

Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

**Art
Works** | Developing
Practice in
Participatory
Settings

**ArtWorks: Understanding demand –
building effective relationships between
employers and artists**

Working Paper 9

Eleanor Sellers
October 2014

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Preface

ArtWorks: Developing Practice in Participatory Settings is a Special Initiative of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation established in 2011 and continuing to Spring 2015. It is a workforce development scheme that seeks to meet the needs of artists at different stages in their careers – from the aspiring young artist embarking on training, to experienced practitioners who wish to progress their output. It is seeking to build on good practice to enhance the existing development infrastructure.

The overall aim of ArtWorks is:

To support the initial training and continuing professional development of artists working in participatory settings. This will enhance the quality of people's engagement in arts-led activity and the arts, and create a more professional and confident sector whose work is valued and seen as important.

Key objectives

- To support partnership working and pathfinder projects to develop, pilot and embed training and continuing professional development opportunities for artists working in participatory settings at all stages in their careers and develop the support infrastructure;

- To develop a better understanding of what constitutes quality in the work through sharing good practice across art forms and demonstrating positive outcomes for participants engaged in arts-led activity and the arts;
- To gather, document and disseminate compelling evidence of positive impact as part of a wider strategy to achieve significant shifts, nationwide, through the facilitation of shared thinking across agencies and settings about workforce development issues for artists working in participatory settings.

Within the programmes of work undertaken by the five pathfinder partnerships, a large body of learning has accrued over the programme to date and we have commissioned a series of Working Papers that seek to crystallise the learning.

This learning has been gained and reported in different ways that can be defined as follows:

- Those that have involved the pathfinder partnerships reflecting upon what they know
- Those that have combined models (like peer mentoring, Action Learning Sets) which are meant to have an outcome in their own right, and tweaked the design and used the output from those models to elucidate research questions
- Those that have undertaken (with a range of approaches) straightforward research, expressed as such to those subjects who are contributing to it, framed formally by research questions, with data collection, analysis and synthesis in a typical format.

The ArtWorks website contains links to all of the material published to date.

The purpose of this suite of Working Papers is to assimilate and summarise this learning and extrapolate key messages so that the learning can inform not only the ArtWorks programme, but also the wider community of practice with an interest in this work.

Further reports supplement these papers and elucidate our work in different ways. These include the *ArtWorks Evaluation Survey of Artists* (dha, 2014) *Interim Evaluation Report* (dha & the Institute for Cultural Practices, 2012) and the first Working Paper which provided an overview, *ArtWorks: learning from the research* (Kay, 2012).

This Working Paper is the ninth in the series. It focuses on ArtWorks research and activity taking place across the programme that explores the 'demand side of the equation' and the complex ecology of participatory arts in the UK.

The relevant documentation can be grouped into five areas:

- Audit and baseline data reports (e.g. Consilium, 2012; dha, 2014; Lowe, 2011; Sellers, 2012a-e)
- Research and reports covering conversations and labs between employers and artists (e.g. Dean, 2013a, b; Johnstone et al., 2012; Trinity Laban, 2014)
- Commissioned case studies (e.g. Davies, 2013)
- Other related literature (e.g. Johnson, 2014a, b)

This paper consequently draws together a wide body of knowledge that has been published throughout the ArtWorks programme, as well as drawing from reports beyond the scope of ArtWorks.

Contents

- 1 Context**
- 2 Introduction**
- 3 Learning to date**
- 4 Conclusions and recommendations**
- 5 References**

1 Context

ArtWorks arose from a concern that the field of 'participatory arts' had expanded over several years but that training, education and professional development for artists had not kept pace. It was believed that this led to variable experiences for participants, as well as for artists and their employers or commissioners. Consequently, ArtWorks developed as a workforce development scheme following research undertaken by Susanne Burns in 2010. This research evidenced that the work which grew out of community arts practice in the 60s, and which is now more commonly described as 'participatory', has evolved over time and has had a:

... profound effect on the arts establishment through the development of infrastructure and the growing professionalism of the field...artists across all art forms are now engaging in a diverse range of practices and we can see an emerging body of practice in individual art forms that has now created a burgeoning sector of work for artists who wish to engage with people (Burns, 2010:7).

The report concludes that:

...context is creating greater demand for artists to work in participatory settings...and it is arguable that artists are in greater demand than ever before to make interventions in both formal and informal settings... Artists are being asked to work in a hugely diverse range of participatory settings...and are now playing an integral role in the learning experiences of people across the whole age spectrum (ibid: 26).

Through the ArtWorks programme, Paul Hamlyn Foundation aims to enhance the quality of people's engagement in arts-led activity and create a more professional and confident sector whose work is valued and seen as important. For it is through understanding, applying and disseminating the views of artists, their commissioners, employers and the participants who work with them, that the experiences of both artists and participants will become consistently mutually beneficial.

2 Introduction

This paper focuses on a body of ArtWorks commissioned research into the needs of employers and commissioners, and reflects on their aims, expectations and requirements from the artistic workforce.

This group includes a wide range of organisations, both within and outside the arts, who engage artists to work in participatory settings, whether this is on a partnership, employed or freelance basis.

There have been significant changes within the field of participatory arts in recent years, as the economic climate, austerity agenda, public sector spending cuts and subsequent funding cuts have impacted upon employment opportunities for artists, leading to a changing employment landscape and ecology (Burns and Cox, 2014: 5; Pheby, 2012: 2-3).

In addition, growing pressure from funders and commissioners to generate value for money has altered employment opportunities, and artists often feel that they are expected to deliver more during the lifetime of a participatory arts project:

Pressures from local government to demonstrate value for money and the impact of funded arts programmes were said to have increased...The difficulty of balancing these demands whilst maintaining quality artwork and integrity of practice was discussed.. (Tuck and O'Donnell, 2013: 6).

