note from an artist explains that they have just finished working with a student. This is the student whose 'reputation proceeds her', whose behaviour is often the subject of staffroom talk and for whom the labels 'disengaged' or 'disaffected' are rarely questioned.

Today, the student was sent to the school's internal exclusion unit. She was not happy and had 'pleaded' with the artist to let her join the INNOVATE group. After some discussion with the manager of the internal exclusion unit, it was agreed that the student could join the session.

The lesson involved acting and mask making – the former being something the student had expressed a keen interest in. In addition to this, the lesson was facilitated outside.

Whether it was because or in spite of the student's near exclusion, the lesson was delivered without any issues.

Critically, for the artist it was because the lesson involved – 'doing stuff where we're not sitting down and writing'.

The experience seemed to have a great impact on the student, who said she felt 'proud of herself' and that she had 'done something good'. Perhaps the greatest achievement was to reveal a different side to the student. She reflected: 'Everyone only sees the bad side of me, but I can be good'.

Source: Voice note

The programme supported cultural shifts in schools. There is evidence that increased collaboration between artists and teachers not only led to artists becoming fully embedded in schools but also to sustainable change in school culture. Examples included an artist collaborating with the school's art department to display and 'celebrate' students' work; an artist facilitating collaboration between the schools' history and media departments to create student-made revision resources that were previously produced by teachers; and the scheme of work, jointly led by an artist and teacher, to roll out form time improvisation activities to Year 7s through to Year 11s (Improv Champions). A case study of Improv Champions can be found on p.25.

Effective partnership working led to collective ownership of the programme. The research suggests that partnerships between the Young Vic and schools, and between artists, teachers and students were working well. Schools appreciated the time taken to establish and maintain positive relationships and considered this enabled 'buy-in' to the programme and a vital step to ensuring school engagement. In one school, the programme was viewed as collectively owned and an embedded part of school life. One teacher thought the involvement of their school in shaping the programme reinforced the fact that the Young Vic saw them as equal and active partners.

The civic role was central to school engagement. Research conducted for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is examining the civic role of arts organisations[27]. The research defines the 'civic role' as: "the ways in which arts organisations animate, enhance and enable processes by which people exercise their rights and responsibilities as members of communities"[28]. This definition can be applied to how the Young Vic, through the INNOVATE programme, facilitated connections between schools and arts practice.

Schools valued opportunities to visit the Young Vic and made good use of the free ticketed scheme the Young Vic offers. The Young Vic offer free tickets to all secondary schools and learning provision in Lambeth and Southwark. As part of an enhanced offer, INNOVATE schools received first pick on dates for free tickets and workshops. There were good examples of these opportunities being extended to other year groups: Year 11, Year 10 and Year 9 students and teachers from South Bank University Academy took advantage of multiple visits to the Young Vic and similarly, for Year 12 students and teachers at Dunraven School. Such visits often included extended theatre experiences, such as pre-show pizza and chips, ice cream and a chance to chat with ushers and members of the Taking Part team.

There was some evidence that visits to the Young Vic helped students to experience the local place of theatre and fostered a sense of belonging. As the following vignette explores:

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27 For a discussion about the civic role of theatre, see also: Nicholson, H et al (2023) Theatre in Towns. London: Routledge.

28 See: **https://gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch/our-work/the-civic-role-of-arts-organisations/**

DISCOVERING THE UNFAMILIAR

The EAL teacher at South Bank University Academy tells me that the young people in the EAL group 'can't speak' to other students or teachers. Consequently, school can be an isolating experience for them. This was one of the reasons that artist, Jordana Golbourn had come in to work with the students: the teacher felt that the artist could suggest 'drama activities' that could bring the young people together in collective and constructive activities. Language barriers between the students and Jordana proved tricky for the group to navigate. However, in most cases the artist found creative ways to engage with the young people. A successful activity involved students designing a PowerPoint presentation about their favourite video games. The idea was to create simple prompts the students could speak to and which would allow them to practice their English-speaking skills.

As an extension of the activity, the group designed video game characters using ideas from a website. Each student prepared character briefs for each of their characters. This, as Jordana pointed out, "introduced them to new vocabulary to explore materials, textures, colours, items of clothing and descriptive language". The character briefs were sent to the Young Vic. These were then passed on to the Young Vic's Costume department ahead of a visit the students would make. It had also been arranged for the young people to visit the Costume department where they would be able to build costumes for their characters.

