

Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education
(PACE) Model: Exploring the Participatory Arts
as a Potential Model for Fostering Creativity in
Post-Primary Education

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PhD

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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This is for them.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	x
Acknowledgements.....	xi
List of Figures	xvii
List of Tables.....	xviii
List of Acronyms	xix
Abstract	xx
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Research Study.....	2
1.3 Arts Education, Arts-in-Education and Participatory Arts.....	3
1.3.1 Arts Education and Arts-in-Education	3
1.3.2 Participatory Arts	4
1.3.3 Selection of Case Studies	7
1.3.4 ‘Pure’ versus ‘Applied’ Participatory Arts	8
1.4 Rationale for Study.....	9
1.5 Research Questions.....	12
1.6 Frame of Research Study.....	13
1.6.1 First Phase of Data Analysis	14
1.6.2 Second Phase of Data Analysis	16
1.7 Researcher Context	18
1.8 Structure of Thesis.....	19
1.9 Summary.....	20
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	22
2.1 Introduction.....	22

2.2 Literature Review Methodology	22
2.3 Creativity: Concepts and Practices	23
2.3.1 Concept of Creativity	23
2.3.2 Levels of creativity	29
2.3.3 Theoretical Paradigms of Creativity.....	32
2.3.4 The Importance of Creativity	34
2.3.5 Creativity in Education	35
2.4 Arts Education and Arts-in-Education	38
2.4.1 Arts Education on the Global Stage.....	39
2.4.2 Arts Education Provision in Ireland	40
2.4.3 Beneficial Impact of Arts Education for Students.....	48
2.4.4 Creativity in Post-Primary Education in Ireland.....	49
2.5 Participatory Arts.....	56
2.5.1 Defining the Participatory Arts	56
2.5.2 Principles of Participatory Arts Practice	61
2.5.3 Community-based Performance as Process	68
2.5.4 Tensions in the Participatory Arts Field.....	69
2.5.5 Non-Conventional Modes of Participatory Arts Practice	71
2.6 Conclusion	74
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS	76
3.1 Introduction.....	76
3.2 Focus of Study	76
3.3 Overview of Research Framework	78
3.3.1 Pragmatism as the underpinning philosophical stance.....	80
3.3.2 Inductive Intent.....	81
3.3.3 Case Study Methodology	82

3.3.4 Dominant Qualitative Concurrent Mixed Methods Approach	91
3.3.5 Data Collection and Analysis.....	95
3.4 Ethical Considerations	115
3.5 Ensuring Rigour in the Research Process	116
3.6 Limitations of the Research.....	118
3.7 Moving Forward	120
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS FOR UPSTATE	121
4.1 Introduction.....	121
4.2 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Psychosocial and Partnerships	123
4.2.1 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Psychosocial dimension	123
4.2.2 Additional Psychosocial Factors that Contribute to Climate/s for Creativity	134
4.2.3 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Partnerships	138
4.3 Processes for ‘Being Creative’	140
4.3.1 Imagining	140
4.3.2 Exploring Options and Alternatives	147
4.3.3 Implementing Ideas and Taking Action	149
4.3.4 Learning Creatively	150
4.3.5 Stimulating creativity using digital technology.....	153
4.4 Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes.....	154
4.4.1 Communal Context	154
4.4.2 Reciprocity	160
4.4.3 Hyphenation	168
4.4.4 Active Culture	170
4.5 Summary of Findings from Upstate	173
4.5.1 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity.....	173

4.5.2 Processes for ‘Being Creative’	175
4.5.3 Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes	177
4.6 Conclusion	179
CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS FOR FIGHTING WORDS.....	180
5.1 Introduction.....	180
5.2 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Psychosocial, Physical and Partnerships. 183	
5.2.1 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Psychosocial Dimensions of Creativity	183
5.2.2 Fostering Climates for Creativity: Additional Psychosocial Factors	197
5.2.3 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Physical Environment.....	202
5.2.4 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Partnerships	207
5.3 Processes for ‘Being Creative’	210
5.3.1 Imagining	210
5.3.2 Exploring Options and Alternatives	215
5.3.3 Implementing Ideas and Taking Action	218
5.3.4 Learning Creatively	220
5.3.5 Stimulating Creativity using Digital Technology	221
5.4 Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes.....	222
5.4.1 Communal Context.....	222
5.4.2 Reciprocity	228
5.4.3 Hyphenation	238
5.4.4 Active Culture	245
5.5 Summary of Findings from Fighting Words Case Study	249
5.5.1 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity.....	249
5.5.2 Processes for ‘Being Creative’	252
5.5.3 Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes	252

5.6 Conclusion	256
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	257
6.1 Introduction.....	257
6.2 Overview of Research Approach	257
6.3 Discussion of Findings Related to Research Question 1	258
6.3.1 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity.....	259
6.3.2 Processes for ‘Being Creative’	265
6.3.3 Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes	270
6.4 Discussion of Findings Related to Research Question 2	277
6.5 Contributions to New Knowledge	282
6.6 Recommendations	287
6.7 Researcher Reflections on Research Journey	289
6.8 Conclusion	291
Bibliography	292
Appendices.....	312
Appendix A Publication 1 Case Study: Upstate Theatre Project	313
Appendix B Publication 2 Case Study: Fighting Words	346
Appendix C Publication 3 Case Study: Fighting Words	366
Appendix D Images from Upstate Theatre Project	395
Appendix E Summary of Quantitative Data from Fighting Words.....	398
Appendix F Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education (PACE) Model	401

List of Figures

Figure 2.1	Creativity Continuum	32
Figure 3.1	Conceptual Framework of the Study	78
Figure 3.2	Research Study Framework	79
Figure 3.3	Shared characteristics between the chosen Case Study organisations	91
Figure 3.4	Concurrent Triangulation Design	94
Figure 3.5	Overview of Data Collection Tools	96
Figure 3.6	Indicative Questions for Semi-structured Interviews in Upstate	98
Figure 3.7	Indicative Questions for Semi-structured Interviews in Fighting Words	100
Figure 3.8	Indicative Questions for Focus Group Interview in Upstate	101
Figure 3.9	Fighting Words Student Questionnaire Format	104
Figure 3.10	Fighting Words Teacher and Tutor Questionnaire Format	105
Figure 3.11	First Phase of Data Analysis – Themes and Sample Coding for Upstate	108
Figure 3.12	A multidimensional model of creative space	111
Figure 4.1	Framing of Findings from Upstate (Pure Participatory Arts) Case Study	122
Figure 4.2	Summary of Findings from Upstate in relation to facilitating Climate/s for Creativity	174
Figure 4.3	Findings from Upstate in relation to processes for ‘being creative’	176
Figure 4.4	Summary of Findings from Upstate in relation to the Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes in Participatory Arts	178
Figure 5.1	Framing of Findings within the <i>Applied</i> Participatory Arts Case Study of Fighting Words	182
Figure 5.2	Summary of Findings from Fighting Words in relation to facilitating Climate/s for Creativity	251
Figure 5.3	Findings from Fighting Words in relation to processes for ‘being creative’	253
Figure 5.4	Summary of Findings from Fighting Words in relation to the Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes in applied Participatory Arts	255
Figure 6.1	Summary of Findings in relation to facilitating Climate/s for Creativity	263
Figure 6.2:	Findings in relation to processes for ‘being creative’	269
Figure 6.3	Summary of Beneficial Outcomes	270
Figure 6.4	Summary of Findings in relation to the Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes in applied Participatory Arts	276
Figure 6.5	Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education (PACE) Model	280

List of Tables

Table 2.1	Principles for Junior Cycle Education	52
Table 2.2	Characteristics of a classroom climate that encourage creativity	54
Table 3.1	Responses to the Fighting Words Questionnaires	102
Table 3.2	Sample Coding Framework Theme A - Fostering Climates for Creativity	113
Table 4.1	Extract Codes for Upstate Sources	123
Table 5.1	Extract Codes for Fighting Words Sources	181

List of Acronyms

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ARIS	Arts Rich Schools
CCE	Creativity, Culture and Education
DAHG	Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht
DCU	Dublin City University
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETAI	Encountering the Arts Ireland
NACCCE	National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCFA	National Campaign for the Arts
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PACE	Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education (PACE) Model: Exploring the Participatory Arts as a Potential Model for Fostering Creativity in Post-Primary Education

Irene White

Abstract

This research study set out to explore how creativity was being fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives, with a view to informing the design of a Participatory Arts model for education. The study explored two types of Participatory Arts initiatives, the first led by Upstate Theatre Project, a ‘pure’ Participatory Arts initiative, and the second led by Fighting Words, an ‘applied’ Participatory Arts initiative. In the context of this study, the aim was to provide an evidence base for, and articulate, the factors and processes underpinning climates for creativity, and the (pedagogic) approaches used to foster creativity in Participatory Arts initiatives, as well as exploring the enablement of beneficial outcomes across both Participatory Arts contexts. The study firstly affirmed that Participatory Arts initiatives foster creativity, and furthermore that the practices within these initiatives enable the type of ‘learning for creativity’ outcomes articulated by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in Ireland. The study further articulated the Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education (PACE) model, a three-layered guide on the principles, practices and processes that can be used to foster creativity. Moreover, the study revealed a series of vignettes of good practice with respect to the enablement of climates for creativity and processes for being creative. The recommendations include a call for the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the NCCA in Ireland to review the current national guidelines on fostering creativity in education in light of the findings from this research study, and for a creativity toolkit to be developed based on the PACE model and accompanying vignettes, and implemented within workshops for practitioners (post-primary teachers, artist-tutors) aiming to foster creativity through the Participatory Arts process.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

... in creating art, we bring something into existence and in doing that we change the world. When we make sense of life, from feelings, ideas and experiences we may not even know we have, in forms to which others can respond creatively, we conjure up new possibilities in all our imaginations. That is the artist's act and it is a power in the world.

Francois Matarasso, *A Restless Art*, 2019.

1.1 Introduction

This research set out to explore how creativity was being fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives, with a view to informing the design of an applied Participatory Arts model for education. In this study, creativity is understood as a process that involves individuals independently or collaboratively working in persistent and purposeful pursuit of an objective that requires them to draw on their imagination to express ideas and/or produce outputs that can be verified by others as original and appropriate to the individual and the context in which they are produced. The Participatory Arts are understood to refer to a collaborative creative process in which individuals or communities work with professional artists in the co-creation of art that is presented to others. The study explored two types of Participatory Arts initiatives, the first led by Upstate Theatre Project, hereafter referred to as Upstate, a 'pure' Participatory Arts initiative, and the second led by Fighting Words Creative Writing Centre, hereafter Fighting Words, an 'applied' Participatory Arts initiative. In the context of this study, the aim was to provide an evidence base for, and articulate, the factors and processes underpinning climates for creativity, and the (pedagogic) approaches used to foster creativity in 'pure' and 'applied' Participatory Arts initiatives, as well as exploring the enablement of beneficial outcomes across both Participatory Arts contexts. This chapter presents

the context, purpose and scope of this research study, the rationale for this research study, an overview of the framing of the research study including the main research questions, and an account of the researcher's personal and professional interest in the area. It closes with an explanation of the overall structure of this thesis.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Research Study

The purpose of this research study was to establish firstly, how creativity was fostered in the Participatory Arts, and secondly, to establish whether the principles, practices and processes characteristic of that field might potentially inform a model of creativity for post-primary education. In order to set the context of this research study, it is necessary to clarify some of the key concepts, parameters and decisions which determine the scope of this study.

Firstly, the model of creativity under investigation was intended for the post-primary education sector. This main reason for focusing on post-primary education was that at the outset of this study the areas of creativity and innovation, specifically processes that enabled learners to be creative, were being prioritised within educational reform in post-primary education in Ireland (DES, 2012). Furthermore, the researcher's disciplinary expertise and experience as a former teacher and current teacher educator lay within the post-primary sector.

Secondly, this research study investigated creativity within Participatory Arts initiatives that were being implemented *outside of* mainstream post-primary education contexts. Therefore, it is not a study of Participatory Arts practice *within post-primary schools*, as no cases of Participatory Arts integration within the post-primary education sector could be identified at the outset of this research. Instead, the researcher identified two types of Participatory Arts initiatives, one of which reflected participatory arts practice in its purest sense, and the second of which had an educational and participatory arts agenda. In this regard, this research study chose the case of Upstate in order to examine the factors, processes and principles underpinning creativity within the most authentic form of the participatory arts.

Furthermore, Fighting Words was chosen as a case of study, as its participants included post-primary students who were brought out of their school to engage in workshops, and in this regard the inclusion of Fighting Words offered a platform for exploration of the potential of participatory arts for fostering and enabling creativity among post-primary students, the findings from which could inform the enablement of creativity within post-primary education contexts.

1.3 Arts Education, Arts-in-Education and Participatory Arts

This research seeks to make a case for the inclusion of the Participatory Arts in post-primary education in Ireland. It is therefore important to clarify and distinguish between the processes and practices in the integration of Participatory Arts in education, and those of Arts Education and Arts-in-education.

1.3.1 Arts Education and Arts-in-Education

In Ireland the term 'arts education' refers to the study of artforms - visual arts, music, drama, poetry, literature - as part of the school curricula, while the term 'arts-in-education' refers to arts and cultural learning experiences which involve an interaction between the education system and the arts world (Arts Council, 2008). In Ireland arts education is primarily a responsibility of the Department of Education and Skills and education providers, while the Arts Council of Ireland, the national agency for developing the arts, is the primary agent of policy and provision in the field of arts-in-education (Braiden, 2008). In January 2013, the Irish government launched the first ever *Arts in Education Charter*, a joint initiative between the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Education and Skills (DAHG/DES, 2013). This landmark document was the first *educational policy* to focus exclusively on the arts and a welcome sign of joined-up thinking between government departments. The Charter builds on the earlier *Points of Alignment* policy document (Arts Council, 2008) for arts education in Ireland. The difference between 'arts education' and 'arts-in-education' is articulated in both of these policy documents as follows:

While these are two areas of co-dependency, arts education refers usually to mainstream teaching and learning of the arts as part of general education, while arts-in-education refers mostly to interventions from the realm of the arts into the education system, by means of artists of all disciplines visiting schools or by schools engaging with professional arts and cultural practice in the public arena. (Arts Council, 2008, p.3; DAHG/DES, 2013, p.3)

Both documents specify that there are two strands of arts-in-education practice - interventions by artists into formal education and students engaging with the arts in publicly-funded arts venues. However, neither document specifies the duration or nature of the interventions by artists in schools or the extent or frequency of student engagement with arts in the public domain. While there is no suggested timeframe for schools to pursue, the Charter stipulates minimum inputs for arts and cultural organisations and artists to follow. For example, in terms of strand one, Individual artists in receipt of public funding are expected to 'invest at least two hours per annum in a local education initiative' (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.13), while publicly funded arts organisations are expected to 'invest a proportionate amount of time per annum in a local education initiative' (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.12). In terms of strand two, the Charter indicates that 'the National Cultural Institutions shall use their best endeavours to ensure that each student visits one national cultural institution **at least once** in their second level school career' (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.13). Considering that most students spend six years in post-primary education, this would suggest a nominal level of engagement with the arts. Similarly, interventions by artists to the tune of two hours per annum, is tokenistic at best.

1.3.2 Participatory Arts

The Participatory Arts under investigation in this research cannot be appropriately classified as either 'arts education' or 'arts-in-education' as defined in the *Points of Alignment* (Arts Council, 2008) and *Arts in Education Charter* (DAHG/DES, 2013). The Participatory Arts, as will be seen from the literature review in chapter two, are difficult to define. This is partly due to the diverse range of art forms and artists which make up the field and partly due to the variety of terms used by artists and policy

makers to describe the practice (Badham, 2010; Lowe, 2011; 2012; Tiller, 2014; Matarasso, 2019). According to Lockowandt (2013, p.8) the Participatory Arts refers to involvement in creative projects such as drama, music, writing, video, digital media, and photography which enable artistic expression and which include 'a shared ownership of decision-making between the participants and the facilitators'. Matarasso (2019, p.48), suggesting that a 'simple' and 'limited' definition is needed to encompass the wide-ranging activities found in the field, proposes the following: 'Participatory art is the creation of art by professional and non-professional artists'. A similar definition is offered by Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.1) who defines it as 'a field in which artists, collaborating with people whose lives directly inform the subject matter, express collective meaning'. While there are some differences in opinion on a suitable definition, there is a general consensus on the core principles and ethics underlying the field of participatory arts practice (Badham, 2010). Cohen-Cruz (2005) identifies these as *communal context*, *reciprocity*, *hyphenation*, and *active culture*. Each of these principles are discussed in depth in Chapter Two, however, a brief explanation is offered here for the purposes of distinguishing the Participatory Arts from arts education and arts-in-education practices as outlined in the previous section.

The *communal context* of the Participatory Arts is evident in the practice of collaboration between professional artists and non-professional participants that characterise the field (Tiller, 2014). The principle of *reciprocity* refers to the mutually nourishing relationship between artists and participants and an understanding that the collaborative process brings benefits to both artists and participants. Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.91) argues that for participants the benefits include 'imaging' - translating ideas into forms and 'imagining' - 'dreaming about what life could be'; an opportunity for 'deep reflection...; critical distance in their lives; and public visibility'. Participatory Arts provide participants with a space and place to create art and the opportunity to have that art viewed/heard by others. The Participatory Arts are a platform for voice and self-expression and a key feature of Participatory Arts practice is making the work created by participants visible to others. *Hyphenation* describes the multitude of intentions and aesthetic processes at play in a Participatory Arts

project. Participatory Arts projects tend to have a dual purpose –an artistic and a social/ political/ educational agenda. Lockowandt (2013, p.3), for example, argues that in addition to empowering artistic expression the practice ‘aims to activate critical thinking and decision-making, transforming participants into active citizens’. The principle of *active culture* reflects two core tenets of the field – participants as creators rather than consumers of art and participants as artists. Matarasso (2019, p.49) argues that all participatory art activities have two defining characteristics in common: ‘*the creation of art*’ and ‘the recognition that *everyone involved in the artistic act is an artist*’.

In summary, the principles underpinning the Participatory Arts outlined above distinguish practice in this field from arts education and arts-in-education in that they are underpinned by the principles of *communal context*, *reciprocity*, *hyphenation*, and *active culture* and thus involve community, collaboration, dialogue, partnership, authorship, and audience. In the Participatory Arts, participants collaborate in a creative process with artists and others in the co-creation of art which they present to an external audience. While it is certainly possible that some interventions may contain elements of the Participatory Arts, they are unlikely to embrace all of the characteristics and more likely, if and when they occur, to be one-off or short-lived experiences. As will be demonstrated by this research, the Participatory Arts process requires a level of protracted and sustained engagement with an arts process beyond that suggested by arts-in-education collaborations between schools and artists under strand one (interventions by the arts world into the domain of formal education) of the national arts-in-education policy. The enactment of Participatory Arts is therefore more in-depth and involved than either of the strands of arts-in-education put forward by the Arts Council/ Department of Education and Skills. Therefore, this is *not* a study of arts-in-education (nor arts education). Rather it is an exploration of how creativity principles, practices and processes are fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives, the findings from which were used to inform a potential model for fostering creativity within post-primary education settings.

1.3.3 Selection of Case Studies

This study sought to explore Participatory Arts practices and their potential for fostering creativity within education, and thus the initial steps involved reviewing organisations currently operating in Ireland within that domain. The researcher reviewed literature, consulted websites and media reports, and was ultimately guided by Stake (2005, p.451) in 'selecting a case of some typicality but leaning toward those cases that seem to offer *opportunity to learn*'. Stake (2005) clarifies that this 'may mean taking the one most accessible or the one we can spend the most time with' (Stake, 2005, p.451). This approach resulted in the selection of two cases for examination, namely *Upstate (Performing Arts Organisation)* and *Fighting Words (Creative Writing Centre)*. Upstate was selected on the basis that it is one of the longest established community-based theatre organisations in Ireland and the only one to consistently provide community arts in a regional and cross-border context. Upstate's extensive experience as a Participatory Arts organisation and, importantly, its easy accessibility to the researcher, were key considerations in identifying a case which offered ample 'opportunity to learn'. Fighting Words was selected on the basis that it was an established initiative known for its innovative bridging of education and the arts, and thus offered potential for further exploring how creativity might be enacted (using participatory arts processes and practices) within post-primary education in Ireland. This connection between the arts and education sectors was considered to be instrumental in this research study, and Fighting Words was deemed a suitable case as it too was accessible to the researcher and thus also offered 'opportunity to learn'. Furthermore, as Fighting Words is part of a growing international movement concerned with promoting creativity among children and young people within and outside of the school system (Barton and Ewing, 2017), the organisation was of interest in terms of its potential to illustrate the impact of participatory arts processes and practices on young people's creativity.

Finally, the use of multiple cases of study in this research study allowed for more comprehensive exploration of the research questions and resulted in better understanding of how creativity was fostered as a whole within the pure and applied

Participatory Arts settings, through comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences of the two different cases.

1.3.4 'Pure' versus 'Applied' Participatory Arts

In the context of this study, Upstate is classed as a 'pure' Participatory Arts initiative and Fighting Words has been classed as an 'applied' Participatory Arts initiative. The distinction drawn here between 'pure' and 'applied' Participatory Arts initiatives, is based on the funding status and charitable purposes of the two organisations under investigation in this study. At the outset of this research, Upstate was *one of six* organisations in Ireland in receipt of annual funding for arts participation from the Arts Council of Ireland (Arts Council, 2019). While Upstate's practice has always encompassed both professional and community theatre, their funding status changed from that of a professional touring company to an arts participation organisation in 2010, and so it was considered an appropriate case within the classical model of participatory arts. It is considered an example of the most authentic form or 'pure' participatory arts as it is specifically funded to promote arts participation in a community context. It is community-engaged in that it operates within a local community setting and invites and accepts ideas from the community, is open to all members of the community, and provides a space where individuals can, *in their free time*, collectively work in collaboration with artists to realise performances based on themes, ideas, and issues of mutual interest. In this regard, its model typified what could be considered as 'pure' participatory arts and Upstate is thus classed as an example of a 'pure' participatory arts organisation. Fighting Words, on the other hand, is considered an 'applied' Participatory Arts initiative as it is an example of an organisation that bridges the participatory arts and education sectors. *Fighting Words operates in an educational rather than a community context; it works in partnership with schools to offer a space where students of all ages can engage in creative writing as part of the school day.* At the outset of this research, Fighting Words was *one of seven* organisations in receipt of an annual programming grant for Literature (English language) from the Arts Council of Ireland (Arts Council, 2019).

Finally, while both organisations are registered charities, they differ in their objectives. Upstate's charitable purpose is classified as the 'advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or sciences' and the main objects of the organisation are 'to promote the study and improve the understanding of the arts' (The Charities Regulator, 2019), while Fighting Words' charitable purpose is the 'advancement of education' and its charitable objects are 'providing free tutoring and mentoring for students of all ages, focusing in particular on children, young adults and children and adults with special needs' (The Charities Regulator, 2019). This distinction in their declared objectives and the different funding criteria applied by the Arts Council of Ireland has influenced how these organisations have been classified in this study.

1.4 Rationale for Study

Creativity has been identified as a critically important skill considered necessary for success in 21st century society by educators, business leaders, academics, and governmental agencies (Robinson, 2011; Hallissy *et al.*, 2013; Sawyer, 2015). Government responses to this has seen creativity emerge as a key concept in educational policies in Western countries such as Australia, the US, the UK, France, Germany and Sweden (Craft, 2005; Feldman and Benjamin, 2006; Shaheen, 2010; OECD, 2013) and several Asian countries including China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore (Cheng, 2011; Lin, 2011). Since the mid-1990s several countries, including Ireland, have been in the process of implementing curricular reform in order to meet the changing needs of society and the challenge of succeeding in an increasingly competitive global economy (OECD, 2013). Accordingly, the fostering of creativity has been foregrounded in numerous policies and actions plans for education (Craft, 2003; Sawyer, 2015).

This research study commenced in the year following the Department of Education and Skills (DES) launch of *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (DES, 2012), the policy document outlining proposed curricular reform in post-primary level education in Ireland. 'Creativity and innovation' were among the eight key principles underpinning the new reform. In a matter of weeks after *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (DES, 2012),

was released, the launch of the first ever *Arts in Education Charter* (DAHG/DES, 2013) announced the government's intention to place the arts at the centre of Ireland's education system. The Charter's declaration that creativity must be Ireland's primary focus for the future appeared to indicate a new commitment to the provision of arts education in Ireland. The Charter articulates a strong association between creativity and the arts and recognises the arts as a gateway to creativity:

We believe creativity must be placed at the heart of our future as a society and a country. The arts are our first encounter with that rich world of creativity, and we believe in placing the arts, alongside other subjects, at the core of our education system. (DAHG/DES, 2013, pp.3-4)

In addition to its proposal for a range of measures to promote creativity in education and enhance the provision of arts-in-education, the Charter calls for research that explores new models of arts and school practice for policy-makers and practitioners to draw on:

the need for research – including action-based research – that builds on existing good practice and explores new models of arts and school practice (content, delivery structure, and relationship with mainstream arts provision and mainstream curricular provision) at home and abroad so as to build the competence of the sector and create a source of knowledge and experience for policy-makers and practitioners to draw on. (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.15)

Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) urge that more empirical research on arts education be carried out to investigate the impact of arts education on the development of a variety of skills and suggests that a high priority area of study would be to investigate the effect of arts education on skills important to innovation, such as creativity, metacognition, and skills supporting good communication (Winner, Goldstein and Vincent-Lancrin, 2013).

During this same period of educational reform in Ireland, as discussions on creativity and the arts were at the forefront of educational discourse, new developments were also emerging on the Dublin theatre scene where a growing number of theatre companies had begun using 'different combinations of co-created, improvised,

physical, documentary, site-responsive, and participatory practices' (O'Gorman, 2014, p.551) in an effort to develop new approaches to theatre-making. This explosion of new theatrical forms, partly a response to the climate of political, economic, social, and cultural turmoil that beset Ireland in the latter years of the previous decade (Walsh, 2013) and partly driven by a need to find new ways to connect with audiences (Murphy, 2009), resulted in a marked shift away from traditional script-based performance towards *devised performance* and from proscenium arch theatre to *site-specific performance*. In addition to placing devising at the centre of their performance practice, many of these theatre companies made the unusual decision to collaborate with non-theatre professionals and to share the stage with untrained performers (McIvor, 2013), traditions firmly associated with participatory arts practices rather than professional theatre practice. These developments attracted much interest and attention (Murphy, 2009; Crawley, 2010; Shortall, 2011; O'Toole, 2013), thus placing participatory arts practices under the spotlight. As an educator and artist about to commence doctoral study, these synchronous developments in the education world and in the arts world presented a timely opportunity to investigate how the two areas of my professional identity might converge and whether there was potential to develop an applied Participatory Arts model for education. My experience as an artist in the participatory arts sector triggered my interest in the participatory arts as an agent for creativity, while my experience as a teacher at post-primary level prompted me to research how efforts to promote creativity in education might draw on this field of practice.

Finally, a further influencing factor that prompted this research study is the fact that the participatory arts, in their truest sense, do not currently feature in the post-primary curriculum. Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.99) holds the view that 'people frequently get more out of making art than seeing the fruits of other people's labors' and 'everyone has artistic potential'. In this regard Matarasso (2019) articulates an important distinction between learning about art and creating art and suggests that the latter is a liberating and empowering act:

Part of the difference in kind between learning about art and creating it lies in the power conferred by each activity. Both enable

us, in different ways, to discover, process, understand, organise and share our experience. But in creating art, we bring something into existence and in doing that we change the world. When we make sense of life, from feelings, ideas and experiences we may not even know we have, in forms to which others can respond creatively, we conjure up new possibilities in all our imaginations. That is the artist's act and it is a power in the world (Matarasso, 2019, p.49).

Therefore, in terms of this research study, as the participatory arts by definition involves the co-creation of artistic endeavours, it was perceived by the researcher to be well-positioned to facilitate opportunities for students to be creators as well as consumers of art, and thus was chosen as the testbed for this study.

1.5 Research Questions

Matarasso's (2019, p.49) notion that creating art can 'conjure up new possibilities in all our imaginations' is of particular relevance to the concept of creativity and presented a strong impetus for this research study which sought to explore how creativity was fostered in the Participatory Arts, with a view to informing the design of an applied Participatory Arts model for fostering creativity within post-primary education contexts. In terms of the latter, the following questions were composed to frame the study:

1. How do pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives foster creativity?
 - a) What are the key characteristics and core processes of the pure/applied Participatory Arts initiative?
 - b) What are the principles and conditions underpinning 'climate/s for creativity' within these forms of Participatory Arts initiatives?
 - c) What are the (pedagogical) approaches that contribute to enabling creativity within these forms of Participatory Arts initiatives?
 - d) What are the beneficial outcomes for participants within pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives, and how are these enabled?
2. What are the characteristics of a Participatory Arts Model that could be integrated to foster creativity in post-primary educational settings?

1.6 Frame of Research Study

The framework for this research study took inspiration from the Case Study methodology of research, with a focus on exploring how creativity was enabled in the Participatory Arts contexts of Upstate and Fighting Words respectively. The pragmatic paradigm underpinned the research approach, and in this respect, attention was focused on the research problem, with practical consideration of the methods and processes that best facilitated exploration and analysis of creativity within these pure and applied Participatory Arts contexts. This mixed methods study made use of both qualitative and quantitative data-sets gleaned from two Participatory Arts settings to explore the aforementioned research questions. In this regard, the researcher utilised a range of data collection tools, including: semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, document/ resource analysis and field notes from observation of Participatory Arts spaces and practices. However, due to participant group size and participant availability, qualitative data were gathered from Case Study 1, and qualitative and quantitative data were gathered concurrently from Case Study 2, making this a dominant qualitative concurrent mixed methods study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The data analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase of analysis of Upstate and Fighting Words data-sets took-place from 2014-2017 and sought to answer Research Question 1 (a) and (d). The second phase of analysis of Upstate and Fighting Words data-sets took-place in 2018-2019 and sought to answer Research Questions 1 (b), (c), (d) and 2. It is important to alert the reader here that this two-phase approach to the data analysis significantly influenced the structure of the thesis and how the presentation of findings were organised. The findings from the first phase of the data analysis are presented in the three publications provided in Appendices A, B and C and the findings from the second phase of analysis are documented in Chapters 4 and 5. A detailed explanation of the data analysis methods employed is provided in Chapter 3, however, a brief overview of the approaches taken in the first and second phases of the data analysis, and the corresponding outputs, is outlined here to enable the reader to form an initial understanding of the two phases of analysis and gain an insight into the presentation and structure of the thesis. Moreover, an explanation

of the somewhat complex structure of this thesis, and how the reader might best approach reading it, is provided in section 1.8.

1.6.1 First Phase of Data Analysis

The first phase of analysis of Upstate and Fighting Words data-sets took-place from 2014-2017 during which time the main focus of the research was to ascertain the broader characteristics of these pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives and identify the beneficial outcomes arising from participating in the participatory arts. During this phase the researcher carried out a preliminary review of the data sets. Two separate data analysis approaches were utilised in the first phase of data analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used to analyse the Upstate data sets, and Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) framework analysis was used to analyse Fighting Words datasets. The guiding research questions at this initial phase of analysis were: *What are the key characteristics and core processes of the pure/ applied Participatory Arts initiative? What are the beneficial outcomes for participants within pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives, and how are these enabled?* The intention was to keep a broader focus on the overall participatory arts experience, and in doing so, get a sense of its key processes and practices, and whether creativity was being fostered within it.

In this first phase of analysis of Upstate' data-sets, the researcher reviewed primary data gathered from interviews with the two founders, interviews with four artists and focus group interviews with participants. Furthermore, secondary data were collated and analysed from documentary materials of 7 Upstate productions. The first phase of analysis of Upstate generated four broad themes relating to what contributed to effectiveness or otherwise of Upstate' Participatory Arts productions, namely, Characteristics of Participatory Arts Initiatives, Processes of Participatory Arts, Principles underpinning the Participatory Arts Process, and Beneficial Outcomes. The key findings in relation to this first phase of data analysis of Upstate' initiatives were framed as a discussion paper, entitled: *'Whose art is it anyway?' Devising in Participatory Arts and Professional Theatre Practice: A Critical and*

Historical Analysis of Upstate Theatre Project, which was published as a book chapter (White, 2015).

The approach taken in the first phase of analysis of Fighting Words data sets was consistent with the principles of framework analysis. Srivastava and Thomson (2009) describe framework analysis as a qualitative method of research which has specific questions, and some a priori issues identified prior to the start of the data analysis. Srivastava and Thomson (2009, p.73) add that while 'framework analysis may generate theories'; its main purpose is to 'describe and interpret what is happening in a particular setting'. According to Ritchie and Spencer (1994), who developed this technique, framework analysis is flexible in that it allows the user to either collect all the data and then analyse them or do data analysis *during* the collection process. Archer *et al.* (2005) emphasise that framework analysis allows keeping in close contact with the data, since it is a dynamic and generative framework which allows change or addition or amendment throughout the process. This flexible approach to data analysis was important for this research study, which needed at this initial stage to uncover simply what was happening within the applied Participatory Arts settings of Fighting Words vis-à-vis engagement of participants, and how this was being facilitated. The first phase of analysis of Fighting Words activities using framework analysis involved coding the qualitative data-sets and generating broad themes relating to what contributed to effectiveness or otherwise of Fighting Words initiatives, and blending the results from the accompanying descriptive statistics as appropriate within and across these themes. In this regard, a number of key themes emerged that pointed to Fighting Words enabling learners in three ways:

- Fighting Words as a *Vehicle for Dialogue and Democratic Relations*
- Fighting Words as a *Vehicle for Voice*
- Fighting Words as a *Vehicle for Creativity and Imagination*

The findings further demonstrated that participants' experience of this space and the learning that occurs there, causes young people to conceive of themselves differently. In this regard, participants in Fighting Words demonstrated a range of behaviours that suggested increased levels of engagement and motivation, improved confidence and self-esteem, recognition of and pride in creative ability, a stronger

sense of self, a greater ability to work collaboratively, and improved literacy. The manner in which the Fighting Words' initiatives enabled the aforementioned beneficial outcomes was articulated in a discussion paper entitled: '*Fighting words as revolutionary pedagogy: a Freirean reading of young people's experiences of a socially-engaged creative writing centre*', which was subsequently published as a journal article (White et al., 2018).

Furthermore, there was evidence to suggest that participants' experience of Fighting Words and learning therein, was connected in some way to the 'space' or 'place'. This led the researcher to move back through the data-sets to consider the learning space, particularly the interplay of the physical, socio-emotional and critical dimensions of the environment on the learner experience. This process led to the articulation of a 'Multidimensional Model of Creative Space', which formed the basis for a further journal article entitled: '*The development of a model of creative space and its potential for transfer from non-formal to formal education*' (White and Lorenzi, 2016).

Ultimately, the three publications provided in Appendices A, B and C emerged from the first phase of research across the two settings, and as such represent the initial outputs from the research study.

1.6.2 Second Phase of Data Analysis

The overarching study was concerned with investigating processes of promoting creativity in education, within Participatory Arts type initiatives, and therefore the second phase of analysis was pivotal in uncovering how climates for creativity were being fostered, and what processes enabled participants to be creative, as well as how broader beneficial outcomes identified in the first phase of analysis were enabled. The second phase of analysis of Upstate and Fighting Words data-sets took place in 2018-2019, during which time the main focus of the research was to ascertain specifically whether (and how) creativity was being fostered within these pure and applied Participatory Arts contexts, and the beneficial outcomes accrued,

with the purpose of articulating features of a Participatory Arts Model that could be used to foster creativity in education. This aspect of the research, therefore, set out to explore conditions and processes that contributed to or fostered creativity within Participatory Arts initiatives, as well as uncovering any beneficial outcomes that emerged. For the second phase of analysis the researcher revisited the literature and guided by the research questions constructed a detailed frame for analysis derived from the relevant literature that integrated the principles, conditions, processes and approaches already shown in other studies to underpin creativity in participatory arts and educational settings. This resulted in the identification of over 40 elements, which were grouped into four thematic categories to comprise the frame for analysis, which was then used to re-analyse the entire datasets from both cases of study. The four thematic categories framing the analysis were: Theme A: *Fostering climate/s for creativity*; Theme B: *Processes for being creative*; Theme C: *Principles of good practice*; and, Theme D: *Beneficial outcomes*. The data from Upstate and Fighting Words were completely re-coded, and categorised under these categories. The second phase of analysis sought to ascertain whether evidence of these elements existed in the data-sets across both studies. The qualitative data-sets were reanalysed using the frame for analysis derived from the critical review of the literature, and the quantitative data-sets were compiled and presented in descriptive statistical format. In this respect, the second phase of analysis was a *reanalysis* of the original data sets. The researcher included the open category 'Other' within the frame for analysis to capture instances or data that did not align with any known principles, practices, processes or conditions for creativity, and thus, allowed the data to speak to what didn't exist in the literature. This approach was adopted to allow the researcher to test the validity of existing ideas/theories in the literature and also to add any new ideas/theories that might emerge. In essence, the frame for analysis in the second phase of analysis allowed for 'tracing of existing' and 'mapping of new' principles, practices, processes or conditions for creativity. The findings that emerged from the second phase of analysis are documented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, and these findings respond to the core research questions, with two further journal articles to be written based on the latter at a point in the near future. *It is important for the reader to take note here that the second phase of analysis is*

where the researcher directly responds to the overarching research questions (as articulated in Section 1.5), and thus it is this second phase of analysis that addresses the main focus of the thesis of exploring the potential of using Participatory Arts initiatives to foster creativity in education.

1.7 Researcher Context

My background as an educator and artist, a lifelong love of the arts and a passionate belief in the transformative power of aesthetic engagement all converged to influence and inform my choice of topic for this research. The research, in attempting to answer the research question of how creativity is fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives and how practices in that field might inspire and contribute to a model of creativity for education was undertaken for a variety of personal and professional reasons. I have straddled the fields of education and the arts over the past three decades. I taught at post-primary level for 12 years and have an extensive background in the arts with a particular emphasis on community arts and participatory arts practice. I worked as an assistant director and stage manager with a number of independent theatre companies before training as a community drama facilitator and working as an artist in the participatory arts sector where I facilitated and directed a number of EU funded cross-border community-engaged theatre projects for participatory arts organisations in Ireland. I have been working as a lecturer and researcher in the School of Education Studies / Institute of Education in Dublin City University for the last 12 years and have recently taken on the role of Chairperson of the Professional Master of Education, an initial teacher education programme for postgraduates seeking to qualify as teachers at post-primary level.

This doctoral research study brings together my work in a variety of creative fields over the last number of years. As a professional educator and artist, I have always been interested in the area of creativity and the arts and particularly in the application of drama-based techniques in non-theatre contexts. My experience as an artist in the community arts sector highlighted the role and potential of the participatory arts as an agent for creativity where I observed powerful examples of what can be done to support young people's creative expression and personal and

social development. As a teacher, I always believed that there was much greater scope for the development of creativity in education and tremendous potential for a much greater emphasis on partnership with the arts community. In particular I was convinced that the model of devising and performance used in community-engaged theatre offered a much-needed model of creativity within the field of education which if utilised appropriately had the potential to bring a genuine sense of creativity into the formal education system. In addition to these personal and professional motivations, the research was undertaken because of the relative lack of research in participatory arts practices in Ireland and the absence of such initiatives in the post-primary sector in particular. My study sought to address this gap and to investigate the potential of the Participatory Arts to foster creativity in the context of post-primary education in Ireland.

1.8 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is structured into six chapters with relevant publications interspersed as outlined below:

Chapter One presents an introduction to the thesis, the rationale for this research study, an overview of the framing of the research study including the main research questions, and an account of the researcher's personal and professional interest in the area. It closes with an explanation of the overall structure of this thesis. **Chapter Two** outlines the literature according to four key areas of relevance to this research thesis including: creativity as a concept and its role in education, arts education in Ireland, the principles of participatory arts practice, and creativity in post-primary level education in Ireland. **Chapter Three** details the research design and methodology, including the rationale and philosophical underpinning of the research and methodologies employed. It further describes the data collection and data analysis processes, and the limitations of the study. **Chapter Four and the accompanying Publication 1** located in Appendix A present the research findings from Case Study 1: Upstate. The reader is asked to first read Publication 1: "*Whose art is it anyway?*" *Devising in Participatory Arts and Professional Theatre Practice: A*

Critical and Historical Analysis of Upstate Theatre Project', in order to familiarise him/herself with the participatory arts work produced by the company. This publication which emerged from the first phase of the data analysis critiques over 7 different productions from Upstate and presents the findings in relation to research Question 1a. The reader is then asked to return to Chapter 4 to review the findings that emerged from the second phase of data analysis in response to Research Questions 1 (b), (c), (d) and 2. **Chapter Five and the accompanying Publications 2 and 3**, present the research findings from Case Study 2: Fighting Words. Again, the reader is asked to first read the accompanying publications, which comprise two journal articles summarising the findings which emerged from the first phase of analysis of data from the Fighting Words case study, before reviewing the findings from the second phase of analysis of the Fighting Word initiative presented in Chapter 5. Publication 2 '*Fighting Words as Revolutionary Pedagogy: A Freirean Reading of Young People's Experiences of a Socially-Engaged Creative Writing Centre*' is located in Appendix B and Publication 3: 'The development of a model of creative space and its potential for transfer from non-formal to formal education' is located in Appendix C. **Chapter Six** details the conclusions from the overall study of how creativity is fostered within participatory arts initiatives, the beneficial outcomes that emerge from such practices and the characteristics of an applied participatory arts model aimed at fostering creativity in the educational context. It presents a discussion of the main research questions, recommendations for policy, practice and further study in this area, and an account of the researcher's reflections on the research journey.

1.9 Summary

Amid calls for greater creativity in education worldwide and in light of recent educational policy in Ireland advocating a need for critical and creative thinking in post-primary education and a commitment to arts education provision, this doctoral research study set out to explore how creativity is fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives, the beneficial outcomes that emerge from same and how such practices might inform a model of creativity for post-primary education. Inspired by current

participatory arts practices in the community and the non-formal education sector, the research investigated the potential of the participatory arts as an agent for creativity. The study explored two types of Participatory Arts initiatives, the first led by Upstate, a pure Participatory Arts initiative, and the second led by Fighting Words, an applied Participatory Arts initiative. In the context of this study, the aim was to provide an evidence base for, and articulate, the factors and processes underpinning climates for creativity, and the (pedagogic) approaches used to foster creativity in these Participatory Arts initiatives, as well as exploring the enablement of beneficial outcomes across both Participatory Arts contexts.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This research study sought to establish how creativity was fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives, with a view to informing the design of an applied Participatory Arts model for education. This review of the literature maps the ideas, arguments and concepts in the two areas under investigation in this study – creativity in education and the participatory arts.

2.2 Literature Review Methodology

The methodology used to identify literature and studies for the review process involved a number of steps. The first step involved targeting literature on the concept of creativity, its importance in society and its role in educational policy and practice. This stage of the review process also sought to identify literature pertaining to the Participatory Arts and in particular to the principles and practices that characterise this field. This involved searches of databases, including: Google Scholar, Taylor Francis Online, Project MUSE and ERIC database using the following search terms: ‘creativity’; ‘creativity in education’; ‘arts education’; ‘arts in education’; ‘participatory arts’; ‘arts participation’; ‘collaborative arts’; ‘community arts’; ‘community theatre’; ‘community-engaged theatre’; socially engaged arts’; ‘artist and community collaboration’ ‘arts-based intervention’, as well as ‘creativity’ in context of ‘post-primary education’. Additionally, sources were acquired through a ‘cited by’ list search. Furthermore, reports from the Department of Education and Skills (DES), and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in Ireland were reviewed with respect to policy formation within the context of creativity in post-primary education. The second stage of the literature review sought to narrow the focus to studies relating to participatory arts initiatives and/or developments in creativity in post-primary education in Ireland in recent years. This involved searches of databases for literature published from 2000 to 2019. This timeframe was chosen as it coincides with the years prior to and including the launch

of post-primary curricular reform in Ireland and with the period when participatory arts approaches were emerging on the Dublin theatre scene. The literature review presented herein examines the relevant key areas and current debates in the academic discourse on creativity in education and the participatory arts. The literature reviewed is divided into four sections according to four key areas of relevance to this research thesis including: creativity as a concept and its role in education, arts education in Ireland, the principles of participatory arts practice, and creativity in post-primary level education in Ireland.

2.3 Creativity: Concepts and Practices

This section introduces the concept of creativity, levels of creativity, theoretical paradigms of creativity, the importance of creativity, and creativity in education.

2.3.1 Concept of Creativity

Commonly regarded as a positive social value (Cropley, 1992; Craft, 2003), creativity is a popular concept that permeates every facet of life (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999; Boden, 2004; Runco, 2004; Harris, 2016; Lucas, 2016). While research on creativity has been in evidence for several centuries (Runco and Albert, 2010), it is widely accepted that modern creativity research began in the mid-20th Century as a direct response to J. P. Guilford's (1950) presidential address to the American Psychological Association in which he called for psychologists to investigate what he considered to be the important but neglected field of creativity. Guilford's speech is frequently cited as a major influence on the upsurge in creativity research in the decades that followed. Guilford (1973, p.3) himself contributed to the field describing creativity as a phenomenon that required 'divergent rather than convergent thinking, going beyond commonly accepted ideas to unusual forms, ideas, approaches, solutions'. Creativity is portrayed in the literature as a somewhat elusive concept that is difficult to define (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999; Saebø *et al.*, 2007). According to Saebø *et al.* (2007, p.206) this is due to the fact that creativity is 'ethereal and elusive' while Treffinger *et al.* (2002, p.5) reasons that 'because creativity is complex and multifaceted in nature, there is no single, universally accepted definition'. The

absence of such a definition is highlighted as problematic by Plucker *et al.* (2004, p.83) who contend that the lack of adequate precision in the definition of creativity has led to a 'preponderance of myths and stereotypes about creativity that collectively strangle most research efforts in this area'. While these challenges and frustrations are indeed borne out by the literature, an examination of some of the many definitions of creativity found in the literature, nevertheless, reveals some commonalities in researchers' understanding of the concept of creativity. Many definitions of creativity, for instance, as Mayer (1999) notes, allude to the creation of outputs that are both original and useful. For example, Sternberg and Lubart (1999, p.3) declare that 'creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task)'. Lubart (1999, p.339) suggests that 'creativity from a Western perspective can be defined as the ability to produce work that is novel and appropriate'. Seltzer and Bentley (1999, p.10) define creativity in terms of 'new' processes and 'valued' outcomes stating: 'creativity is the application of knowledge and skills in new ways to achieve a valued goal'. Martindale (1999, p.137) says 'A creative idea is one that is both original and appropriate for the situation in which it occurs'. Gruber and Wallace (1999) acknowledge the prevalence of 'originality' and 'usefulness' as characteristics of definitions of creativity in their description:

Like most definitions of creativity, ours involves novelty and value: The creative product must be new and must be given value according to some external criteria. But we add a third criterion, purpose – creative products are the result of purposeful behaviour – and a fourth, duration- creative people take on hard projects lasting a long time. (Gruber and Wallace, 1999, p.94)

'Purposeful' is also flagged as a criterion by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) (1999) report *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* which recognises creative outputs as 'original' and 'of value' and also add 'imaginative' and 'purposeful' activity as two further characteristics of creative processes. The NACCCE (1999, p.31). describe 'imaginative activity' as 'a mode of thought which is essentially *generative*' and which considers a given situation from new perspectives, envisioning possibilities that are different from

those normally associated with a given task. The NACCCE (1999, p.30) consequently define creativity as: 'Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value'. Craft (2001a) in her report on *Creativity in Education* for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority also recognises imagination and originality as core traits of creativity, however, she adds that it need not necessarily lead to a product-outcome:

Creativity involves being imaginative, going beyond the obvious, being aware of one's own unconventionality, being original in some way. It is not necessarily linked with a product-outcome (Craft, 2001a, p.15).

Imagination is explicitly linked with creativity elsewhere in the literature by Robinson (2009, p.58) who defines imagination as 'the power to bring to mind things that are not present to our senses'. He argues that imagination involves freeing the mind from the 'here and now' and being able to consider the past, present and future in a different light:

As soon as we have the power to release our minds from the immediate here and now, in a sense we are free. We are free to revisit the past, free to reframe the present, and free to anticipate a whole range of possible futures. (Robinson, 2009, p.58)

Robinson refers to action – the act of doing something – to distinguish between imagination and creativity, asserting that imagination can be entirely internal but creativity requires action. He says being creative involves imagination but also requires action:

To be creative you actually have to do something. It involves putting your imagination to work to make something new, to come up with new solutions to problems, even to think of new problems or questions. You can think of creativity as applied imagination. (Robinson, 2009, p.67)

Robinson develops this argument further in later work, arguing that creativity relies on imagination and that innovation is putting new ideas into practice. He explains the connection between imagination, creativity and innovation as follows:

There are two other concepts to keep in mind: imagination and innovation. Imagination is the root of creativity. It is the ability to bring to mind things that aren't present to our senses. Creativity is putting your imagination to work. It is applied imagination. Innovation is putting new ideas into practice. (Robinson, 2015, p.118)

The role of imagination is also acknowledged by Wood and Ashfield (2008) who argue that providing opportunities for exploring and imagining is key to promoting creativity in the classroom. Lucas (2016), likewise, notes that most definitions of creativity include elements of being 'imaginative' and 'inquisitive'. Based on a review of creativity and an examination of the literature relating to the assessment of creativity in schools undertaken with colleagues at the Centre for Real-World Learning (CRL) at the University of Winchester in 2011, Lucas reports that the CRL research team developed a five-dimensional model of creativity which adopts a definition of creativity based on five core creative habits which include 'imaginative' and 'inquisitive' and also adds 'persistent', 'collaborative' and 'disciplined' as three further dimensions. Lucas explains the addition of these further dimensions is necessary as 'persistent' captures the conduct needed to overcome the difficulties encountered in complex and challenging creative acts; 'collaborative' emphasises groups over individuals and recognises the social components of creative advances in several fields; and 'disciplined' is a reminder that the craft and disciplined practice aspects of creativity should receive greater emphasis. Based on results of trials of the model with teachers in England, Lucas (2011, p.287) proposes that the model can be used as an assessment framework to assess the development of creativity in students and concludes that 'it is operationally possible to define creativity in ways that teachers find valid and useful'.

Amabile's (1982) contention that the creativity of a product is a matter of social judgment – i.e. it is something that people can recognise and agree on – is also helpful for considering how creativity in education might be understood. She provides a consensual definition of creativity as follows:

A product or response is creative to the extent that appropriate observers independently agree it is creative. Appropriate observers

are those familiar with the domain in which the product was created or the response articulated. Thus, creativity can be regarded as the quality of products or responses judged to be creative by appropriate observers, and it can also be regarded as the process by which something so judged is produced. (Amabile, 1982, p.1001)

Amabile's definition highlights two views of creativity commonly found in the literature - creativity *as product* and creativity *as process*. Many researchers refer to creativity as a process which involves active participation and sustained and persistent engagement with a course of action that is purposefully intent in the pursuit of a goal (Guilford, 1973; Torrance, 1988; NACCCE, 1999; Nickerson, 1999). The importance of persistence is highlighted by Seltzer and Bentley (1999, p. viii) who contend that creative learners need to have 'a belief in learning as an incremental process, in which repeated attempts will eventually lead to success'. An environment that encourages and motivates students to persevere with the process through recognising and rewarding creative *effort* 'even when it is not highly successful' is therefore important according to Nickerson (1999, p.414). Nickerson (1999) argues that fear of failure and fear of ridicule curb creative thinking and insists that building confidence is crucial in encouraging creativity. He emphasises the importance of stimulating and rewarding curiosity and exploration and encouraging playfulness and whimsy. Nickerson (1999) further argues that creativity requires discipline and a willingness to take risks, make mistakes and embrace failure as a stage of the process, behaviours also identified by Halsey *et al.* (2006) and Cremin, Burnard, & Craft (2006) who add that learners engaged in a creative process benefit most when the process includes a balance of structure and freedom. The literature also points to the need for reflection and action (Guilford, 1973) which involves creative thinking – 'playing with ideas, trying out possibilities' - and critical thinking – 'evaluating which ideas do work and which do not' (NACCCE, 1999, p.33).

The difficulty in finding a suitable definition of creativity partly lies in the myriad of approaches to the study of creativity. This complexity is captured by Rhodes' (1961) 'four P's of creativity', a multifaceted conception of creativity, which categorises creativity theory under the four strands of 'Person' (includes research relating to

personality traits, habits and attitudes of the creative person), 'Process' (refers to motivation, perception, learning, thinking, and communicating), 'Press' (signifies the relationship between the person and the environment) and 'Products' (applies to ideas rendered in a tangible form). Rhodes' four P's arose from his attempt to synthesise the many definitions of creativity that were already in use within five years of Guilford's call for greater attention to the topic of creativity. Rhodes writes:

About five years ago I set out to find a definition of the word creativity, I was interested also in imagination, originality, and ingenuity. In time I had collected forty definitions of creativity and sixteen of imagination. (Rhodes, 1961, p.306)

Rhodes (1961, p.307) noting that 'the definitions are not mutually exclusive. They overlap and intertwine', offers a synthesised definition of creativity as follows:

My answer to the question, "What is creativity?", is this: The word creativity is a noun naming the phenomenon in which a person communicates a new concept (which is the product). Mental activity (or mental process) is implicit in the definition, and of course no one could conceive of a person living or operating in a vacuum, so the term press is also implicit. The definition begs the questions as to how new the concept must be and to whom it must be new. (Rhodes, 1961, p.305)

While the search for a universal definition of creativity continues to elude researchers in the field, synthesised definitions provide useful parameters. In their extensive content analysis of creativity articles appearing in refereed journals from 2001 - 2004, Plucker *et al.* (2004, p. 90) found that 'clear definitions of creativity are rarely consistent, if offered at all.' Plucker *et al.* (2004, p.88) identified several reoccurring constituent elements to propose a synthesised definition of creativity as follows: 'Creativity is the interaction among *aptitude, process, and environment* by which an individual or group produces a *perceptible product* that is both *novel and useful* as defined within a *social context* '.

Based on a comprehensive study of the literature and for the purposes of this research, creativity is understood as a process that involves individuals independently or collaboratively working in persistent and purposeful pursuit of an

objective that requires them to draw on their imagination to express ideas and/or produce outputs that can be verified by others as original and appropriate to the individual and the context in which they are produced.

2.3.2 Levels of creativity

Traditionally, there are primarily two categories of creativity: *'everyday creativity (also called 'little-c'), which can be found in nearly all people, and eminent creativity (also called 'Big-C'), which is reserved for the great'* (Kaufmann and Beghetto, 2009, p.1) and determined by gatekeepers of the domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Much of the discourse on creativity in education has been driven by the concept of 'little c' creativity - the problem-solving and agency of individuals in everyday life (Craft, 2001b; 2003). As noted by Lin (2011), two key principles underpin the approach to creativity in education: firstly, the view that creativity can be developed (Parnes, 1963; Torrance, 1963; Torrance and Myers, 1970; Fryer, 1996; NACCCE, 1999; Craft, 2001b; Robinson and Aronica, 2015), and secondly, the perception that all individuals have the potential to be creative (Weisberg, 1993; NACCCE, 1999; Seltzer and Bentley, 1999; Craft, 2001b; Feldman and Benjamin, 2006). Understandably, valuing 'everyday creativity' and recognising and developing the creativity of individuals are fundamental principles in the promotion of creativity in education. Although the magnitude of creativity differs considerably between Big-C and little-c, both categories recognise *originality* and *novelty* as critical determinants of creative thought and action. As an understanding and appreciation of the similarities and difference between these categories is of particular significance to educationalists, further elucidation is required.

Craft (2002) identifies five features that she sees as common to Big C and little-c creativity: Innovation – creative acts involve development or change; Depth of knowledge in a particular field – is required to inform the creative act; Risk – the need for creative acts to entail some element of risk; Audience/context – necessary for recognising the creativity and its value, and Idiosyncrasy - viewing creativity as an idiosyncratic concept that defies various tests. Craft distinguishes little-c from Big-C creativity in terms of whether the idea is of consequence to the individual at a

personal level (little-c) or to a field of study (Big C). Craft's articulation of this distinction extends to an understanding that creativity is evaluated differently in each domain. She notes that while Big C creativity is judged by experts of a field, creative action in the little-c domain can be evaluated by peers and non-experts. Boden's (2004) reflection on the different senses of 'creative' and 'creativity' provides a helpful explanation of how levels of creativity can be classified. She argues that ideas can be classed as *psychological*, which she terms P-creative, or *historical*, which she terms H-creative. She uses the term P-creative to describe the type of creativity that occurs when individuals have an idea that is new to them personally, and H-creative to refer to an idea that an individual has that has never occurred to anyone before. She maintains that the extent to which an idea can be deemed original or novel provides the necessary contextualisation. Confident that this distinction applies to all fields, she writes:

The psychological sense concerns ideas (whether in science, needlework, music, painting, literature . . .) that are surprising, or perhaps even fundamentally novel, with respect to *the individual mind* which had the idea. If Mary Smith combines ideas in a way she's never done before, or if she has an idea which she could not have had before, her idea is P-creative – no matter how many people may have had the same idea already. The historical sense applies to ideas that are novel with respect to *the whole of human history*. Mary Smith's surprising idea is H-creative only if no one has ever had that idea before her. (Boden, 2004, p. 43)

A similar distinction is made by the NACCCE (1999) who also advise that originality can be considered '*historic*' and 'uniquely original' in terms of accomplishments in a field, but in the context of education, originality can be viewed as 'individual' or 'relative' compared to work previously produced:

'Individual - A person's work may be original in relation to their own previous work and output.

'Relative - It may be original in relation to their peer group: to other young people of the same age, for example (NACCCE, 1999, p.32).

More recently, Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) argue that the Big-C/little-c dichotomy is not sufficiently nuanced, and thus propose a Four C model of creativity (illustrated

diagrammatically in Figure 2.1 overleaf) that encompasses little-c, Big-C, mini-c and pro-c. The addition of two further categories adds further clarification on how creativity can be classified. Kaufman and Beghetto propose the category of 'mini-c' to capture levels of creativity demonstrated by individuals engaged in the process of learning and the category of 'pro-c' (professional creativity) to recognise the work of individuals who have attained professional level expertise but not yet reached Big-C status. Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009, p. 4) description of 'mini-c' as 'the creativity inherent in students' unique and personally meaningful insights and interpretations as they learn new subject matter' is akin to Boden's P-creative or psychological sense of creativity. In previous work (Beghetto and Kaufman, 2007, p.75) they argue that mini-c is a construct that warrants its own terminology because 'current conceptions of little-c creativity are not inclusive enough to accommodate the personal creative processes involved in students' development of new understanding and personal knowledge construction'. In relation to pro-c, Kaufman and Beghetto (2009, p.5) argue that 'not all working professionals in creative fields will necessarily reach pro 'c'... Similarly, some people may reach pro 'c' level without being able to necessarily quit day jobs'. The Four C model offers a developmental framework for creativity, specifying *feedback* as the factor that determines progression from mini-c to little-c, *practice* as the factor that enables the transition from little-c to pro-c and *time* as one of the most important factors in the leap from pro-C to Big-C.

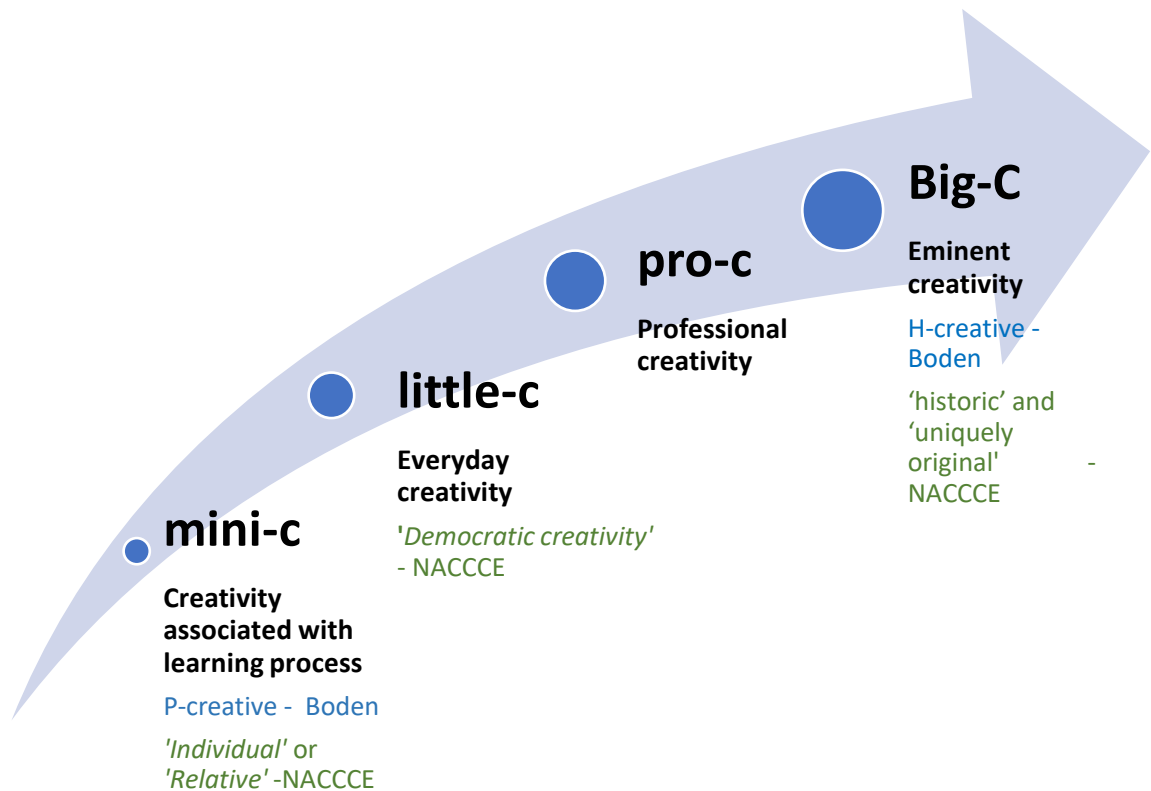


Figure 2.1: Creativity Continuum - illustrating Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) Four C Model of Creativity and points of alignment with Boden (2004) and NACCCE (1999)

2.3.3 Theoretical Paradigms of Creativity

Approaches to the study of creativity have emerged from a range of theoretical perspectives which researchers have categorised into various models. Sternberg and Lubart (1999), for example, identify six approaches, or paradigms, that have been used to understand creativity as follows: mystical approaches (perceive creativity as a form of divine inspiration or spiritual process); pragmatic approaches (concerned with developing creativity); psychodynamic approaches (focus on eminent creators); psychometric approaches (assert an individual's creativity can be measured using paper and pencil tests); cognitive approaches (seek to understand the processes underlying creative thought); and social-personality approaches (focus on personality traits, motivation and the sociocultural environment). Runco (2004) chose a disciplinary framework to organise creativity research by behavioural, biological, clinical, cognitive, developmental, historiometric, organizational,

psychometric and social perspectives. These classifications indicate that while creativity research traverses a vast range of disciplines, there has been a tendency for researchers to examine each of the elements in isolation (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999; Lin, 2011; Glăveanu, 2013).

A shift in the field of creativity studies started to occur in the 1980s and 1990s as researchers began to look towards the interplay between the elements of creativity and sought to develop new theoretical frameworks that attempted to incorporate sociocultural and ecological psychology perspectives on creativity (Montuori and Purser, 1995). These confluence approaches integrated multiple dimensions and factors of creativity (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999; Lin, 2011), and thus offer multidimensional concepts of creativity. Examples include a systems models of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988) which recognises a variety of interrelated forces operating at multiple levels; distributed creativity (Miettinen, 2006; Sawyer and DeZutter, 2009), where collaborating groups of individuals collectively generate a shared creative product; and more recently, Glăveanu's (2013, p.76) five-A framework which rewrites the four P's in order to bring 'more conceptual unity to the study of creativity and a better integration of its fundamental elements'.

Glăveanu's (2013) five-A framework (actor, action, artifact, audience and affordances) proposes a multidimensional, multifaceted vision of creativity which attempts to establish relations between Rhodes four P's. To enable this interconnection, Glăveanu switches the focus from 'person' to 'actor', 'process' to 'action', 'product' to 'artifact', and expands 'press' to include 'audiences' and 'affordances'. Glăveanu argues that research focusing on the 'person' focused exclusively on the individual and failed to consider the influence of social context and environment. He reasons that the term 'actor' recognises that individuals interact within a social and cultural context. Similarly, he argues the term 'action' recognises the behavioural element of a creative act which he argues is 'an internal, psychological dimension and an external, behavioral one' (Glăveanu, 2013, p.73). The creative process requires action and the act of creation is a dynamic and cyclical process. For example, the artist creates a work through a series of inputs and adjustments in response to perception, observation and feedback at various stages

of the creative activity. Applying action to the creative process, Glăveanu (2013, p.73) contends, is 'meant to integrate and study the coordination between these dimensions and locate creative action between actors, audiences, and artifacts'. The term 'artifact' emphasises the cultural context of a product and its evaluation, acknowledges the zeitgeist nature of creative outputs and establishes 'a relational notion able to connect creators and audiences, creative outcomes and creative actions' (Glăveanu, 2013, p.74). Finally, the division of 'press' (social environment) into 'audience' and 'affordance' recognises 'the complexities of creating in a simultaneously social and material world' (Glăveanu, 2013, p.74). This further acknowledges the influence of others (audiences) in the process of creativity as 'being very often a determinant as important as the creator him- or herself' (Glăveanu, 2013, p.74) but also recognises the role of affordances (opportunities presented by the physical environment and the presence of resources) in supporting or hindering creativity. Glăveanu's five-A framework of actor, action, artefact, audience and affordances offers the theoretical advantage of capturing various levels of creative expression on the creativity continuum.

From an educational perspective, perhaps the most relevant of these paradigms of creativity are confluence approaches which consider a convergence of several tributary (or confluent) factors as influential to the development of creativity. As Beghetto and Kaufman (2014) note, the learning environment is also shaped by a confluence of features that influence student creativity.

2.3.4 The Importance of Creativity

Creativity is of both intrinsic and instrumental value. At an individual level, creativity contributes to physical and psychological wellbeing (Runco and Richards, 1997) and to optimal human functioning (Bloom, 2001). Economically, creativity is needed to raise competitiveness in increasingly globalised markets and to survive the fast pace of innovation and change resulting from technological advances (Craft, 2010; Robinson, 2011; Sawyer, 2015). From a social perspective, creativity is viewed as 'one of the key factors that drive civilization forward' (Hennessey and Amabile, 2010,

p.570). According to some commentators (Runco, 2004; Craft, 2011; Robinson, 2011), creativity is more important now than ever before, in terms of the personal, economic, and social benefits it offers a 21st century society. Its focus on problem-solving (Mumford *et al.*, 1994; Runco, 1994) and flexibility (Fiach, 1990; Runco, 1994) make it an effective response to the complexities arising from the rapid social, economic, and technological advances which dominate modern life (Runco, 2004) and a necessary life skill for young people faced with the challenge of coping with the uncertainties of life in the digital age (Craft, 2010). As creativity looms large on political, social and educational agendas worldwide (Newton and Newton, 2014), it is not surprising that attention has turned towards the role of education in fostering young people's creative potential and nurturing the innovators of the future.

2.3.5 Creativity in Education

Over the last few decades, the quest for creativity and the symbiotic relationship between creativity and learning has been the subject of much scrutiny both within and outside of the educational field (Suh *et al.*, 2012; De Jonge *et al.*, 2012) and the fostering of creativity has been foregrounded in numerous policies and actions plans for education (Craft, 2003; Sawyer, 2015). Craft and Jeffrey (2008) proffer three reasons for the push for creativity in educational policies. Firstly, they argue, is the emergence of little 'c' creativity as a concept of creativity that applies to everyday life and can be developed in all individuals; secondly, is the link between creativity and the economy and the notion that a creative workforce can make a substantial contribution to the economy. On this matter Craft and Jeffrey (2008, p.578) note that 'policy development increasingly reflects the dual goals of nurturing the learning society and the development of a knowledge-based economy'. Finally, they suggest that the conflating of creativity and cultural policies has created a core role for creativity in terms of both learning and pedagogy and creativity as a means of securing the type of flexibility and ingenuity required in rapidly changing global economic, political, technological, social and environmental conditions. There is much debate on whether certain domains are more likely than others to foster creativity. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), for example,

have received much attention in this regard but recent commentary suggests that an overemphasis on STEM subjects is misplaced and will not lead to the much-needed creativity and innovation unless accompanied by the parallel development of other fields (Coolahan, 2008; Robinson, 2013). While some commentators argue that creativity spans all domains (Lucas, 2001), and that one domain should not be elevated over another (Harris, 2016), Coolahan (2008) contends that there is growing evidence to suggest that the arts, in particular, could play a pivotal role in fostering innovation, creativity and imagination in education.

2.3.5.1 Creative learning environments in education

A systematic review of creative learning environments in education by Davies *et al.* (2012) is a helpful starting point for examining the environmental factors that influence creativity. Commissioned by Learning and Teaching Scotland, the review reports educational research, policy and professional literature relating 'primarily to studies in the UK (particularly Scotland), together with examples from other countries with similar education systems or where the context of the study was similar to that in Scottish schools' (Davies *et al.*, 2012, p. 82). Given the similarities between the Scottish and Irish educational systems, the findings from Davies *et al.* are considered to also be of relevance here. Davies *et al.* (2012, p.80) provides a synthesised definition of creative learning environments as extending 'beyond the physical architecture of the space in which learning takes place... to encompass psychosocial and pedagogical features... [and includes] the influence of places and people outside the school'. Their study summarised that student creativity is influenced by the physical environment, the pedagogical environment and the role of partnerships beyond the school. The findings in relation to each of these factors are outlined below.

2.3.5.2 Creativity in the physical environment

McCoy and Evans (2002) posit that creativity research has not focused sufficiently on the effect of physical environment on creativity. As mentioned earlier, Glăveanu (2013) introduced the concept of affordances (opportunities presented by the

physical environment and the presence of resources) to emphasise the role of the physical environment in supporting creativity. Other researchers (Warner and Myers, 2009; Dul *et al.*, 2011; Starke, 2012) also indicate that promoters of creativity need to pay attention to physical space. In terms of studies that have examined the physical environment, Davies *et al.* (2012) report flexible use of space and time, availability of appropriate materials and the use of indoor and outdoor spaces as features that foster creativity. Hasirci and Demirkan (2003) recommend that environments should allow independent work, be stimulating but not distracting, and allow easy access to resources. Jacucci and Wagner (2007) acknowledge the potential of classrooms to become creative spaces in which materials such as technologies and art objects expand collaborative communication and promote new ideas. Runco (1993, p.5) emphasises the value of stimulus rich environments as a source of inspiration where ‘bulletin boards and the like—can influence the creativity of students. This is because a creative environment can suggest that originality is acceptable, but also because the environment is itself a source for ideas.’

2.3.5.3 The pedagogical context of creativity

In terms of the pedagogical environment, Davies *et al.* (2012) report several features which have been found to stimulate creativity. These include the use of novel, motivating and authentic activities ‘set within as real a context as possible’; the use of ‘playful’ or ‘games-based’ approaches to learning; an environment that strikes a balance between structure and freedom, allows a degree of learner autonomy, supports risk taking and expressiveness and provides opportunities for exploring and imagining; flexible, informal approaches that are different to formal education, and which allow learners to work at their own pace without pressure; opportunities for working collaboratively with peers and the formation of positive teacher student relations that are based on mutual respect. The review also indicates that teachers’ expectations and students’ perceptions of those expectations have a significant influence on whether or not creativity is likely to occur. The importance of dialogue, humour, spontaneity and flexibility in the pedagogic relationship are also

emphasised as necessary elements to enable teachers to accommodate the directions pupils may wish to take a project.

2.3.5.4 The role of partnerships beyond the school

Finally, with respect to external partnerships, Davies *et al.* (2012) note that establishing partnerships with outside agencies and organisations in the community can significantly contribute to the promotion of creativity in schools. Examples of partnerships include visits to out of school environments such as museums and art galleries and in school events that include experts from outside agencies and organisations.

2.4 Arts Education and Arts-in-Education

This section of the literature review provides an overview of current arts education policy and provision in post-primary education in Ireland through an analysis of two key policy documents - *Points of Alignment* (Arts Council, 2008) and the *Arts in Education Charter* (DAHG/DES, 2013) along with a review of the recently launched Creative Schools, an initiative that forms part of the Creative Ireland Programme, a five year all-of-Government initiative intent on placing creativity at the centre of public policy (Creative Ireland, 2019). The discussion also focuses on current curricular reform, most specifically in relation to its inclusion of 'creativity and innovation' as one of the key principles underpinning post-primary curricula and practices. The discussion here also reviews the growing interest in arts education globally and examines the findings of recent international research on the impact of arts education on student learning, development and wellbeing.

Although creativity is to the fore in educational policies worldwide (Craft, 2003; Sawyer, 2015) and access to the arts has been declared a fundamental human right (UNESCO, 2010), Bamford's (2009, p.11) global compendium on the impact of the arts in education reveals that while the arts form part of the educational policy of almost every country in the world, there is often 'a gulf between the 'lip service' given to arts education and the provisions provided within schools'. Bamford's (2009)

research reports significant variation in how arts education is understood and implemented worldwide and draws a distinction between *education in the arts*, (i.e. the study of art forms such as drama, music and dance) and *education through the arts*, (i.e. the use of arts-based methods of teaching and learning in all curriculum subjects). Bamford (2009, p.11) highlights that quality arts education benefits students' health and socio-cultural wellbeing and specifies that 'quality arts education tends to be characterised by a strong partnership between the schools and outside arts and community organisations'.

2.4.1 Arts Education on the Global Stage

In 1948 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the international organisation responsible for arts in education, passed a motion to introduce arts into general education to encourage improved methods of teaching. Arts education was already seen as a pedagogical tool that could be used to good effect. In 1999 the Director-General of UNESCO put out an appeal for arts in education which led to several international events, including two world conferences in 2006 and 2010 that saw the development of policy documents, the *Road Map for Arts Education* (UNESCO, 2006) and the *Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education* (UNESCO, 2010). The *Road Map* offers a theoretical and practical framework for advancing the qualitative development of arts education, while the *Seoul Agenda* serves as an action plan for arts education for the world (UNESCO, 2011). The *Seoul Agenda* was unanimously adopted by UNESCO Member States at the 36th Session of the General Conference, held at UNESCO headquarters on November 4, 2011, signalling a strong endorsement of arts education from UNESCO members around the world. The 2011 UNESCO General Conference also proclaimed the fourth week of May as the International Arts Education Week, a resolution aimed at increasing the international community's awareness of the importance of arts education and a further indicator of the increasing prominence of arts education globally. The UNESCO world conferences on arts education in Lisbon (2006) and in Seoul (2010) highlighted that educational policies throughout the world need to ensure that arts education is accessible as a fundamental and sustainable component

of a high-quality renewal of education and that arts education principles and practices be applied to solving today's social and cultural challenges.

There is a growing recognition that 'further to fostering aesthetic appreciation and sensitivity, arts education may also have the aim to develop personality traits, such as creativity, imagination and expressivity, as well as self-confidence, perseverance, and a critical spirit' (Amadio *et al.*, 2006, p.3). In addition to calls for a greater emphasis on creativity in education, recent societal changes in Europe, including ongoing international political unrest, mass migration and unprecedented cultural diversity, have sparked a growing interest by governments in culture and the arts as a means of fostering cultural identity, creativity and social cohesion (UNESCO, 2006). As these concerns continue to drive the political and economic agenda worldwide, political and educational leaders are turning their attention to the role that arts education has to play in addressing these wider societal matters. This movement stems from a perspective which considers the value of arts education beyond its direct sphere of aesthetic appreciation and understanding to its wider potential as a contributory factor in enhancing human development. The increasingly credible links between arts education and creativity may account for the growing perception that arts education can not only help improve student achievement in schools but that arts education can also be helpful in achieving personal, social, and cultural goals (O'Farrell, 2013).

2.4.2 Arts Education Provision in Ireland

Despite its international reputation in a range of artforms, Ireland has relatively limited arts education provision at post-primary level where arts subjects are optional, the uptake is low and the choice of artforms is narrow (Arts Council, 2008). Dowling Long (2015) expresses concern at the notable absence of an arts education programme at post-primary level, which she contends results in the majority of senior post-primary pupils leaving school without any in-depth knowledge and appreciation of their rich cultural heritage, a concern, she notes, which has received very little, if any, attention to date. These concerns were previously raised by *The*

Place of the Arts in Irish Education (1979), commonly known as the Benson Report, which had drawn attention to the potential impact of lost opportunities for arts education on future cultural contributions:

the neglect of the arts in Irish education has meant that whole generations have lost the opportunity both of learning about their own artistic history and of acquiring the skills necessary to build upon it. (Benson, 1979, p.18)

The trend away from arts education in post-primary education has also been observed by Bamford and Wimmer (2012) who, citing evidence from Eurydice 2009 on the Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe, note that the focus on the arts diminishes as the child moves from primary to post-primary school, the arts are relegated to the margins of the post-primary curriculum, and some art forms are not taught at all (Bamford and Wimmer, 2012). The need to address this worrying trend was clearly signalled in *The Public and the Arts* (Arts Council, 2006, p.108) report which indicated that over 80% of respondents believe that, 'Arts education in schools is as important as science education'.

In terms of learning in the arts, there are some key differences in provision at primary and post-primary levels in Ireland. Visual Arts, Drama and Music are compulsory components of the Primary School Curriculum (DES/NCCA, 1999), however, the amount of time spent on these subjects varies across schools and classrooms (Smyth, 2016). At post-primary level, the arts are entirely optional and uptake is generally low - a further contributory factor to the marginalisation of the arts at post-primary level (Dowling Long, 2015). Art and Music are offered as options at Junior and Senior Cycle and while Drama forms part of the Arts modules available as part of the Leaving Certificate Applied, and can be studied as part of an optional short course on Artistic Performance, Drama is not offered as a discrete subject at Junior Cycle or at Leaving Certificate level. Of the minority of students who choose Art and Music, there is a marked gender difference in take-up rates for both subjects with fewer boys than girls in both cases (Smyth, 2016). Arts Council director Orlaith McBride argues that the tendency at post-primary to perceive the arts as subjects limits students' experience of the arts. She advocates that integration across the curriculum rather

than isolated periods of music or drama is key to the successful provision of arts in education:

It's at post-primary that we have a lot of work to do. It's seen as a subject area and, if you don't do that subject, you don't do the arts at all. We need to find new ways to bring the arts into school, so it's released from being purely about the subject (McBride cited in McGrath, 2016, para 6).

The scant provision of arts education in the post-primary curriculum is somewhat offset by the more prominent presence of the arts in extra-curricular activities. In the ESRI/Arts Council research on Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the *Growing Up in Ireland* Study, Smyth (2016) found that cultural activities formed an important part of extracurricular provision in second-level schools, with choir, learning musical instruments, drama and dance all featuring to some extent. However, Smyth reports significant differences in the number and type of cultural activities provided across different school settings, with each of the aforementioned activities all found to be more prevalent in larger schools and least prevalent in boys' schools. Smyth's findings, therefore, indicate that access to particular forms of after-school cultural activities vary according to the gender mix, social profile and size of the second-level school attended. Smyth also notes that the provision of cultural activities in DEIS schools does not appear to impact as strongly on students as it does on students in non-DEIS schools:

In spite of urban DEIS schools' promotion of cultural activities, their students are much less likely than others to read for pleasure or to take music/drama lessons and are more likely to spend a lot of time watching television or playing computer games. (Smyth, 2016, p.81)

In her foreword to this report, Orlaith McBride, the Director of the Arts Council remarks that the research provides insights into young people's cultural participation and the range of ways in which they express themselves creatively. She notes that participation in arts and cultural activities in school increases the likelihood of participation in out-of-school cultural activities and that the lack of opportunities available to students in smaller schools could be addressed by linking schools with community arts initiatives.