'Commissioners are expecting a lot more from the contact time...things like induction, meetings and training are most often unpaid for' (Salamon, in Johnstone et al., 2013: 21).

...there is a tendency towards expectation 'creep'...there are rarely further funds/resources/time to address these expectations which means artists end up doing more for less (ibid: 21).

Individuals working in participatory settings are commonly working as freelance, portfolio artists who are proactive in seeking and creating employment opportunities (Burns and Cox, op.cit: 13). The nature of portfolio artists, and the changing needs and expectations of employers, makes it a challenge for ArtWorks to understand the current employment landscape. However, market intelligence is vital for developing confidence within the sector and for artists' employment success. The ArtWorks programme has gone some way to address this need by not only investigating the needs and expectations of artists working in participatory settings but also assessing the expectations and needs of employers and commissioners working in the sector.

This synthesis of the learning from the ArtWorks programme is therefore timely as it will hopefully contribute to discussions between different stakeholders.

Each of the pathfinders has taken a different approach when researching the role of commissioners and employers which has led to a number of baseline data reports supported by in depth case studies. Research has also been undertaken to investigate the perspectives of employers and artists: this reveals where employers and artists think similarly and where there is a divergence of approach and aims (ArtWorks Scotland, 2013).

Whilst all the pathfinders in the ArtWorks initiative have undertaken research into the role of employers and commissioners, there remain limitations with the research. Firstly, few of the research reports distinguish between the different types of employers or commissioners, which hinders in depth analysis of the current employment ecology. Secondly, employers and commissioners can be hard to reach groups and, as a result, many of the reports utilise small scale samples which

provide only a small snapshot into employer attitudes (Sellers, 2012c,d; Johnstone et al., op.cit.). Research undertaken by ArtWorks Navigator and dha utilises findings from larger samples: 927 people (including employers, commissioners and artists) responded to Navigator's survey (Salamon in Johnstone et al., op.cit: 12), whilst 868 completed the dha survey of artists (dha, 2014b). The larger scale studies support the findings from small scale, in depth, questioning undertaken by the other pathfinder projects (Deane, Leatherdale in Johnstone et al., op.cit.).

By developing an understanding of the needs of artists and their employers, the ArtWorks initiative aims to support a more confident workforce where all stakeholders are more articulate about the role and value of participatory arts, more comfortable about discussing their roles and better able to develop clear aims and objectives. By supporting artist development, and developing a shared understanding between artists, employers and commissioners, a stronger sector will develop as all stakeholders will feel able to advocate the importance of participatory arts (Johnstone in *ibid*: 7). A more confident and articulate workforce will also develop positive working relationships and high quality experiences for participants.

...a clearer understanding between artists and hirers is vital in avoiding/ minimising poor working relationships that could reduce employment prospects, as well as ensuring a high quality experience for participants (Salamon in *ibid*: 11).

...a key factor in improving quality is increasing understanding about what the arts and artists can offer and how the role of the artist differs from others working in the community... (Johnstone in *ibid*: 9).

Not only would this raise the profile of participatory arts as a sector but also employers would be in a position to explain more clearly what they need from artists. This could support artists to make decisions to enhance their own employability, through their reflection on the skills and experience that employers expect them to develop throughout their careers.

3 Learning to date

Artists are working in ‘a hugely diverse range of participatory settings’ (Burns, op.cit: 26). They report they regularly work in education as well as in community/ neighbourhood contexts (ArtWorks Scotland, op. cit.; dha, 2014b; Lowe, 2012). This varying nature of the work leads to a complex variety of stakeholders including funders, teachers, carers and staff, all with different agendas (Pheby, 2012: 7). Agendas can range from ‘longer term collaborative engagement’ to ‘an educational outcome or social improvement of some kind’ and it is important that the range of aims is recognised as part of the unique nature of participatory work (Salamon in Johnstone et al, op.cit: 11).

3.1 What do we mean by employers and commissioners?

While ArtWorks recognise the wide range of employers and commissioners, little of the research makes a distinction between the different types of employing or commissioning groups. For clarity and simplicity, these groups can be divided into three main types:

- the ‘creating organisations’
- the ‘buying organisations’
- the ‘artist commissioner’

3.1.1 Creating organisations

‘Creating organisations’ are national or regional arts organisations which develop participatory arts projects across art forms as an integral part of their mission and remit. They differ widely in levels of experience and expertise with which to support artists (Deane, 2013: 5).

47% of organisations [in Wales] have over 20 years' experience in delivering participative work. The data suggests that there is a long history of delivering participative projects in Wales (Sellers, 2012d: 2).

Employers needed to have a good understanding of the artist's role within an organisation/project (Salamon in Johnstone, op.cit: 20).

Smaller and less experienced organisations find hiring more difficult than larger, more experienced ones – who typically have more contacts... (Deane in *ibid*: 112)

A case study from Literature Wales gives an example of how one national organisation delivers participatory work:

Literature Wales is now a recognised national company to develop, to deliver literary activities across the whole of Wales... [We] offer...opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to engage with professional authors and experience creative writing in all forms... there's 25 staff working for the organisation, a lot of us may have used, or had contact with, the variety of different authors (Sellers, 2012a: 1, 2).

These 'creating organisations' usually have dedicated staff and/or project managers to support the development of successful participatory arts projects for participants, artists and 'buyers'. They also have an impact on artist recruitment.

'[The project manager was keen and focused on the project]...She agreed that she would do all the administration so I could just focus on the work. We can really talk honestly...she supports me...values me as an artist...she sees me as a person rather than a tick box' (Wilmot, 2014: 6).