The teacher described the visit to the Young Vic as 'motivational'. The journey to the Young Vic, which the students had planned, had opened up unexplored and overlooked spaces in London and awakened their geographical imaginations. As the teacher explained:

> "I think they [EAL students] don't really engage with living in London, so I think this was an opportunity to show them that they're actually living in a thriving town" (Teacher).

Like many of their peers, the experience of walking into a theatre was new to the students. The teacher described their 'excitement' when 'faced with their costumes' and being 'captivated' by the theatre tour. Time was also made for the young people to read aloud their costume designs. Artist, Jordana reflected on the experience:

> "All of the students were able to communicate their characters and costume briefs in English to the team. They developed new language and challenged themselves to have these conversations" (Artist).

As relatively recent arrivals to the country, the young people had not had a chance to feel connected to where they live. The opportunity, as the teacher reflects, has shown the students that there is – '[a theatre] around the corner that they [can] be involved with'.

The excursion represented a moment of encounter between the theatre and school community, helping young people to discover the unfamiliar - giving them a sense of what being local to a theatre might mean.

Source: Teacher interview and Artist's reflections

EAL INNOVATE project certificate. Designed by Elina Oliva

As part of their civic role, YVTP also facilitated schools' connections with other cultural organisations. One teacher described how a visit to see *For Black Boys* at The Royal Court Theatre, opened up the place of theatre as a space of visibility and recognition:

> "So, for my year group, it was only a few of my students that went but they really were engaged with it. And I'm sitting in between two of them and they were really kind of engaged. They really enjoyed watching the show and I think it was quite nice to see someone who represented someone who looked like them as well on that stage" (Teacher, South Bank University Academy).

For other students, INNOVATE provided a platform to develop creative talents. One teacher, for example, brought their GCSE drama students for tours of the Young Vic, supporting two of them to successfully complete recruitment

workshops for *Of The Cut*. For the young people, this was the first time that they had performed in a professional production. As a result, the experience had a 'powerful impact' on them, as their teacher explained:

> "So that was amazing, for their confidence, a real boost...But I think it also showed [them] the inner workings of the theatre too". (Teacher, South Bank University Academy).

The teacher went onto explain that the students were supported by YVTP to build networks and contacts which were vital first steps on their vocational journeys. One young person is now attending The Brit School and the other is at East London Arts and Music.

**Playful pedagogies assisted reflexive learning in schools.**
Teachers emphasised the value of exploratory forms of learning and playful interaction which facilitated connections between them and their students. A teacher reflected that:

> "…[W]ithin [the creative] process, myself as a participant on an equal basis with the children, was a nice change to the dynamic, the normal dynamic for me" (Teacher, South Bank University Academy).

Artists modelled creativity as 'play', often using games to spark student's curiosities and engage them in conversations. In the following, two students described the way conversation flowed through an activity that encouraged spontaneity and reflection:

> "I really liked the bean bag game. When holding the bean bag, you had the opportunity to say anywhere you would like to live…. I said my home country Albania, and the reason is because I've got so much family there and I haven't seen them in such a long time. It just makes me want to go there and see them." (Form time student, South Bank University Academy)

> "When I was holding the bean bag, I said I wanted to go back to the beginning of humanity to see all of those exotic creatures they talked about" (Form time student, South Bank University Academy)
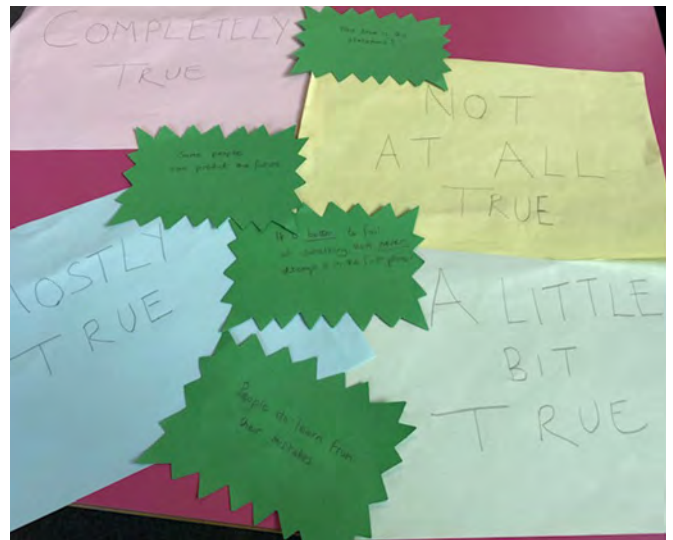
Workshop materials created by Project Associate, Sheryl Malcolm for form time activities. Photography by Sheryl Malcolm

As Hall and Thomson (2017) point out, artists curate playful learning spaces to ensure classrooms are 'social and sociable places'. Similarly, students articulated the importance of enjoyment and playfulness 'in' and 'through' learning.