2.4.2.1 Points of Alignment

Prior to the Arts Council's publication of *Points of Alignment* in 2008, there was no formal alliance between the two government departments with responsibility for arts education and arts-in-education provision in Ireland, namely, the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht respectively. The establishment of the Special Committee on the Arts and Education in 2006 to 'advise the Arts Council on how best to align the Council's strategies for the promotion and encouragement of the arts with the priorities of the formal education system' (Arts Council, 2008, p.8) was a move towards addressing this divide. The resultant *Points of Alignment report* (Arts Council, 2008) offered a detailed analysis of the various social, political and cultural developments that had influenced the changing context of arts in education provision in Ireland over the previous decades, along with a comprehensive review of the value and importance of arts in education and its current issues and needs. The report called for better promotion of the arts among young people and highlighted the important contribution of arts education in developing creativity:

Irish society and the Irish economy need a workforce and a wider population that value risk-taking and experimentation and that are adept in the kinds of problem-solving and the engagement between ideas and materials that characterise the arts (Arts Council, 2008, p.18).

The report which opened with the stark statement that 'Arts provision for children and young people both in and out of school is arguably the single greatest fault line in our cultural provision' (Arts Council, 2008, p. 3) put forward a number of key recommendations and actions to address this deficiency. However, Ireland was on the verge of a deep economic recession and the proposed changes were shelved. Five years after the *Points of Alignment* report was launched the government announced the *Arts in Education Charter*, a discussion of which now follows.

2.4.2.2 Arts in Education Charter

One of the most noteworthy development in arts education policy in Ireland in recent years was the emergence of the *Arts in Education Charter* (2013) a joint initiative

from two government departments, namely, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Education and Skills (DAHG/DES, 2013). Launched in January 2013, this document builds on the Art Council's *Points of Alignment* (2008) report but was the first *educational policy* to focus exclusively on the arts. This joined-up thinking between government departments appeared to signal a new approach to the provision of arts education in Ireland which would enable greater collaboration between schools and arts organisations. The Charter proclaims that creativity must be Ireland's primary focus for the future and announces its intention to place the arts at the centre of Ireland's education system. It articulates a strong association between creativity and the arts and recognises the arts as a gateway to creativity:

We believe creativity must be placed at the heart of our future as a society and a country. The arts are our first encounter with that rich world of creativity, and we believe in placing the arts, alongside other subjects, at the core of our education system. (DAHG/DES, 2013, pp. 3-4)

The Charter's assertion that 'While the arts have no monopoly on creativity, they foster it particularly well' (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.7) further emphasises the value the Charter appears to place on the arts as an agent for creativity. The Charter promises a series of initiatives aimed at increasing young peoples' engagement with the arts including: the donation of time from artists and arts organisations in receipt of public funds to a local education initiative each year, encouragement of visits to cultural institutions, reduced ticket prices for cultural events for those in full-time primary, post-primary and third level education, an increased number of Artists in Residence in Colleges of Education, and curriculum design involving both the Arts Council and the NCCA. The Charter also proposes the creation of an arts-in-education portal site as a key resource for both the education and arts sectors, and the introduction of an Arts Rich Schools (ARIS) scheme which will incentivise and recognise those schools which 'place the arts centrally within the life of the school community' (DAHG/DES, 2013, p. 17).

While the Charter's commitment to arts education is heartening, the lack of accompanying funding undermines its potential considerably (Dowling Long, 2015; O'Hanlon, 2017). Similarly, the Charter's failure to introduce measures that would genuinely place the arts 'at the core of our education system' (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.4) is deeply disappointing and at odds with other government interventions that sought to address issues of national concern. This incongruity is highlighted by Grennan (2017) who argues that unlike the *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* (DES, 2011) policy which increased time allocations to language and maths in an effort to raise educational standards following the publication of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, the Charter merely suggests 'out of hours use of schools facilities' (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.16) rather than increasing time for arts within the curriculum and thereby strengthening the status of the arts within schools. Moreover, the lack of consultation with the arts and education sector before its publication (Dowling Long, 2015) and the absence of detail on its implementation is disquieting. The ARIS scheme provides some indication of how the Charter's vision for creativity and the arts might materialise, however, there is little guidance on how schools/teachers might implement the scheme or how an Arts Rich School might be defined. Crucially, despite the Charter's pledge to place the arts 'at the core of our education system' (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.4) and 'centrally within the life of the school community' ((DAHG/DES, 2013, p.17), the provision of arts-in-education at post-primary level remains optional according to the Charter's guidelines on how schools should organise arts-in-education provision: 'Second-level schools shall in their school policies and plans, *where possible*, include arts-in-education opportunities' (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.14). Unsurprisingly then, the Charter was met with considerable scepticism from those working across the arts and education communities with many expressing concerns about the lack of clarity on its implementation, the lack of funding to support it, its reliance on volunteerism and the assumption that all artists would have the required skillset for educational practice. For example, Jordan (2013, p.51) commented that the suggested proposals would need to be 'developed with sensitivity and in context' and cautioned that they should not be 'imposed on artists without a strong foundation in best practice and sound educational principles'; Cronin (2013, p.51) remarked that 'working as an arts educator is a professional

discipline, not a voluntary add-on, and requires a different set of skills to being an artist'; and Blaney (2013) questioned the likelihood of children and young people gaining an arts-rich experience in areas that lacked strong arts centres or arts supports. The fact that there were no significant changes to arts in education practices in the years following the Charter's publication did little to appease concerns. In effect, despite the government's pledge to promote the arts in education, arts education in schools continued to receive very little attention, and the arts, rather than taking centre stage, remained relegated to the margins. Dowling Long (2015, p.267) criticises this inertia noting 'a lack of any real investment in the *Arts in Education Charter* by the Irish Government, and neglect of policymakers to include references to national and international educational research on the value of the arts for enhancing children's life-long learning'. These sentiments are echoed in the *Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe* (Council of Europe and the ERIC arts Institute, 2015) which notes a lack of commitment to real investment.

However, despite the initial scepticism, there is some very welcome and promising progress occurring at present which suggests a greater commitment to promoting the arts in education in Ireland. For example, the Arts Rich Schools (ARIS) scheme has been replaced by the Creative Schools initiative which is currently being rolled out in schools across the country. Likewise, the proposed Arts-in-Education web portal has been set up to support the development of 'a community of practice within arts and education' and work is ongoing to 'make the portal the key national digital resource of arts and education practice in Ireland' (Arts-in-Education, 2019). Other developments of significance to the promotion of creativity in education include the formation of new organisations such as Encountering the Arts Ireland (ETAI), an alliance of organisations and individuals formed in response to the interdepartmental committee's findings in *Points of Alignment* (Arts Council, 2008) and the *Arts in Education Charter* (DAHG/DES, 2013), and the National Campaign for the Arts (NCFA) 'a volunteer-led, grassroots movement that makes the case for the arts in Ireland' (NCFA, 2019). Both of these organisations actively promote the arts and the provision of arts and culture for young people and seek to develop and embed the arts in education. Also, of interest is the National Association of Principals and Deputy

Principals (NAPD), Creative Engagement arts-in-education programme that pairs local artists with second-level schools to produce artistic projects (Creative Engagement, 2019).

2.4.2.3 Creative Schools Initiative

Creative Schools is a flagship initiative of *Creative Youth – A Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person*, which was published in December 2017 as part of the Creative Ireland Programme. Led by the Arts Council in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, it involves artists and creative practitioners working in partnership with schools to enable and develop the creative potential of every child. Launched in February 2018, Creative Schools, formerly Arts Rich Schools/ARIS, draws on the commitments set out in the Arts in Education Charter. *The Creative Schools Briefing Document* (Arts Council, 2018) reiterates the *Arts in Education Charter's* (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.1) intention to 'put the arts and creativity at the heart of children's and young people's lives.' It outlines a range of measures that will be provided to support participating schools to develop and implement their own Creative Schools plan and stipulates that 'schools are expected to develop a feasible plan that can continue to be implemented by the school beyond 2018–2019' (Arts Council, 2018, p.1). The range of support inputs available to participating schools include: one day's induction/training for school coordinators and two teachers; an allocated Creative Associate (defined as artists, creative practitioners and educators) who will support the school for up to a maximum of nine days over the 2018–2019 school year; and a once-off grant of €2,000 to implement the programme for the 2018–2019 school year. The role of the Creative Associate is to support the school to develop a school plan for the arts and creativity, and 'assist in creating or developing links between schools and with artists and arts and cultural organisations locally and/or nationally' (Arts Council, 2018, p.4). The Creative Schools initiative was piloted in 150 primary and post-primary schools nationwide throughout 2018-19. In February 2019 the government announced that a further 150 schools would take part in the Creative Schools initiative in 2019-20 and invited interested schools to apply

through the Arts Council online services website (Department of Education and Skills, 2019). Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh T.D. announced:

Creative Schools aims to understand, develop and celebrate the arts and creativity, as a core aspect of school life, and to foster children and young people's creativity and participation in the arts as an integral part of their education in Ireland. Creative Schools recognises that the arts are a powerful means through which children and young people can explore communication and collaboration, stimulate their imaginations to be inventive, and harness their curiosity. Engagement in the arts and creativity requires rigour, discipline and resilience nurturing learners' sense of agency and self-worth. This combination of skills underpins all successful learning. (Department of Education and Skills, 2019)

Given that the Creative Schools scheme is currently in its infancy, it is too soon to comment on its success or otherwise or to assess the extent of its impact.

2.4.3 Beneficial Impact of Arts Education for Students

While Creative Schools is in its infancy, there is an extensive body of international research concerned with the impact of arts education on student learning, development and wellbeing. A number of large-scale arts education studies conducted in recent years including the ESRI/Arts Council (2016) in Ireland; Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) (2012) in the UK; and Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) (2010) in Australia indicate positive findings. In Ireland the ESRI/Arts Council research on Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the *Growing Up in Ireland* Study (2016) measured the impact of activities like reading, drama, singing, dance and painting on students' cognitive development and emotional wellbeing and found a positive correlation. The research indicates that students who participate in artistic and cultural activities cope better with schoolwork and have better academic skills and more positive attitudes towards school. They are also happier, have reduced anxiety and fewer socio-emotional difficulties than those who do not participate in artistic and cultural activities. In the UK, Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE), an international non-government organisation has introduced over 4,000 schools to creative ways of

teaching across the curriculum through its Creative Partnerships programme (CCE, 2012). The initiative was purposely 'designed to bring about observable changes in the engagement, attainment and behaviour of pupils within the English education system through the development of their creative skills' (CCE, 2012, p.21). The results of the Creative Partnerships programme are encouraging with evidence indicating that creativity in the classroom improves not only student academic achievement, but also significantly boosts confidence, communication skills and motivation (CCE, 2012). An inspection carried out by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) in 2010 found that there had been notable improvements at Creative Partnerships schools in pupils' levels of achievement and in measurable aspects of their behaviour, such as attendance. They concluded: 'Creative Partnerships had demonstrated how even the most reluctant pupils could be engaged and excited' (Ofsted, 2010, p. 43). The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) 2010 education review highlights a number of international research studies (Wiessner, 2005; Wright *et al.*, 2006; Weinstein, 2010) that demonstrate the positive effect of arts education on students' academic, cognitive, personal, social and civic development and calls for the arts to be embedded in all learning as a way of cultivating creativity and imagination. There is also growing evidence to suggest that marginalised youth participating in arts-based programmes in lower socio-economic communities demonstrate improved critical thinking skills (Horn, 1992), increased self-efficacy (Chandler, 1999; 2002), higher self-esteem (Heath and Roach, 1999), and motivation to learn, self-perception and resilience (Teitelbaum and Fuerstner Gillis, 2004).

2.4.4 Creativity in Post-Primary Education in Ireland

The post-primary education system in Ireland caters for 12-18-year olds, and consists of a three-year Junior Cycle (lower secondary) and a two- or three-year Senior Cycle (upper secondary) depending on whether the optional Transition Year is taken. The main aim of post-primary education is 'building on the foundation of first level education, post-primary education aims to provide a comprehensive, high-quality learning environment which aims to prepare individual students for higher or

continuing education or for immediate entry into the workplace’ (DES, 2004, p.13). At policy level, the NCCA (2002) recognise that a greater focus on creativity is needed at Senior Cycle where an over-emphasis on summative assessment has a negative impact on student learning:

The curriculum must place a strong emphasis on developing skills and competences associated with creativity, problem solving and decision making... for many learners, the senior cycle experience is too often based solely in the absorption and understanding of existing, received knowledge. (NCCA, 2002, p.34)

However, the absence of reference to ‘creativity’ or ‘creative’ is still patently evident in subject specific syllabi at Senior Cycle where curriculum review is currently underway. Curricular reform is currently being implemented on a phased basis at Junior Cycle, with creativity and innovation featuring among the defining principles of the newly reformed Junior Cycle programme. The current process of Junior Cycle curricular reform began in October 2012 with the government publication of *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (DES, 2012). Three months later the government’s publication of the *Arts in Education Charter* (DAHG/DES, 2013, p.3) heralding that ‘creativity must be placed at the heart of our future as a society and a country’ gave further press to the prominence of creativity in the Irish post-primary curriculum. The publication of both these documents in such a short time span bestowed unprecedented attention to creativity in the Irish education system and firmly positioned creativity at the forefront of curricular change.

Consultations with key stakeholders in the preliminary phase of the proposed curricular reform identified key considerations for student learning and development at Junior Cycle. The NCCA (2011) report on *Junior Cycle Developments Innovation and Identity: Summary of Consultation Findings* highlighted four qualities those consulted would like to see developed in students during Junior Cycle. Respondents indicated that they would like students ‘to become independent learners, to become resourceful learners, to have confidence in themselves and their abilities and to become effective communicators - able to interact with others’ (NCCA, 2011, p.23). In an article published the following year, Ruairi Quinn, the Minister for Education

and Skills at that time, emphasised the need for a system that enables students to become critical thinkers capable of working independently and collaboratively:

We need a system where students learn to learn and where they develop critical thinking skills and the ability to solve problems both individually and through working with others. Students need to be liberated to think rather than be forced to memorise. (Quinn, 2012, p.126)

He identified the need for 'a vibrant, dynamic and creative education system' (p.125) that will prepare students for the 21st century and argued that 'At post-primary level, space must be created to allow students to think more, to take greater ownership of their own learning' and that 'their schooling should allow them to become creative individuals committed to the well-being of the community in which they live' (Quinn, 2012, p.138).

In *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (2012), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) identifies eight principles underpinning Junior Cycle education: Learning to Learn; Choice and Flexibility; Quality; **Creativity and innovation**; Engagement and participation; Continuity and development; Inclusive education; and Wellbeing. Many of the principles align with policy suggestions and recommendations from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reports and Education Policy Outlook Ireland placing emphasis on and improving equity, quality, continuity, development and assessment for students in second-level education (see Table 2.1). The explicit inclusion of 'creativity and innovation' as one of the underpinning principles for Junior Cycle education is significant in three respects. Firstly, it signals that creativity is recognised as fundamental to student learning and development, secondly, it suggests a genuine commitment to fostering creativity across the curriculum and thirdly, its overt identification highlights its absence from previous curricular documents. The pairing of creativity and innovation perhaps reflects an instrumental view of creativity and the notion that creative and innovative measures are needed to compete in a global knowledge-based economy (Craft and Jeffrey, 2008).

Table 2.1: Principles for Junior Cycle Education

<p>Quality All students experience a high-quality education, characterised by high expectations of learners and the pursuit of excellence.</p>	<p>Wellbeing The student experience contributes directly to their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing and resilience. Learning takes place in a climate focused on collective wellbeing of school, community and society.</p>
<p><i>Creativity and innovation</i> <i>Curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning provide opportunities for students to be creative and innovative.</i></p>	<p>Choice and flexibility The school’s junior cycle programme is broad enough to offer a wide range of learning experiences to all, and flexible enough to offer choice to meet the needs of students.</p>
<p>Engagement and participation The experience of curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning encourages participation, generates engagement and enthusiasm, and connects with life outside the school.</p>	<p>Inclusive education The educational experience is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcomes for all.</p>
<p>Continuity and development Curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning enables students to build on their learning to date, recognises their progress in learning and supports their future learning</p>	<p>Learning to learn High quality curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning support students in developing greater independence in learning and in meeting the challenges of life beyond school, of further education, and of working life.</p>

Source: DES (2012) *A Framework for Junior Cycle*

In line with the principles for Junior Cycle education, the *Framework* identifies eight key skills of Junior Cycle. In addition to literacy and numeracy, which are highlighted as fundamental to student development, the *Framework* identifies six key skills required for successful learning by students across the curriculum. These are: Managing Myself; Staying Well; Communicating; Being Creative; Working with Others; and, Managing Information and Thinking. The *Framework* specifies that ‘working with digital technology also forms part of each of the skills.’ According to the *Framework*, the eight key skills are to be embedded in the learning outcomes of

all curriculum components. Students and parents will be provided with twenty-four statements of learning which reflect the key skills and encapsulate the required learning at Junior Cycle. In terms of 'being creative' the *Framework* specifies the following key elements to be embedded in student learning:

- Imagining
- Exploring options and alternatives
- Implementing ideas and taking action
- Learning creatively
- Stimulating creativity using digital technology

In addition to the *Framework* document, the NCCA (2014) published *Key Skills of Junior Cycle* which provides further details on each of the eight key skills. In relation to 'being creative', the NCCA highlights imagination, divergent thinking, persistence, reflection and action as key characteristics of being creative:

This skill enables learners to develop their imagination and creativity as they explore different ways of doing things and of thinking. Students learn to stay with challenges or tasks to completion and to learn from their experiences. (NCCA, 2014, p.3)

In relation to 'working with others' the NCCA refer to the value of collaborative and productive relationships:

This skill helps learners develop good relationships and to appreciate the value of cooperating to reach both collective and personal goals. Students also learn to value diversity and to engage in collaborative work aimed at making the world a better place. (NCCA, 2014, p.3)

The NCCA (2015) document '*Key Skills of Junior Cycle: Being Creative*' also outlines the characteristics of a classroom climate that encourages creativity, as summarised by Teaching and Learning Scotland (2001) in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Characteristics of a classroom climate that encourage creativity

Some characteristics of a classroom climate that encourage creativity:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is structure and order.• There is high challenge, low threat.• There is high energy and low tension.• There are high expectations.• Personal differences are accepted.• People are accepted as individuals of unconditional worth.• Extreme and early evaluations and judgements are avoided.• Self-evaluation is encouraged.• There is openness and trust.• There is a positive attitude to novelty.• Divergence is accepted and rewarded.• Ambiguity and uncertainty are tolerated.• Alternative solutions are taken seriously.• Speculation and fantasy are encouraged.• People feel free to express themselves. <p>(Teaching and Learning Scotland, 2001)</p>

Source: NCCA (2015) *Key Skills of Junior Cycle - Being Creative*

The NCCA (2015) 'Being Creative' document also cites the climates identified by Hamza and Griffith's (2006) research which found that:

Those classroom climates that promoted creative thinking and problem solving were: open, comfortable, relaxed, challenging, safe, supportive, trusting, humorous, energized and collaborative. Such climates rewarded creative behaviour and encouraged thinking and exploring processes: students were free to voice opinions through non-threatening, entertaining and enjoyable methods. (Hamza and Griffith, 2006, pp.14-15)

The new Junior Cycle programme advocates a shift towards student centred learning and offers greater flexibility and autonomy for schools to select, develop and deliver curriculum to suit students' needs. The *Framework* proposes that in addition to English, Irish and Maths, which are to remain core subjects, students choose from a range of subjects and short courses and also partake in 'other learning experiences'

provided by the school. The other learning experiences may involve aspects of pastoral care, guidance and personal and social development. Schools will also provide Priority Learning Units (PLU) for students with special needs. While many subjects from the present curriculum will continue to be offered, content will be reduced to allow more emphasis on the quality of learning. The introduction of short courses is a new component that allows schools to design and deliver their own courses based on students' talents, abilities, needs and interests. In this respect, the short course component is somewhat similar to the current Transition Year Option which offers schools freedom of choice in course content and design. The NCCA will offer prepared short course programmes in a range of subject areas but schools are also encouraged to create and design programmes of study at local level and in accordance with NCCA specifications. This provides schools with the opportunity to create links with innovative and creative projects based in the local community and to establish learning in areas of interest and relevance to students' lives. Short courses may be an opportunity for students who are involved in various out of school activities to gain credit and recognition for developing skills and talents in areas of personal interest.

The proposed curricular reforms are clearly a departure from the previous Junior Cycle programme but the most significant change, according to the *Framework* document, is in the area of assessment. The current Junior Certificate examination will be phased out and replaced by a school-based approach to assessment. While the NCCA 2011 document had recommended the retention of national certification and external examiners, the *Framework* indicates that schools will assess their own students and issue school certificates. The shift towards continuous assessment reflects the emphasis on students as active independent learners, and also aligns post-primary education in Ireland with best international educational practice. Involving students in their own learning through reflection and self-evaluation will, according to the OECD Policy Brief (2005) see students take increasing responsibility for their own learning and progress.

The proposed Junior Cycle changes are being introduced on a phased basis over a five-year period which began in September 2014. During this period, the new Junior Cycle will operate in schools alongside the programmes based around the existing Junior Certificate. So far, the Junior Cycle reform has been met with a mixed reaction within the teaching profession. There has been strong resistance from teacher unions which have resulted in industrial action and attracted significant media attention (O'Brien, 2015). One reason for the unfavourable response may have been the ill timing of the proposed reform. The announcement was made during the period of economic turmoil that followed the crash of the 'Celtic Tiger' boom. The reform was seen as a cost cutting measure and part of a spate of government cutbacks that were introduced during a period of austerity. While some level of agreement has been reached with the Teacher Unions, there are still some outstanding issues at present and talks are ongoing.

The proposed Junior Cycle reform promises a student-centred approach to learning and assessment, an increased emphasis on active teaching and learning methodologies, deeper learning, a greater choice in curriculum and the embedment of key skills. In terms of creativity, the curricular changes demonstrate a much greater emphasis on creativeness and imagination than ever before and, as such, the changes offer greater opportunities for the promotion of creativity within the formal education system.

2.5 Participatory Arts

This section explores the nature of Participatory Arts, four key principles underpinning good practice in Participatory Arts initiatives, tensions in the field, and ends with an example of one of the many non-conventional approaches being used within Participatory Arts contexts.

2.5.1 Defining the Participatory Arts

Definitions of participatory arts practices are difficult to pin down, not least because of the staggering array of art forms, cross-disciplinary practices and range of artists

which make up the field. Among the latter Lowe (2012, p.4) includes ‘participatory filmmakers, musicians, drama practitioners, writers, photographers, live-artists, AV makers, textile artists, print makers, designers, animators, dancers, painters, and sculptors’. The difficulty lies in finding a suitable umbrella term which is broad enough to include the array of artists and disciplines and accurate enough to identify a common purpose across their practices. It seems this problem is a universal concern among practitioners and researchers internationally. In Australia, Badham (2010) laments the ‘shopping list’ of terms used by policy makers to identify the field. She notes:

The practice is known by many names: community art, participatory arts, community-engaged arts, socially engaged arts, arts for social justice, artist and community collaboration, relational or dialogical art, applied aesthetics, and community cultural development. By extension, folk art, ethnic art, outsider art, collaborative art making, circus arts and grassroots arts are also at times included in this ‘too hard to define’ basket. (Badham, 2010, p.86)

A similar issue is evident in the UK where Lowe’s (2011, p.54) *Audit of Practice of Arts in Participatory Settings* reports that ‘Interviewees used a total of 23 different terms for people who deliver the work, and 23 different terms for the practice itself’. Tiller (2014) attributes the variance in language to the complexities surrounding issues of identity and practice in the field:

Its terms of reference, even for those working in the field, are still emerging and evolving: from the way people describe their creative selves (arts practitioners, community musicians, creative facilitators) to the way they identify their practice (community dance, art for social change, collaborative art) to the way they consider the role of their participants. (Tiller, 2014, p.21)

In the US, Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.1) defines it as ‘a field in which artists, collaborating with people whose lives directly inform the subject matter, express collective meaning’. She describes it as an ‘unwieldy field’ where practices range from grassroots oral storytelling to formal techniques and theories build not only on art ‘but also on concepts from education, therapy, sociology, anthropology, the emerging field of dialogue studies, and community organizing’ (Cohen-Cruz, 2005,

p.1). In Ireland, Gorman (2001 p.11) offers a similar definition to Cohen-Cruz highlighting collective authorship, community, and collaboration as key features of community drama in an Irish context:

In broad terms, it refers to original work for performance that has been generated from within communities, often in the context of community development or educational objectives. Primary distinguishing features of the plays... are their collective authorship; their immediate relevance to the writers' own world and that of their communities; and the collaboration that took place between professional artists and members of the community groups. (Gorman, 2001, p.11)

Both Cohen-Cruz's and Gorman's definitions correspond with that of Geer (1993) who describes the field as 'of the people, by the people, and for the people' to refer to work from the makers' cultural context, made collectively by members of the community for themselves and others within that community. Cohen-Cruz (2005) refers to Geer's description as 'a useful touchstone' which resonates with the tenets of cultural democracy used by others to frame the field. According to Adams and Goldbard (1990) equality, participation, and democracy are the three interrelated tenets involved in the concept of cultural democracy. They argue that cultural democracy posits that no cultural tradition should be allowed 'to dominate and become an official culture'; it 'proposes a cultural life in which everyone is free to participate'; and a belief that 'cultural life itself should be subject to democratic control' (Adams and Goldbard, 1990, p.107). Coughlan (2004, p.115) characterises the participatory arts as 'a political and social movement with a desire for cultural democracy at its heart'. For these commentators, the participatory arts offer communities an opportunity for political and social engagement and debate through the arts.

It would appear that while there is consensus about the commonality of ideas and approaches, efforts to define the field are obfuscated by the diversity of language used to refer to its practices. This is exacerbated by the fact that terms, often used interchangeably, can have slightly different understandings and nuances in local, national and international contexts. Debates over terminology continue as the

language in this area continues to evolve (Lowe, 2011). In Ireland the terms 'community arts' and 'socially-engaged arts' have been widely used to describe the field 'which has only more recently turned towards 'participatory' and 'collaborative' as synonyms' and perhaps 'more flexible and inclusive categories to describe this field' (McIvor, 2015, p.50). Currently the Arts Council of Ireland, the main statutory funding agency for the arts in Ireland, use the term arts participation 'to include a broad range of practice where individuals or groups collaborate with skilled artists to make or interpret art' (Arts Council, 2019, para 1). The diversity of practice and the range of contexts is evident in the Arts Council's subdivision of the area into five different strands including: Arts and health, Arts and disability, Cultural diversity and the arts, Arts and communities, and Arts and older people. A number of key organisations and agencies are funded by the Arts Council to support the various strands including CREATE, the Irish national development agency for collaborative arts in social and community contexts. CREATE describe the practice of 'collaborative arts' as follows:

Collaborative arts is a dynamic and contemporary form of arts practice. Related and similar ways of working can come under the headings of participatory arts, socially engaged arts and in the theoretical realm are closely linked to the concept of relational aesthetics. Collaborative arts practice plays with and contests notions of authorship and the idea of the artist-genius. Work that is made collaboratively often exists outside of the gallery or takes place outside the traditional theatre space. It can also be interdisciplinary and for example involve a musician working with a visual artist or an architect with a dance artist. (CREATE, 2019, para 1)

Changes to the language appear to have slipped into the discourse with relative ease, partly perhaps, as Mary Moynihan, Artistic Director of Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company notes, due to a belief that a change in name does not change understandings of the work:

Regardless of titles, the work is about professional artists working in partnership and collaboration with a diverse range of people, in diverse settings, through multiple and creative ways of working (Moynihan and Carney, 2005, p. 6).

Nonetheless, the absence of an agreed umbrella term poses a challenge to artists and researchers seeking to locate and document their practices and to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the field. These difficulties are compounded by the emergence of increasingly cross-disciplinary and innovative practices which traverse different artistic and social practices and settings (Tiller, 2014). The field's interdisciplinary nature and its tendency to respond to local needs through the application of a myriad of social and cultural aesthetics makes attempts to trace the historical development an onerous task; a sentiment captured by Badham (2010, p.85) who notes that 'this field of art practice is informed less by its own historical context and more by its shared principles and ethics'. On this front, Badham (2010, p.85) argues that the field 'requires a more rigorous inquiry of relevant arts based conceptual frameworks, to be grounded as a legitimate art form' and that 'continued critical and conceptual discourse is required for not only acceptance of this practice as a professional art form, but to also sustain an innovative and resilient community of practice'. Matarasso (2019, p.48) notes that the use of the term participatory art in the arts, policy and academia to signify a wide range of activities can be confusing and suggests that a 'simple' and 'limited' definition is needed and thus proposes the following: 'Participatory art is the creation of art by professional and non-professional artists'. He argues that all participatory art activities have only two things in common: 'The first is that *participatory art involves the creation of art*' and 'the second defining characteristic of participatory art is the recognition that *everyone involved in the artistic act is an artist*' (Matarasso, 2019, pp.48-49).

For the purpose of this research the term 'participatory arts' is used to refer to the field. The usage of this term is considered suitable as it places explicit emphasis on participation and takes into account the terminology currently in vogue in Ireland. In this study, Participatory Arts is understood to refer to a collaborative creative process in which individuals or communities work with professional artists in the co-creation of art that is presented to others. While art is understood to include all forms of aesthetic output, this research focuses specifically on the narrative forms of creative writing and community-based performance. The collaboration between professionals and non-professionals is understood to be a socially-engaged process

aimed at developing the personal, social and creative potential of participants. This definition is informed by a number of interrelated strands that emerged from the research and from the review of the literature which now follows.

2.5.2 Principles of Participatory Arts Practice

A review of the literature reveals that, difficulties with terminologies aside, there appears to be agreement on the core principles underlying the field of participatory arts practice. This doctoral research is concerned with narrative based participatory art practices including creative writing and community-based performance and therefore draws primarily on literature pertaining to these areas of practice in the community. The discussion begins by examining the principles and characteristics of community-based theatre as evidenced in the literature. Jan Cohen-Cruz's (2005) *Local Acts* offers a good starting point. In this influential study, Cohen-Cruz examines the historical antecedents of community-based performance in the United States and traces the development of the field from the 1960s onwards. She identifies four key principles that she sees as core to the practice of community-based performance: *communal context*, *reciprocity*, *hyphenation*, and *active culture*. The discussion here draws on Cohen-Cruz's articulation of these four principles as a framework for examining the literature on the key principles underlying the field of practice.

2.5.2.1 Communal context

The concepts of 'community' and 'collaboration' are central to participatory arts practice. Communities, according to Kershaw (1992), can be 'communities of place' or 'communities of interest' which Anderson (1983) terms as 'imagined communities' in reference to the shared identity felt by people with common interests or mutual experiences. Similarly, McMillan and Chavis (1986, p.9) refer to 'a feeling of belonging or relatedness' and a 'shared emotional connection' and propose a definition as follows:

Sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together.' (McMillan and Chavis, 1986, p.9)

Nicholson (2005, p.94) argues that 'communities of identity' are created 'when people recognise their own experiences in others, and share an understanding of each other's values or stories'. She cautions that loose applications of the term 'community' can be limiting and miss the possibilities of multiple identities. Prentkl and Preston's (2009, p.13) discussion of community performance summarises the aforementioned categories of community describing it as 'a group of people who share certain common denominators, be these geographical, racial, experiential or circumstantial'. However, they also recognise that practitioners

'may prefer to use the theatre process itself as a form of community building, rather than starting from any preconceived idea that a given group of participants share any commonalities other than the fact of presenting themselves as participants for this process'. (Prentkl and Preston (2009, p.13)

This view is echoed by Nelson (2011) who asserts that community can be constructed through the sharing of personal narratives. In her study of playmaking as a pedagogy of change with urban youth, she found that as commonalities between narratives emerged, participants began to see themselves as members of a unified group. She argues that connecting the creative process with participants' life experience and their view of the world enabled participants to explore their position in society and articulate their views on matters of relevance to their lives, a process she argues which prompted participants to recognise the power of their voice as a tool for positive change in society. According to Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.91) 'community-based performance emerges from a *communal context*; the artists' craft and vision are at the service of a specific group desire'. She contends that 'communal expression is rooted in recognition that much creativity and meaning come out of the group' and that the collaboration which occurs between the artist, who brings an arsenal of aesthetic tools to the project, and participants – 'people with lived experience of the subject' generates 'a collective vision' which leads to a joint ownership of the work (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, p.92). The notion of a community collaboration between artist and participants is widely acknowledged throughout the literature, with others referring to it as a collaboration between professional artists and non-professional participants (Tiller, 2014), between actors and non-actors (Boal, 2002) and 'the

construction of a community or temporal social group through a collective vision' (Helguera, 2011, p.9). Tiller (2014, pp.21-22) considers 'non-professional' to be a useful term to refer to 'those who do not earn their living in the arts but contribute collaboratively to a piece of work by making, doing, creating or offering their stories or ideas', while Boal (2002, p.17) uses the phrase 'actors and non-actors' to capture the notion that 'everyone has theatre within' whether they make a living from it or not - 'we all are human, we all are artists, we all are actors'. Helguera (2011) advises that the collaborative process requires a clear understanding of the artist-participant relationship and stresses that the value that individuals bring to a collaboration must be recognised. He cites Freire's critical pedagogy as a useful model for artists to follow in marrying their artistic expertise with participants' knowledge and experience of the subject matter. He advises:

Collaborative art also requires modes of communication that recognise the limitations and potentials of a collective relationship. Freire's approach provides a path to thinking about how an artist can engage with a community in a productive collaborative capacity. (Helguera, 2011, p.52)

2.5.2.2 Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the second principle Cohen-Cruz (2005) identifies as core to the practice of community-based performance. This principle, she states, 'describes the desired relationship between community-based artists and participants as mutually nourishing' (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, p.93). For participants, she argues, the benefits include 'imaging' - translating ideas into forms and 'imagining' - 'dreaming about what life could be'; an opportunity for 'deep reflection; critical distance in their lives; and public visibility' (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, p.91). She observes that participants frequently comment on 'how appreciated they felt to have a moment in the spotlight and to be treated with respect by people interested in their viewpoints' (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, p.93). Artists also benefit as they get the opportunity to engage with a different narrative and give voice to untold stories. She contends that the grassroots approach offers a viewpoint that is different from the mainstream:

In contrast to top-down experts who assume what will be of interest to people, this process draws on the skills of trained artists/facilitators to tease out what a range of people want to express and then helps them to do so. (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, p.94)

For Cohen-Cruz, reciprocity relies on dialogue, listening and respect, concepts also put forward by Helguera (2011) who speaks of 'opening a discursive space' that invites and accepts participant input. Helguera (2011, p.48) maintains that the artist must demonstrate a genuine interest in the 'experiences of the community and his or her desire to learn from these experiences'. However, he cautions, artists must avoid seeing the community in 'a utilitarian capacity—that is, as opportunities by which they may develop their art practices' (Helguera, 2011, p.48). Equally, he argues, artists must avoid acting solely as an agent or problem-solver for the community as this would deviate from their responsibility to create a critical dialogue. Cohen-Cruz (2005) argues that reciprocity is reflected in joint ownership of the work and urges caution when 'charging artists with 'using' a community', but, like Helguera (2011), she also believes that the artist must avoid adopting 'the artist-helping-the-people model' (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, p.96). She argues that reciprocity is rooted in an asset-based model of community-building; it focuses on the community's strengths, capacities and asset (Kretzman and Mc Knight, 1993) as opposed to its problems and deficiencies as found in a deficit-based model (White and Robson, 2011). Tiller (2014, p.26) notes this can be challenging for artists working in 'a context where communities are often labelled as 'disadvantaged', 'marginalised' or 'excluded''. Borwick (2012) advocates the need for arts organisations and their communities to engage in 'reciprocal' and 'mutually beneficial relationships' while an emphasis on mutuality is also evident in Lowe's (2012, p.7) view of dialogic participatory art as, 'a shared process of creative enquiry and learning between artist and participants'. Goldbard (2006, p.64) suggests that dialogue through art can accommodate polarised views, even in communities that are split over contentious issues as 'the experience of genuine, inclusive dialogue refreshes a sense of possibility, leading to more openings for real exchange'.

2.5.2.3 Hyphenation

Commonly referred to as socially-engaged arts practice, it is widely accepted that community-based arts serve both a social and artistic agenda. As noted earlier, a plethora of terms are commonly used to describe the multidisciplinary practices and multipurposed goals associated with the field. Cohen-Cruz (2005) uses the term hyphenation to capture the multitude of intentions and aesthetic processes at play in community-based performance. She writes:

Community-based performance is hyphenated in consisting of both multiple disciplines – aesthetics and something else, such as education, community building, or therapy – and multiple functions, having as goals both efficacy and entertainment.’ (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, p.97)

Intentions to bring about positive personal and social change through a broad range of artistic practices are well documented throughout the literature. As Tiller (2014) and others (Grant, 1993; Plumb, 2017) note, many participatory arts projects purposefully seek to work with participants from marginalised and potentially vulnerable communities in an effort to enable social interaction through the arts. Often, the purpose is to affect positive social change and facilitate individuals and communities in active participation in their cultural identity (Badham, 2010). Helguera (2011, p.5) posits that socially engaged art contributes to social change, ‘by attaching itself to subjects and problems that normally belong to other disciplines, moving them temporarily into a space of ambiguity’. The suggestion that engagement with the artistic process enables participants to detach from the familiar and therefore see the issue anew, resonates with Turner’s (1964) notion of liminality, a point also put forward by Matarasso (2019, p.50) who argues that participatory art is ‘full of ambiguities’ - its duality of intent, its creative alliance between professional and non-professional artists, and its cross disciplinary capacity means it ‘thrives in liminal space, on margins and borders’. Tiller (2014) observes that theatre’s capacity to create an ambivalent position is one of the principal reasons why performance is considered an effective platform for prompting social action. She notes:

This possibility for theatre and performance to embrace complexity, contradiction and paradox is central to the work of

theatre practitioners from Brecht to Boal. Where breaking down the fourth wall brings performance directly into the 'social sphere': presenting audiences with the possibility to develop the critical detachment that might eventually lead to direct 'social action'. (Tiller, 2014, p.28)

2.5.2.4 Active Culture

Cohen-Cruz (2005) identifies the principle of active culture to reflect two core tenets of the field – participants as creators rather than consumers of art and a recognition of 'little c' or democratic creativity. On the matter of creating art, she contests that 'people frequently get more out of making art than seeing the fruits of other people's labors' and secondly, 'everyone has artistic potential' (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, p.99). The latter implies that inclusiveness and diversity must be key elements of active culture. The principle of active culture then can be understood to signify the *participatory* element of engagement associated with community arts -the citizen as artist- as distinct from the passive participation associated with consumption of the arts at a societal level. Matarasso (2019) articulates an important distinction between learning about art and creating art and suggests that the latter is a liberating and empowering act:

Part of the difference in kind between learning about art and creating it lies in the power conferred by each activity. Both enable us, in different ways, to discover, process, understand, organise and share our experience. But in creating art, we bring something into existence and in doing that we change the world. When we make sense of life, from feelings, ideas and experiences we may not even know we have, in forms to which others can respond creatively, we conjure up new possibilities in all our imaginations. That is the artist's act and it is a power in the world. (Matarasso, 2019, p.49)

Definitions of 'participation' in the context of 'participatory arts practice' vary according to criteria used. Helguera (2011), for example, suggests that participation can be viewed according to levels of engagement ranging from 'nominal' to 'collaborative'. He proposes four levels of participation including: '*nominal*

participation' (passive spectator); *'directed participation*' (participants make simple artist led contributions to the work); *'creative participation*' (participants contribute content within a structure established by the artist); and *'collaborative participation*' (participants share responsibility for the structure and content of the work in dialogue with the artist). Using a different classification, Brown and Novak-Leonard (2011, p.4) define participation in terms of 'audience involvement', suggesting a spectrum which progresses from receptive ('Spectating', 'Enhanced Engagement') to participatory ('Crowd Sourcing', 'Co-Creation', 'Audience-as-Artist'. While Helguera's 'nominal participation' includes spectating as a form of participation, Brown and Novak-Leonard's entire focus on audience involvement, as Tiller (2014) notes, is more concerned with participation as audience development than participation as a social act. Drawing on the work of Helguera (2011) and Brown and Novak-Leonard (2011), Tiller (2014, p.11) develops a 'spectrum of participatory performing arts practice' beyond the audience on the premise that 'the continuum starts at the point at which participants are *actively engaged*'. Tiller defines four types of participation along the continuum: *'active engagement*' (participants contribute to the work through stories, ideas or performances); *'collaborative making*' (participants have a direct involvement in the creation of the final piece, working together with artist who remains in the leading creative role), *'co-creation*' (artist and participants have joint ownership of the artistic creation); and *'participants' initiative*' (participants instigate and realise their own creative idea, may choose to involve an artist or not).

According to Prentki and Preston (2009) the intentions of the work -whether it is *'for'*, *'with'* or *'by'* the community- can involve participants in different participative relationships. They explain *theatre 'for' a community* as work developed for an audience and often informed by their experiences and stories; *theatre 'with' a community* can take a workshop or process-based approach that involves participants in a creative exploration that may or may not lead to a presentation to a wider audience; and *theatre 'by' a community* refers to work created and performed by participants, possibly for a specific audience or in response to a specific setting. Badham (2010, p.87) referring to the distinctions between art *for*, *by* and *with* community comments: 'These tiny prepositions might seem insignificant but they

alter the meaning substantially in regard to power relationships and ownership of voice, aesthetic and artistic content'. Tiller (2014, p.16) argues that 'participation can often create an aesthetic of its own: by taking work outside the cultural institution and challenging who has the right to be seen on stage'. Lowe (2012) makes a similar point, noting that participatory arts practice facilitates participation in creative processes amongst people who might otherwise be unlikely to become involved in the arts.

2.5.3 Community-based Performance as Process

As community building and development is often the impetus behind community-based theatre projects, there tends to be a strong emphasis on process and relationship building, a point made succinctly by Grant in *Playing the Wild Card*:

In conventional theatre, the process (the writing of a script and the rehearsal of actors) is focused on performance. The process is a means to that end. In community drama, the process is at least as, if not more important than the end product. This is because the involvement of the participants is the end being served by the project. The resulting production is a shared celebration of the work done together. (Grant, 1993, p.8)

Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.101) further argues that process is essential as it 'creates spaces for interaction and, perhaps most important, the grounds for belief in change, be it personal or political'. Comparing the three phases of the process (pre-performance, performance, post-performance) to van Gennep's (1909) tri-part structure of a rite of passage, she argues that the process is what enables change to occur. Drawing on Schechner's (1985) analysis of performance as a seven-stage process, Cohen-Cruz equates Schechner's first four phases (training, workshop, rehearsal, and warm-up) with van Gennep's first ritual stage 'separation'. She correlates performance (Schechner's fifth phase) with liminality, van Gennep's middle stage of a rite of passage, and associates Schechner's final two phases (cooldown and aftermath) with van Gennep's notion of reintegration, 'the point at which the people who have gone through the rite of passage rejoin their society with new roles and responsibilities' (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, p.101).

2.5.4 Tensions in the Participatory Arts Field

There are two main tensions in the field of participatory arts, namely, process versus product, and instrumental versus intrinsic value. As noted earlier, the duality of purpose associated with the principle of hyphenation invariably implies that participatory arts practices become entwined with other agendas and thus are expected to satisfy both a social and artistic remit. This double agenda creates a tension between process and product, a dichotomy that is a source of much debate in the field. The sites of this recurrent tension are captured by Tiller (2014, p.25) who notes that 'tensions around the ethical nature of the participatory 'process' and the 'quality' of the final 'product', and within that its 'social impact', remain a constant in participatory practice'. This tension is particularly felt in the area of assessment and evaluation where questions on how to value practices and judge the quality and success of participatory arts projects arise (Plumb, 2017). Evaluation is a necessary component of participatory arts practices and artists/organisations are accountable to funding bodies, outside agencies and the communities they serve. Dunphy (2013) identifies a lack of evaluation frameworks suitable for arts initiatives. The absence of appropriate frameworks for evaluating their practices and the presence of funder-driven agendas can force art organisations to adopt evaluation designs that do not serve their needs. Bishop (2012) argues that different sets of criteria are needed to measure artistic merit and social impact. Likewise, Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.118) argues that multiple methods of evaluation are needed 'not only from the realm of art but also from other fields in which a given project is grounded'. An understanding of a project's point on the spectrum of participation and clarity on whether it is intended to be 'for', 'with' or 'by' the community are also useful indicators for formulating evaluation criteria.

The process/product tension is related to another major tension in the field - the 'intrinsic' versus the 'instrumental' value of the arts. 'Art for art's sake' is commonly cited as a defence for the aesthetic merit of the arts and to uphold the view that art is of value in itself and not obliged to serve any other purpose. Instrumental views of art, on the other hand, such as those put forward by Matarasso's (1997) seminal *Use*

or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts, consider art as an 'instrument' which can impact positively on other spheres and, therefore, serve a wider social, cultural or economic purpose. Critics of instrumental views of art tend to be cynical of this approach seeing it as a compensatory measure by governments to address shortcomings in areas that have been neglected elsewhere by social or economic policy (Plumb, 2017). However, as Tiller (2014) and Badham (2010) highlight there is increased pressure on the arts sector to provide justification of their practices in terms of their contribution to public life. Tiller (2014) and Plumb (2017) both note that Matarasso's (1997) *Use or Ornament?* was the first significant work to provide evidence of the instrumental value of the arts and thus, in Tiller's (2014, p.17) view, 'offered a much-needed framework from which to argue the instrumental case'. In his study, Matarasso (1997) identifies fifty potential social impacts that fall within six broad themes each related to public policy objectives: personal development; social cohesion; community empowerment and self-determination; local image and identity; imagination and vision; and health and wellbeing. Matarasso's (1997) study demonstrates the impact of the arts at an individual, community and societal level and, as Tiller (2014, p.18) observes, 'lays down a marker for taking social impact seriously: despite making participatory arts vulnerable to being equated solely with 'instrumental' outcomes'. The latter is a source of alarm for Badham (2010) who cautions against dropping art in pursuit of social outcomes. She expresses concern that socially driven agendas which place an emphasis on the instrumental value of the arts overshadow artistic integrity and detract from the work. Putting forward a case for artistic merit within the context of social practice, she argues that transformation comes from the art, not the social policy:

Socially engaged arts are inherently transformational because they are collaborative and engaging, especially when lead artists are determined to uphold the artistic integrity of the work. However, it is the art more than the social policy outcome that results in transformation'. (Badham, 2010, p. 91)

Joss (2008), however, suggests that instrumental value is dependent on intrinsic value and viewing them separately creates a 'false polarity'. Similarly, Plumb (2017)

argues that intrinsic and instrumental views need not be pitted against each other. Rather they can be viewed as interrelated:

Art's intrinsic aesthetic and creative value and role as a powerful vehicle for communication and expression of human perception and experience is not negated through a desire to become more socially relevant and effective. And immersion in the intrinsic aspects of an artistic activity through participation and collaboration might lead to extrinsic gains and non-artistic outcomes, such as social, educational, health or economic benefits. (Plumb, 2017, p. 64)

2.5.5 Non-Conventional Modes of Participatory Arts Practice

In addition to the vast array of art forms that fall under the umbrella term participatory arts, there are a diverse range of methods and approaches within artforms. In the field of community-based theatre, narrative based methods including, storytelling, devising, role play, improvisation and tableaux are commonly used to generate original work created by participants. Another feature of participatory arts is a tendency towards site-specific work. The growing popularity of site-specific theatre is a relatively recent development. It was not until the 1980s that the term 'site-specific', already well established in the visual arts, began to emerge as a way of describing a growing body of performances occurring in non-theatre venues or to be more precise in locations where the chosen site is of relevance to the work and informs or influences the performance (Wilkie, 2004). Pearson (2010, p.8) notes a variety of terms associated with site-specific performance including "site-determined", 'site-referenced', 'site-conscious', 'site-responsive', 'context-specific,' (each implying a slight variation in the relationship between the site and the performance devised). Oddey (1994, p.125) defines site-specific devised theatre as a framework in which the chosen location 'provides the potential structure, form, content, and participants for the piece'. Pearson and Shanks identify site-specific performances as those:

conceived for, mounted within and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces, existing social situations or locations, both used and disused [...] and rely for their conception and their

interpretation, upon the complex coexistence, superimposition and interpenetration of a number of narratives and architectures, historical and contemporary. (Pearson and Shanks, 2001, p.23)

The 'complex coexistence' of past and present highlights the duality at play in site performance work where the historical past of the space is intertwined with the present performance - 'that which pre-exists the work and that which is of the work: of the past and of the present' (Pearson and Shanks, 2001, p. 23). Elsewhere, Pearson (2012) uses the host/ghost concept put forward by Cliff McLucas (Pearson's co-artistic director of the Welsh theatre company Brith Gof) to describe this coexistence. According to Pearson, McLucas understood site-specific performance as:

the coexistence and overlay of two basic sets of architectures: those of the extant building or what he called the *host*, that which is *at* site – and those of the constructed scenography and performance or the *ghost*, that which is temporarily brought *to* site. The site itself became an active component in the creation of performative meaning, rather than a neutral space of exposition or scenic backdrop for dramatic action. (Pearson, 2012, p.70)

The interplay between the host and ghost adds a further dimension to the audience experience, making it impossible to separate the historical past from the performative present. Wilkie (2004, p.207) argues that this duality means 'the spectator of site-specific performance is fictionalized by both performance and site and is therefore required to take on a hybrid identity', which she argues, 'points to site-specific spectatorship as an imaginative experience, which cannot be wholly contained by either the space or the performance' (Wilkie, 2004, p.210). The imaginative experience of site-specific spectators is also highlighted by Turner who suggests:

the audience might be invited to experience and imagine beyond the confines of the performance, beyond the history of the site, slipping through the gaps in the performance to discover new narratives and experiences. (Turner, 2000, p.27)

Cordileone and Whorton note that the fusion of past and present engendered by site-specific theatre also presents challenges and opportunities for artists and performers:

As creators of site-specific work, we must consider stories we want to tell, as well as stories the space is already telling. What messages are unavoidable and what can be successfully added or removed without compromising the integrity of the space itself? (Cordileone and Whorton, 2015, p.298)

The performers' decision to move away from a traditional theatre space can be viewed, as Wilkie (2002, p.144) remarks, as an 'explicitly political one' which rejects the traditional proscenium arch theatre spaces that are part of the dominant culture in favour of less conventional settings in the community. The move could also be regarded as a means of promoting cultural democracy - an attempt to widen cultural and arts participation and expand the audience base by bringing the arts into other spaces in the community. However, as Wilkie also notes:

whether the site-specific mode can indeed reach the wider audience that many of its practitioners seek will depend on the type of site used, on issues of accessibility, cultural and social positioning, and on the terms in which the experience is couched. (Wilkie, 2004, p.60)

The literature has revealed the core values and principles that underpin the diverse range of models found within the field of participatory arts practice. The discussion has highlighted the centrality of community, collaboration, partnership, dialogue, social engagement and participation as core principles of participatory arts practice. It has also identified process-based approaches and the development of site-specific work as defining features of community-based theatre. The principles and ethics of community-based arts challenge conventional notions of art, authorship, and audience. Unlike traditional modes of performance in which the community/individual assumes a passive role in response to the arts, the community/individual in community-based theatre has an active participatory role in the creation of art and how it is received. Community-based theatre follows postmodern tendencies to use dramatic forms that oppose the genres, practices and aesthetics of traditional theatre. Its emphasis on creating original work devised, written and performed by members of the community and based on themes or issues relevant to their lives 'brings the participants into the socio-political arena' (Boehm

and Boehm, 2003, p.285) and its intent to affect social or political change situates its practices in the realm of socio-political performance (Louis, 2002; Boehm and Boehm, 2003). In this regard, socio-political theatre practitioners and theorists such as Brecht and Piscator who sought to incite action among audiences, laid the foundations for Boal and others to follow.

2.6 Conclusion

Based on a comprehensive study of the literature and for the purposes of this research, creativity is understood as a process that involves individuals independently or collaboratively working in persistent and purposeful pursuit of an objective that requires them to draw on their imagination to express ideas and/or produce outputs that can be verified by others as original and appropriate to the individual and the context in which they are produced. Moreover, participatory arts is understood to refer to a collaborative creative process in which individuals or communities work with professional artists in the co-creation of art that is presented to others. This literature review has examined the available literature on three key areas of relevance to this research including creativity as a concept and practice, arts education and creativity in the context of Irish post-primary education, and the principles and practices of participatory arts practice. From this review, it is evident that any exploration of how creativity is fostered within the chosen pure and applied Participatory Arts case studies of Upstate and Fighting Words respectively, would need to consider whether the psychosocial factors such as those identified by Teaching and Learning Scotland (2001) and Hamza and Griffith's (2006) conditions for creativity were fostered in their initiatives, and whether they contributed to climates for creativity. The factors identified by Teaching and Learning Scotland (2001) and Hamza and Griffith (2006) are deemed particularly pertinent to this research study as both of these sources are cited by the NCCA (2015) document 'Key Skills of Junior Cycle: Being Creative' as key studies in fostering classroom climates that encourage creativity. Furthermore, there needs to be an examination for evidence of the NCCA's five pedagogic processes for 'being creative', namely, 'Imagining', 'Exploring options and alternatives', 'Implementing ideas and taking

action', 'Learning creatively' and 'Stimulating creativity using digital technology'. The consideration of these pedagogic processes is pivotal to this study as these are the key elements specified by the NCCA in *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (2012) as fundamental to the promotion of creativity. Consideration must also be given to the process/product and instrumental/intrinsic tensions associated with the field of participatory arts. Any model arising from this study would need to be cognisant of this discord and seek to identify possible measures to navigate such a political tightrope. Finally, in terms of enabling beneficial outcomes that extend beyond achieving a creativity skills-set, the presence or enactment of the general principles of good practice in community/participatory arts initiatives articulated by Cohen-Cruz, namely, '*communal context*', '*reciprocity*', '*hyphenation*', and '*active culture*' needs to be explored in order to establish the impact that engaging in the participatory arts had on participants in this study. The research methods chapter that ensues explains how these factors, processes and principles informed the frame for analysis that was used at a meta-level in the research study to respond to the core research questions.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The research design and methodology of this dominant qualitative concurrent mixed methods study exploring creativity within Participatory Arts programmes, is presented herein. The discussion opens with an overview of the research focus, research questions and conceptual framework. The central part of this chapter describes the overall research approach, including the philosophical stance of pragmatism, the case study methodology and the dominant qualitative concurrent mixed methods approach, and this is followed by a summary of the research tools and data analysis processes. In the final part of the chapter, there is discussion of how rigour was ensured within the research process and the ethical considerations and processes are presented, followed by the limitations of the study.

3.2 Focus of Study

This research set out to explore how creativity was being fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives, as well as the beneficial outcomes that emerged, with a view to informing the design of a Participatory Arts model for education. The study explored two types of Participatory Arts initiatives, the first led by Upstate, and the second led by Fighting Words. In the context of this study, the aim was to provide an evidence base for, and articulate, the principles and conditions underpinning climates for creativity, and the (pedagogic) approaches used to foster creativity in pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives, as well as explore any beneficial outcomes that result from pure Participatory Arts initiatives and in those that straddle educational contexts. The main research questions were as follows:

1. How do pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives foster creativity?
 - a) What are the key characteristics and core processes of the pure/applied Participatory Arts initiative?
 - b) What are the principles and conditions underpinning 'climate/s for creativity' within these forms of Participatory Arts initiatives?

- c) What are the (pedagogical) approaches that contribute to enabling creativity within these forms of Participatory Arts initiatives?
 - d) What are the beneficial outcomes for participants within pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives, and how are these enabled?
2. What are the characteristics of a Participatory Arts Model that could be integrated to foster creativity in post-primary educational settings?

The conceptual framework for this study, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, comprised three broad strands, namely: Fostering Climate/s for Creativity, Processes for 'Being Creative', and Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes. **The first strand, Fostering Climate/s for Creativity**, consists of two main categories – the *psychosocial dimension* which presents the principles and conditions underpinning climatic conditions for creativity as identified by Teaching & Learning Scotland (2001) and Hamza & Griffith (2006), and the role of *partnerships* as reported by Davies et al. (2012). **The second strand, Processes for 'Being Creative'**, draws on the NCCA's (2015) frame of pedagogic processes that foster creativity, which are described in terms of five factors namely: Imagining, Exploring options and alternatives, Implementing ideas and taking action, Learning creatively, and Stimulating creativity using digital technology. Finally, **the third strand, Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes**, is derived from Cohen-Cruz's (2005) set of principles for good practice, namely: Communal Context, Reciprocity, Hyphenation, and Active Culture.

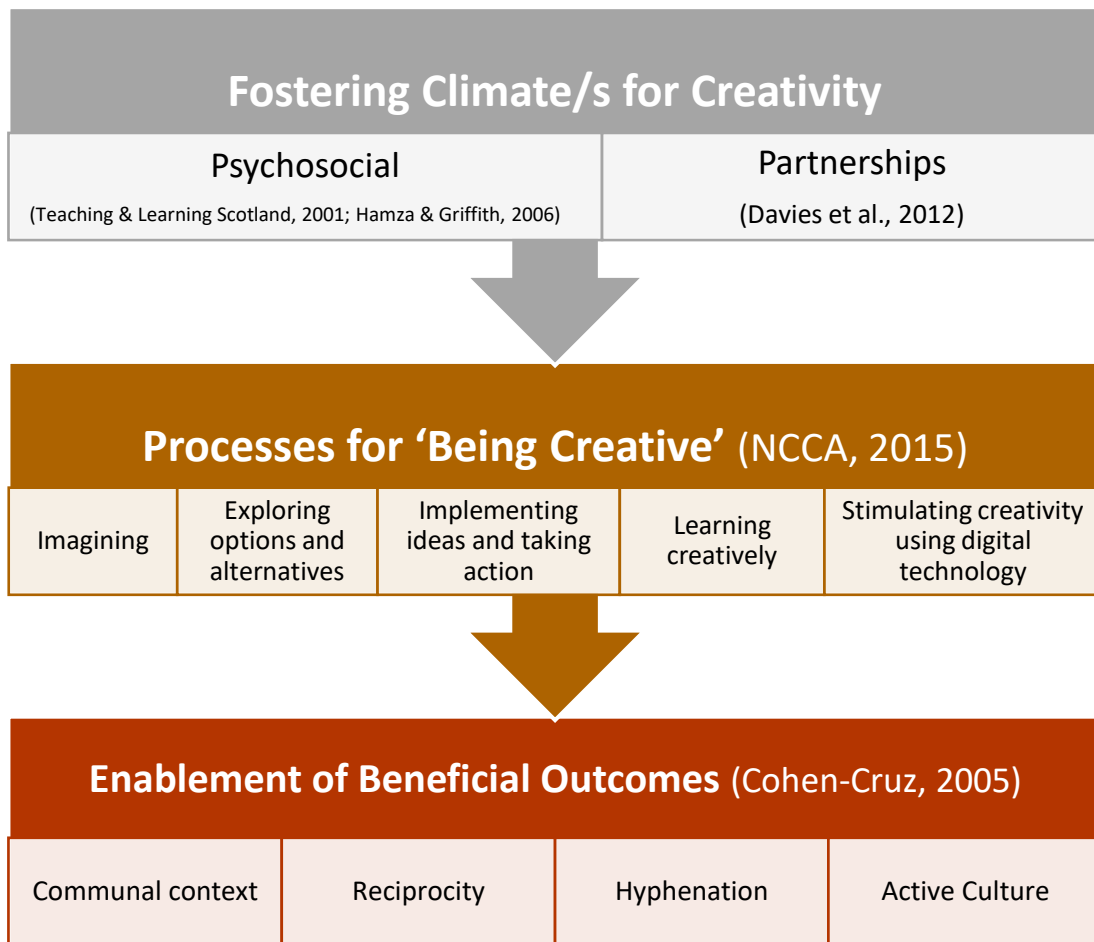


Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework

3.3 Overview of Research Framework

The research framework for this research study, as illustrated in Figure 3.2, took its inspiration from the 'Research Onion Framework' by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) and in doing so, provides an overview of the research framework in terms of five dimensions - philosophy, form of reasoning, methodology, methods, and data collection and analysis. In this study, the adapted five-level framework presents the philosophical paradigm on the first (outermost) level as that of *Pragmatism*. The *Inductive* form of reasoning underpinned the frame for analysis as illustrated on the second level. The *Case Study* methodology on the third level was used to frame and bound the study. The *Mixed Methods* approach as shown on the fourth level, combined qualitative and quantitative data. Emphasis was given to the former, that is, the qualitative components were given dominant status, designating this a 'QUAL

+ quan' study (where '+' stands for concurrent, capital letters denote high priority or weight, and lowercase letters denote lower priority or weight) as described by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004). The *Data Collection* and Analysis as shown on the fifth (innermost) level included the thematic analysis of interviews, surveys and a focus group, as well as the generation of descriptive statistics from surveys.

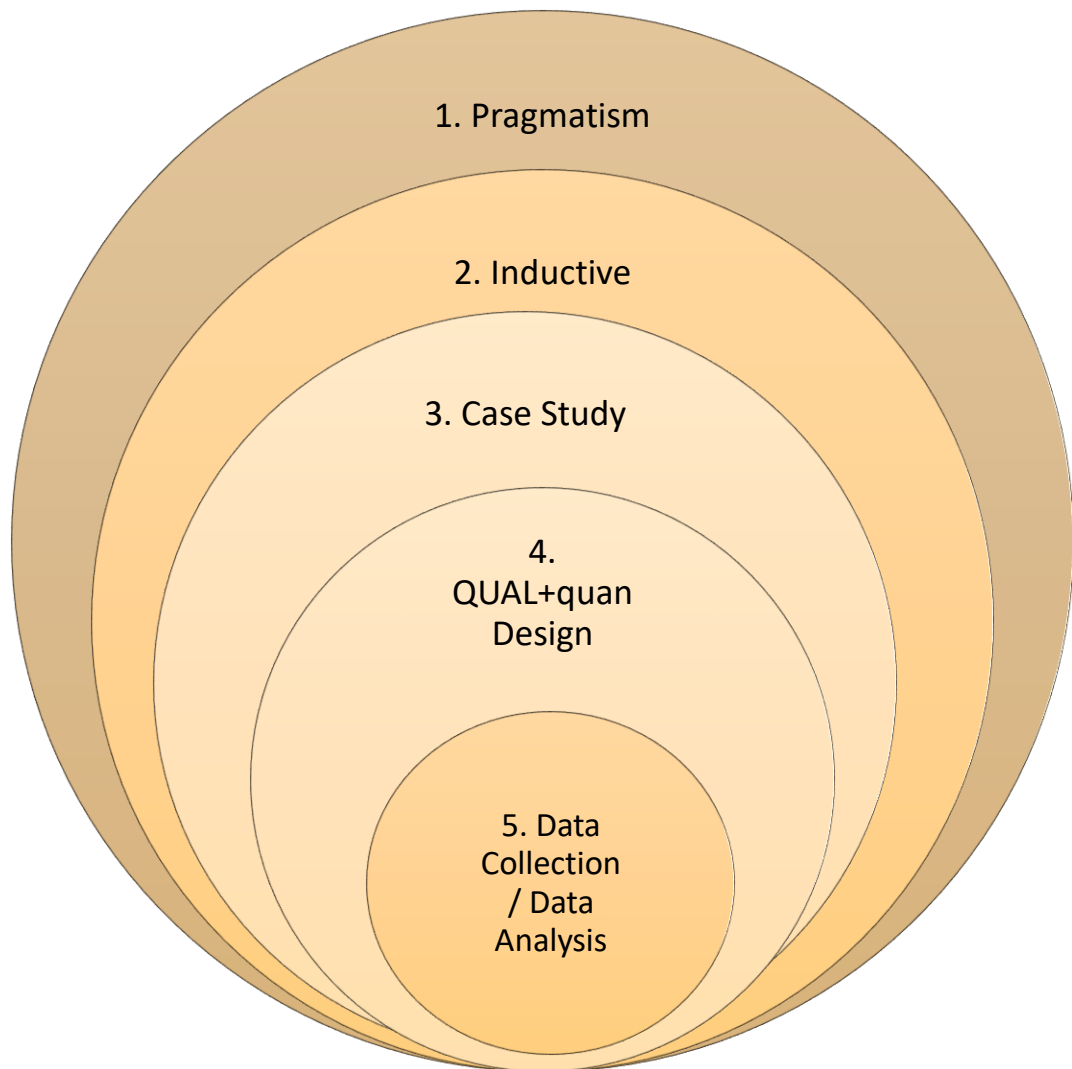


Figure 3.2: Research Study Framework - inspired by the Research Onion Framework Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012)

The discussion that ensues describes each layer of this framework, beginning with the philosophical underpinnings of the research and its prevailing ontological, epistemological and axiological stances, and progressing to explain the case study research methodology, the inductive intent, the dominant qualitative concurrent

mixed methods approach, and ending with a discussion of the data collection and analysis methods.

3.3.1 Pragmatism as the underpinning philosophical stance

'Pragmatism' is presented, as illustrated in the outer layer of the aforementioned Research Study Framework, as the philosophical paradigm underpinning this study of creativity processes within the participatory arts. The philosophical roots of pragmatism can be described in terms of its ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological perspectives. In this regard, the *ontological* perspective underpinning pragmatism recognises that individuals have unique and differing interpretations of reality, the *epistemological* stance recognises the central role of the researcher in interpreting and determining relationships and in the construction of knowledge within a research study, the *methodological* approach focuses on framing the systematic inquiry according to what methods best facilitates exploration of the research questions, and the *axiological basis* accepts that the researcher's values-base can and will influence the pursuit of knowledge, and thus allows for purposeful knowledge advancement strongly guided by the researcher's viewpoint on what should be valued in terms of outputs from the research study.

Pragmatism is in effect a problem-oriented philosophy which takes the view that the best research methods are those that help to most effectively answer the research question/s. According to Cherryholmes (1992), it focuses attention on the research problem, and the researcher is free to choose the methods and processes that facilitate exploration and analysis of the research problem of focus. A key aspect of pragmatism in research, is that exploring the research question is foregrounded, as noted by Morgan (2007), Patton (1990), Rossman and Wilson, (1985) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), and this is valued above all other factors, including the methods of inquiry or pre-existing conditions. In this regard, as argued by Fendt *et al.* (2008, p.473), pragmatism is 'driven by consequences' and therefore, it is paramount that '*right questions*' are posed within the research study. The framing of these questions is critical.

Mason (2002, p.59) asserts 'that how we think the social world is constituted, or what we think it is (our ontology), shapes how we think we can know about it, but conversely how we look (the epistemology and methods we use) shapes what we can see'. In this regard, Mason is highlighting that the beliefs system and values-base of the researcher does influence what and how data is gathered, and indeed how the data is interpreted – thus, the philosophical underpinnings of the research must be articulated. From the outset, the researcher took the stance that the collation of perspectives and insights from those who crafted or participated within the pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives was paramount to uncovering whether these types of initiative had potential for fostering creativity in education. In this regard, she devised research questions and explored these using mixed methods approaches that sought to capture from the participants their experiences of the Participatory Arts: 'how they see it', 'describe it', 'how they feel about it', 'remember it', 'make sense of it', and lastly 'talk about it to others' (Patton 2002, p.104). Ultimately, this allowed the researcher better understand the conditions, processes and practices within Participatory Arts initiatives that enable creativity.

3.3.2 Inductive Intent

This research was inductive in nature in that it framed broad research questions that sought to capture the participants' experiences within the chosen Participatory Arts case studies with the aim of better understanding how creativity was being fostered in these settings. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p.23), within the inductive approach the researcher works from the ground upwards using data sources (for example, the participants' views) to build themes from which to generate theory, which contrasts with the deductive approach where the researcher starts 'works from the 'top down', from a theory to hypotheses to data to add to or contradict the theory'. Thus, the researcher seeks to prove or disprove a pre-formed hypothesis in the deductive approach, as opposed to seeking to respond to broader research questions in the inductive approach in a way that allows for the complexity of the context or phenomenon to be revealed. In the context of this study, there were two phases of analysis. The first phase of analysis was more aligned to traditional

notions of inductive research in that it allowed for open coding of data from participants and other sources across both case studies, and through processes including relational coding, revealed categories and ultimately generated findings summarised in the journal article publications provided in Appendices A-C. However, in the second phase of analysis, a detailed frame for analysis was constructed that leaned heavily on the critical review of literature about principles, processes, practices and climates for creativity, and the Participatory Arts. The analysis sought to ascertain whether evidence of these elements existed in the data-sets across both studies, and in this sense, it could be argued that the analysis in the second phase in particular was more deductive in nature. However, the researcher included the open category 'Other' within the frame for analysis to capture instances or data that did not align with any known principles, practices, processes or conditions for creativity, and thus, allowed the data to speak to what didn't exist in the literature. In essence, the frame for analysis in the second phase of analysis allowed for 'tracing of existing' and 'mapping of new' principles, practices, processes or conditions for creativity, and thus as a whole, was inductive in nature. It is important to note here that the inductive nature of this research study does however make it bounded and context specific.

3.3.3 Case Study Methodology

This research was a dominant qualitative concurrent mixed methods case study which took evidence from a range of data sources, including: semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, focus group, document/ resource analysis and field notes from observation of Participatory Arts spaces and practices. Stake (2005) identifies three types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. According to Stake (2005, p. 445) an *intrinsic* case study is one where 'the case itself is of interest'; an *instrumental* case study, is one where the case is of secondary importance but it 'facilitates our understanding of something else'; and a *collective* case study refers to instances where a number of cases are studied 'in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition'. He asserts that collective 'is instrumental study extended to *several* cases' (Stake, 2005, p.445). Stake (2005,

p.446) also acknowledges that 'Reports (and authors) often do not fit neatly into such categories' and concedes that some intrinsic studies could also be viewed as instrumental, in that the case was of immediate interest but also enabled understanding of something else. This research study correlates with Stake's definition of a collective case study, that is, two cases were chosen to investigate how creativity was being fostered in participatory arts initiatives with a view to understanding how participatory arts practices and processes might potentially inform a model of creativity for post-primary education.

The Case Study methodology is regarded by Balbach (1999, p.17) as 'particularly useful for evaluating unique programs, programs with unique outcomes, and programs carried out in turbulent or unpredictable environments'. Case Study was used to investigate the participatory arts initiatives at the centre of this research, as this methodology allowed for an in-depth examination of the practices of particular Participatory Arts settings, and facilitated exploration of '...a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context' (Yin, 2009, p.1). In the context of this research, the case study methodology adopted was inspired by the non-deterministic conceptions of case study articulated by Merriam (1998, p.6), who asserts that 'reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds'. Therefore, this study was underpinned by the premise that knowledge is socially constructed, that multiple realities exist, and thus, multiple interpretations can emerge in explorations of the promotion of creativity within participatory arts.

Heale and Twycross (2018, p.7) describe case study in terms of it being 'an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables'. The first step in case study is in identifying the single case of interest, or, as in the context of this study, the multiple cases for examination. Merriam (1998, p.27) perceives 'the case as a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries', and in the context of this study the research was bounded by focusing on those engaged in what could be considered as participatory arts. This study sought to explore the practices of Participatory Arts and their potential for fostering creativity within education, and

thus the initial steps involved reviewing organisations currently operating in Ireland within that domain. Heale and Twycross (2018, p.7) further note that: 'A search to determine what is known about the case(s)...may include a review of the literature, grey literature, media, reports and more, which serves to establish a basic understanding of the cases and informs the development of research questions'. The researcher reviewed literature, consulted websites and media reports, and ultimately the search resulted in the selection of two cases for examination, namely *Upstate (Performing Arts organisation)* and *Fighting Words (Creative Writing Centre)*. Upstate is an established Participatory Arts organisation selected on the basis that its model typified what could be considered as pure participatory arts, and thus it was an appropriate case for exploring whether and how creativity was being fostered within the classical model of participatory arts. Fighting Words is an established initiative known for its innovative bridging of education and the arts, in the form of creative writing initiatives, and was selected on the basis of its potential for further exploring how creativity might be enacted (using participatory arts processes and practices) within post-primary education. As argued by Heale and Twycross (2018, p.7) 'Evidence arising from multiple-case studies is often stronger and more reliable than from single-case research'. In the context of this research, employing an applied model as a second case study was considered more beneficial than employing a second 'pure' case due to the applied case's potential to illuminate how a participatory arts model might operate in post-primary education.

The use of multiple cases of study in this research study allowed for more comprehensive exploration of the research questions and resulted in better understanding of how creativity was fostered as a whole within the pure and applied Participatory Arts settings, through comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences of the two different cases. Patton (2015, p.259) points to the richness that can be generated from Case Study type research, when he speaks of their potential to generate a 'rich story about a person, an event, organization, event, campaign or program', which is particularly important in the context of this study which sought to reveal aspects of creativity that were fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives. However, a limitation of this, and indeed of the case study

methodology more generally, is that the volume of data can be large, and brings with it challenges of organisation and analysis. To mediate the latter in this study, a frame for analysis was developed that was heavily informed by factors, principles and processes of creativity critiqued within the literature review. The following subsections provide an overview of the two cases selected for investigation in this case study research.

3.3.3.1 Case Study 1: Upstate

Upstate is an Arts Council-funded 'community-engaged performing arts organisation' which has operated in the border region between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland since 1997. Specialising in devised performance, Upstate enjoys an international reputation (Jennings, 2012) in the fields of professional and community-engaged theatre and has made a significant contribution to both participatory arts and professional theatre practice in Ireland (McIvor and O'Gorman, 2015). Since 2005, the company has been a teaching partner of the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University and offers advanced-level training aimed at playwrights, directors and drama workers wishing to create original work within community-engaged settings (NYU, 2019). Founded by Declan Gorman and Declan Mallon, the company has consistently interwoven participatory engaged practice with professional theatre practice in the creation of local, regional and national theatre productions over a period of two decades. It is one of the longest established community-based theatre organisations in Ireland and the only theatre company to consistently provide community arts in a regional and cross-border context throughout the island. Initially established as an independent regional theatre company, Upstate's aim was to bridge the gap between what the founders saw as a false divide between professional theatre and community-engaged theatre. From its inception, the company sought to reflect a broad understanding of the place of 'theatre' and 'drama methodologies' in a wider social context, and to explore the interface between art and progressive social values. The organisation's vision reflected a cultural democratic viewpoint which 'conceives of the arts as a form of political as well as of aesthetic power' (Benson, 1992, p.31). A distinguishing

feature of Upstate' practice is its emphasis on art for all – that is, to create art and promote arts practices that are inclusive of all citizens. In the context of this research, Upstate's work constitutes pure Participatory Arts programmes, and thus was targeted as the base for analysis for the articulation of principles and climates for creativity, as well as the identification of processes used to foster creativity, and any resultant beneficial outcomes, in participatory arts movements. This research study collected data from artists and participants who had engaged with Upstate productions, and also from Upstate' archived content.

3.3.3.2 Case Study 2: Fighting Words

Fighting Words is a creative writing centre established by Irish author Roddy Doyle and his colleague Seán Love in Dublin in January 2009. Inspired by the creative writing project 826 Valencia (<https://826valencia.org/>, 2019) founded by American writer Dave Eggers in San Francisco, Doyle and Love saw potential for such an initiative in Ireland. Fighting Words was the first project of its kind in Europe but others, inspired by the 826 Valencia model, have since followed with new centres opened in London, Paris, Milan, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Vienna, Stockholm, Barcelona and Belfast. In line with their mission statement, Fighting Words founders declare creativity and empowerment as defining purposes of the centre's activities.

Since its inception, Fighting Words has worked with in excess of 90,000 participants from all parts of the country, but predominantly with students from the greater Dublin region and particularly with schools based in North inner-city areas, where lower socio-economic status is more likely to be found. Consequently, many of the participants come from communities where people tend not to have much voice in society. Approximately 85% of the participants are of school age between 6 and 18. Fighting Words also offers its services to special and diverse needs groups and send teams of tutors out to groups who cannot travel to their premises, including places of institutional care and juvenile detention centres. All activities are free of charge. Fighting Words relies almost entirely on volunteers to facilitate and support their initiatives. The volunteers are selected through an interview process, subjected to

reference check and police vetting and undergo specific training. They come from different walks of life. Among them are most commonly current or retired teachers, post-graduate students, writers or aspiring writers, journalists and librarians. They range in age from 19 to over 60 and are predominantly female. There are 450 active¹ volunteers of which approximately 100 frequently contribute to Fighting Words activities.

Fighting Words operates in close partnership with schools in Ireland. Creative writing workshops are offered mornings and afternoons during the school term. Each creative writing workshop lasts for two hours, involves approximately 20-25 students and is facilitated by approximately eight volunteer tutors (one tutor per three students). Students spend the first part of the session working together, as a group, creating a story initially through role play and improvisation. They work together, generating ideas, developing characters, setting and plot, adding dialogue and editing as they go. In the second half of the workshop, each participant has the opportunity to work on their own. Every student writes individually, either working on the group story or creating something completely new. All students work in small groups and are helped and encouraged by the volunteer tutors. Post-primary school groups can attend a one-off session or apply to participate in a 'Book Project', a longer-term project involving weekly attendance over the course of an academic year. Generally, students who attend one-off creative writing workshops are brought by their teachers and have no choice on whether to participate, whereas, students who take part in the yearlong book project are given the option not to participate. The yearlong book projects are usually undertaken by students during Transition Year, an optional year free of formal assessment and intended to act as a bridge between Junior Cycle (lower secondary) and Senior Cycle (upper secondary) in the post-primary education system in Ireland. The first book project workshop follows the same format as the one-off creative writing workshop and each week thereafter, students work with their assigned tutor in groups of three on their individual stories. Tutors who volunteer to work on the Book Project commit to being available at the

¹ An active volunteer is a volunteer who participates in at least 2-3 sessions a year.

same time each week so students get to work with the same tutor for the year. The Book Project culminates with the publication of an anthology of short stories written and edited by the students and introduced with a foreword from a famous writer. The books are professionally published and students work with a designer, a copywriter and other members of the publishing team to design a cover for the book, organise the layout and produce the final proof. The books are available for purchase in bookshops and online.

In addition to the one-off creative writing workshops and yearlong book projects, which are connected to school activities, Fighting Words also offers the Write Club to individual young people who have manifested a personal interest in creative writing and want to pursue their creative pursuits in their own time. The Write Club is a time and space for young people aged between 13 and 18 to come to Fighting Words and work on their own independent writing projects. They can use the space to work on different types of writing: short stories, film scripts, comedy, novels, poetry, graphic fiction or whatever interests them. No tutoring is involved in these three-hour sessions which take place on Wednesday afternoon, but professional writers are in attendance and offer support when required. The Write Club members have the opportunity to discuss their work with tutors and other experienced writers. A core group of approximately 20-30 young people attends these sessions. Many of them were introduced to Fighting Words through attending a one-off workshop with their school.

While some readers may consider the Fighting Words model to be more akin to process writing, than Participatory Arts, it is argued here that Fighting Words' emphasis on collaboration, partnership with professional writers, dialogue, participant voice and the creation of original work based on themes or issues relevant to participants' lives reflects *communal context*, *reciprocity*, *hyphenation*, and *active culture* the core principles of participatory arts. It is further argued that Fighting Words falls within the realm of Participatory Arts as their works extends to a wide range of art forms including scriptwriting, song writing, playwriting, poetry, graphic fiction, animation, TV, film and other media, all of which are carried out

collaboratively or individually in partnership with professional writers/artists/designers. It also engages in creative collaborations with other arts organizations, such as the Abbey Theatre, the National Gallery, The Print Museum, the Science Gallery, and Brown Bag Film Animation among others, and many of their participants works are published and/ or performed within public settings. In all of these respects it can be considered a form of Participatory Arts practice.

In the context of this study, Fighting Words has been classed as an applied Participatory Arts initiative that bridges the participatory arts and education sectors, and thus was deemed suitable as a base for further analysis for the articulation of principles and climates for creativity, as well as the identification of processes used to foster creativity, within the context of education. This research included representation from three cohorts of participants from Fighting Words: a) those who engaged within school groupings in one-off creative writing (CW) workshops, b) those which became ongoing members of the Wednesday afternoon Write Club (WC) and c) the 15-17 year olds involved in the yearlong book project (BP). Participants who were sampled in this study from the first two cohorts ranged in age from 12-18. All of the latter participants were in Transition Year. In the context of this research, 'teachers' refers to the school teacher accompanying transition year students attending the year-long book project; 'tutors' refer to Fighting Words volunteer tutors who work on the yearlong book project and one-off creative writing workshops; and 'principals' refer to the principals of schools participating in the yearlong book project.