Despite the impact that project managers have on projects, and artists, their role within the sector has only recently been investigated by ArtWorks (*ibid*; Sheen, 2014):

[Project Managers'] position as a 'broker', 'middleman' and 'supportive champion' means they are often required to manage a range of complex situations of which they have no formal training (ibid:11).

Not only do project managers play a vital role in supporting, and balancing, complex stakeholder aims but they are also seen as providing vital support for the artists involved in their project. Both artists and project managers in the ArtWorks research responded that supportive and trusting relationships were vital:

Clearly roles need to be defined to satisfy both sides but it appears that the best working relationships also require trust, respect and creative space that go beyond a purely functioning working arrangement (ibid: 7).

Despite the importance of developing excellent relationships, some project managers 'felt unable to highlight negative aspects of the artist's practice if they were unable to offer CPD' and would opt simply not to employ individual artists in the future (Wilmot, op.cit:17). Project managers involved in the research found the discussions to be a valuable learning tool.

The sector would benefit from the development of frameworks and tools enabling project managers and artists to provide feedback on projects, and thus support the development of the workforce. Within the ArtWorks research, artists have frequently cited a need to educate employers and commissioners (Johnstone in Johnstone et al, op.cit: 6) and a tool such as this could provide valuable learning and support for those working within organisations:

'Finding out about how an artist works and what they would like from me would now be important steps for me: I wouldn't make so many assumptions' (Sheen, op.cit: 6).

'I found the session so helpful – much more than most training I've been on. Really useful activities to reflect on own practice, hear from other organisations and apply conversations to own contexts' (ibid: 8).

Developing the skills of project managers within organisations would not only support the development of a confident workforce, but also help prevent feelings of neglect and a lack of appreciation that project managers frequently report (ibid: 7).

3.1.2 Brokering role of 'creating organisations'

In the current financial climate, project managers and organisations not only could support the development of a confident workforce but also provide a brokering role by 'signposting' artists to opportunities outside of the organisation. Changing policies and structures mean that the brokering role that organisations play has become more important for artists as opportunities for employment are more difficult to source:

From 2012, ACE's National Portfolio Organisations will no longer include public art agencies...from which artists might benefit from openly advertised commission or residency opportunities (Jones, 2011: 6).

Artists/practitioners have found work...in the past through Creative Partnerships (CP) agents although since they closed opportunities have dried up (Pheby, op.cit: 14).

In the current employment landscape it is arguable that artists are more dependent on mediating organisations to provide information, support and secure contracts:

'As a freelance artist [the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art] got me jobs (performing, choreographing and workshops) across the UK' (Johnson, 2014b: 35).

'Can you set up an agency? With promotional material and branding. People need to be seen – it's all evidence based' (Johnson, 2014b: 26).

In the North East, organisations such as Helix Arts and The Forge as well as music consultants provide important brokering roles alongside cultural venues and charitable organisations (Pheby, op.cit: 21).

3.1.3 Buying organisations

'Buying organisations' are often organisations outside of the arts sector such as schools, the National Health Service, Her Majesty's Prison Service and local authorities. These groups may approach organisations in the arts sector or develop arts projects which are then offered out to tender.

'Buying organisations' are characterised by a desire to provide long term impact on their client group, often without extensive contact time (Sellers, 2012b: 2, 5). Vicky Charnock, Arts Co-ordinator at Alderhey Hospital in Liverpool, highlights why organisations outside the arts sector are motivated to utilise and develop participatory arts experiences for their clients:

'The results of participatory arts are immediate in a healthcare setting...you see amazing outcomes, for some patients it can be life changing...We support artists to achieve successful projects but it is what they come with that helps' (Johnson, 2014b: 7-8).

This perspective is supported by other research for participatory arts in healthcare settings:

The reviewed evidence demonstrates the considerable physical and psychological benefits of using arts with people in receipt of social care [and] increased opportunities that the use of the arts provides for social interaction (www.iriss.org.uk/resources/arts-and-social-care)

'Buying organisations' are highly motivated to develop positive experiences for their client group; however, the creation of art is not necessarily the main motivator. There is, therefore, often a perceived lack of understanding about the nature and quality of participatory work (Consilium, 2012: 36).

...inexperienced employers/hirers from non-arts sectors in particular [need to have] understood and valued artists and the arts' role and impact on people in their care, community and society (Salamon in Johnstone et al., op cit: 19).

'I was interviewed by a head teacher...the thing that got me the job was that I was doing the Masters in Education and that I already have my Masters in music. She...saw my desire to do another qualification as a demonstration of my own commitment to learning...' (Leatherdale in *ibid*: 63).

Teachers underestimating what can be achieved and less experienced artists overestimating what can be achieved are common difficulties (Dean, 2013b: 16).

The dha *Survey of Artists* supports the perception that there is a lack of understanding in the sector. Over half of the artists surveyed said that they either 'strongly agreed' or 'tended to agree' that 'employers and commissioners do not always know how to make best use of my expertise and experience' (dha, 2014b: 33). Employers, particularly those outside of the arts sector, require support in understanding the value of participatory arts and the skills of the artists.

There is also a lack of understanding within the arts sector in relation to recruitment and access to employment opportunities. ArtWorks research to date recognises that this is a barrier for artists engaging with 'buying organisations':

It is much more difficult for freelancers to engage with schools and others.

Most of the work goes through established organisations... (Pheby, *op.cit*: 11).

Given the high percentage of freelance artists working in the sector, this is a significant barrier to workforce development, particularly for new or emerging artists. The role of 'brokering organisations' and 'brokering project managers' who inform their artists of additional opportunities outside their organisation are particularly important for artists looking to establish themselves.