> "I thought like most of time it was really fun cos, like sometimes instead of doing questions, you'd come and you'd do a quiz, which made it more fun to learn" (History student, Dunraven school)

Some students described how INNOVATE provided them with a different means of learning that encouraged deeper thinking and fed their imaginations.

> "I really liked drawing and sometimes performing, I guess. It helped you to imagine what life was like in the period of time we were actually covering. So, it helped you like, think about it more" (History student, Dunraven).

Other students emphasised the role of play in building empathetic links and understanding the perspectives of others. While other students recognised the broader pedagogical significance of playing games:

> "It [the bean bag game] opens your perspective, you can almost feel what other people are feeling. Like if somebody says something, you can actually ask them why they've said something, instead of just saying, 'Ok' and moving on" (Form time student, South Bank University Academy).

> "You play games to have fun, but also to find out stuff. Like, they're not just games; you use what you do in games in real life situations, like debating and that kind of thing" (Form time student, South Bank University Academy).
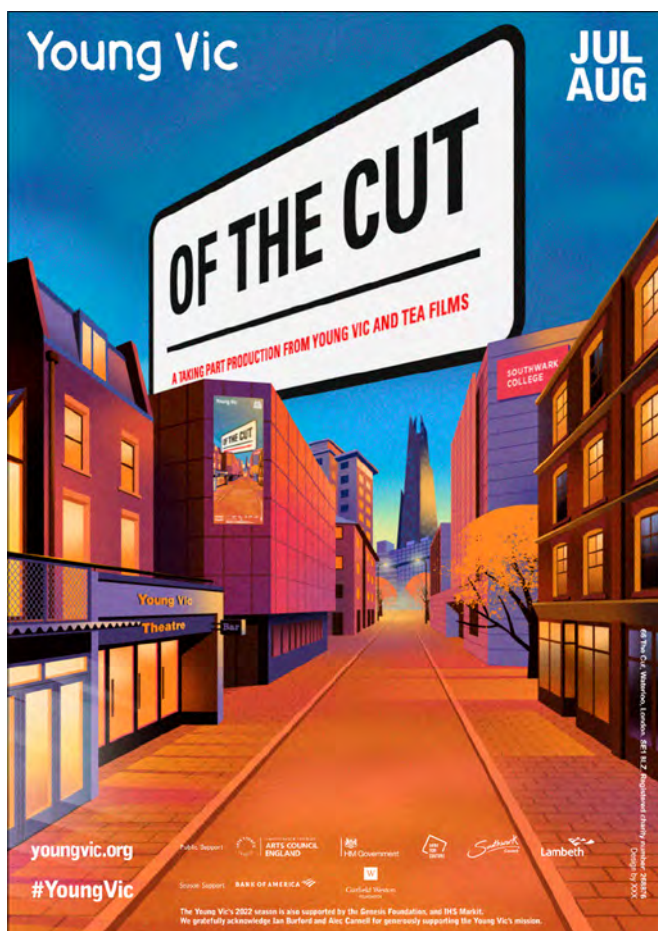
Production poster: Of The Cut, A Taking Part production from Young Vic and TEA films. Written by Yasmin Joseph and the Company. Directed by Philip J Morris. Artwork design by Michael Stonelake. Of The Cut was a multistrand project open to INNOVATE schools.

CASE STUDY:
Arts and creativity as a vehicle for change

Focus on: *Inclusion Hub*

The Inclusion Department at South Bank University Academy offers an alternative space within the mainstream school where students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and / or issues with behaviour, can receive additional targeted support. This includes support with communication and interaction, cognition and learning and social and emotional learning[29].

The Inclusion Hub project began in the summer term, 2022, and was delivered as part of INNOVATE activities in SBUA. The project focused on eight students[30], who were selected by the school SENCO. These students were on the school's SEN register and, according to the school SENCO, had been 'really struggling' to engage with lessons at the time their involvement in the project was proposed. The plan had been to work with the young people to develop strategies that could be applied and keep them in mainstream lessons.

An all-male group[31], students started the project as Year 7s, moving to Year 8 in the project's second and final year. Project Associates worked with the group on a fortnightly[32] basis, creating a model of self-directed learning that followed the young people's interests, skills and motivations.