3.3.3.3. Relationship between the cases

In the context of this study, Upstate is classed as a 'pure' Participatory Arts initiative and Fighting Words as an 'applied' Participatory Arts initiative. As outlined in Chapter 1, the distinction drawn here between 'pure' and 'applied' Participatory Arts initiatives, is based on the funding status and charitable purposes of the two organisations. Upstate is considered an example of the most authentic form or 'pure' participatory arts as it is specifically funded to promote arts participation in a

community context. It is community-engaged in that it operates within a local community setting, it invites and accepts ideas from the community, it is open to all members of the community, and provides a space where individuals can, *in their free time*, collectively work in collaboration with artists to realise performances based on themes, ideas, and issues of mutual interest. In this regard, its model typifies what could be considered as ‘pure’ participatory arts and Upstate is thus classed as an example of a ‘pure’ participatory arts organisation. Fighting Words, on the other hand, is considered an ‘applied’ Participatory Arts initiative as it is an example of an organisation that bridges the participatory arts and education sectors. *Fighting Words operates in an educational rather than a community context; it works in partnership with schools to offer a space where students of all ages can engage in creative writing as part of the school day.* The organisations also differ in their objectives. Upstate is concerned with promoting the arts and providing opportunities for local communities to engage in collaborative arts projects, while Fighting Words’ main objective is to provide free tutoring and mentoring in creative writing and related arts to children, teenagers and adults with special needs. Despite these differences, the organisations share a number of common characteristics. For instance, they both assume a democratic view of creativity. They believe that all individuals have the right to express themselves creatively and should have the opportunity to have their story heard. In this respect, both organisations offer a space for individual and collaborative creative expression and provide participants with a platform for voice. While they both specialise in different forms of the creative arts, storytelling is a core feature of all their creative activity. Both Upstate and Fighting Words view creative expression as a process that enables and empowers individuals and enhances their personal, social and emotional development. Both are socially-engaged organisations offering a free of charge service inclusive of all individuals, especially those from traditionally marginalised communities and those with lesser heard voices. An overview of their shared characteristics is illustrated in Figure 3.3.

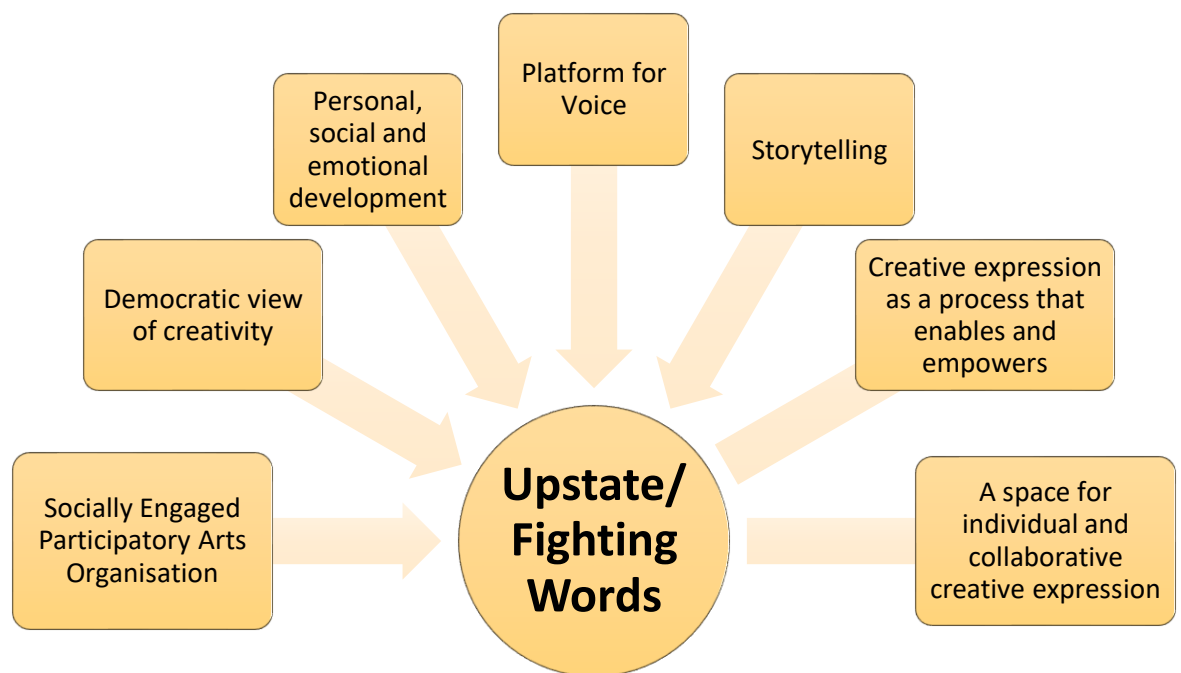


Figure 3.3 Shared characteristics between the chosen Case Study organisations

3.3.4 Dominant Qualitative Concurrent Mixed Methods Approach

The ‘paradigm wars’ of qualitative versus quantitative has resulted in a persistent emphasis on the differences between the two orientations, with purists on both sides of the divide vehemently arguing the superiority of one paradigm over the other, and thereby implying that methods associated with one should not be mixed with the other (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Bazeley’s (2003) definition of quantitative and qualitative research captures the chief differences between these two opposing research paradigms: ‘The term *quantitative* implies something that can be quantified or measured, and... *qualitative* implies making an assessment or judgement that involves interpretation’ (Bazeley, 2003, pp. 387-388). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.14) ‘present mixed methods research as the third research paradigm in educational research’ in the hope that ‘the field will move beyond quantitative *versus* qualitative research arguments because, as recognized by mixed methods research, *both* quantitative and qualitative research are important and useful’. According to Guetterman and Fetters (2018, p.903) mixed methods refers to a process where

quantitative and qualitative data are integrated 'to more completely address a study's purpose or research questions'. This view of mixed methods research is corroborated by Creswell and Creswell (2018, p.4) who posit that 'the core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the integration of qualitative and quantitative data yields additional insight beyond the information provided by either the quantitative or qualitative data alone'. Guetterman and Fetters (2018, p.902) suggest that researchers conducting a case study that uses qualitative and quantitative methods 'can benefit from recent innovations in mixed methods research, such as considering the mixed methods design and achieving meaningful integration of the two forms of data to yield new inferences and a more complete understanding'. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that when constructing a mixed-method design the researcher can decide whether to operate predominantly within one paradigm or not and whether to conduct the phases concurrently or sequentially.

In the context of this study a dominant qualitative concurrent mixed methods approach was adopted. The data collection tools for Case 1: Upstate were qualitative and the data collection tools for Case 2: Fighting Words were both qualitative and quantitative. A mixed-methods design was adopted in this research study, as the researcher recognised that by using both qualitative and quantitative tools that a diversity of views from wider cohorts (of students, volunteer tutors, teachers) as well as those of individuals within and beyond these cohorts would be captured. Creswell et al. (2003) and Creswell (2012) summarised six Mixed Methods research approaches which described differing ways to schedule such a study, and alternative purposes for collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data. In terms of scheduling, the methods articulated by Creswell allowed for either sequential collection (across a minimum of 2 phases) or concurrent collection (within a single phase) of qualitative and quantitative data, each with its own clearly defined purpose that set out to explain, explore or transform a research context, as described below:

- **Sequential Explanatory Design** – This method is a two-phase design where the quantitative data is collected first followed by qualitative data collection. The

purpose is to use the qualitative results to further explain and interpret the findings from the quantitative phase.

- **Sequential Exploratory Design** – This method is also a two-phase design. The qualitative data is collected first, followed by collection and analysis of quantitative data. The purpose of this design is to develop an instrument (such as a survey), to develop a classification for testing, or to identify variables.
- **Sequential Transformative Design** – This type of design also has two phases, but allows the theoretical perspective of the researcher to guide the study and determine the order of data collection. The results from both methods are integrated together at the end of the study during the analysis and interpretation phase.
- **Concurrent Triangulation Design** – In this design, qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently in one phase. The data are analysed separately and then compared and/or combined. This method is used to confirm, cross-validate or corroborate findings. It is often used to overcome a weakness in one method with the strengths of another.
- **Concurrent Nested (Embedded) Design** – This design includes one phase of data collection in which priority is given to one approach that guides the project, while the other approach is embedded or nested into the project and provides a supporting role. The embedded approach is often addressing a different question than the primary research question.
- **Concurrent Transformative Design** – This method involves concurrent data collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. It is guided by a theoretical perspective in the purpose or research question of the study. This perspective guides all methodological choices and the purpose is to evaluate that perspective at different levels of analysis.

In the context of this study, the Mixed Methods approach utilised could best be described as the **Concurrent Triangulation Design** as illustrated in Figure 3.4. The researcher collected data concurrently from two settings in the same time period (2013-2017), the first of which involved the use of qualitative data to deeply research aspects relating to creativity within Upstate (*Pure* Participatory Arts initiative), and the second of which employed both qualitative and quantitative tools to analyse the practices within the context of Fighting Words (*Applied* Participatory Arts initiative). The data were analysed separately and then compared and/or combined.

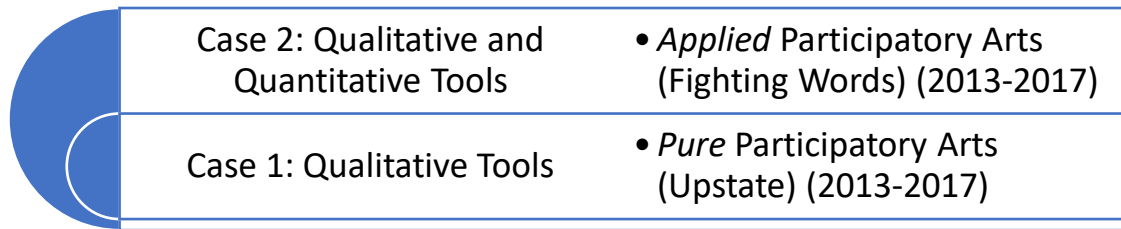


Figure 3.4: Concurrent Triangulation Design

The researcher hoped the emergent findings would be better supported through the ‘mixing of data’ gathered through these tools, through a process that Maxwell (1992) coined as: internal generalizability, that enhances the credibility of conclusions from a research study. In this regard, the claim is not that the inclusion of quantitative approaches contributes to the generalisability of the findings beyond this qualitative study, but rather that it had the potential to provide a means of examining whether particular themes generated from qualitative sources were characteristic of the chosen setting, or a cohort of individuals within that setting. With respect to the latter, Maxwell (2010, p.478) argues: ‘the *internal generalizability* of qualitative researchers’ claims... refers not to the generalizability of conclusions to other settings (what qualitative researchers typically call transferability) but to generalization *within* the setting or collection of individuals studied, establishing that the themes or findings identified are in fact characteristic of this setting or set of individuals as a whole’. Moreover, within certain themes, the information gleaned from quantitative sources further enhanced knowledge of the beneficial impacts of the initiative for the broader student cohort.

This dominant qualitative concurrent mixed methods research study was undertaken within a single phase, utilising both qualitative and quantitative tools to gather primary data, and further making use of secondary sources of data where appropriate. The study of Upstate yielded insights into how creativity was fostered within pure Participatory Arts initiatives, while the study of Fighting Words provided specific insights into the application of Participatory Arts in education – the latter being the context of particular interest to this study considering the implications for post-primary education. The data in this study were collected from a range of tools,

including interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and field notes and this was furthered with data gleaned from secondary documentary sources. In the study of Upstate Theatre Project, four forms of data collection were used, namely, semi-structured interviews with founders, a focus group with participants, participant evaluation forms and documentary review of resources from various productions. In the study of Fighting Words, four forms of data collection were used, namely, semi-structured interviews with founders, the CEO of the NCCA and principals, and questionnaires with (school) teachers, Fighting Words volunteer tutors, and students. Furthermore, field-notes were generated from observations of the researcher during visits to Fighting Words workshops during the period of study and documentary review of archived content/resources. This study allowed for triangulation of qualitative data-sets, through its use of multiple qualitative tools, and the exploration of two different types of Participatory Arts in order to elaborate on, enhance and add clarification to results gleaned from both the pure and applied Upstate and Fighting Words models.

3.3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

As shown in Figure 3.5, the data for this project were gathered across pure and applied Participatory Arts contexts from primary sources, including: students, teachers, volunteer tutors, school principals, Participatory Arts founders, artists, and/or participants; and through examining secondary data sources from archived resources, institutional websites, and/or government policy documents on education and arts provision. Due to participant group size and participant availability, qualitative data were gathered from Case Study 1, and qualitative and quantitative data were gathered concurrently from Case Study 2. This section summarises the processes of data collection and its subsequent analysis.

3.3.5.1 Data Collection Tools

The research included a range of data collection tools, including: semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, focus group, document/ resource analysis and field notes

from observation of Participatory Arts spaces and practices, as summarised in Figure 3.5.

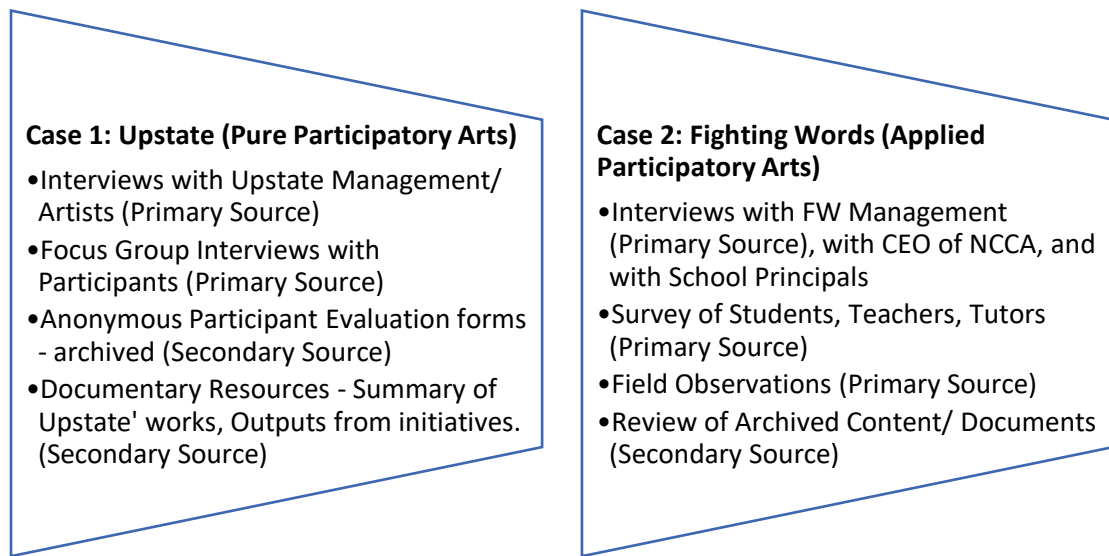


Figure 3.5: Overview of Data Collection Tools

Patton (2002, p.340) noted that interviews can be used to reveal information that can't be generated through direct observation – 'we interview people to find out from them those things which we cannot directly observe'. A research interview is a type of dialogue or conversation between two or more people one of whom controls the conversation and asks questions of the other/s.

In the case of Upstate, the data were collected from interviews with 6 of the artists that led pure Participatory Arts initiatives (2 of which were founders), and a further focus group was held with 7 participants. In addition, access was provided to secondary data sources in the form of substantive archived content held by Upstate, including: anonymous participant evaluation forms completed at the end of each Upstate production (2014-2017), video clips capturing performances, and the Upstate anthology of 7 productions, namely, *Hades* (1998), *Epic* (2001) and *At Peace* (2007) [*Border Chronicles* trilogy], *Tunnel of Love* (1999), *Come Forward to Meet You* (2011), *Ship Street Revisited* (2012) and *The Far Side* (2013).

In the case of Fighting Words, the data were collected from semi-structured interviews, from questionnaires, from researcher's own field observations and from review of resources available on Fighting Words website, and other Irish government publications on education and arts provision. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2014-2015 with the two founders of Fighting Words, 6 school principals whose learners availed of the service, and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in Ireland. These key stakeholders were selected for interview because their understanding of both the *Fighting Words* model and developments in the Irish mainstream post-primary curriculum saw them well-placed to comment not only on the Fighting Words model but also on the potential for its translation or integration into mainstream education.

Decisions regarding the choice of data collection tools were based on distinctions between the two organisations. In contrast to Fighting Words, Upstate does not operate in partnership with the education sector, therefore, school principals and the CEO of the NCCA were not interviewed in relation to Case Study 1. Surveys were deemed the most appropriate and effective means of gathering data from Fighting Words participants due to the participant groups size and accessibility. The volunteer tutor, teacher and student participant groups had either attended Fighting Words in the past and were no longer in attendance at the centre or they were engaged in Fighting Words activities at the time of data collection and were not available to partake in a focus group interview. Surveys were not used to gather data from Upstate participants as the smaller participant group size and participants' availability in Upstate was appropriate for a focus group interview. In addition, the large volume of archived anonymous participant evaluation forms available to the researcher contained information similar to that which might be gathered in a survey.

3.3.5.1.1 Interviews

Patton (2002, p.340) points to the usefulness of interviews 'to find out... those things which we cannot directly observe'. Merriam (2009, p.88) further highlights the value

of interviewing when we need to better understand ‘how people interpret the world around them’. In the context of this study, the researcher wanted to gain a greater understanding of the enactment of Participatory Arts-type initiatives across both contexts, particularly the experiences of practitioners, their perspectives on particular processes and practices, and any beneficial outcomes. In this regard, the researcher constructed a series of questions for semi-structured interviews with founder-practitioners and artists of Upstate (see Figure 3.6), as well as founder-practitioners and school principals in the case of Fighting Words (see Figure 3.7).

- Indicative questions for semi-structured interview with founder-practitioner/ artists of Upstate:**
1. If you were to describe *Upstate productions* to someone who has never heard about it what would you say?
 2. What do you see as the primary purpose and ethos of *Upstate productions*?
 3. Can you describe the methods/ processes used by *Upstate productions*, and participants response to these? (Devising, etc.)
 4. Are there particular strategies used to mediate interactions/ encounters between the ‘professional artist/ actor’ and ‘amateur artist/actor’? Explain.
 5. Do you think participants benefit from *Upstate productions* and if so in what ways?
 6. Have there been unanticipated outcomes arising from *Upstate productions* – *If yes, what do you think have been the catalyst for these outcomes?*
 7. Are there challenges in managing *Upstate productions*, and how do you manage these?
 8. What makes *Upstate productions* successful?
 9. What might undermine it?

Figure 3.6: Indicative Questions for Semi-structured Interviews in Upstate

Merriam (2009, p.99) asserts that open-ended questions are good in generating descriptive data, and that ‘the more detailed and descriptive the data, the better’. In this regard, the interview questions in this research study were semi-structured and open-ended to allow the practitioners to fully express their perspectives and sentiments on both initiatives, and furthermore in the case of Fighting Words, to allow the school principals and the CEO of the NCCA to consider the potential of the Fighting Words model to be integrated in post-primary education settings. Patton (1990) contends that the quality of information retrieved during an interview depends on the interviewer, and in this regard, Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.698) assert that the act of interviewing results in ‘negotiated, contextually based results’. Therefore, the researcher’s role as interviewer encompasses being aware of the

multiple factors at-play for researcher and participant (perspectives of self and of other) and the multiple realities in-play, and interpretations thereof, during all stages of the interview process. The interviews typically took 45 minutes to 1 hour, and were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and were transcribed by the researcher shortly afterwards.

3.3.5.1.2 Focus Group

A focus group was used in this study to gather perspectives and experiences of 5 Upstate participants on the processes, practices used within the Upstate productions. The focus group interview has been described by Agar and MacDonald (1995, p.80) as being 'somewhere between a meeting and a conversation', with the ever-present possibility of discussion wandering off-course. Kidd and Parshall (2000, p.294) point out that the interviewer plays a pivotal role in moderating the discourse, but also recognises that the characteristics of the participants and their 'emotional stake in the topic(s)' can greatly affect the quality of discourse. In the context of this study, the researcher framed indicative questions as illustrated in Figure 3.8 to help retain the focus on the research study. The focus group interview took place at a location where Upstate productions were regularly performed, and was 90 minutes in length. The focus group interview was recorded on a digital voice recorder and transcribed by the researcher immediately afterwards.

<p>Indicative questions for semi-structured interview with Founder-Practitioners of Fighting Words:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you were to describe the <i>Fighting Words Model</i> to someone who has never heard about it what would you say? What are the key principles/ processes/ practices within FW model? 2. In what way is <i>Fighting Words</i> different from Valencia 826? 3. <i>What do you see as the primary purpose of Fighting Words?</i> 4. <i>Do you think students benefit from Fighting Words and if so in what ways?</i> 5. <i>Have there been unanticipated outcomes arising from Fighting Words?</i> 6. <i>Are there challenges in implementing the Fighting Words model? Explain.</i> 7. <i>What makes Fighting Words successful?</i> 8. What might undermine it? 9. <i>Do you think that the Fighting Words model can be translated in the formal school curriculum without compromising its integrity? Explain.</i> 10. Do you think the model is more suited to be translated into a short course or as part of the English curriculum? Explain. 11. <i>What are the benefits of incorporating the Fighting Words model in the formal school curriculum?</i> 12. <i>What compromises do you envisage may be necessary to translate Fighting Words in the formal school curriculum and to what extent do you find these problematic?</i> 13. Do you envisage the <i>Fighting Words</i> centre and its staff playing any specific role in the implementation of the model in the formal school system? 14. What is the biggest achievement of the <i>Fighting Words</i> project? 15. What are your long term hopes and aspirations for the project?
<p>Indicative questions for semi-structured interview with participating school principals: [In addition to questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12 the following questions were posed and/ or extended]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. How did your school become involved in <i>Fighting Words</i>? 17. Were there any administrative and organisational challenges in facilitating students to participate in the project? 18. Were there any benefits for the school as a whole arising from participating in <i>Fighting Words</i>? 19. Do you think that the <i>Fighting Words</i> model could be translated in the formal school curriculum? 20. If yes, how do you think it could be incorporated? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could the <i>Fighting Words</i> model be delivered as a transition year module within the school? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, should it be delivered by outside volunteer tutors or by teachers? • If it were to be translated in to the school curriculum, do you think the model is more suited as a short course as per the revised Junior Cycle or as part of the English curriculum? Why? 21. What compromises do you envisage may be necessary to translate <i>Fighting Words</i> in the formal school curriculum and to what extent do you find these problematic? 22. Do you think there would be benefits in incorporating the <i>Fighting Words</i> model in the formal school curriculum?
<p>Indicative questions for semi-structured interview with CEO of National Centre for Curriculum and Assessment: [In addition to questions 3, 4, 19, 20, the following questions were posed and/ or extended]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 23. What do you know about the <i>Fighting Words</i> model? 24. Do you see any similarity or points of contact between the principles that informed the revision of the Junior Cycle and those which underpin the <i>Fighting Words</i> model? 25. Which of the following options do you think would best translate the <i>Fighting Words</i> model in the school curriculum and why? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Transition year module run by the school b. Junior Cycle Short Course c. As part of the English curriculum d. Other... 26. If the FW model were to be translated in to the school curriculum, do you envisage assessment being a difficulty? 27. Are there any other specific difficulties that you envisage?

Figure 3.7: Indicative Questions for Semi-structured Interviews in Fighting Words

Indicative questions for focus group interview with participants of Upstate:

1. If you were to describe Upstate productions to someone who has never heard about it what would you say?
2. Why did you sign up for an Upstate production?
3. Can you describe the processes used by Upstate productions, and what are your thoughts on these?
4. What did you like least/ most about Upstate productions?
5. What has been your experience of interacting with professional artists/ actors?
6. Have you benefitted from engagement in *Upstate productions* and if so, in what ways?
7. Have there been any unanticipated outcomes arising from *Upstate productions*? *Explain.*
8. Have you experienced any challenges in engaging in *Upstate productions*? *If yes how did you manage these?*
9. What in your opinion contributes to a successful *Upstate production*?
10. What might undermine it?
11. Have you any other comment?

Figure 3.8: Indicative Questions for Focus Group Interview with Upstate participants

3.3.5.1.3 Questionnaire

Regmi *et al.* (2016) advocate for having a user-friendly design and layout in questionnaires and point to the usefulness of the online platforms (such as: Survey Monkey, Google forms) in reducing the danger of multiple responses, and in allowing users to self-pace in completion of survey. However, Regmi *et al.* (2015) further point to challenge in ensuring adequate sampling and response rate, and the considerable time-load associated with framing, piloting and implementing questionnaires in online settings. O’Leary (2014) outlined the following processes that need to be followed with respect to questionnaire design – initial framing of the instrument, piloting, modifying and refining of instrument – which is followed by broader implementation, and then the data analysis process.

The Fighting Words questionnaires were initially piloted online in 2013 with two users from each cohort of teachers, volunteer tutors and students, and there were no requests for changes to the framing or number of questions. The questionnaires were then distributed via an online survey (Google forms) to 7 teachers, 41 volunteers tutors and 256 participants who had engaged with Fighting Words programmes. The accessibility of participants and stakeholder group size dictated the

distribution of these questionnaires. A census approach was taken for Book Project students, Book Project Teachers and Fighting Words volunteer tutors as the researcher wished to specifically target students, teachers and tutors who were involved in Book Projects during the period from Fighting Words began to the time of data collection (2009 – 2014). Similarly, a census approach was taken for Wednesday Afternoon Write Club students, as the researcher sought to gather data from all students in this participant group. Convenience sampling was used for Creative Writing Workshop students as the researcher gathered data from students who were in attendance on the days that the researcher was present and so these students were ‘convenient’ sources of data for the researcher. There were responses from 5 teachers (2 male and 3 female), from 13 volunteer tutors (3 male and 10 female) and from 145 students (27 male and 118 female) who had participated in Fighting Words Creative Writing (CW) workshops (N=92: 22 male and 70 female), Wednesday afternoon Write Club (WC) sessions (N=11: 2 male and 9 female) or the Book Project (BP) sessions (N=42: 3 male and 39 female). The response number and rate from the questionnaire is displayed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Responses to the Fighting Words Questionnaires

Participant	Total participants	Responses	Response rate (%)
Book Project students (BPS)	116	42	36.2
Creative Writing Workshop students (CWS)	120	92	77
Wednesday Afternoon Write Club students (WCS)	20	11	55
Book Project teachers (BPT)	7	5	71.4
Fighting Words volunteer tutors (FWT)	41	13	32

The response rate for each participant group varied considerably. The difference in response rates is most likely due to the different timespans between participants’ engagement with Fighting Words activities and distribution of the questionnaire. For instance, of the 116 Book Project students surveyed, only 24 were involved in the Book Project that was in progress at the time of data collection. The other 92 participants had completed the Book Project as part of Transition Year in one of the five years prior to data collection (2009-2013) and had since either left school, started college, emigrated or moved on in their lives in one way or another, hence the relatively low response rate (36.2%) for this participant group. On the other hand, the high response rate (77%) from Creative Writing Workshop students was likely

due to the fact that participants in this group were surveyed a day or two after attending a workshop and thus Fighting Words was a more recent experience for them. Likewise, the higher than average response rate (55%) from the Wednesday Afternoon Write Club students was likely due to the fact that individuals in this participant group were in regular attendance at the centre and thus still interested and involved in Fighting Words. The high response rate from Book Project teachers (71.4%) was likely due to the fact that most of the teachers in this participant group remained in regular contact with Fighting Words after their respective Book Projects ended. The comparably low response rate (32%) from Fighting Words volunteer tutors is more difficult to explain but perhaps could be accounted for by the fact that individuals in this group were involved in a voluntary capacity with limited time availability and may have chosen to dedicate time available to helping out in the centre rather than completing a questionnaire.

The questionnaires differed according to the target population but care was taken to ensure that questions were designed so that, as far as possible, responses could be compared and substantiated. The questionnaires contained a mix of open-ended and close-ended questions to allow for the collection of both numeric and qualitative data. The student questionnaire comprised of three sections, the first of which confirmed consent, the second gathered some demographic information and the third of which gathered the student cohort perspectives on Fighting Words, as illustrated in Figure 3.9.

The Fighting Words teacher and tutor questionnaires comprised four sections, the first confirmed consent to engage in research study, the second gathered demographic information, the third section explored their experience teaching or tutoring, and the further section gathered their perspectives on Fighting Words Model, its impact on students, and its potential for transition to mainstream education, as illustrated in Figure 3.10. These data sets were collated within a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and descriptive statistics were generated from each survey, visually displayed in charts, and results written up in a narrative format.

Student Questionnaire (Creative Writing workshop students/ Book Project students/ Wednesday Afternoon Write Club students)

Section 1: Research Consent

I am over 18 and I have read and understood the plain language statement and the consent form (tick), OR

I am under 18 and my parent/guardian has signed the consent form and I have returned it to my teacher (tick)

If I agree to take part in this research, I understand that my responses will be analysed for research purposes and may be quoted in a report to be published by Fighting Words and in a PhD study. I also understand that my personal details will not be disclosed and information I have offered will be treated confidentially and reported accurately. [I agree/ I disagree to take part in the research study. (tick)]

Section 2: Demographic

Student Age, Gender, Nationality, School, Highest educational qualification/ Occupation of parent/ guardian

Section 3: Fighting Words Project

- How did you initially get involved in *Fighting Words*? (please tick)
Book Project, Once-off School Creative Writing Afternoon Session, Summer Workshop, Other
- Did you have a choice to get involved in the *Fighting Words* project? Yes/ No. Explain.
- Are you still in contact with *Fighting Words*? *Why are you still in contact with *Fighting Words*?*
- If you were given the choice, would you take part in *Fighting Words* again (Yes, No, Maybe)? Explain.
- What do you like most/ least about being involved in *Fighting Words*? Why?
- After participating in *Fighting Words*, how would you rate the following (Very Well/ Well/ Not Sure/ Poorly/ Very Poorly)
 - I am now better able to write in English
 - I am now better able to speak in English
- As a result of being involved in *Fighting Words* which of the following do you think have improved, please rate your level of agreement for each of the following – Strongly Agree/ Agree/ Don't Know/ Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
 - I am more able to think for myself
 - I am more confident in my writing abilities
 - I am more confident asking questions in the classroom
 - I am a better listener
 - I am more respectful of other people's ideas
 - I am more comfortable working with others
 - I visit the library more often
 - I read more
 - I enjoy sharing my ideas
 - I learned more about my strengths
 - I learned more about my weaknesses
 - I am not afraid to stand up for myself
 - I am not afraid of asking for help
 - I have more confidence in my ability to be creative
 - I can put my point across more clearly
 - When something does not work, I am more able to think of an alternative
- What is the most important thing you have learned so far from participating in *Fighting Words*?
- What is your biggest achievement from participating in *Fighting Words* so far? Why?
- Have you continued writing after finishing *Fighting Words* project? *What are you writing at the moment?*
- What advice would you give to new students who wish to get involved with *Fighting Words*?

*Blue text denotes alternative question asked of Wed afternoon Write Club students

Figure 3.9: Fighting Words Student Questionnaire Format

Teacher Questionnaire (School teachers accompanying students to <i>Fighting Words</i>) & <i>Fighting Words</i> Tutor Questionnaire	
Section 1: Research Consent	
I have read and understood the plain language statement. (tick) I have read and agree with the terms outlined in the consent form. I agree to take part in this research. I understand that my responses will be analysed for research purposes and may be quoted in a report to be published by <i>Fighting Words</i> and in a PhD study. I also understand that my personal details will not be disclosed and information I have offered will be treated confidentially and reported accurately. I agree/ I disagree to take part in the research study. (tick)	
Section 2: Demographic	
Student Age, Gender, Nationality, School, Highest educational qualification, teaching experience/ FW tutor experience	
Section 3: Role of Teacher/ <i>Fighting Words</i> Tutor	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Why did you get involved in <i>Fighting Words</i>? What did you like most about being involved in this project? [FW Tutor Only] Rate Effectiveness of Tutor Training on 5-point scale from: <i>Very Effective</i> to <i>Not Effective At All</i>. [FW Tutor Only] -What are the challenges of being a tutor for <i>Fighting Words</i>? [FW Tutor Only] -What is your biggest achievement as a <i>Fighting Words</i> tutor? 	
Section 4: Role of Teacher/ tutor	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In what way do you think <i>Fighting Words</i> benefits students? As a result of students being involved in <i>Fighting Words</i>, please indicate your level of agreement for each of the following – Strongly Agree/ Agree/ Don't Know/ Disagree/ Strongly Disagree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are more able to think for themselves Students are more confident in their writing abilities Students are more confident asking questions in the classroom Students are better listeners Students are more respectful of other people's ideas Students are more comfortable working with others Students visit the library more often Students read more Students are more open to sharing ideas Students learned more about their strengths Students learned more about their weaknesses Students are not afraid to stand up for themselves Students are not afraid of asking for help Students have more confidence in their ability to be creative Students can put their point across more clearly When something does not work students are more able to think of an alternative Student literacy has improved Performance in written continuous assessment has improved Students show a greater interest in literature Students demonstrate a better ability to critically analyse literary texts Students show a greater ability to critically analyse a broad range of written texts I don't believe the <i>Fighting Words</i> model would work without the following elements: *Tick the elements you consider essential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose built space Interaction with tutors other than own teacher No assessment Publication of a book Involvement of high-profile writers Collaborative nature of the writing process Supportive atmosphere Individual support outside of group session Other: Do you think that the <i>Fighting Words</i> model can be transferred to a formal school environment without compromising the integrity of the model? Yes/ No/ Maybe. Explain If you responded yes to previous question, do you think the model can be transferred without modification? Yes/ No. Explain If the <i>Fighting Words</i> model were to be incorporated in the Junior Cycle, to which of the following do you think it is most suited? English Syllabus/ Short Course. Explain Have you any suggestions on how the current format of the model might be improved? [Teacher Only] Has your relationship with your students changed in any way as a result of <i>Fighting Words</i> [Teacher Only] Is there any final comment you wish to make about the impact of <i>Fighting Words</i> on your students? [Tutor Only] What advice would you give to new tutors starting to volunteer with <i>Fighting Words</i>? 	

Figure 3.10: *Fighting Words* Teacher and Tutor Questionnaire Format

3.3.5.1.4 Field Notes

Additional data were obtained from field notes compiled by the researcher during site visits to the Fighting Words premises. Over the period of a year in 2014-2015, the researcher visited the premises 6 times along with a fellow researcher, where she retained general notes/ observations of the physical premises, of the Creative Writing workshops and events, and any informal chats with staff, volunteer tutors, teachers and students about their experiences. In total, field observations of three complete Creative Writing workshops in-action were also recorded, which included descriptions of the physical space, the teaching and training methodologies, and the interaction of students, tutors and teachers in the researcher's field diary. The researcher also made field notes at a training workshop for volunteer tutors on how training was conducted, what was emphasised in terms of processes and practices for enabling learning, and how the ethos of the organisation was presented.

3.3.5.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase of analysis of Upstate and Fighting Words data-sets took-place from 2014-2017, during which time the main focus of the research was to ascertain broader characteristics of these pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives. The first phase of analysis sought to answer Research Question 1 (a) and (d) and led to the publication of the three papers located in Appendices A, B and C. The second phase of analysis of Upstate and Fighting Words data-sets took-place in 2018-2019, during which time the main focus of the research was to ascertain specifically whether (and how) creativity was being fostered within these pure and applied Participatory Arts contexts, and the beneficial outcomes accrued, with the purpose of articulating features of a Participatory Arts Model that could be used to foster creativity in education. The second phase of analysis sought to answer Research Questions 1 (b), (c), (d) and 2, the findings of which are documented in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.3.5.2.1 First Phase Analysis of Upstate and Fighting Words 2014-2018

Two separate data analysis approaches were utilised in the first phase of data analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used to analyse the Upstate data sets, and Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) framework analysis was used to analyse Fighting Words datasets. The guiding research questions at this initial phase of analysis were: *What are the key characteristics and core processes of the pure/applied Participatory Arts initiative? What are the beneficial outcomes for participants within pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives, and how are these enabled?* The intention was to keep a broader focus on the overall participatory arts experience, and in doing so, get a sense of its key processes and practices, and whether creativity was being fostered within it. The processes involved in Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis include: reading the dataset multiple times before coding the data, and continually making rough notes and memos to generate ideas for coding. A list of initial codes emerged from this process, which were aligned with corresponding themes in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. These codes were then grouped into thematic categories, which were reviewed and reduced to a number of main themes. Braun and Clarke's (2006) frame for thematic analysis thus allowed for themes to emerge either in an inductive 'bottom up' or deductive 'theoretical or top down' approach. In this first phase of analysis of Upstate' data-sets, the researcher reviewed primary data gathered from interviews with the two founders, interviewed four artists and held focus group interviews with participants. Furthermore, secondary data were collated and analysed from documentary materials of 7 Upstate productions. The first phase of analysis of Upstate generated four broad themes relating to what contributed to effectiveness or otherwise of Upstate' Participatory Arts productions, namely, Characteristics of Participatory Arts Initiatives, Processes of Participatory Arts, Principles underpinning the Participatory Arts Process, and Beneficial Outcomes. These themes and some accompanying coding elements are illustrated in Figure 3.11.

First Phase of Data Analysis: Themes and Sample Associated Codes from Upstate
<p>Theme 1: Characteristics of Participatory Arts Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimate atmosphere • Feels authentic • Story telling • Performance • Voices of less heard are placed centre-stage • Real-time interaction with audience • Site-specific • Street performance • Voicing untold stories • Diversity in profile of participants - pluralist • Local practice/ community context • Process of creating as important as the high-quality end product • Encourages participants to provoke – awakens aesthetic consciousness/ inspires social change
<p>Theme 2: Processes of Participatory Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devising process • Participants inform the writing of play – participants work with professionals to craft story • Participants lead the writing of play – participants generate storyline and craft story • Character building from local archives/ knowledge • Character building from personal lives/ experiences of participants • Opportunities facilitated for individual/ group reflection • Ideas formation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Triggering Ideas -Images, photos, drawings, location-visits ○ Mapping ideas - Text diagrams, Spider diagrams ○ Collating Ideas - Flipcharts and markers ○ Exchanging ideas
<p>Theme 3: Principles underpinning the Participatory Arts Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty with and from participants about journey • Openness to new ideas and sharing of personal experiences • Collective ownership of works-in-progress and of final work • Freedom to suggest ideas and create works • Equal access to engage in PA process • Equality of opportunities within PA processes
<p>Theme 4: Beneficial Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters critical consciousness • Fosters aesthetic consciousness • Sense of belonging/ community

Figure 3.11: First Phase of Data Analysis – Themes and Sample Coding for Upstate

The key findings in relation to this first phase of data analysis of Upstate’ initiatives were framed as a discussion paper, entitled: *‘Whose art is it anyway?’ Devising in*

Participatory Arts and Professional Theatre Practice: A Critical and Historical Analysis of Upstate Theatre Project, which was published as a book chapter (White, 2015).

The approach taken in the first phase of analysis of Fighting Words data sets was consistent with the principles of framework analysis. Srivastava and Thomson (2009) describe framework analysis as a qualitative method of research which has specific questions, and some issues identified prior to the start of the data analysis. Srivastava and Thomson (2009, p.73) add that while 'framework analysis may generate theories'; its main purpose is to 'describe and interpret what is happening in a particular setting'. According to Ritchie and Spencer (1994), who developed this technique, framework analysis is flexible in that it allows the user to either collect all the data and then analyse them or do data analysis *during* the collection process. Archer *et al.* (2005) emphasise that framework analysis allows keeping in close contact with the data, since it is a dynamic and generative framework which allows change or addition or amendment throughout the process. This flexible approach to data analysis was important for this research study, which needed at this initial stage to uncover simply what was happening within the applied Participatory Arts settings of Fighting Words vis-à-vis engagement of participants, and how this was being facilitated. The first phase of analysis of Fighting Words activities using framework analysis involved coding the qualitative data-sets and generating broad themes relating to what contributed to effectiveness or otherwise of Fighting Words initiatives, and blending the results from the accompanying descriptive statistics as appropriate within and across these themes. In this regard, a number of key themes emerged that pointed to Fighting Words enabling learners in three ways:

- Fighting Words as a *Vehicle for Dialogue and Democratic Relations*
- Fighting Words as a *Vehicle for Voice*
- Fighting Words as a *Vehicle for Creativity and Imagination*

The findings further demonstrated that participants' experience of this space and the learning that occurs there, causes young people to conceive of themselves differently. In this regard, participants in Fighting Words demonstrated a range of behaviours that suggested increased levels of engagement and motivation, improved

confidence and self-esteem, recognition of and pride in creative ability, a stronger sense of self, a greater ability to work collaboratively, and improved literacy. The manner in which the Fighting Words' initiatives enabled the aforementioned beneficial outcomes was articulated in the journal article entitled: *'Fighting words as revolutionary pedagogy: a Freirean reading of young people's experiences of a socially-engaged creative writing centre'*, which was published as a journal article (White, Lorenzi and O'Higgins Norman, 2018).

Furthermore, there was evidence to suggest that participants' experience of Fighting Words and learning therein, was connected in some way to the 'space' or 'place'. This led the researcher to move back through the data-sets to consider the learning space, particularly the interplay of the physical, socio-emotional and critical dimensions of the environment on the learner experience. The process of characterisation of the resultant elements required careful choice of language as the terms chosen had to be broad enough to reflect the core characteristics and precise enough to capture the nuances dictated by each dimension. Terms which recurred in the text of the interviews and responses to questionnaires and researchers' field notes were identified: *open, light, dynamic, stimulating, unexpected* and *cosy*, and the analysis of what these terms referenced led ultimately to the articulation of three dimensions (Critical, Physical, Social-emotional) in the 'Multidimensional Model of Creative Space' as shown in Figure 3.12, which formed the basis for the second journal article entitled: *'The development of a model of creative space and its potential for transfer from non-formal to formal education'*, which was published as a journal article (White and Lorenzi, 2016).

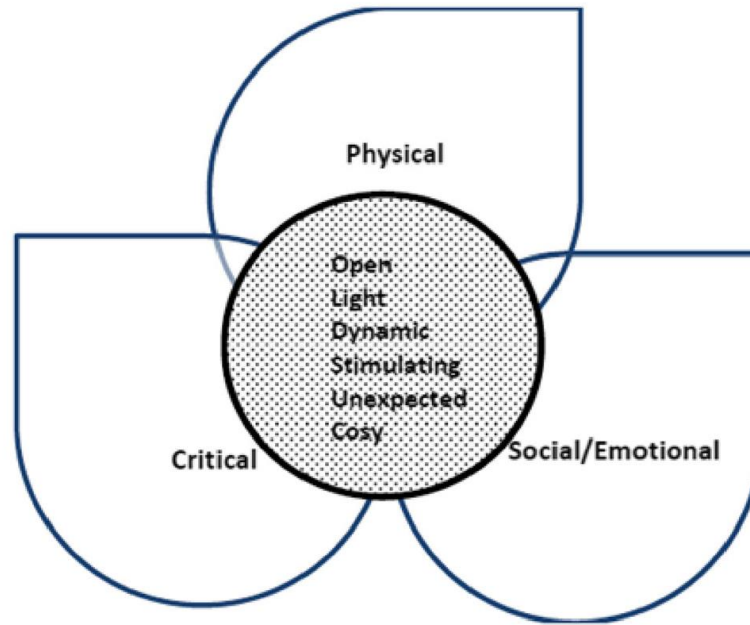


Figure 3.12: A multidimensional model of creative space

3.3.5.2.2 Second Phase of Analysis of Upstate and Fighting Words 2018-2019

The second phase of analysis focused specifically on further exploration of the third theme which emerged from the first phase of analysis, namely, the Participatory Arts initiative as a *Vehicle for Creativity and Imagination*, and sought to explore this in more depth, particularly the processes and conditions fostering creativity across the Upstate and Fighting Words. ***It is important to remind the reader here that the second phase of analysis is where the researcher directly responds to the overarching research questions (as articulated in Section 1.5), and thus it is this second phase of analysis that addresses the main focus of the thesis of exploring the potential of using Participatory Arts initiatives to foster creativity in education.***

This second phase of analysis took place in 2018-2019 and required the researcher to re-engage with the literature to compile a new frame for analysis that integrated the principles, conditions, processes and approaches already shown in other studies to underpin creativity in participatory arts and educational settings. This resulted in the identification of over 40 elements, which were grouped into 4 thematic categories to comprise the frame for analysis, which was then used to reanalyse the

entire datasets from both cases of study. The four thematic categories framing the analysis were: Theme A: *Fostering climate/s for creativity*; Theme B: *Processes for being creative*; Theme C: *Principles of good practice*; and, Theme D: *Beneficial outcomes*. The data from Upstate and Fighting Words were completely re-coded, and categorised under these categories. The coding process involved sifting through each data set and selecting text that was relevant to each code. Selected text was copied and pasted into an Excel spreadsheet. Each code was given a row and each data source was given a column. Relevant text from each data source was entered in the appropriate column and according to the corresponding row. When each of the fields in the spreadsheet were populated and all the data sources sorted, each row from the spreadsheet was individually copied and pasted into a Word document and the cells in each row were merged to create individual tables representing each element of the frame for analysis. For this reason, it was important that clear identifiers for each source were included after each quote during the coding process. A sample of the coding process for Theme A (after cells had been merged in Word document) has been included for illustrative purposes in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Sample Coding Framework for Theme A - Fostering Climates for Creativity.

THEME A	Fostering Climate/s for Creativity	
Category	Sample Codes	Sample extracts from participants and review of resources of Upstate/ Fighting Words. Sample descriptive statistics from Fighting Words (FW) survey respondents.
Psychosocial Factors	Safe Supportive Trusting Non-threatening Fun/ Humorous Open and Relaxed Challenge Energy Non-judgemental Freedom to express one-self Flexible	<p>...<i>The first few weeks of any project it's getting to know the group and getting them to trust each other. You have to welcome them, make them feel at ease, challenge them, introduce them to other people, build their confidence, have some craic, break down the barriers between you and them. There is a lot going on before you even think about doing a play.</i> (Hayes, Upstate)</p> <p>...<i>Initially I try and make it fun. I really believe that if this stuff is fun it's easy and if it's not fun, once it crosses the line of not being fun anymore, it becomes very difficult and people clam up.</i> (Murray, Upstate)</p> <p>...<i>they make you feel comfortable, they're good fun.</i> Anna FG - Upstate</p> <p>...<i>If you can go in with a good energy it really helps and if you keep things fun.</i> (Murray, Upstate)</p> <p>...<i>I enjoyed the challenge of gently easing them into it...encouraging them when necessary...and at times pushing them if I felt they needed it.</i> (FW Tutor)</p> <p>...<i>It has the right balance of fun and focus. It's structured, it's managed, and yet it's also loose and free. It has all the right things going on.</i> (FW Tutor)</p> <p>...<i>'I could have my say' and 'I learnt that no idea is bad or stupid'</i> (FW Student Survey)</p> <p>The majority of Book Project students were not afraid of asking for help - strongly agreed (34%)/agreed (39%). (FW Student Survey)</p> <p>The majority of Creative Writing Workshop students were not afraid of asking for help - strongly agreed (20%)/ agreed (46%). (FW Student Survey)</p> <p>...<i>They let you voice anything. If you say 'would this work?' They say, 'Well let's try it and see. They give you the freedom to do that.</i> (Olivia FG-Upstate)</p> <p>...<i>Children have more freedom in this project. I think it engages them because to a certain extent they're creating, you know, their own syllabus really.</i> (PSC -Fighting Words)</p>
Psychosocial Processes	Positive attitude to novelty Alternative solutions are taken seriously Personal differences are accepted People are accepted as individuals of unconditional worth	<p>...<i>like we didn't set out to make a film... it was just sort of a discussion and it developed into it. It could just as easily have turned into a play or a book or a book of poetry, anything could have come out of it, it just sort of developed over time.</i> (Liam FG, Upstate)</p> <p>...<i>That's the whole point of these projects, particularly with Upstate, is to bring a motley crew together who would never have encountered each other and get them to bond through the medium of creating a piece of art and have fun with it. And it's incredible! I think people make friends for life through it.</i> (Murray, Upstate)</p>

	Extreme and early evaluations and judgements are avoided	...I'm talking about a world where the notion of adjudication is actually probably the most inappropriate thing you could imagine. (Gorman -- Upstate)
	Allowing adequate time and space to build trust	...I felt very comfortable in the group and XXX approach really allowed the group develop at its own pace. (ER – Upstate)
	Allowing progress at their own pace to build confidence and overcome fears	...I learned so much from being a part of such a supportive, dynamic and fun group...to not take myself so seriously, to trust the process and the people, to make mistakes, to find my voice, to collaborate. (ER- Upstate)
	Valuing ordinary 'little c' creativity	... Sharing our stories really encouraged each of us to develop our own voice. This was done in such a gentle manner. It was a huge confidence builder for us all. (ER – Upstate)
	Gentle facilitation of voice	
	Offering reassurance and encouragement	...It's more about getting people to trust that they can do it. That's the biggest difficulty. Giving people confidence in their ideas because if you can give them the confidence to say what they are thinking you'll get wonderful stuff. (Murray, Upstate)
	Demystifying and simplifying the creative process	... It's about making it simple. If you make it simple you take away the mystery, give people the confidence to say what they are thinking as opposed to trying to form what they're thinking into something impressive... (Murray, Upstate)
Physical	Other/ Out of school space	...I think Fighting Words works because it's not school, the students tend to relax when they realise they're there to write and to enjoy the writing and also that their work will be valued and respected, that they'll be treated as writers -- not as 'pupils.' (FW-Tutor)
	Does not resemble traditional structure	...it's just to give the children a different place that they know it isn't school and therefore they know there isn't an exam at the end and nobody's marking it and nobody's judging it and all the rest of it so. (Love - Fighting Words Founder)
	Site-specific practice	...working on the site with the architecture of the space would have fuelled the idea of making that particular piece (Lowe – Upstate)
		...we wanted to do a site-specific piece on a bus. Declan had organized getting the bus, we had about 30 young people and complete freedom. We had the bus and we had a couple of places that we wanted to go and visit on the bus. (SM – Upstate Artist)
Partnership	Value in partnering with expert/s (artist-tutor)	...I think the results show how professional those guys are especially the cinematography... They actually created an atmosphere. You mightn't have noticed it when it was being filmed but it came across in the way it was just shot so beautifully. (Liam FG – Upstate)
	Acknowledgement of role of 'audience' (publication/ presentation) in partnership	...When the show was performed, we heard the intakes of breath and the gasps of familiarity, dismay and delight from the local audience. They were watching people they know telling - in fact, living out – a story they understood intimately. The line between reality and fiction blurred. The story was entirely made up – a clever archetypal construct – but the collective ownership of it, among the writers who were now acting it with familiar ease and the audience who sensed the pure truth of it, was something that mainstream theatre, with all its methods, struggles to achieve. (UR, 2001, p. 16 – Upstate)

The overarching study was concerned with investigating processes of promoting creativity in education, within Participatory Arts type initiatives, and therefore the second phase of analysis was pivotal in uncovering how climates for creativity were being fostered, and what processes enabled participants to be creative, as well as how broader beneficial outcomes identified in the first phase of analysis were enabled. The remaining thematic categories and associated codes are fully discussed alongside the findings for the second phase of analysis in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 for Upstate and Fighting Words respectively.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by DCU's Research Ethics Committee in October 2013. The interview and focus group participants in both Upstate and Fighting Words were provided with a Plain Language Statement which explained the aim of the research, the nature of their engagement, that interviews would be recorded, that their participation was voluntary and thus they could disengage at any point without penalty, and finally that pseudo-names would be used to enable anonymisation of datasets unless the participant expressly requested their real name be used, as per DCU guidelines. All participants were informed prior to the conduction of the interviews/ focus group, that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed, and that they could withdraw for any reason at any point in the process. The interviewees signed and returned the Informed Consent forms in advance of the interview/ focus group. In terms of the questionnaires, the participants were asked to confirm at the outset of the online questionnaire, that the plain language statement had been read by them (or had been read to them), and furthermore to confirm that they understood they were consenting to engagement in a research study, and that confidentiality and accurate reporting of findings were assured. Finally, in one of the Participatory Arts organisations, the researcher had a long-standing association with the organisation including serving as a board member. This association had benefits in terms of understanding its work but also introduced the possibility of bias. During the period of research, the researcher continued as an Upstate board member, but importantly during interviews and focus groups, openly declared her association with

the organisation, and took steps to minimise possible bias by asking participants in the research to review their transcripts for accuracy.

3.5 Ensuring Rigour in the Research Process

As with any research study, the researcher was cognisant that it was important to ensure that the research study was undertaken in a systematic and unbiased manner and that there needed to be rigour in the enactment of the research processes to ensure validity and reliability of findings. As previously mentioned, this study used a range of qualitative and quantitative tools, which allowed for the triangulation across qualitative data sources (interviews and focus groups) and in some instances across the qualitative data and descriptive statistics generated from the quantitative data tools. In qualitative research, validity should be seen as something that exists to a degree as it is not realistic to see it as an absolute, thus according to Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2011), the researcher should try to minimise invalidity and maximise validity. Cohen *et al.* (2010, p.133) contend that validity in qualitative data might be achieved through: ‘...the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher’. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.288) assert that ‘qualitative researchers can use triangulation, peer examination, investigator’s position and audit trail to ensure dependability and consistency’ as within qualitative research, the internal validity construct is replaced with *credibility*, the external validity construct is replaced by *transferability*, the reliability construct is replaced by *dependability*, and the concept of objectivity is replaced by *confirmability*. They further argue that rigour can be ensured through audit trails of evidence, data checking/ validation with participants during coding or categorisation processes, triangulation, and adequate reference to key literature in the field.

In the case of Fighting Words, rigour was ensured within the qualitative research process through the presence of a second researcher at interviews and focus groups, and during site visits to the Fighting Words Centre, who provided an important function as a critical friend in checking transcriptions and field notes. The interview and focus group transcripts and field notes were discussed and reviewed shortly after

each visit by both researchers. In terms of the quantitative approach, the questionnaires were piloted pre-distribution to ensure that the number and framing of questions didn't pose difficulties for the differing cohorts of participants (teachers, volunteer tutors and students). In terms of Upstate, rigour was ensured through the provision of authentic deep descriptions of its context from interviews with key stakeholders and a focus group with participants, and a deep review of an anthology of its productions. In keeping with Creswell's (2012) Concurrent Triangulation Design, qualitative and quantitative data were analysed separately and then compared and combined. Findings from the data were triangulated using the codes from the frame for analysis. During the coding process, data sources were coded according to the frame and selected text was copied and pasted into an Excel spreadsheet. Each code was given a row and each data source was assigned a column. Relevant text from each data source was entered in the appropriate column and according to the corresponding row. This allowed data to be compared as elements from each category were recorded according to each data source. The 'control find' function was also used to search for key words and phrases across the data sets. Points of agreement or disagreement among the various stakeholder groups were thus identified and the different perspectives were reported in the presentation of findings. The quotes and vignettes included in Chapters 4 and 5 were used to provide examples of data that best illustrated the various categories within each theme in the frame for analysis. Excerpts were chosen on the basis that they typified a point that recurrently appeared in the data or they offered 'thick' description which vividly captured a key theme or idea.

Furthermore, the inclusion of two Participatory Arts contexts (Upstate as pure Participatory Arts initiative, and Fighting Words as an applied Participatory Arts initiative) was also important in enhancing rigour of the research study. If Upstate had formed the sole basis for analysis of creativity in this study, then the context of creativity in education would not have been well-served and the researcher would not have been able to extrapolate to consider creativity in education settings. The inclusion of Fighting Words thus provided a platform for comparing and contrasting creativity in pure and applied participatory arts. In order to construct an audit trail, a

reflective diary was maintained by the researcher during the process of collecting data to capture ideas and thoughts regarding the study. This record ultimately presents evidence of how data were collected and analysed and how the research was conducted. Also, the interviews were recorded and transcriptions returned for review by participants, which ensures that the participants' viewpoints have been verified and confirmed by them as accurately portraying their contribution to the study. However, due to both time restrictions and the time lapse between when data was gathered and when the reanalysis was carried out, it was not feasible to have participants review the coding applied during the second phase of analysis. This limitation of the reanalysis was, however, minimised by the PhD supervisory process. Coding was carried out under the close surveillance of the PhD supervisor who also coded sections of the data set according to the same frame for analysis, in order to check for consistency in how coding was applied and to allow the interpretation of data to be verified. Syed and Nelson (2015, p.376) argue that establishing reliability when coding data is 'a marker of rigorous research regardless of the method. That is, one individual's analysis of qualitative data should generally lend itself to be re-captured by another individual who is reasonably familiar with the research question and procedure'. In this regard, the second application of the coding resulted in the same categorisation and selection of text as that chosen by the researcher. This outcome verified the reliability of the coding process, confirmed the validity of inferences from the qualitative data, and strengthened the rigour of the reanalysis.

3.6 Limitations of the Research

While this research makes important contributions in articulating elements of a model of Participatory Arts for fostering creativity in education, there is one main limitation of the research. This research could not explore the implementation of a Participatory Arts intervention within the mainstream Irish post-primary context due to access and resourcing issues, and thus this research can only speak to the potential of processes, practices and principles of the aforementioned Participatory Arts model to foster and promote creativity in post-primary contexts. As such, the researcher is positioning this Participatory Arts model as one way in which the infusion of creativity

in post-primary contexts might be enacted, with the expectation that post-doctoral research will follow to establish whether it can be validated as a tried and tested model at a point in the future.

The study may have benefited from including a larger number of participants involved in Upstate productions, and in particular from the inclusion of a focus group with Upstate participants attending post-primary school at the time of data collection. This would have allowed for a broader representation of participants and offered more scope for analysis of participants' perceptions and experiences of creativity in Upstate and their perceptions and experiences of creativity in school and whether participation in Upstate has affected their experience of school.

Similarly, the study may have benefited from more prolonged contact with schools and more in-depth contact with teachers and students involved in Fighting Words' programmes. Prolonged contact with participants before and after their engagement time at Fighting Words would have allowed the gathering of further data on participants' profile and offered more scope for analysis of how participation in Fighting Words has impacted on their long-term development and creativity in other areas. Another possible limitation is the absence of the voice of parents in this study – further research with them may bring added insights on whether aspects of student creativity is exhibited beyond the boundaries of Fighting Words and the school.

Furthermore, it is always difficult to differentiate between changes that occur naturally during adolescence and/or the impact of external factors on shaping individuals who are undergoing a period of significant transitioning. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that self-reported changes by participants in their knowledge, skills or dispositions may not solely have been due to their engagement with Upstate or Fighting Words.

3.7 Moving Forward

This chapter summarised the research methods and processes. The following chapters, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, now present the findings that have emerged from the study. In Chapter 4, the reader is asked to engage first with the first publication, a book chapter that critiques over 7 different productions from Upstate, and then to progress to review the findings from the second phase of analysis of the processes for fostering creativity within a sample of the aforementioned Upstate productions. In Chapter 5, the reader is asked to read the second and third publications, which comprise two journal articles summarising the findings from the first phase of analysis of data from Fighting Words, before being asked to move forward to review the findings from the second phase of analysis of the Fighting Word initiative. Chapter 6 brings together the findings from the second phase of analysis of Upstate and Fighting Words and presents the conclusions and recommendations for the overall study.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS FOR UPSTATE

4.1 Introduction

This aspect of the research set out to explore conditions and processes that contributed to or fostered creativity within Upstate productions, the pure Participatory Arts initiative, as well as uncovering any beneficial outcomes that emerged. The reader should first read the chapter publication on Upstate located in Appendix A: "*Whose art is it anyway? Devising in Participatory Arts and Professional Theatre Practice: A Critical and Historical Analysis of Upstate Theatre Project*", in order to familiarise him/herself with the company's practice and the range of participatory arts works produced. The reader should then progress to read the overall findings from the second phase of analysis for the Upstate case study which have been structured into three sections, namely: Fostering Climate/s for Creativity, Processes for 'Being Creative', and Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes. In relation to the first section on fostering climate/s for creativity, the findings have been organised into two main categories – the *psychosocial dimension* which presents the principles and conditions underpinning climatic conditions for creativity in Upstate, and the role of *partnerships* which summarises the relationships that were established within Upstate to support creativity. In terms of the second section on processes for 'being creative', the findings have been organised using the NCCA's (2015) frame of pedagogic processes that foster creativity, namely: Imagining, Exploring options and alternatives, Implementing ideas and taking action, Learning creatively, and Stimulating creativity using digital technology. Finally, the third section reveals the beneficial outcomes from engagement within the pure Participatory Arts model implemented by Upstate, and intentions and processes that enable these. The findings are presented within a frame inspired by Cohen-Cruz's (2005) set of principles for good practice - Communal Context, Reciprocity, Hyphenation, and Active Culture. Figure 4.1 overleaf provides an illustration of the overall framework for presentation of findings related to creativity and enablement of beneficial outcomes within the Upstate Case Study.

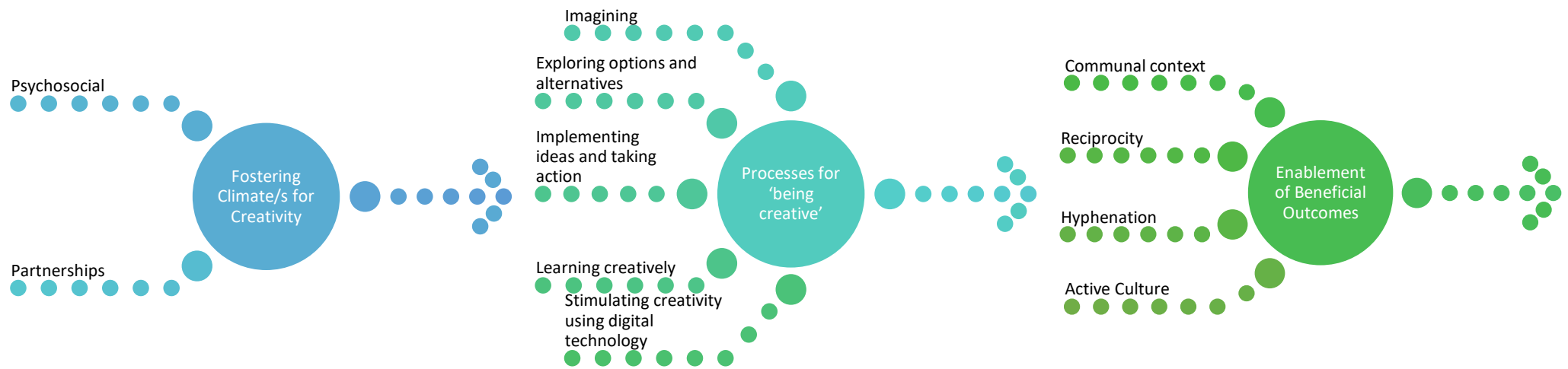


Figure 4.1: Framing of Findings from Upstate (Pure Participatory Arts) Case Study

4.2 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Psychosocial and Partnerships

The findings indicate a number of key features of Upstate' Participatory Arts model that contribute to climate/s for creativity, specifically in terms of the psychosocial characteristics and the facilitation of partnerships. The coding of extracts used in this chapter is outlined in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Extract Codes for Upstate Sources

Code	Source
UF	Upstate Founder
UA	Upstate Artist
FG	Participant from Focus Group
ER	Excerpt from archived Evaluation Reports of Upstate productions
UR	Excerpt from Upstate document/ archived resource

4.2.1 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Psychosocial dimension

The psychosocial factors identified in Upstate' practice were benchmarked against two key sources from the literature on fostering climates for creativity, namely, the characteristics of a classroom climate that encourages creativity as summarised by Teaching and Learning Scotland (2001) and Hamza and Griffith's (2006) conditions for creativity, and the findings indicated that all of the factors therein were visible within Upstate' work. The findings specifically relating to both of these literature sources are presented in **bold** font throughout this section. Furthermore, in addition to these findings that correlate with the literature, *additional psychosocial factors* that contribute to a climate for creativity emerged from the analysis of data from the Upstate case study. These additional findings are presented in *emboldened Italic* font at the end of this section.

According to Upstate artists establishing a **safe, supportive, trusting, non-threatening environment** that gives participants the courage to contribute freely and without fear is a key factor in creating an environment that is conducive to creativity.

In *Way Out in the Country* (Mallon and Gorman, 2001), an anthology of the company's early work, Mallon, founding partner of Upstate, notes:

The starting point has always been trying to engender a sense of safety to allow and encourage full participation without fear of ridicule. (UR - Mallon, 2001, p.205)

The initial phase of a project places a strong emphasis on building relationships, slowly breaking barriers, putting participants at ease, building trust and confidence and instilling a sense of fun among the group. Hayes notes:

The first few weeks of any project it's getting to know the group and getting them to trust each other. You have to welcome them, make them feel at ease, challenge them, introduce them to other people, build their confidence, have some craic, break down the barriers between you and them. There is a lot going on before you even think about doing a play. (UA - Hayes)

The artists strive to create an environment that feels 'safe' and encourages participants to take risks. Hayes refers to pushing participants out of their comfort zone while also making them feel safe and protected:

they knew that if they were only new to it, I wasn't going to be asking them to do anything that they couldn't do, you know. It was a very safe environment. (UA - Hayes)

The approach adopted by Upstate artists seeking to establish a safe, supportive, trusting and non-threatening environment illustrates a number of key principles that underpin their practice.

Firstly, the artists stress that it is crucial that workshops are **fun and challenging**. Both of these conditions are highlighted as prerequisites to attracting participants' attention, sustaining their interest, and encouraging their participation and expressivity. As an arts organisation relying on participants' willingness to voluntarily commit to a project, these factors are understandably high on the artists' agenda and considered particularly critical in the early stages of a project. Gorman argues that it is really important that people are challenged and Mallon argues that the fun element is essential in helping people relax. Murray believes fun to be of such importance that its absence can be detrimental to creativity as it can actually inhibit

expressivity and therefore make the creative process unnecessarily difficult. He recommends that artists make activities fun and challenging. In his words:

Initially I try and make it fun. I really believe that if this stuff is fun it's easy and if it's not fun, once it crosses the line of not being fun anymore, it becomes very difficult and people clam up. If you have fun doing some of the exercises, if you can make them fun and challenging as well... give somebody a challenge, something they want to achieve which is fun... if you can get that going with a group they'll do a lot of the work for you and if you can keep that mood and that atmosphere then they will go along with pretty much anything. I will challenge people then and I won't really take no for an answer. I will be persistent with somebody. I will challenge them to try stuff because if you don't push them, they won't get anywhere at all. **But it very much depends on the energy you bring into the room. If you can go in with a good energy it really helps and if you keep things fun.** (UA - Murray)

Murray's reference to 'a good energy' and 'keeping things fun' suggests an environment where **there is high energy and low tension**. Likewise, his reference to 'pushing people' and 'giving somebody a challenge, something they want to achieve which is fun' suggests that there is an emphasis on motivating participants to actively contribute but in a way that is enjoyable, not pressurising, therefore suggesting an environment where **there is high challenge, low threat**. The below vignette provides an example of a specific exercise that Murray uses to challenge and motivate participants and introduce them to drama.

Vignette – 'Hello Harry' – An example of a fun and challenging exercise to introduce participants to drama

So specifically, there is an exercise that I always do with the group. It's an exercise called 'Hello Harry'. For some groups it's really difficult but it gets everybody to make a fool of themselves initially and you also have to remember a few little lines. Now also I would tell people what they're doing as they're doing stuff, you know, we talk about what it is you have done in this exercise. You don't realise there is quite a lot going on... it is a simple little exercise; it goes like this – you say 'Hello Harry' to somebody, they say 'Hi Harry' back to you. Then you say 'Tell Harry' (everybody is called Harry), and they say 'Okay Harry'. So, it goes:

Hello Harry,
Hi Harry,
Tell Harry,
Okay Harry.

You have to go around the group and nobody can do it at first, everybody gets stressed and you talk to them about it.

So why do you think you're getting stressed? Why is it you can't remember? How many words are there?

There's eight words.

What are they?

I mean four of them are Harry, the other four are hello, hi, tell and okay. It's quite easy but we all do it because we put pressure on ourselves, we'll all trip over it. So, I will explain all this stuff and then we do the exercise and we get going with it and really make a fool of people by punishing them if they get stuff wrong, it's great fun! Everybody ends up laughing and it becomes something that they want to achieve but having great craic while doing it, everybody is kind of laughing at each other, nobody is getting pissed off about it because it's fun and a bit of craic. For guys who spent a lot of time in prison this is a big deal the idea of laughing at somebody without them having to get up and hit or lose the plot or putting a sticker on your head and looking like a bit of a fool is huge. And a lot of the time you'd be going into a group and they don't know what drama is, they are expecting... they are expecting what a lot of people do which is these breathing exercises and let's be trees and if you go in doing this with groups who have no experience with that stuff it frightens them, it terrifies them and they clam up. You will get people in the group that are capable of doing that stuff, you will get them to do it and they will be grand, they'll like it, but you will lose so many people who you have to ease into that sort of stuff. So, the first sessions I always do are fun and challenging and a little bit scary, always with groups like that. But if you are devising stuff you have to up the stakes then, you have to get good stuff because otherwise you are going to end up with nothing worth showing. So, it's about finding that balance with easing them in, having fun, but getting the work done as well. So, the first couple of sessions are crucial for building up the right atmosphere.

(UA - Murray)

The approaches adopted by Upstate to establish the 'right atmosphere' appear to have the desired effect on participants who report feeling **comfortable** and **relaxed** but also challenged, excited and energized.

They make you at ease. (FG - Olivia)

They make you feel comfortable, they're good fun. (FG - Anna)

You just feel at home with them. They relax you. (FG - Sarah)

it is challenging but challenging in a nice way as opposed to being dictated to... you get to be yourself (FG - Anna)

We were pushed beyond the limits of where we thought we could go. (ER)

I enjoyed the project immensely, particularly the warmth and camaraderie of the group and the time and space we had to work together. (ER)

The safe, supportive environment instils confidence in participants who **feel free to express themselves**, as shown in extracts below:

You can talk to them and say anything to them. (FG – Sarah)

It's being able to talk about something that you mightn't be able to talk about to anyone about but you're in this space, a safe space and there is a shared confidence, there's a collective, there's agreement. Anything you say goes, its fine. And we all listen to each other. (FG – Anna)

'I felt that I was given a voice to portray my story in a non-judgemental environment.' (ER)

The findings indicate a range of behaviours, attitudes and interactions that Upstate artists and participants deem important in a climate that encourages creativity. Open positive relations between artists and participants and participants and each other appear to be regarded as important by all. The above comments also highlight the importance of an **open and non-judgemental** environment in creating 'the right atmosphere'. The data indicates that it is important that creative endeavours are built on authentic interactions that allow 'frank, yet sensitive, discussion' (UR - Mallon, 2001, p.205). Mallon points out that mutual respect, open dialogue and constructive criticism are fundamental to developing positive relations between the company and the communities they work with:

As in all good community arts practice the relationship between the facilitating professional arts organisation and the community group is of utmost importance. Creating an environment of mutual respect where communication is two-way traffic and open dialogue, constructive criticism and discussion is encouraged, is the beginning of a healthy relationship. The prerequisites of group facilitation all apply, investigating and analysing the group dynamic, balancing contributions and ensuring participation from all quarters. (UR - Mallon, 2001, p. 204)

A similar spirit prevails among the artists who are mindful that their role as facilitator requires them to stand back, to allow the participants work independently, to

observe the group dynamic, to be receptive to ideas and to respond appropriately.

Murray notes:

You need to be open to what happens, be very open to what happens. watch and listen. leave people alone to do things on their own for a while, trust your instincts. develop good communication skills and good people skills... I would try to be as open as possible and see what happens, see what comes up and respond to that.
(UA - Murray)

Lowe also observes the importance of responding and reacting to the group. She says it is crucial that the artists recognise the individual. She advocates that those who come forward to participate in a project should be placed at the centre of the process.

It's about the individual who comes to that space and what they need and I have to be able to react and interact at that level, no matter what that is. I think that's something that the Upstate artists all have actually... there is something in all our ethos that's shared and it's a commonality about recognising the individual... I think it's about the recognition of the individual... putting them at the centre and allowing them to dictate where it should go and what it should be. (UA – Lowe)

Allowing participants dictate the process and being receptive and open to what emerges requires artists to adopt a **non-judgemental** attitude. Gorman argues that the participants and the audience must also be accepting of difference and non-judgemental in their response to work that has emerged from an authentic process of artistic engagement. He advises that **extreme and early evaluations and judgements are avoided** and genuine effort, engagement and creativity are recognised. In the following vignette he provides an example of how some participants may be performing under challenging circumstances and explains why the audience need to appreciate the artistic output that emerges in spite of the constraints:

Vignette – Creativity Climate: A world where the notion of adjudication is actually probably the most inappropriate thing you could imagine

I'm talking about a world where the notion of adjudication is actually probably the most inappropriate thing you could imagine. We're talking about engagement, we're talking about a dialogue, we're talking about a process of understanding and empathy that has allowed me and the kind

of people who do the kind of work that I have been doing to bring people with profound intellectual difficulties on to a stage who sometimes find it very difficult to articulate a full sentence and to absolutely bowl over an audience in a way that is real and not patting them on the head or being patronising because they are actually creating and making something extraordinary and wonderful that has come from themselves through a genuine process of artistic engagement, but, of course, the audience has to be ready for it. It is a piece of work that is coming from a person who cannot talk. So, if there's a piece of work that is coming from a person who cannot talk, you know, you need to stop expecting them to talk.

(UF – Gorman)

While harsh judgement is not favoured, **self-evaluation is encouraged**. Participants are encouraged to identify and explore problems and find their own solutions. Crucially, when they suggest possible solutions, those **alternative solutions are taken seriously**. Murray believes that it is very important that participants learn to solve their own problems and to think for themselves. He encourages this process through questioning.

My general rule of thumb... I ask people questions... like if somebody says to me 'we're having this difficulty' I will say 'well what do you think you should do about it?' I generally keep asking them until they come up with the solution themselves as much as possible and that would be my philosophy about this. My job is to facilitate. It's to make things easier, it's not to steer it too much. That would be my take on it, you know. There may be other schools of thought but my approach is to let people do it themselves... if I am there with a group, it's not my story, it's not my thing... it's about getting their stuff out in as simple and clear way as possible.

(UA - Murray)

In line with the company's non-judgmental ethos, the data reveals that artists make every effort to ensure **people are accepted as individuals of unconditional worth**. One example is the policy of welcoming all participants who present, irrespective of any social or political 'labels' that may have been attached and insisting that they follow artistic rather than issue-based agendas.

If the funding was offered on foot of your being perceived as a victim, a disadvantaged person or indeed a trouble-maker, we are not going to exacerbate that perception (or even self-perception) by taking it as our starting point. Come into the room and dream.

Dream of a different world – maybe a better one. (UR - Gorman, 2010, p. 5)

The decision to avoid issue-based agenda was considered to be of particular importance in the early years of Upstate and during the company's work on cross border projects that included participants from both sides of the political and sectarian divide in Northern Ireland. The decision to place a strong emphasis on the artistic intent influenced the approaches and strategies adopted by the team of artists. There was a conscious effort to choose drama exercises and activities that allowed participants explore ideas and material in imaginative ways through image work, choreographed movement and creative writing exercises. Participants were thus **free to voice opinions through non-threatening, entertaining and enjoyable methods**. Some of the methods used in the cross-border projects are specifically designed to **encourage speculation and fantasy**. In a bid to remove participants from the conflict and tensions and the grim realities of their everyday lives, artists chose to introduce participants to the process by working in the realm of dream. Gorman describes the process and its rationale as follows:

We felt that there were such sensitivities there around Catholics and Protestants and North and South and conflict and all that stuff, that there was an enormous pressure on us to deal with issues and we said 'no we won't do that, they'll come trailing in behind us eventually anyway'. Why start with the labels? Why start with the presumptions that we are victims or the presumptions that we are enemies, you know? Let's begin in the kind of shared and wonderful world of dreaming because every human being dreams in some way. They dream actively and they dream passively in their sleep. So, we would create these kinds of big bad tableaux and I would also introduce very early in the process a creative writing exercise that was based around writing a dream (UF - Gorman).

The following vignette provides an example of a creative writing exercise used to encourage speculation and fantasy through memory exercises and working with objects. It also illustrates an instance of **a climate that encourages thinking and exploring processes** and exemplifies a climate where participants are **free to voice opinions through non-threatening, entertaining and enjoyable methods**.

Vignette – Creativity Climate: An example of how speculation and fantasy can be encouraged through creative writing, memory exercises and working with objects

We would send them all outside to find an object. They would could back in with bus stops and buckets and shovels and swords that they found and saws, and blades of grass, sweet papers and anything possible would be brought into the room. And of course, initially I'd trick them into you know kind of thinking that this was just like you know that they'd have to set them up and how many on the list and there'd be twenty-five objects, how many of them of them can you remember? Who can remember which is the biggest object? Could you draw a map of where I left them around the room? And so on, and so they would compete with each other in completing these tasks but really, they're working with their active memory to become familiar with the objects. Then after a while I'd give each of them the opportunity to come and take an object, not the object you brought into the room, take ownership now of one of those objects, something there that tickles your fancy and way off with you into a corner and remember that exercise we were doing this morning where you were imagining these characters and I want you to take whichever character you want and I'm giving you seven minutes exactly to write down a dream that that character had involving the shovel or the saw or the blade of grass, and they'd say 'oh we don't...' and I'd say 'ah go on and just sit down and do it' and they'd sit down and do it and the quality of what would come back time and time again was always wonderful.

(UF – Gorman)

The above vignette also reveals a warm rapport between artist and participants and suggests a playful and experimental environment prevailed despite the politically charged milieu. Gorman affirms that the difficult circumstances did not alter Upstate's **high expectations** for participants. He asserts that they remained committed to the creation of high-quality art and continued to challenge participants to strive for excellence:

Once in, we never shied from insisting on our shared responsibility – we as trained artists, them as participant artists – to make art of the highest possible standards, whatever that might mean in these given circumstances. (UR - Gorman, 2010, p. 3)

Evidently in the context of the Northern Ireland 'troubles' there was a particular need to focus on commonalities rather than differences and the world of dream and fantasy appears to have been instrumental in successfully bringing members of a divided community together. In less volatile settings, the company were able to focus

much more openly on diversity but still kept the focus on the creation of art. In these contexts, the work created reflected an environment in which **personal differences are accepted** and the experience of engaging with different ‘types’ of individuals was seen to have a positive impact on participants. Murray recalls one such example involving a group of adolescents:

We had a really mixed group. We had one guy who was a little bit older, he had been in a serious car accident and had some learning difficulties. He had difficulties learning his lines but it was amazing how supportive the rest of the group were. And we had all these different types of characters writing parts for themselves because you get all these disparate groups like goths, young cool girls, the kind of geeky dudes, one guy that nobody liked and you're trying to get them all to work together! (*laughs*) But that's the wonderful thing about those projects! That's the whole point of these projects, particularly with Upstate, is to bring a motley crew together who would never have encountered each other and get them to bond through the medium of creating a piece of art and have fun with it. And it's incredible! I think people make friends for life through it. (UA - Murray)

There are also indications to suggest that **divergence is accepted and rewarded**. The data reveals some of the challenges that artists and participants encounter in the course of a project. Work commitments, family responsibilities and other factors can affect participants' ability to attend and to contribute and so the devising process can be challenging as disparate stories and disconnected voices thwart efforts to bring the group together. Murray refers to Upstate's production of *The Mango Tree* as an example of a project where 'divergence was the glue' that brought the piece together. In the following vignette he illustrates how the themes of isolation and disconnection that emerged during the process developed as a theme for the show and so the show became a celebration of the group's divergence.

Vignette – Celebrating Divergence

We worked with a multicultural group of adults for a show called *The Mango Tree*. It was a very awkward group to work with time wise because they all had their own stuff on. I mean they're all adults, they had their own jobs, some were doing courses and stuff and they had kids, one of the participant's father died during it... so there were lots of disruptions to the group. We never started on time and never had everybody there, that's always a difficulty in working with those groups. They were tough enough to work with because of their own life constraints but when you did get

them, they don't know each other, so it's tough getting the group together because it's not just about creating a show, it's about bringing these people together. So initially you've to break down all the barriers, then you've to start looking at the more interesting in-depth stuff and also, you're looking at language barriers when you are working with groups like that as well. You've got multinational groups, so you've got people who are not using English as their first language. Everybody wrote their own story, everything that they said they wrote themselves. So, what we had to do was try to link their separate stories and that's what the theme became, that's what the show became. We didn't know what we were going to do a show about. It was very difficult to come up with an idea of what it should be and it became about all these different people in a city wanting to connect with each other, but not knowing how to and that then became the theme of the show because that's what the workshop felt like sometimes - all these people not knowing each other and trying to connect and not being able to connect at first.