'They really look after their musicians – very quickly they become like family. Milapfest have been proactive in recommending me, giving me visibility, professional performance and workshops' (Johnson, 2014b: 32)

It is clear that more research needs to be done with this group of employers, to fully understand their needs. Due to the different primary functions of the commissioners (e.g. education, healthcare etc.), it is also suggested that more could be done to support them in ensuring that they are able to work with participatory artists in a meaningful and beneficial way.

3.1.4 Artist employers

Individual artists can also act as employers in the sector and face a number of challenges when undertaking this role. Artist employers often have fewer resources to utilise when developing projects and employing or contracting other artists. They frequently have to balance their responsibilities as an employer with their desire to develop their own skills. Artist employers feel there is a need for established artists to receive ongoing support in order to develop their practice. Such support needs to be flexible in allowing time and space for busy artists to engage alongside current work commitments.

Ned Glasier, Artistic Director of Islington Community Theatre and ArtWorks London Fellow, highlights some of the issues that he faces as an artist employer:

‘I’ve always found it difficult to balance the role of employer and artist, for lots of reasons. Because being an artist sometimes means neglecting other things – which you can’t really do when you have responsibility for other people in your organisation; because working with people who you employ can sometimes lead to tension (how, for example, do you negotiate a fee with someone who you are about to collaborate with)...I choose the artists we work with for a number of reasons – for their understanding of our company ethos and how likely they are to develop it/move us forward, for their sympathy with the work and their love of young people, for what they’ll bring to an artistic process...

I don’t really know who is responsible for organising training – it’s a hard one. I do think, as a company that builds long term relationships with artists, it is both

responsible and beneficial for us to offer CPD on a regular basis. Funding that is obviously pretty tricky and I think it's important that organisations/initiatives/funders recognise the importance of it' (Sellers, 2012a: 1).

3.2 Employer and commissioner expectations

While understanding the complex ecology of employment is important in understanding the different aims, agendas and expectations of stakeholders, the purpose and intent of the work appear to be more important than employer type in terms of developing aims and objectives in participatory arts. Deane identifies three types of intent and purpose for 'community music', which could be applied to other art forms:

...where the focus was on the music itself (styled here "music first"); where the music was important, but recognised how it would lead to personal, social, or community development ("music+"); where the focus was on personal, social, or community development, with the music as a vehicle to deliver this ("development") (Deane in Johnstone et al., op.cit: 100).

In Arts Council England commissioned evaluation guidance, Woolf (2014: 15) acknowledges that partners will have different aims and objectives, recommending they discuss agendas openly, are willing to compromise and are specific about achievable aims. This need to discuss agendas and expectations is supported by ArtWorks research, from the perspectives of both artists and employers:

Regular meetings which involved the artist, commissioner and relevant others...for the duration of a project served to strengthen partnership working (Salamon in Johnstone et al., op.cit: 13).

Artists found it extremely helpful that the different agendas were discussed and made explicit at the beginning of the project. By making the different agendas explicit artists felt able to make more sense of the project during their own planning (Sellers, 2012e: 4).

Participatory work...engenders divergent expectations of desirable outcomes which are specific to individual project aims... (dha & the Institute for Cultural Practices, op.cit: 19).

It would seem that employers need to be able to explain their needs to artists confidently and articulately, while being open to negotiation and discussion. When commissioners and employers are able to articulate their needs, artists can respond and assess their own skill set in relation to these. Employers and commissioners who fail to express their needs can find their expectations are not met.

[Employers/commissioners] get quality by being clear about what skills they are looking for and being able to identify through 'observation in practice' (Johnstone in Johnstone et al., op.cit: 7).

'The people who contracted me didn't understand the process or nature of working with freelance artists so neither side's expectations were met' (Salamon in ibid: 19).

All employers need support in developing their own skills and an understanding of both the role of participatory arts and its potential outcomes.

79% of artists 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree' that 'On the whole, there is not enough understanding about the potential benefits of this work' (dha, 2014b: 29).

67% of artists 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree' that 'In the arts sector, too many people do not value this work as artistic practice' (ibid: 29).

Despite feeling that their practice is not valued within the arts sector, most artists feel that employers and commissioners are supportive. 'There are areas in which artists would appreciate better or more nuanced engagement from employers or commissioners' which suggests that 'on the whole, artists feel that employers and commissioners mean well, but find it harder to put this into practice' (ibid: 29).

Employers need a developed understanding of the role and impact of participatory arts, as well as to value its role and function (Salamon in Johnstone et al., op.cit: 21).

3.3 Quality factors for artists and commissioners

While ArtWorks acknowledge that employers and artists need to develop a shared understanding of quality, the research has avoided simply defining quality. Dha, ArtWorks evaluators, acknowledged there is already a body of literature investigating ideas of quality and recommended that the issue of quality could be investigated with a view to practical outcomes which could be used by the sector. This focus included identifying what might improve the experiences of participants and artists, understanding different quality factors and appreciating the range of quality frameworks available.

It will be important for the Pathfinders not to enquire about 'quality' only for the sake of producing, for example, a finite definition (dha, 2012: 38).

ArtWorks has, therefore, focused on developing and testing a number of quality factors which have generated widespread agreement between artists and employers/commissioners (termed 'partners' by ArtWorks Scotland) (ArtWorks Scotland, op.cit.). Over 70% of artists who responded to the ArtWorks Scotland survey identified the following factors as essential to supporting quality (Dean, 2103a: 3):

- Having time to think and reflect as part of a project
- Feeling professionally valued within the project
- Having adequate resources – financial and other – to support planning delivery and evaluation
- Realistic expectations of what can be achieved in the time and resource
- Having 'buy in' and trust between all partners/participants

Partners who responded to the survey identified similar factors as being essential to support quality. However, only two factors were highlighted by more than 70% of the employing/commissioning group (ibid: 3):

- Artists feeling professionally valued within the project
- Having 'buy in' and trust between all artists/partners/participants

The variation in responses from artists and partners may be due to the different roles and perspectives of those involved in a project. Seidel believes that perspectives on quality are viewed through different 'lenses' (Burns and Cox, op.cit: 12-13). While artists and partners largely agree on the factors for quality, these different 'lenses' mean that artists and partners may prioritise different quality factors.