In practice, this involved work on two smaller projects: one centred on basketball and the other, cooking. It had been determined early on in the basketball project that the students were passionate about basketball. Lead artist, Amy Robinson's approach had been to take each student for one to ones, supported by a member of staff from the Inclusion Hub. During one to one work, young people were asked to take Amy to a place in the school 'they loved', and all had chosen the school's basketball court. Amy then set about exploring activities with the group that could tap into this enthusiasm. The young people had gravitated towards the idea of a project that could showcase their talent and skills in basketball. Ideas were developed within a supportive framework and culminated in a curated film, featuring and made by the students themselves.

In a similar way to the basketball project, the cooking project was developed on the back of students' suggestions. Amy guided the young people towards sharing their ideas, opinions and feelings. She carefully curated the activities and workshop space to invite conversations in which students shared things they cared about and were important to them. One of the young people said that they enjoyed cooking, which immediately sparked the interest of others in the group. Information was shared about what the young people cooked at home and how good they were at cooking, with one student expressing disappointment that food technology was not offered at the secondary school. A weekly reflection recorded by Amy gives a sense of the creative energies generated through discussion and how students' involvement in the basketball project afforded new learning:

> The group were very animated about everything they wanted to cook and make, lots of ideas about filming the recipes and sharing it with the staff. It was lovely to see them so engaged and planning how we could use the time. Having the basketball project as a reference was useful as they struggled to understand how we needed to plan ahead and use the weeks; this time they were suggesting a basic timeline we could use.

Over the course of the project, students were engaged and supported to come up with different recipes which they as a team were responsible for researching and cooking. Artists Sheryl and Jordana facilitated some workshops. Each brought their own unique approach to working with the young people, drawing on strategies that gave opportunities for person-centred learning and co-design. Prepared dishes included mug cakes, pancakes, creamy pasta and tomato, a fried chicken dish, and fruit smoothies.

At the heart of the design of the Inclusion Hub project was the understanding that young people have input and control of what and how they learn. YVTP had emphasised the need to move away from the donor-recipient model of learning, where students experience education that is done 'to them' rather than 'with them'. Instead, collaboration was central to the work with the young people. This imperative was not lost on the students, as one explained, describing what he enjoyed most about the cooking project:

> "I liked that we got to discuss what we were gonna cook and what ingredients we were gonna use to cook it…Also, we got education from it as well cos it's showing you how long you need to cook stuff for and like how to use it [cooking thermometer]" (Student).

Both the cooking and basketball projects supported young people's involvement in decision making and encouraged new learning. For example, with the cooking project, young people were supported to change the quantities of ingredients in recipes and work out cooking times using maths (i.e., multiplication and fractions). Similarly with the basketball project, young people set their own agendas for learning, researching basketball techniques, curating the film, (including sourcing the music), and in the filming itself.

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29   SBUA SEND Policy (2022): **https://www.southbankua.org.uk/our-policies/**

30   This was the total number of young people involved in the project from 2022-2023. Two students were lost to permanent Exclusion.

31   Although students were not asked to formally identify in terms of their gender or ethnic backgrounds, one of the young people could be described as 'white' and all others were of 'black' Afro Caribbean backgrounds.

32   While the project operated on a fortnightly basis to accommodate the school's A/B timetable, there were weekly workshops towards the end of the project.

There was evidence that the young people appreciated this way of working, with one student suggesting that a similar approach to researching topics could be adopted within the mainstream school: "So, like in science, we could research an experiment and then have the opportunity to do it in class".

The way in which artists Amy, Sheryl and Jordana approached engaging the young people modelled how relationships can be formed. They used subtle, nonobtrusive strategies to connect with the young people and help build rapport. A popular break-the-ice activity employed in the sessions was 'Rose and Thorn'. This involved the group sharing a 'rose', a positive highlight, and 'thorn', a challenge they'd encountered that day. When students were asked what difference the Inclusion Hub project was making, they cited the fact that the rose and thorn activity had encouraged the building of positive relationships and understanding. Before the project, they would see students from the group around the school, but would not have spoken to them. They said they now felt as a group they had made 'good friends'.

Exchanges in the space also revealed how the mainstream school could be experienced as alienating and stressful. The young people said that they did not enjoy school and found classrooms a challenging space to be in. Geographer Gill Valentine[33] has shown how teenagers' identities are produced, not only by social categories like age or gender, but the limited, often hidden spaces in a school where they can negotiate their identities. The Inclusion Hub offered a break from the norms, rules and often pressurised environment of classrooms. It was a space where young people's involvement was both valued and needed and where students' behaviour was not a defining feature.

Interviews with artists indicated that being flexible was a key part of their evolution through sessions with the young people. Student absence and timetabling clashes sometimes required a reorientation of artists' ideas. Back up plans included a string of contingency games. But the loss of two students to exclusion was experienced as difficult for all of the group.