(UA - Murray)

The findings also highlight other aspects of the psychosocial environment that are considered to be conducive to creativity. For example, participants comment on the **freedom and flexibility** they experience during the creative process:

They let you voice anything. If you say 'would this work?' They say, 'Well let's try it and see. They give you the freedom to do that. (FG – Olivia)

There's great flexibility, you can twist it around and try it another way. (FG – Kate)

While participants refer to freedom and flexibility, artists refer to the need for **structure and order** and 'getting the work done'. For example, Hayes indicates the need for a clear time frame and a definite plan of action:

I have a very fixed structure of where I am going to be 8 weeks to go 7 weeks to go 6 weeks to go etc... I would have been very focused even in those early workshops towards whatever I was focused on that day. There wasn't any sitting around thinking or chatting. If I had a plan of action for week three that was, we have to do this, this and this, then we did that, that and that, you know. (UA - Hayes)

Some of the comments also suggest that seeing the work to completion **encouraged thinking and exploring processes** that enabled participants enter a state of liminality

where **ambiguity and uncertainty are tolerated**. One participant felt that the process was so open-ended it could have led to a variety of artforms:

I thought it was very interesting the way it started like we didn't set out to make a film... it was just sort of a discussion and it developed into it. It could just as easily have turned into a play or a book or a book of poetry, anything could have come out of it, it just sort of developed over time. (FG – Liam)

Another participant liked the fact that the process remained open and flexible up to the end point. She felt that uncertainty benefited the final performance:

I didn't know what we were doing two weeks before we were doing it! I quite like that element of it because it leaves you fresh for the performance. (FG – Kate)

One participant who was new to the process was particularly struck by the **humorous, energized, collaborative** aspects of the experience:

I've never acted before so this was a very new experience. I learned so much from being a part of such a supportive, dynamic and fun group...to not take myself so seriously, to trust the process and the people, to make mistakes, to find my voice, to collaborate. (ER)

4.2.2 Additional Psychosocial Factors that Contribute to Climate/s for Creativity

In addition to the factors highlighted in the literature, a number of other features of a psychosocial environment conducive to creativity emerge from this study of Upstate. These include adequate time and space to build trust and to allow individuals progress at their own pace, building confidence and overcoming fears, valuing ordinary 'little c' creativity, valuing contributions, facilitation of voice, offering reassurance and encouragement, demystifying and simplifying the creative process and site-specific practice as a means of engaging multiple senses and intelligences.

The findings indicate that the creative process requires **adequate time and space to build trust** and **to allow individuals progress at their own pace**. Comments from artists and participants suggest that Upstate projects benefit from a prolonged period of engagement:

It's a beautiful thing to witness people surprising themselves. They say things like 'I didn't know I'd be able to do that' or 'If you were going to tell me that on day one, I wouldn't have done it.' It's getting that trust over time. (UA - Cannon)

Our sense of confidence in each other built over time. (ER)

I felt very comfortable in the group and Feidhlim's approach really allowed the group develop at its own pace. (ER)

The above comments also illustrate the importance of **building confidence and overcoming fears**. Allowing adequate time helps but genuinely **valuing ordinary 'little c' creativity** and actively persuading individuals that they can be creative and that what they have to say counts is also important. This can be done by **valuing contributions** and through the gentle **facilitation of voice**:

I felt comfortable in the workshop and my ideas and contributions were made most welcome. I felt I knew what was going on and enjoyed its development. (ER)

Sharing our stories really encouraged each of us to develop our own voice. This was done in such a gentle manner. It was a huge confidence builder for us all. (ER)

Offering reassurance and encouragement, Murray notes, is vital to building confidence and empowering participants to believe in the value of their ideas:

It's more about getting people to trust that they can do it. That's the biggest difficulty. Giving people confidence in their ideas because if you can give them the confidence to say what they are thinking you'll get wonderful stuff. that would be one of the great things from devising... that if you can break down the fear that people have inherently that what they are saying isn't good enough, if you can get rid of that, then you are well on your way to devising because that makes everything very easy. (UA - Murray)

Demystifying and simplifying the creative process by breaking it down into a series of tasks is also helpful for building confidence within the creative enterprise. In the case of Upstate, this is particularly important in projects where community actors work alongside professional actors. When it comes to writing, Murray favours simplicity and honesty as the most effective means of creating authentic original work.

I begin by getting them to write a monologue. It's about making it simple. If you make it simple you take away the mystery, give people the confidence to say what they are thinking as opposed to trying to form what they're thinking into something impressive... to just actually say what's there, that's what's magic and devising is all about taking away the mystery, letting people say what's in their heart, taking away all the fanciness, getting trust, trust enough to just be honest and it is beautiful, can't help but be beautiful (UA - Murray).

In terms of performance, Lowe suggests that assigning tasks rather than roles or 'parts' to play can be an effective means of reassuring individuals and eliminating performance anxiety. She believes that the completion of tasks can level the playing field between professional and non-professional members of a community cast and that this process also results in the creation of meaningful action that the audience can interpret. The below vignette captures Lowe's view on why demystifying and simplifying the process is important and how doing so can have an empowering effect on participants:

Vignette – Creativity Climate - Process of demystifying and simplifying the process

You have to mind the community cast because you don't want them to feel that they are not able to do it, so I often break it down and don't give them parts and just give everybody tasks. You actually have tasks, so you are not playing somebody. So, for example, I wouldn't be pitting somebody against an actor in a scene where they're both playing characters talking to each other - it just wouldn't work. So, both sides get tasks. Then in the task comes the action and, in the action, comes the reading for the audience and the reading for the audience becomes the meaning. So, it's not necessarily that a community cast member is playing the meaning or the character, they just have a task... that might be to get out of the building or it might be to go negotiate your way through something, but ultimately, taking away that pressure of performance is vital.

(UA – Lowe)

Finally, in terms of the physical environment, the data reveals that Upstate's *site-specific practice* introduces participants to a range of settings and locations (see images in Appendix D) that have the potential to stimulate creativity. In many instances, both artists and participants acknowledge that the sites chosen for projects had a considerable influence on the shaping of the story.

working on the site with the architecture of the space would have fuelled the idea of making that particular piece. (UA - Lowe)

The architecture within the space was something that we worked very much with in Oldbridge. (FG - Kate)

we wanted to do a site-specific piece on a bus. Declan had organized getting the bus, we had about 30 young people and complete freedom. We had the bus we had a couple of places that we wanted to go and visit on the bus because we needed to have a route. (UA - Murray)

The findings indicate that Upstate participants expressed excitement at having the opportunity and *freedom to explore sites using multiple senses and intelligences*. For example, one participant recalls being stimulated and inspired to write as she explored the various rooms and spaces in a particular building. The below vignette captures the excitement she felt on her initial introduction to the site:

Vignette – Creativity Climate - Significance of site-specific environments in stimulating creativity

I found 'Ship Street' very exciting because it was my first site-specific project. Going to a building blindfolded and going around feeling the walls to get a sense of the building and then removing the blindfold and exploring the building for inspiration and writing pieces around each room, this could be an office, this could be an institution, a school, an airport you know... I felt that that was very exciting. That was my very first experience of site-specific.

(FG - Anna)

The use of blindfolds is an example of how artists stimulate participants' imagination through active engagement in sensory explorations. it is also testimony to the level of trust that has been established between artists and participants. It is also clearly a new and exciting experience for the participant. Murray's description of devised theatre as 'new' and 'exciting' also indicates that **there is a positive attitude to novelty**. Murray argues that devising is important for theatre to survive and is an effective way for new voices to reach new audiences:

The most exciting theatre that I have seen is new, really you know, and it's devised, it's created, it is people collaborating, you know. Ok there are some incredible writers writing amazing work, but there is not enough incredible writers writing amazing work. It is in some way elitist and it will always be so

until you get the masses back in again and have stuff that speaks to the masses and if you don't have those voices present, creating stuff, you're going to have the same audiences all the time, you know, and it won't change. (UA - Murray)

4.2.3 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Partnerships

As a community-engaged participatory arts organisation adhering to collective and collaborative approaches, Upstate's work is entirely community-based and relationships with the local community are, therefore, pivotal to the company's existence. In this respect, and given that the company operates in a different context from that of schools, a discussion of the significance of partnerships with outside agencies and organisations in the community as an effective means of promoting creativity (Davies *et al.*, 2012) seems somewhat redundant. On the other hand, there is some evidence in the data to suggest that participants and artists value the notion of partnership as an important outcome beyond the immediacy and duration of any given project. Some of the comments suggest that participants see the **value in partnering with experts** outside of the project.

I know when we were working with Feidhlim originally at this stage it hadn't been decided it was going to be a film or the idea of a film hadn't even been touched, we were discussing different topics. Then one night we turned up and a sound engineer guy dropped by and we were introduced to him. The guys they brought in particularly the cinematography guy Killian, these guys came in and they were just accepted straight away. They just stayed in the background, two lovely guys and they weren't intrusive or anything and suddenly they were just part of it, they were introduced slowly, everything was introduced slowly, the camera was introduced a couple of weeks later. I think the results show how professional those guys are especially the cinematography... They actually created an atmosphere. You mightn't have noticed it when it was being filmed but it came across in the way it was just shot so beautifully (FG - Liam)

There is also a sense that forming partnerships outside of the group brings an element of **authenticity** that enriches the work and participants' experience of a project.

One of the ideas of community theatre is learning about a community and then showing that community to others. So, they all went away and they talked. They talked to old people who are

working class people in Drogheda and remember Drogheda or remember the street or remember the factories or whatever. So basically, they were able to come back and start writing scenes monologues, duologues, different action scenes with their character in it which was very important for the process. It was not that important for the final play because a lot of the audience wouldn't have been aware that every single child, teenager and adult actor on the street had in their head 'I am Michael Smith. I grew up in number 43 Marsh Road. I was a welder' but it's really important for the process, it just lends a huge amount of authenticity and it means it's easier for them to act as well because they feel like they are being someone else, it feels like they have learned a lot about the community that we are celebrating. (UA – Hayes)

This sense of *partnership and authenticity appears to extend to audiences*. In the context of community theatre, there is a very strong relationship between the audience and the participants. Gorman explains that this is due to the fact that the stories are invented from within a shared experience of writers and audience and performed by the inventors.

Where much of theatre is filtered – a writer writes a play from his or her experience or observations, a group of actors and a director interpret it - in community theatre, the stories are invented from within a shared experience of writers and audience and performed by the inventors. It is a subtle difference, but one which might help to explain the unusually emotional response that can attend community drama performances. The stories and their inhabitants feel utterly credible, even where the players may have limited training in the actor's craft (UR - Gorman, 2001, p.16).

Mallon also refers to the fact that a community play evolves and develops from the community that makes up the audience.

The first night of any show is special. It is more so for a community play that has evolved and developed from within the same community that makes up the audience. The ultimate test for any play. (UR - Mallon, 2001, p.207)

Gorman notes that reality and fiction blur as the audience recognise the story as it reflects a world they inhabit:

When the show was performed, we heard the intakes of breath and the gasps of familiarity, dismay and delight from the local audience. They were watching people they know telling - in fact,

living out – a story they understood intimately. The line between reality and fiction blurred. The story was entirely made up – a clever archetypal construct – but the collective ownership of it, among the writers who were now acting it with familiar ease and the audience who sensed the pure truth of it, was something that mainstream theatre, with all its methods, struggles to achieve (UR - Gorman, 2001, p.16).

4.3 Processes for ‘Being Creative’

As a participatory arts organisation, Upstate is chiefly concerned with supporting creative expression through a variety of artforms. The concepts of cultural democracy and ‘little-c’ or ‘democratic’ creativity are central tenets of Upstate’s ethos. Each project demonstrates a commitment to supporting individuals’ creative potential and a firm belief in the aesthetic value of community art. Declan Gorman, co-founder of Upstate asserts: ‘We always described our quest first and foremost as an artistic one, immediately affirming that no-one has a monopoly on dreaming, on creativity’ (UR - Gorman, 2010, p. 3). As a participatory arts organisation, Upstate produce original devised theatre that is written and performed by participants in conjunction with professional artists. Considering that their primary remit is to provide communities with an outlet for creative expression, it is perhaps not surprising that much of the activity and many of the methods and approaches adopted by Upstate correlate with the NCCA’s (2015) guidelines on the process for ‘being creative’ within their documentation for Key Skills of Junior Cycle. The findings in this section thus are structured under the five elements articulated by the NCCA for ‘being creative’ – Imagining, Exploring options and alternatives, Implementing ideas and taking action, Learning creatively, and Stimulating creativity using digital technology. A close analysis of the data provides details and examples of how the elements of a process for being creative occur in participatory arts practice.

4.3.1 Imagining

Within the sub-process of Imagining, the NCCA (2012) outlines a range of learning outcomes that need to be realised by each learner, including: using different ways of learning to help develop imagination, imagining ways to make a positive difference in the world, taking inspiration from the courage and imagination of others, and

expressing feelings, thoughts and ideas through movement, writing, music, art, storytelling, drama and imaginative modes of expression. In terms of Upstate productions, imagination and creative expression are integral to the devising process and providing a platform for participant voice and encouraging participants to use their voice are core features of the company's work, so it comes as no surprise that the findings show evidence of the facilitation of multiple opportunities for and development of imagining capabilities.

The devising process requires participants **to think, to imagine and to generate ideas** collaboratively. Lowe refers to its collaborative nature and describes it as the art of creating something from nothing:

For me devising is collaborative. It is a collaboration. From my perspective, it starts with a space, a place, or a theme or a community of space, or place, or interest and going from there as a notion. It's about starting with a nucleus of something or an organic position or a frame of something else and most often as not collaborating with others to see what their responses are to that. I suppose its creation more than anything else. It's creation from not having the script or a thing; it's a creation from nothing (UA – Lowe).

Gorman's description of devising is similar to Lowe's but also provides an insight into how the process unfolds:

My definition of devising is where a group of people who will probably, although not necessarily, have a role in performing a piece of theatre play an active role from the outset in creating a piece of theatre. There may well be a concept, there may well even be fragments of a script but as often as not there are neither of the above. There's nothing at all but a collective of people who have agreed to the idea of making a piece of theatre together and from scratch they discuss the ideas, they brainstorm the ideas, they workshop the ideas through practical activity and eventually they put it on a stage (UF – Gorman).

Lowe and Gorman's definitions of devising highlight the **centrality of ideation and the practice of imagining, generating and developing ideas through collaborative activity**. The data reveals that the process of workshopping ideas through practical activity includes the use of **games, exercises and activities** that are specifically aimed towards **enabling individuals to express feelings, thoughts and ideas through**

movement, writing, music, art, storytelling, drama and imaginative modes of expression. The techniques used to support participants' creativity include *incorporating multiple narratives into the story framework and the use of vernacular language*. Participants were encouraged to write monologues and dialogues based on their own dialect.

We have sought to define and develop a specific aesthetic for our brand of community drama – for narrative-based communal storytelling on the stage. Some of the key artistic features and techniques include: the simultaneous telling of several stories, creating a sense of a complex but self-contained community, the use of movement, and the use of vernacular language. The dramas are almost exclusively written in dialogues and monologues involving ordinary characters in ordinary situations (UR - Gorman, 2001, pp. 20-21).

The process of enabling creativity involves breaking down barriers and removing obstacles to the creative process. The exercises used for these purposes can also be strategies for stimulating ideas and enabling participants to reconsider previously held views:

When we have shared our dream narratives, run around the room together honking as deranged geese, fallen about laughing at our silly portrait exercises, collectively invented thoughtful or comic short improvised tableaux, then – and only then – might we allow ourselves to move towards making art that touches upon the things that divided us or terrified us or stereotyped us or caused our anger back then before we began. (UR - Gorman, 2010, p. 6)

'Honking as deranged geese' *'silly portrait exercises'* and *'short improvised tableaux'* are examples of some of the imaginative modes of expression participants experience as part of the devising process. Drama, movement and storytelling are the 'nuts and bolts' of devising and are repeatedly used to stimulate the collective writing process. However, creative writing is also a central feature of Upstate's work. Gorman explains that often devised pieces tend not to have a literary focus; however, Upstate generally prefer to merge devising with more literary traditions:

Devising for the stage is very seldom about creating a piece of literary theatre although one of the things that Upstate actually achieved was that we took devising and married it with the literary tradition. So, some of the work that has been created through

processes that could appropriately be described as devising, actually have quite a strong literary element in them because we always brought creative writing into the room. (UF - Gorman)

One of the reasons for the company's focus on creative writing is a passion for storytelling and the view that creative writing is a form of storytelling. Gorman comments on this as follows:

For me, the act of creative writing is as spontaneous and within the grasp of most men and women because really it is just a manifestation of storytelling, as is the act of creating it through physicality or through song or sound, and all that sort of thing. For me, writing is part of the dramatic arts and therefore it has to be part of devising. (UF – Gorman)

Enabling individuals to express feelings, thoughts and ideas through movement is a key feature of Upstate's work. The analysis of data indicates that the devising process used by Upstate repeatedly relies on the use of physical approaches to advance the drama. Gorman sees the creation of images and the use of movement as indispensable tools in the devising process:

By and large, traditional devising has been about creating images, creating tableau, creating moments from the world of the clown and so on. As somebody who is a great believer in encouraging creative writing in the community, that has opened up for me the notion that you can create an entire battlefield, you can create a football stadium, you can create a city street, the seas of Norway through sound and movement and what the actor does with his or her body. (UF – Gorman)

Hayes and Lowe also refer to the importance of **physicality as a means of developing characters**:

a lot of my stuff in theatre would be physical, just from the belief that you can find characters just as easily through physicality as you can through talking. (UA - Hayes)

I would always try and find the character or the person or the representation of that person through a physical base always, always and not think it out because sometimes if you think things and write them down, they are rigid. So, everything is done from a physiological vantage point with the idea that physicality can inform the psychological and not the other way around. (UA- Lowe)

The data provides thick description of how the use of tableau and situations arising from abstract physical representations can be used as strategies for stimulating ideas, developing imaginative responses and creating storylines and characters. The following vignette offers one such example illustrating how Boal's (2002) 'Circle of Knots' exercise could be used as a starting point for a story and the creation of specific scenes and characters:

Vignette – Creative Process: Imagining and developing ideas through movement and tableaux

In terms of methods... just simple things like going from an abstract physical situation that might arise in a workshop. So, we'd play a game where if you had 12 people in a room, you'd get 6 of them to tie themselves up in a knot. You have to make contact with somebody with two parts of your body and create a really complicated knot. Then get the other six people to walk around and look at that extraordinary warped gathering of human beings all connected. If this was a piece of sculpture in a town in Germany or in England or in Scotland that you were visiting as a tourist and it was a work of art and there was no plaque to tell you what it meant, what do you think it would be? You'd get all the usual answers – 'There's conflict in it' or 'they seem to be supporting each other' or 'they are pulling against each other' or 'It's a game of rugby' Ok, so let's say it's a game of rugby and there's conflict in it so let's start a story around that. rugby itself isn't of interest to everybody but rugby is played by men and men are married to women and men and women have children. Let's begin to imagine some of the characters on the rugby team or maybe some of the characters watching the rugby from the stand - who might they be? Just come up with Jack Johnson and he's from some school where rugby was never played but when he went to university, he turned out to have a gift for it. Let's follow him into the university and let's put him in a room with his professor. Let's create a tableau of the first day he goes to college and how he's handed a rugby ball. You're beginning to make these shapes and images. You work through the physicality of it. They have great fun setting up these photographs and so on and so forth and before they know it, they have created a story and then they have created five stories and then we say okay let's take those five stories now. Could we find a frame to marry the story of the rugby player, the girl that he is eventually going to marry, her mother, a local guard who came into the story somewhere, and we build from there.

(UF – Gorman)

Mallon comments that the devising process also enables participants to collaboratively develop and organise ideas through the use of drama techniques such as improvisation, hot-seating and story-boarding.

Each session was prepared as any drama workshop would. Warm up games were designed to prepare for the objective of the session, whether it was improvisation, creative writing or movement. Themes and ideas would be worked through by choosing scenarios that the members of the group would improvise. Characters created in these exercises might be 'hot-seated' or have monologues written for them. (UR - Mallon, 2001, p. 204)

The findings suggest that these methods are effective in empowering participants to **take inspiration from the courage and imagination of others.**

An idea voiced by a character during an improvisation dedicated to a totally different subject might be the spark for a new improvisation. Themes emerged, were explored and discarded. (UR - Mallon, 2001, p.204)

Recording and storing documentation from this phase is always useful. Embryonic ideas can later give birth to new incarnations in the later parts of the project. (UR - Mallon, 2001, p.205)

Participants also comment that hearing other participants' stories was inspiring and prompted further thoughts and stories.

You were always amazed at the stories you would hear. You'd listen to them and then you'll get stuff that they are saying and then things will come back to you as well. It's kind of like raising memories that people had forgotten about. (FG - Lisa)

Hearing other stories would trigger discussions, questions or other stories, memories and thoughts. (ER)

The vignette that follows illustrates how more reserved participants or those struggling with their creative juices can be inspired through observation and engagement in a collaborative improvisation exercise.

VIGNETTE – Creative Process: Improvisation strategy for activating engagement of more reserved participants

I think the greatest support mechanism and the most effective support mechanism for inexperienced and shy and anxious people in a devising process is the power of peers. It is the approval of peers and I think managing improvisations and showing and telling of work and judging when it is the right time and judging what is the right context for that becomes very, very, important in the workshop and just to give an example of a project I worked on this year. There was one member of that group, a woman who was extremely shy, had no experience in this kind of work and

would have lacked confidence in her appearance, in her capacity to articulate and wouldn't have been perhaps given an awful lot of help or encouragement in the real world outside, let me put it like that. I remember we did an exercise where people move around the room in an ordered way and would speak a few lines that they had written down. I had encouraged them to write down who they were in the story, you know, they had to create a character for themselves in the Battle of the Boyne so you know you had the bereaved wife and you had the missing soldier who has lost his mind because he's been shell shocked and he's wandering around and all these kind of people, and none of them had heard one another's stories, the first revelation was when they would read it out loud in this movement exercise. This woman hadn't written her story, the others had all written them down, she preferred to tell me her story and then she was comfortable to read it but not to write it. So, she spoke it and I wrote it down verbatim as she told it to me in six lines. She was having difficulty with the coordination of following the pattern of the carousel as it was based on a drum beat so it was choreographed and she wasn't really able to just work with that in the way that everybody else was so we had to find a creative way to involve her in another way, so she became the commander calling the commands rather than obeying the commands. So, she was held back and when the others had all told their story, she then walked into a silence, now this is an improvisation in the third or fourth week, she walked into a silent space where everybody else was in a sort of a freeze. She spoke her few lines and her lines were exactly 'My name is Sally Barron. My husband and son were killed at the Battle of the Boyne. I was left alone with six children and no money to feed them. There was nothing for it but to dress up as a man myself and go to war.' She spoke it exactly like that, and you could hear a pin drop in the room. There was just this absolute astonished silence. It was a wonderful moment, you know? It was a completely original idea. It was her idea, none of us had given her that idea, it hadn't come up in the discussions, nobody had talked about those old folk songs where women dress up and go to war, where she got it from nobody knew. There were teenagers in the room, this was a woman you know a mature woman in her fifties, I think that prior to that moment you know while they would have been respectful around her, none of them would have expected her to really kind of contribute at that level. There was a silence and after about thirty seconds, they began to applaud and it was just you know from that moment on you couldn't stop her! She was you know like in a way the next task was to say to her well we can only have your characters for so much of the time you know, because she really was, her confidence had built up. And what was interesting as she... just to conclude that story, you know, when she did it on stage and the first time, she came forward in the show to speak that and again you could feel the same response in the audience: 'Oh my God! We weren't expecting that! Fair play to that woman! Jesus that woman is great!' and they're behind her all the way. And so, she was very buoyed up at the end of it.

(UF - Gorman)

4.3.2 Exploring Options and Alternatives

Within the sub-process of *Exploring options and alternatives*, the NCCA (2012) outlines a range of learning outcomes that need to be realised by each learner, namely, thinking through a problem step-by-step, trying out different approaches when working on a task and evaluating what works best, seeking out different viewpoints and perspectives and considering them carefully, imagining different scenarios and predicting different outcomes, taking risks and learning from mistakes and failures, and repeating the whole exercise if necessary. The analysis of data in this study suggests many of these learning outcomes can be achieved through the devising process, a key practice of Upstate productions. The devising process comprises a series of creative activities that requires participants to experiment with ideas, explore options and alternatives, **imagine different scenarios and predict different outcomes**. Participants are encouraged to allow ideas percolate, to ruminate, and to figure out how best to proceed in a given situation. Much of this is achieved through improvisation, reflection and group discussion:

The outline for a play emerges through a continued process of improvisations and discussion. Storylines, impressions, character development are continually teased out, tossed around and left to lie amid the rest of the jigsaw puzzle. (UF - Mallon, 2001, p. 206)

Engaging in this process enables participants to **seek out different viewpoints and perspectives and consider them carefully**.

I think devising offers you insights you might not otherwise come across, you know, like a way in or something. Just a viewpoint that you wouldn't have normally seen. (FG – Kate)

Placing the process on an equal footing with the product gives artists and participants a sense of freedom and the courage to **take risks and learn from mistakes and failures**. It also allows them to **try out different approaches when working on a task and evaluate what works best**.

They give you **permission to make mistakes and to fail**. I think that's incredible. Like the process is what's important and sometimes the process is all that's important for a particular group depending on where you are working or what you are working on, but yeah placing similar importance on the process as you would the product and that's exciting. That's giving an artist a gift and

then there is a really open kind of dialogue that can happen in those situations. (UA - Lowe)

While the company founders recognise the value of taking risks and encourage artists to experiment with different approaches, they also point to the importance of reflection and evaluation and learning from mistakes and failures.

Opinions on the appropriateness, the success or failure of an improvised experiment are all part of creating the safety zone from which to launch a trusting relationship of creativity. (UF - Mallon, 2001, p.205)

Gorman notes that reflecting on the process and evaluating the artistic output plays a critical role in advancing the company's work. He writes:

Rigorous internal evaluations follow each production. This extends to the quality of the artistic work as well as to the process, the management and the communications. There are always mistakes from which to learn. Through the learning an increasingly distinct voice is hopefully emerging. (UF - Gorman, 2001, p.20)

There comes a point in the devising process when the various characters and storylines that have been developed through workshops must be translated into a play. During 'the writing of the play' phase, participants work together in an effort to unify the stories in a coherent narrative. To facilitate this collective writing process Upstate artists use a method they refer to as 'The Grid', a structured technique that allows participants to **think through a problem step-by-step**. This strategy enables the group to establish a template of the story, agree a storyline, decide on a timeframe and the narrative sequence.

A significant phase in the process of writing the plays has been 'The Grid' as we have called it, a kind of story-boarding exercise. This is a point where – the characters and the place having been well established through improvisation and discussion – a story or set of stories is devised for them. Working in teams or as a single group in some cases, the participants begin to tell a chronological tale, while one of the artistic team has the task of recording the key episodes on a great big wall-chart spreadsheet. This has consistently proven the most exciting and revealing point in the collective creative process. The night or nights of the story. (UR - Gorman, 2001, p.16)

4.3.3 Implementing Ideas and Taking Action

Within the sub-process of *Implementing Ideas and Taking Action*, the NCCA (2012) outlines a range of learning outcomes that need to be realised by each learner, including testing out ideas, evaluating different ideas and actions, and, seeing things through to completion. The data offers several instances of participants implementing ideas and taking action. The processes of devising and collective writing require participants to **test out ideas** and **evaluate different ideas and actions**. The drafting and editing of the script require joint decision making and rigour. Invariably some material is edited out of the final play and ideas that were once precious are cast aside. According to Gorman, the act of devising 'is all about the art of letting go'. Mallon suggests that the nature of the collective writing process allows this to happen quite seamlessly as the joint ownership eliminates individuals claiming ownership of ideas:

There comes a time in the process when a greater level of commitment is required. The improvisations become more intense; the investigation of themes and ideas more rigorous. It is during this phase of the project that courage and discrimination to test and reject ideas becomes essential. The nature of the process is collective and no personal ownership is held on any of the material therefore no offence is perpetrated when deciding on what has to be omitted. The editing out of some ideas can also lead to some insightful discussion on issues that arise from the themes, form and characters that are suggested for development. The level of personal commitment, simply around time, is essential to achievement of the agreed objective whether that is to develop a full-length or one-act play. (UR - Mallon, 2001, p. 205)

Producing the final draft of the script is one clear example of how participants **see things through to completion**. Mallon notes the significance of this milestone:

One of the major benchmarks of the project is the returning of the completed, typed-up script to its authors. (UR - Mallon, 2001, p.207)

A further example of how participants **see things through to completion** is the performance of the play in front of an audience. The importance of this final phase of the project and the sense of achievement felt by participants is captured in the following comments:

- The first night of any show is special. It is more so for a community play that has evolved and developed from within the same community that makes up the audience. The ultimate test for any play. (UR - Mallon, 2001, p. 207)
- The finished product was enjoyed by all who saw it and all participants got a huge amount out of it – socially and creatively. (ER)
- It was an amazing and enriching experience and I was tremendously proud of the finished piece. ((ER))
- Seemed to be quite organic, the way the final project bubbled up gradually from our weekly get-togethers and essays. The final piece was terrific, unusual and original. (ER)

4.3.4 Learning Creatively

Within the sub-process of *Learning Creatively*, the NCCA (2012) outlines a range of learning outcomes that need to be realised by each learner, including participating in learning in creative ways, suggesting creative ways that help own learning, and using a variety of learning tools that help learner to be creative. Although 'learning creatively' is not the primary remit of Upstate's practice, there is evidence to suggest that capacity development with respect to learning creatively can be inferred from the findings. For example, the artists refer to creative processes such as ***brainstorming, visualisation and image work***:

what is really important in our devising is a flip chart, a marker and Blu-tack. So, we spider diagram a lot. We just put ideas, it tends to be ideas and images on whatever subject matter that we are working on, we put them up on the board on paper all around the space and over the weeks or months we can always revisit these ideas on the wall (UA - Cannon).

There are also examples of activities that involve participants making connections and seeing relationships, envisaging what might be, exploring ideas, keeping options open, reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes:

we worked in the realm of dream... everybody had to share a dream that they had. Each person told their group about their dream and then the next part of the exercise was to take one image from each of those dreams and create a new dream because dreams of course are disconnected images. That dream then had

to be told back to the group as a whole and from that we moved into creating dream imagery (UF - Gorman).

The data reveals instances of participants **participating in learning in creative ways, and learning to explore their creativity in ways that are relevant, interesting, and meaningful to their lives**. For example, one of the artists shares a detailed account of a strategy he uses to enable participants to learn how to engage collaboratively and to write creatively. He insists that it is important that participants learn to recognise the distinctiveness of their vernacular and the richness of their life experience and circumstances as a wellspring for their art. He refers in particular to the value of inculcating a sense of creativity and self-belief among groups with challenging behaviours:

You'll get so much from a group like that if you can get them to do stuff. I've been working with some of them over the last year, toughest group I have ever worked with, not a week goes by where someone doesn't storm out... one fella went for me one day, tough, tough as nails... but when you are getting somewhere with them its brilliant! And you can get some amazing stuff out of them! They naturally speak in this uninhibited flow and they don't necessarily think so much, they are far more instinctual, they don't have as many constraints, so you get this really exciting stuff. (UA - Murray)

In the following vignette he describes how he used the strategy with this precise group. He also provides an excerpt from the creative output the group produced in the twenty-minute exercise.

VIGNETTE – Creative Process: Strategy for encouraging participants to learn creatively

I got them to write this monologue. It's one of these writing exercises I do with them because a lot of the guys I work with find the idea of writing extremely intimidating. So, I do this really simple exercise with the lads, I'd do this with any group that I am devising with. We'd pick something we all have in common. With the Dublin lads we could pick Dublin. And I say we're going to write something really quickly together about Dublin. Then I'd go around to them and ask them:

'When you think of Dublin what's the first thing that pops into your head?'
'Pigeons'.

Next person, next word.

Instead of getting them to write, I do all the writing. I write down each word so there's no stress for anyone having to write for themselves. Say one

word and each person says a word and at the end of it you have about twenty words and then you go:

'Okay, now you have to give me a sentence with your word about Dublin in it.'

This is one here I can show you as an example. This is one a group wrote about addiction. So, I asked them for words they associated with addiction and think about colours, textures, smells try to keep those things in mind. Some of the words they came up with were 'turn on; filthy, creeks; death; thrombose veins; blagging; goods; tap'. Those are some of the words. So again, you're trying to get them to think about a sentence and give them a bit of guidance so that you are not staring every sentence with 'the' or 'it is'. Here is one of the monologues that they came up with from this 20-minute exercise:

Black as day every day, filthy, dirty lanes with fear where me next turn on is coming from. Standing in the midst of the rain. Noise piercing me ear drums. Cold and confused. Slightest creak will make your heart stop. Damp musty rooms and squats. The strong smell of death and poison. Going from flat to flat, derelict and torn apart. Waiting by the shopping centre for hours. Searching and hard to find. Collapsed and thrombose veins. Crime from frustration. Blaggard from me family. Knowing it's wrong but still doing it. Sleeping in abandoned houses, hood up, hiding from the world. Hiding from meself. Tapping town, many years behind the walls, riddled with cramps, kicking the walls, scutters, no control over the bowels. Snotty nose, one side dripping, one side clogged. Shakes in the morning as you stretch for the empty bottle. Dying of sick grey black dull. Scamming our way through life, breathless at the thought of having nothing. Family stepping back a shade.

So, this would have come from a group who would never have written anything. And I say to them 'every single word of that is yours right. I did the writing but there's nothing there that you didn't say'.

And then, I get them to perform it.

(UA - Murray)

The data also suggests that Upstate's engagement of a diverse array of artists who come from different contexts and perspectives is instrumental to the company's ongoing capacity to provide participants with the opportunity to explore their creativity through a variety of methods, approaches and artforms:

I think the methods have changed. Upstate now works with top quality artists, community artists, political artists, socially-engaged artists, artists of the highest calibre who have brought new methods, sometimes methods that have been quite challenging for

the participants, quite challenging for the audiences, but it's really important that people are challenged (UF - Gorman).

4.3.5 Stimulating creativity using digital technology

Within the sub-process of *Stimulating Creativity using Digital Technology*, the NCCA (2012) outlines a range of learning outcomes that need to be realised by each learner, including, being innovative and creative in using digital technology to learn, think and express oneself, exploring the possibilities of mixing different technologies and digital media to help oneself reflect, problem solve and present ideas, and creating digital media objects which demonstrate creativity and imagination to present learning. While the use of digital technology is not a large focus of Upstate's work, there is, however, some evidence to suggest that participants in Upstate have an opportunity to stimulate creativity using digital technology. Mallon observes that community theatre reflects the era we live in and calls on various digital supports to tell the story:

Community theatre is folk art for the twenty-first century, but it is folk art with computer-aided lighting, reference points in video culture and pop-music soundtracks, and usually with a specialist artist or two hired in to help it along, with wall charts, laptops or whatever else it takes to get the story into shape. It is an ancient form serving an ancient need, but executed in the manner of the era we live in. (UR - Gorman, 2001, p.16)

Likewise, the participants comment on their engagement with digital media to present ideas:

I'm very happy with the overall project. I really enjoyed the process of discussing and writing and eventually developing a history of stories and images captured in the film. (ER)

I'm very happy with way the film worked out. Work was atmospheric and edgy and caught the flavour and also the humour of the workshops. (ER)

I was delighted with the outcome. I was very proud to share a screen/ stage with the members of the group and the team. The [film] production quality was very high; it was a very new and exciting way to share memories. The subject matter was both personal and universal and engaged the public without

sentimentality and with very good humour. A very successful participatory project and a really strong artwork. (ER)

4.4 Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes

The findings in relation to the enablement of beneficial outcomes from engagement in Upstate Participatory Arts productions are presented using a frame inspired by Cohen-Cruz's (2005) four key principles in the enactment of good practice within community-based arts (*communal context, reciprocity, hyphenation* and *active culture*). Findings specifically relating to these four principles are presented in **bold** font throughout this section. In terms of key findings, the beneficial outcomes are articulated within the category of *communal context* (quality of collaboration), and in this regard, these beneficial outcomes include the sense of ownership, belonging, purpose and fulfilment, and wellbeing expressed by artists and participants of Upstate. The remaining categories of *reciprocity, hyphenation* and *active culture* articulate the intentions and processes that underpin the enablement of these beneficial outcomes. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that this study uses self-report and stakeholder opinion as a measurement of beneficial outcomes and that such data can be affected by response bias.

4.4.1 Communal Context

The concept of a **community collaboration** between artist and participants identified in the literature (Boal, 2002; Cohen-Cruz, 2005; Helguera, 2011; Tiller, 2014) as a central focus of participatory arts practice is clearly evident in the research findings. Devising is a collaborative process and all of Upstate's work involves working with communities. Each Upstate project is reliant on the formation of a partnership with groups or individuals interested in exploring themes and topics of relevance to their community through an artistic process. Mallon recalls that when the company was first founded, devising and scripting new material was a priority, and so, they actively sought to connect with communities to engage in a creative process that would challenge the community's imagination and document its stories:

Upstate was looking to form a partnership with interested groups or individuals to explore the boundaries of devising and scripting new material. Ultimately, we wanted the challenge of writing

about a contemporary community, delving into its psyche, challenging its imagination and hearing its stories by having people from the community write the play themselves. (UR - Mallon, 2001, p.203)

The emphasis on community collaboration has continued to drive the work with more recent artists noting that while the choice of art form can vary from project to project, the core idea of bringing communities together remains a constant:

We are always working with community people to tell community stories in whatever way is deemed appropriate by the people we are working with. An Upstate show can be anything - it's a group of people coming together to create a piece and that piece can be any of the art forms – dance, film, art- it can be anything but at the core of it - it should be about communities coming together to create art. (UA - Hayes)

The enactment of a **communal context** is evidenced in Upstate by a number of factors, namely, the **sense of ownership, belonging, fulfilment, purpose and wellbeing**, which are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

4.4.1.1 Sense of ownership

Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.92) contends that 'communal expression is rooted in recognition that much creativity and meaning come out of the group' and that the collaboration which occurs between the artist and participants generates 'a collective vision' which leads to a joint ownership of the work. In this regard, Upstate artists speak of the importance of being open and receptive to ideas and material that come from the group:

They're making high quality art and it is art that is steeped in their community. The participants there are completely collaborating on and are being **fellow makers of the work and have a huge input and ownership of the work.** (UA - Cannon)

I am always reluctant to tell somebody what I want... I want them to find a way to do this... because I want it to come from them, **I want them to have real ownership of the work they create.** (UA - Lowe)

Participants also recognise that the process centres on their ideas and contributions and value the collaborative experiences of working creatively with others.

Everybody got involved and contributed a lot to the project. (ER)

Everybody has their input and contributes to the final piece and **it all comes from the individuals** that are part of that group and it evolves as it goes along so it's very much part of the group who are there. (FG - Aoife)

Upstate artists articulate a clear position on the role of the artist in the joint ownership of the work. They see themselves as co-creators of the work with responsibility drawing on their artistic vision to guide the artistic process and to shape the final piece. Gorman urges that achieving partnership is important and that **artists and participants must be on equal footing**. He notes that there should be open acknowledgement that artists bring their artistic and technical skills to a project but that the content, the story and all its elements come from the participants. Gorman remarks that it is important that the artist has the appropriate generosity of spirit to genuinely embrace the ideas and stories that emerge from participants.

The process of devising, in my view, will work better if it is led by a generous visionary person who has the vision to be able to identify the breakthrough moments when they come, to put a structure on the work at various points, and particularly at the end point. I do believe that if the process has been sensitive, if the process has been honest, if the facilitators or facilitator in the room is prepared to acknowledge that he or she brings remarkable skills and great abilities and great editorial vision and all the rest to the work but does not know the story really, then you're on an equal footing, and that's the key (UF - Gorman).

Gorman believes that the artist has a fundamental role in the design and delivery of the artistic work and how that work is created and shared with the wider community.

Community artists are the interface between the community and the art. They are the interface between the story and the telling of the story (UF – Gorman).

He argues that the artist can add considerable value to the piece without hijacking the project. He likens the role of the artist to that of a midwife:

You've midwived it a little bit, you've eased its passage here and there. You've thrown in the odd little tip. I think there is an ethical line where you take over. If you take over, they will know, they will be unhappy. If you subtly add value, they will thank you for that and love their own work the more. That's what it's about (UF – Gorman).

4.4.1.2 Sense of belonging

In the literature the concept of 'community' implies 'a feeling of belonging or relatedness' and a 'shared emotional connection' (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). A real sense of genuine community emerges from the findings. Feelings of congeniality and conviviality experienced as part of the collaborative process have led to the development of a strong camaraderie among members of the group. Participants speak of a **high level of social and emotional connectedness** with each other and the confidence they have gained from the experience of having their voice heard and from being part of a group performance. The process appears to have invigorated and inspired some participants who express joy, enthusiasm and a zest for life:

Upstate gives one a lovely sense of belonging, a sense of striving to educate and challenge oneself. Performing with a group does wonders for self- confidence and contributes to joie de vivre. (ER)

It was an uplifting, creative and socially integrating experience. (ER)

It gives you something to look forward to and it brings a bit of joy into your life. (FG - Sarah)

Social inclusion. Confidence enhancing. It's good to find your voice sometimes! (ER)

the cast and crew - **we were our own little community, a microcosm of the bigger community. We had our own little world.** (FG - Anna)

The finished product was enjoyed by all who saw it and all participants got a huge amount out of it – socially and creatively. (ER)

It has brought me close to the group but also to learn some important history of Drogheda. (ER)

Crucially, the sense of belonging that developed in the course of a project appears to have continued and extended beyond the group and outlived the lifespan of the project. Some comments suggest the formation of lifelong friendships and greater bonds within the community. One newcomer to the area saw this as particularly beneficial:

It's all about self-development and community because it's community theatre. I moved into the area and from doing community theatre I have now become part of the community

and my circle of friends are from Upstate people I know and it's all coming from this. I am now part of that community... I am not from Drogheda but yet I found out so much about Drogheda and about the people and I felt really proud to be living in Drogheda and I'm a Dub! So that takes a lot to say that. (FG - Aoife)

Similarly, a comment from one of the artists highlights that in addition to communities of location or interest, communities can be formed through the creation of art, a view consistent with that of Helguera (2011) who talks of 'the construction of a community or temporal social group through a collective vision' (p. 9). He notes the positive impact that participation in the creative process has had on participants' sociability and confidence and attributes community building to engagement in the process:

Communities can come from anywhere - supporting the same football team, living in the same street or a **community can be formed when 50 people put on a play together and that's what we did**. We got 50 people who are now... lots of them all know each other and I would think that that would be part of the remit because that goes back to the process. If the process is effective then you are going to have that. Yes, you are going to have a good production at the end of it but you are also going to have all these people who have way more friends, social life, confidence etc. The lady who had the smallest person in Ship Street had the biggest part in Abacus the movie. That's great to see. She thinks she's a movie star now! (UA - Hayes)

4.4.1.3 Sense of purpose and fulfilment

Participants comment on the sense of ownership they feel and express delight and excitement at being part of the creation of something original.

you have ownership and that sense of ownership is very important because you think there has been nothing written like that before... it's new, it's novel, I own it... There is something quite special about that. (FG - Anna)

Participants also express appreciation and gratitude **for the sense of purpose and enrichment they gained from** being part of something worthwhile.

I have a much better understanding of what arts participation can be. The quality of time spent, quality of experience, quality of relationships built and quality of understanding of life experiences

from the different age groups that occurred was truly enriching. A very worthwhile and exciting experience. (ER)

Confidence, sense of fun – to not feel it is all about me and how 'perfect' I can be – to see myself as a part of something bigger – to trust the process. (ER)

4.4.1.4 Sense of wellbeing

Participants also believe that the sense of community they experienced contributed to their emotional and mental wellbeing and helped them to cope with life's challenges.

I lost my mother in June of last year. I felt quite down which was the main reason I wanted to be part of the project. It helped being part of a community-based project. **It helped me to feel good and I really felt I was part of something worthwhile.** (ER)

I'd say Upstate save the HSE a fortune. It's like therapy coming here every week, except it's fun as well. (ER)

It keeps you happy, it's better than any therapy, I think. (FG - Olivia)

Each weekly workshop is a **wonderful and necessary escape from the hum drum of everyday life.** (ER)

It helped me with my own self-esteem. Being a mother/housewife, day to day routines are monotonous – knowing that I had Upstate to attend **really cheered me up** and it helped with my confidence too. (ER)

In addition to the positive impact on participants' sociability, there are also suggestions that the sense of communion that participants feel as a result of their new formed community appears to have filled a spiritual void in their lives. They express a need to connect with others and conclude **that the communal experience helps stave off loneliness and isolation.**

This was extremely valuable to me. **Our rehearsals in the winter genuinely saved me from depression and isolation.** It was a remarkable experience. Community therefore is invaluable for me and our town and on a personal level replaces a void since leaving religion. (ER)

I have turned to theatre and this way of community in place of religion. It's a spiritual, communal experience, a space to go to when you need to be part of a community. (ER)

4.4.2 Reciprocity

The findings indicate that the principle of reciprocity identified by Cohen-Cruz (2005) to describe the **mutually-nourishing relationship between artists and participants** is evident within the artist/participant relations in Upstate. This is evidenced by the presence of an **asset-based model of community-building**, and the presence of **processes that enable reciprocity**.

4.4.2.1. An asset-based model of community-building

The findings indicate that Upstate adopt an asset-based model of community-building in all contexts, regardless of the challenges that a particular context may present. Cohen-Cruz (2005) argues that reciprocity is rooted in an asset-based model of community-building, which Kretzman and Mc Knight (1993) assert focuses on relationship building based on the strengths and capacities of the parties involved rather than their weaknesses and needs. Tiller (2014, p.26) notes this can be challenging for artists working in ‘a context where communities are often labelled as ‘disadvantaged’, ‘marginalised’ or ‘excluded’’, however, Upstate artists considered this approach to have been instrumental in their work in the border region of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland where many of the projects were completed against the political backdrop of ‘the troubles’ and the uncertainty of the peace process. This bears testimony to Goldbard’s (2006) view that dialogue through art can accommodate polarised views, even in communities that are split over contentious issues. Evidence of the company’s implementation of an asset-based model can be found in the company’s **decision to prioritise artistic rather than ‘issue-based’ agendas or programmes**. They are determined to avoid naming the issues or labelling the participants who present to partake in a project, arguing instead that there is more to be gained from pursuing an ‘artistic quest’ that imbues feelings of joy, trust and respect. They also recognise that the individuals who come from a troubled community are likely to have an appetite for change and a desire to engage in an aesthetic journey that offers alternatives.

There is much evidence that the community that assembles to imagine and to make art is already a community in change, a community in reflection, a community seeing alternatives. Real political change seldom flows from a theatre stage, but it might

flow from those who themselves are changed by creating for the stage when that creative process is underpinned by values of respect, trust, empowerment and also the right to joy (UR - Gorman, 2010, p. 7).

Gorman asserts that if there is to be any prospect of progress or any hope for participants to perceive themselves and be perceived differently, it is vital that they 'leave their baggage at the door'. He explains that engagement with the issues must and inevitably will come later in the process but it is important to **start with the art**. Once the artistic process has begun and participants have gained each other's' trust and respect, they can then begin to look at the issues that hover beneath the surface. The following vignette captures the reasoning behind this stance.

Vignette – Creativity Climate - 'Leave your baggage at the door – especially if it contains a gun'

Our only rule in fact is that you leave your baggage at the door – especially if it contains a gun. If the funding was offered on foot of your being perceived as a victim, a disadvantaged person or indeed a trouble-maker, we are not going to exacerbate that perception (or even self-perception) by taking it as our starting point. Come into the room and dream. Dream of a different world – maybe a better one. **We therefore almost never pursue what is referred to as an 'issue-based' agenda or programme. We pursue a creative program. An artistic quest, if you don't mind.** The fact is that the issues will inevitably follow you into the room in due course anyway. But why let them lead when they can just as easily follow? What I mean is this. The issues of class, race, gender, ability and so on are part of the political backdrop which – dare to say it – defines us because it dictates to us. Politics is part of life. We inherit our labels, we absorb them, we resist them, we embrace them. They are as real as the trees and the houses. So, we cannot lock them out of the creative, imaginative process any more than we could lock them out of life itself. But we do not start with them. As artists, surely, we can see more in the criminal than his or her criminality; more in the victim than his or her victimhood. Who wants to be defined as a victim or a destroyer when a good, first two-hour drama workshop can already allow you to reimagine yourself as a winner and a maker?

(UR - Gorman, 2010, pp. 5-6)

4.4.2.2 Processes that enable reciprocity

Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.9) identifies '**imaging**' - translating ideas into forms, and '**imagining**' – 'dreaming about what life could be'; an opportunity for '**deep**

reflection...; critical distance in their lives; and **public visibility'** as the benefits for participants and the allure of **untold stories and less heard voices** as benefits for artists. She argues that **dialogue, listening and respect** are integral processes of reciprocity, concepts also put forward by Helguera (2011) who speaks of '**opening a discursive space'** that invites and accepts participant input. In terms of Upstate, there is much evidence of the presence of these processes, which are now presented in the following categories: Listening/ Having voice heard, Helping people express ideas, Public visibility/ recognition, and Voicing under told stories.

4.4.2.2.1 Listening / Having voice heard

Participants express satisfaction and enthusiasm at having the opportunity to explore themes and topics of interest and relevance to their lives. They refer to the fact that engaging with the process gives them an opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas and have those **thoughts and ideas heard and validated by others**. In particular, the opportunity to have their views heard by the wider community through a public performance of their artistic creation is viewed as exciting and rewarding.

It's an opportunity to voice your own feelings maybe around a theme or a topic or a human right or something that's bugging you and maybe to have that on a script and performed is quite exciting and rewarding and it all happens around huge collaboration, you know. (FG - Anna)

They were also appreciative of the respect that was shown to them and they felt that their contribution was valued and that everyone's role, no matter how small, had significance attached to it.

They respect you, even with the smallest part you have to play, **they give you respect, make you feel you have something important to contribute.** (FG - Sarah)

The findings indicate that the experience of being listened to, of having their voice heard and their point of view accepted led to an increase in self-confidence that saw reticent participants become more vocal:

Members in the group changed from being quiet in the background to wanting to be listened to, with something to say.
(ER)

The artists observe that listening to people and respecting their viewpoint is essential in a collaborative process. Gorman points out that devising obliges participants to listen, to share and to respect others' ideas and viewpoints. He suggests that this can encourage people to articulate their own sense of themselves. In the below vignette he talks about the benefits young people derive from the devising process.

Vignette – Creativity Climate - You are obliged to listen, you are obliged to share, you are obliged to respect.

I believe that the greatest contribution that youth drama makes is not the formation of a new generation of actors but an awful lot of very interesting young men and women are actually working in other fields who actually learned all about themselves through youth drama. So that's another facet, of the community practice and it is a by-product of the devising. In fact, sometimes it is the purpose of the devising because of the collectivity of it, because of the fact that **you are obliged to listen, you're obliged to share, you're obliged to respect**, you are obliged not to bully, you are obliged not to, when I say obliged... it is counterproductive to do those negative things, you are the one that is exposed in the group if you are inclined to be that way, you know, around people. So, I think that the process of devising can be creatively very important but it has another profound function which is actually, you know, **encouraging young people to have the confidence to articulate their own sense of themselves**, whatever that might be, in a group of other young people, in a group of their peers. We've seen so many over the years, young people who have come out of their shell of shyness to become confident and admirable young adults.

(UF – Gorman)

4.4.2.2 Helping people express ideas

The data contains several references to the active methods used by artists to enable participants to express their feelings, thoughts and ideas through a range of activities that encompass **physical and imaginative modes of expression**. These include exploring ideas through storytelling, creative writing, image work and movement. Participants are encouraged to share memories and tell stories using their own dialect. The natural cadence of the vernacular is valued and participants' regular speaking voice is extolled - 'no-one is asked to attempt heightened or poetic language' (UR - Gorman, 2001, p. 21). Participants have opportunities for **individual and shared**

creative expression and many refer to the fact that the artists helped them to express their ideas.

They manage to draw ideas out of everyone and feelings (FG - Anna)

Sharing our stories really encouraged each of us to develop our own voice. (ER)

Some consider this feature of Upstate's work to be one of the greatest strengths of the company.

Everybody has a story within them and I think one of Upstate greatest talents is being able to tap into the fact that everybody has a story and then being able to bring it out in them. I think that's their greatest strength. (FG – Kate)

One of the artists recounts an example of an unorthodox approach he adopted in an effort to encourage participants' expressivity. He wanted participants to feel empowered to draw on their everyday lives and experiences and to be inspired and animated by life in their locality. He thought that getting the participants to show him around their home town would be a good way of getting to know the group and encouraging them to share their stories and begin the process of expressing and performing their ideas in front of others. In the below vignette he describes his interaction with the group the first time they met.

Vignette – 'All of a sudden the workshop became about them'

The first time I met the group it was a Saturday in November it was cold. I'd asked Declan to organize a mini bus or some sort of way of getting us around Drogheda and I just asked the guys to choose somewhere in Drogheda that meant something to them. So, **all of a sudden, the workshop became about them** and I was the one participating. It was about them saying 'this is where I went to school and this is where I sat'. They were performing before they even knew it. And that was important. You can reference that later on after a few weeks. That day you brought me up to where you spoke this way. I think that's how you should do it and they go 'oh okay, well I can do that because I have done that'. And Declan always kind of references that as an interesting tactic... that from the get go they were kind of relaxed because they were in a location they had chosen, that meant something to them. **They were educating me.**

(UA - Cannon)

This vignette also provides an insight into how a reversal of roles between artist and participants can shift any perceived hierarchy and place the participants in a position of power as they dictate the pace, place and plot and reflect on the world from their perspective.

4.4.2.2.3 Public visibility/recognition

Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.93) observes that participants frequently comment on 'how appreciated they felt to have a moment in the spotlight and to be treated with respect by people interested in their viewpoints'. Similarly, in this research, participants refer to the **enormous pride** they felt from the **public recognition** of their work. The data indicates that participants felt **a strong sense of achievement** from performing in front of audiences and from having their voices and views heard by the wider community. The audience's presence during the show and the feedback received from audience members after the show was an **enormous boost to participants' confidence and self-esteem**.

Audiences seemed to love our show. I was proud, so proud to be part of such a community-based project. We put in a lot of hard work and effort and it showed.' (ER)

Three sold out shows indicate the public interest, not to mention RTE including the production in one of their prime-time magazine shows. (ER)

I was delighted with the outcome. **I was very proud to share a screen/ stage with the members of the group and the team.** (ER)

I would say **my sense of achievement** at the end of the preview **and the positive feedback I heard** around me, both to me and to others on the night of the preview, **left me on a high.'** (ER)

Participants were also very **proud of the quality of the artistic work** they produced. They believed it to be of a high standard and felt that it spoke to audiences in an interesting and original way.

The production quality was very high, it was a very new and exciting way to share memories. The subject matter was both personal and universal and engaged the public without sentimentality and with very good humour. **A very successful participatory project and a really strong artwork.'** (ER)

It was an amazing and enriching experience and **I was tremendously proud of the finished piece.**' (ER)

4.4.2.2.4 Voicing under told stories

Borwick (2012) advocates the need for arts organisations and their communities to engage in 'reciprocal' and 'mutually beneficial relationships' while an emphasis on mutuality is also evident in Lowe's (2012, p.7) view of dialogic participatory art as, 'a shared process of creative enquiry and learning between artist and participants'. Reciprocity and mutuality appear to characterise participant/artist relations in Upstate. Gorman comments on the richness of experience and the potential for **vivid storytelling** that emerges from the **relationship between artists and participants:**

Within communities there will usually reside a deep font of story, from gossip to confession to fantasy, and within all of us is the capacity to dream and invent. When artists bring their skills to a marriage with a story-rich community, the possibilities are great indeed for vivid storytelling. (UR - Gorman, 2001, p.15)

While participants benefit from public recognition and having their voice heard, **Upstate artists also benefit from the public visibility and recognition of their work in the community.** The data indicates that the collaborative process of devising is indeed a rewarding and enriching experience for **artists who express excitement** at the experience of working with people with **lesser heard voices**. Gorman observes that the duality of intent found in community theatre is the reason why unique voices come to the fore in this setting.

Most youth theatres, like community theatre, are dedicated at least as much to the broader educational and social development of the participants as they are to artistic concerns. But precisely **out of that duality of intent can come a voice that is unique and that has cultural and artistic significance.** (UR - Gorman, 2001, p.19)

The artists see this as an opportunity to give people an artistic platform but also to bring **original voices** to the fore and to hear voices that are **distinct from mainstream theatre.**

When you are working with groups that don't necessarily have a voice, you don't know what they are going to say, and they'll blow you away with what they say! You never know what you're going

to get with an Upstate show because you are working with artists and groups that have **lesser heard voices, distinct voices**, that's the hallmark of an Upstate show, distinct voices. You might not always like what they say, but they've always got something to say. They are giving a voice to something that you are not going to hear every day of the week, something you are not necessarily going to hear elsewhere, you know. You are certainly not going to hear it in any of the big mainstream theatres, you know, and that's a shame. There are things that they are saying that deserve to be heard and should be heard (UA - Murray).

While the stories generated through the devising process are expressed in the participants' voice, the presence of lesser heard voices can also be found in the fictional work that the participants create. Disenfranchised voices characterise much of Upstate's work. Many of the plays reveal the social and cultural attitudes and the political and economic circumstances of frequently marginalised groups of society. The plays represent the lives and stories of working class and unemployed people, emigrants and immigrants, lone parents, adolescents, older people and other vulnerable and sometimes marginalised groups. The artists appreciate the **opportunity to experiment with innovative methods to explore overlooked narratives of a community and tell under told stories**. They also feel a sense of ownership and pride in the work and they frequently acknowledge that the community context gives them openings and opportunities that they would not get in other mediums such as professional theatre or film.

If you devise stuff it's your own voice and it's the voice of the people in the room, which is very exciting and it can break down all the walls. You don't need a proscenium arch. You can site-specific it or off-site it, you can do intimate theatre, you can do so much more. (UA - Hayes)

Every town in Ireland has forgotten streets and forgotten stories one of the things we managed to do was tell people stories that would have been forgotten otherwise. No one is going to make a film or write any kind of fictional book on these people's lives because what they achieved in their lives... I suppose raising twelve kids in a tiny house that floods six times a year is remarkable but it's not the kind of thing that people make movies out of. So, in this environment **you can tell the forgotten people's stories which feels really good**. (UA - Hayes)

4.4.3 Hyphenation

Cohen-Cruz uses the term hyphenation to capture the multitude of intentions and aesthetic processes at play in community-based performance. Tiller (2014) and others (Grant, 1993; Plumb, 2017) note, many participatory arts projects purposefully seek to work with participants from marginalised and potentially vulnerable communities in an effort to enable social interaction through the arts. The findings in this research suggest that the collaborative devising process adopted by Upstate enables **a level of social interaction among participants that generates communities of a lasting nature**. While they do not pursue an issue-based approach to theatre, they are clearly focused on community and highly cognisant of the benefits arising from a community-engaged artistic process. Gorman explains that the company was ‘founded initially to explore the interface between art and progressive social values’ (UR - Gorman, 2010, p.3) and that they sought **to create art that would fill a void that other arenas and support mechanisms could not:**

We have worked with communities, time and again, for whom the adventure of entering a theatre workshop, of dreaming up an image or narrative from nowhere, of progressing this to a stage performance, is a novelty. There has usually been no tradition of this. We are there because through whatever brokerage process these people have asserted their right to make art and to make sense of the world around them through art and we have been invited in to be part of that journey. Once in, we have never shied from insisting on our shared responsibility – we as trained artists, them as participant artists – **to make art of the highest possible standards**, whatever that might mean in these given circumstances – **to make art that is enquiring, new, beautiful and spiritually transformative in ways that other rehabilitative ‘instruments’, such as sport, economic supports, health and wellbeing programs and so on may not.** (UR - Gorman, 2010, p.3)

Although Upstate maintain a singular focus on artistic pursuit, they are also firm believers in **the liberation that can derive from personal and communal creativity**. They refuse to allow issue-based agendas to dictate a project but they are acutely conscious of the **transformative potential of the creative arts** and fully endorse the social and artistic merit of work created through a collective process. Gorman argues that **transformative art also has aesthetic value** and can add original, informative and entertaining contributions to the arts.

Well-designed arts activity can and does transform individuals, societies and communities for the better. Men and women collectively in communities can create works of art that are stimulating, poetic, entertaining and genuinely original, and so enlarge our understanding and appreciation of known and unknown worlds (UR - Gorman, 2001, p.23).

In its twenty odd years of existence, hyphenation has always been evident in the company's work. The initial peace-building focus among divided communities in the North and border region in the early years was later replaced by other societal needs that emerged during the years of the Celtic Tiger economy:

Our programmes initially focussed strongly on **peace-building**. In more recent times, as uneasy peace descended and the war receded in the consciousness, we shifted our focus to two new strands: **interculturalism and urban youth** – aware of the increasing low-level racism in the households and on the streets, and of the ever-widening gulf between a puffed-up nouveau riche and political elite and an increasingly alienated edge-city youth, duped into consumerism and denied true cultural right of expression (UR - Gorman, 2010, pp.4-5).

The findings from this research indicate a range of positive outcomes across a number of spheres. The **benefits identified by participants include** a range of positive outcomes that could be classified as **educational, community-building, therapeutic, personal and social development**. The data indicates that the experience of participating in the devising, writing and performance process inspired participants to take on new challenges and directions in their personal and professional lives. For example, the sense of achievement and confidence gained from participating in an Upstate project seems to have filtered into their consciousness and encouraged them to try other forms of artistic expression.

I fulfilled an aspiration to write and act and it gave me the courage to volunteer to facilitate drama classes for young people in an Asylum Centre. (ER)

Apart from making friends for life I wrote a song because it was needed and I would never have done it otherwise. This has also led to my getting more involved with singing in public. (ER)

Others have **taken inspiration from the process** and adopted aspects of it into their professional practice. For example, one participant used games and exercises she

learned in workshops and introduced them to her class – ‘As a teacher I used many of the workshop games with my class and they loved it.’ (ER). One participant remarked that the confidence she gained from the project improved her performance at job interviews:

It has given me tremendous confidence. I noticed when I went for job interviews, I found it easier to look them in the eye and talk about myself and even brag a little, which I never could do in the past because it's not easy to talk about yourself like that. (ER)

Some participants display signs of **the development of a growth mindset** as they report a **new ‘can do’ attitude**:

it gives you belief in yourself. it gives back what education took out... I think once you discover a skill you think you couldn't have done before that the possibilities are endless. Then suddenly you think, Jesus I can do anything! There are just so many things that you want to try then, all of a sudden. It's being handed that opportunity for creativeness within a community, that's a safe place to explore all that you ever wanted to explore. (FG – Kate)

I realised there was more in me and more that I wanted to do and more that I could have done. It's given me more confidence, more belief. (FG - Sarah)

Others seem to have developed a **more positive disposition** in their daily lives:

The project inspired me to pursue work, and caring for a family member with a 'life' is a big workshop' outlook. (ER)

It's wonderful to see at my age, that I got there, that I did this and that I can do it. It gives you a whole different outlook. (FG - Sarah)

4.4.4 Active Culture

Cohen-Cruz (2005, p.99) identifies the principle of active culture to reflect two core tenets of the field – participants as creators rather than consumers of art and a recognition of ‘little c’ or democratic creativity. On the matter of creating art, she contests that ‘people frequently get more out of making art than seeing the fruits of other people’s labors’ and secondly, ‘everyone has artistic potential’. There is ample evidence to indicate that Upstate **value ‘little-c’ ordinary, everyday creativity** and

believes that everyone has artistic potential. Gorman provides an example of the participant profile of a project:

The writers and actors are ordinary men and women, members of Macra na Feirme – young farmers, factory operatives, computer technicians, hospital orderlies, hairdressers and so on (UR - Gorman, 2001, p.11).

Lowie proclaims that she sees everyone as an artist. She views each project as an artistic team and does not see or make distinctions between professional and community actors.

I try and see everyone as an artist whether they be from a community context or a professional context sometimes merging those things, so I suppose I don't see any distinctions then because we are all collaborating together and I think we are a team. I think of it as an artistic team and each group is different. It's not about professional versus, you know, community based. (UA – Lowie)

This outlook is in keeping with the spirit of **inclusiveness and diversity** associated with active culture and does not go unnoticed by participants, one of whom comments: 'We are all equal, it's very inclusive' (FG - Anna). There is also a very strong sense of **participants as creators**. The work is created, written and performed by participants:

The work was of them, by them, about them, for them and their families and their community. There was never a question of who owned the work. (UF - Gorman)

In the early stages of a project participants generate and explore ideas. In the later phases of a project, an emphasis on participant voice and a transparent and tightly structured framework is used to assign specific writing tasks to individuals. **The use of participants' vernacular** is a further testimony to the notion of participants as creators.

The story framework having been worked out in a group process in advance, individual participants are given the task of writing individual scenes. With all of the writers generally coming from the same geographic region – a region that happens to have a rich and beautiful vernacular – there is a remarkable consistency in the 'music' of the writing. No-one is asked to attempt heightened or poetic language. The natural cadence of everyday speech in the hands of people who are sensitive to the pathos of the situations, or who are natural comics, is enough to give an overall rhythmic feel to the play. My work as script supervisor has been to edit out

occasional inconsistencies and so on, and occasionally to add short links (such as the description of the movement pieces). I have never found myself needing to 'correct' or improve work. (UR - Gorman, 2001, p.21)

The general premise that informs Upstate's practice is an understanding that **people get more out of making art than viewing art.**

it was very important in the Upstate model that the writing itself should come from the community. It should come from the participants. And I know for a fact that **when people have written something and then they perform it, it has additional resonance and meaning for them.** (UF - Gorman)

One participant explicitly commented that the experience of making and performing her own art was much more rewarding and enjoyable than performing someone else's work.

I think when you actually write the script yourself **you want to do it proud because it's actually your show**, you wrote the script, it's all to do with you and you want to tell it how it is, but when you are reading a script by a playwright, it's like, right, well you have to do it this way, you have to speak in a certain tone and everything is just so instructed, you can't do it freely. But when it's your show you'll do it however you want and it's more fun that way. (FG - Lisa)

Participants also express a sense of achievement and satisfaction from having written and performed the play themselves.

I really wanted to act and loved the challenge and the sense of achievement. **I was really proud to have played something I wrote.** I was really proud of our team also. (ER)

One participant expressed surprise at her ability to write and excitement at how 'real' her character became in the process:

for me to sit down and write was wonderful. After all these years, I didn't think I could do it and then they carried me into it and the part became real and I thought that was exciting. (FG - Olivia)

Gorman observes that the act of creative writing opens up a space that can have an **empowering and therapeutic effect** on participants:

Our work is never about encouraging the victimised to describe their victimhood. We leave that to other forms of chronicles. But

we find that very often when people are enabled to write creatively, they do just that. They surpass their pain and their enmity by creating something new, something that captures their inner journey more succinctly than the mere facts, something called art. And they and we – continually again and again – are empowered by simply having that part of ourselves, that space, opened up for us. (UR - Gorman, 2010, p.6)

4.5 Summary of Findings from Upstate

The case study of Upstate contributes to knowledge in the field of creativity firstly through its substantiation of the presence of factors and practices that previous studies from the literature review purported to foster creativity, thus, validating the enactment of Participatory Arts initiatives to further creativity. Secondly, and very importantly, this case study revealed new factors and processes influencing climates for creativity and enabling participants to be creative within Upstate' Participatory Arts initiatives, and furthermore identified a broader range of beneficial outcomes for participants engaging in such enterprises. Therefore, the findings from the case study of Upstate contribute knowledge to three aspects of creativity, namely: 1) Fostering climate/s for creativity, 2) Processes for 'being creative', and, 3) Enablement of beneficial outcomes of creativity. A summary of Upstate' contributions in respect of each of these aspects of creativity is presented herein.

4.5.1 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity

The findings provided affirmation that the factors and conditions for fostering climate/s for creativity as characterised by Teaching and Learning Scotland (2001) and Hamza and Griffith's (2006) research were visible in Upstate participatory arts initiatives, as shown in the first column of Figure 4.2. Furthermore, the findings revealed the presence of some additional aspects of significance in the facilitation of climatic conditions for creativity, as shown in the second column of Figure 4.2. These included: *the need for provision of adequate time and space to build trust; allowing participants to self-pace to build confidence and overcome fears; valuing ordinary 'little c' creativity, valuing contributions through gentle facilitation of voice; offering reassurance and encouragement to participants; demystifying and simplifying the creative process; and, the use of site-specific visits to stimulate creativity.*

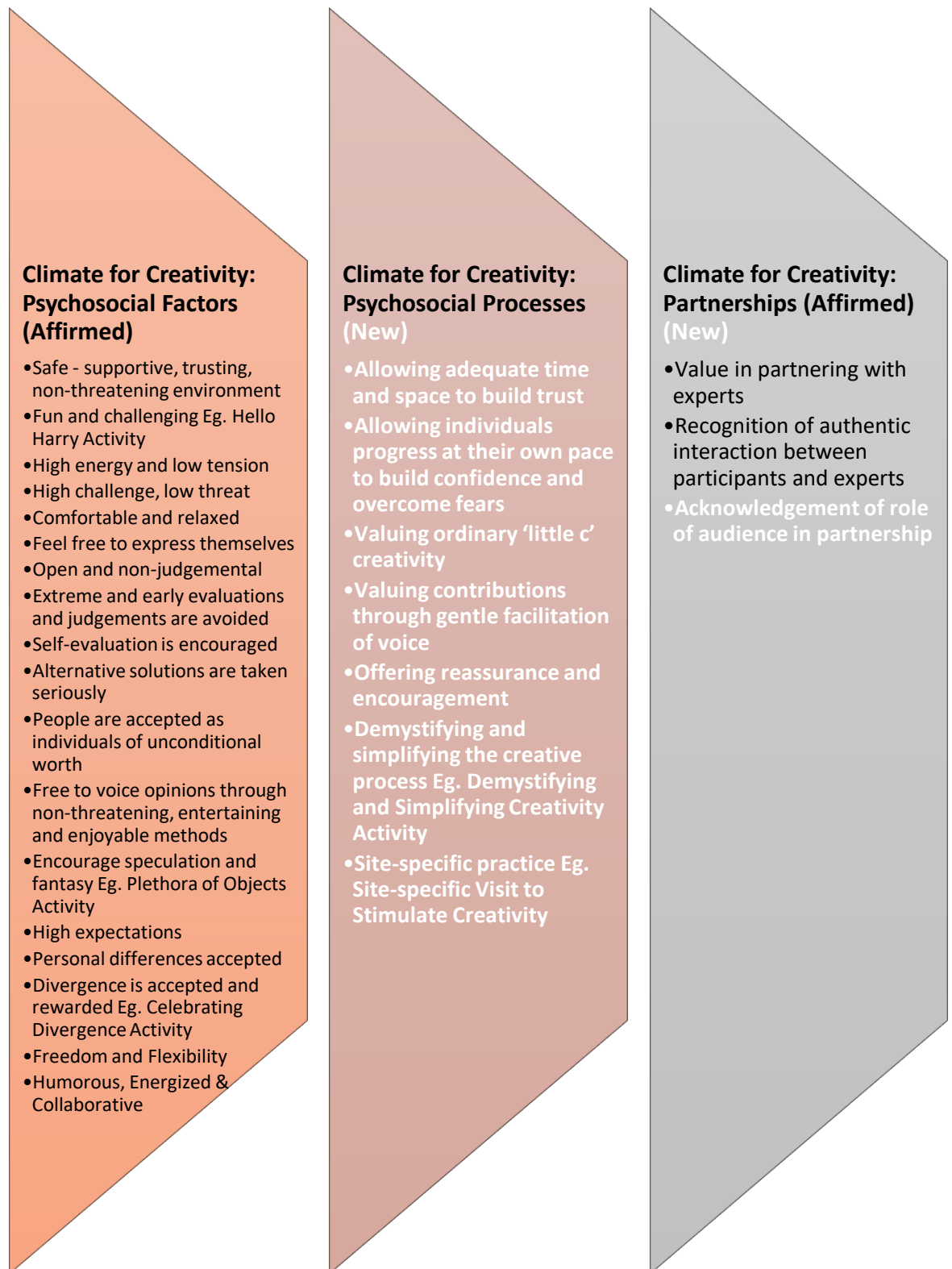


Figure 4.2: Summary of Findings from Upstate in relation to facilitating Climate/s for Creativity.

A secondary aspect of fostering a climate for creativity was also visible; namely, the significance of an effective partnerships model, the dimensions of which have been presented in the third column of Figure 4.2. The Participatory Arts field leans heavily on partnership as an ethic of practice, and it was evident that the role of professional artists and other practitioners was pivotal to furthering participants' experiences and enhancing outcomes for all. There was evidence that the equal valuing and recognition of participants' works was a necessary component of the artist-participant relationship within the partnership model, and furthermore the audience interaction and validation of performance was critical for participants. Finally, five vignettes of activities that were shown to be effective in contributing to climates for creativity have been articulated, and these include: the *Hello Harry* activity to inject some fun; the *Plethora of Objects* activity to encourage speculation and fantasy; the *Celebrating Divergence* activity to encourage divergent thinking; the *Demystifying and Simplifying Creativity* activity to enable understanding of creativity, and the *Site-Specific Visit* to stimulate creativity.

4.5.2 Processes for 'Being Creative'

The analysis of data from Upstate affirmed the presence of pedagogic processes for 'being creative' that were articulated by the NCCA's (2015) guidelines for promoting creativity, as illustrated in Figure 4.3, which included the presence of processes to invoke imaginings, to explore options and alternatives, to implement ideas and take action, to learn creatively and to stimulate creativity using digital technology. The findings presented here contributed further by providing exemplification of particular ways to foster practices for 'being creative', mainly evident in the enactment of the sub-processes within the *Devising Process* (such as: *Circle of Knots* and *Tableau activities* used for imaginings, and *Story-boarding, Improvisation*, the collaborative formation of storylines within *The Grid activity*, and of course ultimately, the *Performance of self-created works*, which was at the core of all of Upstate's productions.

Imagining	Using different ways of learning to help develop imagination <i>Eg. Warm-up games; Devising Process; Storyboarding</i>
	Imagining ways to make a positive difference in the world – <i>no example here in Upstate data sets</i>
	Taking inspiration from the courage and imagination of others – <i>Eg. Hot seating activity; Improvisation strategy; Recording/ re-play of ideas.</i>
Exploring options and alternatives	Expressing feelings, thoughts and ideas through movement, writing, music, art, storytelling, drama and imaginative modes of expression - <i>Eg. Incorporating multiple narratives into the story framework the use of vernacular language; physicality as a means of developing characters - 'Honking as deranged geese', 'silly portrait exercises' and 'short improvised tableau'; Circle of Knots activity.</i>
	Thinking through a problem step-by-step <i>Eg. The Grid activity that enables collaborative writing of the play.</i>
	Trying out different approaches when working on a task and evaluating what works best <i>Eg. Devising Process – Improvisation sub-process</i>
	Seeking out different viewpoints and perspectives and considering them carefully. <i>Eg Devising Process – Reflection and Group Discussion sub-processes</i>
	Imagining different scenarios and predicting different outcomes <i>Eg. Devising Process - Improvisation sub-process</i>
Implementing ideas and taking action	Taking risks and learning from mistakes and failures, and repeating the whole exercise if necessary. <i>Eg. Emphasis on process, exploration and experimentation</i>
	Testing out ideas <i>Eg. Devising Process – Implementing and responding to improvisation activities</i>
	Evaluating different ideas and actions <i>Eg. Devising Process – Improvisation sub-process; drafting and editing script/story; Giving and receiving feedback</i>
Learning creatively	Seeing things through to completion <i>Eg. Completion of scripts, Performance of self-created work / Presentaion of artistic work to an external audience</i>
	Participating in learning in creative ways <i>Eg. Writing a Monologue Activity, Realm of Dream Activity, Creative writing sub-process</i>
	Suggesting creative ways that help own learning <i>Eg. Spider Diagrams, Brainstorming, Visualisation</i>
Stimulating creativity using digital technology	Using a variety of learning tools that help learner to be creative <i>Eg. Images, Texts, Flip Chart, Marker, Blu tack, Display on paper/ board/walls, 'space'.</i>
	Being innovative and creative in using digital technology to learn, think and express oneself <i>Eg. Digital media creation/recording of productions</i>
	Exploring the possibilities of mixing different technologies and digital media to help oneself reflect, problem solve and present ideas <i>Eg. Video-clips, music soundtracks, laptops, digital images, wall charts</i>
	Creating digital media objects which demonstrate creativity and imagination to present learning <i>Eg. Film, Digital Imagery</i>

Figure 4.3: Findings from Upstate in relation to processes for ‘being creative’

4.5.3 Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes

The findings in relation to the enablement of beneficial outcomes from engagement in Upstate Participatory Arts' productions were presented using a frame inspired by Cohen-Cruz's (2005) four key principles in the enactment of good practice within community-based arts (communal context, reciprocity, hyphenation and active culture), and findings are summarised within Figure 4.4.

The beneficial outcomes were articulated within the category of *communal context* (quality of collaboration) and these suggest that engagement in the Upstate' participatory arts process is a rewarding experience for participants and artists who expressed a sense of ownership, belonging, purpose and fulfilment, and wellbeing. The remaining three categories of reciprocity, hyphenation and active culture revealed the intentions and processes that underpinned the enablement of these beneficial outcomes. The processes of *reciprocity* (mutually nourishing relationships between artist and participant) were shown in Upstate to be fostered through an asset-based model, that invoked processes that included: Listening/ Having voice heard; Helping people express ideas; Enabling public visibility/ recognition; and Voicing *under told* stories. The *hyphenation* (agendas and intentions) showed Upstate to be very much focused on the artistic agenda/ quest rather than any issues-based agenda, but there was recognition of the transformative potential of the creative arts in enabling educational, community-building, therapeutic, personal and social benefits (whether intentional or not). There was further support within Upstate for the creation of art that would fill a void that other arenas and support mechanisms could not, through the development of a growth mind-set, thus, fostering 'can do' attitude/s among participants. Finally, in terms of *active culture*, there was evidence within Upstate of the valuing of 'little-c' ordinary (everyday creativity), of attempts to foster a spirit of inclusiveness and diversity, and of recognition of participants as creators and that participants frequently get more out of making art than viewing art.