Responses from partners and artists also reveal a variation in the frequency with which these quality factors are met. Partners report that quality factors are met more frequently than artists suggest. The variation in responses suggests that artists and hirers require support in engaging in a dialogue which would lead to the development of a shared culture and would support positive working relationships:

All [stakeholders] are important to the achievement of quality. Dialogue, alignment and engagement are critical to making this work (ibid: 12).

There is widespread agreement across the arts in participatory settings sector about the importance of particular quality factors and the significance of supportive employers. Employers report that they feel responsible for developing suitable frameworks and working practices to enable artists to undertake their best work. However, they are also keen to ensure that quality factors are of practical use. A set of factors would need to avoid rigidity, have space to develop and respond to the context and aims of any project (Dean, 2013b: 5).

'... I believe it is essential to have a clear framework in place as to how the project will proceed, and what individual roles and responsibilities are. There needs to be a structure to allow ongoing management and monitoring of progress, budgets, targets... If this is in place then the artist(s) will be able to focus on achieving maximum community involvement and creating high quality art works – and I believe these are the key elements in achieving a successful project' (ibid: 13).

'...a supportive and engaged management of artists is important in providing good quality processes – this is hardly rocket science' (ibid: 17).

'[It] will depend upon the kind of activity being delivered, the scale, the key aims and the kind or type of contract being made...and will vary according to this... As an employer of artists in participatory contexts...I have a wide range of aims for different kinds of activity, and therefore different kinds of relationships, expectations and requirements of artists...' (ibid: 13-14).

The use of shared quality factors, alongside a dialogue to negotiate the needs and skills of artists and employers, would support the development of a more confident workforce. The development of an open dialogue to provide feedback during a project is also vital in supporting ongoing evaluation and reflection across the sector.

3.4 Recruitment

The ArtWorks research suggests that employers recruit artists using a variety of methods and despite this 'while employers were mostly able to get the quality of practitioner they wanted...they were not always successful' (Schwarz, 2014: 17).

Employers frequently rely on recommendations to employ artists and also select artists from their own "skilled and wide database" (Sellers, 2012d: 3) they have collated for themselves, rather than opening opportunities externally. Using personal recommendations or experience is particularly prevalent amongst experienced and connected employers and commissioners who have developed their networks and contacts over time (Johnstone in Johnstone et al., op.cit: 1, 8). This approach is often viewed as 'exclusive' and is perceived to hinder the development of new artists in the sector (Deane in ibid: 102; Sellers, 2012d: 3):

'...we do all have a little black book we resort to that has been built up over years, and is primarily based on our experience of the musician/artist within their own contexts. The reality is that this has never been an inclusive book' (Deane in Johnstone et al., op.cit: 103).

...you tend to bring in those you already know to work with you (Pheby, op.cit: 23).

If an artist is not in the artist pool they stand a much smaller chance of getting employed (Johnson, 2014a: 9).

New graduates in particular are likely to suffer most from the scarcity of arts work (Jones, op.cit: 5).

Although recruiting through recommendations is viewed as an exclusive process, organisations rely on this approach to save time and resources as well as ensuring loyalty amongst their pool of artists (Johnson, 2014a: 68). While hindering the development of inexperienced artists, those with an established reputation benefit from this model and feel that their good performance is rewarded with additional work opportunities.

'I get regular repeat work from schools who have booked me over and over again for some time because they know what they are going to get' (Johnson, 2014b: 25).

'There is lots of earning potential if you have the reputation...' (ibid: 30).

'Reputation is everything... It's tough for the new artist 'cause you have to pay your dues but all you can do is offer them support...' (Sellers, 2011: 8).

Employers may also be reluctant to utilise new artists if they feel confident in the skills of artists within their own pool:

New artists are at risk, artists are ambassadors for the employers and have the potential to build or tarnish the organisation's reputation... (Johnson, 2014a: 77).

Smaller and newer employers often experience greater difficulty in recruiting appropriate artists as they lack the contacts and resources to seek recommendations

(Deane in Johnstone et al., op.cit: 112; Johnstone in ibid: 6). Such employers, particularly those outside the arts sector, are more likely to rely on qualifications:

Some employers, particularly those in education or health sectors, valued qualifications (Leatherdale in ibid: 63).

Although organisations utilise both recommendations and formal qualifications during recruitment there is ambivalence about the usefulness of qualifications:

It is clear...that employers set great store on practical skills and ability, particularly soft and personal skills, and believe qualifications do not cover these adequately... (Deane in ibid: 107).

'I don't think it's about qualifications, it's about training, experience and attitude' (ibid: 108).

As well as training and experience, organisations wanting to employ artists also look for shared values and support for the organisation:

'...we might find it difficult to recruit someone who didn't share our beliefs about equal opportunities and community building' (Sellers, 2012d: 5).

'If I recruit an artist to work with me on a project and they are working under our name I expect the values set out by the project and the organisation to be manifest in their work' (Wilmot, op.cit: 20).

Employers utilise a variety of methods when recruiting artists and while many employers do not experience problems with recruiting artists with the skills they need, there are barriers for artists wishing to embark on, and sustain, a career in participatory arts.