At a day set aside for artist training, artists talked about the environment they hoped to have created within the Inclusion Hub: one which broke with school conventions and redefined the relationship between students and professionals. This was achieved by the artists getting involved in activities with the young people; playing games with them and cooking with them, while giving students the space to make their own valuable contributions.

The significance was that the Inclusion Hub, regardless of where it happened in the school, fostered an atmosphere of care, respect and leadership. It had also been a vehicle for changing how young people experienced school – a space in which having a say in what and how they learned was actively promoted.

In practical terms, this was achieved through a number of factors:

• Activities were grounded in young people's interests.
• Perceived neutrality of artists – students characterised artists as different from their teachers in school, describing them as able to 'match their energy', 'joyful' and 'always happy' in sessions.
• Tolerance - Artists sometimes had to necessarily overlook some behaviours that would not have been tolerated in the mainstream school (for instance, the young people cursed regularly, sometimes without realising it). Artists always called out behaviour that breached the group's ground rules of care and respect.

33   Valentine, G (2000) Exploring children and young people's narratives of identity, Geoforum, Vol 31, p257-67

CASE STUDY:
Increased and embedded collaboration leading to cultural shifts

Focus on: Improv Champions

Improv Champions was developed as part of the roll out of INNOVATE activities in Dunraven School. Starting in the Autumn term of 2021, the initiative focused on Year 7 students that had transitioned from primary to the secondary school during the pandemic. As a year group, the students had struggled with the return to in-classroom teaching, and it had become clear that they would benefit from strategies that promoted a positive sense of self and approach to learning. Artist Joe Prestwich, and a teacher collaborator, introduced improvisational activities to form times to engender a spirit of play, exploration and experimentation. In particular, the work aimed to:

• Develop peer to peer relationships and empathy;

• Enable students to feel they can make mistakes;

• Increase confidence and self-esteem.

Improv Champions is an example of how successful collaboration between artists and schools is reliant on creating the right conditions for collaboration. As the case study demonstrates, this can foster positive relationships between artists and teachers, which become an embedded part of school life and over time, change school culture. Improv Champions also highlights the benefits of artists being responsive to context and responding to opportunities as they occur.

A flexible and responsive approach

In the beginning, Joe and the teacher planned to create slide resources that would detail different improvisation scenarios and games to be used in the context of form time. The plan was for the artist and teacher to meet every Friday (Joe's 'INNOVATE day') to discuss the format of sessions; however, logistically this proved challenging, as

the artist explained:

> "What would happen is that, as you know in a school environment, I would arrive to meet [the teacher] and there would be a problem that had just come up that she needs to go and solve, so it would mean we would only have ten minutes for a discussion rather than half an hour".

For Joe, 'time constraints and unpredictability' meant that the one-day INNOVATE model proved difficult for him and didn't work for the teacher. Being local to the school, the artist found it easier to spread his time over several d ays where he would come into school for a few hours. The teacher was clear that this had meant, "so much more [could] be achieved" in the project. She indicated that the artist's flexible and responsive approach helped with initial implementation of the project by facilitating opportunities to:

• **Establish a productive relationship**, based on mutual respect, partnership and shared goals. The artist felt that being in school on a frequent and flexible basis allowed him to better respond to the teacher's needs. Observation revealed that over time, the relationship of trust forged, created a spirit of experimentation and willingness to 'try new things'. This was seen when, for example, Joe was invited to run improvisational activities with Yr 7 – Yr 9 students as part of the school's 'Activities Week'.

• **Schedule work involving other INNOVATE teachers**. Because the artist was able to come into school several days per week, this freed up time to work with other subject teachers. Additionally, as Joe was local to the school, he was also able to come in at short notice (for example, when plans changed or there was a clash with teachers' timetables).

Creative mask making with Project Associate, Lerato Islam, as part of the school's English and Drama departments collaboration on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Photography by Lerato Islam

Form time improv

Christine Hall and Pat Thomson (2017) propose that classrooms become 'narrative-rich environments' when there is a willingness to (amongst other things) 'improvise' and use 'dramatic tools'. They suggest that such environments feed young people's imaginations and encourage spontaneity. This sense of spontaneous learning was part of the students' experiences of doing form time improvisation, which seemed to encourage an openness to expanding comfort zones.