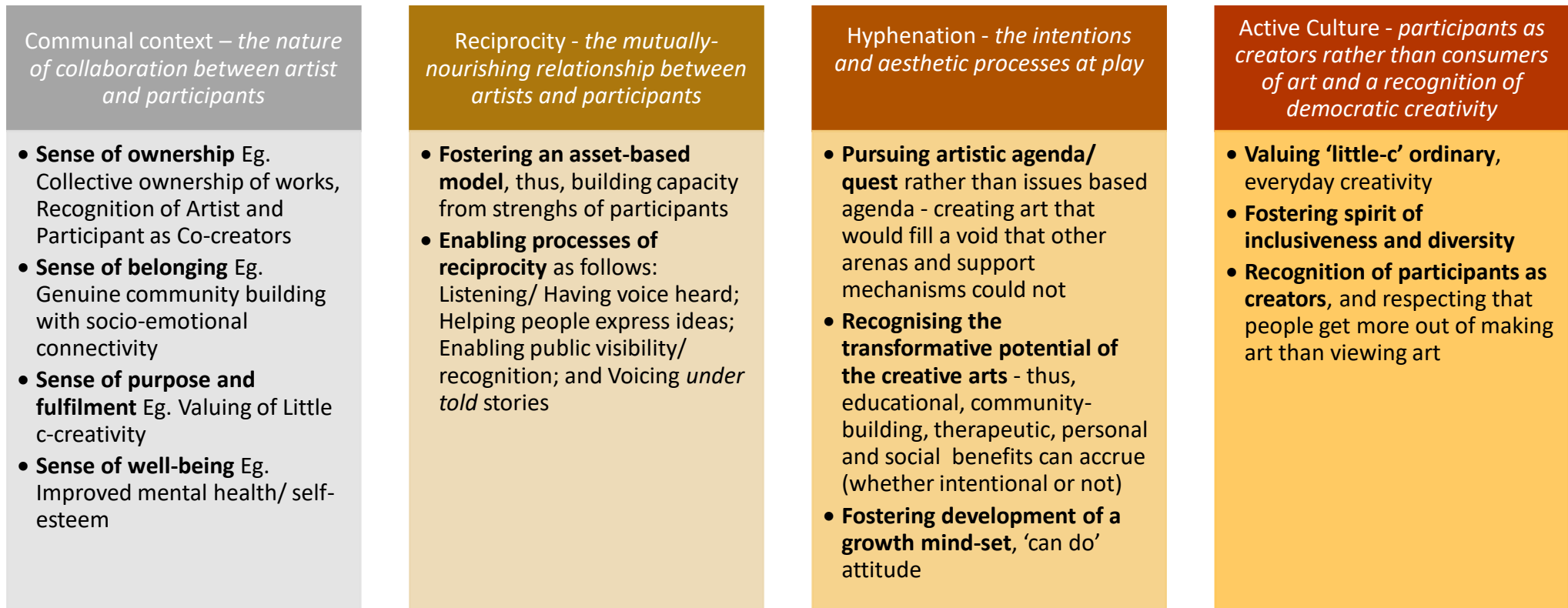


Figure 4.4: Summary of Findings from Upstate in relation to the Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes in Participatory Arts.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from a deep review of Upstate' Participatory Arts productions, and these affirm and extend the range of factors to be considered in fostering climates for creativity, as well as provided vignettes of processes that can be enacted to inspire creativity, and enable participants to think creatively and collaboratively produce creative outputs. The findings in relation to beneficial outcomes further provide a warrant for the consideration of the inclusion of Participatory Arts practice as a means of promoting creativity, community building and wellbeing in pure and applied settings, and further point to the usefulness of the frame of analysis used in this dimension of the study to evaluate the effectiveness or otherwise of the application of the Participatory Arts model in pure and applied settings.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS FOR FIGHTING WORDS

5.1 Introduction

This research set out to explore processes invoked within Participatory Arts initiatives that fostered creativity, as well as the beneficial outcomes that emerged. The reader should first read the following two journal publications on Fighting Words located in Appendix B and C, which emerged from the first phase of analysis of data from the Fighting Words case study:

1. '*Fighting Words as Revolutionary Pedagogy: A Freirean Reading of Young People's Experiences of a Socially-Engaged Creative Writing Centre*'.
2. 'The development of a model of creative space and its potential for transfer from non-formal to formal education'.

The findings presented herein are the outcomes from the second phase of analysis of data from the Fighting Words case study, and as such contribute directly to overall understanding of how creativity can be fostered through applied participatory arts integration in education. In this regard, the findings from Fighting Words are presented within three sections: Fostering climate/s for creativity, Process for 'being creative', and Enablement of beneficial outcomes. In relation to the first section, the characteristics of the psychosocial climate and role of partnerships in enabling creativity within Fighting Words are presented in a similar fashion to Upstate' findings.

However, a further dimension unique to Fighting Words was the role of the physical environment in fostering creativity and it is presented herein. In terms of the second section, the processes of 'being creative' evident within Fighting Words are described in terms of five factors – Imagining, Exploring options and alternatives, Implementing ideas and taking action, Learning creatively, and Stimulating creativity using digital technology. Finally, the third section reveals the enablement of beneficial outcomes

of Fighting Words framed using principles articulated by Cohen-Cruz (2005) - Communal context, Reciprocity, Hyphenation, and Active Culture. Figure 5.1 overleaf provides an illustration of the overall framework for presentation of findings related to creativity within Fighting Words.

The contributions from participants and extracts from sources presented in this chapter are coded as outlined in Table 5.1 below

Table 5.1 Extract Codes for Fighting Words Sources

Code	Source
WCS	Write Club Student
BPS	Book Project Student
BPT	Book Project Teacher (School teacher accompanying student to book project)
FWT	Fighting Words (Volunteer) Tutor
SP – A SP – B SP – C SP – D SP - E SP - F	School Principal A School Principal B School Principal C School Principal D School Principal E School Principal F
FWF	Fighting Words Founder
SECW	Student evaluation forms from one-off creative writing workshops
FWW	Fighting Words Website
CEO, NCCA	Chief Executive Officer of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
RFN	Researcher’s Field Notes
PDR	Public Domain Resources

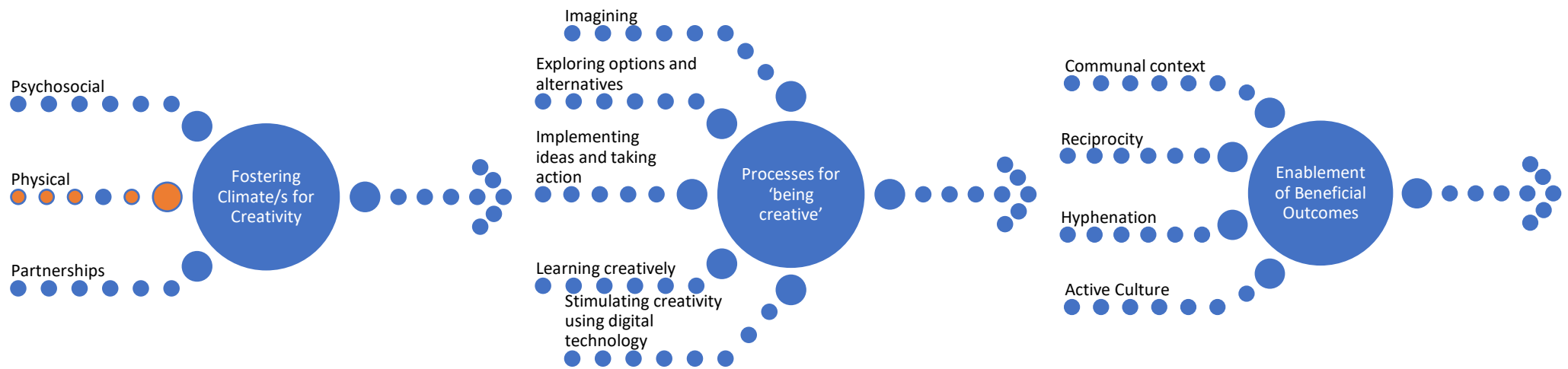


Figure 5.1: Framing of Findings within the *Applied* Participatory Arts Case Study of Fighting Words

5.2 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Psychosocial, Physical and Partnerships

This section presents the findings from an exploration of how Fighting Words fostered climate/s for creativity, and includes discussion of the psychosocial factors that contribute to climate for creativity, the characteristics of the physical environment that supports creativity, and the role of partnerships in enabling an overall climate for creativity.

5.2.1 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Psychosocial Dimensions of Creativity

The psychosocial conditions for fostering creativity and the resultant climatic characteristics were inspired and framed from principles outlined by Learning and Teaching Scotland (2001), Hamza and Griffith (2006) and from findings in the Upstate Study, and were used as a frame for analysis of the psychosocial factors in the case study of Fighting Words. As in previous chapter findings specifically relating to both of these literature sources are presented in **bold** font throughout this section. The findings indicate that Fighting Words is perceived as a **safe, supportive, trusting, non-threatening environment**. Most stakeholders refer to the safe and supportive atmosphere they experience in Fighting Words. Many of them describe it as **comfortable** and **relaxed**. For example, students describe it as a 'relaxing atmosphere' (SECW), a 'nice atmosphere for writing' (WCS) a 'helpful and relaxed environment' (BPS) and one tutor remarks that 'the physical space allows relaxing' (FWT). Some of the comments suggest that the atmosphere and ambiance that characterises Fighting Words contrasts with that found in a school setting. For example, one teacher comments that 'students would not be as relaxed in a school environment' (BPT) and a student states that 'it did not feel like school' (BPS).

Fighting Words tutors are the most frequently cited factor in the establishment of an atmosphere different from that experienced in school. The majority of teachers and

of tutors regard the supportive atmosphere and the interaction with tutors rather than teachers as key to the model. One tutor believes that the equal status between tutors and students is an important element, 'I think the environment where students work with adults who treat them as equals and introduce themselves by their first names is probably significant' (FWT). Another tutor thinks the contrasting environment enables students to collaborate more freely with tutors than they might with teachers:

I think the break from formal school where students are not in a top-down educational environment, working often one-on-one with people who are not necessarily teachers allows them to collaborate with tutors in a more relaxed fashion than they might with their normal teacher. (FWT)

Tutors see their role as primarily supportive and highlight interacting with young people/supporting them and building relationships as their primary function. One tutor comments:

In terms of the yearlong book project, I loved getting to know the students I worked with and developing relationships with them. (FWT)

Students identify 'help from volunteers' (BPS) and 'having mentors supporting me' (WCS) as particularly important to their engagement with the model. Some comments suggest that students perceive the partnership with tutors as a source of comfort and reassurance. For example, one student observed that it 'made creative writing less scary' (SECW) and another commented on 'not feeling intimidated' (SECW). One student appears to be pleased by the dynamics of the tutor/student relationship which she felt struck an appropriate balance for her needs:

I was intimidated at the start I was expecting [it] to be either the stuck up kind of writer you hear about or really laid back and not working much but he turned out to be just the right mix of enough like a teacher to get me to write all the time but enough like a normal person that I was able to talk to him about my ideas. (BPS)

Teachers note students are more respectful of other people's ideas and attribute this to the supportive atmosphere arising from tutor/student relations. These comments

along with one tutor's description of the approach she takes with students suggests that Fighting Words is a **high challenge, low threat** environment:

I enjoyed the challenge of gently easing them into it...encouraging them when necessary...and at times pushing them if I felt they needed it. I enjoyed the group dynamic...a sense of us all working as a team...students, volunteers, Fighting Words staff and all the other experts who came in to speak to us as the project developed.
(FWT)

In addition to the positive interaction with the tutors, students also identify peer support and the collective start as components of the model that they find stimulating and reassuring. The collective start appears to be a source of inspiration as it generates a climate of **high energy and low tension** where the risks are minimal and students become more animated and more inclined to contribute as the momentum grows. Doyle's remarks on the collaborative beginning suggests that it sets the appropriate tone.

I like the notion of the collective start. I do think it rids it of a lot of its terror and it's, you know it's, dare I say it, fun! (FWF – Doyle)

Students also report enjoying the 'fun aspect' (SECW) of Fighting Words, an aspect also highlighted by one of the principals who describes the approach taken by Fighting Words tutors as **fun and challenging**. She comments, 'they're doing it in a fun way and yet they're challenging the students' (SP – A). According to Seán Love, the notion of fun was a top priority for the founders of Fighting Words when they set up the initiative.

When we spoke about what we would do here, yes it was with a serious endeavour in mind - creative writing, but condition number one was it would have to be fun and it is! (PDR - Fighting Words, 2017a)

These combined characteristics appear to create an environment that is conducive to creativity and in which students **feel free to express themselves** as borne out by comments such as, 'Getting the confidence to speak out' (BPS), 'Having my say' (BPS), and 'Being able to share my ideas' (SECW).

As discussed so far, the relaxed and comfortable ambiance and the safe and supportive environment portrayed in the findings appear to be largely due to the good relations and positive interactions between tutors and students. Tutors appear to genuinely enjoy working with the students - 'the interaction with the kids is incredible' (PDR – Fighting Words, 2016) and appreciate their candour and enthusiasm - 'I just love their openness and their energy' (PDR – Fighting Words, 2016). The **open and non-judgemental** approach of the tutors and staff in Fighting Words is cited as a significant factor in supporting students throughout the creative process. One principal comments that the tutors' interest in students, their passion for the work and the strong interpersonal relationships that they cultivate is instrumental in an initiative of this kind.

I found talking to the staff from Fighting Words that they had first of all a real interest and it came across that they had a passion for what they were doing which I think is crucial. That's fantastic when you can get that! They liaised very well with the students. I think they facilitated the work really well; they were very receptive towards students and I think that's a really important part of something like this, that the adult is interested, concerned, will discuss 'Is that how...? Is that good or not?' but very much still letting the student try things out, and having a good dialogue about why they were doing something, but you know, that interpersonal relationship in something like this is crucial and certainly from what I could see of it there was a very good atmosphere when you went in to the room. (SP – B)

The non-judgmental ethos is clearly perceived by students, one of whom comments explicitly 'nobody judges you' (BPS). Other comments from students that indicate their recognition of a non-judgemental environment include 'I could have my say' (BPS) and 'I learnt that no idea is bad or stupid' (SECW). Students' acknowledgement that they were not afraid of asking for help as a result of engagement in Fighting Words is a further testimony to the non-judgmental environment. The majority (66%) of Creative Writing workshop students (N=92) agreed that they were not afraid of asking for help. The majority (73%) of Book Project student participants (N=42) also indicated they were not afraid of asking for help. All the student participants of the Write Club indicated they were not afraid to ask for help. Moreover, 80% of school

teachers (N=5) agreed that students were not afraid of asking for help, while 77% of tutors (N=13) agreed that students were not afraid of asking for help. There was disagreement on this from a minority of 17% of Creative writing workshop participants and 10% of Book Project participants, with the remainder indicating they didn't know.

Some tutors comment that the non-judgmental ethos of Fighting Words allows students the freedom to make mistakes, a notion they clearly do not associate with school. One tutor states: 'it offers a space alternative to school/the non-judgmental space allows students to make mistakes' (FWT), and another observes that it offers a freedom and a sense of possibility not found in schools:

I think Fighting Words works because it's not school, the students tend to relax when they realize they're there to write and to enjoy the writing and also that their work will be valued and respected, that they'll be treated as writers -- not as 'pupils.' When I worked on the book projects, I felt the fact that the teachers only rarely got involved in the work made all the difference -- the students were freed of school pressures, most of them soon realized that there was no bad and good when it came to their work, that their words were valuable in and of themselves. Letting them know that it didn't matter about punctuation, spelling etc, in the beginning was also crucial. It took time for most of them to feel comfortable writing. They needed to learn that their work wouldn't be judged in the same way as school work is judged. I think there's a lot of 'unlearning' that some of them need to do before they really begin to feel comfortable writing. There's a freedom in Fighting Words, a sense of possibility that, in my experience, doesn't exist in schools. (FWT)

Love also comments on the significance of engaging with students in an alternative space to school. He believes that bringing students to a space outside of school removes any notions of assessment and that simply being in different physical surroundings can send a powerful message:

We actually go out of our way to take the students out of the school environment into the centre here, which again is not in any way a criticism of the school, it's just to give the children a different place that they know it isn't school and therefore they know there isn't

an exam at the end and nobody's marking it and nobody's judging it and all the rest of it so... in the main we try to get them to come here because it's a different special place. (FWF – Love)

The absence of assessment is also reported by interviewees as being influential in the establishment of supportive relationships with students. Tutors who are not seen as teachers adopt a mentoring role and make a concerted effort to ensure that **extreme and early evaluations and judgements are avoided**. The constructive and advisory role assumed by tutors is decoupled from the judgmental role associated with assessment. Students work at their own pace and **self-evaluation is encouraged**. This practice appears to be welcomed by students one of whom observes 'it gives you a chance to think more about writing' (BPS). Students discuss their progress with tutors and look for feedback as the work develops. Students see the tutors' feedback as 'helpful' and 'constructive' and understand they are going through 'a process' and that there are 'no right or wrong answers' (BPS). This arrangement allows students experience a greater **freedom and flexibility**. One of the principals remarks that students are essentially free to create their own syllabus:

Children have **more freedom** in this project. I think it engages them because to a certain extent they're creating, you know, their own syllabus really, I suppose. (SP - C)

One of the tutors comments that while students experience freedom and fun there is also a sense of **structure and order**, a balance he believes to be necessary:

I love that young writers are being given the chance to come to a centre where they can thrive, and that's what Fighting Words offers them. It's a wonderful environment - hugely creative, and yet also serious and studious - this is a place where people can come to play but they also come because they are serious about writing and about creating. It has the right **balance of fun and focus. It's structured, it's managed, and yet it's also loose and free**. It has all the right things going on. (FWT)

The data also indicates that the approach used by Fighting Words helps to **create a climate that encourages thinking and exploring processes** and that sees students **free to voice opinions through the use of non-threatening, entertaining and enjoyable methods**. The collective start to the writing process, for example, is

considered to be instrumental in stimulating ideas and enabling students to begin exploring possible storylines and characters. Both Doyle and Love emphasise the importance of the group working together at the beginning of the writing process. They see this collaborative approach as an integral part of the creative process and have found it to be a highly effective strategy for enabling writing. Doyle remarks, 'It's the blank page that terrifies people more than anything else' (FWF – Doyle). Love agrees. He stresses that a collective start to the writing process allows students to overcome this obstacle as it provides a clear starting point and a strong focus. It also enables them, he argues, to take ownership of the work. In the below vignette, Love describes how the method works and why they find it to be effective:

Vignette - Overcoming the fear of the blank page

Any group that comes in, they work as a group and they work orally, they work verbally and their ideas get typed up on the screen by somebody who's working on the laptop. Generally it'll be a group of 25, standard class size working together so rather than trying to get them to start working individually from the beginning, when they come in, no matter what age they are, they work as a group and we use the screen, we don't hand them a blank page sheet of paper for the first half hour or an hour. And what we discovered, really what this did was, it opened the door for not just teenagers but older people as well, it **got them over the fear of the blank page** – they don't know how to start. When they would start orally with an idea... we'd give them scenarios that they could ad-lib and kind of act out and we'd type up these dialogues, these brief dialogues, it worked without fail, no matter who the students are. Once they see it become real, see it written up on the screen, they start to edit it, **they take ownership of it** and once that happens then we say, 'Now down to the table and individually take it where you want it to go'.

(FWF – Love)

The fictional scenario and lively banter that ensues from the collaborative opening creates a climate where students are **free to voice opinions through non-threatening, entertaining and enjoyable methods**. The strategy of projecting students' words onto the screen as they speak is a source of fascination and entertainment and appears to be enjoyed by all. In the below vignette Doyle describe how various participants respond to it and recalls his own excitement at discovering how well the method worked:

Vignette – ‘They loved seeing their words up on the screen’

We brought in the screen which works really, really well with primary school kids and we started using it with secondary school kids and it was a fabulous way of starting work. Everybody we’ve worked with including adults and including blind kids who can’t see what’s actually going up on the screen but they still love the event. So, it worked very well, that notion of them working together at first and then bringing them away from the screen and getting them to work on their own. It was great...it was...yeah... it was one of the things I remember at the time that really thrilled me because I felt, you know, now we know what we’re doing.

(FWF – Doyle)

At the beginning students are learning to work together and participate in a collaborative writing process. All suggestions are accepted and transcribed on the screen. As the story begins to develop it can move away from the initial scenario as new ideas emerge and students begin to take the story in a different direction. As these changes unfold it becomes clear that **alternative solutions are taken seriously**. Following the collective input at the beginning, students then have an opportunity to explore their individual writing styles and to use their imagination to complete the story however they wish. As Love puts it, ‘they jointly write the first part of the story and then they individually take the story on so that it goes in twenty-five new directions’ (FWF – Love). Inviting students to take the story and write their own ending actively and overtly encourages divergence. When the students return to the group and share their individual stories, the celebration and acknowledgment of each contribution is a prime example of how **divergence is accepted and rewarded** in Fighting Words. There is also a strong sense that **people are accepted as individuals of unconditional worth**. One tutor comments:

99% of what we do is reminding young people that they are worthwhile individuals and that anyone at all can invent a story.
(FWT)

In a similar vein, Doyle asserts:

We want the kid to come out the other end with a strength of feeling and a strength of purpose and a belief that what they do is valid and good and worthwhile. (FWF – Doyle)

The organisation is open to everyone and seeks to give all participants an opportunity to have their voice heard, a point highlighted by Sean Love whose comment is a clear indication that **personal differences are accepted**:

Our experience in here is that every student is creative. Every child since we've opened has engaged, no matter what their abilities. They all achieve and we try to publish everything that is written here... the quality of what's produced, the consistent, extraordinary high quality of writing by children from every background, from every ability would blow you away! (FWF – Love)

Inclusion is also plainly evident in Doyle's comment:

It's not that we want household names to come out of the place, which would be great but that's not what we're after. It's to get across the sense that this doesn't belong to a couple of hundred people or this doesn't belong to people who are formally educated, this belongs to everybody - the ability to put one word after another, after another, and create a fascinating sentence followed by another or to write a screenplay - it's open to everybody and not just to, you know, the usual few. (PDR – Fighting Words, 2017a)

The prospect of publication is a tremendous incentive and it sends a strong signal to students that Fighting Words have **high expectations** for their work. In the below vignette, Doyle provides an account of one particular student who responded to the challenge and demonstrated a willingness to explore how her ideas and her use of language could be improved. It also illustrates the freedom that participants enjoy and suggests that Fighting Words espouse a **positive attitude to novelty**:

Vignette – Example of student taking ownership of ideas and responsibility for the work

A personal high point for me, I was involved in the 'Book Project' a yearlong project with a Transition Year group – Lost in Transition – which was great really invigorating but within that year sitting with a young woman as she edited her story and I had ideas about the words she was using, the language she was using and she fought for every one of her own ideas she really fought in the best way possible; it wasn't a shut 'no' she wouldn't let go until she realised or understood or decided that she had something better and she made her own decisions and it was really, really so admirable, just plain brilliant to watch her at work because it was work and she was very, very proud and delighted with herself when she was

finished. I felt quite elated by the whole experience, I floated home really, I just thought it was fantastic to witness.

(FWF – Doyle)

The Fighting Words model encourages students to experiment in a diverse range of styles and genres of writing. Love provides examples of the types of creative writing students experience in the centre:

We've expanded significantly into other areas of the creative arts. It isn't simply straight forward fiction. We do all forms of creative writing - it includes poetry, song writing and musicals, filmmaking and film animation, writing for radio, writing for tv, writing for media and playwriting and performance - pretty much any form of creative writing, we do it. (FWF – Love)

Creative writing by its nature seeks to **encourage speculation and fantasy**. To complete a short story or any fictional narrative, students must draw on their imagination to create characters and stories and engage in a process that requires them to think imaginatively. The below selection of extracts from students' work suggests that they are doing just that.

Vignette - Selection of extracts from students' work as an indication of the model's capacity to encourage speculation and fantasy.

Student A

I'm writing a story it's about a girl and a group of friends and at the beginning it's innocent and nothing's really happening but then her father turns up and it turns out like she thought she was an orphan and it turns out that he's like the leader of this big mad organisation. So, what she has to do is runaway and her mother helps her with that but as the story goes on, you don't notice but, each part is told by someone else but they're all connected even though you don't immediately see it.

Student B

I'm writing a fantasy horror book about how demons invaded about a hundred years ago and it's about how scientists create half demons before demons took out all our technology.

Student C

It's about a man who got taken in by a group of assassins when he was a child because his house burnt down and he didn't have anywhere else to go. He never wanted to be doing it so when he's a bit older he decides he

wants to quit it. So, he takes the woman who's supposed to be his next victim and they try and escape.

Student D

My book has literally everything in it, there's fight scenes, there's a bit of comedy scenes, there's science fiction there's a bit of a romance literally you name it, it's a short story full of loads of things.

Student E

I'm writing kind of a novel and I do a lot of short stories as well. The novel is fantasy but the short stories I'd write would be kind of set in the real world and in Dublin.

(PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

The findings also indicate that students find Fighting Words to be a **humorous, energised, and collaborative experience**. They recognise the value of working with others and make comments such as 'teamwork is helpful' and 'when you're working together you learn off other people'. They also enjoy the experience of working with tutors and some comment specifically on the fact that tutors are not like teachers. Ironically, many of the tutors are in fact teachers, but clearly students don't see them as such in the Fighting Words model. For example, one student comments:

He's really helpful to us and he doesn't mind us all talking to each other a little bit. He wouldn't be like a teacher or anything, he's just very helpful and friendly. He has a good humour as well, friendly, easy to talk to, he's a very relaxed person. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

An additional source of humour is the less friendly Mr. and Mrs. McConkey the cantankerous editors who remain hidden from view in the back office. While they never make an appearance, stories can be passed in through an opening in the wall for Mr. or Mrs. McConkey to read. Exchanges between Mr. or Mrs. McConkey and the tutors add a touch of humour to proceedings and provide a further example of **the use of non-threatening, entertaining and enjoyable methods** to engage students' imagination. One of the tutor notes that the younger students enjoy hearing the editor's comments:

Mr. McConkey or Mrs. McConkey are the nominal editors of these stories created by the children in Fighting Words. For most of the kids it's just funny because they have to use their imaginations, imagining who this cranky person is that they can't see! (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

The below comments provide a snapshot of some of the younger students' responses to Mrs. McConkey:

- Mrs. McConkey is the editor of the story, she's really narky.
- She was getting really like mean because she didn't really think we could come up with a good story.
- She was being really narky saying that like sixth class aren't great and they can't write a story but then Sara was saying 'Aaaww I think they're really good at stories!'

(PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

In addition to the factors highlighted in the literature, a number of other features of a psychosocial environment conducive to creativity emerge from this study of Fighting Words. These include adequate time and space to build trust and to allow individuals progress at their own pace, building confidence and overcoming fears, valuing ordinary 'little c' creativity, valuing contributions, facilitation of voice, offering reassurance and encouragement, demystifying and simplifying the creative process.

The findings indicate that the creative process requires **adequate time and space to allow individuals progress at their own pace**. Comments from stakeholders suggest that Fighting Words projects benefit from a prolonged period of engagement. For example, one of the principals comments on the sense of development that evolved as a result of the timeframe involved:

The book launch and the completing of the book was very much a project that went on for a few months so there was really a sense of it developing over time. (SP – D)

A tutor also reflects on how students developed and progressed over the course of the project and suggests that building trust over the course of a year helped students grow in confidence and ability:

I loved meeting the girls and watching their stories grow and develop. I also loved getting to know them and building trust with them over the space of the year. It was amazing seeing them go from a group of shy girls tentatively writing down a few words on a page, to a group of writers confidently typing up their work on their laptops and asking me and each other for words/ideas to replace something they had without apology. (FWT)

Some of the student's observations indicate that they also experienced a sense of development over time.

- I liked watching the story develop. (BPS)
- I loved seeing how our stories got different and more constructed as the weeks passed. The stories would change countless times. (BPS)

Roddy Doyle also comments that regular engagement with a creative task develops students' tenacity and they begin to understand the discipline of the writing process. He also believes that seeing him and other professional writers facing the same challenges and working in the same way helps with **demystifying and simplifying the creative process**:

There's a group of kids come here on Wednesday afternoons and they just sit and write for three hours and I think that, that in itself is a good thing. They're prepared to sit and write and there's a lot of people would not be able to cope with sitting down in front of a screen or a piece of paper for three hours and in a way, they see me doing it or whoever's here on a Wednesday afternoon. Now I get up and I walk around and have a chat with them but they can see it's actually quite mundane in that way. (FWF – Doyle)

A comment from one student's perspective substantiates Doyle's view:

The slog of the weeks and weeks of just hours of writing, even though I knew it was essential. It was incredibly repetitive and when you had a block it was tedious. But it was also bonding

because you would talk about ideas and want to tell people at your table. (BPS)

This student's reference to 'a block' and 'bonding' and the image (captured in the previous comment) of Roddy Doyle, Booker Prize and BAFTA recipient, and the students sitting writing at the same desk conjures a liminal space/experience where **ambiguity and uncertainty are tolerated** and the individual is supported by others who are experiencing a similar situation. The collaborative start and the use of the screen to capture students' words are also regarded as valuable tools in **demystifying and simplifying the creative process** and **offering reassurance and encouragement** to students as they begin their story. Doyle and Love believe that using these approaches enables participants to overcome the fear of the blank page. In their experience, it has proven to be an effective tool in enabling participants to begin the writing process and also a helpful strategy for building confidence and rapport. In the below vignette Love describes the first time they used the approach with a group.

Vignette – The model developed through trial and error

It's probably one of those things that's blindingly obvious and you don't realise it until you do it. Roddy developed it with some of the volunteers through trial and error. We discovered it particularly worked with a group of young women, girls who had left school early for an assortment of reasons, from down in North Wall. They came in in our first few months, they came in as part of a community outreach project, they would've been all around 19/20 that kind of age and they were coming in to write a story. But of course, they all came in and said, 'I don't know how to write', 'I don't know how to write a story.' So, Roddy got a couple of them up to ad-lib a situation and once the words got typed up on the screen all of the inhibitions disappeared and they wrote an extraordinary story and they're still writing! The main thing was **they took ownership** of it. Once they created characters and they saw the words typed on the screen, **all of the inhibitions disappeared** and we just discovered then, this works we'll try it and it works all the time, no matter who you're working with.

(FWF – Love)

The above vignette also demonstrates the importance of **valuing ordinary 'little c' creativity** and actively persuading individuals that they can be creative. Projecting

the students' words onto the screen is a powerful way of **valuing contributions** and letting students see that what they have to say is valid. The message is not lost on students, one of whom comments, 'I loved the way my ideas were welcomed and appreciated'. Valuing contributions by accepting ideas and committing them to the screen not only encourages participation, it also supports the **facilitation of voice**. These sentiments are further evidenced in the below vignette which captures one of the principal's reaction when he first witnessed the model in action.

Vignette – Witnessing the model in action

Fighting Words was a chance to get the girls to write down their stories because they've such imaginations, they've such life experience! And to get it down, to show them how easy it is... I attended one of the first sessions and there was a role play and the facilitator just asked two girls to get up and just have a conversation about say, someone took your mobile phone and talk about it. So, they got up and they were chatting away, no problem, and as they were talking, I was amazed, there was somebody typing up the dialogue! So, by the end of those 40 seconds they could see that was a page of script nearly, from a novel. So, it was making them see that they have got something to say

(SP – D)

5.2.2 Fostering Climates for Creativity: Additional Psychosocial Factors

In the review of *Fighting Words*, three further factors that contribute to fostering climate/s for creativity were identified, namely, the ***need to stimulate and inspire participants from the outset***, recognition that participants need the ***freedom to be creative***, and finally to set the ***expectation that the creative process involves sustained investigation***.

5.2.2.1 Need for stimulation and inspiration from outset

The findings discussed so far clearly point to the importance of providing a strong stimulus that provokes students' interest from the outset. While it is fair to say that this could be perceived as a 'given' in any pedagogical model, analysis of the data

indicates that the ***need to stimulate and inspire participants from the outset*** is an especially important consideration in a climate that fosters creativity. An appropriately designed starting activity is explicitly identified as a critically important component of the Fighting Words model. The findings repeatedly indicate that the model's success relies on the simultaneous implementation of three specific methods: the use of scenario-based role play, whole group collaboration and digital technology. This multifaceted approach captivates students' interest and attention and immediately draws them into a creative process. The use of technology to document students' responses demonstrates the creative process in action and also sets the expectation of students as creators. Doyle and Love have repeatedly indicated that this method helps participants overcome the 'fear of the blank page' and, in their experience, it has 'worked without fail, no matter who the students are' (FWF – Love). Principals have also commented on the effectiveness of the collaborative start both as a means of captivating students' immediate interest and attention and as a means of encouraging their expressivity - 'it makes them see that they have got something to say' (SP - D).

5.2.2.2 Freedom to be creative

A further factor that has emerged from Fighting Words as contributory to fostering climate/s for creativity is the basic premise of giving participants the ***freedom to be creative***. Both the collaborative and individual phase of the model offer participants the freedom to create and complete a story from their own imagination. The story is of their choosing and participants have the opportunity to be as imaginative as they wish. Teachers note that this sense of freedom has a positive influence on students' creative capacity. Love believes that allowing students to write their own stories has a liberating effect on their creativity. He observes that students sometimes comment explicitly on the sense of freedom they experience from creating work that is not being assessed according to specific criteria:

Some of them will talk about **the freedom they've had to create something** that is entirely theirs and the absence of pressure, you know, that there's no... eh we don't tell them what they have to

write about and we're not judging it, and there's no exam. They have **freedom, a freedom to be creative**. (FWF – Love)

Students also appear to recognise that the freedom to be creative inspires their creativity. They express delight at their autonomy:

- We're allowed to do our own thing! (BPS)
- I love the freedom of creativity/being able to write what I want! (BPS)
- We started coming to write club because it's good to be able to do what you want to do and just write. We just sit down and write for three hours... it's basically whatever we feel like doing we just do and we can switch between things we're working on. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Students are encouraged to be creative from the beginning. Doyle notes that the collective start gives students the opportunity to brainstorm and experience a free flow of ideas. He maintains that the use of the screen to record and edit responses helps students realise that 'mistakes' can be rectified later and that initial thoughts can be developed or abandoned and replaced with better ones. Doyle believes that this process of freewriting and editing is key to supporting individuals' creativity:

We just get them to write as quickly as possible and worry about the consequences when they can, or react in some ways to what they've written, rather than worry... the first sentence you write in my own experience is very rarely the first sentence of the finished piece. I usually I delete it, usually it's a bit vague, usually it's not very good so you just write it and later on when you see that, you might see that the third sentence is a much better one to start with but if you don't write the sentences you can't do the judging... so you have to free them up to begin with, you know (FWF – Doyle)

Doyle argues that 'false starts' are an inevitable experience for every writer, and therefore advises that it is important that students' efforts are recognised and encouraged from the beginning.

I think the work that goes into it... even failure has to be recognised as success. In a way, you know, false starts are every writers experience... (FWF – Doyle)

5.2.2.3 Expectation that creative process involves sustained investigation

The analysis of data from Fighting Words also indicates that the yearlong book projects set the ***expectation that a creative process involves sustained investigation***. Schools involved in the book project sign up to a yearling process which requires students to attend Fighting Words on a weekly basis. This initial agreement sets the ***expectation that a creative process involves sustained investigation*** and as the year progresses, the reality of this expectancy becomes increasingly apparent to students. Doyle emphasises the importance of regular engagement with the creative process and sees the weekly writing workshops as a vital learning experience for students both in terms of advancing their writing skills and their personal development. One student's account of the process suggests that she learned to recognise the value of talking, thinking and writing each week and that she grew to appreciate that sustaining this discipline over an extended period of time brought success:

We published a book project in the Fighting Words centre and it's called 'Lost in Transition'. There's about 24 people, we all have a short story in it. I was a bit unsure because I find English hard like to get through it and to write that much. You'd come in every Thursday, sit down with your volunteers and kind of think of ideas and just, even if you write like a page of things you feel like you've accomplished something, you can kind of take it at your own pace. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Another student comments on the satisfaction she experienced from engaging in a sustained investigation and seeing her work grow and develop:

The most important thing I learned is that working on a story for a long time, editing, drafting and re-drafting is hard work but it can be enjoyable as well and it's nice to see your work transform and improve. (BPS)

Tutors remark that engaging with the book project develops students' discipline and tolerance and enables them to recognise that successful outcomes emerge as a result of continuous engagement with a process over an extended period of time. One tutor believes that the lengthy creative process helped participants to become more

disciplined and more patient and understanding as they learn to recognise that 'things take time' and that working collaboratively with others takes time and teamwork. In the below vignette the tutor reflects on aspects of the project that allowed this learning to occur.

Vignette – Learning that a creative process takes time

Fighting Words has created a room/space for students where they can be creative without being judged. They learned that they can write an entire story on their own, and I think that it is very important for them to know that they are able to start and finish a project. They learn to be disciplined, that things are not done within a day or a week. They learn that sometimes things or results take time. Some students may discover that they are not only good writers but that they also enjoy expressing themselves creatively. Some of them may keep writing, others may try out different paths and start painting or photography. But no matter which path they choose, they have written one story and it is published, and no one can take that away from them. Also beneficial is the collaboration to find the right title and the book cover. Here again, they learn that it takes time to get to the result. That it takes also more than one person and that they have to listen to other people's ideas or suggestions. The class I was involved with also learned that once a decision is made, it is often a final decision. So, they learned that their decisions have consequences. (When the class saw the book cover, two weeks after having agreed on it, some girls expressed suddenly their dislike, and the situation got a little tumultuous.)

(FWT)

Some of the students' comments indicate that they also became aware that a great deal of time, effort and commitment is required to see a creative process through to completion.

- It is not very easy to write a book. It takes plenty of time and a lot of effort. (BPS)
- It took dedication and work. Any school plan on Thursday was cancelled, we had to be at Fighting Words with no excuses. This wasn't a simple overnight project. This took months and months of hard work, motivation and dedication. I was not aware of how much work and dedication was needed to complete the project and this came to shock to all of us as we

didn't realise how much the result at the end was an accomplishment. (BPS)

5.2.3 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Physical Environment

In addition to the psychosocial factors described above, the findings reveal that the physical environment is also considered by stakeholders to be a contributory factor in the establishment of an atmosphere that is conducive to creativity. The premises of Fighting Words with its open, bright spaces and the minimal use of physical barriers are seen as an embodiment of the principles that animate the creative writing centre. Various stakeholders allude to the impact of the physical space and its role in fostering creativity. The below vignette taken from field notes compiled by the researcher during a site visit to the Fighting Words premises gives the reader a sense of the physical space and how it is used.

Vignette: The purpose-built space and its use

The premises of Fighting Words are located in Dublin inner city an area often associated with economic disadvantage. The building is a purpose-built space and is an integral part of the approach to creative writing taken by Fighting Words. The main room is a large brightly lit space with flexible seating and walls lined with bookcases. Adjacent to the main room there is another large room with colourful tables and chairs which is separated from the main room by a heavy colourful curtain rather than by a door. In the main room the initial portion of the stories written by the students is developed collectively. To aid the process a projector is used to show the text which is projected onto a large screen and is typewritten by one of the volunteers while it is being developed through the collective contributions of the students. Participants move to the adjacent room to write the continuation of the story individually. In the same room the creative efforts of some of the students are read either by the participants themselves or by the Fighting Words volunteers at the end of each session.

(RFN)

One student also commented on the presence of books as a welcome addition:

We were surrounded by book that we could take a lend of. As we took our break we could chat or flick through other books and that was great. (BPS)

A comment from another student highlights the appeal of the outdoor space:

It was really nice and easy going to work together, the atmosphere was calm and nothing was forced. We could go outside for breaks and the little garden had many features (benches, paintings, sculptures) which helped to really take a mental break and focus our minds/creativity on something else. (BPS)

Interestingly many of the stakeholders' comments do not separate the physical from the psychosocial environment, which potentially suggests that they see a synergy between the two dimensions. For example, a student comments that 'the space is light and friendly' (BPS) and a tutor comments that what she most likes about Fighting Words is 'the enthusiasm of everyone involved and the bright uplifting space' (FWT), and another tutor comments 'it's a very welcoming place, a very welcoming experience' (PDR – Fighting Words, 2016). Similarly, Sara Bennett, Manager of Fighting Words, comments:

the space itself is bright and cheerful and really promotes creativity and the atmosphere that we create with the volunteers is certainly a vital component of that (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Roddy Doyle speaks of the space in physical and symbolic terms. According to him the brightness of the space is significant both in terms of the location of the property in a disadvantaged area and its timely arrival during the gloomy days of a deflated economy:

It's a big bright room, in an area that needs a big bright room and in a climate that needs a big bright room. (PDR – Fighting Words, 2017a)

Orla Lehane, Fighting Words Education Co-ordinator, also refers to 'a big bright space' and suggests there is something 'magical' about the building:

The building itself is quite magical and I think the space is an important part of what we do. As you come in, we have a big glass front and on our front window we actually have a projector set up that plays reels of clips and little videos that have been put together of some of the stories that have been written. We're very lucky to have a magic door at Fighting Words and the magic door is a bookcase that opens up, so when the kids are ready to go through, they come up with a couple of magic words and the main part of the centre is a big bright space. There's book shelves along

every wall. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

The impact of the physical space is also noted by one of the principals who recalls his first impressions of the premises and his experience of the magic door:

The setting is superb! It's a wonderful place to go down and visit. I remember being blown away the first day going into that first reception space, and then walking through the wall of books into the other nice bright space! (SP - D)

The notion of entering a 'nice bright space' through a 'wall of books' has metaphorical connotations which could be interpreted to represent a broadening of perspective through literature, creative writing and other literary endeavours. The physical space also has a further symbolic connotation which is recurrently and consistently brought up by all interviewees. The data suggests that it represents an '*out-of-school space*' and an '*out-of-school experience*'. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) comments that the '*out-of-school*' dimension is a key constituent of *Fighting Words* and emphasises that the physical space is also a vehicle for a different type of experience for the students.

A key feature of the *Fighting Words* is that the students are taken out of the institutional setting of the school or at least the institutional setting of the school is modified for that creative engagement... in other words... we come out of the institution that regulates our space, our time, our dress, our lives. We're taken out of that into a space that's much freer, quite different. We interact with different kinds of adults, they're not teachers who tend to be a particular class type, so they interact with different people. (CEO, NCCA)

Principals also note the significance of interacting with adults other than teachers. One principal thinks it is important that students hear ideas from a different perspective, even if the message is the same:

The fact that they have outside people involved because sometimes while a teacher might be saying exactly the same thing in the classroom, when they're in a different venue, when they're learning from maybe a retired teacher or it's a student or it's

whatever, they're getting a different perspective. I think that's important for them to encounter other adults do you know who probably as I said are giving the same message but it's, it's coming from someone new which is important. (SP – D)

Another principal also feels it is important that students encounter adults other than teachers and suggests that often what they hear from someone else can have more of an impact. This principal also notes that when students are out of the school environment, they tend to behave differently than they would within the school environment:

Outside of the school they're a little bit more open and they remember I think more of what's said from outside people; teachers, they see us all day, every day we say the same thing: 'that's important', 'this is important'... em ...and I think as well when they're down there what my understanding is they were so eager to get up and talk and vocalise and one girl, they were saying, never stopped talking you know this sort of thing just talk, talk, talk, talk, talk whereas we're always saying 'Be quiet! Settle down!' So, I think it's a different type of dynamic which works well when they're outside school because with certain subjects you can't have that but when they went and did their workshop, they were so willing to get up and verbalise. (SP – D)

Similarly, another principal comments that the out of school experience offers a memorable experience precisely because it offers an alternative from what is normally done in schools.

There's always a different buzz around something external you know. If you go out it's obviously creating a different dynamic, if you're meeting new people, it's different you know like. I suppose like what days do we remember from school? It's not the days we sat doing maths or something for the thousandth time but you remember trips you made... 'oh yeah we went, do ye remember we did that?' 'oh yeah do you remember we went there?' These are the things that are remembered whereas if it's just sort of part of that great mélange of a... of school, school work I don't think that's as memorable as something that's seen as different. (SP - E)

Another principal agrees that moving outside of the school can have a significant influence on the learning process:

In some ways part of the learning process is moving outside of the classroom and going to a different venue. (SP - D)

In the case of *Fighting Words*, the 'out of school experience' is also an educational experience, but education becomes dissociated from schooling. One principal remarks that the student rather than the syllabus becomes the centre of the educational experience.

I suppose to give the children an opportunity to engage with language outside of the classroom and to open it outside of the syllabus itself to give them an opportunity to express creatively something that reflects their own experience of life and that is not necessarily dictated by the curriculum and syllabus laid down by the department, like I know a lot of people choose creative writing you know within the syllabus but this is something that gives total freedom to the student so it's more student directed. (SP – C)

The 'out of school experience' also appears to be a space with less defined boundaries, both physical and metaphorical. The findings suggest that there are less boundaries between mentors and students, less specific limitations on what can or cannot be done, and less formal types of interactions between tutors and students. These occurrences are attributed to the psychosocial factors already outlined but also to the configuration of the space and in particular to the flexible seating arrangements. The CEO of the NCCA notes that the space does not resemble a classroom – 'There are no desks... the organisation of the space is different' (CEO, NCCA). Lehane confirms this difference and explains how it looks:

they sit on little bean bag cushions in front of a projection screen and that's where they write the first part of their story. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

One of the tutors also remarks that being out of the classroom environment has a liberating effect on students. She highlights the importance of humour and laughter as a means of connecting with the students and releasing ideas:

We're very lucky, in *Fighting Words* when we are given a group of kids to work with, they're already excited and they're already out of their class environment and generally that makes it really easy to work with them and also, we're not their teacher. It's easy for

us, we're almost a clown like guy standing up there having a laugh with them and helping them with their ideas and we get a great reaction because we can write a story and the character in it can let a big fart and they don't do that in school, so we already have them giggling and laughing. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Another tutor also rates the out of school experience as significant and suggests the purpose-built space, the student-centred approach and the presence of writers and other creative practitioners are key to the model's success:

I think what makes it appeal to students is that it is independent of their school. It's like a cool drop-in centre. It's for students. It's for them. I think a big part of the appeal is a purpose-built space where they meet writers and creative people who they find interesting, and do work they find interesting. I think a key part of its success is that it exists outside of the school environment and is seen as a separate entity - that is part of the credibility. (FWT)

The CEO of the NCCA also views these aspects of Fighting Words as important and worthwhile experiences for students, particularly those who struggle with the formal school environment:

Fighting Words almost defines itself by being slightly anti-institutional and that's a good thing, It's a good thing for kids to be in a space, to come out of a very regulated school space into a different one, whether it's physically coming out to the centre or metaphorically being taken out of that space, and that's a good thing and I think it's a good thing for the educational system, it's a good thing for young people... You could argue that one of the successes of Fighting Words is that it gets students who find dealing with the formal school environment very difficult, it gets something out of them, because they're taken out of the school environment. (CEO, NCCA)

5.2.4 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity: Partnerships

The notion of partnership is central to Fighting Words activities. Fighting Words works in partnership with primary and post-primary schools throughout Ireland. Approximately 10,000 participants avail of Fighting Words services annually.

Approximately 5,000 students a year take part in the primary school Creative Writing workshops and approximately 2,500 students a year take part in the secondary school Creative Writing workshops. Over 1,500 students outside Dublin participate in once-off primary and secondary school Creative Writing workshops via the cinemobile. The cinemobile, an articulated truck containing a one hundred-seater cinema, offers a mobile venue to replicate the Creative Writing workshops in other locations around Ireland. In recent year, the organisation has expanded its services further with the opening of additional centres around the country. They have built relationships with an extensive network of schools and they continue to expand their practice each year with the introduction of new programmes, the delivery of summer camp activities and through participation in a variety of writing, literature and book festivals.

During school summer holidays Fighting Words runs eight-week long camps for three age groups (6-9 year olds, 10-13 year olds and 14-17 year olds). These camps are not connected to school activities and focus on developing young people's ability for writing fiction, song-writing, graphic fiction, film and script-writing, film-making, poetry and playwriting. Other programmes are also on offer during summer weekends for those who want to further enhance their creative writing. The summer camps are attended by approximately 750 young people every summer. Fighting Words also offers Creative Writing workshops for children and adults with special needs. Approximately 15 groups (300 participants) from fields of intellectual disability, mental health, elderly care and support and children's hospital support avail of its services each year.

The success and the survival of the organisation is completely reliant on the goodwill of tutors who are recruited from the local community on an entirely voluntary basis. The tutors come from all walks of life and represent the very deep connection between Fighting Words and the local community. The volunteers include professional writers - novelists, screen-writers, journalists, poets - aspiring writers, student teachers, retired teachers and many more people who are keen to be involved in creative work. As has been documented throughout the findings, the

Fighting Words tutors are instrumental to the operation of the Creative Writing model. Their contribution is acknowledged by all stakeholders as integral to the model's implementation. One of the principals likens them to foot soldiers and highlights how indispensable they are to the organisation:

I met the volunteers and I actually think it's the foot soldiers, it's those volunteers who are committed, committed to giving up an afternoon or some time of their own lives and coming in and helping those girls in our school and other schools... it's the volunteers, without the foot soldiers you couldn't, you couldn't run Fighting Words, the model they're using now, and those volunteers deserve a medal, an absolute medal. (SP - A)

In addition to the philanthropy of the tutors, Fighting Words also enjoys a strong partnership with the arts community. They partner with a number of local and national arts institutions in the joint delivery of a range of creative arts programme. Love explains that partnering with these organisations has opened doors into other creative arts media entities and enabled Fighting Words to provide support in a wide range of genres:

We have loads of creative collaborations with other arts organisations who bring their expertise and their people to what we do totally pro bono. We have partnerships with the Abbey, The Irish Times, The National Gallery, The Print Museum, the Science Gallery, Brown Bag Film Animation to name but a few... the idea being that other organisations with great expertise bring it to us and share it for the advantage of the children to be able to write in that genre. (FWF – Love)

Fighting Words also enjoys close contact with a large number of internationally acclaimed Irish authors who have contributed to Fighting Words as guest editors of student anthologies. The writers work with the students, read their work and write a foreword to the publication. Some of the well-known writers associated with Fighting Words include among others: John Banville, recipient of the 2005 Booker Prize for Fiction; Anne Enright, recipient of the 2007 Booker Prize for Fiction, Hugo Hamilton, Paul Howard, Maeve Binchy, Patricia Scanlan, Sheila O'Flanagan, Kevin Barry, Colum McCann, Richard Ford, Paul Murray, Lorrie Moore, Dave Eggers and Nick Hornby.

Love comments on the generosity of the arts community and their willingness to become involved.

The reaction of the arts community has been very generous. We've asked professional writers and filmmakers and musicians and others to get involved and they all have. Nobody says no. (PDR - *Fighting Words*, 2017a)

Anne Enright recalls being asked to support one of the projects and explains why she agreed to become involved:

I think Roddy asked me, we were somewhere, some town and he was telling me about *Fighting Words* and said would I come in. Hugo Hamilton had done an introduction to their first anthology and he asked me to do an introduction to this anthology. So, you never say no to Roddy really because he's so committed to *Fighting Words*. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

5.3 Processes for 'Being Creative'

As a creative writing centre, *Fighting Words* primary remit is to provide young people of all ages with an outlet for creative expression. *Fighting Words* was established in direct response to what its founders perceived as a lack of opportunity for creative expression for young people in formal education provision. This section presents the findings in relation to processes that enabled *Fighting Words* participants to 'be creative'.

5.3.1 Imagining

Imagination and creative expression are the central focus of *Fighting Words* activities. *Fighting Words*' primary focus is on enabling participants to discover and develop their voice through a variety of creative writing forms. *Fighting Words*' mission statement openly declares the organisation's intention to give young people the opportunity to develop their imagination:

Our aim is to help children and young people, and adults who did not have this opportunity as children, to discover and harness the

power of their own imaginations and creative writing skills. (FWW
- Fighting Words, 2019)

John Banville, guest editor of one of the students' anthologies, refers to the importance of imagination and sees encouraging young people's imagination as the chief purpose of Fighting Words:

Essentially the aim is to encourage young people in creative writing. I don't think the aim is to produce, you know, hundreds and hundreds of writers, I mean it's to get young people, people in their teens mostly to exercise their imaginations and realise the importance of imagination which is one of the great human faculties. (PDR - Irish Times, 2012)

The Fighting Words model is designed to help students generate and develop ideas and shape them into an imaginative piece of writing. The methods and approaches devised by Fighting Words support the creative process. Starting with a scenario-based role play, participants are given the opportunity to develop dialogue, create characters and establish a setting, all of which gives participants the inspiration and confidence to start writing immediately. The comments below from students suggest that the collaborative brainstorming and group discussion helps to spark their imagination and encourage their expressivity:

- I learned that sharing your ideas with a small group can help expand or improve an idea. (SECW)
- It's the way you're not really on your own, everyone's doing it together. (SECW)
- I liked hearing other people's ideas and sharing mine. (BPS)

The methodology utilised by *Fighting Words* is informed by 'the Socratic method' and requires tutors to engage in an open and democratic dialogue with students. The creative writing process is designed as a collaborative and democratic activity that encourages active participation. An initial story is developed collectively by participants in response to a scenario-based role play. Two students are invited to role-play the given situation to see what conversation might emerge from an encounter between the two individuals specified in the scenario. As the students

carry out the role play, one of the tutors types the conversation and the words are projected onto a screen in real time. After a few moments, the tutor leading the workshop stops the role play and the group read and edit the words on the screen until they are happy it reflects the dialogue they witnessed. The group then proceeds to collaboratively create a story around the agreed dialogue. The lead tutor facilitates the collaboration through questioning while another tutor types the participants' responses. All students' ideas appear on the screen and the story develops gradually through a democratic editorial process led by the tutor. This phase of the model offers students opportunities for working collaboratively with their peers. One of the tutors describes a specific workshop in action:

We start off with a bit of role-playing. So, we get two people up and we build a situation together and we have a few set ones that we use but the group today like they were really on it and they thought up their own scenario. So, it was about a guy who wins 60,000,000 on the lottery. So, you start off with a situation like that, you get them to get a few bits of dialogue and that just gets rid of the blank screen. We use a computer at the back of the room, they talk and someone types so the words appear on the screen as they go and we chop and change until we get the bones of a story. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

The tutors' comments suggest that this method is a powerful means of engaging students' imaginations and helping them to generate ideas. One of the tutors remarks that 'It's lovely to see the kids open up their imaginations' and another observes 'They come up with all sorts of wacky ideas and it's great to facilitate that' (PDR – *Fighting Words*, 2016). Another tutor is struck by the way students engage with the process and how ideas gradually start to snowball:

Once they start getting these ideas, you see them shouting out ideas or whispering and it's amazing how that creative process works, where you can just start from one idea and it just blossoms into this fantastic, really great, very charming short story. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Roddy Doyle also appears to be enthused by the inventiveness of students' ideas and hopeful that thinking processes of this variety will continue:

Watching them come up with these mad, mad ideas. I mean what you want to do is to try and make sure that the mad ideas keep coming (PDR – Fighting Words, 2015a).

School teachers also remark that the method develops creativity and imaginative skills and students' perceptions of the development of their imagination are also positive, as illustrated in excerpts below:

- I trust my imagination. (BPS)
- I understand how a story is planned and constructed. (BPS)
- I learned how to write a story. (BPS)
- I learned to be more creative. (BPS)

Evidence of how students express feelings, thoughts and ideas through creative writing can be found in the excerpts from students' work in the following vignette.

Vignette – Excerpts from students' work as an illustration of how students can express feelings, thoughts and ideas through creative writing.

My name is Sadhbh and this is my story 'Fragmented'...

For a long, long time I've been in pieces, she stands on the busy loud street, thoughts emotions flying past her she gone to browse to distract herself but the thoughts keep bursting through. She has a decision to make, a life altering one. Here world is turned upside down she's screaming inside...

My name is Gareth and this is my story, 'Last Chance Saloon'...

He finally reached the small town of Chance later that afternoon, the village seemed deserted, lifeless. The man walked up the main street paranoid that he was being watched. Under his poncho he tightly gripped his gun his hand trembling with anticipation. He walked steadily and slowly up to the saloon never once letting his guard down...

My name is Aideen and this is my story, 'Pretty Damn Wonderful'...

The last thing I can remember is boarding the plane while my head was spinning with the chaos, I could barely keep in. Then the plane began to shake and splutter a surge of panic and sound erupted and fire blazed from every direction, there was smoke everywhere. I couldn't breathe and soon enough the heat and smoke and noise rose so much that I couldn't bear anymore and then there was nothing. I lay there barely conscious with no idea....

My name is Peter and I'm 12 years old and today at Fighting Words we did a story about a Chinchilla called 'Joey' and his friend Father O'Flaherty and they have a crazed mother called Teresa and one night they go to Vegas to gamble and they're playing poker and they...eh...win this jackpot but all through the night their mother Teresa was like following them and spying on them...

My name is Darragh, this is the ending to my story; Joey and Father O'Flaherty jumped around with joy... 'I will name him Joey Junior', said Joey. They didn't notice the card dealer pulling off a wig to reveal a green spikey head it was Joey's mother-in-law before she stole the baby she screamed, 'You don't deserve this baby'. She took it and ran off. Joey screamed, 'Oy, my baby'. Joey started yelling Spanish swear words and kicking the slot machines. Father O'Flaherty picked up Joey and...

(PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

The findings indicate that students **take inspiration from the courage and imagination of others** and that they benefit from being surrounded by fellow writers. One tutor cites 'meeting likeminded people for those who are interested in writing' (FWT) as one of the advantages of Fighting Words. Students' comments also suggest that they are inspired by others. One remarks 'I learned to respect other people's imagination' (BPS) and another refers to 'being around people who enjoy writing' (WCS) as advantageous. The majority of teachers mentioned working with established writers as particularly beneficial and a small number of students also mention that the opportunity to interact with writers was a bonus. **The presence of well-known writers, and particularly the founder Roddy Doyle, appears to be a considerable source of inspiration for some.** One student has fond memories of himself and Roddy sitting side by side at the table, each working on their own story. He describes how Roddy would stop occasionally to read his work and give him advice:

I'm Conor I'm sixteen and I go to St. Paul's up in Raheny. At the beginning it was just me and Roddy at a table, me with a little notebook and Roddy on his laptop and occasionally half way through the day Roddy would read what I'd written and give me a bit of constructive criticism, tell me where I was doing well, where

I was doing wrong. At the start I did very little description but now I've progressed and I do just enough just not to bore the reader but to give them enough to give them a sense of what they're reading. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Another student is a fan of Roddy Doyle's work and considers his own writing to be similar to Doyle's:

I'm from Bulgaria and I'm seventeen years old. We moved to Ireland when I was seven and a half. To be honest I hadn't read anything by Roddy Doyle; now I do know his stuff and I actually really like it because his stuff is kind of like mine because I like writing lots of dialogue. His books are just like you grab them, you read them; you can't stop reading them! (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

5.3.2 Exploring Options and Alternatives

The findings indicate that the Fighting Words model encourages and enables students to explore options and alternatives and reflect on possible courses of action. As part of the creative writing process students learn to **try out different approaches when working on a task and evaluate what works best**. During the collaborative story writing phase students hear **different viewpoints and perspectives and consider them carefully**. They decide which ideas to include and which to omit. They create characters, give them names, suggest what their greatest ambition might be and what they are most afraid of in life. They play around with ideas, they edit the dialogue, they move sentences around, they discard the opening line and try another one. Roddy Doyle describes the thinking, drafting and editing processes that are at work as students work together to develop the story as it emerges on the screen.

Their suggestions – words, sentences, character names, place names, snatches of dialogue – are typed on to the screen. It's a simple idea but they often react as if it's the first time they've seen words typed on to a screen. They make suggestions, delete words and sentences, change character names and locations. It isn't an exam and they're not in a race against time. They see how they can write up and down the page and how changing your mind is often a very good idea. (PDR – Doyle, 2019)

Students' comments indicate that the collaborative process enabled them to consider a range of options and alternatives and extend their thinking:

- I learned that it's good to brainstorm with other people and get ideas from lots of different people. (SECW)
- I learned to accept the creativity of others (BPS)
- Try different ideas, not just one (SECW)
- Don't be afraid to experiment (BPS)

The majority of student participants (81%) from the Book Project (N=42), the majority (90%) of Write Club students (N=11) and the majority (67%) of students from the Creative Writing workshops (N=92) indicated that they were more able to think of alternatives as a result of engagement in Fighting Words initiatives. Similarly, all the school teachers (N=5) and the majority (77%) of volunteer tutors (N=13) agreed that students were more able to think of an alternative, when something did not work, as a result of their engagement with Fighting Words. The difference in findings between the Book Project and Write Club students compared to Creative Writing workshop students suggests that students in sustained engagement with Fighting Words benefit more in terms of developing creative skills than those attending a once-off workshop.

During the individual phase of the process, students **imagine different scenarios and predict different outcomes** in the process of developing and completing their own story. They experiment with ideas and discuss possible courses of action with their tutor. According to tutors, this process enables them to recognise that 'mistakes' are a normal part of the process. For example, one tutor notes:

Workshops in the centre take the students out of their normal school routine and teach them to think in a more open and creative way. It removes them from the strict guidelines they are taught about 'how' to write a school essay. It encourages them to write what they want in the manner that they want, and teaches them that mistakes are allowed. (FWT)

The CEO of the NCCA considers this aspect of Fighting Words to be of particular relevance to current curricular developments in Ireland. She observes that it is important that students recognise that the learning process is about making mistakes and learning from them:

In the old Junior Certificate, the space for the creative process was squeezed out in the desire to cover content and to get things right. So even in the Project Maths evaluation, we have had researchers who are doing the evaluation come back with data from the students where the student realises 'I didn't know it was OK to make a mistake' like 'I didn't know that learning, that making a mistake and getting it wrong was part of the learning' and in Junior Cycle we're really trying to move, to build on that and move towards teaching students that **the learning process is about making mistakes and about discovering and getting things wrong and reworking them** and I think that part of the issue that Fighting Words connects with the idea of the voice of the student and giving, allowing that voice to be heard it also deals with that issue of creativity which is also one of the underpinning skills of the new Junior Cycle. (CEO, NCCA)

Similarly, one of the principals comments on the need for students to be able to 'fail' without consequences and to have the confidence and the opportunity to partake in creative projects:

It really is as much about skills and giving them the confidence to try something and one of the things which I suppose in terms of the arts and the educational system as it is, is that you need students to be able to fail at things but without it having huge consequences or to be seen to have huge consequences. (SP – B)

Therefore, it can be argued that the Fighting Words initiatives facilitate opportunities for participants to think for themselves through processes of developing and creating their own works, and learning through trial and error. Interestingly, the majority of the cohort of student participants (65%) from the Creative Writing workshop (N=92) felt that Fighting Words had enabled them **to think for themselves**. Similarly, the majority of student participants (81%) from the Book Project (N=42) accepted that Fighting Words enabled them to think for themselves. The majority (82%) of Write Club students (N=11) also indicated agreement that the centre enabled them to think for themselves. All of the school teachers (N=5) also felt that Fighting Words enabled

students to think for themselves. The majority (85%) of volunteer tutors (N=13) indicated broad agreement that students had been enabled to think for themselves. It is interesting to note that a further 10% of Creative writing workshop students indicated disagreement that engagement in the Fighting Words initiative had enabled them to think for themselves, and a further 25% of students in the Creative Writing workshop, 19% in Book Project, and 18% of those in the Write Club indicated that they didn't know if their ability to think for themselves had been improved..

5.3.3 Implementing Ideas and Taking Action

The findings indicate that the Fighting Words model gives students the opportunity to **test out ideas** and **evaluate different ideas and actions**. The collective start supports the generation of ideas in a collaborative context, and the individual development and completion of the story allows students to play with those ideas, test them out and ultimately decide what course of action they wish to pursue. It is interesting to note that in the survey of the wider student cohorts, the majority of student participants from each of the Creative Writing workshop, Book Project and Write Club groups indicated that they were *more comfortable working with others*, *enjoyed sharing ideas* and *were more respectful of other people's ideas* as a result of their engagement in Fighting Words initiatives. In terms of the Creative Writing workshop students (N=92), 77% were in agreement about being more comfortable working with others, 67% were in agreement about enjoying sharing ideas as a result of engagement in Fighting Words, and 89% more respectful of others ideas. In terms of the Book Project students (N=42), 83% were in agreement about being more comfortable working with others, 83% were in agreement about enjoying sharing ideas as a result of engagement in Fighting Words, and 95% about being more respectful of others ideas. In terms of the Write Club students (N=11), 91% were in agreement about being more comfortable working with others, enjoying sharing ideas as a result of engagement in Fighting Words, and being more respectful of others ideas. However, it is important to note that there was some disagreement with this, with a further 10% of students from Creative Writing Workshop, and Book Project disagreeing with the notion that they were more comfortable in working with

others, and 16% of students from the Creative Writing workshop and 7% of Book Project disagreeing that they enjoyed sharing new ideas. In terms of the school teachers, all teachers agreed that students were more comfortable working with others, enjoyed sharing ideas, and were respectful of others' ideas as a result of engagement in Fighting Words initiatives. The volunteer tutors (N=13) indicated that they strongly felt students were more comfortable working with others (76%), enjoyed sharing ideas (77%) and were respectful of other people's ideas (95%).

Teachers comment on the 'sense of freedom generated by being allowed to write their own stories' and comment on students' 'perseverance and commitment to a project'. Students also refer to 'the freedom to experiment/ try things out' and 'not to give up when stuck/resilience'. A principal comments that it is an opportunity for students to discover and develop their creative abilities:

It's an outlet for students to experiment with ideas, to test their imagination, to develop talents and really to develop their creative abilities. (SP – B)

The findings indicate that students are able to **see things through to completion**. Teachers, tutors, principals and students all refer to the final publication as a clear measure of students' abilities to implement ideas and see a project through to completion. One tutor also comments on the significance of students being aware that they have completed a project from start to finish:

They learned that they can write an entire story on their own, and I think that it is very important for them to know that they are able to start and finish a project. (FWT)

Roddy Doyle observes that students demonstrate a consistent ability to evaluate ideas and **see things through to completion** or start afresh.

I come in on Wednesdays, most Wednesdays and work or just watch actually kids working and they all get to the end, they all get to the end either that or they see that it's not a good choice anyway so they abandon it and start something else. (FWF – Doyle)

5.3.4 Learning Creatively

The findings suggest that participating in Fighting Words gives student an opportunity to **learn creatively**. The range of genres, the availability of tutors, the use of collaborative and individual approaches and the use of digital technology enables students to **participate in learning in creative ways**. The CEO of the NCCA comments that Fighting Words enables students to **use a variety of learning tools that help them to be creative**:

Fighting Words to me is about voice so it's about giving students the tools to articulate views, opinions, ideas, concepts, questions even if they're challenging...so giving them the tools giving them the space and giving them the confidence as well to find that voice.
(CEO, NCCA)

Similarly, a principal observes that Fighting Words provides students with an alternative means of exploring their creativity and also an opportunity to engage in a different type of learning:

it's another avenue in which they can explore both their creativity and also get some, I suppose, learning involved in terms of presenting work and just also the whole group dynamic, it's a very different experience maybe from what they'd be used to. I mean I see them learning from something that's different and also learning to be more creative or at least opening a door to their creativity. (SP – D)

One of the students describes how the learning she has experienced in Fighting Words is different from her previous learning experiences:

My name's Gemma. I'm 15 years old and I go to Larkin College. When I sit down and I do my normal writing like but say I'm thinking of 'do these two words work well together?' Certain sentences flow and certain ones don't. Like I've always just kind of guessed that, but Roddy's able to tell me *why*. So, I'm learning more rather than just trying to... just guessing my way through as I had been before.
(PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

5.3.5 Stimulating Creativity using Digital Technology

As has been documented throughout the presentation of findings, the use of the screen is considered by the various stakeholder groups to be a hugely significant element of the model both in terms of the collaborative creation of the story and the powerful effect it has on the participants. Love and Doyle emphasise that for the participants the simple act of seeing their own words being typed on the screen is incredibly liberating and a hugely important confidence building experience. They also contend that the screen appears to work for everyone especially those who do not consider themselves as writers. In the below vignette, Roddy Doyle describes the positive effect of the screen on participants.

Vignette – They loved seeing their words up on the screen Use of the screen

They started chatting and the typist tried to keep up with them transcribing it up on the screen, which is a challenge... they were talking so quickly! But they loved it, they actually loved seeing their words up on the screen, they just loved it, you could see happiness in their faces really and the fun... they began to react to it immediately. Once they saw it typed out, they started reacting to it.

(FWF – Doyle)

Aside from the screen, which is a core feature of each programme, Fighting Words also draws on other forms of digital technology in their filmmaking and film animations. Students participating in these projects get to experience a variety of digital technologies. Sean Love describes one such project:

My favourite project that happened has been with younger kids who ended up making a film animation project with Brown Bag Films. They worked with 10/11 year olds and it was a yearlong thing and they were doing it at weekends, it wasn't in school but they wrote this extraordinary story and then they drew it and then they acted it and they animated it with people and it's, again it would blow you away the ability that's in there. (FWF – Love)

5.4 Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes

The final section of the presentation of findings from the Fighting Words case study examines the outcomes arising from participating in a creative writing process. The findings suggest that engaging in the Fighting Words model is a rewarding experience for participants and tutors. An analysis of the data establishes a number of beneficial outcomes, all of which are based on self-report and stakeholder opinion. These are framed according to Cohen-Cruz's (2005) four key principles of community-based performance: *communal context*, *reciprocity*, *hyphenation*, and *active culture*, which contribute to the enablement of these beneficial outcomes for participants. Findings specifically relating to these four principles are presented in **bold** font throughout this section.

5.4.1 Communal Context

Strictly speaking, Fighting Words does not operate in what might be viewed as a traditional community context. It does not open its doors to the general public en masse with a view to forming or strengthening community ties. Rather it works in partnership with schools and other educational settings with a view to specifically giving young people access to their free mentoring service. It therefore occupies a somewhat hybrid position between non-formal education, formal education and participatory arts practice. While some of the outcomes associated with community arts practice may not be present, there are however a number of features of its practice that are aligned with community arts practice. For instance, it is reliant on the formation of partnerships with schools and other health and education settings and the model's use of collaborative approaches is rooted in a communal context. The findings indicate that students cite working with others/ writing a story with peers/ working in groups/ interacting with the class as key elements of the model. Tutors and teachers also indicate that the collaborative nature of the writing process is an important element of the model. The discussion here will focus on how the collaborative aspect of Fighting Words gives rise to a communal context.

5.4.1.1 Sense of ownership

Communal expression recognizes that creativity comes from the group. In community arts practice, the collaboration between artists and participants generates a collective vision which leads to a joint ownership of the creative work. In the case of Fighting Words, the tutors represent the role of the artist, however, there is no suggestion that the work produced by students is jointly owned by tutors. In fact, the findings indicate that the work is very much the students own. A number of the stakeholders refer to the tremendous sense of achievement that students experience from **authoring their own work**. For example, Sean Love notes that students were enormously proud of the fact that they had created something entirely from their imagination.

The biggest achievement for the students, from their perspective, I would imagine on the basis of what I've seen, is **the sense of achievement that they get from creating something that is entirely theirs from their own imagination**. I mean we do... I don't want to be over labouring the point, but we see it every day, the look of achievement and delight and happiness, it's just extraordinary to witness it. I think it's the sense of achievement that they have created something that is theirs. (FWF – Love)

This outcome was especially significant for those students who had previously lacked confidence. For Roddy Doyle, participants' pride in their achievement is understandable. He observes:

It's one of the measures of independence really isn't it? The ability to write something that is your own and to actually take the next step and let other people read it. (FWF – Doyle)

One of the principals cites the book launch as a key moment when students' ownership of the work was clearly in evidence as they saw themselves as authors:

The launch of the book was an amazing experience ...for the girls to see their words in print and to hear them **talking about themselves as authors** is just amazing. (SP – D)

5.4.1.2 Sense of belonging

Although community building is not the purpose of Fighting Words activities, students appear to feel a connection to the place. This appears to be particularly the case for members of the Write Club, a facility offered to young people who have manifested a personal interest in creative writing and want to pursue their creative pursuits in their own time. One student refers to it as his 'world':

There's just something about it that I can't even describe but it just gives the kind of feeling that **this is your world**. What you want to happen, happens, and it's just great. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Sara Bennett, Manager of Fighting Words, also comments on a connection between students and the space. She uses the term 'home' in her description:

It's like they found their space, **they found their home**. They found a place where they can explore what's important to them through writing (PDR - *Fighting Words*, 2012)

A student also uses the term 'home' in his description of Fighting Words and expresses a very definite sense of belonging:

This place is like a second home to me. It's like a home where you sit down, you write and there's people here to give you ideas, there's a good environment here. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Two other students conjure a sense of community by referring to the common experiences and interests they share with other members of the group:

- It's good to kinda come to a place where other people would read the same stuff as you and to have somebody else to write with and understand why you enjoy it and everything and you can talk about what you're working on it's just really, really helpful and fun. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)
- Not only do I get to do my own writing but I'd never met anyone my age before who done it as well. Now I can talk to so many other people. It's the way **you're not on your own, everyone's**

doing it, it's everyone's kinda, passion. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

A similar observation is made by another student who suggests that a common interest is a unifying factor:

In our school there wouldn't be a lot of people who write at all and we've very few friends who were interested in it so we'd kinda be geeks so it's good to kinda come to a place where other people read the same stuff as you. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Roddy Doyle also suggests that there is a sense of connection between those students who regularly attend *Fighting Words*:

Writing is a very solitary occupation but these kids love being in the company of other writers. It's nice that a couple of hours a week that they are in the company of those who feel the same urge or who do the same thing. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

He speaks of students feeling comfortable with taking charge of the activities they carry out in *Fighting Words* and suggests that this leads to generating a sense of community and of mutual respect.

They're making up their own rules, swopping work with each other although they're very, very gentle with each other which is a good thing as well and they just have that common cause so to speak. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

5.4.1.3 Sense of purpose and fulfilment

There is a sense that the enjoyment and satisfaction that participants experienced from partaking in *Fighting Words* has infiltrated into their personal lives and continues to bring them pleasure. For example, one boy tells how he continues writing stories and brings his notebook to sports events, suggesting that his passion for **writing brings him much joy**.

My parents would bring me to rugby matches and I'd be sitting there with my little note book writing down things and my parents

originally thought I was writing down notes about rugby but when my mam actually read the note books it was of little stories. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Another student also appears to derive great satisfaction from her ability to compose stories. She says **much of her day is spent in creative thought** as she plots and plans her next story.

I randomly come up with an idea for an entire story and as I just go around in my little life it just develops and like I have these perfect characters who do certain things and it just kind of made sense to write it down because if I didn't it would all just be kinda wasted. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

One teacher comments that the experience 'enriched the lives of students' (BPT).

5.4.1.4 Sense of wellbeing

The findings suggest that engagement in the Fighting Words creative writing process has a positive impact on participants' wellbeing. This seemed to be primarily in the case of participants who had prolonged contact with Fighting Words such as those partaking in the yearlong book project or other long-term projects. One participant who first encountered Fighting Words at the age of 12 and has recently become a volunteer sees writing as her coping mechanism:

Writing came to me at a time where I really needed it. It used to be my way of coping with things that are going on in my life but now **it's my way of coping with things that are going on in the world.** It's weird going from 12 like coming in here shaking with the fear and now I'm 18 and coming here and volunteering during the summer camps and stuff it's just amazing! (PDR – Doyle, 2019)

Two of the principals also mention enhanced wellbeing as a positive outcome for Fighting Words participants. One principal says that the project particularly benefited a student with poor social skills who had been seriously bullied in primary school.

Participating in the project was good for him, good for his parents and has **helped him develop that little bit of extra confidence that wasn't there before.** (SP - B)

The same principal makes a similar observation in relation to quiet students and students with special needs:

A couple of the students in the group would've been very, very quiet. I know one now would have been within the special needs area and this was something which would have done **absolute wonders for their self-confidence and their self-esteem** and that again is a huge benefit of it. (SP - B)

He also refers to the benefits for a student with serious behavioural problems:

He had just about managed to get into 5th year because we had a difficult transition year with him, and yet this was something which **drew him into a much more positive relationship with the school** as a whole because he had never been involved in any extra-curricular activity much prior to that, so this was something which was hugely beneficial for him. (SP - B)

Another principal reports that participating in the Book Project improved the wellbeing of a student experiencing low self-esteem and mental health issues. She believes that Fighting Words provides students with a much-needed opportunity to articulate and process issues through the medium of a fictional lens. In the below vignette she talks about **the therapeutic effect of writing** and argues that from a mental health perspective, it is very important that young people have the opportunity to express themselves through initiatives like Fighting Words.

Vignette – Therapeutic effect of writing

One of the students in our school who got published had a lot of low self-esteem and mental health issues... suffering from a bit of depression and so on... Writing yeah it can be solitary when you're on your laptop and so on but because you're expressing stuff that you might find hard to verbalise, **it de-stresses**, so it is a great vehicle of communication and that's why you know it's not just the more articulate kids in class who participate in class that it actually can reach out to someone who is quite quiet so you know the power of the pen. And when I said it gives voice to their expression that's very important and I think from a social perspective that because ye know at the school gates there are so many of societal problems arriving here and schools are being forced actually to deal with them. Whereas I think Fighting Words is **an opportunity to unravel some of the issues that they are dealing with** you know and sometimes teachers even find it hard talking about mental health issues, it can be challenging. Whereas when you have writing exercises and you're writing from a

creative perspective and you're bringing it into a storyline, it's just an easier way of getting the information out. Sometimes things that we're not able to express verbally, we can articulate them on paper. So, that's a long-winded way of saying that from a mental health perspective as well ye know there are many, many children in front of us and that's why I just think it's very important to give them that opportunity. Kids have imaginations and we forget that they have imaginations and imagining and positive day dreaming and visualisation, again from a de-stressing perspective, is very important and it's very important to get that out of your head. A lot of people don't want to say stuff that they're thinking but they have vivid imaginations; they're influenced by all types of different media and it's a way of releasing that, you know. So, imagination is very, very important and it's something that is not encouraged enough at second-level and it's something that should be cherished; it's very important to give people these skills to continue creatively. I think for society you know everywhere not just at second-level and **if you do it at second-level then they'll bring it with them and that's a tool basically for positive mental health**

(SP - C)

5.4.2 Reciprocity

The findings indicate that the principle of reciprocity is evident within the tutor/student relations in Fighting Words. This is evidenced by the presence of **processes that enable reciprocity**, as outlined in the following.

5.4.2.1 Listening/ Having voice heard

The opportunity to express their views and have their voice heard is identified as a significant factor in building participants' confidence and developing their creative potential. A number of stakeholders comment on the value of Fighting Words as a platform for the student voice. According to the CEO of the NCCA, voice is at the core of the initiative and providing participants with the tools, the space and the confidence to develop their voice is central to what they do:

Fighting Words to me is about voice. So, it's about giving students the tools to articulate views, opinions, ideas, concepts, questions even if they're challenging... giving them the tools, giving them the space and...em ... giving them the confidence as well to find that voice. (CEO, NCCA)

This view is echoed by a principal who thinks it is particularly important that students have this platform given the absence of the teenage voice from the media.

I think the media today particularly print media is often dominated by adults and you get a different dimension coming from what the kids write. *Fighting Words* encourages students to engage with experience at their level that's why it's attractive to students... their experience counts, their experience of life has merit so it's really **facilitating the teenage voice and giving expression to their ideas** particularly with societal issues that are not necessarily covered in the media by their peers because most of the stuff... is usually written from a journalistic perspective whereas this way it gives them a voice (SP - C)

Another principal observes that it was 'tremendously affirming for students' to have their voice heard. He stresses that the opportunity to tell their stories in their own native language was particularly significant for non-national students:

One of our girls was a non-national student who was very poor at English, she wrote a wonderful story which *Fighting Words* kindly translated from Polish into English. It was good to show that, that girl, **even though she was not from Ireland and couldn't speak English, she too could write her story**. To then have it translated so that it was printed in both languages in the book... I think was an amazing thing. (SP - D)

One of the tutor's responses to what advice she would give to a new tutor highlights the importance of listening to students:

Don't be afraid to make suggestions if you are working with a student who is stuck or blocked, but make sure that if you give them help or suggestions, you aren't accidentally putting words in their mouths. **Listen to them** as well - try not to take over if they're being quiet. They often have lots of ideas, but don't know how to write them down, and the ideas are damn good so they just need a bit of encouragement. (FWT)

In addition to being listened to by tutors and peers throughout the process, students also get to have their voice heard by the wider public through the publication of their stories in a book which is officially launched in the school before going on sale in bookshops nationwide. All students consider 'being published' as one of their biggest

achievements. One student expresses astonishment that other people want to read their stories:

It's really amazing that we get to publish a book at 16! Roddy read our stories and he gave us tips from his experience that we wouldn't really have got anywhere else. It's kinda really bizarre that **people want to read our stories** and have our signatures on them! (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

An interesting corollary to having their voice heard was the positive impact of Fighting Words on students' own listening abilities. The majority of student participants (65%) from the Creative Writing workshop (N=92) felt that Fighting Words enabled them to be better listeners. The majority of student participants (70%) from the Book Project (N=42) also felt that Fighting Words enabled them to be a better listener. Moreover, the majority of those participating (72%) in the Write Club (N=11) indicated they were better listeners. In terms of disagreement, 10% of the Creative Writing students, 2% of the Book Project students and 9% of the Write Club students felt that they had not become better listeners, with the remainder indicating that they didn't know whether they had/hadn't improved their listening skills. In terms of the school teachers, 4 out of the 5 teachers participating in this study agreed that Fighting Words enabled students to be better listeners, with the remaining teacher indicating that she didn't know. In terms of the volunteer tutors (N=13), just 31% agreed that participants were better listeners as a result of engagement in Fighting Words, with 62% indicating that they didn't know.