These barriers include:

- History of volunteering

Artists are more likely to be offered paid work if they have completed unpaid work (Burns and Cox, op.cit: 6). Undertaking unpaid work is particularly common for emerging artists who lack experience:

New graduates are increasingly expected to work as unpaid interns or to be ready for employment without the costly need for further mentoring or professional support (ibid: 6).

- Geography

Although many organisations are able to find the artists they need, organisations running projects in rural areas have more problems recruiting artists:

Recruiting suitable artists...can be a challenge for organisations in Wales. One organisation explained that recruitment was difficult because a large percentage of artists “go to London. They go for their training, and they don’t come back” (Sellers, 2012d: 3).

‘There are quite a few people with the skills...but the work demand we have is not sustainable for people travelling more than about 30 minutes to a session’ (Deane in Johnstone et al, op.cit: 103).

3.5 Cultural diversity

Not only do artists experience barriers in employment depending on their ability to undertake voluntary work and travel, but there is also evidence that culturally diverse artists have suffered more from the current economic climate than other groups.

A significant proportion of respondents to the dha survey of artists were white (85%) (dha, 2014b: 11). The employment and recruitment practices outlined above may have an adverse effect on culturally diverse practitioners.

Johnson argues that geography has a huge impact on whether culturally diverse artists are regularly recruited, but there is evidence that culturally diverse artists may be scarce in some areas (Johnson, 2014a: 5).

'Cumbrian residents are uncomfortable with people from other parts of the county never mind the world. This manifests in a form of racism founded on ignorance, where culturally diverse artists are considered "exotic and special". I think there's a real issue around people not having sustained quality dialogue with people from other backgrounds' (ibid: 62).

Culturally diverse artists involved in Johnson's research reported that they felt marginalised and labelled as part of their practice:

'I get labelled as a refugee artist. This has negative connotations' (ibid: 6).

'No one contacts us for "mainstream" research, we only get contacted as "culturally diverse"' (ibid: 64).

'We are bracketed "culturally diverse" not mainstream. First and foremost culturally diverse artists are professional artists' (ibid: 11).

The work can often be cyclical with some artists feeling that they are only called to complete work as part of events such as International Women's Day. Artists expressed a desire to be treated as professional artists first and foremost.

'In October for Black History Month I am rushed off my feet. Come November work dries up again. It feels like a box ticking practice. I try to explain that I'm still black in November!' (ibid: 65).

'I don't "think" that organisations don't go out of their way to employ culturally diverse artists. I KNOW THEY DON'T' (ibid: 80).

The need for employers and commissioners to be more aware of cultural diversity is particularly important given the loss of BAME (Black and minority ethnic) led organisations, often due to funding issues, which has had an impact on employment opportunities for culturally diverse artists:

If we know that BAME led organisations are employers then we can also assume that the reduction in BAME led organisations will have an impact on the number of practitioners (ibid: 80).

'In the old system it used to be there was a need for multicultural arts in the UK...but the current government is very silent about it' (ibid: 10).

3.6 Skills and qualifications

Due to the wide range of contexts in which they work, participatory artists are expected to have a wide range of skills and expertise. The skills that artists develop have been well documented by research from the ArtWorks programme and include the following:

Organisations are very clear that artists...should have good interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills included the ability to listen and communicate, an ability to work with others, and empathy for others; these were considered vital to delivering successful participative projects (Sellers, 2012d: 4).

The common ground is empathy, listening skills, ability to lead in a supportive way, ability to adapt plans in a flexible way... (Deane in Johnstone et al., op.cit: 105).

Although the language expressed by different stakeholders may vary, ArtWorks have found evidence of a strong correlation between the skills that employers expect and

those that artists feel they need (Johnstone in *ibid*: 7). This suggests that participatory artists are proactive in terms of ensuring their employability through their own skills development.

There are many areas of agreement [about skills] including the need for artists to be highly skilled in their arts practice, reliable, punctual and innovative (Wilmot, *op.cit*: 15).

Artists need to invest in their skills base and practice to remain employable and relevant. This involves saving up to take time out to develop work (Johnson, 2014a: 10).

Artists believe employers are looking for strong people skills, art practice, facilitation, adaptability and...initiative... The employers interviewed identified the skills and experience needed... [citing] excellent artistic practice and communication as essential (*ibid*: 66).

As well as expecting wide ranging skills, many organisations also expect formal qualifications when recruiting new artists (see **3.4 Recruitment**). Although it is recognised that qualifications do not provide all the tools that participatory artists need, employers acknowledge that qualifications can act as 'short-hand' evidence of the commitment of an artist (Deane in Johnstone et al., *op.cit*: 108). While valuable for all employers, evidence of an artist's qualifications becomes particularly important for inexperienced employers:

Employers also valued qualifications like a driving licence because it demonstrated the artist's autonomy and reflected on their ability to deliver (Leatherdale in *ibid*: 64).

...having nationally recognised qualifications as a result of a CPD course was important because some employers were so unfamiliar with the issues that art practitioners needed to learn they needed to have the short-hand approval (*ibid*: 67).

Most organisations...don't look for specific qualifications, although many do expect that artists will hold a relevant arts degree before embarking on their participative arts practice (Sellers, 2012d: 3).

It is clear that employers expect a highly skilled workforce, and that artists are ready to respond to the needs of employers. Artists need to be able to articulate their own skills clearly and continue their own development to increase their chances of sustained employment.

3.7 Training and continuing professional development (CPD)

Artists are proactive in their skills development and recognise the need for CPD to maintain their employability. The dha *Survey of Artists* revealed that three quarters of respondents try to dedicate time regularly to developing their practice while two thirds have covered the costs of their time for training and development:

Artists are positive about wishing to develop their skills for specific settings and whilst they feel that employers/commissioners could invest more in artists, they are also prepared to invest themselves in their professional development and try to regularly dedicate time to developing their practice (dha, 2014b: 2).