> "When we had the Thursdays outside it was fun because we kind of let loose; like at school, everything is sort of serious but with improv you kind of let loose and could be as ludicrous as you want". (Form time student)

Hall and Thomson (2017) write about the importance of having opportunities to, as the student put it, 'let loose', and how – by having the freedom to just be - they set up productive atmospheres for learning. In a similar way, students felt that form time improv livened up school mornings and set a positive tone for the rest of the day:

> "I think that the acting and the scenarios was especially fun…, cause in the morning it's like twenty minutes of acting out these silly scenarios, which is like so fun"! (Form time student)

Improv Champions

Encouraged by the success of form time improvisation, Joe and the teacher suggested students take on a more central role as 'Improv Champions', delivering form time improv themselves using 'demonstration videos' they would also feature in.

An example of an improv activity utilised in classrooms grew out of a collaboration between the school's English and drama departments. This was based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Taking the play as inspiration, students were asked to use improvisation to explore the characterisation of selfish and self-centred characters in the play. Filming for this took place in the school's courtyard.

Fieldnotes on the activity observed students 'diving' into the improvisations with very little planning. One character a student constructs is brash, confident and strikingly amoral. Clearly corresponding with the brief, the student uses the scenario to show off her acrobatic skills, proceeding to do back flips across the courtyard, much to the amazement of her peers. Later, in interview, the student shared her passion for gymnastics, and said she was glad she was able to demonstrate her talent in the improvisation. This corresponds with Hall and Thomson's (2017) assertion that the process of crafting stories in classrooms is enriched when derived from students' own experiences (p.104).

Taking the text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and breaking it into small doable parts through improvisation, seemed to build student's confidence and create an environment in which they were less self-conscious and therefore freer to make art without fear of 'making mistakes'. A focus group with the students makes clear the impact of being an Improv Champion has had on them. Examples included:

- **Building confidence, Loosing inhibitions**
  "I think it's made me less embarrassed to do stuff cause like when we started making the videos and like everyone was like, 'Oh my God, I saw you do it'… and like after a while you just stop caring… And like talking to the [new] Year 7s, it's a bit weird [at first] but after a while you don't care so much because you have more confidence".

- **Voice, Skills building, Motivation to pursue creative ambitions**
  "When I first started doing this project it got me more into drama than like I was and then I kind of pushed myself into getting involved with a show the school did…. It kind of like increased my drama skills and gave me the self-esteem to speak up".

- **Peer working, Empathy, Relationships**
  "Going to the [new] Year 7s, they sort of looked up to you, which was really nice. One of the tutor groups we went into; at first, they really didn't like us coming in and then when we came up with the idea of giving sweets as prizes everyone loved us coming in! …Even though we bribed them with sweets it was still nice that they looked up to us".

Legacy

Following the success of Improv Champions, the artist and teacher committed to developing a whole school approach to improvisation. Plans were being developed to roll out the scheme of work to the wider school (Year 7s through to Year 11s). The research explored the conditions that led to the artist becoming fully embedded in the school and sustainable change in school culture. Key facilitators to this were:

The artist being local, enabled the artist to be in school on a frequent and flexible basis, which in turn enabled them to build strong and trusting relationships with students and teachers. Over time, the sense of trust and connections that had been forged allowed the artist to be considered an 'insider', which smoothed the way for work in the wider school.

The artist being responsive to context, which required flexibility, versatility and adaptability in responding to opportunities as they occurred.

Open dialogue between the artist and teacher, with respect to the direction of the work and decision making.

The artist's positionality as an 'insider' - attuned to teachers and schools' needs, and 'outsider' - creative expert with capacity to make things happen. This was also important in terms of bringing different collaborators together, as in the case of work towards *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* which also involved the school's drama and English departments.

4. Concluding reflections

"INNOVATE gave teachers the opportunity to step back and look at their practice through the eyes of an expert in a different field. This brought new perspectives, new ideas and the opportunity to create together. Teachers know that engagement and active participation is an important part of learning and now they have developed their arsenal for making it happen in their lessons" [School Lead].

INNOVATE was inspired by a vision of how the arts can make a difference to education. At its core has been an exploration of possibilities - of what happens when artists, teachers and students work together to explore the potential of creative learning pedagogy. INNOVATE has initiated new ways of working informed by arts approaches. It has expanded opportunities to learn, play, and build individual agency through creative pedagogies. The research has revealed the rich learning environments created through artists and teacher's collaborations, signalling the capacity of INNOVATE to make a difference to schools and education.

This report has presented key learning from the two years of INNOVATE delivery. It has drawn on data collected from teachers and artists who participated in interviews as well as focus groups with students and observational work. As an exploratory project, the research has been interested in grounded experiences of how INNOVATE was implemented in schools, seeking to understand from teachers, students and artist's perspectives, the potential impact of the programme. Findings have highlighted both the successes and challenges of INNOVATE, indicating learning for the legacy of the programme going forward.