5.4.2.2 Helping people express ideas

The findings suggest that the Fighting Words model develops students' creative potential by encouraging and enabling their expressivity. One principal links expressivity with confidence and sees Fighting Words as a driver of both:

The primary purpose is to help students express themselves and to develop their confidence. (SP - E)

Another principal believes that the model works because it caters for all levels of literacies and abilities and enables students to express themselves using their own vernacular:

It gets students to express their own experience in their own words at their own level. I think that what's good about it is, it caters for all levels. So, you can have somebody struggling with literacy who's writing at a certain level and you can have somebody who's very proficient in the language and because the children have more of a freedom in this project, I think it engages them. (SP - F)

Roddy Doyle makes a similar point. He emphasises that an important part of the process is making writing accessible by convincing participants that they can write and that writing is not just the preserve of a select few:

...to open the individual children and young people who come through the door, **open their heads to the idea that they can write and that it's not something that's for other people** or it's not something they can only do if they're in honours English. (FWF – Doyle)

Doyle's message appears to be getting through to students. The analysis of student participant survey responses in this study indicate that they were aware that they could put their points across more clearly and that they had increased confidence in their ability to write. In terms of the ability to express their points, the majority of student participants (62%) from the Creative writing workshop (N=92) indicated that they could put their point across more clearly. The majority of student participants (78%) from the Book Project (N=42) also indicated that they too could put their point across more clearly. In terms of Write Club participants (N=11), the majority (90%) indicated agreement. All 5 teachers indicated agreement on this. In terms of the volunteer tutors (13), 46% indicated agreement, and almost half (46%) indicated they didn't know. In terms of disagreement, just 8% of Creative Writing workshop participants and 2% of Book Project students indicated levels of disagreement on this, with a further 30% of Creative Writing workshop participants, 20% of Book Project students and 10% of Write Club students, indicating they didn't know. In terms of their ability to write, the majority of student participants (75%) from the

Creative Writing workshop (N=92) felt more confident in their writing abilities. Similarly, the majority of student participants (93%) from the Book Project (N=42) felt more confident in their writing abilities. All of the Write Club participants (N=11) strongly agreed that they felt more confident in their writing abilities. The majority (92%) of volunteer tutors (N=13) indicated agreement. All 5 school teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students were more confident in their writing abilities as a result of engagement with Fighting Words. Finally, 12% of the Creative Writing workshop participants disagreed that their confidence in writing had improved, and the remainder (13%) indicated that they didn't know.

Two of the professional writers associated with Fighting Words, Maeve Binchy and Glenn Patterson, also comment on the organisation's success in helping people express themselves. Glenn Patterson states that Fighting Words validates the student voice by persuading participants that their stories are valued and what they have to say is unique:

Fighting Words is particularly good at letting children know that **the way they speak and that the stories that they have in their head** are exactly the kinds of stories that can be committed to paper and in the language that they use. (Fighting Words, 2015b).

Maeve Binchy remarks that Fighting Words gives people the courage to write and express themselves. In the below vignette, she explains why this is important and how having a voice enables individuals to be part of a well-functioning society.

Vignette – It gives them the courage to write and express themselves - Maeve Binchy

I think everybody has a story in them and most of us want to tell that story. We want to tell that story to everybody but the problem and the thing that gets in our way is we think 'Well why me? I couldn't possibly do it! No one would listen to me!' and this is why Fighting Words is such a splendid idea because what it does, it takes out that awful middle anxiety, it gives people self-esteem, **it gives them the courage to write and express themselves** and this is why I support it so much and I'm proud to be connected with it. **It's very important that people should have a voice and they should know they have a voice** because otherwise they go into themselves and think, 'sure nobody is going to listen to me'. It stops people voting in elections, it stops them taking part in society in general, if they think

people are not going to listen to them, and I think that voice is very important, it should be heard and must be listened to.

(Fighting Words, 2017a)

5.4.2.3 Public visibility/recognition

Fighting Words' association with Roddy Doyle and several other high-profile writers is cited as a significant strength of the model. The findings indicate that students, teachers and principals believe that the opportunity to work with well-known Irish writers is a remarkable advantage which adds considerable weight to participants' experience. The overwhelming majority of students who took part in the book project programmes speak of the publication of a book as their greatest achievement. Each book project culminates in the publication of an anthology of students' writing prefaced with a foreword by a renowned Irish author who comments on each individual short story included in the book. The **public endorsement of students' work by a prominent author** lends considerable prestige to the end of year publication and adds tremendously to students' sense of pride. One student describes how emotional she felt when she read what the author had to say about her work:

Roddy brought out the box of books, so we all got a copy each and signed them all but it was just amazing really, the foreword in it by Anne Enright, the bit she wrote about my story, I nearly cried like...
(PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Another student comments on how heartening it is to see their book professionally published and available for purchase in bookshops alongside the work of famous authors:

It's a great opportunity and without the Fighting Words centre would never have happened to any of us. It's just a great feeling after all the work we did, **to finally see it in Easons next to brilliant authors like J.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling, it's just unbelievable!**
(PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

The endorsement of writers has clearly generated a sense of validation of students' creativity among the students themselves and those students who have continued to keep in touch with Fighting Words through the Write Club confirm that this factor has influenced their decision to continue to write creatively. The findings indicate that recognition of students' work is also garnered through events such as end of year ceremonies where schools participating in the Book Project host an official book launch to celebrate the students' achievements. Throughout the findings, the night **of the book launch is described as an enormously uplifting experience** for students and their parents and a cause for great celebration in the school. One principal's account gives a sense of how happy the occasion was and how much it meant to students and their parents:

When we had the launch night here and when parents came in, they were very proud of their children. Any opportunity where parents are proud of their children is obviously a good thing, you know. It was a very positive experience for the students who took part, it surprised them... you could see it in them the night they were presented with their book, (*points to photos*) you could see the happy faces, all the heads were up, all proud of themselves you know. Like if you wanted anymore proof than that... like that's enough like and they were...eh...some of those kids were quite shy, so it really was a great achievement for them. (SP - E)

Another principal describes how the school celebrated and elevated students' work by making it visible on large poster displays which were placed around the school in preparation for the book launch:

For the book launch, we got pieces from the book enlarged and copied on to big posters and so it was very visible in the school.
(SP - D)

A third principal highlights that the book launch increased participants' profile among their peers. She observes that for many participants the feeling of success was heightened by the reaction of others to their work and the fact that other students within the school community now looked up to them:

They were so proud of themselves to have their book launched, to be sold, to become writers, published writers – a lot of those

girls - their self-esteem has just blossomed and they hold their head up high and **they're kind of role models now to the other students**, the other students in their year group thinking, wow, you did that, pure role models. (SP - A)

The principals of the schools that participated in the yearlong book project point out that the launch of the book has been a highlight of the school year not only for the students but also for the schools themselves. The publication of a book has increased the visibility of schools and, according to the principals, their profile has been raised, thanks to the association with Fighting Words. Nevertheless, the responses to the questionnaires by the students who have attended only a once-off workshop show a proportionally comparable sense of achievement derived from completing a story in a short period of time and without the benefit of a professional publication. Bringing a creative task to completion therefore emerges as a positive outcome even if dissociated from a high-profile publication.

In addition to the book publication, Fighting Words also provides publishing opportunities to students outside of the book project. For example, there is an **annual publication in the Irish Times, a leading national newspaper**, which publishes an extensive supplement of students' work and **generates a great deal of public attention**. The opportunity to have their voices heard by the wider public is a further recognition of the value of students' work, a point noted by one student who comments:

It really is so heart-warming to have people respond to your work when it's on a national platform like the Irish Times (BPS).

Other opportunities include performing at The Abbey/Peacock Theatre, video recordings and films of participants' work on the Fighting Words website, interviews and readings on local and national radio stations and occasional commemorative events. One unusual example of the latter was the opportunity for Fighting Words participants to write a story to capture 'the essence of Dublin' in precisely 224 words for a postal stamp celebrating Dublin's permanent designation in July 2010 as a UNESCO City of Literature. The selected short story, written by a seventeen-year-old boy, was printed on a postage stamp and subsequently went on sale in post offices

and shops nationwide. The circulation of the stamp on parcels and letters to homes, schools and workplaces countrywide resulted in a rather unusual and highly visible form of public recognition.

5.4.2.4 Benefits for tutors

The findings indicate that tutors also derive enormous benefit from their involvement with Fighting Words. One of the tutors explicitly comments on this reciprocity, stating:

The sessions are as enjoyable for volunteers as they are for the students and it is easy to get a real, tangible idea of the contribution you are making to the learning experience. (FWT)

A number of the tutors' comments suggest that they find volunteering with Fighting Words to be a highly rewarding experience. In terms of best aspects of being involved in Fighting Words, one reports an '**enriching sense of mutual service (both parties gaining from the exchange)**' (FWT), one states 'becoming aware of young people's creative potential' (FWT) and another comments 'seeing young people developing and learning' (FWT). Other tutors also comment on the satisfaction they get from seeing the creative development of young people:

- **It opens your mind**, I guess, you know. You hear their ideas, you hear their outlook on life and **you see how much the young people get out of it when they are here** (PDR - Fighting Words, 2016).
- **What I like best is seeing young people's imagination produce a story that they never knew that they could** (PDR - Fighting Words, 2016).

One of the tutors says she volunteers as much as possible because of the reward she feels from knowing that she has helped students tell their stories and the level of personal satisfaction she gains from making what she sees as a positive contribution to young peoples' lives:

I try and do as much as I can and **there's a great feeling of reward**, when you look at the story that the kids produce at the end there is a feeling... well, ok **I helped that along, you know, that's great...**

Committing to something like Fighting Words provides you with an opportunity to **feel like you're making a proper contribution**, particularly when you're, maybe like I was for an extended period, on Social Welfare. **There's a sense of personal satisfaction in that**, a sense that your proving that you have a value above the €188 you're getting from the government. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

She also refers to her own creative contribution to the process and comments that the rewards outweigh the investment:

I tend to be the storyteller when I'm taking part. I've been doing it for a long time and it's something I really enjoy... **I feel like I get more out of it than I put in.** (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Another tutor's description of Fighting Words as a 'magical place' and the pleasure she gets from her work there is a further example of how tutors see volunteering in Fighting Words as a rewarding experience:

It's a really magical place to work in... - You leave with a smile on your face every day (PDR - *Fighting Words*, 2016).

A similarly enthusiastic response is expressed by a tutor who declares that she feels rejuvenated by Fighting Words and appreciates how her experiences there distract her from the pressures and anxieties of her day to day life:

Anytime I volunteer with Fighting Words I leave feeling hugely energised and it puts me in good humour. I suppose while you're there, while you're in there working in the session **you don't think of the stresses and worries you might have in everyday life...** to come into a space like this where **it's an extremely positive and nurturing environment, it's really beneficial personally.** (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

A further example of how Fighting Words provides tutors with a reprieve from their everyday life is also evident in one tutor's account of how volunteering with Fighting Words helped her cope with difficult personal circumstances and was an important source of healing in helping her deal with the grief of losing her young child:

I'm a volunteer illustrator here at Fighting Words. I come in once or twice a week; **I would come every day if I could because I enjoy it so much!** It's very amusing, very entertaining. It's a great atmosphere - the children are all having fun, what could be better really? ... My own personal story is that I had a very beautiful little boy named Thomas who got very sick and passed away in 2008 and the trauma of his illness and losing him made me unable to work. Fighting Words was easy to give to for me because it was something I enjoyed, something I can do. **I've always been able to draw cartoons and illustrate things. I think that was very therapeutic for me, it was a good match.** (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

Another tutor comments on how working with young people as a volunteer in Fighting Words was a very satisfying experience which had a positive and unexpected influence on her career choice:

To be honest, I didn't have a huge desire to work with kids or any great feelings that I would enjoy it, so that side of it certainly surprised me. **I really got a huge amount out of leading the primary school sessions with younger groups or working individually with teenagers. I kind of surprised myself how much I enjoyed it, so much so that I've applied to do a H. Dip now - I'm going to train to be a teacher** in September, so it's been a big turnaround for me in that sense. I didn't kind of imagine maybe four or five years ago that I'd be training to be a teacher and it's largely to do with my work with Fighting Words that has led me down that path. (PDR - *The Lyric Feature - Word of Mouth: The Story of Fighting Words*, 2011)

5.4.3 Hyphenation

The findings indicate that Fighting Words exemplifies the notion of hyphenation, that is, there is strong evidence to suggest that Fighting Words' mission has a dual purpose – it has broader objectives beyond artistic intent. According to their mission statement, Fighting Words has the dual aim of developing young people's imagination and enabling them 'to be resilient creative and successful shapers of their own lives'.

Our aim is to help children and young people, and adults who did not have this opportunity as children, to discover and harness the

power of their own imaginations and creative writing skills. **At its core, Fighting Words is also about something much broader and more inclusive. It is about using the creative practice of writing and storytelling to strengthen our children and teenagers** – from a wide range of backgrounds – **to be resilient, creative and successful shapers of their own lives** (FWW - Fighting Words, 2019).

Sean Love's explanation of the primary purpose of Fighting Words provides further clarification and specifically identifies the development of self-esteem, self-confidence and empowerment as intended goals:

The primary purpose is to give as many children as possible the opportunity to engage with creative writing just to see what it opens up for them.... every child should have that opportunity and underlying that is that **it's all about self-esteem, self-confidence and empowerment**. We're not looking to create the greatest writers of all time, we can see them passing through here but that's not our purpose; it's to give every child a shot and if they want more than one shot, they get more than one shot, but at least give them the opportunity. (FWF – Love)

The findings from this research indicate a range of positive outcomes for Fighting Words participants. The benefits identified by stakeholders fall within the educational, community-building, therapeutic, personal and social development spheres. The findings reveal that the experience of participating in Fighting Words has given students an increased sense of confidence/ belief in their own creative ability, more positive relations with teachers in school, increased resilience and perseverance and enhanced self-efficacy.

5.4.3.1 Increased Confidence / Belief in their creative skills

According to one principal, Fighting Words plays a significant role in developing students' self-esteem. She notes that increased self-esteem was particularly visible among students who might ordinarily struggle with a lack of self-belief. The below vignette provides insights into her observations:

Vignette - Their self-esteem shot through the roof... their shoulders were physically up more

I know from some of the girls **their self-esteem shot through the roof**, we didn't say no to anybody, they volunteered. We got a great cohort of girls but some of those girls may have certain issues at home, broken backgrounds, alcoholism at home... coming into school is almost a relief for them, but they never get the praise, the merit in anything, because they're average students, but going out there every Thursday they were coming back having been praised by the volunteers in Fighting Words told they can do this, that they were wonderful human beings, that they were brilliant creative skills and **I could see over the course of the year, their shoulders were physically up more.**

(SP - A)

One of the tutors also notes that Fighting Words provides an outlet to those who are shier and less comfortable with self-expression. Further evidence of their confidence can be seen in their behaviour and attitude in school. One principal reported that students who had participated in Fighting Words demonstrated an increased willingness to take on leadership roles, to exercise their voice and to play a more active role in school life. In the below vignette, she outlines the changes she observed in students which she attributes to Fighting Words

Vignette – Leadership Roles

Students who were involved in Fighting Words in fourth year are generally the ones who **put themselves forward for** things maybe like **mentoring** in fifth or sixth year **or the student leadership team** in sixth year. I think that whole notion of getting up and presenting their work, working with groups, it just gives them skills that students who haven't been involved mightn't have, do you know? Now again with the book launch, that particular group really got a huge amount from it because **one of the writers is now the head girl, most of them actually are on that student leadership team** and I would say a lot of that, it wasn't the only thing that obviously influenced the vote or whatever, but they got skills during that, including to get up in the hall in front of strangers and speak, which would be very much outside the comfort zone, to organise the book launch itself in conjunction with teachers. All of those sorts of activities certainly benefitted the whole school because **they're a group of young women who are now in leadership positions**, you know

(SP - D)

According to one principal, the development of creative skills is more important now than ever and therefore *Fighting Words* is a timely initiative.

I think it's more than just short story writing, I think **it's about developing the creative skills, the mind-set** in young people today; they're so tuned in with their iPhones and TV programmes and so forth, sometimes to get into that creativity the students don't realise that they actually have...I just think the idea...get in there, something so simple and basic, yet I think we fail to do that in schools, at times within the mainstream curriculum. I think they found a niche, a fun way of developing those creative skills because they are skills we're looking for in young men and women leaving school We're looking at one of the key skills in the new Junior Cycle *Framework* as well, so I think they're hitting the nail on the head and this can only go further. (SP - A)

In terms of creative ability, students who engaged in the one-off workshops, the Wednesday Write Club and the Book Project, volunteer tutors, and school teachers, were asked in a survey distributed in 2013-2014 to indicate whether they believed students' confidence in their creative ability had increased. The results overwhelmingly confirm that the majority of students from both cohorts, the volunteer tutors and the school teachers felt that confidence in the students' ability to be creative had increased. In relation to the student participants in this study, 83% of students who attended the once-off Creative Writing workshop (N=92), 92% of the Book Project students (N=42) and 91% of students in the Write Club (N=11) agreed that they were more confident in their ability to be creative. In respect of the volunteer tutor (N=13), the majority of tutors (92%) also felt that students were more confident in their ability to be creative. Finally, in terms of the school teachers, all 5 participating teachers felt that students were more confident in their ability to be creative.

5.4.3.2 Improved student-teacher-school relations

The findings indicate that the experience of participating in *Fighting Words* allowed students to foster **more positive relations with teachers in school** and the experience also enabled **teachers to see students, some of whom had a negative reputation, in a new light**. One principal noted that this was a decidedly new

experience for some students and suggested that increased positive connections with school tended to increase the likelihood of students remaining in school:

It allowed some teachers to view children differently in that they saw them in a very positive light. Not all of these students would have had very positive reputations, so **it allowed them to show a different side of themselves** so any time people can see a way to express themselves positively is good, they're getting positive affirmation rather than a situation where I'm giving out to someone or something like that, you know... The more positive connection students have to school obviously the easier it is for them to stay here, where if the only connection they have is conflict and...eh...and disapproval well then it's hard, they don't tend to last as long. Students who are getting positive reinforcement, students who are getting praise... who are being seen as contributing, you know, they obviously get more, there's a better chance of them staying in school. (SP - E)

Another principal made a similar observation noting that many teachers perceived students differently and expressed surprise at their creative ability:

Some **staff are seeing the girls**, and some of them may not be the most easiest girls to deal with on a day to day level, they're seeing them **in a new light** and actually **seeing that they do have something to offer** because sometimes you've to dig very deep with teenagers but certainly the staff over the course of last year said to me, 'I didn't realise X was as good as what she was and she was showing me her draft... and there was a buzz, there was a buzz amongst them! (SP - A)

5.4.3.3 Increased resilience and perseverance among students

A couple of principals remarked that they noticed an increased resilience and perseverance among students who had participated in the *Fighting Words* project. These principals believed that the experience of participating in *Fighting Words* had inspired students to see projects through to completion. Students displayed behaviour and attitude that indicated they had developed an **understanding of deferred gratification and an ability to persevere with a course of action even when they encountered challenges** that they would have previously considered insurmountable. This change in behaviour and attitude was **most noticeable among**

students who would be considered ‘at risk’ of leaving school early. One principal referred to a particular group of students whom he believed showed increased resilience and determination and went on to complete school.

These students, nearly all of them I would say, finished out the Leaving Cert, right – which is a good thing... if it shows, if it shows students that...eh...yeah I can do something and I can get benefit out of education, then obviously it’s a good thing, you know, it encourages people to stay in school. (SP - E)

This principal singled out one student in particular whom he felt surpassed all expectations in her achievements.

Well, one of the girls there, she had the best, she’d the best Leaving Cert last year you know and got her first choice in college right, and she would not have always been an obvious person for that (SP - E)

Another principal anticipates a similar outcome for the Fighting Words participants in her school. She believes that the boost in confidence that students experienced will result in a higher rate of achievement among the Fighting Words students than might have previously been expected.

As a principal I would know a lot of them individually and know that some of those girls, their self-esteem isn’t great, they’d be facing an ordinary Leaving Cert of maybe 250 points. Yet **they tasted success; they know they can take on board an initiative, carry it through, do really, really well and reap the benefits** and that’s... those skills have to be transferred across the board. (SP - A)

5.4.3.4 Increased self-efficacy

One tutor comments that the experience of Fighting Words gives students a **sense of self-belief in other areas of their life.**

Some kids who attend Fighting Words probably never will become writers, and probably have no interest in it. But they may be struggling in other areas of their life, and the work they do at Fighting Words **gives them a sense of self-belief**, a release from where they're at with other aspects of their life. (FWT)

Similarly, another tutor indicates that enhanced creative potential leads to benefits in other areas:

Primarily it **helps all participants to reach their creative potential. This boosts confidence in other areas**, social skills, ability to apply lateral thought to problem finding, among many others. (FWT)

Another tutor suggest that Fighting Words promotes a 'can do' attitude among students:

Something like Fighting Words **provides that link between feeling like you can do something and then proving that you can do it.** This isn't about spellings; it's about what you really feel and think and what you can imagine. (FWT)

Finally, in terms of benefits for students, the below vignette summarises one tutor's views of how participating in Fighting Words benefits students on many levels:

Vignette – Benefits of Fighting Words for students from a tutor perspective

Fighting Words benefits students in various different ways. For those who are naturally drawn towards writing it gives them a space to enjoy this. They also meet like-minded people and, in many cases, develop friendships. They get lots of free valuable advice from experienced (and sometimes famous) writers! For students who aren't necessarily all that interested in writing, I think a session at Fighting Words is still enjoyable and for many of them it opens up something 'different' from the norm of school. One student from last year's book project said she absolutely loved coming to Fighting Words every week... she just hated having to write a story! Having said that, this particular student made a video montage of the class's time coming in to Fighting Words for the launch night of their book. I strongly believe that although she didn't enjoy writing her story, her creativity was fostered, her confidence developed and she found an outlet for it in a different way.

(FWT)

Interestingly, the findings from the wider cohort indicate that students improved their ability to stand up for themselves as a result of engagement in Fighting Words initiatives, and in this regard, improved their self-efficacy. In this respect, almost half (47%) of the Creative Writing workshop students (N=92), 73% of the Book Project students (N=42) and 63% of the Write Club students (N=11) indicated they were not

afraid to stand up for themselves. Moreover, 80% of the teachers (N=5) and 54% of the volunteer tutors (N=13) agreed with this. However, there was a relatively high level of disagreement on this by the Creative Writing workshop participants, with a further 31% indicating that this was not the case for them.

5.4.4 Active Culture

The findings indicate that Fighting Words adopts the principles underpinning active culture, in that they recognise the value of 'little c' or democratic creativity, and they encourage participants to create rather than consume art. The freedom to imagine and the opportunity to be creative are central tenets of Fighting Words' activities. Séan Love sees these as essential elements in the development of the individual and argues that the formal education system is not providing young people with this opportunity:

There's really no opportunity to be creative, pretty much in any subject at second-level, and I want to emphasise again that I don't criticise the teachers at all for that, but it's... there's very little opportunity for creativity that I can see at any level in secondary because of the points and the examinations system. I think one of the downsides of the absence of creativity at second level is that it's really destructive, and this is a societal problem, because and as I understand it, having read papers from the university's professors over the last few years, they're saying that students are coming in from secondary, you know, with 600 points but they don't have the capacity to engage in critical thinking or even in creative thinking, they haven't done it, and so they, no matter how many points they've got, they're completely ill prepared for third level... no ability to think critically or creatively ...not that they've no ability to but they've never had the opportunity to do it... that's not a healthy thing, I think. (FWF – Love)

One of the tutors comments that the approach in Fighting Words differs to formal schooling and, in her view, the participant-centered process adopted by Fighting Words better enables students' creativity:

I think one of the key aspects of the Fighting Words approach is the fact that **everything centres on the student. They come up with**

the idea; they decide what is good enough; what is worth including, excluding or editing; they set their own standards. I think this approach, which perhaps gives an unusual level of respect to the student's judgement, in contrast to formal schooling, helps students to realise their own potential and develop a style that is genuinely their own. (FWT)

Other tutors express similar views:

- I think and hope it provides an opportunity for students to be creative outside of the formal educational system. I think the Fighting Words experience fills in some of the gaps in the formal system which concentrates so much on rote learning. Any opportunity for creativity has to be of benefit to anybody (FWT).
- I think it is an amazing outlet for students who like to write to begin with, who are comfortable with their creativity and with expressing themselves. It's absolutely brilliant for the students who choose to go to Write Club on Wednesdays and Saturdays, for example. For other students, who may not enjoy writing creatively, or who are less comfortable with self-expression, it can show them that they are creative, that they can tell stories, that they do have a voice and that their voice deserves to be listened to. (FWT)

Roddy Doyle also comments on how he hopes that students experience of writing in Fighting Words differs from what they experience at school. He is hopeful that it might be something they would like to engage with on their own terms and for their own reasons:

I'd like to think that young people when they come to Fighting Words come away with perhaps a different angle when it comes to writing. I think in school we are pressurised into thinking in terms of time and marks and planning and there's no room for changing your mind for example. There's an obsession with the amount that one has to write, reasonably enough if you are planning for an exam, but you know Shakespeare didn't write because he was doing the Leaving Cert., you know, Hamlet wasn't his transition year project, he wrote for other reasons and I think Fighting Words gives young people an opportunity to see writing as something that they could do because they want to rather than writing as something they have to do. (PDR – Fighting Words, 2017b)

The **fundamental belief that anyone can be creative** permeates *Fighting Words'* activities and this is clearly perceived by the students who have attended the centre. Students speak of the **freedom that being creative offers and a sense of validation of individual and collective imagination** emerges from the responses:

- **Anybody can write a story.** (WCS).
- **I learned that everyone has a story inside them** just waiting to burst out and onto paper to share with the world. (BPS).

One student was particularly grateful for the freedom to write on a topic of their choosing and was surprised to hear how much the teenage voice had to offer:

What I loved is that we got freedom. Freedom of the word. I didn't realise the strength of a teenager's word until I read our book in full. We could really write about everything our heart desired... our dreams, hope, even fears. It really takes over your heart (PDR - *Fighting Words*, 2013).

Another student's comment illustrates his recognition of little 'c' creativity and highlights the importance of originality:

I think a lot of the time we try and make poetry bigger than it is, like you're a great person for capturing those moments and I think that's the wrong way to look at poetry, it should be for everyone. It shouldn't be for the few who write it and I think like **you should be writing something that you want to write and not maybe what other people have written before or emulating them.** (PDR – Doyle, 2019)

There is also a sense of **participants as creators rather than consumers of art** and the notion that people get more out of making art than viewing art. A number of the stakeholders commented on the potential of *Fighting Words* to spark a love of writing that would remain with some participants for life. One principal remarked that having their work published was enormously encouraging for young people and significantly increased their chances of pursuing writing as an outlet and seeking to be published no matter what career path they might choose in the future.

When something is actually published and it's there particularly on a library shelf or online or on our website or in the national newspaper that motivates them to seek perhaps third level

involvement with language and so it opens them up to maybe, you know, Journalism or, you know, making creative writing, be that in poetry or prose, sort of alive in the 21st Century, so that people from all backgrounds... basically if somebody gets something published at the age of sixteen it means that they will probably keep on writing even if they're studying science or something, that they will keep on writing creatively and seek to publish outside of their actual profession, that could be a profession in pharmacy but that they see a relevance in literacy and that **everybody is capable of writing that it just doesn't belong to those who study English.** (SP - C).

This principal also observed that creative writing presented students, who may not be inclined to experience other art forms, a valuable opportunity to engage in an artistic process over an extended period of time, and that the process was equally as important as the finished product.

Lots of schools have their musical or their play but that's very much a once off self-contained area. Something like this is different, yes you have a final product, but... **it's a process that's going on over a longer period of time and allows for much more engagement by the student both in the final outcome but also in the process of how it's actually put together** so from that point of view it's something which is giving...em... that broad term 'the arts' a higher profile... bringing in students who might not for instance have been the ones to play the sport or play a part in the musical or whatever... so I think that's really, really important and it's fantastic to be able to have an outside body providing you with some assistance and some resources (SP - C).

Another principal commented on the **high quality of the work students produced** and remarked that it is experiences like these that stand out in the memory long after school days are over.

The standard of both the story making but also of the art work that they did was, it was fantastic and that's great. It's great for the students primarily, but for everybody else whether it was the staff involved, the parents...em...for them all it's, **its' something that they remember, forever. They have that book at home** that they did when they were in whatever year, and that remains with them and that's fantastic (SP - B).

5.5 Summary of Findings from Fighting Words Case Study

The case study of Fighting Words contributes to knowledge in the field of creativity firstly through its substantiation of the presence of factors and practices that previous studies from the literature review purported to foster creativity, thus, validating the enactment of this applied Participatory Arts initiatives to further creativity in education. Secondly, and very importantly, this case study revealed new factors and processes influencing climates for creativity and enabling participants to be creative within Fighting Words' Participatory Arts initiative, and furthermore identified a broader range of beneficial outcomes for participants engaging in such enterprises. Therefore, the findings from the case study of Fighting Words contribute knowledge to three aspects of creativity, namely: 1) Fostering climate/s for creativity, 2) Processes for 'being creative', and, 3) Enablement of beneficial outcomes of creativity. A summary of Fighting Words' contributions in respect of each of these aspects of creativity is presented herein.

5.5.1 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity

The findings from Fighting Words provided affirmation of the presence of the factors and conditions for creativity as characterised by Teaching and Learning Scotland (2001) and Hamza and Griffith's (2006) research, as shown in the first column of Figure 5.2. Furthermore, the findings further affirmed the presence of additional aspects in the facilitation of climatic conditions for creativity (originally identified within the Upstate case study), as shown in the second column of Figure 5.2, which included: *the need for provision of adequate time and space to build trust; allowing participants to self-pace to build confidence and overcome fears; valuing ordinary 'little c' creativity; offering reassurance and encouragement to participants; demystifying and simplifying the creative process; and, the use of site-specific visits to stimulate creativity.* In relation to the latter point, a new dimension to fostering a climate for creativity was identified in the Fighting Words case study, namely the significance of the **Fighting Words space** – both physical and emotional - as shown in Column 3 of Figure 5.2, which was mentioned by all categories of stakeholders in

this research. The physical space is represented by the building per se and by its openness, brightness and minimal use of physical barriers. The emotional space is the lived experience of the space, the atmosphere and the ethos as experienced by the students. Tutors are fundamental to the creation of a safe and supportive emotional space as they embody the Fighting Words' values in their interaction with the students. The space has a symbolic connotation as it represents an '*out of school*' *experience* for the students. The participants commented on breaking away from the school routine and teachers and principals suggested that the dynamics and student behaviours witnessed in the Fighting Words centre were different from those normally witnessed in school, such as for instance a greater willingness to verbalise their ideas and to actively contribute to the development of the story.

Finally, the significance of an effective partnerships model, the third dimension of fostering climate/s for creativity was affirmed as shown in the fourth column of Figure 5.2. The Participatory Arts field leans heavily on partnership as an ethic of practice, and it was evident that in the case of Fighting Words, the role of professional writers as lead tutors and the further support from volunteer tutors was pivotal to furthering participants' experiences and enhancing outcomes for all. There was evidence that the valuing and recognition of participants' works as worthy works in their own right, was a necessary component of the artist-participant relationship within the partnership model. Furthermore, the validation through public dissemination of works in published formats and through performance (readings) at public events was critical for participants.

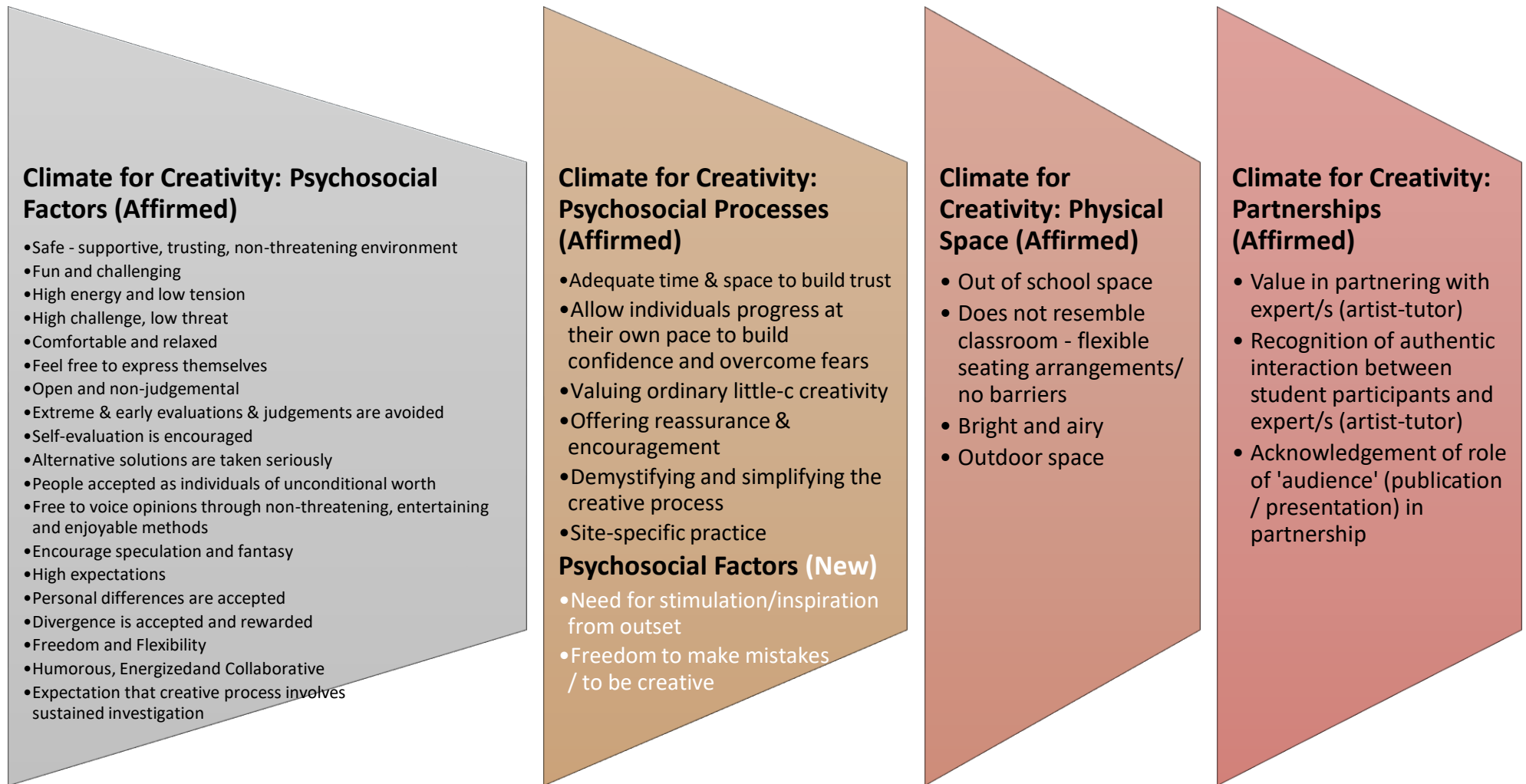


Figure 5.2: Summary of Findings from Fighting Words in relation to facilitating Climate/s for Creativity.

5.5.2 Processes for ‘Being Creative’

The analysis of data from Fighting Words affirmed the presence of pedagogic processes for ‘being creative’ that were articulated by the NCCA’s (2015) guidelines for promoting creativity, as illustrated in Figure 5.3, which included the presence of processes to invoke imaginings, to explore options and alternatives, to implement ideas and take action, to learn creatively and to stimulate creativity using digital technology. The findings presented here contributed further by providing exemplification of particular ways to foster practices for ‘being creative’, mainly evident in the enactment of the sub-processes within the Creative Writing processes that were at the core of all of the Fighting Words activities.

5.5.3 Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes

The findings in relation to the enablement of beneficial outcomes from engagement in Fighting Words activities were presented using a frame that included: communal context, reciprocity, hyphenation and active culture, as illustrated in Figure 5.4. The beneficial outcomes were articulated within the category of *communal context* (quality of collaboration) and these suggest that engagement in the Fighting Words’ participatory arts process is a rewarding experience for the participants who reported developing a sense of (individual) ownership of their creative works, a sense of belonging within a community of learners, a sense of purpose and fulfilment in engagement in Fighting Words, and/ or an enhanced sense of wellbeing. There was a noticeable shift in the sense of ownership from recognition of works as collectively produced by artist/ participant to recognition of the works being ‘individually’ owned by a group of peers, or individual learners within Fighting Words (thus, tutors not perceived as co-owners of works within Fighting Words model). Moreover, the findings indicate a range of beneficial outcomes reported by tutors of this applied Participatory Arts initiative, including a sense of mutual enrichment of tutor and participant, personal satisfaction in facilitating the creative development of young people, and in own creative contribution to process, a sense of rejuvenation from tutoring in Fighting Words, in that it offered a reprieve from personal pressures/ anxieties of tutors, and, finally, in the case of one tutor, a re-orientation of her career.

Imagining	Using different ways of learning to help develop imagination <i>Eg. Creative Writing activity - Cranky Editor character</i>
	Taking inspiration from the courage and imagination of others – <i>Eg. Creative Writing process - Brainstorming ideas</i>
	Expressing feelings, thoughts and ideas through movement, writing, music, art, storytelling, drama and imaginative modes of expression - <i>Evident in excerpts from collaborative and individual phase of the model and in publications of students' writing</i>
Exploring options and alternatives	Thinking through a problem step-by-step <i>Eg. The use of board to capture and discuss ideas</i>
	Trying out different approaches when working on a task and evaluating what works best <i>Eg. Thinking, drafting and editing processes involved in creating characters, composing dialogue and deciding setting, timeframe and plot development</i>
	Seeking out different viewpoints and perspectives and considering them carefully. <i>Eg. Collaborative phase - Listening to peers' ideas, weaving others' contributions into story; Individual phase - tutor feedback, hearing direction of storyline taken by others, changing direction of story or introducing a new character based on others' ideas and feedback</i>
	Imagining different scenarios and predicting different outcomes <i>Eg. Role play and character decisions; experimenting with different endings</i>
	Taking risks and learning from mistakes and failures, and repeating the whole exercise if necessary. <i>Eg. Drafting and re-drafting, deciding to create a new character or start over with a new storyline.</i>
Implementing ideas and taking action	Testing out ideas <i>Eg. Creative writing sub-process; Book Project meetings; Wed afternoon Club.</i>
	Evaluating different ideas and actions <i>Eg. Creative Writing sub-process; Book Project meetings; Wed afternoon Club; drafting and editing story; Giving and receiving feedback</i>
	Seeing things through to completion <i>Eg. Publication of completed work; Presentaion of work to an external audience</i>
Learning creatively	Participating in learning in creative ways <i>Eg. Creative Writing sub-process; collaborative writing activity; graphic novel</i>
	Suggesting creative ways that help own learning <i>Eg. Diagrams on Board, illustrations, stimulating reflection through tutor-participant dialogue</i>
	Using a variety of learning tools that help learner to be creative <i>Eg. Role play, use of screen to record dialogue and demonstrate the writing and editing process in action. Artist illustrations to capture visual story</i>
Stimulating creativity using digital technology	Being innovative and creative in using digital technology to learn, think and express oneself <i>Eg. Film and video productions of screenwriting and drama scripts.</i>
	Exploring the possibilities of mixing different technologies and digital media to help oneself reflect, problem solve and present ideas <i>Eg. Use of screen to record dialogue and demonstrate the writing and editing process in action.</i>
	Creating digital media objects which demonstrate creativity and imagination to present learning <i>Eg. Film and video productions of screenwriting and drama scripts.</i>

Figure 5.3: Findings from Fighting Words in relation to Processes for ‘being creative’

The remaining three categories of reciprocity, hyphenation and active culture revealed the intentions and processes that underpinned the enablement of these and other beneficial outcomes with the Fighting Words case study. As shown in the previous case study of Upstate, the enablement of the aforementioned beneficial outcomes were shown to be reliant on reciprocity enabled through the fostering of mutually nourishing of artist/ tutor and participant relationships, which can be enacted by an asset-based model (building on strengths of participants) and processes that include participants listening to each other, having their voice heard, and learning to express their ideas, and through the presentation of creative writing works in the public sphere to enhance visibility and recognition of works within and beyond Fighting Words. The *hyphenation* (agendas and intentions) showed Fighting Words to be very much focused on developing young people's imagination and enabling them to be resilient, creative and successful shapers of their own lives – thus, Fighting Words had a quest that straddled an arts-based agenda (in the promotion of creative writing) and a personal development agenda (in enabling learners to transform themselves). In respect of the latter, there was ample evidence of the transformative potential of Fighting Words in enabling educational, personal and social benefits for learners, with the findings revealing that the experience of participating in Fighting Words has given students an increased sense of confidence, improved communication skills, enhanced self-efficacy and belief in their own creative ability. Finally, in terms of *active culture*, there was evidence within Fighting Words of the valuing of 'little-c' ordinary (everyday creativity). The fundamental belief that anyone can be creative permeates Fighting Words' activities and this is clearly perceived by the students who have attended the centre who spoke of the freedom that being creative offers and a sense of validation of individual and collective imaginings.



Figure 5.4: Summary of Findings from Fighting Words in relation to the Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes in applied Participatory Arts

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from a deep review of Fighting Words' Creative Writing Centre, and these affirm and extend the range of factors and dimensions to be considered in fostering climates for creativity, as well as provided vignettes of processes that can be enacted to inspire creativity, and enable participants to think creatively and collaboratively produce creative outputs. The findings in relation to beneficial outcomes for both participants and tutors alike further provide a warrant for the consideration of the inclusion of this applied Participatory Arts practice as a means of fostering creativity, enhancing personal development and promoting wellbeing in educational contexts.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This research set out to explore how creativity was being fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives, as well as the beneficial outcomes, with a view to informing the design of an applied Participatory Arts model for fostering creativity in education. The study explored two types of Participatory Arts initiatives, the first led by Upstate and the second led by Fighting Words. In the context of this study, the aim was to provide an evidence base for, and articulate, the factors and processes underpinning climates for creativity, and the (pedagogic) approaches used to foster creativity in Participatory Arts initiatives, as well as exploring the enablement of beneficial outcomes across both Participatory Arts contexts. This final chapter presents a discussion of the findings pertinent to the main research questions, which is followed by recommendations for policy, practice and further study in this area. The chapter concludes with researcher's reflections on the research journey.

6.2 Overview of Research Approach

This research study explored how creativity was enabled in the Participatory Arts contexts of Upstate and Fighting Words. The pragmatic paradigm underpinned the research approach, and in this respect, attention was focused on the research problem, with practical consideration of the methods and processes that best facilitated exploration and analysis of creativity within these pure and applied Participatory Arts contexts. The researcher utilised a range of data collection tools, including: semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, document/resource analysis and field notes from observation of Participatory Arts spaces and practices. In terms of data analysis, the qualitative data were analysed using thematic frames for analysis, including a frame developed from a critical review of the literature, and the quantitative data-sets were compiled and presented in descriptive statistics format. The meta-level analysis of the overall data was conducted through

a qualitative lens. The resultant findings have been collated and are discussed in terms of the main research questions, as follows:

1. How do pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives foster creativity?
 - a) What are the key characteristics and core processes of the pure/applied Participatory Arts initiative?
 - b) What are the principles and conditions underpinning 'climate/s for creativity' within these forms of Participatory Arts initiatives?
 - c) What are the (pedagogical) approaches that contribute to enabling creativity within these forms of Participatory Arts initiatives?
 - d) What are the beneficial outcomes for participants within pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives, and how are these enabled?
2. What are the characteristics of a Participatory Arts Model that could be integrated to foster creativity in post-primary educational settings?

6.3 Discussion of Findings Related to Research Question 1

The first overarching research question: *How do pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives foster creativity?* necessitated an exploration of how creativity was being fostered within pure and applied Participatory Arts initiatives. Two case studies were selected, namely, Upstate and Fighting Words. These case studies contributed to knowledge in the field of creativity firstly through their substantiation of the presence of factors and practices that previous studies from the literature had highlighted as being important in fostering creativity, thus, validating the enactment of Participatory Arts initiatives to foster creativity. Secondly, and very importantly, the case studies revealed new psychosocial processes, as well as physical and partnership dimensions influencing climates for creativity, as well as revealing innovative approaches enabling participants to 'be creative'. Finally, the case studies identified a broader range of beneficial outcomes for participants engaging in such enterprises, and validated the presence of Cohen-Cruz's (2005) four key principles of good practice in both Participatory Arts initiatives. It is important to note that the findings and conclusions in relation to Research Question 1 a) were presented within

the three publications in Appendices A - C, and thus are not discussed further here. This section thus responds to the latter three sub-questions, and in this regard, summarises the findings across both of the case studies in terms of fostering climate/s for creativity, secondly in relation to processes that enable participants to 'be creative', and thirdly, in terms of the enablement of beneficial outcomes.

6.3.1 Fostering Climate/s for Creativity

This section responds to the sub-question: *What are the principles and conditions underpinning 'climate/s for creativity' within pure and applied forms of Participatory Arts initiatives?* The findings indicate that there are three dimensions entailed in fostering climate/s for creativity in the participatory arts: the psychosocial factors and processes, the physical space and the role of partnerships, as illustrated in Figure 6.1.

The **psychosocial factors and processes** identified in this study were initially benchmarked against two key sources from the literature on fostering climates for creativity, namely, the characteristics of a classroom climate that encourages creativity as summarised by Teaching and Learning Scotland (2001) and Hamza and Griffith's (2006) conditions for creativity, as illustrated in the abridged summary in the first column of Figure 6.1. The findings provide affirmation that the factors and processes for fostering climates for creativity identified by both of these sources were present in the participatory arts initiatives under investigation in this study. In this regard, the findings affirm that climates conducive for fostering creativity are safe and supportive, where participants feel comfortable and relaxed (as opposed to tense or threatened). In addition, the expectations of participants are set high, through engagement in activities of sufficient challenge. Moreover, each participant is accepted as an individual of unconditional worth that can make meaningful contributions to the creative enterprise, and have freedom to express themselves openly and without fear of ridicule or failure. And, importantly, participants should have fun together, in entertaining and energising activities that encourage speculation and fantasy. Those facilitating creative sessions need to have an open

and non-judgemental approach, have a positive attitude towards novelty, be tolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty and take seriously alternative solutions offered by participants – divergence, creative thinking and novel responses should not only be accepted but rewarded, aligning in this respect with Nickerson's (1999) view that curiosity and exploration must be stimulated and creative *effort* must be rewarded. This speaks also to the facilitation of types of thinking that enable creativity articulated by others such as: possibility thinking as framed by Craft (2010) and divergent thinking promoted by Guilford (1973) and Torrance (1972).

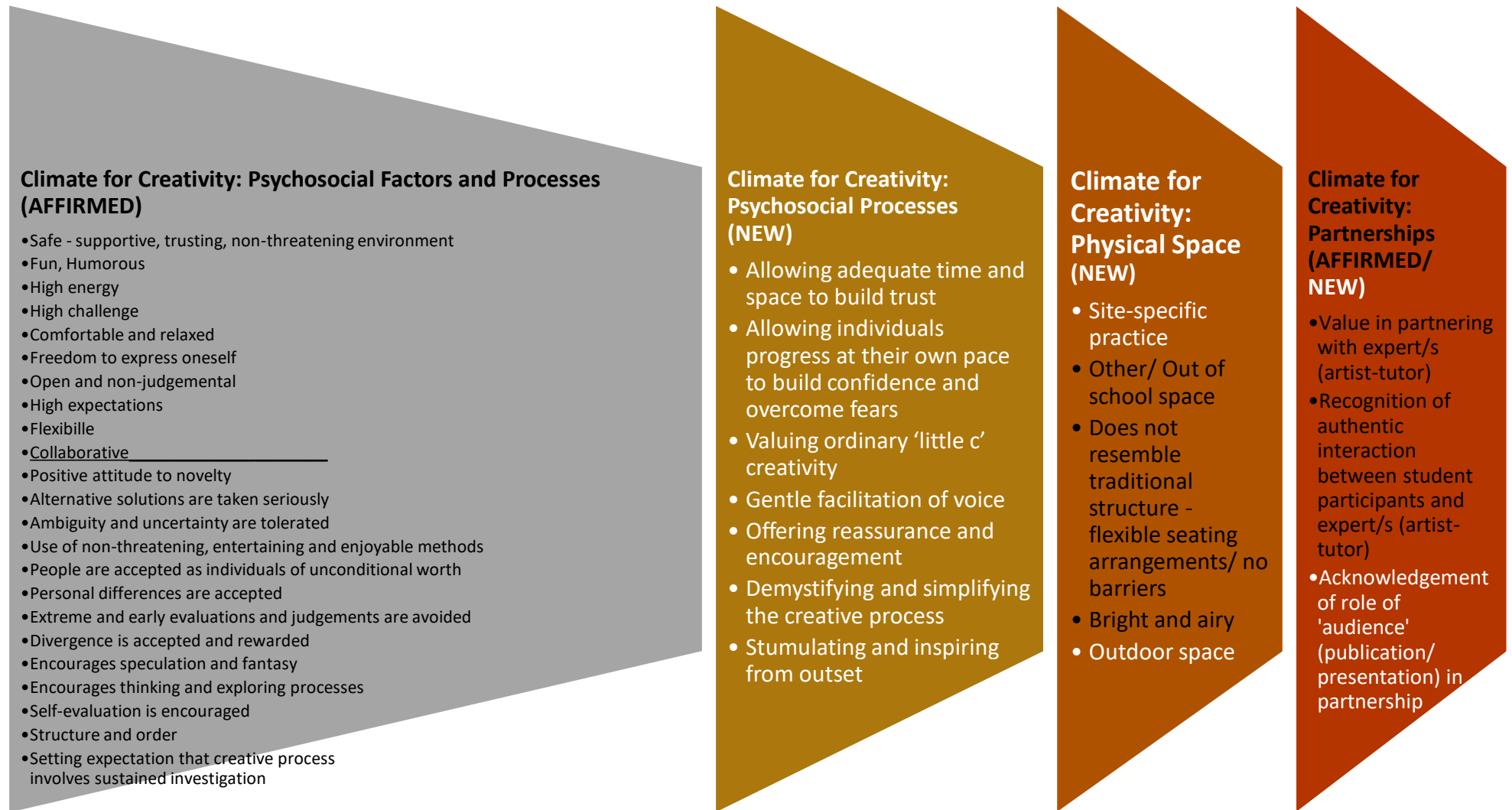
This study further showed the need for facilitators to be mindful to avoid extreme and early evaluation and judgement of participants' contributions, and instead to promote self-evaluation by participants. This stance suggests an understanding of the need to recognise varying levels of creativity as put forward in the literature by Craft (2002) who asserts that creative action in the little-c domain can be evaluated by peers and non-experts; by Boden (2004) whose P-creative classification recognises the type of creativity that occurs when individuals have an idea that is new to them personally; by NACCCE (1999) who suggest that originality can be viewed as 'individual' or 'relative' compared to work previously produced; and finally by Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) whose concept of 'mini-c' creativity describes the type of creativity displayed by individuals engaged in a learning process. Furthermore, participants should be encouraged to imagine and to think and explore processes, as espoused by NACCCE (1999) and Wood and Ashfield (2008) through the use of non-threatening, entertaining and enjoyable methods. Fostering climates for creativity does not happen without planning, so there is a need for structure and order, while allowing for flexibility as found by Halsey *et al.* (2006) and Cremin, Burnard, & Craft (2006). The findings also revealed that engagement in Participatory Arts initiatives gave participants the freedom to be creative and permission to take risks and to make mistakes, factors Nickerson (1999), Halsey *et al.* (2006) and Cremin, Burnard, & Craft (2006) identify as essential for creativity to occur. Furthermore, the findings indicated that engagement in Participatory Arts initiatives over a longer timeframe gives participants the opportunity to partake in an extended learning process. This arrangement clearly sets an expectation that creative processes involve

sustained investigation, advocated by Guilford (1973), Torrance (1988), NACCCE (1999) and Nickerson (1999), a factor stakeholders in this study considered important in promoting creativity and enabling participants to recognise that ideas and outcomes evolve over time and as a result of consistent and persistent effort.

In terms of contributions to new knowledge, the findings further revealed the presence of some additional psychosocial processes that enhance the climatic conditions for creativity, as shown in the second column of Figure 6.1. These included: *allowing adequate time and space to build trust; allowing participants to self-pace to build confidence and overcome fears; valuing ordinary 'little c' creativity; valuing contributions through gentle facilitation of voice; offering reassurance and encouragement to participants; demystifying and simplifying the creative process; and stimulating and inspiring from the outset.* In addition, the stakeholders consistently argued that *adequate time and space* to build trust between artists/tutors and participants was vital. Appropriate time and space were also considered important to allow sufficient flexibility and 'breathing space' for participants to benefit from the opportunity to think and to work and progress at their own pace. It was suggested that giving participants the opportunity to engage in this way enables them to become more confident and better able to deal with any hesitancy or uncertainty that they may feel when venturing into the new or unknown. The findings also reveal that recognising individuals' creativity and acknowledging their contributions by providing them with a platform for being heard (a central premise of participatory arts practice) was a critical factor in fostering creativity and encouraging voice. Stakeholders also identified the importance of *offering reassurance and encouragement* to participants at regular intervals throughout the creative process. This was considered to be particularly important at moments where participants were experiencing difficulties or frustrations and needed support and reassurance to keep them focused and motivated. Similarly, finding ways of *demystifying and simplifying the creative process* by making it accessible and appealing to participants was deemed instrumental in enabling individuals to engage with the creative process. Stakeholders involved in the applied model of participatory arts also identified *the need for stimulation and inspiration from the outset* as a

means of captivating participants interest and stimulating their creativity. Finally, four vignettes of activities have also been revealed that show how some of these psychosocial processes can be enabled, namely: the *Hello Harry* activity to inject some fun; the *Plethora of Objects* activity to encourage speculation and fantasy; the *Celebrating Divergence* activity to encourage divergent thinking; and the *Demystifying and Simplifying Creativity* activity to enable understanding of creativity.

A further significant finding pointed to the centrality of a second aspect – **the physical space** in the enablement of climate/s for creativity, which is summarised in the third column of Figure 6.1.



Climate for Creativity: Psychosocial Factors and Processes (AFFIRMED)

- Safe - supportive, trusting, non-threatening environment
- Fun, Humorous
- High energy
- High challenge
- Comfortable and relaxed
- Freedom to express oneself
- Open and non-judgemental
- High expectations
- Flexible
- Collaborative
- Positive attitude to novelty
- Alternative solutions are taken seriously
- Ambiguity and uncertainty are tolerated
- Use of non-threatening, entertaining and enjoyable methods
- People are accepted as individuals of unconditional worth
- Personal differences are accepted
- Extreme and early evaluations and judgements are avoided
- Divergence is accepted and rewarded
- Encourages speculation and fantasy
- Encourages thinking and exploring processes
- Self-evaluation is encouraged
- Structure and order
- Setting expectation that creative process involves sustained investigation

Climate for Creativity: Psychosocial Processes (NEW)

- Allowing adequate time and space to build trust
- Allowing individuals progress at their own pace to build confidence and overcome fears
- Valuing ordinary 'little c' creativity
- Gentle facilitation of voice
- Offering reassurance and encouragement
- Demystifying and simplifying the creative process
- Stimulating and inspiring from outset

Climate for Creativity: Physical Space (NEW)

- Site-specific practice
- Other/ Out of school space
- Does not resemble traditional structure - flexible seating arrangements/ no barriers
- Bright and airy
- Outdoor space

Climate for Creativity: Partnerships (AFFIRMED/NEW)

- Value in partnering with expert/s (artist-tutor)
- Recognition of authentic interaction between student participants and expert/s (artist-tutor)
- Acknowledgement of role of 'audience' (publication/ presentation) in partnership

Affirmed Factors - Black Font

New Factors - White Font

Figure 6.1: Summary of Findings in relation to facilitating Climate/s for Creativity

The importance of the physical space as a factor that influences creativity has been highlighted by Warner and Myers (2009), Dul *et al.* (2011), Starke (2012), and Davies *et al.* (2012). In this study, the use of *site-specific visits* to stimulate creativity was found to be a feature of participatory arts practice which stakeholders identified as an underpinning principle which had considerable impact on participants' creativity. The *site* was either in an *authentic (real-world)* setting, such as the site-specific practice described in the Ship Street vignette in the Upstate context, or in an *out-of-school* setting in the Fighting Words centre. The necessity of this type of physical space to promote creativity has been also suggested by Jankowska and Atlay (2008, p. 275) who refer to a C-space (Creative Space), a space designed to free users from constraints of the traditional classroom which 'doesn't feel like a classroom' and which 'influences creative thinking'. Stakeholders in this study referring to the importance of this 'other' space in the context of Upstate, or 'out of school' space in the context of Fighting Words, call for a space that does not resemble typical traditional structures, with flexible seating arrangements/no barriers, a space that is bright and airy, and a space that includes outdoor space, features which are also reported by Davies *et al.* (2012) as conducive to creativity. There was, however, one significant variation between the use of outdoor space as described by Davies *et al.* and the use of outdoor space as defined in this study. Davies *et al.* refer to the use of outdoor space as an example of an alternative teaching environment to complement the curriculum such as that found in a Forest School. In contrast, in the case of Fighting Words, the outdoor space was viewed as a welcome retreat where participants could 'take a mental break' when they needed to step away from the creative task or needed a space to think. In this regard the outdoor space was considered a source of relaxation and renewal rather than a place of learning or work. In the case of Upstate, outdoor space was a site of inspiration which informed and influenced the performance and was of relevance to the work produced as described by Wilkie (2004). In this respect, the physical space played a pivotal role in fostering creativity. Furthermore, the use of site-specific locations signifies a move away from traditional spaces and structures to more flexible and adaptable environments.

A third aspect of fostering a climate for creativity was also visible; namely, the significance of **partnerships**, the dimensions of which have been presented in the fourth column of Figure 6.1. Several studies have highlighted the benefits of a *partnership between arts professionals, teachers and schools*, including those undertaken by Stevenson and Deasy (2005), Anderson (2013), and Imms *et al.* (2011). In particular the Poetry Quest evaluation project (Anderson, 2013. p. 3) highlighted that engaging with professional artists ‘inspires pupils, sets a strong context for workshops and provides a performance model pupils are keen to emulate in their own performance at the end of the project’. The Participatory Arts field leans heavily on partnership as an ethic of practice, and it was evident that the engagement of professional artists/tutors and other practitioners was pivotal to furthering participants’ experiences and enhancing outcomes for all within this study. In this regard, the findings of this study support those of Peters’ (2010) study on the benefits of mentorship in an art field, which highlighted that the personal mentor-mentee relationship increases confidence and self-esteem in young persons and contributes to their overall development. There was also evidence from the findings in this study that valuing and recognising participants’ outputs as *worthy works* in their own right, was a necessary component of the artist-participant relationship within the partnership model. This aligns with findings from Imms *et al.* (2011) whose study on partnerships between schools and the professional arts sector attributed the praise and encouragement from art professionals as a strong motivational impact on students. Furthermore, the validation of participants’ work by a wider audience within the community, such as family, friends, colleagues and also by an external audience via public performance and/or public dissemination of published work and presentation at public events was critical for participants.

6.3.2 Processes for ‘Being Creative’

This section responds to the sub-question: *What are the (pedagogical) approaches that contribute to enabling creativity within pure and applied forms of Participatory Arts initiatives?* The findings from this research demonstrate that approaches that contribute to enabling creativity within pure and applied forms of Participatory Arts

initiatives correlate with the pedagogic processes for 'being creative' that were articulated in the NCCA's (2015) guidelines for promoting creativity, as illustrated in Figure 6.2, which included the presence of processes to invoke imaginings, to explore options and alternatives, to implement ideas and take action, to learn creatively and to stimulate creativity using digital technology. The findings contributed further by providing exemplification of particular ways to foster practices for 'being creative', mainly evident in the enactment of the sub-processes within the devising and creative writing processes implemented by the two organisations at the centre of this study. Specific examples of each are outlined in each textbox within Figure 6.2. The sub-processes illustrated a range of approaches and techniques that can be used to support the development of creative skills and inspire participants' confidence and expressivity. The findings indicated that the use of games, exercises and activities that are specifically aimed towards enabling individuals to express feelings, thoughts and ideas through movement, writing, music, art, storytelling, drama and imaginative modes of expression are common approaches to promote creative forms of thinking in the participatory arts. Techniques identified in this study include the simultaneous telling of several stories, the weaving together of individual ideas through a unifying framework, the use of role play, tableaux, improvisation and movement, and the use of vernacular language to encourage participants to create stories and other forms of artistic output based on their own ideas and experiences and using their own voice and dialect. Also, the use of visual methods such as storyboarding, graphic illustrations, and digital technology were all highlighted as powerful tools in bringing ideas to life and stimulating participants' imagination as noted by Jacucci and Wagner (2007), while the use of a whiteboard and flipchart and sheets of text and images on the walls to capture and discuss ideas were also identified as particularly helpful tools in supporting the creative process. The importance of a stimulus rich environment as a support to the creative process is identified by Runco (1993) who argues that this is particularly beneficial for disadvantaged students who may not have access to materials elsewhere and Glăveanu (2013) who highlights the role of affordances (opportunities presented by the physical environment and the presence of resources) in supporting or hindering creativity.

Connecting the creative process with participants' life experience and their view of the world also emerged as an effective means of stimulating creativity and encouraging voice and as a means of inspiring the creation of original and authentic work as advanced by Heath *et al.* (1998) in their study of the impact of community-based arts programmes on adolescent participants. The findings revealed several occurrences of participants learning to explore their creativity in relation to matters that were relevant, interesting, and meaningful to their lives, an approach identified by Nelson (2011) in her study of playmaking as a pedagogy of change with urban youth, as effective in enabling participants to understand the power of their voice as a tool for positive change in society.

The findings also indicated a strong emphasis on the strength of the creative process as a means of enabling participants to learn to trust and respect others and critically consider other perspectives through working collaboratively with peers as found by Holloway and LeCompte (2001) and Imms *et al.* (2011). Working with peers in this way enabled individuals to consider different viewpoints and perspectives and reflect on how these understandings and insights might be used to improve their own creative work. Similarly, the findings demonstrated that opportunities to engage in critical dialogue with professionals in a mentoring capacity was also instrumental in developing participants' creativity and supporting their decision-making as found by Heath and Roach (1999) and more accepting of the guidance of knowledgeable and expert adults and peers as found by Imms *et al.* (2011). The findings indicated that sub-processes within the processes of devising in Upstate productions and creative writing in Fighting Words workshops repeatedly included reflection and discussion with peers and artist/tutors and demonstrated that sharing and exchanging ideas builds participants' confidence in their ability to be creative and to articulate ideas, and also that listening to others, taking others' contributions into account and giving and responding to feedback helped to progress the creative work as described by Heath *et al.* (1998) who found that young people in community arts programmes learn to revise their work based on feedback and reflection and as put forward by Glăveanu (2013, p.74) who identifies the influence of others (audiences) in the process of creativity as 'being very often a determinant as important as the creator

him- or herself'. In addition to the benefits gained from working collaboratively, the findings indicated that providing participants with the opportunity to work individually was also an important factor in supporting creativity, as found by Hasirci and Demirkan (2003) who recommend that creative environments should allow independent work and easy access to resources. The findings also demonstrated that the sub-processes of devising in Upstate productions and collective writing in Fighting Words enable participants to continually test out ideas, evaluate different options and take alternative courses of action, a key process for creativity highlighted by the NACCCE (1999). The findings indicated that the thinking processes involved in creating characters, composing dialogue, agreeing settings, timeframe and plot and the drafting and editing of the story required joint decision making and rigor and instances of each of these components were demonstrated across both settings.

Imagining	Using different ways of learning to help develop imagination <i>Eg. Warm-up games; Devising Process; Storyboarding. Eg. Creative Writing activity - Cranky Editor character</i>
	Taking inspiration from the courage and imagination of others – <i>Eg. Hot seating activity; Improvisation strategy; Recording/ re-play of ideas. Eg. Creative Writing process - Brainstorming ideas</i>
	Expressing feelings, thoughts and ideas through movement, writing, music, art, storytelling, drama and imaginative modes of expression <i>Eg. incorporating multiple narratives into the story framework and the use of vernacular language; physicality as a means of developing characters - 'Honking as deranged geese', 'silly portrait exercises' and 'short improvised tableau'; Circle of Knots activity. Evident in excerpts from collaborative and individual phase of the model and in publications of students' writing</i>
Exploring options and alternatives	Thinking through a problem step-by-step <i>Eg. The Grid activity that enables collaborative writing of the play. Eg. The use of Board to capture and discuss ideas</i>
	Trying out different approaches when working on a task and evaluating what works best <i>Eg. Devising Process – Improvisation sub-process. Thinking, drafting and editing processes involved in creating characters, composing dialogue and deciding setting, timeframe and plot development</i>
	Seeking out different viewpoints and perspectives and considering them carefully. <i>Eg Devising Process – Reflection and Group Discussion sub-processes. Collaborative phase - Listening to peers' ideas, weaving others' contributions into story; Individual phase – tutor feedback, hearing direction of storyline taken by others, changing direction of story or introducing a new character based on others' ideas and feedback</i>
	Imagining different scenarios and predicting different outcomes <i>Eg. Devising Process - Improvisation sub-process. Role play and creative writing sub-process</i>
	Taking risks and learning from mistakes and failures, and repeating the whole exercise if necessary. <i>Eg. Emphasis on process, exploration and experimentation. Drafting and re-drafting, deciding to create a new character or start over with a new storyline.</i>
Implementing ideas and taking action	Testing out ideas <i>Eg. Devising Process – Implementing and responding to improvisation activities. Creative writing sub-process; Book Project meetings; Wed afternoon Club.</i>
	Evaluating different ideas and actions <i>Eg. Devising Process – Improvisation sub-process; drafting and editing script/story; Giving and receiving feedback. Creative writing sub-process, Book Project meetings; Wed afternoon Club; drafting and editing story;</i>
	Seeing things through to completion <i>Eg. Devising Process - Performance sub-Process. Creative writing sub-process, Book Project meetings; Wed afternoon Club.</i>
Learning creatively	Participating in learning in creative ways <i>Eg. Writing a Monologue Activity, Realm of Dream Activity. Creative writing sub-process, collaborative writing activity, graphic novel</i>
	Suggesting creative ways that help own learning <i>Eg. Spider Diagrams, Brainstorming, Visualisation. Diagrams on Board etc, stimulating reflection through tutor-participant dialogue</i>
	Using a variety of learning tools that help learner to be creative <i>Eg. Images, Texts, Flip Chart, Marker, Blu tack, Display on paper/ board, walls, 'space'. Role play, use of screen to record dialogue and demonstrate the writing and editing process in action. Artist illustrations to capture visual story</i>
Stimulating creativity using digital technology	Being innovative and creative in using digital technology to learn, think and express oneself <i>Eg. Digital media creation/recording of productions. Film and video productions of screenwriting and drama scripts.</i>
	Exploring the possibilities of mixing different technologies and digital media to help oneself reflect, problem solve and present ideas <i>Eg, Video-clips, music soundtracks, laptops, digital images, wall charts. Use of screen to record dialogue and demonstrate the writing and editing process in action.</i>
	Creating digital media objects which demonstrate creativity and imagination to present learning <i>Eg. Film, Digital Imagery. Film and video productions of screenwriting and drama scripts.</i>

Figure 6.2: Findings in relation to processes for 'being creative'

6.3.3 Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes

This section responds to the sub-question: *What are the beneficial outcomes for participants within ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ Participatory Arts initiatives, and how are these enabled?* It is perhaps unsurprising that beneficial outcomes accrue for participants and artist-tutors alike from engagement in Participatory Arts initiatives, beyond simply the creation or enactment of a creative artefact/ enterprise in and of itself. This section opens by articulating the beneficial outcomes that were reported by participants in this study. It then progresses to reveal whether there existed evidence of the four key principles (communal context, reciprocity, hyphenation and active culture) in the enactment of the type of good practice within Participatory Arts initiatives that contribute to these broader beneficial outcomes.

6.3.3.1 Beneficial Outcomes

As illustrated in Figure 6.3, the findings in relation to the beneficial outcomes for participants within ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ Participatory Arts initiatives indicate that engagement in a participatory arts process is a rewarding experience for participants and artist-tutors alike.

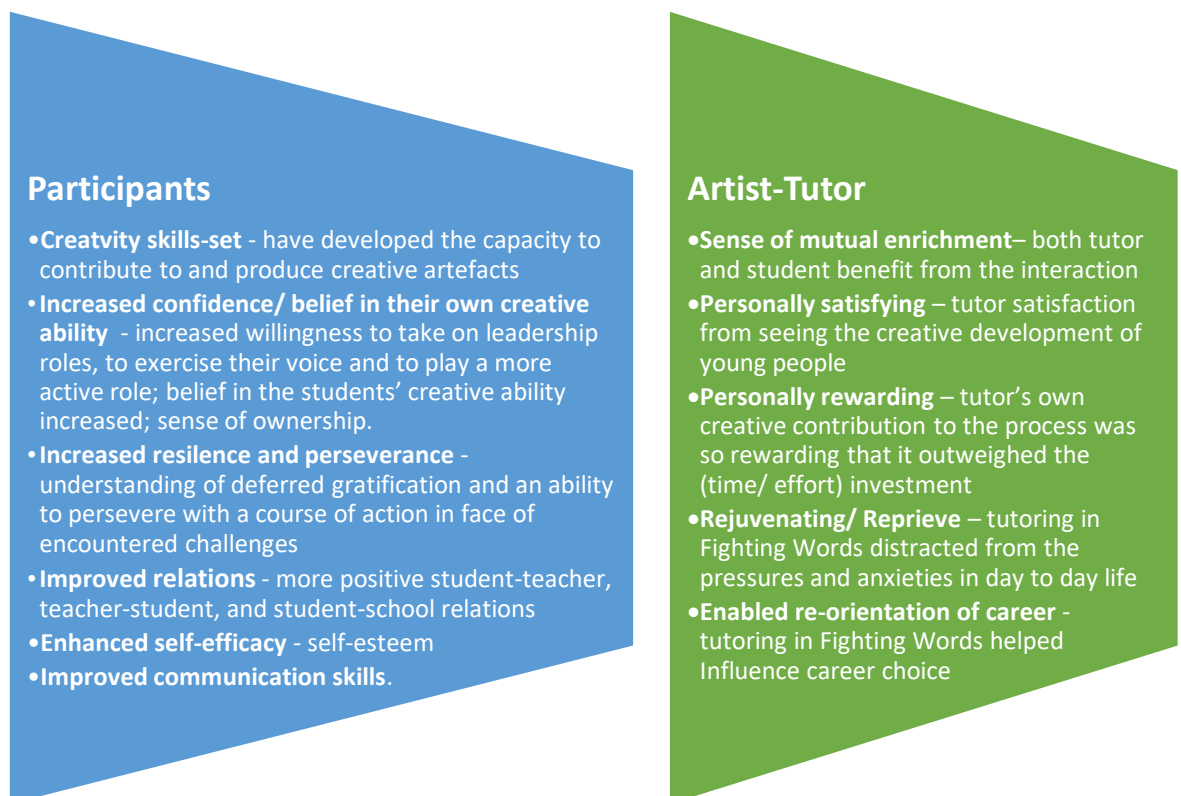


Figure 6.3: Summary of Beneficial Outcomes

The beneficial outcomes for participants in this study included the development of a creativity skills-set, increased confidence/belief in their own creative ability, enhanced wellbeing, increased resilience and perseverance, improved relations, enhanced self-efficacy and improved communication skills. The findings demonstrated that these benefits were enabled by participants' sense of ownership of the work, their sense of belonging from being part of a community, the sense of purpose and fulfilment they experienced from having their voice heard and their creativity acknowledged, and the sense of wellbeing they felt as a result of their enhanced self-efficacy. The sense of belonging expressed by participants aligns with Nicholson's (2005) 'community of identity' in which individuals recognise their own experiences in others and share an understanding of each other's stories and also Anderson's (1983) 'imagined community' where a shared identity emerges through mutual interests or experiences. Furthermore, the sense of support participants experienced indicated that they felt part of a genuine community with strong socio-emotional connectivity as espoused by McMillan and Chavis (1986). Also, the spirit of inclusiveness and diversity underpinning participatory arts practices was identified as a further enabling factor in the personal and creative development of participants.

Benefits were further enabled by the recognition of participants as creators, and the validation of their individual and collective imaginings. The sense of purpose and fulfilment and the sense of wellbeing expressed by participants stems from the sense of pride and achievement they experienced from creating completed original works but also from the satisfaction of being engaged in a creative process as suggested by Csikszentmihalyi (1996, p.2) who observes: 'When we are involved in it, we feel that we are living more fully than during the rest of life.' In this study participants' experience of success and achievement was heightened by the experience of having their work viewed and appreciated by others. The significance of public visibility is highlighted by Cohen-Cruz (2005) who stresses the importance of the collective work being recognised and speaks of the value participants place on having their work viewed and appreciated by others. The experience of having their creativity acknowledged inspires participants' belief in their creative ability, as identified by Nickerson (1999) who asserts that rewarding creative effort is instrumental in

encouraging creativity. In relation to the applied Participatory Arts initiative in this study, the creative writing process was shown to bring particular personal, social and emotional benefits, which supports findings from studies by Chandler (1999) who suggests that writing is an act of empowerment that enables individuals to access self, imagination and voice and can contribute to the mental, emotional, and social development of the writer, and Chandler (2002) who suggests that writing in a group increases self-knowledge, coping strategies, and understanding and appreciation of others. In addition, artist-tutors reported the development of a growth mind-set, a new 'can do' attitude among participants and in the case of the applied Participatory Arts case study, more positive student-teacher, teacher-student, and student-school relations as found by Heath *et al.* (1998) and Imms *et al.* (2011). The findings also illustrated that these beneficial outcomes for participants within pure and applied participatory arts initiatives were enabled by fostering an asset-based approach as articulated by Kretzman and Mc Knight (1993) which focused on relationship building and participants' strengths and on pursuing an artistic quest rather than focusing on individuals' weaknesses and needs or starting with any preconceived ideas of the views or issues a given group of participants might share. This was found to be particularly important in the case of Upstate where artistic projects were conducted in communities for whom political and sectarian matters were highly divisive issues. This outcome substantiates Goldbard's (2006) view that dialogue through art can accommodate polarised views, even in communities that are split over contentious issues and also aligns with studies by Prentkl and Preston (2009) and Nelson (2011) which showed that community can be constructed through an artistic process that allows commonalities to emerge and a group identity to form.

The findings also demonstrated that engagement in a participatory arts process is a rewarding experience for Artist-Tutors/ Volunteer Tutors who expressed personal satisfaction from witnessing others' creative development and growth and the knowledge that they were enabling participants to give voice to untold stories, an opportunity Cohen-Cruz (2005) highlights as worthwhile for artists seeking to engage with alternative narratives. Artist-Tutors/ Volunteer Tutors found that their own creative contribution to the process was so rewarding that it outweighed the (time/

effort) investment. A further benefit expressed by the volunteer tutors more generally, was the sense of rejuvenation and reprieve from the worries of their daily life, and in the case of one tutor, the impetus to enable a re-orientation of career. The presence of mutual benefits for artist/tutors and participants evident in this study align with those reported by Peters' (2010) study of mentorship within inner-city black rhythm tap dancing communities in New York City which found a number of benefits were bestowed on both mentors and mentees including: for the mentors, – a sense of pride, a feeling of usefulness and a sense of legacy by being able to pass on their art form; and for the mentees, - an opportunity to study, perform, and be seen with masters of the art form.

6.3.3.2 Enablement of Broader Beneficial Outcomes

The findings in relation to the enablement of beneficial outcomes from engagement in pure and applied participatory arts initiatives were presented using a frame inspired by Cohen-Cruz's (2005) four key principles in the enactment of good practice within community-based arts: communal context, reciprocity, hyphenation and active culture, which are illustrated in Figure 6.4.

The findings from an analysis of the *communal context* (nature and quality of collaboration/ community) suggest that engagement in the participatory arts process is a rewarding experience for the participants who reported a sense of ownership of the creative work, a sense of belonging within a community of learners, a sense of purpose and fulfilment in engagement in initiatives within both settings, and an enhanced sense of wellbeing. There was a noticeable shift in the sense of ownership from recognition of works as collectively produced by artist/ participant to recognition of the works being 'individually' owned by a group of peers, or individual learners within the applied Participatory Arts context of Fighting Words (thus, tutors not perceived as co-owners of works within Fighting Words model), in contrast to the pure Participatory Arts context of Upstate where a sense of joint ownership prevailed.

The remaining three categories of reciprocity, hyphenation and active culture revealed further the intentions and processes that underpinned meaningful engagement within both contexts. In both the pure and applied Participatory Arts contexts, *reciprocity* was evident in reports of mutual nourishing of artist/ tutor and participant relationships, which was enacted by an asset-based model, building on strengths of participants, as espoused by Kretzman and Mc Knight (1993) and processes that included participants listening to each other, having their voice heard, and learning to express their ideas, and through the presentation of creative writing works in the public sphere to enhance visibility and to facilitate recognition of works within and beyond the context.

In terms of *hyphenation*, there were some variations in the agenda or focus of the initiative in the pure and applied Participatory Arts' contexts. In the pure Participatory Arts initiatives facilitated by Upstate, the *hyphenation* (agendas and intentions) was very much focused on the artistic quest rather than any issues-based agenda, but there was recognition of the transformative potential of the creative arts in enabling educational, community-building, therapeutic, personal and social benefits (whether intentional or not). There was further support within Upstate for the creation of art that would fill a void that other arenas and support mechanisms could not, through the development of a growth mind-set, thus, fostering 'can do' attitude/s among participants. The *hyphenation* within Fighting Words was very much focused on developing young people's imagination and enabling them to be resilient, creative and successful shapers of their own lives – thus, Fighting Words had a quest that straddled an arts-based agenda (in the promotion of creative writing) and a personal development agenda (in enabling learners to transform themselves). In respect of the latter, there was ample evidence of the transformative potential of Fighting Words in enabling educational, personal and social benefits for learners, with the findings revealing that the experience of participating in Fighting Words has given students a creativity skills-set, increased confidence/belief in their own creative ability, enhanced wellbeing, increased resilience and perseverance, improved relations, enhanced self-efficacy and improved communication skills.

Finally, in terms of *active culture*, there was evidence across both the pure and applied Participatory Arts contexts in this study of the valuing of 'little-c' ordinary (everyday) creativity, of attempts to foster a spirit of inclusiveness and diversity, and of recognition of participants as creators and that participants frequently get more out of making art than viewing art. Providing the opportunity for creative self-expression is one of the distinguishing features of the arts according to Heath and Roach (1999, p.33) who identify the important role of arts-based organisations in providing a '*unique element of imaginative creativity*' not found in other outlets. At the core of this approach is recognition by stakeholders and participants themselves that all participants are creative, which was clearly evident within the pure Participatory Arts setting of Upstate and the applied Participatory Arts setting of Fighting Words, whose cultures are underpinned by the fundamental belief that anyone can be creative and this was clearly perceived by all stakeholders in both settings. In the case of Upstate, there was a strong emphasis on the aesthetic value of participants' creative output and the right of all citizens to make art, in the case of Fighting Words, students who have attended the centre spoke of the freedom that being creative offers and of the sense of validation of their individual and collective imaginings. This stance is in line with recent discourse on creativity which highlights the importance of recognising everyone's potential to be creative and the need to acknowledge 'little-c' creativity (Craft, 2001; NACCCE, 1999; Seltzer and Bentley, 1999; Weisberg, 1993).