'You have to invest in what you do. I have seen some artists deliver the same workshop again and again and again. Unless you are willing to develop your practice, your work will become old hat' (Johnson, 2014a: 45).

'I like to go to other artists' workshops, exchange and share ideas, look at how I can improve my work' (ibid: 8).

Artists appear keen to develop their skills specifically for specialist settings:

[Artists] would benefit from training that focuses on particular groups or settings (e.g...with frail, elderly people in residential care) (Deane in Johnstone, op.cit: 105).

...in some cases it was the context in which [the artists] were working that determined the on-going demand for qualifications (Leatherdale in *ibid*: 64).

While there is confidence from many working in specific settings, there is also an appetite for developing further settings-specific skills (dha, 2014b: 1).

Despite this motivation to engage in CPD opportunities, two thirds of artists surveyed felt that employers and commissioners should be responsible for, and invest more in, developing practitioners (*ibid*: 2). Forty one percent of respondents had experienced support from employers/commissioners with the costs of training and development.

Some organisations, recognising skills shortages, are able to offer in house training to prepare participatory artists to working in specific contexts. For example, Age Cymru and engage Wales offer awareness training with the Alzheimer's Society for artists involved in working with older people with dementia. Helix Arts offers 'specific schemes so that artists can get advice about working with particular groups e.g. young offenders, people with mental health issues...' (Pheby, *op.cit*: 27).

Despite the desire for employers to offer bespoke training for artists, 'contracts are often short term and employers have little money to invest in their [artists'] professional development' (Burns and Cox, *op. cit*: 6). This can have a negative impact of the workforce development:

All the support bodies are gradually disappearing. There is no longer a body doing training and supporting artists to do this work (Johnson, 2014a: 32).

Employers working with client groups with specific or complex needs feel it is important to provide guidance on working with their client groups to ensure artists are able to adapt to the needs of the group and share the employers' values and approaches. Other employers, where resources allow, feel that it is important to support the development of freelance artists:

[Ovalhouse Theatre]...believes the sector on the whole has a responsibility for quality CPD, regardless if artists take that experience and knowledge to another organisation (Davies, 2012: 9).

'We think there's a responsibility here on the purchaser/commissioner of work in terms of providing appropriate guidance and context for the work, more than there is on being trained to work in specific settings' (Deane in Johnstone et al., op.cit: 106).

Artists value employers providing guidance in the context and the approach of the organisation. Sixty seven percent of artists in the dha survey stated that they either 'strongly agreed' or 'tended to agree' that 'employers and commissioners...vary significantly in their approach to developing projects' (dha, 2014b: 28). Providing guidance for artists ensures that they have an understanding of the approach of the employing/commissioning organisations and the context in which they are working, which enables them to provide a quality experience for participants. Giving guidance on specific contexts, rather than training artists to work in a particular setting, also ensures that the unique role of the artist is valued in participatory art projects.

The ArtWorks programme has, therefore, researched a variety of training models to enable participatory artists to work in a number of settings:

- ArtWorks London, with Barbican Guildhall, has developed undergraduate and postgraduate degrees which will go live in 2015 (subject to validation)
- ArtWorks London has piloted a collaborative fellowship programme
- ArtWorks North East, through the University of Sunderland, has developed a number of participatory arts training modules
- ArtWorks Cymru has developed a number of informal training models to support informal artist training

3.8 Training and CPD: resources and responsibility

Artists reported the 'most significant barriers' to training and development. The two barriers which were most selected were financial cost (66% of respondents) and time cost (59%) (dha, 2014b: 36).

For the freelance artist, funding their own training and development is problematic:

Average pay rates are low compared to other freelancers, which may cause problems, particularly in relation to artists being able to pay for their own training and development (Lowe, op.cit: 6).

The costs of undertaking training and developing – both paying for opportunities, and covering the time taken to engage in opportunities – are the most significant barriers to engaging in opportunities (dha, 2014b: 2).

While artists are proactive in seeking their own development, 71% of artists surveyed felt that 'Employers/commissioners should be more responsible and invest more in developing practitioners' (ibid: 41).

Employers engaged in the ArtWorks research have agreed that there is a responsibility for developing the skills of artists they employ. However, cost is a prohibiting factor for them as well (Davies, op.cit; Deane in Johnstone et al., op.cit; dha, 2014b).

Many [organisations] felt that a lack of resources meant that [training and development] was currently impossible (Lowe, op.cit: 60).

Arts organisations are not averse to engaging with trainee practitioners through placements or visits, and understand the value to both the practitioner and (perhaps in the longer run) to the organisation... There are potentially some costs involved in supporting this kind of opportunity from the perspective of the arts organisations, and individual organisational capacity to absorb this may vary significantly (dha, 2014a: 18).

Although the financial climate is a barrier to offering training opportunities for some organisations, there is evidence from the ArtWorks research that some modes of delivery can be cost effective. For example, the pilot studies undertaken by the ArtWorks Development Awards recipients highlight that training and CPD ‘can take place even with relatively modest funding, provided the proposition is focused...’ (ibid: 2).

3.9 Models of good practice

ArtWorks have highlighted a number of employers and arts organisations that represent good practice in the field of CPD and training. The majority of training opportunities provided by these are non-accredited but enable artists to develop their skills in a variety of settings and contexts. ArtWorks London completed a number of case studies that showcased training opportunities from organisations in London (Davies, op.cit.) whilst ArtWorks North East completed an audit of training opportunities in the region (Lowe, op.cit).