In many ways, post lock-down provided a readymade platform for INNOVATE in schools, but it also created challenges in relation to school readiness. Schools reported issues they were dealing with post pandemic (lost learning, staff attrition, impacts to well-being and mental health), suggesting the value of INNOVATE to ameliorate such issues. Yet, schools with some understandable concerns about how to fit INNOVATE into existing plans and timetables in a way that benefitted their students and not have counter-productive consequences, were not always ready. As David Parker points out in relation to the role of Bridge organisation's work with schools, "[schools] work in line with national policy [and]… have ongoing responsibilities for ensuring children meet mandated curriculum outcomes. This necessarily defines and limits what they can do…"[34]. Since the introduction of Progress 8, schools have also faced increasing accountability, which as many commentators[35] have asserted, ensures what is measured is prioritised. In the context of INNOVATE, this sometimes meant that teachers were hesitant to engage with the programme if the creative content of lessons was less easily adapted to meet curriculum needs and priorities.

Teacher workloads has been found in other research[36] to limit the amount of time teachers are able to commit to external programmes, and this was a key issue for schools involved in INNOVATE. Time or as was often the case, the absence of it, limited the ability of schools to engage with the programme. Schools were more successfully engaged when there was support from senior leaders who protected teacher's time.

Being well prepared to deliver INNOVATE went some way to mitigating challenges, and there was good evidence of a commitment to preparing the ground, with a number of successful approaches adopted by YVTP. Orientation meetings and listening days, for example, were approached in a spirit of collaboration, and this combination supported by artists' energies and sensitivity of approach ensured schools were engaged on their own terms. The opportunity for YVTP to develop in terms of the consistency of approach to preparation has been highlighted, and school partners have an equal role to play in encouraging and supporting preparation.

The research had a particular focus on programme success, of what this looked like, for whom and how INNOVATE achieved success. It has also been important to consider whether or not success for the programme equated with schools' expectations for success. This distinction is important, as schools sometimes articulated priorities for impact that were geared towards student outcomes. While the process of involvement in INNOVATE revealed clear benefits for young people (i.e., sense of agency, increased voice, the ability to empathise, lead and have ideas that are carried through), it will be some time before impacts linked to outcomes such as academic attainment become measurable.

In many ways, the real success of INNOVATE has been its ability to bring artists, students, and teachers together - the relationships it has forged, and this has required some analysis of the 'how'. It was important that artists took time to establish a rapport with teachers and students to build trusting relationships in schools. This was sometimes facilitated by artists' 'insider / outsider' positionalities but also their creative and emotional intelligence. The length of time needed to establish personal relationships was also acknowledged as was the need for artists to be properly embedded in schools, not just 'visibly' present, but having a permanent base. Having a base in schools was key in allowing teachers and artists to develop ways of working and shared goals. It also allowed artists to make the most of opportunistic moments.

The collective achievements of INNOVATE, as a vehicle for changing students' attitudes to learning; supporting cultural shifts which led to school change; mobilising playful pedagogies that assisted reflexive learning; making visible distinctions between theatre cultures and school cultures; and engaging schools through its civic role, speak to the relational aspects of the programme.

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34   Parker, D (2023) The Bridge Network (2012-2023) Reflections on Strategic Work with Children and Young People in Education, Culture and the Arts, funded by Arts Council England.

35   See, for example: **https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/asset/7712/download?1679991820**

36   See: **https://www.creativescotland.com/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/93444/Arts-in-Education-Final-Report-December-2022.pdf**

In this way, the particular place-based approach taken created further opportunities for relational working through partnerships which engaged schools where they were. Schools have benefited from working in this way and YVTP were instrumental in connecting schools with local cultural organisations and youth and mentoring provision.

A central question underpinning the research has been what needs to be in place to create the conditions for success. And while no single formular was identified, this question has really been about what artists, and as such a creative approach, bring to educational contexts. The hallmark of artists' work in INNOVATE – whether modelling creativity as 'play, chaos and disorder', or working in ways which recognised student's agency in and through learning – is perhaps best understood as *how* artists' teach and *what* might be learned (Thomson et al, 2012). In attempting to identify artists' distinctive pedagogies, it has not been the intention to set up a dichotomy between artists and teachers. Rather, it has been to set up a dialogue about what approaches might be valuable to schools. In this regard the legacy and learning of INNOVATE has much to offer.