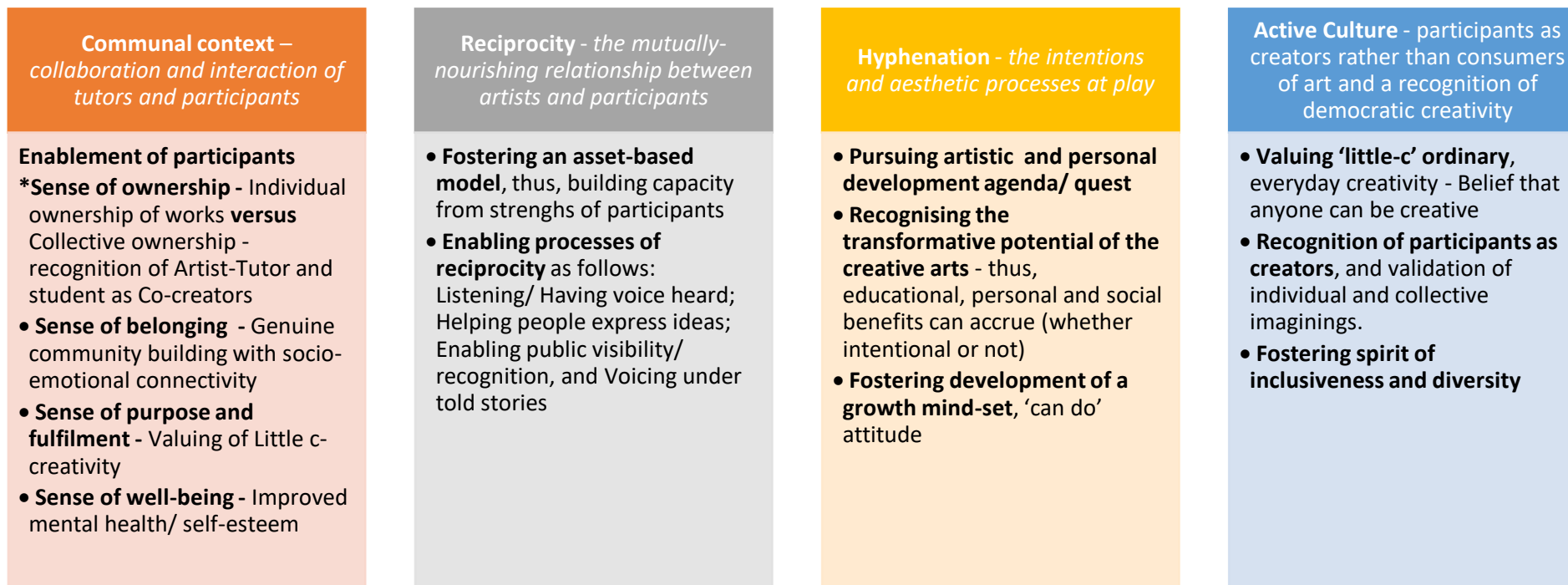


Figure 6.4: Summary of Findings in relation to the Enablement of Beneficial Outcomes in applied Participatory Arts.

6.4 Discussion of Findings Related to Research Question 2

The overall findings from a deep review of *Upstate* and *Fighting Words*, affirm and extend the range of psychosocial factors and processes to be considered in fostering climates for creativity, as well as confirming the importance of the physical space and the role of partnership with artist-tutors. It further provides vignettes of processes that can be enacted to inspire creativity, and enable participants to think creatively and collaboratively produce creative outputs. The findings in relation to the broader beneficial outcomes further provide a warrant for the consideration of the inclusion of Participatory Arts practice as a means of promoting creativity, community building, enhancing personal development and sense of wellbeing.

So, in terms of guidance, *what are the characteristics of this Participatory Arts model aimed at supporting or fostering creativity in the educational context?* In Figure 6.5, the three level Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education (PACE) model, which can be used to promote creativity in education, is presented, and its structure is as follows: General Principles of Good Practice, Fostering Climate/s for Creativity, and, Processes for 'Being Creative'. Each level can be viewed more fully in the A4 size version of this diagram provided within Appendix F. The diagram consists of three shaded columns which should be read from left to right, in the direction of the arrows. The first column, titled 'PACE Model' and shaded brown, illustrates the three levels of the PACE model and its individual components; the second column, titled 'Traced' and shaded purple, summarises the principles, factors and processes of the PACE model which have been identified by previous studies and also traced or found in this study; and finally, the third column, titled 'Mapped' and shaded green, depicts additional principles, factors and processes of the PACE model which have been recorded or mapped in this study but not documented in the literature. The terms 'traced' and 'mapped' were chosen to capture the notion of tracing or tracking previous ground and mapping or charting new territory. In this regard, alignment of findings with previous research appear in the 'Traced' column, and new contributions to knowledge are listed in the 'Mapped' column.

At the top level of the PACE model, there must be consideration of the four general principles underpinning good practice in Participatory Arts type initiatives – otherwise the essence of what constitutes Participatory Arts may be lost, and many benefits that accrue beyond the development of a creativity skillset and creation of creative artefacts/ enterprises would likely not ensue. In practical terms, this means that there must be emphasis on fostering a community of practice – *communal context*; recognition of the need to foster a dual agenda – an artistic agenda plus an education agenda or a creativity agenda etc. - *hyphenation*; acknowledgement of participants' *little-c* creativity – *active culture*; and fostering of mutually nourishing relationships for the artist-tutor and the participants - *reciprocity*.

At the middle level of the PACE model, there must be consideration of three critical dimensions of fostering climate/s for creativity – psychosocial factors and processes, the physical environment and partnerships. The psychosocial factors in enabling climate/s conducive for fostering creativity include the facilitation of a safe and supportive environment that enables participants to feel comfortable and relaxed. It further includes the setting of high expectations through deployment of challenging tasks. In addition, each participant must be accepted as an individual of unconditional worth that can make meaningful contributions to the creative enterprise. Moreover, participants must have the freedom to express themselves in open and non-judgemental ways; and, be encouraged to have fun together through entertaining and energising activities that encourage speculation and fantasy. The important role of the facilitator in enabling climate/s for creativity has been affirmed in this regard, who needs to: exude a positive attitude towards novelty, tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty, accept alternative solutions offered by participants, accept and reward divergence, avoid extreme and early evaluation and judgement of participants' contributions but encourage self-evaluation by participants, encourage participants to think and explore processes through the use of use of non-threatening, entertaining and enjoyable methods, and also provide structure and order, while allowing for flexibility. The use of *site-specific visits* to stimulate creativity can enhance the experience of participants, and the vignette of Ship Street

provides an exemplar of this. The climate for creativity can be enhanced through the following activities - *Hello Harry* activity to inject some fun; the *Plethora of Objects* activity to encourage speculation and fantasy; the *Celebrating Divergence* activity to encourage divergent thinking; and the *Demystifying and Simplifying Creativity* activity to enable understanding of creativity. Furthermore, professional artists/tutors and other practitioners are pivotal to furthering participants' experiences and enhancing outcomes for all. Moreover, valuing and recognising participants' works as worthy works in their own right, and the presentation of participants' work in the public sphere, are critical aspects in validation *of* works and *for* participants.

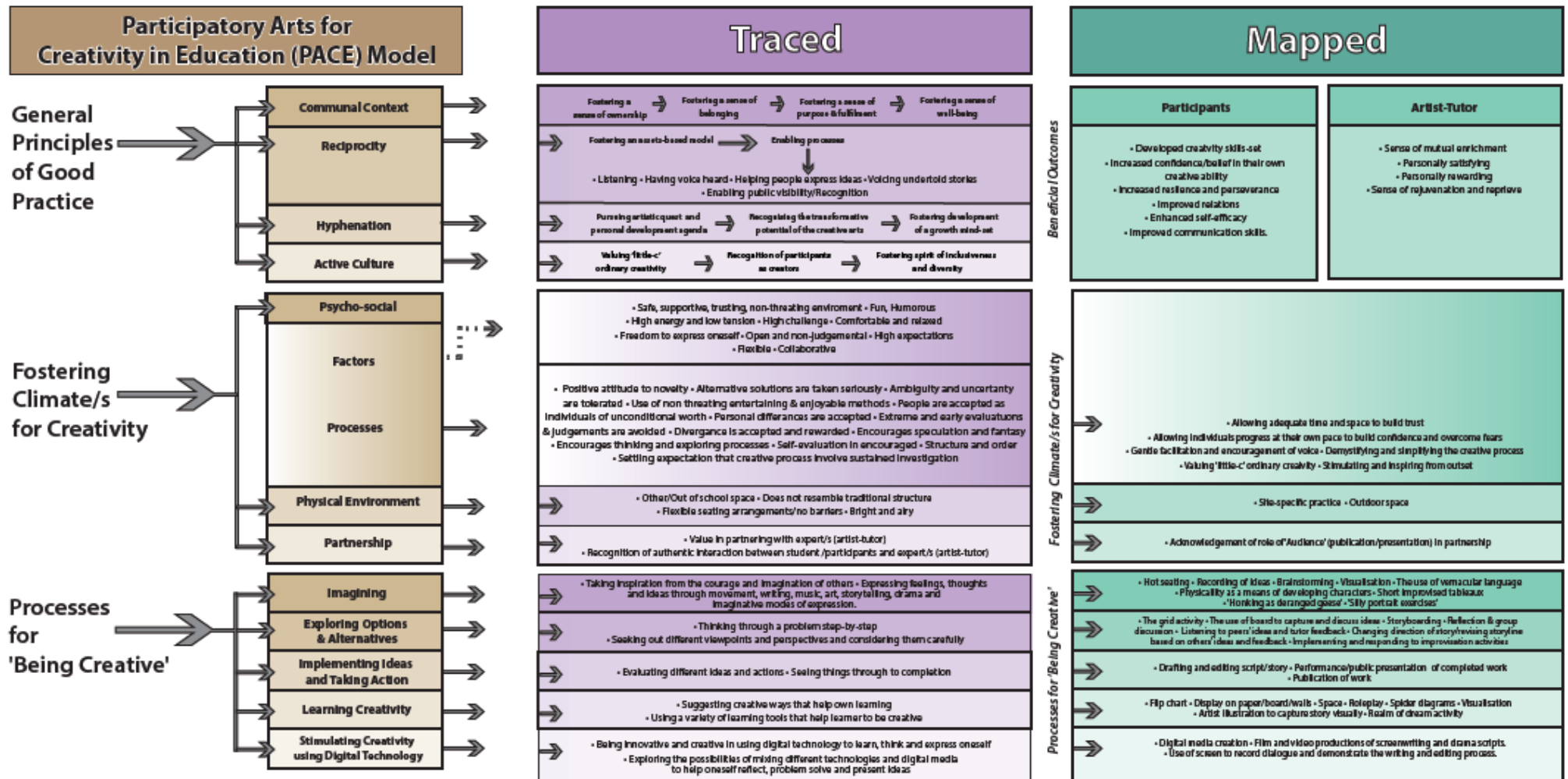


Figure 6.5: Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education (PACE) Model

Finally, at the bottom level of the PACE model, the enablement of creativity through a set of (pedagogic) processes must be enacted. These include enabling participants to engage in processes that encourage imagining, and that allow them to explore options and alternatives, through implementation of ideas and actions. The process is enriched through learners' engagement in activities that enable them to learn creatively, and this can be stimulated in many ways including the use of digital technologies. Examples within the devising process and its creative sub-processes include activities such as: Circle of Knots which shows the imagining and development of ideas through movement and tableaux; tableau activities, collaborative improvisation exercises for activating engagement of more reserved participants; Grid activity, exercise for story-boarding and the collaborative formation of storylines; and, Monologue exercises as a means of inculcating a sense of creativity and self-belief among groups with challenging behaviours. Further examples of pedagogic practice and approaches with respect to enabling learners to become creative within the *creative writing* sphere and its sub-processes include strategies such as the use of narrative based scenarios, role-play, brainstorming, documenting and projecting participants' words on a 'live' screen, and the use of graphic illustrations to depict characters and elements of plot.

As the Participatory Arts is the defining approach and context of this model, its successful implementation is contingent to the guidance of appropriately qualified and experienced facilitators who have knowledge and skills in the specific artform but are also sensitive to a hyphenated artistic process. As such the successful implementation of the PACE model would be reliant on engagement of professional artists, preferably artists who are experienced in working in a community context, within the partnership. The PACE model, therefore, necessitates the development of greater links between schools and local community arts services where such services exist and where the providers have gained recognition for the quality of experience and artistic output generated through their work with the local community. Partnerships between schools and artists from a range of disciplines would enable the successful implementation of the model and increase the likelihood of a positive outcome. Ideally, therefore, the lead facilitator will be an artist-tutor, a professional

who works in a specific area of the arts that has the skills-set to tutor school-aged children. However, it is accepted that for financial and other reasons, not all schools would be able to engage a professional artist. In these cases, the lead facilitator would likely be a qualified teacher, preferably one who has an understanding and appreciation of the participatory arts and a willingness to guide the artistic process in a manner that respects and upholds the principles underpinning the pursuit of a dual agenda that is concerned with the creation of quality artistic output and also alert to the benefits an artistic process brings to those involved in the creation of art. Preferably the teacher leading such a project will have undertaken training on the PACE model emergent from this study. As has been shown in this research, a safe, creative and playful environment that supports and encourages openness, spontaneity and risk-taking is paramount to the promotion of creativity. The PACE model therefore requires a facilitator who has *the skills to establish such an environment and gain participants' confidence, trust and respect.*

6.5 Contributions to New Knowledge

This research study has made contributions to knowledge as follows:

- 1) The study firstly affirms the value of Participatory Arts initiatives in fostering creativity, and furthermore that the practices within these initiatives enable the type of 'learning for creativity' outcomes articulated by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in Ireland. Furthermore, it revealed beneficial outcomes for participants, including: the enhancement of their creativity skills-set, improved confidence/belief in their own creative ability, enhanced wellbeing, increased self-efficacy, increased resilience and perseverance, improved communication skills, more positive relations and the development of a growth mind-set / 'can do' attitude. The study also found a number of benefits for Artist-Tutors/ Volunteer Tutors facilitating the participatory arts process including the personal satisfaction of being a mentor, the gratification of having a positive influence on others, having their creative contribution to the process recognised, a sense of rejuvenation and

reprieve from the worries of their daily life. However, it should be noted that while responses from participant groups in this mixed methods study were triangulated, the findings in relation to beneficial outcomes described in this study are self-reported or reported by others. As response bias is often a common feature of self-reported data, a phenomenon whereby individuals respond positively for various reasons including to 'look good', even if the survey is anonymous (Rosenman, Tennekoon & Hill, 2011), it is important to acknowledge that the beneficial outcomes identified in this research may be overstated.

- 2) The study further provides an evidence base for the Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education (PACE) model, a three-layered guide on the principles, practices and processes that may be used to foster creativity in education. Within each level of the PACE model is a clear and comprehensive list of factors that have been found to be effective in fostering creativity in participatory arts settings, and that may, therefore, have the potential to contribute to the enablement of creativity in education. The top level of the model recognises four general principles of good practice in Participatory Arts type initiatives, namely, communal context, reciprocity, hyphenation and active culture, all of which are key to implementing effective participatory arts initiatives and likely to accrue wider beneficial outcomes for participants. Furthermore, the middle level of the model articulates critical dimensions of fostering climate/s for creativity within Participatory Arts initiatives, namely the psychosocial conditions and processes, the physical environment and the role of partnership. Finally, the bottom level of the model summarises pedagogic processes that need to be enabled in order to foster creativity, which include the implementation of processes to invoke imaginings, to explore options and alternatives, to implement ideas and take action, to learn creatively and to stimulate creativity using digital technology. However, as the model originated in a participatory arts context, it is worth remembering that initiatives like Fighting Words or Upstate are often 'doomed to succeed' due to factors such as novelty value, voluntary engagement and escape from

daily routine. The extent to which such factors can be present in the everyday school environment is significantly reduced and therefore the implementation of the model in such different circumstances may pose some very real challenges.

- 3) The study affirms and extends the knowledge base on psychosocial factors and processes that foster climates for creativity, and that enable learners to become creative. In terms of psychosocial factors the findings affirm that climates conducive for fostering creativity tend to: be safe and supportive; enable participants to feel comfortable and relaxed; set high expectations and challenging tasks; accept each participant as an individual of unconditional worth that can make meaningful contributions to the creative enterprise; allow participants the freedom to express themselves in open and non-judgemental ways; encourage participants to have fun together, in entertaining and energising activities that encourage speculation and fantasy. Processes that enable learners to become creative affirmed by this study include the experience of interacting with a facilitator who exudes a positive attitude towards novelty, sets the expectation that creative process involves sustained investigation, tolerates ambiguity and uncertainty, accepts alternative solutions offered by participants, accepts and rewards divergence, avoids extreme and early evaluation and judgement of participants' contributions but encourages self-evaluation by participants, encourages participants to think and explore processes through the use of non-threatening, entertaining and enjoyable methods and provides structure and order, while allowing for flexibility. In terms of contributions to new knowledge, the findings further revealed the presence of some additional processes that enhance the climatic conditions for creativity. These included: *allowing adequate time and space to build trust; allowing participants to self-pace to build confidence and overcome fears; valuing ordinary 'little c' creativity; valuing contributions through gentle facilitation of voice; offering reassurance and encouragement to participants; demystifying and simplifying the creative process; and stimulating and inspiring from the outset.* Many of

the factors and processes outlined here are characteristic of an effective learning environment and reflect practices associated with good teaching. In this respect, many elements of the PACE model are compatible to education settings and a willingness and enthusiasm for the model would, despite the challenges, place it well within the reach of many schools.

- 4) Moreover, the study further provides vignettes that can be used as guides by tutors/ teachers in fostering climate/s for creativity. The climate for creativity can be enhanced through the following activities - *Hello Harry* activity to inject some fun; the *Plethora of Objects* activity to encourage speculation and fantasy; the *Celebrating Divergence* activity to encourage divergent thinking; and the *Demystifying and Simplifying Creativity* activity to enable understanding of creativity. Furthermore, the site-specific vignette of Ship Street provides an exemplar of how the physical environment can contribute to the climate for creativity. Nonetheless, a significant challenge to implementing the PACE model in schools, is the potential restrictions of the physical environment and its association with formal learning and assessment. It should be noted that in the case of Fighting Words, the significance of the 'out of school' experience was repeatedly cited by stakeholders. Similarly, in the case of Upstate the use of site-specific locations as a stimulus was considered an important factor.

- 5) Finally, the study also provides vignettes that can inform pedagogic practice and approaches with respect to enabling learners to become creative. Examples within the devising process and its creative sub-processes include activities such as: Circle of Knots which shows the imagining and development of ideas through movement and tableaux; Tableau activities, collaborative improvisation exercises for activating engagement of more reserved participants; Grid activity, exercise for story-boarding and the collaborative formation of storylines; and, Monologue exercises as a means of inculcating a sense of creativity and self-belief among groups with challenging

behaviours. Further examples of pedagogic practice and approaches with respect to enabling learners to become creative within the *creative writing* sphere and its sub-processes include strategies such as the use of narrative based scenarios, role-play, brainstorming, documenting and projecting participants' words on a 'live' screen, and the use of graphic illustrations to depict characters and elements of plot. In terms of the many vignettes that might be used to inform pedagogic practice, a word of caution is needed in relation to the implementation of these activities. It is important to note that the activities described in this thesis occurred as part of an ongoing creative project, in spaces that enthused and stimulated participants and which they voluntarily joined. In terms of replicating the vignette activities, in post-primary education, it would be important that the activities are not done in isolation as some sort of stopgap measure to promote creativity. Rather, it is imperative that any attempts to foster creativity in education through participatory arts practices would embrace all three levels of the PACE model, and in a context where there is a genuine interest and commitment to fostering climate/s for creativity and implementing processes that enable young people to 'be creative'. Otherwise, there is a real danger that the formulaic application of techniques would be ineffective or even counterproductive. Finally, a prerequisite of the PACE model is that *adequate time and attention is given to the artistic process* in order to allow a *quality artefact* to develop and potential beneficial outcomes accrue. In this regard, and in respect of the process/product and intrinsic/instrumental tensions that dominate the field of participatory arts, a balanced and sensitive approach, which recognises and values the importance of both *process and product*, and shows due regard and appreciation for both *the intrinsic and instrumental value of art* is a must.

6.6 Recommendations

The following key recommendations have been made in relation to dissemination and further studies in this area.

The *first recommendation* of this study is that the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in Ireland be invited to critically review the current guidelines on fostering creativity in education in light of the findings from this research study. The current NCCA guidelines were updated in 2015, however, there is still a strong reliance on quite generic information on how to integrate and foster creativity in education within the guidelines. This study offers the Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education model, the PACE model, as a guide for fostering creativity in education with evidence-based strategies that encourage participants' expressivity, imagination and creativity. It further offers examples of contextualised processes for 'being creative', with detailed descriptions of the conditions and factors that are necessary in the creation of climate/s that foster creativity. This study therefore provides an evidence-based model and strategies that can be used to inform future policy and strategies initiatives for creativity being spearheaded by the DES, and/ or used as a reference point on creativity during the next phase of curriculum review by the NCCA in Ireland.

The *second recommendation* relates to the enhancement of partnership between schools and artists/ arts-based/ community-based organisations (a critical dimension of fostering climate/s for creativity identified in this research study) to facilitate greater engagement with more diverse populations, and sharing of more diverse artforms. The Creative Schools initiative is currently offered across 150 primary and post-primary schools in Ireland, with Creative Associates appointed for circa 9 days to each school on a yearly basis. This study has shown the importance of partnership with professional artists and communities in the enablement of creativity and a range of beneficial outcomes, and therefore it is recommended that the term of these Creative Associates be increased to allow more weekly contact with schools

throughout the school year, and thus more regular and sustained engagement with the process, and more time and space to develop trust and meaningful relationships with the school, and between the school and participating partners. This will allow for integration of creativity in education, guided by evidence-based models, such as the PACE model.

The *third recommendation* of this study is to develop a Creativity Toolkit for teachers (and indeed artist-tutors) interested in fostering creativity through the Participatory Arts process in educational contexts, and to further facilitate workshops to acclimatise practitioners to the PACE model and associated approaches. The Creativity Toolkit would include the vignettes identified in this study, along with other suitable resources, providing practitioners with fuller examples of processes and practices that foster creativity in learning contexts. In particular, it is recommended that a specifically designed continued professional development programme on fostering creativity be made available to teachers in schools seeking to design or develop a Transition Year curriculum.

The *fourth recommendation* is that further research be conducted on the PACE model to trial and test the model within the mainstream Irish post-primary context, in order to establish whether it can be validated as a tried and tested model. Moreover, there is an urgent need for a broad evidential base to include quantitative measurable outcomes. The participants in this research study spoke in overwhelmingly positive terms of the benefits derived from engagement with the participatory arts. However, given the potential for response bias in self-reported data, it is recommended that a study measuring the beneficial outcomes of the participatory arts using carefully chosen instruments and methods, other than self-report or opinion, be conducted to get a more impartial view of the impact of participatory arts on participants. It is also recommended that further research be conducted on other applied Participatory Arts type initiatives to further refine and articulate factors and processes that foster creativity in the context of education. In this regard, the frame for analysing creativity in the Participatory Arts initiatives in this research study may be useful in the

evaluation of such creative initiatives. It is further hoped that the Arts Council of Ireland would consider providing funding to research these artistic endeavours that have the potential to foster creativity or promote wellbeing and other beneficial outcomes within educational contexts.

6.7 Researcher Reflections on Research Journey

There were many challenges and much learning on this journey. The various phases of this research study have had a significant impact on my learning as a doctoral student. In the initial phase of the research, the focus was on research design and data collection. The findings from the first phase of analysis (2015-2018) from both case studies resulted in three main publications, a book chapter setting the context for and highlighting key processes within Upstate' productions which was for an edited collection on devised performance in Ireland, and two journal article publications disseminating initial findings from the Fighting Words case study. The second phase of analysis involved re-engagement with the literature to construct a frame for analysis, and rigorous re-coding and categorisation of data-sets to respond more fully to the core research questions. This second phase of analysis, conducted in 2018-2019, thus responded more directly to the overarching focus of the research, which was to explore processes and practices that enable creativity within Participatory Arts initiatives. This was the most illuminating in terms of understanding and implementing processes that ensure rigour and evidence-based outcomes. The second phase of analysis process involved re-engagement with the literature to create a frame for analysis for creativity, and revisiting and coding each of the data sets accordingly. This resulted in the creation of an evidence-based trail that allowed the articulation of findings, where alignment of findings with previous research could be clearly traced, and new contributions to knowledge firmly mapped. The process of bringing all of the elements of each case study together proved useful, as the overall findings provided clearer understanding of the ways in which creativity was supported and fostered within pure and applied Participatory Arts contexts.

Pursuing doctoral studies is a challenging, enlightening and rewarding journey. I have learned much about the research process and the challenges and opportunities it presents. I have also learned that research is in itself a creative process and that the doctoral journey entails many of the factors identified in this study including adequate time and space to allow 'breathing space' for the researcher to think and progress at his/her own pace and become more confident in the research and writing process. The doctoral candidate also benefits from other aspects of a creative process including having contributions validated by peers through the publication and dissemination of work and receiving reassurance and encouragement from his/her supervisor particularly at moments where the candidate may be experiencing difficulties or frustrations and in need of support and reassurance to remain focused and motivated. The researcher found the supervisory role critical in demystifying and simplifying the research process and setting the expectation that the doctoral journey is a creative process which involves persistent and sustained investigation.

The last part of the journey will involve dissemination of the findings that emerged from the second phase of analysis of data-sets, which ultimately led to the articulation of an applied Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education model, the PACE model. In this regard, the remaining work will involve the creation of the creativity toolkit, and accompanying workshop for practitioners. Furthermore, it is envisaged that two publications will result from the second phase of research carried out for this study, the first a paper to position the PACE model as a guide for the integration of creativity in education, and the second, a paper to report on the beneficial outcomes emergent from engagement in pure and applied participatory arts initiatives.

Finally, the learning and insights that I have gained as a result of my journey will inform and benefit my teaching in higher education both in terms of how I foster climates for creativity and also the pedagogical processes that I develop and implement to encourage creativity among my students. It is hoped that this experience will in turn enable and inspire students to foster creativity in their practice

in the post-primary classroom. My disciplinary areas of English pedagogy and Drama in Education lend themselves particularly well to Participatory Arts approaches and many of the processes illustrated in the vignettes throughout this research will be adapted to inspire graduate teachers to introduce innovative approaches in their classroom practice.

6.8 Conclusion

This research set out to explore how creativity was fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives, the beneficial outcomes that emerge from such practices and the characteristics of an applied Participatory Arts model aimed at fostering creativity in the educational context. The findings suggest that the Participatory Arts are a powerful agent for creativity and that promoting creativity through the Participatory Arts brings much wider benefits beyond achieving the immediate desired effect of fostering creativity. The research provides a strong rationale for the inclusion of Participatory Arts not alone as a means of promoting creativity but also for the purposes of community building, enhancing personal development and engendering a sense of wellbeing. This research has presented an evidence-based account of the principles and conditions underpinning climates for creativity, and the approaches used to foster creativity in participatory arts initiatives. The Irish education system is currently undergoing significant changes in terms of current and planned curricular reform. Creativity, wellbeing, quality and engagement and participation have been identified among the core principles underpinning the reform. A conglomeration of factors, including the ongoing curricular reform, the recent introduction of *Encountering the Arts Ireland* and the *Creative Schools* initiative as part of the wider Creative Ireland Programme, suggest that perhaps the time is right for a more fulsome consideration of the Participatory Arts in education and the emergence of a more collaborative approach to learning in educational and community contexts. In this regard, the PACE model is presented as a guide to practitioners and educational researchers, and indeed those involved at government levels in developing policy and strategy, as one possible approach that might be considered with respect to the promotion of creativity in education.

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Appendices

Appendix A Publication 1 Case Study: Upstate Theatre Project

‘Whose art is it anyway?’ Devising in Participatory Arts and Professional Theatre Practice: A Critical and Historical Analysis of Upstate Theatre Project

Irene White

Introduction

A survey of contemporary Irish theatre practice indicates that an ever-growing number of theatre companies are using devised performance as they seek to develop new approaches to theatre-making and explore new theatrical forms. Within this mix is the work of Brokentalkers, ANU Productions and Una McKeivitt. Not only do these companies and artists place devising at the centre of their performance practice but they share the stage with untrained performers. This chapter begins from the premise that while these approaches are becoming more widespread and visible, they are not new. Their origins, in fact, are deeply rooted in the field of community-engaged theatre. As Charlotte McIvor argues elsewhere in this collection, for example, the concept of devising as a politicised practice merging professional and non-professional artists has been in operation in community arts practice in Ireland since at least the 1970s.

Upstate Theatre Project has been one of the long-standing innovators in the area of community-engaged theatre from the 1990s onwards. This chapter proposes that the new thinking among some professional theatre-makers mirrors the model of collaborative, participatory practice developed by Upstate over seventeen years, and represents a logical progression of that socially-engaged tradition. It is also suggested that an appreciation and acknowledgement of the aesthetic value of community art informs the current devising movement within the professional sector. It is notable for example that many recently acclaimed independent devising artists including Brokentalkers’ Gary Keegan and Feidlim Cannon, and ANU Productions’ Louise Lowe, have found a natural home in Upstate.

Upstate is an Arts Council-funded ‘community-engaged performing arts organisation’ which has operated in the border region between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland since 1997 (Upstate Theatre Project, ‘About’).

Specialising in devised performance, Upstate enjoys an international reputation in the fields of professional and community-engaged theatre and has made a significant contribution to both participatory arts and professional theatre practice in Ireland. Founded by Declan Gorman and Declan Mallon, the company has successfully and consistently interwoven participatory engaged practice with professional theatre practice in the creation of local, regional and national theatre productions. Upstate's recent collaborations with some of the newly emerging artists referred to above has raised the company's profile further as those artists have achieved national and international recognition in their own right. It is not surprising that Upstate should gravitate towards these young artists who challenge form and style and whose shared ethos demonstrates a resolute belief in the aesthetic value of collaborative community art, nor is it surprising that such artists should be drawn to work with the Drogheda-based company. Upstate's unique geographical and cultural position in the Irish theatrical landscape make the company's model a useful lens through which we can view the place of community-engaged theatre and devised practice in Ireland. The company is uniquely positioned for a number of reasons. It is one of the longest established community-based theatre organisations and the only theatre company to consistently provide community arts in a regional and cross-border context in the Republic of Ireland. Furthermore, while Upstate's practice has always encompassed both professional and community theatre, their funding status has changed from that of a professional touring company to an arts participation organisation in 2010. This makes them a compelling case study of how the funding landscape has changed in Ireland since the 1990s and the place of collaborative, community or devised practice relative to these shifts.

This study is informed by my own longstanding association with Upstate. My relationship with the company began as a local citizen and audience member based in Drogheda and developed from there to my current position as a voluntary board member of the company. From my position on the board, I have watched Upstate develop its practice over the past seven years. Prior to joining the board, I was engaged on an occasional basis as assistant director and stage manager with the professional touring wing of the company before going on to work as a facilitator and director on some of the company's cross-border projects. This trajectory has given

me insight into the company's work and their role in the local community, along with their position in the wider regional context and their contribution to political and social affairs in the border area in the early years of the Northern Ireland peace process. My involvement with Upstate has raised my own awareness of the possibilities and challenges of theatre making, the frustrations and satisfactions of the devising process and the scope and constraints within which a theatre company must operate.

The research for this chapter was conducted through a series of interviews with Declan Mallon, Director of Upstate; Declan Gorman, former Artistic Director of Upstate; and members of Upstate's artistic team of recent collaborators, including Stephen Murray, Louise Lowe (ANU Productions), Feidlim Cannon (Brokentalkers), and Paul Hayes (Catastrophe). A number of the community projects' participants also contributed to the research through a focus group. I offer an analysis of Upstate's work at various stages of the company's history, as well as examining the relevance of its model in relation to the developing collaborative, participatory practices currently in vogue in contemporary Irish theatre. The techniques and practices utilised by Upstate's artists are presented here as a backdrop to the contemporary growth of devised performance in Irish theatre. It is not possible, within the confines of this chapter, to provide an exhaustive account of the considerable body of work produced by Upstate over the past seventeen years. Instead this essay will provide a brief overview of a selection of productions from the company's oeuvre in an effort to give the reader a flavour of the variety and breadth of work Upstate has produced.

The discussion begins with an analysis of *The Border Chronicles* trilogy, a series of original devised plays comprising *Hades* (1998), *Epic* (2001) and *At Peace* (2007), that sought to document life in the region known as the border area of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland during a period of immense political, social, cultural and economic change. This selection is taken from work produced by Upstate Live, the company's professional touring wing. The discussion will also examine four productions produced by Upstate Local, the company's community-engaged wing: *Tunnel of Love* (1999), *Come Forward to Meet You* (2011), *Ship Street Revisited* (2012) and *The Far Side* (2013). These productions have been chosen as their chronological order spans the arc of the company's lifetime and thereby offers

a glimpse of how the work has developed over time. *Tunnel of Love* (1999) was the first devised piece created by the company; the other three plays form a trilogy that emerged from Upstate's Shared Heritage Programme which commenced in 2011. This programme, inspired by the archive collected by Drogheda Local Voices, (a project documenting recordings of the town's social history) set out to explore Drogheda's oral histories through contemporary storytelling. The trilogy is also of interest because it provides a snapshot of the work created when Upstate teamed up with some of the newly emerging artists referred to above. This new phase of work developed after the company's restructuring in 2011. The seven plays discussed here therefore illustrate the diverse array of styles and approaches adopted by the company; they highlight the principles and ethos that inform Upstate's work and they offer the reader a broad spectrum of the methodologies and techniques associated with devised practice.

The early years of Upstate Theatre Project

Established as an independent regional theatre company in Drogheda, Co. Louth, Upstate's aim was to bridge the gap between what founders Declan Gorman and Declan Mallon saw as a false divide between professional theatre and community-engaged theatre. From its inception, the company sought to reflect a broad understanding of the place of 'theatre' and 'drama methodologies' in a wider social context. In Gorman's words, 'Upstate Theatre Project was founded initially to explore the interface between art and progressive social values' ('Aesthetics'). The organisation's vision reflected a cultural democratic viewpoint which 'conceives of the arts as a form of political as well as of aesthetic power' (Benson, 1992, 31). A distinguishing feature of Upstate's practice is its emphasis on art for all – its determination to create art and arts practices inclusive of all citizens. The philosophy of cultural democracy is summarised by Benson as follows: '[...T]he case for cultural democracy is moral and political, and grounded in the dominant ideas of modernity. It resists the conception of art and of artists as detached from ordinary life, and argues instead for transcending the divide which has grown up between art and society' (32).

In keeping with the principles of cultural democracy, the company's policy articulates Upstate's aim to improve arts access and provision for all members of the community and, specifically, to expand its audience base to non-theatre goers and to encourage local citizens to participate in the creation of communal art. Upstate's four-strand policy declared the company's socially engaged agenda under the four distinct headings of Local, Learning, Lab, and Live. The company's first publication, *Up and Running: A Review of the First Two Years* (1999, p.3) defined each of these areas as follows: Upstate Local, encapsulated 'the company's community drama animation programmes, whereby Upstate works in partnership with local groups to develop drama activity and to devise original dramas of interest to them'; Upstate Learning was the branch that would provide 'a range of training and education programmes'; Upstate Lab aimed to offer an 'innovative workshop programme, dedicated to researching new approaches to staging and playwriting. Regular action research work is carried out in collaboration with professional actors, designers, choreographers etc., and with local groups and trainees'; and finally, Upstate Live, was the term used to refer to the professional touring wing of the company.

The four-strand policy reveals an aspiration to merge community-engaged theatre with professional practice through collaborative, participatory processes. The provision of experimental workshops and related training and educational supports is an indication of the company's vision and recognition of the strategies required to realise its mission. While the company initially pursued all four areas, Lab and Learning appeared to become less prominent, and Local and Live became the principal strands of the company's practice. This division of practice was most unusual; it distinguished Upstate from other theatre companies operating at the time. It was also a somewhat odd decision given that, on the one hand, the company sought to 'bridge the gap' between professional theatre and community-engaged theatre, and on the other, it drew a distinction between 'pure' professional practice (Live) and collaborative community/professional practice (Local). Both wings were dedicated to working with the community in the creation of original devised theatre. Gorman explains that the Live/Local divide was a first step towards integration against the backdrop of 'widespread indifference that abounded in arts funding, media and industry circles generally to community-engaged practice in the 90s. It

was driven by an ethos of affording equal esteem to diverse ways of making art' (Personal interview). The division of practice, therefore, seems to have been largely a political decision.

While Gorman and Mallon make a clear distinction between the devising processes adopted by Upstate Live and those adopted by Upstate Local, they refuse to distinguish the work in any way that would elevate one over the other. Gorman avows: 'I reject any hierarchical placing of value on work by differing population groups where the work is genuinely creative and motivated by the desire to make change through art – whatever that might mean' (Personal interview). He emphasises that there are many models of devising and Mallon concurs stating, 'there's no one model that we would champion; the method and technical approach will continuously shift in order to suit participants and the aesthetic ambitions of the project' (Personal interview). In the case of Upstate Local, the plays were devised, written and performed by participating members of the local community who were provided with professional facilitation and essential training, whereas the plays produced by Upstate Live, while inspired and informed by the community, were written or adapted from classic texts, directed by Gorman and performed by professional casts, with the occasional inclusion of non-professional or training actors, who then toured the shows locally, nationally and internationally.

The plays of Upstate Live were devised through a process of inquiry and engagement with the community which Gorman describes as akin to action research (Personal interview). Through a range of methods including workshops, focus groups and interviews, members of the community shared their views and ideas which were then explored in dramatic form through drama workshops and public readings before being scripted by Gorman who is explicitly identified as the author. The devising methods used were similar in many respects, but differed in terms of the role of the writer and the associated issues of how ownership of work was designated. According to Gorman, this distinction is important and needs to be made clear at the outset of a project. An analysis of a selection of devised work produced by Upstate Live and Upstate Local now follows.

Upstate Live 1997 - 2010

Although Upstate specialise in devised performance, the organisation also has produced and performed a variety of other work including adaptations of well-known works and plays by local and national playwrights. The first Upstate Live production was Gorman's adaptation of Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Weavers* (1997), a 19th-century epic of a local craftsmen's revolution in 1844 Silesia. Gorman's adaptation drew parallels between the traditions of the North East of Ireland and the remote Polish-German region in which the original play was set. Other plays adapted and produced by Upstate Live include Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1999), Paul Smith's *The Countrywoman* (2000) (adapted by Elizabeth Kuti) and Patrick Kavanagh's memoir, *The Green Fool* (2004). In addition to these adaptations, Gorman directed John McArdle's *Two Houses* (2005), a play for children. In a later phase Upstate Live produced Colm Maher's *The Enemy Within* (2008), Aidan Harney's *Submarine Man* (2009), and Conall Quinn's *The Ones Who Kill Shooting Stars* (2010) developed under Upstate's Writers' Commissioning Scheme which was established and managed by Paul Hayes during his tenure as creative producer with the company.

In terms of work that derived from a devising methodology, Upstate Live produced a series of plays that would eventually become known as *The Border Chronicles*. Written by Gorman, the plays were based on information gathered through interviews, focus groups and public meetings with local communities across the border region over a ten year period. Emerging themes were explored in workshops with professional and community actors who probed and experimented with ideas through improvisation and physical movement exercises. This methodology was adopted with a view to creating original artistic work that reflected the specific cultural context of the geographical and political milieu of the border region. As a socially engaged arts organisation, Upstate sought to capture and express, in aesthetic form, the community's response to the social and political happenings that prevailed in the area during that period. In this regard, the plays are an example of how action research can potentially translate into devised theatre.

Spanning the period 1997 to 2007, the plays offer an account of life in the border region during a time of major political upheaval that covers the signing of the

Belfast Agreement, the uneasy peace which followed it, the beginnings of the 'Celtic Tiger' economic boom and the new phenomenon of significant inward migration. The events that unfolded during that decade are depicted against a backdrop of myths and legends from the ancient civilisations of Greece, Ireland, West Africa and the Baltic region. As the narratives weave back and forth from the surreal world of ancient folklore to the present day Irish political landscape the parallels between these worlds become apparent.

Taking as its starting point the ancient Greek myths of the underworld, *Hades* (1998), the first play of the trilogy, is set in the fictitious border town of Ballinascaul (Town of Shadows) in the months following the Good Friday Agreement, the peace treaty which enabled the end of the Northern Ireland conflict. Inspired by the ancient Greek myths of the underworld, the play is a collection of stories of individuals seeking to overcome the obstacles life has thrown in their path. The characters include a taxi driver and his 15-year-old daughter who sneaks out of their home at night; an ex-champion boxer desperately trying to escape the grip of moneylenders; a boy whose true identity were it to become known would cause great scandal in local political circles and an assortment of local public figures struggling to retain their identity in the midst of the shifting sands of an unfolding peace process. A weave of storytelling, myth, dream and dance *Hades*, won a BBC/Stewart Parker Award in 1999 and drew comment on Upstate's collaborative community approach: '[I]f, as Thomas Kilroy recently stated, a lively, collaborative community theatre is emerging to challenge the traditional pre-eminence of the literary in Irish drama, Upstate Live may well lead the charge' (Byrne 54).

Epic (2001), the second instalment of the trilogy, is set primarily on the Cooley Peninsula in County Louth in the wake of the foot and mouth disease that beset the area in 2001, at a time when border paramilitarism and the threat of a breakdown in the peace process remained prevalent. The play merges the ancient Celtic myth of the Táin Bó Cuailgne with modern reality to portray life in this small farming community following the outbreak of the virus. The four-person ensemble, doubling up in twenty seven roles, present a weave of interconnected stories that trace the devastation and disquiet that swept through rural Ireland as a result of this agricultural crisis. The play begins with two boys witnessing an act of criminality in a

remote, sacred mountain setting. A modern curse is unleashed and a virus affecting livestock spreads through the land. A cull of farm animals disturbs the ancient ghosts on the plains of Meath and a mysterious virus begins to spread into the homes and hearts of people causing computer crashes, factory closures and a trail of deceit and destruction across the country. The play, a combination of storytelling, surreal myth and dream captures the social and economic disaster that faced inhabitants of this area of the border, while paramilitaries continue to try to hold their grip on the community.

Echoing the themes of *Hades* and *Epic*, the final part of the trilogy, *At Peace* (2007), adopts a physical performance style that mixes myth and modernity to explore life in a peacetime border community. A multi-ethnic cast of Irish, African, and Eastern European actors and an onstage use of their respective native languages highlighted the increased cultural diversity experienced by the border area as a result of the rapid population shift occurring in Ireland during the early years of the twenty-first century. The play begins with the fictional discovery of human remains found during the building of a cross-border motorway. Work on the by-pass is held up when a Nigerian ground worker discovers the ancient remains in the path of the bulldozers. The disturbing of the bones appears to trigger a series of strange events in the area and ancient myths of Eastern Europe, West Africa and Celtic Ireland surface as the interconnected stories of a group of Nigerian, Latvian and Irish road workers present on the day of the find unfold.

Together the three plays of *The Border Chronicles* offer a panoramic snapshot of a community in a state of flux, where issues of identity, values and traditions were thrown into disarray during an era of unprecedented political, social, cultural and economic change. Time and place combine to communicate a distinctive cultural context that not only infiltrates the work but isolates Upstate's geographical and cultural position in Irish theatre-making.

During this period, Upstate was funded in equal measure by the Arts Council, the statutory body charged with funding the arts in Ireland, and the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, a European Union programme aimed at stabilising society in the post-conflict era in Northern Ireland and in the counties that form the Border Region of the Republic of Ireland. Arts Council funding was allocated towards core

company costs and the Upstate Live programme, while EU funding supported the development of projects under Upstate Local.

In 2010, the company underwent radical structural changes occasioned by funding cuts and a negotiated arrangement with the Arts Council to cease professional production and regional touring and pursue a purely participatory agenda. Upstate Live ceased to operate and Gorman departed the company to pursue other solo, teaching and public art interests. The company, now under Mallon's direction, continued to be funded by the Arts Council of Ireland but solely under the auspices of the Arts Participation Department. The Arts Council had declined explicitly to support Upstate Local activities previous to this. The upheaval coincided with the arrival of a number of emerging theatre-makers on the Dublin scene who proclaimed their collaborative credentials from an early stage. Some of these practitioners, namely, Louise Lowe of ANU Productions and Feidlim Cannon and Gary Keegan of Brokentalkers, were to become essential in the continuance of the development of practice and form in Upstate as the company changed from an Artistic Director-led to a curatorial model. Interestingly, Upstate's shift from theatre to participatory arts funding occurred at the same time as these artists, whose practice hinged similarly on collaborative devised theatre with community actors, were funded under the Arts Council's theatre budget. The reason for this anomaly is unclear but it illustrates how the funding landscape has changed in Ireland in recent years, impacting on the structure of arts organisations and – by extension – the form of works they produce. Upstate's recent phase of work, the company's development under participatory arts funding and its relationship with this new wave of artists forms part of the discussion that follows below. The discussion begins by examining the history of Upstate Local.

Upstate Local 1998 - 2010

In Upstate's formative years, Gorman and Mallon worked together as co-facilitators. Their first large-scale undertaking was a creative partnership with a local branch of the national organisation Macra na Feirme (meaning Stalwarts of the Land in Gaelic). This organisation provides opportunities for 17 – 35 year olds in rural communities

to interact through participation in a range of social and cultural activities including performing arts. Upstate's partnership with the local Termonfeckin branch culminated in the productions *Tunnel of Love* (1999) and *Zoo Station* (2001). These plays, along with an earlier work devised by Gorman and the Monaghan Macra Arts Club, are documented in the company's publication *Way out in the Country: An Anthology of Community Plays* (2001). In this collection, Mallon recounts how Upstate Local sought partnerships with groups interested in devising and scripting original material. He writes, '[u]ltimately we wanted the challenge of writing about a contemporary community, delving into its psyche, challenging its imagination and hearing its stories by having people from the community write the play themselves' ('Way Out in the Country' 203). A discussion of Gorman and Mallon's artistic partnership and the process of working with the local community in their first devised production, *Tunnel of Love*, illustrate how the company's origins in devising began.

***Tunnel of Love* - Gorman and Mallon**

Set in a fictitious rural village, *Tunnel of Love* (1999) depicts life in a small Irish rural community at the turn of the twenty-first century. The play traces the lives of two fictional families over a two-year period, leading up to and including the day of a troublesome wedding. It is a character-driven, episodic drama that follows a narrative through line concerning families divided by social and economic difference, punctuated by such features as flashback, direct address and stylised movement tableaux. Part of the story involves a local man who emigrates to London to avoid the gossip that will inevitably follow the break-up of his seven year engagement. In London he falls for a woman a few years his junior who also hails from his home village. They return to marry at home but on their wedding day it is revealed that he has had a dalliance in the meantime with his ex. This familiar plot of deceit and betrayal allowed not only for comic episodes, but a serious investigation of emigration, the male psyche, addiction (in a sub-plot concerning an alcoholic family member) and class division in a small community. Some of the later more physical and ritualistic work of Upstate is prefigured in the visual tableaux in *Tunnel of Love*, in particular a highly stylised beginning and ending in which the traditional wedding

game where the couple runs through a 'tunnel' of outstretched guests' arms becomes a portal into dream, memory and altered realities.

Tunnel of Love saw Gorman and Mallon combining their methods, Gorman drawing on a model that he had begun to develop in his earlier work in Monaghan and Mallon bringing his knowledge of youth drama (already a hotbed for devising in Ireland at the time) to the project. They acknowledge that borrowing techniques and methods from other practitioners and theorists helped shape their practice and cite Augusto Boal, Chrissie Poulter and Clive Barker as particular favourites. In line with the principles of cultural democracy underpinning the company's ethos, the duo was acutely aware of the need to develop an inclusive approach that would accommodate the varied needs of diverse communities. Fostering positive relationships and creating an environment of mutual respect that encouraged an exchange of ideas and allowed for meaningful dialogue and critical reflection was a priority. As Gorman and Mallon progressed onto the more complex *Zoo Station*, they saw drama games and exercises as key to achieving such an atmosphere. Consequently, every workshop began with physical and verbal drama exercises – warm-ups, trust and spatial exercises – before moving to more intricate work such as tableaux and improvisations. The company's incorporation of physical theatre promoted an emphasis on physicality and movement, and so workshops and resultant productions typically contained a strong element of choreographed movement. Tableaux depicting abstract physical situations were frequently used as a stimulus for brainstorming ideas which were then developed further into scenarios for improvisations.

Gorman and Mallon describe their work in this phase as character-driven narratives. They cite character as the most important element of the process, deeming it much more important than story. Gorman explains how participants would form a series of tableaux and characters and 'before they knew it, they had created a story and then they had created five stories and then we would say, right, let's take those five stories and see can we find a frame to marry them' (Personal interview). They quickly discovered that a narrative drama form was the key to finding a frame and best suited their purpose and methods. It was an effective vehicle for harnessing the unconnected stories that frequently emerge from collaborative

writing processes. Mallon maintains that because the work was character driven there was no difficulty in developing a script; characters would bring stories with them: 'with clearly defined characterisation and scene objectives, collective writing was not a problem' ('Way Out in the Country' 204). Nevertheless, the collaborative methods used generally led to a hotchpotch of storylines and characters. So, a form consisting of multiple narratives intertwining and unfolding simultaneously was needed.

Gorman observes that dramas with several narratives benefit from the use of devices such as 'unifiers' and 'clustering' (Personal interview). He explains, 'it is helpful to have at least one unifying device – something that all the characters experience even if independently from other characters. And clustering (the gathering together of characters into logical clusters) is a critical step in developing cohesive narratives' (Personal interview). He also recommends that when it comes to penning a story collectively, it is wise to agree a location and a timeline. Gorman and Mallon used these techniques to guide the writing process. In addition to physical drama exercises, their workshops included a succession of creative writing exercises all of which were inspired by what had transpired on the workshop floor and many of which were in the realm of dream or involved memory exercises or working with objects. Participants, having agreed a location and timeline, frequently sat and wrote in seven minute bursts. This balance of freedom and structure – a coherent framework that allows multiple narratives to develop – gave participants opportunities for individual and shared creative expression. The method of interweaving improvisation with writing is an effective means of stimulating ideas and eliciting material from the participants. It also ensures that the stories are expressed in the participants' own voices, which has the added advantage of capturing the cadence of the local dialect.

Gorman and Mallon recognised that the techniques they had developed were highly adaptable and they set about honing these methods further to work with intercultural and intergenerational groups. Following their fruitful partnership with Macra, Gorman and Mallon expanded Upstate Local across the region to include the wider border area and parts of Northern Ireland. During the period between 2002 and 2007, Upstate Local developed its community-engaged programmes through the

auspices of The Crossover Project. Funded by Border Action through Peace and Reconciliation II, the programme comprised four adult groups and one youth group in the border counties of Louth and Monaghan in the Republic and in counties Tyrone and Fermanagh in Northern Ireland. This cross-border and cross-community project sought to devise original material reflecting life in rural communities of the border counties through the voices of members of both sides of the divide. The devising process that the company had by now developed provided an opportunity for Catholics and Protestants north and south of the border to come together in the creation of communal art. Although conflict resolution was an obvious objective, Gorman and Mallon were adamant that setting out to 'tackle' issues head on was a tactic that should be avoided. Instead they opted to concentrate their efforts on the creation of art. Gorman asserts, '[w]e always described our quest first and foremost as an artistic one, immediately affirming that no-one has a monopoly on dreaming, on creativity" ('Aesthetics'). Gorman and Mallon maintained that any issues present would inevitably surface through the process. With artistic pursuit firmly the focus, they began their work in the realm of dream. Gorman explains their rationale as follows:

In the early years of Upstate we began with dreams . . . that became particularly important when we moved to The Crossover Project you know, we felt that there were such sensitivities there around Catholics and Protestants and north and south and all that stuff and there was enormous pressure on us to deal with issues and we said, 'No we won't do that, the issues will come trailing in behind us eventually anyway.' Why start with the labels, why start with the presumptions that we are victims or the presumptions that we are enemies? You know? Let's begin in the kind of shared and wonderful world of dreaming because every human being dreams in some way; they dream actively and they dream passively in their sleep. So we would create these kinds of big mad tableaux and I would also introduce very early in the process a creative writing exercise that was based around writing a dream. (Personal interview)

This strategy was an effective leveller; it invited participants to communicate and interact imaginatively and intuitively, and alleviated tensions and prejudices that may have been present. It provided participants with an escape from reality and a safe distance from the conflicts that troubled their everyday lives. The use of tableaux facilitates an easy transition to the type of abstract movement pieces that

characterise Upstate's theatre. In those early years, in which peace-building and – later – interculturalism were part of the context, Upstate deliberately avoided sharing personal histories with audiences, although some carefully managed work along such lines did occasionally proceed in more advanced enclosed workshops. This foregrounding of dream-based fictions over lived experience was based on a belief that reconciliation and empowerment should come initially from the collective act of devising and creative writing. Participants were encouraged to 'leave their baggage at the door,' to park their labels, resist categorisation and instead to imagine new worlds and fictional scenarios, often parallel to the real, familiar border counties milieu but nonetheless newly reimagined in a shared process. After five years, with an average of four local productions per year, The Crossover Project came to an end and Upstate shifted its focus from the rural communities of the border region to the world of interculturalism and urban youth in its next phase of work.

The Louth International Theatre Project was launched in 2007 in response to the rapid demographic change that had occurred in the region as a result of the large influx of immigrants into Ireland during the boom years of the Celtic Tiger economy. This intercultural initiative aimed to provide an artistic forum where the growing international population could voice their experience of life as an immigrant in Irish society. The first production to emerge from the venture was *The Journey from Babel* (2009), an off-site performance on the theme of journeys and migration. The play, directed by Gorman and Mallon, was devised by fifteen local people of eight nationalities. Performed in a disused dockside warehouse, this work is a significant transitional moment in the company's development, signalling the move from largely black-box, narrative dramas to Upstate's current preference for interactive and site-specific work. The transition was influenced partly by Hayes' interest in site-specific work and his appointment as creative producer of the company and partly by the growing trend in site-specific performances happening elsewhere. *The Journey from Babel* utilised techniques common in contemporary site-specific performance including physical engagement with the audience, separating the spectators into separate groups and promenading from room to room. Other companies specialising in site-specific performance at the time were Northern Ireland based theatre company Kabosh and Dublin based theatre company Semper Fi whose production

Ladies and Gents (2002), first performed in the public toilets on Dublin's St. Stephen's Green as part of the Dublin Fringe Festival, won a Fringe First Award in Edinburgh 2004. While *The Journey from Babel* did not entirely reflect the specificity of the site where it was performed, the production combined documentary historical testimony, video, audio, ritual gestural work and song with narrative fiction and comic relief. The narratives highlighted similarities between the lives of immigrants living in present day Ireland with historical accounts of migrants globally through the ages, from the biblical Babel myth of the performance's title to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911 in New York in which 146 migrant workers perished.

The Mango Tree (2011), the second production to emerge from the Louth International Theatre project, combined traditional storytelling with visual artistry to reveal the hidden voices of a diverse community. The stories, told through a series of monologues, explore the isolation and disconnection felt by the inhabitants of an Irish town. In the Director's Note on the show's programme, Stephen Murray writes: 'It seemed important that what we were doing was also a social activity and the process of meeting up, devising and working on the play was resolving the very issues that we were working on.'

During the same period as the Louth International Theatre Project, Upstate was also concentrating its efforts on creating a number of community-engaged theatre projects with the young people of the area. For example, *No Change Given* (2009), directed by Stephen Murray and Declan Mallon, was devised over a four month period by a group of twenty-five teenagers from various parts of Drogheda. The project began with the idea of producing a show on a bus. This starting point prompted consideration of situations that might arise on a bus, and characters emerged through plotting the route the bus would take. The characters were developed and a storyline was established through a series of improvisations examining what might happen both on and off the bus as certain characters entered and exited the action. Scripted by playwright Colm Maher, the play was described in its programme as 'a story of life, love and youth in a walled town. Post boom drama through the eyes of the generation who will have to foot the bill. Not so much life in the fast lane as life in the bus lane.' Significantly, this project was informed by an

early urban work, *The Bus Project* (2007), undertaken in Ballymun, by Louise Lowe collaborating with Murray as part of in the 2007 Dublin Fringe Festival.

Kinda Random (2011), directed by long-time Upstate collaborator Tara Jenkins, is a further example of the company's work with the youth of the area. Adopting a documentary style narrative, the play offers an account of life in a present day Irish town from the perspective of its adolescent community. During workshops the thirteen participants aged between 13 and 17 explored and experimented with voice, improvisation, choreography and physical theatre techniques and recorded their responses to questions concerning the lives of young people. Jenkins collaborated with Fintan Brady, a writer and political activist in Belfast, who edited the recordings to create a script based on the participants' responses.

Much of the intercultural and youth work was experimental. Mallon explains that this is because this type of performance needs 'continually to shift and change to ensure a cultural connection with those participants who may have no interest in dramatic presentation as it is conventionally perceived' (Personal interview). These three projects belong to a middle and transitional phase of the Upstate story and coincide with an internal restructuring that took place when Paul Hayes joined the company in a creative producer role in 2006. From his earlier work with Catastrophe Theatre Company, Hayes brought with him an enthusiasm for site-specific work and his own first directing project for Upstate was the historical drama *The Enemy Within* (2008) performed across two heritage sites in the town of Drogheda - Laurence's Gate and Millmount's Martello Tower - both significant sites in historical sieges of the town. Across the company's Live and Local strands, the move towards the later site-specific and documentary work was beginning to take hold.

Upstate under participatory arts funding

As outlined earlier, Upstate underwent structural changes in 2010 following the Art Council's decision to change the company's funding status from a professional producing touring company to a participatory arts organisation. This period in the company's development is marked by the company's recent affiliation with newly emerging artists such as Louise Lowe (ANU Productions), Feidlim Cannon

(Brokentalkers), and Paul Hayes (Catastrophe). An analysis of three of the works produced by Upstate in conjunction with these artists now follows.

***Come Forward to Meet You* – Artist Louise Lowe (ANU Productions)**

In September 2011 Upstate, as part of the Shared Heritage Programme, invited artist Louise Lowe (currently co-artistic director of ANU Productions) to work with a group of local adults to devise a piece of theatre based on the oral history archive collected by Drogheda Local Voices. The culmination of that venture was *Come Forward to Meet You* (2011), a site-specific production performed in Oldbridge House, an eighteenth-century manor located on the site of the 1690 Battle of the Boyne, a battle of considerable political and historical significance nationally and internationally. The British throne, French dominance in Europe and Religious power in Ireland were at stake in this decisive battle between the Catholic King James and the Protestant King William of Orange whose landmark victory shaped the course of Irish, British and European history in the centuries that followed. The annual twelfth of July commemoration of the infamous battle remains a contentious issue in Irish North-South relations. The eighteenth-century manor and estate now publicly owned and managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) houses the Battle of the Boyne Visitor's Centre. Large installations detailing European politics at the time of the battle and exhibitions illustrating events from the King's perspective are on display in the Visitor's Centre on the ground floor of the house. The setting of *Come Forward to Meet You* in this important heritage site, heightened the theatricality of this production. The play reveals a world normally hidden from view. Confined to the basement, the action invites the public to enter the private sphere of the house.

Billed in the programme as 'a unique collision of oral history and highly physical performance,' the play is based on the oral memoir of local woman Angela Mitchell, who lived and worked on the Oldbridge estate as a servant in the 1920s. As is often the case in devised theatre, the site inspired the story and informed the performance. Lowe remarks that in her practice devising begins with 'a space, a place or a theme;' she is confident that in this case the architecture of the space fuelled the making of the piece. Lowe recalls how the group were drawn to Angela Mitchell's

story. The reason for this was not clear but she speculated that the predominance of women in the group may have steered an overall affinity with Angela's story.

The action takes place in five rooms in the original kitchen area located in the basement of the big house. Audience members, having been assigned a number, are greeted by a butler who escorts them through the courtyard into the house. The performance begins in the corridor with a movement piece involving the full cast after which the actors disperse to various rooms followed by audience members marshalled according to the number they were allocated. In each room, the actors await the audience who move from room to room to watch fragments of Angela Mitchell's life unfold. The action in each room is repeated every time a new audience group enters the space. The memories portrayed include the death and burial of a new-born twin, a seductive dance between a young couple entangled in a forbidden courtship, and the highly-physical and disturbed antics of the butler scaling the walls in the kitchen before he eats the supper prepared by a kitchen maid. The wake of the lady of Oldbridge House is depicted in a darkened room where a servant fervently prays as she repeatedly circles the coffin of her mistress. Across the hall, a servant in the laundry room is washing sheets and asking audience members, 'Do you believe in ghosts?' as she hands them bars of carbolic soap and buckets of water so they can help her complete the task. In another room an archived recording of Angela Mitchell's voice is heard describing the events illustrated by the various scenes.

The division of the audience into appointed rooms creates an intimate atmosphere and intensifies the experience for both the actors and the audience. The use of highly-physical movement pieces in confined spaces creates a palpable sense of entrapment. Dance infiltrates Lowe's work. In her view actors discover a character's inner thoughts and emotions through movement. The choreography of this production is testament to this belief as the narrative emerges through the movement and rhythm of the performance and infuses the characters' lives with symbolic rituals. Lowe emphasises the importance of giving each actor a 'task' to complete. For example, one actor might be given sheets to wash, while another actor might have to eat a meal or scrub a table. Lowe focuses the actors' attention on physical tasks as a means of creating the action; she maintains that this tactic is also an effective strategy for reducing performance anxiety amongst both trained and

untrained performers. Lowe refers to Ann Bogart's view that the right people are in the room at the right time. Lowe explains 'I think I take that notion on strongest no matter where I am, that this is the right place, this is the right time, these are the right people and so we make the right piece for these people in this place at the right time.'

There was a pleasing symmetry between the characters being portrayed and the actors portraying them. In this subversive account of life in the big house, it is the servants, the butler, the kitchen maid, and the laundry worker who are centre stage. The characters represent the traditionally invisible citizens in society. The non-professional community cast have a central role to play in bringing the stories of the otherwise forgotten characters to life. Voices that otherwise would not be heard, both in terms of content and performance, are given a platform.

***Ship Street Revisited* - Artist Paul Hayes (Catastrophe)**

Ship Street Revisited (2012), the second instalment of the Shared Heritage Programme, also focuses on the lives and memories of ordinary people. The former residents and workers of the, now largely derelict, street of the play's title are the subjects of this play. Set in 1940s' Drogheda, the plot weaves around the lives of the tightknit, working class community who resided in Ship Street, an industrial area surrounding the town's port. A cast of fifty community actors brought to life the abandoned street, as well as the forgotten stories of the men and women who worked in the boot and shoe factories, the breweries and the mills. A combination of street performance and traditional drama and storytelling, the performance took audience members on a journey through the street and into the derelict homes of its residents. As with *Come Forward to Meet You*, audiences were divided into small groups and guided to each location by a 'local resident' who chatted with audience members about the trials and tribulations of life on the street. Inside the various houses, audiences were met with a conventional fourth wall performance depicting the lives of those who lived there. Familiar themes of young love, family, emigration, poverty and unemployment emerged from the stories that unfolded inside the walls of each dwelling.

Ship Street Revisited was written by Aidan Harney and directed by Paul Hayes. Harney, a local playwright, had been researching the local oral history archive made available to Upstate as part of the Shared Heritage Programme, and he and Hayes had worked together previously on *Submarine Man* (2009). A number of factors distinguish *Ship Street Revisited* from the other two projects that form the trilogy. The fact that it was written by a playwright, for instance, immediately sets it apart. Harney's script, however, emerged from a devising process and the participants, like those of the other two projects, contributed to the development of the characters and storyline. The main reason for adopting this approach was down to Hayes' methods of devising which differ significantly from those of Lowe and Brokentalkers. ANU and Brokentalkers usually begin devising from scratch and continue in this mode right up to the final rehearsal, whereas Hayes, most likely because of his dramaturgical background, opts to work with a writer and likes to have an early draft of a script beforehand. This preference for dramaturgy, in fact, represents a continuation of the literary strengths traditionally associated with Upstate, exemplified in earlier works such as *Tunnel of Love* (1999), *Zoo Station* (2001), *Time's Hands* (2007) and *Midland* (2008). This shows how Mallon's curatorial policy embraces new methodologies while maintaining space for the artistic strengths upon which the company was built. Hayes felt it was important to explain this style of practice to the participants of the project. He admits, 'I never said to the cast of *Ship Street* that they were writing their own play, I said they were informing the writing of the play, it's different.' Hayes' and Harney's work is a reminder that devised and more 'literary' theatrical forms are not necessarily diametrically opposed. Gorman makes the point that, although devising for the stage is very seldom about creating a literary piece of theatre, one of Upstate's achievements is marrying devising with literary traditions. He states: 'Some of the work that has been created through processes that could appropriately be described as devising actually have quite a strong literary element in them because we always brought creative writing into the room' (Personal interview).

Although this was Hayes' first time to devise and direct a show with community actors, he had devised a number of shows with his own professional theatre company Catastrophe. Those shows were usually inspired by a site-specific

location and written by a writer who created a script based on the characters and themes that emerged during the devising process. Hayes followed the same model for *Ship Street Revisited*, and immediately set about securing a site that would provide him and the writer with a framework. Once the venue had been agreed, participants drawing on local history archives were asked to find a person who grew up in Drogheda in the 1940s, on which each would base her/his character. Following this, the performers began writing scenes involving these characters.

With a total of eighty-five participants, *Ship Street Revisited* was Upstate's most ambitious project to date. Aside from the large number of participants, the show was received well locally. It sold out for twenty nights, drawing predominantly non-traditional audiences (anecdotal accounts from the show's participants suggest that upwards of 80% of the audience were non-theatregoers) and attracting an unprecedented number of social networking comments. Much of the reason for this response from the community was due to local interest in the site-specific location and in the oral history archive on which the play was based. Ship Street is strongly associated with the town's industrial past and holds a special place in the town's history. Many locals have fond memories of the street and the residents who inhabited it.

Ship Street Revisited and *Come Forward to Meet You* reflect a significant shift to site-specific work by the company and a decision to search for locations that both reflect and affect the narrative. The settings of Oldbridge House and Ship Street were instrumental in developing plot and characters during the collaborative process between artists and participants. Moreover, both venues resonated enormously with the told stories and the local community audiences.

***The Far Side* – Artist Feidlim Cannon (Brokentalkers)**

The Far Side (2013), the third project in the Shared Heritage Programme, reflects the other recent shift in Upstate's direction from a dramatic narrative form towards a documentary style of presentation. This production mixes traditional live performance with multimedia to document the lives of seven locals living in present day Drogheda. Once again, the ordinary events of everyday life were placed centre

stage; as part of the process of creating this work, performers shared their memories and dreams of growing up and growing old in their local town. Unlike the first two parts of the trilogy, *The Far Side* does not draw on the local oral archives for its inspiration. Rather it relies on the personal lives and experiences of the performers to create a contemporary, living history. The events and experiences that helped shape their identity, from mealtimes around the family table to dancing in a bingo hall, are remembered and celebrated through a blend of humorous and poignant moments of personal recollections and reflection. The participants' stories were presented through a combination of recorded performance, visuals and music in a celebration of the history of their own lives. The action weaved between past and present as the performers' reminiscences came to life on a big screen providing a documentary account of the social history of Drogheda and, on a wider scale, a contemporary perspective of life in a large Irish town in twenty-first century Ireland.

The Far Side came to fruition under the guidance of artist Feidlim Cannon (Brokentalkers) who conducted a series of writing workshops with participants over a two year period. For Cannon, much of the nuts and bolts of devising revolve around keeping a record of what happens throughout the process. Flipcharts and markers are always to hand; images, photos, drawings, snippets of text and spider diagrams indicating kernels of ideas are charted and revisited as the work unfolds. Once again, this mirrors and reinvents methods used over two decades by Upstate artists. In his afterword to *Way out in the Country* (2001), Mallon describes how 'the mapping of characters and clusters of characters, told orally, is charted on a grid' ('Way Out in the Country' 205). In 2007, Upstate commissioned artist Vivienne Byrne to create a visual installation using hundreds of hoarded pages of literary scribbles, drawings, notes and similar grids and charts collected over ten years of Upstate's community devising processes all across the border region.

Cannon, a self-confessed advocate of the collaborative process, sees devising as a way of challenging traditional ideologies of text-based theatre. Like Lowe, he is concerned with exploring the ideas that emerge from the people in the room. He cautions that clear communication between the artist and the group is crucial, 'even if you don't know what your show is going to be, tell them that.' Whether this degree of honesty inspires confidence or alarm may well depend on the personalities that

make up the group; nevertheless, it is a significant endorsement of the artist's belief and confidence in the process and it serves to highlight the importance of participant voices in shaping the outcome of projects. Such a stance promotes openness to diverse ideas during the theatre-making process and increases a sense of group ownership of the final production.

During the course of *The Far Side* project, Cannon encouraged participants to speak openly and candidly about their experiences and memories of growing up in the town. He asked participants to bring him to places of personal significance in their local area. He and the group travelled around the town on a bus and explored places nominated by participants. Cannon recalls, 'all of a sudden then the workshop became about them and I was the one that was actually participating in it.' This reversal of roles shifts the hierarchy, empowering participants to take the lead. It places the artist in the role of observer and gives the group control over content, freedom to create, and opportunity to reflect.

Published literature on devised and community-engaged theatre practices by such writers as Boal and Johnston suggests that it is an infinitely more powerful experience for participants if the content comes from them, rather than from an outside source. Boal insists, 'The themes to be treated were always suggested by the group or by the spec-actors; I myself never imposed, or even proposed, anything by way of subject matter – if the intention is to create a theatre which liberates, then it is vital to let those concerned put forward their own themes' (19). Similarly, Johnston argues that, community drama workshops 'are more effective by criteria of self-empowerment if they place the participating group in the role of content-makers' (17). In the case of *The Far Side*, Cannon's site-specific exercise appears to have provided participants with rich stimuli for writing. Participants commented that visiting the locations brought forgotten memories to the surface, and listening to other people's memories stirred further memories: 'things will come back to you [...] they're talking about stuff you had forgotten about and then that will bring up another story' (Upstate Theatre Project Participants). Cannon cites this as an important workshop tool as it not only generated material at the time but, like Lowe's 'complete the task' strategy, it is also a useful rehearsal device, helping to alleviate participants' performance anxiety. Cannon's bus exercise also made clear that the

stories, memories and reminiscences that the group shared with each other during the devising process should be the focus of the show. Cannon remarks that, in his experience of devising, what happens through preliminary exercises and in the rehearsal room often becomes central to the final production.

Murray notes that a similar process took place amongst the group who devised Upstate's production of *Mango Tree* (2011). He recalls how this intercultural group found it difficult to link the separate stories that members of the group had written, and how that struggle ultimately became the theme of the show. He explains: 'It was about all these different people in a city wanting to connect with each other, but not knowing how to. That became the theme because that's what the workshop felt like sometimes.' Community-engaged performance opens the possibility for everyone involved in creating a performance to have her/his voice heard by the wider community. The challenge of bringing together the disparate voices of a diverse community in many ways seems to inform the work. Sharing personal stories, exchanging ideas, and connecting with others in an act of communal art-making to be shared with the wider community reflects Grayling's idea of the arts as that 'typically brilliant part [...] of the conversation a community has with itself' (38).

The wider local and global political significance of the work

The plays *Come Forward to Meet You*, *Ship Street Revisited*, and *The Far Side* offer vibrant and thought-provoking portrayals of contemporary Irish society. In this way, they follow the precedent set by *The Border Chronicles* and much of the early work of Upstate Local. Created and inspired by the community, all these productions are grassroots celebrations of the lives of 'ordinary' people, a commemorating of the stories and memories of people whose lives largely go unnoticed. Although firmly rooted in the local, the plays have a wider social and cultural relevance. By highlighting the collective concerns of individuals and communities, the plays reflect the diverse political and cultural beliefs and values that shape a community; they speak beyond the local to matters of national and global relevance. In doing so, they epitomise Michel de Montaigne's philosophy that 'the most deeply individualised is

at the same time the most universal' (de Montaigne, qtd. in Cohen-Cruz 129). The plays reveal the social and cultural attitudes and the political and economic circumstances of frequently marginalised groups of society. The plays represent the lives and stories of working class and unemployed people, emigrants and immigrants, lone parents, adolescents, older people and other vulnerable and sometimes marginalised groups. These often disenfranchised voices and overlooked narratives of a community have characterised much of Upstate's work. Hayes remarks, 'Every town in Ireland has forgotten streets and forgotten stories . . . one of the things that we managed to do was tell people's stories that would have been forgotten otherwise . . . you can do that in this environment.' Murray agrees, affirming that it is the presentation of lesser-heard voices that distinguishes Upstate's work. He observes that the voices portrayed in an Upstate show usually are not heard in more dominant, literary and commercial theatre forms: 'They [the participant-performers] are giving a voice to something that you're not necessarily going to hear elsewhere. You're certainly not going to hear it in any of the big mainstream theatres and that's a shame . . . there's things [sic] that they're saying that should be heard.'

Upstate's pluralistic attitude and inclusive practice has resulted in an open-door policy that offers all citizens equal access and equal opportunity to engage with art as a participant in the theatre-making process. Participants are recruited using multiple methods, from ads in local papers to social media callouts to direct referrals from official agencies that work with minority groups and vulnerable peoples in the community. This policy has a direct knock-on effect on Upstate's audience profile as invariably a diverse range of participants attracts a variety of audience members, many of whom are non-theatre-goers, who turn out to support family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. In all Upstate's work, the company has maintained an inclusive, pluralist policy and demonstrated a consistent record of persuading people from all backgrounds and ages to come together to create art. By embedding its practice within local communities, Upstate is positioned to respond to the specific needs and agendas of specific communities, and to provide opportunities to widen participation and include culturally marginalised audiences. As a result, the company frequently works with people who have no experience of theatre or the arts. This adds significant depth to the work according to Murray, who asserts that working

with community actors brings a fresh perspective that can revitalise the art form. He observes that experienced actors tend to have a heightened awareness of form and structure that can occasionally inhibit ideas whereas, he explains, participants with no experience of performance 'won't have thought about stuff as much so they'll do something completely different . . . completely new. When you are working with groups that don't necessarily have as much of a voice, you don't know what they are going to say.' This raises an interesting dichotomy for artists working in the shared environment of community and professional theatre. Indeed, the raw energy of an unschooled performer speaking or physically acting out something deeply truthful can be immensely powerful; it is one of the strengths of community casting, but the unique craft of the trained actors – and especially actors trained in improvisation – can yield equally evocative material. Murray's observation also highlights a need for responsible direction, a leadership and vision that is sensitive to the needs and abilities of participants, in particular, where vulnerable people such as those with intellectual disabilities or traumatic histories may be concerned.

In Upstate's most recent collection of work, the organisation has continued to position social engagement at the centre of its practice. Despite some divergence in terms of the methodologies and approaches adopted by its recently expanded team of artistic collaborators, the company's socio-political ethos remains steadfast. Whatever the tools and methodologies used in the creation of the work, the artists share a common aesthetic outlook; they collaborate with a community whose experiences and knowledge inform the subject, and together, they work to create a collective vision that reflects the world from their perspective. Each of the projects demonstrates a consistent attentiveness to process. While the pursuit of a quality aesthetic performance is the impetus behind each project, the end production is, nevertheless, of secondary importance to the process. David Grant alludes to this characteristic of community-engaged theatre in *Playing the Wild Card*: 'In community drama, the process is at least as, if not more important than the end product. This is because the involvement of the participants is the end being served by the project. The resulting production is a shared celebration of the work done together' (8). Upstate artists' and participants' comments as shared in the Focus group conducted by the author echo Grant's view. Lowe states that 'the productions by Upstate are a

celebration of all the work that everyone's done, they're not what we are working towards . . . the end result is a celebration of the process.' Murray remarks, 'It's important that they [the participant-performers] have a show at the end of it but more important is the process and I think if you want to talk about Upstate then that's what counts . . . with Upstate everything comes from the group.' In the programme note for *Kinda Random*, Jenkins notes that '[...] the performance of *Kinda Random* is the tip of the iceberg. What has happened between us, in our workshop programme, is the other 80% of the iceberg.' Finally, from the participants' perspective, 'the performance is just the icing on the cake but all those workshops . . . all those meetings . . . the laughter and the fun . . . that journey is very special.'

Although the above quotes reveal consensus on the importance of process, there is also a strong emphasis on pursuing the creation of high-quality art. This intersection between high-quality practice and community-based ethos is crucial to Upstate's work. As Gorman asserts:

We have worked with communities time and again for whom the adventure of entering a theatre workshop, of dreaming up an image or narrative from nowhere, of progressing this to a stage performance, is a novelty. There has usually been no tradition of this. We are there because through whatever brokerage process these people have asserted their right to make art and to make sense of the world around them through art and we have been invited in to be part of that journey. Once in, we have never shied from insisting on our shared responsibility – we as trained artists, them as participant artists – to make art of the highest possible standards, whatever that might mean in these given circumstances. ('Aesthetics')

The pluralist, collaborative and participatory approach adopted by Upstate and its artists is underpinned by a resolute belief in the aesthetic value of community art. It is this fundamental principle that positions Upstate at the forefront of community-engaged theatre practice in Ireland, and it is this footing that has attracted likeminded artists such as Stephen Murray, Louise Lowe, Feidlim Cannon, Gary Keegan and Paul Hayes to the company. As Cannon observes: 'There's a real quality to the [Upstate's] work, it's not patronising; it's a piece of art that can be held up against any other piece of art. They're making high quality art that's steeped in their community.' Murray and Hayes agree. Hayes remarks that the work can take any artistic form 'but at the core of it, it should be about communities coming together

... that would be part of the remit because that goes back to the process'. Murray goes on to point out that community-engaged theatre is needed now more than ever: 'the current climate is probably good for theatre; good for the arts, in that people need to express themselves. People are annoyed, people want a voice, people want to have their say; they want to hear things, to see things.'

The plays discussed here engage with pressing issues in modern and contemporary Ireland concerning such intersecting identity categorisations as race, religion, class, social status and citizenship. The displacement, isolation and alienation experienced by certain communities, and individuals within those communities, suggest a need for greater cohesion and solidarity among citizens in society. Collaboratively made, community-engaged theatre creates opportunities for participants to engage in artistic expression and develop social networks within their local communities. It encourages artists and citizens to take action, to make theatre that inspires social change and to create art that engages and awakens the aesthetic imagination of the community. In so doing, it offers opportunities to awaken a critical consciousness in wider society. Perhaps we can account for the current popularity of devised practice in contemporary theatre, both in Ireland and internationally, on the basis of wider desires to promote an ethos of sharing and communicating across perceived cultural, social and political boundaries in response to increased awareness of poverty, disadvantage, inequality and the socially-divisive impacts of neoliberal capitalism following the most recent global recession.

Conclusion

The current surge in experimentation within contemporary Irish theatre practice suggests a desire for alternative forms that are poised to communicate alternative messages. This development has perhaps been prompted by recognition of the need to develop styles of theatre that serve to better authenticate the live experience for both performers and audience. Why has contemporary Irish theatre practice moved progressively more towards embracing the ethos of community arts-orientated practice? Why are prominent artists now more than ever seeking out more inclusive, communal ways of making theatre? The answers to these questions

may well lie in the fundamental changes that have swept Irish society from approximately the middle of the twentieth century to the present day. The demise of the power of the Catholic church, the tired politics of a state beleaguered with a legacy of corruption and greed, the so called 'Celtic Tiger', mass immigration, the economic downturn, and the continuous cycle of mass emigration have all contributed to increased disenfranchisement and disillusionment within Irish society. Where is the place of art in such a society and how can art address such seismic failures? Perhaps placing the creation of art in the hands of citizens, artistically embracing the tenets of cultural democracy and narrowing the gap between art and society might offer ways to ensure that art is given meaningful space to illuminate and interrogate pressing contemporary issues. Devising, by its very nature, is collaborative; it enables artists to be inclusive and it encourages citizens to voice their views. These are important steps towards the creation of a truly participative society.