Organisations are motivated to deliver specific training as they recognise that artists need training that offers ‘a broader skill base to be able to widen and sustain their employment opportunities and profiles in the UK’ (Akademi case study in Davies, op.cit: 2).

The training is responsive both to the artists’ needs and interests identified in reviews, and the areas of need within the organisations programmes of work (Ovalhouse Theatre case study in ibid: 8).

Offering training in house ensures that artists have an insight into specific contexts and working environments while also allowing organisations to observe artists in relation to potential employment opportunities. Not only is the workforce skilled up but also they are offered the opportunity to understand the values and beliefs of that organisation. Both observation of practice, and shared values and beliefs, are recognised as important aspects of an artist’s participatory practice and their employment opportunities:

All artists, regardless of prior experience and knowledge, are asked to attend a session of 'Ambient Jam', a regular participatory programme run by Entelechy... This is a tremendous experience which prepares the artists for participatory work in a range of other settings... (Entelechy Arts Case Study in *ibid*: 6-7).

ArtWorks North East, through Sage Gateshead, is currently piloting a Participatory Arts Learning Scheme (PALS) to support artist CPD. The scheme is aimed primarily, although not exclusively, at new/emerging artists who are most likely to be unsure about accessing CPD opportunities. The currency for artists in the PALS scheme, however, is time and knowledge, rather than money. Such a model may prove valuable in a sector that has restricted resources.

ArtWorks Navigator is developing a universal code of practice for artists working in participatory settings (Deane in Johnstone et al., *op.cit*; Deane, 2014). Embracing but not replacing existing codes, this is owned by the artist as a series of 'commitments'. By adopting the code, artists demonstrate their commitment to quality work – and at the same time, employers demonstrate their commitment to recognising high quality practice and supporting artists in producing it (*ibid*: 1).

As another quality related initiative, ArtWorks Navigator partners have worked with Creative & Cultural Skills to develop a 'suite' of National Occupational Standards (NOS). This covers activities such as identifying a market for work, engaging participants in arts activities and identifying continuing professional development.

In addition, ArtWorks Navigator has devised a CPD Credit System (Leatherdale, 2014) to enable artists to evidence the broad range of knowledge and experience they have gained through continuing professional development, and which they need or use in their practice across a broad range of contexts. Employers will benefit from this System because it will provide them with verified evidence of the range of experience held by those they seek to employ and their continued commitment to learning, giving them a mechanism for seeing how and in what context practitioners have gained their skills. It is intended that this 'credibility check' will help artists secure future employment and raise a personal sense of achievement as the

development of new skills and knowledge are recorded, and provide reassurance for employers in their recruitment.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

ArtWorks have clearly amassed a great amount of knowledge on the interaction between employers/commissioners and artists in the sector.

There is a wide variation in training and development opportunities offered to artists by different employers and commissioners – from internships, bespoke short courses and mentoring, to nothing at all. There are examples of pragmatic and mutually beneficial solutions that bring benefits to artists as well as to the employers. These need to be shared and made more visible.

We know that artists want employers and commissioners to play a greater role in supporting their training and development needs throughout their careers.

The breadth of participatory practice and diversity of intent is both acknowledged and celebrated by ArtWorks. Due to differences in the aims and intent of the work, it is not possible or desirable to standardise all aspects of the employing/commissioning side of the sector. However, the need to support the development of both artists and employers/commissioners suggests that we need to be engaged in a new and dynamic dialogue regarding the practice.

ArtWorks is in a strong position to develop and support the sector and should encourage employers to 'lead from the front' when considering workforce development. The following are key opportunities:

- Promoting CPD for artists

Whilst artists are proactive in their skills development, employers/commissioners have a responsibility to support artists in developing skills, particularly in the contexts in which they are working.

Employers also have a responsibility to provide opportunities for feedback both during and after a project. This means that time for reflection needs to be built into projects.

Funders are in a unique position to drive skills development within the sector. If CPD opportunities were viewed as an integral part of a participatory project's design and funding, this would make a significant difference to the provision for artists and in turn impact on quality.

- Adopting new guidelines

Employers and commissioners can promote the quality of their own practice by adopting tried and tested approaches to ensuring and enhancing quality.

- Code of Practice

ArtWorks Navigator is developing a Code of Practice to help artists explain how they work. This Code could support employers/ commissioners by encouraging dialogue between them and artists and enabling stakeholders to articulate their aims and objectives. Such frameworks and tools help promote coherent, yet flexible, approaches to definitions of quality within the sector.

- Adopting the use of NOS (National Occupational Standards)

NOS provide a short-hand for both artists and employers when articulating their skills and practice. All stakeholders should utilise these to raise the status of this artistic practice within the arts sector.

- Supporting project managers

ArtWorks recognise the important role that project managers play in developing successful projects and positive working relationships.

Employers should develop CPD opportunities for project managers which improve confidence and skills in the sector.

Despite the challenges in the sector, ArtWorks have uncovered significant evidence of good practice within the field, as well as a desire for continuous improvement. Examples of good practice need to be shared widely to support and advocate the development of the sector.

ArtWorks have a unique opportunity to unite the whole sector and enable it to speak with one, albeit diverse, voice. Employers can play a critical role in this. A united sector would lead to major shift within the sector, including improving how participatory arts are valued, growing confidence within the sector and enhancing experiences for participants.

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Paul Hamlyn Foundation

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ArtWorks

ArtWorks: Developing Practice in Participatory Settings is a PHF Special Initiative working to improve participatory practice in the arts. It focuses on workforce development, seeking to improve training and development infrastructure for artists at different stages of their careers. The initiative began in 2010/11 and continues to the end of 2014/15.

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