In the executive summary to the Arts in Schools report[37], Pauline Tambling and Sally Bacon write about 'brave teachers', who, in the absence of a 'universal entitlement' to the arts in schools, must step up to provide a 'rich and ambitious' arts curriculum. In much the same vein, the story of INNOVATE could not have been told without the bravery of teachers, who, resolute in their approach, took leaps of faith to try new things and make it possible.

> "For [INNOVATE] to happen in our school, it's been based on staff buying in. So, it's been their spare time. They haven't been given any extra free periods, any days off or anything. So, we were lucky that we were able to get that buy-in and staff have driven it through" (Senior Leader).

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37   Tambling, B and Bacon, S (2023) The Arts in Schools: Foundations for the Future: **https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/asset/7712/download?1679991820**

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations emerge from the achievements, challenges and possibilities presented by INNOVATE. They offer insights from what has been learned from the programme to inform its further development as well as the design and delivery of other arts education programmes.

For cultural organisations designing and / or delivering arts education programmes

- **The challenges of collaborative programming should not be underestimated**. Experiences in INNOVATE have shown that schools and cultural organisations can work productively together and how new ideas are sparked through the process of bringing together partners from different backgrounds. However, schools and cultural organisations operate quite differently. Developing a shared strategy to manage expectations about ways of working is important and this should be managed from the start.

- **Ensure there is understanding of which impacts are most valued and relevant to schools**. INNOVATE artists worked in schools to a clear educational benefit. Yet, school partners may have different priorities for impact. It is important for cultural organisations and schools to have a shared sense of impacts, and for these to be co-defined and revisited throughout the life of a programme.

- **Artists recruited to work on cultural education projects benefit from having broad knowledge and experience of work in schools.** INNOVATE artists with prior knowledge and experience of work in schools were able to navigate school cultures and processes more successfully. They were also able to clearly connect the INNOVATE offer with schools' curriculums.

- **Factor in additional time for artists to build relationships with schools and teachers**. Strong relationships underpinned successful collaboration in INNOVATE. Future programmes might consider contingency planning that affords additional time for relationship building.

- **Where possible, spread artists' work in schools over several days.** An 'hours approach' was adopted for INNOVATE, with each artist being contracted to work 4-6 hours per week. Artists who were able to spread their work in schools over several days, was found to be beneficial to schools and the effective delivery of INNOVATE. However, it is recognised that this will not always be appropriate for individual and / or freelance artists.

For consideration by the Young Vic:

- The nature of collaborative programmes can shift as parameters for engagement change over the course of their lifespans. However, in the case of INNOVATE, unforeseen and internal challenges faced by one school affected the programme's coherence and ongoing engagement. It is worth considering how cultural organisations can plan to support schools throughout the longevity of programmes and help them anticipate challenges and solutions.

- Opportunities for reflection on the research – achievements and challenges - has been beneficial. Future research would benefit from starting at the same time as programmes and factoring in longitudinal tracking of students and schools.

For consideration by schools seeking involvement in arts education programmes:

- Prioritise recruiting teachers into programmes before the start of the new academic year and ensure their involvement at the earliest possible stage, clarifying the purpose of the programme from the outset.

- Artists who have residencies in schools have been described as 'transitory change makers',[38] as they can offer something different from the norm. Consider providing a permanent base for artists during their residency. In the context of INNOVATE, this enabled artists to feel valued and part of the picture in schools. Artists were also more confident about instigating change relevant to the curriculum which schools ultimately benefited from.

- Positive collaboration between teachers and artists created rich environments for learning. Support teachers to feel more confident about taking risks in the classroom (through, for instance, artist-led shadowing opportunities).

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38   Parker, D (2023: p43) The Bridge Network (2012-2023) Reflections on Strategic Work with Children and Young People in Education, Culture and the Arts, funded by Arts Council England

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Appendix A

Project Associates and Visiting Associates

Projects Associates

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Appendix B

Advisory Panel

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Dr Vicky Storey

Kay Rufai

Dr Javeria K. Shah

Darren Chetty

Appendix C

INNOVATE Team

Taking Part

Director of Taking Part, Shereen Jasmin Phillips

Participation Producer, Aaliyah Antoine

Neighbourhood Theatre Producer, Alisha Artry

Learning Producer, Melanie Anouf

Taking Part Administrator, Michelle Cullimore

INNOVATE Lead Contact, Dunraven School

Assistant Head, Secondary, Nicholas Hargreaves

**INNOVATE Lead Contact,
South Bank University Academy**

Principal, Annette Moses

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Research lead, Professor Helen Nicholson