The growth of devised performance and community collaboration is shaping a new relationship between the artist-citizen and the citizen-artist as well as the public's appreciation of a refined art experience. Community-engaged theatre uses the power of performance to build a bridge between art and society, providing possibilities for participants to create meaning in a personal and communal context. It offers a framework for re-defining the parameters of art and extending the civic aesthetic space. There are in contemporary theatre practice opportunities to create aesthetic frameworks that encompass and acknowledge the values and aesthetics of community art. This, in turn, calls for a broadening of academic research on Irish theatre to include a critical discourse on this largely ignored sector. Perhaps the recent surge of devising will encourage more theatre-makers to explore new ways of creating art and new ways of broadening and deepening engagement with a wider audience cohort. In terms of future investment and funding for the arts, there is a strong rationale for allocating resources to support the continued development of inclusive collaborative practices that create art that invites equal engagement from all citizens of society. Upstate offers a sustainable model wherein such art has not only been created but documented and refined in long-term practices which acknowledge that, while projects and personalities come and go, the communities

that engage with art, benefit from art and provide the wellspring of artistic inspiration remain rooted in place.

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Appendix B Publication 2 Case Study: Fighting Words

***Fighting Words* as Revolutionary Pedagogy: A Freirean Reading of Young People's Experiences of a Socially-Engaged Creative Writing Centre**

Irene White, Francesca Lorenzi and James O'Higgins Norman

Abstract

Standardisation and quantification intensify the impact of social class differences on educational opportunity and decrease the quality of educational experience for all students. Efforts to tackle educational inequality encourage conformity rather than address the underlying issues of the varied economic, cultural and social capital of diverse populations. Drawing on Paulo Freire's (1970) theory of critical pedagogy, this paper examines the impact of a Freirean inspired participatory arts initiative on youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds in a developed city in the western world. Focusing on the Freirean concepts of dialogue, democratic relations, voice, creativity and imagination, the authors present a case study of *Fighting Words* Creative Writing Centre, a socially-engaged participatory arts organisation currently operating in the non-formal education sector in Ireland. The research, a qualitative study conducted over a twelve-month period, presents data gathered from participants and other key stakeholders through interviews and questionnaires. The findings indicate that participants in *Fighting Words* demonstrate increased levels of engagement and motivation, improved confidence and self-esteem, recognition of and pride in creative ability, a stronger sense of self, a greater ability to work collaboratively, and improved literacy.

Key Words:

Freire, Voice, Dialogue, Creativity, Youth.

1. Introduction

The 2012 OECD Equity and Quality in Education report indicates that ‘every OECD education system suffers from school failure and student dropout’ (p. 17). The report cites lack of inclusion as the main reason for this occurrence, identifying that almost 20% of young people fail to reach a basic minimum level of skills to function in today’s societies, and attributing the fact that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are twice as likely to underperform. The report highlights that a lack of diversity in approaches to education prevails and schools in lower socio-economic areas fail to offer a quality learning experience for children and young people who experience the most inequalities. In Ireland, the Government’s response to addressing inclusion and fairness has been chiefly in the form of large scale funding and resourcing rolled out through a national programme aimed at delivering equality of opportunity in schools. While there have been some positive outcomes, success has been somewhat limited (Smyth *et al.*, 2015). The allocation of additional funding and resources to support students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in achieving educational potential reflects a meritocratic view of education which ignores the underlying issue of educational inequality, namely, the inherent cultural bias in an education system which perpetuates the dominant cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1974), reproduces bourgeois structures (McLaren, 2000) and upholds the role of education in maintaining the social status quo (Sullivan, 2002).

The present climate of standardisation and quantification, compels schools to deliver outcome-based curricula that measure educational success in terms of academic attainment and students’ ‘ability’ to perform according to set criteria. All students, regardless of background, are expected to adhere to the structures of formal education systems including organised timetables, standardised curricula, terminal assessments and teacher-led models of learning delivered in traditional classroom environments. Recent research (Sahlberg, 2010; Noddings, 2013; Robinson and Aronica, 2015) suggests that the restrictions imposed by standardised testing and accountability impinge on the quality of educational experience and conflict with commonly agreed goals of 21st-century education such as cooperation,

critical thinking, and creativity. Furthermore, Tucker (2015) notes that an emphasis on performativity can diminish pastoral care provision and prevent schools from meeting the pastoral needs of young people. There is an urgent need for alternative education programmes and diverse modes of practice to improve educational opportunity and provide a quality learning experience for all youth (Yasunaga, 2014).

Freire sought to eradicate patterns of oppression perpetuated by what he termed 'banking' education, traditional pedagogical practices which place the power in the hands of the teacher and 'dehumanize' and disempower the student. Freire's work with young people experiencing inequalities in South America caused him to reject this authoritarian concept of education in favour of 'problem-posing education', a democratic and dialogical process which places student and teacher on an equal footing as partners of inquiry and active participants in the educational 'transaction'.

This paper examines the experiences of young people in a socially-engaged creative writing centre in a developed city in the western world. Drawing on Paulo Freire's (1970) theory of critical pedagogy, this paper presents a case study of *Fighting Words* Creative Writing Centre, a socially-engaged participatory arts organisation underpinned by Freirean principles currently operating in the non-formal education sector in Ireland. *Fighting Words* and its linked partners focus primarily on affording all youth, but particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds who tend to be voiceless in society, the opportunity to discover and realise their own creative power, to think critically, and to express themselves in their own voice. In contrast to the standardised formal education system, non-formal education is characterised by a high degree of flexibility (Yasunaga, 2014) and 'its readiness to adapt to heterogeneous populations with many and diverse educational needs' (Romi and Schmida, 2009, p. 258). Like formal education, it is planned, structured and may be teacher-led but participation is usually voluntary, motivation is typically more intrinsic than extrinsic and learning is usually not formally evaluated (Eshach, 2007). As non-formal education structures and curricula are not determined or restricted by state rules and dictates (Hoppers, 2006), it is often more learner-

centred than curriculum-focused and less directive and more flexible (White and Lorenzi, 2016). All of these characteristics apply to *Fighting Words*.

2. Theoretical Framework

In his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire presents education as a political act. He criticises the banking concept of education as an 'instrument of oppression' that serves to propagate the needs of the dominant classes and to 'encourage passivity in the oppressed'. Banking education, Freire argues, renders knowledge as static, the teacher as a depositor and the student as a passive recipient. This form of interaction, he contends, inhibits dialogue, critical thinking, creativity and transformation – core principles, one might argue, of true education. In a call for a radical overhaul of education, he puts forward his ideas for problem-posing education, a critical pedagogy that he believes can liberate through a process of 'conscientization' (awakening critical consciousness). Emancipation, he argues, must come from the oppressed, not the oppressor, and awareness of self and self in relation to others is a crucial step in awakening a critical consciousness in society. Freire argues that everybody, particularly the disadvantaged and disenfranchised, needs to be aware of the power structures operating in society as social inequalities can only be addressed when those affected by it recognise their oppression. He argues that oppressed communities, often unaware of their own oppression, are constrained by a 'culture of silence' and forced to conformity. Often their unawareness is due to the fact that they have internalised their oppressor's values and, therefore, view their situation through the eyes of the oppressor and fail to see possible solutions or alternatives to their circumstances (Barroso, 2002). Freire's view of education as a means of social transformation stems from his belief that humans through their awareness of themselves as conscious beings and their capacity for praxis - reflection and action intent on transformation- have the potential to transform reality. He insists that once the oppressed realise that reality is not static, they can conceive of changing it. Furthermore, Freire argues that problem posing education through its use of dialogue and democratic relations is essential in aiding this transformation.

3. Background and Context

Fighting Words is a creative writing centre established by Irish author Roddy Doyle and his colleague Seán Love in Dublin in January 2009. Inspired by the creative writing project *826 Valencia* founded by American writer Dave Eggers in San Francisco, Doyle and Love saw potential for such an initiative in Ireland. *Fighting Words* was the first project of its kind in Europe but others, inspired by the *826 Valencia* model, have since followed with new centres opened in London, Paris, Milan, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Vienna, Stockholm, Barcelona and Belfast. In line with their mission statement, *Fighting Words* founders declare creativity and empowerment as defining purposes of the centre's activities.

Since its inception, *Fighting Words* has worked with in excess of 90,000 participants from all parts of the country, but predominantly with students from the greater Dublin region and particularly with schools based in North inner-city areas, where lower socio-economic status is more likely to be found. Consequently, many of the participants come from communities where people tend not to have much voice in society. 84.5% of the participants are of school age between 6 and 18. *Fighting Words* also offers its services to special and diverse needs groups and send teams of tutors out to groups who cannot travel to their premises, including places of institutional care and juvenile detention centres. All activities are free of charge. *Fighting Words* relies almost entirely on volunteers. Volunteers are selected through an interview process, subjected to reference check and police vetting and undergo specific training. They come from different walks of life. Among them are most commonly current or retired teachers, post-graduate students, writers or aspiring writers, journalists and librarians. They range in age from 19 to over 60 and are predominantly female. *Fighting Words* operates in close partnership with schools in Ireland. Workshops are offered mornings and afternoons during the school term. Each workshop lasts for two hours, involves approximately 20-25 students and is facilitated by approximately eight volunteer tutors (one tutor per three students). Schools can apply to enrol students in a once off workshop or as part of a year-long book project involving weekly attendance at the centre. The latter culminates with the publication of an anthology of short stories written and edited by the students

themselves. The books are professionally published and are available for purchase in bookshops and online. Generally, students who attend once-off workshops are brought by their teachers and have no choice on whether to participate, whereas, students who take part in the year-long book project are given the option not to participate. This research focuses on 15-17 year olds who have participated in the year-long book project.

The methodology utilised by *Fighting Words* is informed by 'the Socratic method' and requires tutors to engage in an open and democratic dialogue with students. The creative writing process is designed as a collaborative and democratic activity that encourages active participation. An initial story is developed collectively by participants in response to a scenario-based role play. Two students are invited to role-play the given situation to see what conversation might emerge from an encounter between the two individuals specified in the scenario. As the students carry out the role play, one of the tutors types the conversation and the words are projected onto a screen in real time. After a few moments, the tutor leading the workshop stops the role play and the group read and edit the words on the screen until they are happy it reflects the dialogue they witnessed. The group then proceeds to collaboratively create a story around the agreed dialogue. The lead tutor facilitates the collaboration through questioning while another tutor types the participants' responses. All students' ideas appear on the screen and the story develops gradually through a democratic editorial process led by the tutor. This phase offers students opportunities for working collaboratively with their peers. At a suitably dramatic moment in the development of the collective story, the group input ends and the second phase begins. Participants now move to an adjoining room where they are given the time and space to continue the story individually. Groups of three are assigned a tutor who provides individual attention. Tutors read the students' work and support their progress through dialogue centred on constructive feedback and questioning. In the final phase, the students reconvene and read their stories aloud.

Basic as it may seem, the screen is a significant element of the model both in terms of the collaborative creation of the story and the powerful effect it has on the participants. The founders of *Fighting Words* emphasise that the simple act of seeing

their own words being typed on the screen is an important confidence building exercise for the participants. It helps them to overcome the fear of the blank page and enables them to take ownership of the work. Having their words projected back to them appears to inspire and excite participants, particularly those who do not see themselves as writers. The founders stress that the collaborative writing approach used to begin the session is an integral part of the creative process and is a highly effective strategy for drawing students into the story and enabling them to write. Opening the session with these approaches sets the tone and firmly establishes the Freirean concepts of dialogue, democratic relations, voice, creativity and imagination as core features of the Fighting Words model. Here we see the tutor pose a problem and the students actively engage in dialogue with the tutor and each other to co-create a story. While the initial input is structured, students then have the freedom to take the story in unexpected and original directions according to their imagination. They subsequently share their stories, listen to alternative courses of action and reflect on the process.

4. Research Design and Aims

The authors identify *Fighting Words* as a socially-engaged organisation that uses dialogical, collaborative and democratic practices to give young people the opportunity to be creative, to think critically, and to develop and utilise their voice in order to prepare them to be active citizens in society. This research examines the experience of young people participating in *Fighting Words* and aims firstly, to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of *Fighting Words*' Freirean inspired practices on participants, and secondly, to determine whether their experience has supported their personal, social and emotional development.

We considered case study evaluation to be the best method to achieve the aims of the research because it allowed us to focus in-depth on the practices of a specific organisation. Case studies are preferred 'when the desire is to study some contemporary event or set of events' (Yin, 2018, p. 12) and are regarded as 'particularly useful for evaluating unique programs, programs with unique outcomes,

and programs carried out in turbulent or unpredictable environments' (Balbach,1999, p. 17).

The research investigated the perspectives of a range of key stakeholders including adolescent students (15-17 year olds) who had experienced weekly contact with *Fighting Words* over an academic year, teachers, school principals, *Fighting Words* founders, *Fighting Words* tutors and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were deemed the most suitable data collection methods. The questionnaires were designed to elicit the experiences and views of all the students (256), teachers (7) and tutors (41) involved in the project. While the questionnaires differed according to the target population, the questions were designed in a way which enabled, as far as possible, comparison of the responses. The questionnaires contained a mix of open-ended and closed questions and were designed to give a comprehensive range of responses to more than 20 questions relating to all aspects of the project. Interview questions were designed to give a comprehensive range of responses to all aspects of the project and to allow for triangulation with responses from questionnaires. Questions for the semi-structured individual interviews were planned for each of the following stakeholders: *Fighting Words*' founders; the CEO of the NCCA; and principals of schools participating in the year-long project. These key stakeholders were selected because their understanding of the *Fighting Words* model and/or the participating students saw them well-placed to comment on the model and its impact on the participants.

Data collection was carried out over twelve months. A total of 163 out of 304 stakeholders responded, giving a response rate of 54.3 per cent. Additional data were obtained from field notes we compiled during site visits to the premises. Over the period of a year, we reviewed the premises, attended workshops and events, and spoke with staff, tutors, teachers and students. We also attended a training workshop for tutors to observe how training was conducted and how the ethos of the organisation was presented. Field notes based on the researchers' observations of the physical space, the teaching methodologies and the interaction of students, tutors and teachers were documented and stored as field data.

5. Discussion of Findings

Three major themes emerged from the data: *Fighting Words* as a vehicle for dialogue and democratic relations; *Fighting Words* as a vehicle for voice and *Fighting Words* as a vehicle for creativity and imagination. The discussion that follows presents the findings and correlates the data with key Freirean concepts.

5.1 *Fighting Words as a Vehicle for Dialogue and Democratic Relations*

The democratic relationship between tutors and students in *Fighting Words* generate different dynamics from those existing in schools. The majority of teachers and tutors regard the supportive atmosphere and the interaction with tutors as key components of the *Fighting Words* model. Tutors are seen by principals and teachers as essential in motivating students to endure through a lengthy writing process and the tutors themselves also highlight the importance of their, often, arduous motivational role in helping students to build self-reliance and resilience. As outlined earlier, the methodology utilised by *Fighting Words* requires tutors to engage in an open and democratic dialogue with students. During both the collaborative story writing phase and the individual development and completion of the story, the tutors and students discuss possible courses of action, explore character motive and experiment with a constantly evolving narrative. Sharing their stories and listening to their peers' accounts adds a further dimension to the discussion as they hear different versions and other perspectives of the original storyline. The notion of seeking alternatives, considering a range of possibilities and realising that there can be more than one outcome is in itself a Freirean experience for students as 'they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation' (2017, p. 56). *Fighting Words* reflects the Freirean notion of a dialogical relationship between teacher and student. The tutors offer students support decoupled from the judgmental function often associated with the role of teachers and through dialogue reveal themselves to be what Freire termed as educational partners with the students as they assume a complementary mentoring role in the formation of the students.

Recurrently in the interviews, *Fighting Words* is described as an emotional and nurturing environment that supports without judging and creates a safe place for participants to thrive both academically and personally. The non-judgmental ethos is clearly perceived by students who, when asked to identify the best aspect of being involved in *Fighting Words*, responded with comments such as: 'The helpful and relaxed environment'; 'Having my say'; 'Constructive advice on my writing'; 'Having mentors supporting me'; 'Nobody judges you'. These observations are a recognition of the difference between the dialogical approach adopted by tutors and the banking concept of education more commonly found in formal education environments.

One stakeholder identified the 'out-of-school' dimension as a key constituent of *Fighting Words*. She remarked that the physical space and the interactions with tutors generates a different type of educational experience for the students:

They're taken out of the formal school environment into quite a different space, into a space that's much freer, a space where everything is different, there's no desks, the organization of the space is different. They interact with different kinds of adults, they're not teachers who tend to be a particular class type, so they interact with different people in a different way.

This emphasis on a 'different' physical space and 'different' relations is also captured by a student who noted 'It did not feel like school' and by another principal who commented that 'the educational boundaries dissolve and the student, rather than the syllabus, becomes the centre of the educational experience'. "The reference to boundaries dissolving is an acknowledgement of the greater freedom and possibility participants experience compared to the usual classroom environment and the confines of a formal curriculum.

The support of tutors is consistently mentioned by all stakeholders as fundamental to the success of the model. A number of stakeholders observed that engaging in dialogue and experiencing democratic relations in *Fighting Words* fostered improved teacher-student relations in school and enhanced students' capacity to engage in dialogue with teachers, peers and other adults outside of *Fighting Words*. Teachers commented that they felt a greater bond with the students and that they noticed a greater bond among the students as a result of their shared

experience of the project. Principals observed a noticeable improvement in participants' self-esteem. One principal noted:

Their esteem shot through the roof! Some of those girls may have certain issues at home, broken backgrounds, alcoholism at home... coming into school is almost a relief for them. They never get the praise, the merit in anything, because they're average students, but going out there every Thursday... they were coming back having been praised by the tutors in *Fighting Words*, told they can do this, that they were wonderful human beings, that they were brilliant creative beings and I could see over the course of the year, their shoulders were physically up more.

The experience was also considered a positive influence in strengthening student resolve. Several teachers commented on students' 'perseverance and commitment to a project' and principals noticed an increased resilience and tenacity among students who had participated in *Fighting Words*. Students also recognised an improvement in their stamina. One student said, 'I am able to complete a story and to persevere', while another declared 'I achieved a high score in my end of year exams thanks to my involvement in *Fighting Words*'.

5.2 *Fighting Words as a Vehicle for Voice*

As a creative writing centre, the concept of voice is central to the work of *Fighting Words*. Several stakeholders observed the value of *Fighting Words* in providing a platform for the student voice. One principal noted that it was a rare opportunity to hear young people's voice on social issues:

It's really facilitating the teenage voice and giving expression to their ideas particularly with societal issues that are not necessarily covered in the media by their peers because most of the stuff, when they're writing about, ye know, drink and drugs and sex, and what have you, is usually written from a journalistic perspective whereas this gives them a voice.

The opportunity to express their views and have their voices heard was identified as a significant factor in building participants' confidence and self-esteem. One stakeholder states that voice is at the core of the initiative:

Fighting Words, to me, is about voice. It's about giving students the tools to articulate views, opinions, ideas, concepts, questions, even if they're challenging, giving them the tools, giving them the space and giving them the confidence as well to find that voice.

Being given an opportunity to have their voice heard was seen to be an empowering experience for participants that encouraged them to use their voice elsewhere. Teachers noted that students were more likely to ask questions and to approach teachers with new ideas than they would have been previously. Some of the students' comments also capture this development: 'I am able to communicate my ideas more clearly now than I was before'; 'My skills have improved and as a result I am less hesitant sharing my work with others'; 'I am more confident to ask questions in class'; The data suggests that some participants found the confidence to utilise their voice in shaping school policies and contributing to decision-making processes by joining the student council and other fora that enabled them to engage with school management and the wider school community. One principal observed that *Fighting Words* participants were more likely to take leadership and mentoring roles in the school. Significantly, most of the *Fighting Words* participants in that particular school went on to play active leadership roles in the school with one participant becoming head girl of the school. The principal felt this trend was due to the practical skills and the confidence, initiative and sense of agency students acquired as part of the *Fighting Words* project.

These findings can be related to Freire's concept of praxis - '*reflection and action* directed at the structures to be transformed' (2017, p. 99). The decision to take on leadership roles is an indication of the participants' awareness of citizenship and their realisation that choosing such roles gives them the power to shape, influence and ultimately 'transcend themselves... so that they can more wisely build the future' (Freire, 2017, p. 57) and transform their experience of the world. Their understanding of their democratic right to exercise their voice, and their willingness to use their voice to benefit themselves and others suggests that their experience of *Fighting Words* has inspired confidence, self-awareness and empowerment. Consistent with Freire's notion that emancipation must come from the oppressed, not the oppressor, Malhotra *et al.* (2002) and Tremblay and Gutberlet (2010) highlight that empowerment can only occur when the individuals concerned are the agents of change. In Freire's words they have developed:

their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (2017, p. 56).

While all students were considered to have benefited from having their voice heard, the resultant increase in confidence seems to have been particularly pronounced among participants who might traditionally struggle to make their voice heard. A significant number of stakeholders commented that the project had a profound impact on notably shy participants. According to tutors it is 'a valuable outlet for those who are shier and less comfortable with self-expression', while one principal was particularly struck by the fact that less vocal students were willing participants:

One of the students in our school had very low self-esteem and suffered from depression. It was very surprising for me when I realised that this boy was getting published because to me, he was withdrawn and he was quiet, and so you know it's not just the more articulate kids who participate in class that like it, it actually can reach out to someone who is ordinarily quite quiet.

A principal observed that it was a hugely affirming experience for ethnic minority participants and participants with poor language skills to have the opportunity to tell their stories and have their voice heard:

One of our girls was an ethnic minority student who was very poor at English, she wrote a wonderful story which *Fighting Words* kindly translated from Polish into English. It was good to show that, she too could write her story.

A number of principals remarked that the opportunity to have their voice heard was particularly significant for special needs students. One principal noted that participating in *Fighting Words* 'was the makings of some of our special needs students. It would have done absolute wonders for their self-confidence and their self-esteem'. According to one of the founders, this was one of the unanticipated benefits of the project. He remarked that some of the workshops with special needs students have been especially engaging:

I'm struck by parents of children with Asperger's about what it has done for their children... and for the visually impaired... I think the workshops with those children are just the best fun ever... a few days ago we had a group up from Cork... adults with a range of intellectual disabilities and it was just the most fantastic session. They had a fantastic time, they wrote a fantastic story together, they wanted their books and so they waited and... got a late train home.

These findings suggest that *Fighting Words* provides a space that enables participants to acquire a voice and a platform for that voice to be heard. The findings also suggest that *Fighting Words* is particularly effective at reaching the more marginalised members of society.

5.3 Fighting Words as a Vehicle for Creativity and Imagination

The data suggests that the freedom to imagine and the opportunity to think critically and creatively are central tenets of the *Fighting Words* initiative. Creativity -as the opposite of rote learning- and empowerment are cited as defining purposes of the activities offered by *Fighting Words* by both of its founders. They frequently describe *Fighting Words* exclusively as a creative writing centre with two main characteristics: making writing accessible and giving an opportunity to participants to be creative by compensating for what they perceive as a lack of creativity in the formal education system. This perception echoes Freire's criticism of the banking concept prevalent in formal education systems and the need for alternative models of pedagogy. The founders see creativity and critical thinking as essential elements in the development of the individual and contend that there is insufficient opportunity for young people to develop these skills in school. One of them expresses concern at what he sees as a lack of 'real' education in western society:

There's no freedom to think in school and, you know, I think if you're really educating children, they have to have the freedom to think. It's not just an Irish issue, this is why the model that we have and that's now in other countries and which we have adapted from the U.S., it's the same thing being said... that the education system in so many of the countries of the developed world is so restrictive. There's little opportunity for anyone to be creative.

The lack of opportunity for creative expression in formal education is highlighted by a number of the principals who recognised that *Fighting Words* gave students a freedom to develop their creativity and imagination not found in the curriculum. One principal commented:

Everything is about getting the curriculum covered. You have to do the poetry, you have to do the novel, and yes, there is a chance to write but it's hugely constrained, it's not complete freedom to write what you want. Sometimes as teachers we'd say, 'now do you really need to put it in that language?', whereas in *Fighting Words* they have freedom to use that

language, and that's us as teachers putting our middle-class values on, you know, on what we think is normal.

The opportunity to draw on their own life experience was emphasised by another principal who added that students realised that their communities had something unique to offer:

Our children here in the city centre are very vocal, they're very orally able but yet when it comes to writing things down that could be a downfall.... They've such imaginations and such life experience that they usually don't get to share, so for them to discover that their stories are just as important as anyone else's, was truly a remarkable realisation for them.

Tutors also recognised that *Fighting Words* gives participants 'a chance to be creative outside the formal school environment' and 'encourages creativity as it allows students to make mistakes'. Similarly, students' comments indicate a positive disposition towards risk-taking, a willingness to experiment with ideas and an appreciation of their imagination: 'It got me to think outside the box'; 'There are no right or wrong answers'; 'No idea is bad/stupid'; 'One student noted that 'writing is a really worthwhile activity' and the majority of students mentioned an improved confidence in writing. Some principals observed that the project supported the development of literacy in participants and the publication of the book helped promote literacy across the school.

All of the key stakeholders commented on the sense of empowerment and confidence that participants gained from the *Fighting Words* experience. Several teachers and tutors commented that seeing confidence developing in students was 'one of the best aspect of being involved in the project'. A number of the stakeholders referred to the tremendous sense of pride and achievement that students experienced from their involvement in *Fighting Words*. In particular, it was noted that students were immensely proud of the fact that they had created something entirely from their imagination. Several of the students' comments capture their delight at this accomplishment: 'I learned how to write a story'; 'I am surprised at my own ability'; 'I had a good story in my head and I did not know about it!'. For many participants, the feeling of success was heightened by the reaction of others to their work and the fact that other students in the school now looked up to them. One principal noted:

They were so proud of themselves to have their book launched, to be sold, to become writers, published writers – a lot of those girls, their self-esteem has just blossomed and they hold their head up high and they're kind of role models now to the other students, the other students in their year group thinking, wow, you did that, pure role models.

The night of the book launch was described as an 'enormously uplifting' experience for students and their parents and a cause for great celebration in the various schools. Principals commented that the parents were immensely proud of their children's creative achievement and that the participants were animated by their parents' response.

6. Conclusion

Positioning *Fighting Words* as a Freirean inspired space, this paper examines the impact of a socially-engaged participatory arts organisation on young people's personal, social and emotional development. Based on the perspectives of participants and other key stakeholders, the findings indicate that *Fighting Words* is especially valuable in providing a formative and positive experience for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and other marginalised backgrounds where they may not have previously had a strong sense of agency or voice. Observations from various stakeholders indicate a range of positive changes in participants' behaviour and attitude which stakeholders attribute to experiences gained through *Fighting Words*. The findings demonstrate that participants' experience of this space and the learning that occurs there causes young people to conceive of themselves differently. Participants in *Fighting Words* demonstrated a range of behaviours that suggest increased levels of engagement and motivation in school, improved confidence and self-esteem, recognition of and pride in creative ability, a stronger sense of self, a greater ability to work collaboratively, and improved literacy.

Fighting Words seeks to empower youth by providing them with an opportunity to engage in dialogue, experience partnership and democracy, and develop their creative power in the hope that these experiences will ultimately pave the way for them to become active citizens in society. It engages participants in a creative, collaborative process that requires them to be creative, to think and to

imagine. Articulating and sharing their ideas helps participants gain a sense of self and their right to be heard. Learning to use their voice effectively is a small but important first step in empowering adolescents from marginalised, and traditionally voiceless, communities.

In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire recognised that education was only part of the process of social transformation:

A more critical understanding of the situation of oppression does not yet liberate the oppressed. But the revelation is a step in the right direction. Now the person who has this new understanding can engage in a political struggle for the transformation of the concrete conditions in which the oppression prevails (p. 24).

In his contemplation of how the pedagogy of the oppressed can be implemented devoid of political backing, Freire concludes that it is possible through drawing a distinction between *systematic education*, which can only be changed by political power, and *educational projects*, which should be carried out *with* the oppressed in the process of organizing them (2017, p.28).

Educational reform is invariably slow and rarely radical. In the meantime, schools seeking to extend their work beyond narrow mechanisms and outcomes focused structures might look towards practices in non-formal education that offer students the opportunity to transform their own reality or at least continue to formalise partnerships with informal education providers to supplement for what they identify to be missing in the provision of formal education.

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Appendix C Publication 3 Case Study: Fighting Words

The development of a model of creative space and its potential for transfer from non-formal to formal education

Irene White and Francesca Lorenzi

Abstract

Creativity has been emerging as a key concept in educational policies since the mid-1990s, with many Western countries restructuring their education systems to embrace innovative approaches likely to stimulate creative and critical thinking. But despite current intentions of putting more emphasis on creativity in education policies worldwide, there is still a relative dearth of viable models which capture the complexity of creativity and the conditions for its successful infusion into formal school environments. The push for creativity is in direct conflict with the results-driven/competitive performance-oriented culture which continues to dominate formal education systems. The authors of this article argue that incorporating creativity into mainstream education is a complex task and is best tackled by taking a systematic and multifaceted approach. They present a multidimensional model designed to help educators in tackling the challenges of the promotion of creativity. Their model encompasses three distinct yet interrelated dimensions of a creative space – physical, social-emotional and critical. The authors use the metaphor of space to refer to the interplay of the three identified dimensions. Drawing on confluence approaches to the theorisation of creativity, this paper exemplifies the development of a model before the background of a growing trend of systems theories. The aim of the model is to be helpful in systematising creativity by offering parameters – derived from the evaluation of an example offered by a non-formal educational environment – for the development of creative environments within mainstream secondary schools.

Key Words

Creative Space; Multidimensional Model; Non-formal Education; Formal Education

1. Introduction

More than half a century ago, Joy Paul Guilford argued that “a creative act is an instance of learning” (Guilford 1950, p. 446), thus offering grounds for affirming that the promotion of creativity has a rightful place in educational policies and practice. Over the last few decades, the quest for creativity and the symbiotic relationship between creativity and learning has been the subject of much scrutiny both within and outside of the educational field (Suh *et al.*, 2012; De Jonge *et al.*, 2012). Much of the focus of this discourse has been on the importance of a creative environment for learning (Zimmerman 2014; Chappell and Craft 2011; Warner and Myers 2009; Jankowska and Atlay 2008; Sagan 2008). Creativity has been emerging as a key concept in educational policies since the mid-1990s, with many Western countries restructuring their education systems to embrace innovative approaches likely to stimulate creative and critical thinking (Craft 2005; Feldman and Benjamin 2006; Shaheen 2010). This pattern is also emerging in Ireland, where the second-level curriculum² is currently undergoing major reform as a result of recent educational policy developments which advocate a need to foster students’ critical and creative thinking (NCCA 2012).

While in many countries the promotion of creativity has become a salient feature of government educational policy documents and declarations of intent, its translation into practice is often less apparent than the rhetoric would suggest (Lin 2011; Newton and Newton 2014). The push for creativity is in direct conflict with the results-driven/performance-oriented culture which continues to dominate formal education systems (Burnard and White 2008; Craft 2010; Newton and Newton 2014). While fostering creativity requires a shift away from knowledge acquisition and assessment-driven agendas, the continuing emphasis on these elements tends to sway educators towards traditional teaching methods and away from the type of innovative approaches likely to stimulate creative, critical thinking (Troman *et al.*,

² In Ireland, second-level education is provided by different types of post-primary schools. That is, secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Second-level education consists of a three-year junior cycle followed by a two-year or three-year senior cycle depending on whether an optional Transition Year is taken following the Junior Certificate examination. Students usually begin the Junior Cycle at age 12. The Senior Cycle caters for students in the 15 to 18 year age group.

2007; Besancon and Lubart 2008). The failure to address this tension within educational policy, coupled with limited resources within schools and a lack of specific measures and appropriate support structures to accompany policy, make the promotion of creativity a real challenge for educators.

This paper seeks to address this challenge by offering a multidimensional model of creativity designed to support schools in the task of transforming policy into practice. Our model recognises creativity as a multidimensional concept – attempts to embed it in practice must be cognisant of the complexity involved. The dimensions concern physical, social-emotional and critical aspects of creativity. Physical aspects include physical space (the layout and organisation of the space); social-emotional aspects include the establishment of a safe, supportive atmosphere (e.g. encouraging and valuing student voice); and critical aspects concern the development of metacognitive skills (e.g. encouraging self-monitoring and experimentation with ideas). However, space is a concept which lends itself to be read not only in physical but also in metaphorical terms. It encompasses physical architecture/surroundings, climate, atmosphere, attitudes, relations and experiences. In our view, the term *creative space* therefore best captures the multidimensionality of creativity.

Our model draws on confluence approaches³ to the theorisation of creativity (Lin 2011) and presents its development before the background of a growing trend of systems theories. Systems theories conceptualise creativity as a complex system emerging from the interplay of different components and “take a very broad and often quite qualitative contextual view of creativity” (Kozbelt *et al.*, 2010, p. 38). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s (1999) systems model is particularly apt as, unlike other theorists, Csikszentmihalyi places particular emphasis on the environment and shifts the focus from “What is creativity?” to “Where is creativity?” (Kozbelt *et al.*, 2010). We argue that the provision of a creative space in schools is a small but significant step towards the promotion of creativity in education.

While concepts of creativity offer a generic theorisation of creativity, our development of a model aims to offer a more concrete framework for the infusion of creativity into educational contexts – both formal and non-formal ones – and

³ A confluence approach regards creative thinking or creativity as being formed by a convergence of several tributary (or confluent) factors.

therefore holds the potential of bridging the gap between theory and practice. In particular, we suggest that schools could benefit from a model derived from nonformal education. While both non-formal and formal education present intentional and systematic (Etling 1993; Romi and Schmida 2009) approaches to teaching and learning and therefore feature some commonalities in terms of planning instructional activities, non-formal education tends to have a more learner-centred orientation (rather than being curriculum-focused) and places greater emphasis on “the unique needs of students (or unique situation)” (Etling 1993, p. 72). In addition, the less directive and more flexible roles of non-formal educators may also offer examples for democratising educational practices in formal learning environments. A straightforward replication in schools of the educational creative conditions found in the non-formal educational environment we describe in this paper may of course be somewhat aspirational. Nevertheless, we argue that the principles which inform it and its characteristics can offer a model for a gradual modification of educational practices in the formal education sector.

Fighting Words Creative Writing Centre: An example of creative space in the non-formal sector

We developed our model based on data gathered as part of a larger evaluation study (Lorenzi and White 2013) of a creative writing centre. Fighting Words is a Dublin based, non-profit, self-funded, independent arts organisation which provides free mentoring in creative writing to participants of all ages, in particular young people and disadvantaged youth. Founded by well-known Irish writer Roddy Doyle⁴ in 2009, Fighting Words operates in close partnership with schools in Ireland. It works predominantly with students from the greater Dublin area, particularly with schools based on the Northside and inner-city neighbourhoods where social disadvantage is prevalent⁵.

⁴ Roddy Doyle is an award-winning Irish writer of novels, plays and screenplays who writes for adults and for children. His homepage is <http://www.rododydoyle.ie/> [accessed 4 October 2016].

⁵ For more information about the Fighting Words centre, see <http://www.fightingwords.ie/> [accessed 29 September 2016].

The Fighting Words creative writing model consists of three phases. During the first phase, participants create characters and develop dialogue in response to a scenario-based role play. Consistent with suggestions put forward by Chrysanthi Gkolia *et al.* (2009) and Marion Rutland and David Barlex (2008), the prompt is powerful and encourages students to experiment with ideas. The scenarios invariably originate from experiences students can readily identify with (Halsey *et al.*, 2006). For instance, two friends want to go to a concert. One of the friends wins tickets and the other assumes that the friend will bring him/her. However, the friend decides to bring someone else. Students role-play the situation and a tutor types the conversation as it unfolds. The students' words are projected onto a screen in real time. The group then creates a story around this scenario. All students' ideas appear on the screen and the story develops gradually through a democratic editorial process led by the tutor. This phase offers students opportunities for working collaboratively with their peers (Dillon *et al.*, 2007; Rutland and Barlex, 2008), but also allows for the type of dialogue and interpersonal exchange which sparks creativity (Gandini *et al.*, 2005). At a suitably dramatic moment in the development of the collective story, the group input ends and the second phase begins. Participants now move to the adjacent room to continue the story individually. In the final phase, the students reconvene and read their stories aloud.

Fighting Words is an example of a creative space in the non-formal education sector. Providers of non-formal education are free from the restrictions which plague the performance-driven formal sector and enjoy greater freedom in terms of design and delivery of programmes and choice and location of environments. Fighting Words operates outside of formal institutional contexts, yet, thanks to its close connection to schools, Fighting Words represents an organisation with the potential to bridge the gap between formal and non-formal education. It is for this reason that we chose it as the environment for the analysis presented in this paper.

The model proposed here may help in systematising creativity by offering parameters for the development of creative environments within schools. While our model has been derived from and illustrated with reference to Fighting Words, we envisage that its relevance could extend beyond purpose-built non-formal creative writing centres. Unlike other models of creativity which have been generated entirely

from theory and have been perceived by educators as top-down approaches for educational practice (Lin 2011), the grounding of our research in the Fighting Words approach provides exemplification from a lived experience of promoting creativity through the co-operation of formal and non-formal education providers.

Research methodology

The parent study

The follow-up research we report on in this paper was derived from a larger evaluation study commissioned by Fighting Words. The primary purpose of that larger study (Lorenzi and White 2013) was to evaluate the compatibility of the Fighting Words creative processes with curricular developments in second-level education in Ireland. Without having had any prior connection with Fighting Words, we were given unlimited access to resources and stakeholders involved with the creative writing centre. At no point during the research process did the commissioning organisation exert pressure or influence the outcomes of our research.

The original evaluation was a large study which had investigated the perspectives of a range of key stakeholders. These were second-level students, teachers, school principals, Fighting Words tutors and founders and the Chief Executive Officer of the Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Students included those who had experienced weekly contact with Fighting Words over an academic year, those who participated in a one-off workshop and those who continued attending Fighting Words (after their contact through school ended). The accessibility and the size of the stakeholder group dictated that we apply nonselective sampling. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were deemed the most suitable data collection methods. The questionnaires were designed to elicit the experiences and views of all the students (256), teachers (7) and tutors (41) involved in the project. While the questionnaires differed according to the target population, the questions were designed in a way which enabled, as far as possible, comparison of the responses. The questionnaires contained a mix of open-ended and

closed questions to allow for the collection of both numeric and qualitative data. The questionnaires were designed to give a comprehensive range of responses to more than 20 questions relating to all aspects of the project.

After the questionnaires had been designed, questions for the semi-structured individual interviews were planned for each of the following stakeholders: the Fighting Words founders; the Chief Executive Officer of the Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA); and principals of schools participating in the year-long project. These key stakeholders were selected because their understanding of both the Fighting Words model and developments in the second-level curriculum saw them well-placed to comment not only on the model itself but also on its potential translation to mainstream education. Interview questions were designed to give a comprehensive range of responses to all aspects of the project and to allow for triangulation with responses from questionnaires.

Data collection was carried out over twelve months. A total of 163 out of 304 stakeholders responded, giving a response rate of 54.3 per cent. Additional data were obtained from field notes we compiled during site visits to the premises. Over the period of a year, we studied the premises, attended workshops and events, and spoke with staff, tutors, teachers and students. We also attended a training workshop for volunteer tutors to observe how training was conducted and how the ethos of the organisation was presented. Given the large number of volunteer tutors working for the organisation,⁶ we felt this to be an important consideration. Observations of the physical space, the teaching methodologies and the interaction of students, tutors and teachers were recorded and stored as field data.

Focusing on creative space: our follow-up research, using framework analysis

An initial characterisation of creative spaces had emerged as an unexpected outcome of the original research. This outcome appeared to warrant further exploration, particularly with a view to strengthening our argument for the potential of Fighting Words to provide a rich example for the infusion of creativity into formal educational

⁶ At the time of our study, there were 41 volunteers out of a selection of over 500.

environments. However, the initial characterisation was sketchy and unstructured and we felt that revisiting the data more closely might yield further useful information to systematise the characterisation of creative spaces.

For the follow-up study reported on in this paper, we narrowed our focus on the emerging model of creative space and its transferability from a non-formal to a formal educational context. The data analysis approach we took for this study is consistent with the principles of framework analysis. Aashish Srivastava and Bruce Thomson (2009) describe framework analysis as a qualitative method of research which has specific questions, a pre-designed sample and some a priori issues identified prior to the start of the data analysis. They add that while “framework analysis may generate theories”, its main purpose is to “describe and interpret what is happening in a particular setting” (p. 73). According to Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer (1994), who developed this qualitative research method, framework analysis is flexible in that it allows the user to either collect all the data and then analyse them or do data analysis *during* the collection process. Louise Archer *et al.* (2005) emphasise that framework analysis allows keeping in close contact with the data, since it is a dynamic and generative framework which allows change or addition or amendment throughout the process. This flexible approach to data analysis was important in our research, where the original framework was provided by the original study which indicated that creativity is a multidimensional concept. Through a closer textual analysis of interviews, questionnaire and researcher-generated observations, we examined the specific characteristics of a creative space and their interconnection.

Analysis and discussion of findings

Three main outcomes emerged from our follow-up study: (1) a multidimensional concept of creative space; (2) a more specific characterisation of a creative space; and (3) the identification of challenges to and parameters for a potential transfer of the model from non-formal to formal educational contexts.

The development of a model of creative space

Traditionally, there are primarily two categories of creativity: “everyday creativity (also called ‘little-c’), which can be found in nearly all people, and eminent creativity (also called ‘Big-C’), which is reserved for the great” (Kaufmann and Beghetto 2009, p. 1). Much of the discourse on creativity in education has been driven by the concept of ordinary or “little c” creativity – problem-solving and agency of individuals in everyday life – (Craft 2001a; Craft 2003) and the perception that the ordinary person can be creative (Craft 2001b; NACCCE 1999; Seltzer and Bentley 1999).

Perhaps a more useful conceptual framework is the concept of “mini-c” creativity – the type of creativity demonstrated by individuals engaged in the process of learning – put forward by Ronald Beghetto and James Kaufmann (2007, 2009). Mini-c creativity aligns more closely with Guilford’s original observation on the relationship between learning and creativity and thus with our purpose here. Another concept which also contributed to the theoretical background of our model is Vlad Petre Glăveanu’s (2013) “five A” framework of actor, action, artefact, audience and affordances.⁷ We consider this a useful framework appropriate to the concept of creativity in education as it recognises the creativity inherent in the learning process and includes creative expression at several levels. It therefore offers the potential to encapsulate creativity across all domains on the little-c/Big-C continuum. Our model is thus underpinned by the concept of “mini-c” creativity and Glăveanu’s (2013) “five A” framework.

A creative space in educational terms should foster development; it should be stimulating and dynamic and generate a fertile environment for the emergence of unexpected and divergent outcomes (Wild 2011). In this section we identify the characteristics of a creative space captured by the data gathered during our evaluation study of Fighting Words (Lorenzi and White 2013). Our findings indicate that the Fighting Words model entails three distinct dimensions of creative space – a physical dimension, a social-emotional dimension and a critical dimension. Our

⁷ Affordances are possibilities of action.

analysis of the data in our follow-up study has resulted in a refinement of the characteristics and their connotations in relation to each dimension.

In this paper we refer to a *model* of creative space. The *model* is intended as an example generated from both theory and practice (rather than from theory alone) and is to be understood as a general framework for infusion of creativity into both non-formal and formal educational environments, albeit originally generated from the analysis of a non-formal educational environment.

Other researchers have spoken of *creative space* in multidimensional terms. Stefania Bocconi *et al.* (2012) suggest that a creative classroom comprises eight dimensions. They describe the interplay between the dimensions as an eco-system and see creative classrooms as complex organisms constantly evolving. Maja Jankowska and Mark Atlay (2008) present creative spaces as possessing specific physical characteristics, generating different relationships between teachers and students and eliciting co-operation, creative thinking and reflection. Dan Davies *et al.* (2013) describe creative learning environments as possessing psychosocial and pedagogical features in addition to the physical architecture of the space. In analogous terms to Rupert Wegerif's (2011) theorisation of dialogic space, a *creative space* is a dynamic rather than a static interplay of the above-mentioned dimensions and is highly dependent of the situational context. Glăveanu's (2013) five-A framework also puts forward a multifaceted notion of creativity. Glăveanu introduces the concept of affordances (action possibilities) to emphasise the role of the physical environment. Other authors (Warner and Myers 2009; Dul *et al.*, 2011; Starke 2012) also indicate that promoters of creativity need to pay attention to physical space. Janetta Mitchell McCoy and Gary Evans (2002) posit that creativity research has emphasised personal characteristics and has not focused sufficiently on the effect of physical environment on creativity.

In order to develop a model of creative space which could bridge the gap between theory and practice and offer practitioners – in both non-formal and formal education sectors – a guide for generating an environment conducive to the emergence of creativity, we took a three-step approach. First, we considered those data collected in the course of the parent study which highlighted the emergence of a characterisation of creative space. Second, we reviewed the literature on the topic

of creative spaces. This allowed us to generate a more refined framework for analysis of our data. Finally, we returned to the data with the refined framework, which enabled us to identify the interconnection between the various dimensions of creative space and to add detail to their characterisation. The interplay among the dimensions as it emerged from our analysis is illustrated in Fig. 1.

To explain the interplay illustrated in Fig. 1, the next section discusses how the characteristics are specified across different dimensions. For instance, creative spaces should be characterised as *open* and *light* in physical, social-emotional and critical terms. The same goes for the other four characteristics we identified: *dynamic*, *stimulating*, *unexpected* and *cosy*.

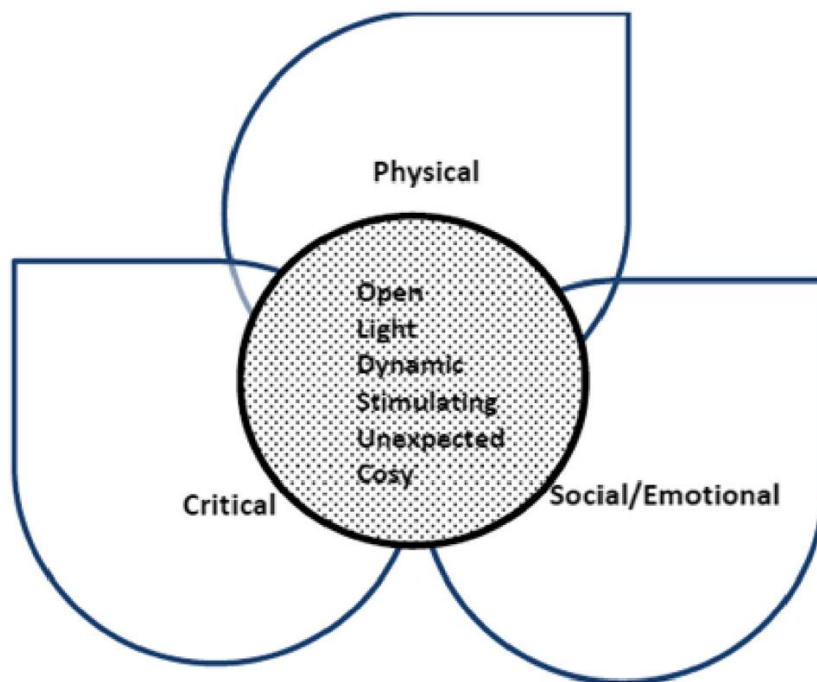


Figure 1: A multidimensional model of creative space

The characterisation of our model of creative space

In this section we discuss the characteristics of a creative space as they emerged from our study. We examine the characteristics in the context of each dimension. These characteristics emerged when we applied the refined framework, referred to above,

to data obtained from field notes, interview transcripts and questionnaire responses. As the purpose was to establish interconnections between the dimensions, we deliberately chose terms which could be applied equally across all dimensions. The process of characterisation required careful choice of language as the terms chosen had to be broad enough to reflect the core characteristics and precise enough to capture the nuances dictated by each dimension. Terms which recurred in the text of the interviews and responses to questionnaires and researchers' field notes were selected. These were: *open, light, dynamic, stimulating, unexpected* and *cosy*. A description of these characteristics and how they manifest in Fighting Words now follows.

Open and light

Fighting Words is a bright, open, welcoming space. The furniture is gaily coloured, but economical, leaving the space uncluttered. The main rooms present specific sensory features. Bright pink curtains replace doors and are rarely used to isolate one room from the other, thus leaving the space open most of the time. Access to the main room is through a bookcase which opens like a door. The minimal use of physical barriers and flexible seating arrangements allow ease of movement between work areas and smooth transitions between activities. The space is brightly lit and natural light floods in from the large patio door leading to a courtyard. The addition of the courtyard as an outside space extends the sense of openness and fluidity evident inside the building. The combination of these factors generates a perception of the space as *open and light*.

Our data indicate that the physical environment of Fighting Words is conducive to creativity. Participants saw the configuration of space and the open bright decor as important, and commented that these features create a relaxed ambience different from that found in formal school environments. Our findings from the data which highlight this include references to Fighting Words premises as "an alternative space to school", a "physical space that allows relaxing" (tutors and teachers), and as a place where "there's no desks ... the organisation of the space is different" (CEO NCCA).

A number of authors (Addison *et al.*, 2010; Jeffrey 2006) suggest that openness should characterise the creative space and that classrooms which allow flexible use of space and ease of movement promote pupils' creativity. According to Veà Vecchi (2010), the sensory qualities in learning environments such as light, colour and sound are important influences on young people's perceptions of their creative ability. Openness, brightness and minimal use of physical barriers are also highlighted by Jankowska and Atlay (2008), who refer to what they call the C-space (Creativity space) as "clean, nicely furnished/decorated ... [and which] doesn't feel like a classroom" and add that "the space influences creative thinking" (p. 275). Elsewhere, Scott Warner and Kerri Myers (2009) speak of lighting, colour, decorations, resources, sensory variables and room configurations as contributing factors to generating an environment conducive to creativity and, in accordance with Nancy van Note Chism (2002), argue that room design influences the social context, the student-teacher relationship and the overall effectiveness of the instructional design. Some of the features of the physical environment described here are rather different from those found in formal school environments, however, Giulio Jacucci and Ina Wagner (2007) acknowledge the potential of classrooms to become creative spaces in which materials such as technologies and art objects expand collaborative communication and promote new ideas.

Further analysis of the data revealed that the *open* and *light* characteristics found in the physical space of Fighting Words are mirrored by a relaxed, supportive atmosphere and non-judgmental ethos. This social-emotional dimension was seen by participants as a crucial component of Fighting Words and as an important factor in promoting creativity. Most stakeholders referred to the relaxed and supportive atmosphere they had experienced in Fighting Words. The non-judgmental ethos was clearly perceived by all students, including one-off workshop attendees. This is evident in students' references to the sense of self-validation which they experienced by taking stories in individual directions ("I could have my say"), and the freedom they felt from not having to conform to rigidly set standards ("I learnt that no idea is bad or stupid"). Recurrently in the interviews, Fighting Words is described as a nurturing environment which supports without judging and in so doing creates a safe place in which to thrive both academically and personally.

The empowerment which results from supportiveness of the environment opens up a creative space where participants can experiment with ideas and express their views openly. Such a freer environment is also a more playful one where humour contributes – in critical terms – to the development of students’ creative ability and also helps – in social-emotional terms – to foster relationships (Jindal-Snape *et al.*, 2011; Miller *et al.*, 2010). The flexible seating arrangements allow less formal interaction between participants and tutors, and this creates an atmosphere which suggests fewer boundaries and less specific limitations on what can or cannot be done. This blurring of boundaries allows references which may be considered unacceptable in a classroom to be embraced in this less restricted environment, as signalled by this tutor:

In Fighting Words when we are given a group of kids to work with they are already excited and they’re already out of their class environment ... we get a great reaction because we can write a story and the character in it can let a big fart and *they don’t do that in school so we already have them giggling and laughing.*

Creative spaces should be characterised as *light* in physical, social-emotional and critical terms. *Light* in the critical dimension recognises that creativity is enhanced when students are given some control over their learning and are also supported in taking risks (Cremin *et al.*, 2006; Burgess and Addison 2007; Ewing 2011).

Light in terms of the social-emotional dimension manifests as humour and enjoyment and can enhance the teacher/student relationship (Cumming 2007). Bringing more “playful” or “games-based” approaches into classrooms at all ages can also support the development of creative skills (Cumming 2007; Cachia *et al.*, 2009; Jindal-Snape *et al.*, 2011). Students find in Fighting Words a nurturing space where praise has a profound effect on their performance. Tutors who are not seen by students as teachers and who do not act as teachers are the most frequently quoted factor in the establishment of an atmosphere different from that experienced in school. Mentorship alone does not seem to be a sufficiently differentiating characteristic to distinguish tutors from teachers, as it can be argued that teachers also fulfil that role to some extent. However, the constructive and advisory role assumed by tutors – which in Fighting Words is decoupled from the judgmental role associated with assessment – was reported by interviewees as being influential in

the establishment of a supportive relationship with students. Freedom to think outside the box and confidence gained from seeing one's own ideas validated by other students, teachers and tutors emerge from our data as frequently mentioned benefits.

It is put forward in the literature that the infusion of creativity into education should aim to generate development in social-emotional terms. A supportive environment is needed for creativity to flourish (Zimmerman 2014). Creativity is enhanced when students are given some control over their learning and are also supported in taking risks (Cremin *et al.*, 2006; Burgess and Addison 2007; Ewing 2011). Students should feel comfortable and their voice should be heard and acknowledged. To this end, Lynn Holaday (1997) suggests that coaching rather than judging is more likely to help students develop confidence in their creative ability. Jankowska and Atlay (2008) highlight the importance of atmosphere and suggest that in social-emotional terms, the atmosphere should be personal, less bookish and make students more likely to comment honestly. A non-judgmental ethos plays a significant role in the establishment of a supportive and safe environment for students, but also in the development of creativity, and in particular of "possibility thinking" (Craft 2001b), divergent thinking (Torrance 1972) and a dialogic space (Wegerif 2011). Beth Hennessey and Teresa Amabile (1987, p. 11) have asserted that intrinsic motivation is influenced greatly by situational or "state" factors in one's environment (e.g. school). The environment may affect one's motivation when engaged in a task (e.g. problem-solving), thus also pointing to the importance of the relations within the environment. Furthermore, the importance of a relational space where individuals grow personally and relationally is highlighted by Shelley Day-Sclater (2003), Kerry Chappell and Anna Craft (2011), and Olivia Sagan (2008, p. 182), who speaks of a transitional space "as one in which the student, artwork and tutor 'play'" and where "risk-taking and co-construction of identity and ideas" are allowed.

Stimulating and cosy

As already mentioned, the physical environment of Fighting Words is comfortable and pleasant. Many aspects of its design are conducive to creative work. According to the literature, the visual environment may stimulate pupils' creativity when work in progress is on display (Addison *et al.*, 2010). Extracts from students' work dotted around the room, rows of colourful bookcases and the courtyard as a thinking space are examples of how the physical space of Fighting Words can be stimulating. The outside space of the courtyard can only be accessed by participants, making it safe and cosy. According to the data, our respondents experienced Fighting Words as a stimulating, cosy environment which engages and motivates students and encourages expressivity. One school principal commented that students rather than the syllabus become the centre of the educational experience:

It gives students an opportunity to express creatively something that reflects their own experience of life and that is not necessarily dictated by the curriculum ...

In terms of expressivity, a number of stakeholders observed the value of Fighting Words in providing a platform for the student voice. Teachers commented that the space was crucial in "allowing students space and freedom to express themselves". According to the CEO of NCCA, voice is at the core of the initiative:

Fighting Words to me is about voice. It's about giving students the tools to articulate views, opinions, ideas, concepts, questions – even if they're challenging ... giving them the tools, giving them the space and giving them the confidence as well to find that voice.

The opportunity to be heard was identified as a significant factor in building participants' confidence and self-esteem. According to one principal,

Their self-esteem has just blossomed; they hold their head up high and they're role models now to the other students.

Some of the findings indicate that the opportunity to have their voice heard was particularly significant for quiet students and students with mental health difficulties. One principal noted that the informal atmosphere stimulated students' participation and encouraged them to express their opinions:

They were so eager to get up and talk and vocalise, and one girl, they were saying, never stopped talking, ye know, just talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. We're

always saying “be quiet”, “settle down” so I think that’s a different type of dynamic.

Once students begin to articulate their thoughts and become aware that their opinions are being validated, they delve deeper, discover further ideas and start to contribute more, perhaps unleashing more than they realised they had to say. The fact that participants felt confident to express their views freely is indicative of the supportive, non-threatening and cosy atmosphere which prevailed.

In addition to the factors already discussed, the innovative methods used in the Fighting Words model are a further example of how a creative environment encompasses the social-emotional and critical dimensions associated with creativity. Our analysis of the data illustrates that the Fighting Words model develops creativity by encouraging expressivity, divergence and resourcefulness. The collaborative process used during the first phase of story writing is an example of how a “can do” attitude is generated. The shared responsibility for the initial development of the story stimulates ideas, and the group energy provides students with a strong starting point for their story. Interesting, motivating and relevant projects with exciting starting points and stimulus materials develop and open pupils’ minds (Gkolia *et al.*, 2009; Rutland and Barlex 2008). The collaborative beginning sidesteps the hurdle of starting, an obstacle commonly experienced by those embarking on a creative process. Roddy Doyle, being an established writer himself, considers this a vital strategy, remarking: “It’s the blank page that terrifies people more than anything else.” Opportunities for working collaboratively with peers (Burgess and Addison 2007; Dillon *et al.*, 2007; Rutland and Barlex 2008) and interacting dialogically may spark creativity (Gandini *et al.*, 2005).

The collaborative beginning also generates a sense of mutual support and respect. Students reported a sense of validation from seeing their shared story being typed and projected onto a screen. Doyle sees this as an essential confidence-building exercise which helps students recognise and trust their creative ability. The sense of ownership derived from this activity builds students’ resilience and resourcefulness and initiates a creative process which, once started, is sustained mostly by the students alone. A further sense of validation and mutual supportiveness is generated in the final phase of the creative writing process, as

students respectfully listen to each other's versions of the story and express surprise at how remarkably different the stories have become.

A creative space should empower students to become autonomous agents who can think for themselves and have an analytical capacity which enables them to choose between alternative options while also considering the impact of those choices on others. The necessity of a critical dimension has been identified by Daria Loi and Patrick Dillon (2006, p. 364), who assert that "educational environments that claim to foster creativity must incorporate potential for analysis".

In the second phase of the model, students develop the story individually and are urged to take their own route in storytelling. Our data suggest that Fighting Words stimulated participants' creativity and instilled an appetite for creative thinking. Students experimented with ideas and were encouraged to continuously rework their writing to develop it. As a result, different, original and divergent endings emerged. Students were given full control over their stories and tutors encouraged students to articulate their ideas and use their imagination. One principal argues that this approach contrasts with formal education, where syllabi are constraining and consequently the imagination of a child is limited:

They are reminded to regurgitate the facts, the facts, the facts and sometimes there isn't space for expression aside of the facts ... generally they don't get the opportunity ... it is very, very important and it's something that is not encouraged enough at second level and it's something that should be cherished.

The relationship with tutors appears to have been paramount in stimulating students' resourcefulness and resulted in students producing work they did not realise they were capable of creating. One student referred to "being surprised at my own ability", and another remarked: "I had a good story in my head and I did not know about it". Despite the excitement of being able to write their own stories, students reported also experiencing fatigue generated by the intensity of effort which any creative endeavour requires. They acknowledged that in "chiselling" their story they needed to develop perseverance, self-reliance and self-motivation. Responses from the key stakeholders suggest that the tutors' motivational role was paramount in "helping students to build self-reliance". This appears to tally with views expressed by the surveyed teachers, who remarked that students displayed

behaviours and attitudes which indicated they had developed an understanding of deferred gratification and an ability to persevere with a course of action even when they encountered challenges which they would previously have considered insurmountable. Principals attributed this increased resilience to participants' experience of seeing projects through to completion in Fighting Words.

Unexpected and dynamic

Many aspects of Fighting Words can be described as unexpected and dynamic. The unconventional use of the bookcase as a door repurposes it in dynamic and unexpected terms. A bookcase is normally static. The notion of an opening bookcase leading to a secret passage is a nod towards fictional worlds depicted in novels and films. The key for opening the door is not physical but metaphorical. A Fighting Words tutor (hidden from students' view) opens the door in response to a chorus of magical words chosen and uttered by students. The fact that the magical words are decided by the students reinforces the power of words created by the students themselves.

The Fighting Words Educational Co-ordinator emphasises the magical ambiance of the space:

The building itself is quite magical and I think the space is an important part of what we do. We are lucky to have a magic door at Fighting Words and the magic door is a bookcase that opens up so when the kids are ready to go through, they come up with a couple of magic words and the main part of the centre is a big bright space.

The element of surprise generated by the bookcase door creates a sense of anticipation and discovery. This sense of wonderment continues into the main room – a dynamic space which serves multiple purposes and encourages fluidity – and the courtyard – an outside space which is not, as might be expected, reserved for breaks from the work but also used as a place of work, a thinking space.

Conclusion

Our research identified specific challenges to the transferability of the Fighting Words model to formal education. In this paper, we have outlined a multidimensional model of creative space which, while generated from our analysis of data collected in a non-

formal educational setting, offers potential for its transfer to formal education. We have argued that at the heart of the model is the interconnection of the three dimensions we have identified, namely the physical, social-emotional and critical dimensions. While the specification of the dimensions may be dependent on the context in which the model is adopted, attention should be paid to all three dimensions. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that there are fundamental differences between non-formal and formal education. In particular, it must be recognised that formal educators may in practice operate in more restrictive conditions, subject for instance to curricular dictates, established roles, functions and organisational structures. From the evidence gathered in the course of our study, what has emerged as a common thread underpinning the three dimensions is *difference*. The need for different physical spaces, different types of social emotional environments and relationships and different forms of thinking have been summed up by the stakeholders as “out-of-school experience”. This seems to point to the impossibility of generating a creative environment within schools. Yet difference here is seen as something which can be brought inside schools by modifying current practices, policies, roles and attitudes rather than relegating creativity to environments physically, emotionally and critically located outside schools. We argue here that the model of creativity put forward in this paper is within reach of schools seeking to implement it, provided that there is an orchestrated effort among different stakeholders within the school. In this final section we summarise some of our findings in relation to the potential constraints to the translation of our model to formal educational contexts.

The physical environment

Our study has evidenced that the physical space is a contributory element to the generation of an environment which fosters creativity. The space comes to life through visual reminders of creativity both in the form of creative works produced by participants and established sources – examples of both “mini-C” and “Big-C creativity”. These have been identified by participants as an important element in generating a stimulating environment where one is surrounded by creativity and

prompted to partake. Features such as brightness, flexibility and openness have also been mentioned by participants as important aspects in generating a sense of freedom and openness. Such features have also been associated with absence of restrictions and possibility to interact in and use the space in imaginative ways. Schools can generate a physical creative space by *repurposing and/or reconfiguring space*. A dedicated room in the school can be repurposed specifically to promote creativity and may present architectural features reminiscent of Fighting Words building. However, if aiming for a more extensive infusion of creativity into schools, it may be more pragmatic to consider classrooms reconfigured as creative spaces. Such classrooms are then characterised by flexibility, brightness and openness. The flexibility may allow for different use for different subjects and this may bring an element of surprise and variety to a room which is used by multiple teachers.

However, the physical environment is not in itself sufficient. Its interplay with the social-emotional and critical dimensions is also necessary.

School structures and roles

Most participants had concerns regarding the compatibility of the model with specific aspects of the second-level curriculum, including: the necessity to associate summative assessment with the model, the unavailability of tutors to support students, and the unsuitability of the school environment to recreate an “out-of-school” experience. Some of these limitations have led to the suggestion that rather than translating the model in its entirety, it would be more achievable to consider the translation of the workshop approach adopted by Fighting Words into a teaching methodology which could be utilised by teachers. The reproduction of the social-emotional environment witnessed in Fighting Words is by no means straightforward. *Different types of relationships between teachers and students* are being advocated, but realistically this requires a shift in thinking both in terms of teachers’ self-identity, role and responsibility and students’ perceptions of the role teachers play in their learning. Issues of authority and equality in the classroom may be brought to surface when attempting to establish an environment denoted by a non-judgmental ethos and freedom of self-expression, elements often referred to by participants in this

study as crucial for the establishment of a fertile environment for creativity. Furthermore, larger pupil-teacher ratio and teachers' dual role as mentors and assessors impact on one-to-one time and attention which mentorship requires and on the extent to which a more relaxed and informal type of relationship can be established. Nevertheless, the introduction of, for instance, team teaching along with a greater focus on nurturing mentoring relationships with students is not beyond the scope of schools. These measures should help towards consolidating the supportive/non-judgmental ethos which usually accompanies the type of relationships already enjoyed by teachers and students in extra-curricular activities. The example of extra-curricular activities is particularly pertinent because it illustrates a successful example of bringing the "out of school experience" into schools. Ideally behaviours and attitudes embraced and expressed in extra-curricular activities should permeate classroom interaction and the curriculum itself should cease to be a straight-jacket which restricts both focus and form of the interaction.

In this study, a non-judgmental ethos has been identified as a catalyst in empowering students to "have a voice" and in signalling that different perspectives are valued. The generative process of story-writing is of significance as it illustrates that even from a shared starting point, individuals can think and take their stories in remarkably different directions. Similarly, opportunities to think freely away from pre-determined directions or expected answers should underpin the interaction in the classroom if creativity is to be promoted. The thinking associated with learning in formal educational environments is often restricted to meeting assessment requirements. Yet the scope of formal education expands beyond satisfying assessment requirements, and consideration of the formation of students in a broader sense is within the remit of teachers. Forming autonomous thinkers who can experiment with ideas and take them in novel directions would not only benefit students but education in more general terms.

We hope that the limitations of this study can be addressed by future research. Some of the limitations of this research include the limited timeframe for conducting the study. The study would have benefited from more prolonged contact with schools and more in-depth contact with teachers and students. Prolonged contact with participants before and after their engagement time would have

allowed us to gather further data on participants' profile and offer more scope for analysis of how having experienced a creative space has impacted on their long-term development. It is always difficult to differentiate between changes which occur naturally during adolescence and the impact of external factors on shaping individuals who are undergoing a period of significant transitioning.

While the challenges and limitations discussed above are substantial, these could potentially be overcome if a gradual and systematic approach to the infusion of creativity into formal environment through the generation of creative spaces is adopted. The study has simply gone as far as proposing a model. A future study should investigate – with reference to the model – what is the current status of creativity in formal educational environments. It is envisaged that this type of study could further inform the development of the model of creative space, but also result in more specific guidelines for educators and educational managers to favour the infusion of creativity into schools.

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Appendix D Images from Upstate Theatre Project





Upstate Theatre Project Site-Specific Production of *Ship Street Revisited*





Upstate Theatre Project Site-Specific Production of *Ship Street Revisited*

Appendix E Summary of Quantitative Data from Fighting Words

	BPS	Book Project Student		Strongly Agree			Agree			Don't Know			Disagree			Strongly Disagree		
	WCS	Write Club Student		BPS	WCS	SECW	BPS	WCS	SECW	BPS	WCS	SECW	BPS	WCS	SECW	BPS	WCS	SECW
	SECW	Workshop Students		BPS	WCS	SECW	BPS	WCS	SECW	BPS	WCS	SECW	BPS	WCS	SECW	BPS	WCS	SECW
<i>I am more able to think for myself</i>	33	18	26	48	64	39	19	18	25	0	0	8	0	0	2			
<i>I am more confident in my writing abilities</i>	44	100	25	49	0	50	7	0	13	0	0	9	0	0	3			
<i>I am more confident asking questions in the classroom</i>	24	36	18	42	55	39	17	9	24	17	0	18	0	0	1			
<i>I am a better listener</i>	35	45	25	35	27	40	28	19	25	2	9	8	0	0	2			
<i>I am more respectful of other people's ideas</i>	49	27	46	46	64	43	3	9	8	2	0	3	0	0	0			
<i>I am more comfortable working with others</i>	54	27	36	29	64	41	7	9	13	10	0	8	0	0	2			
<i>I visit the library more often</i>	10	18	3	22	27	16	5	0	30	51	55	29	12	0	22			
<i>I read more</i>	24	36	11	24	36	32	15	19	25	32	9	24	5	0	8			
<i>I enjoy sharing my ideas</i>	37	27	16	46	64	51	10	9	17	7	0	8	0	0	8			
<i>I learned more about my strengths</i>	46	45	11	37	45	40	12	10	32	5	0	14	0	0	3			
<i>I learned more about my weaknesses</i>	34	36	14	49	45	33	17	19	28	0	0	20	0	0	5			
<i>I am not afraid to stand up for myself</i>	32	27	12	41	36	35	20	28	22	7	9	23	0	0	8			
<i>I am not afraid of asking for help</i>	34	18	20	39	82	46	17	0	17	10	0	15	0	0	2			
<i>I have more confidence in my ability to be creative</i>	51	64	33	41	27	50	6	9	11	2	0	5	0	0	1			
<i>I can put my point across more clearly</i>	34	45	16	44	45	46	20	10	30	2	0	8	0	0	0			
<i>When something does not work, I am more able to think of an alternative</i>	33	45	28	48	45	39	12	10	22	7	0	11	0	0	0			

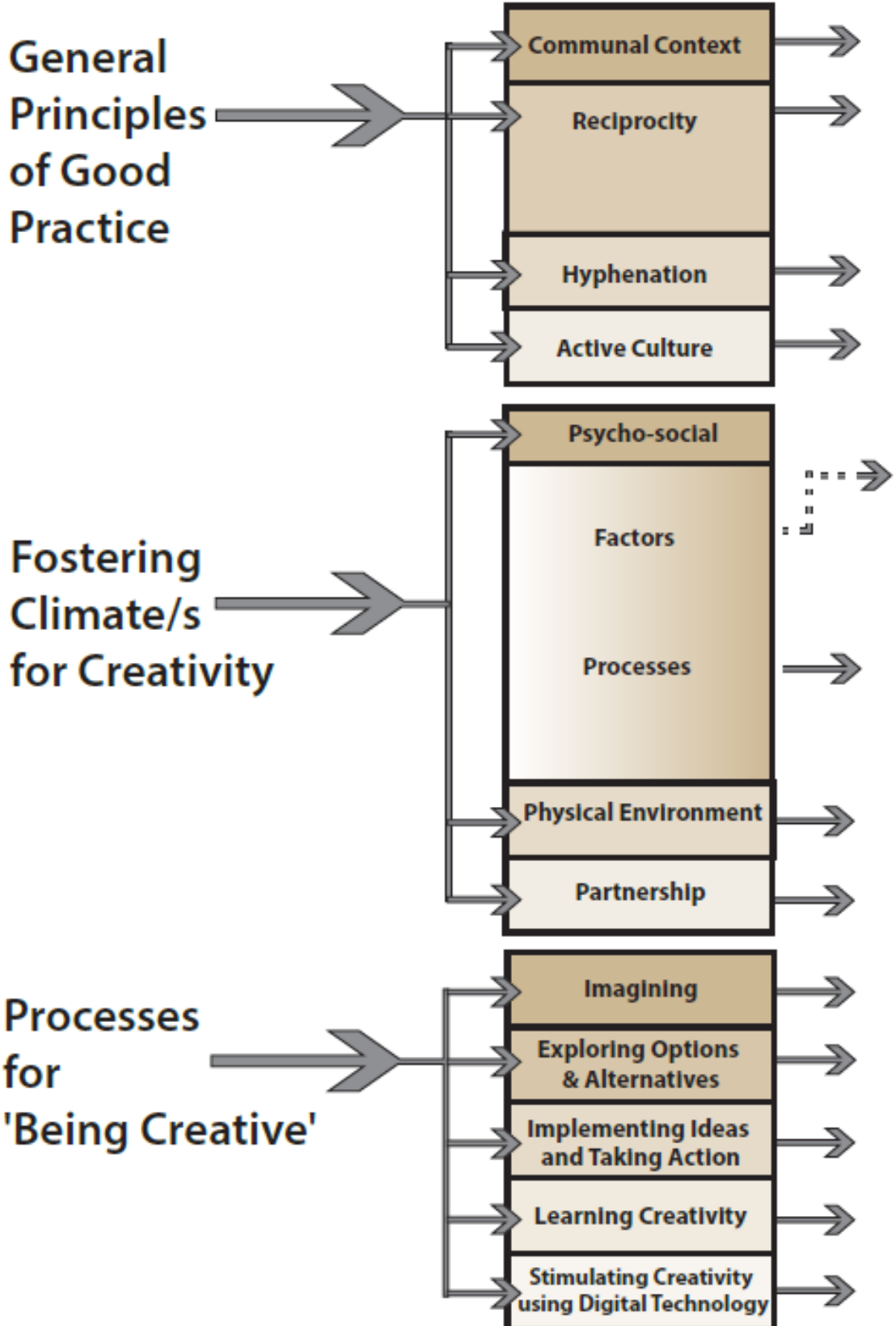
Fighting Words Student Questionnaire Responses (%)

	Book Project Teacher		Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't Know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	BPT	FWT	BPT	FWT	BPT	FWT	BPT	FWT	BPT	FWT	BPT	FWT
	Fighting Words (Volunteer) Tutor											
<i>Students are more able to think for themselves</i>	80	54	20	31	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Students are more confident in their writing abilities</i>	80	77	20	15	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Students are more confident asking questions in the classroom</i>	40	23	40	46	20	31	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Students are better listeners</i>	0	0	80	31	20	62	0	7	0	0	0	0
<i>Students are more respectful of other people's ideas</i>	80	49	20	46	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0
<i>Students are more comfortable working with others</i>	60	38	40	38	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Students visit the library more often</i>	0	23	20	69	80	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Students read more</i>	0	7	60	39	40	39	0	15	0	0	0	0
<i>Students are more open to sharing ideas</i>	60	23	40	54	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Students learned more about their strengths</i>	80	46	20	46	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Students learned more about their weaknesses</i>	40	8	60	23	0	31	0	31	0	0	0	7
<i>Students are not afraid to stand up for themselves</i>	60	8	20	46	20	31	0	15	0	0	0	0
<i>Students are not afraid of asking for help</i>	80	15	0	62	20	23	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Students have more confidence in their ability to be creative</i>	80	69	20	23	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Students can put their point across more clearly</i>	0	15	100	31	0	46	0	0	0	0	0	8
<i>When something does not work students are more able to think of an alternative</i>	40	23	60	54	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Student literacy has improved</i>	20	----	60	----	20	----	0	----	0	----	0	----
<i>Performance in written continuous assessment has improved</i>	0	----	60	----	40	----	0	----	0	----	0	----
<i>Students show a greater interest in literature</i>	20	----	60	----	20	----	0	----	0	----	0	----
<i>Students demonstrate a better ability to critically analyse literary texts</i>	40	----	60	----	0	----	0	----	0	----	0	----
<i>Students show a greater ability to critically analyse a broad range of written texts</i>	40	----	60	----	0	----	0	----	0	----	0	----

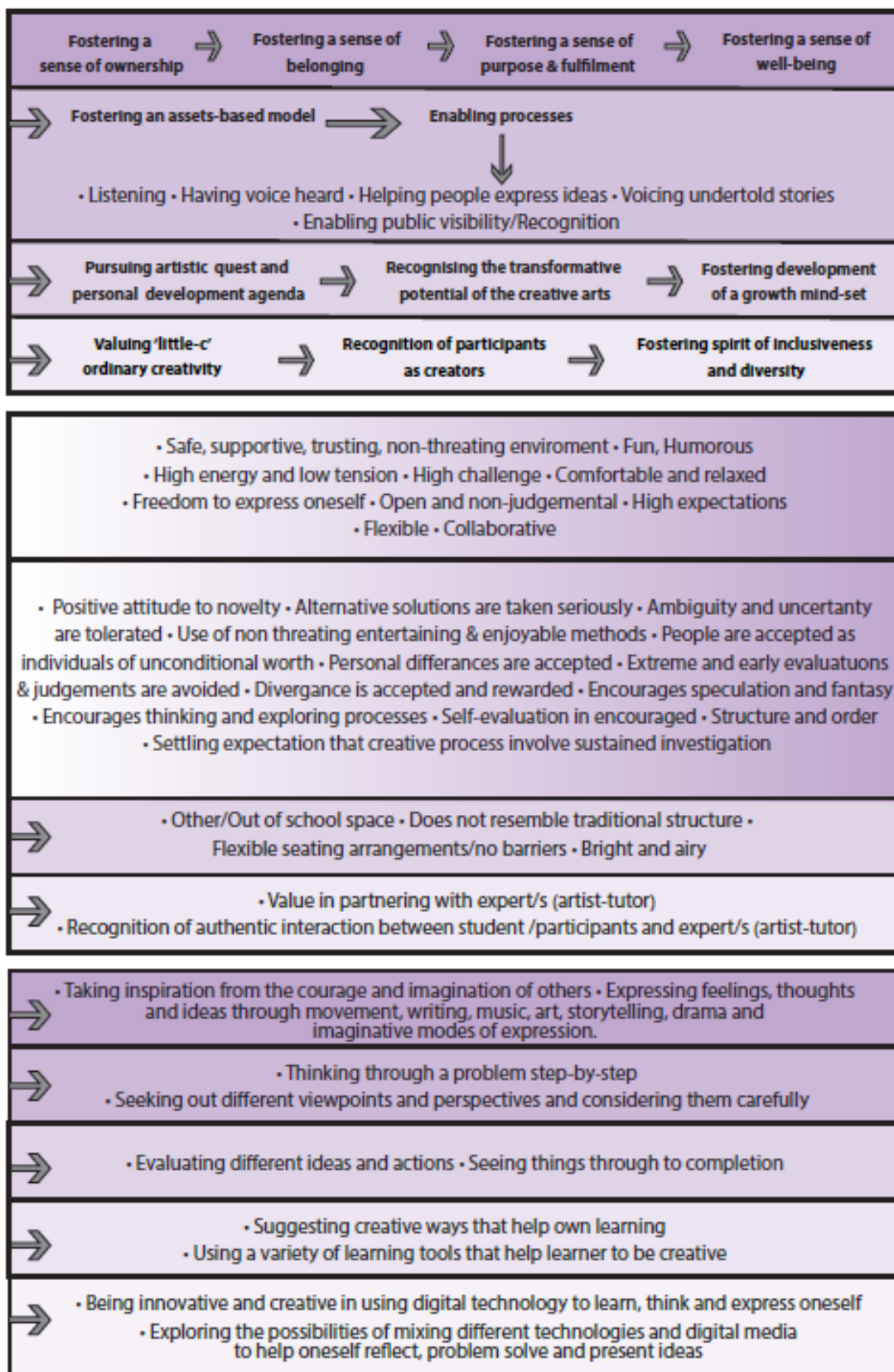
Fighting Words Teacher/Tutor Questionnaire Responses (%)

Appendix F Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education (PACE) Model

Participatory Arts for Creativity in Education (PACE) Model



Traced



Mapped

Beneficial Outcomes

Participants

- Developed creativity skills-set
- Increased confidence/belief in their own creative ability
- Increased resilience and perseverance
 - Improved relations
 - Enhanced self-efficacy
- Improved communication skills.

Artist-Tutor

- Sense of mutual enrichment
 - Personally satisfying
 - Personally rewarding
- Sense of rejuvenation and reprieve

Fostering Climate/s for Creativity

- • Allowing adequate time and space to build trust
- Allowing individuals progress at their own pace to build confidence and overcome fears
- Gentle facilitation and encouragement of voice • Demystifying and simplifying the creative process
 - Valuing ordinary little 'c' creativity stimulating and inspiring from outset

- • Use of site-specific practice • Use of outdoor space

- • Acknowledgement of role of 'Audience' (publication/presentation) in partnership

Processes for 'Being Creative'

- • Hot seating • Recording of ideas • Brainstorming • Visualisation • The use of vernacular language
 - Physicality as a means of developing characters • Short improvised tableaux
 - 'Honking as deranged geese' • 'Silly portrait exercises'

- • The grid activity • The use of board to capture and discuss ideas • Storyboarding • Reflection & group discussion • Listening to peers' ideas and tutor feedback • Changing direction of story/revising storyline based on others' ideas and feedback • Implementing and responding to improvisation activities

- • Drafting and editing script/story • Performance/public presentation of completed work
 - Publication of work

- • Flip chart • Display on paper/board walls • Space • Roleplay • Spider diagrams • Visualisation
 - Artist illustration to capture story visually • Realm of dream activity

- • Digital media creation • Film and video productions of screenwriting and drama scripts.
 - Use of screen to record dialogue and demonstrate the writing and editing process.