

Chickenshed Evaluation by EdComs A Commentary

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Why am I writing this paper?

I was approached by Jon Batterham of EdComs with a request to provide some complementary comments in relation to their evaluation work for Chickenshed. This request probably took place because I had earlier worked on a detailed study of the National Theatre's drama work in primary schools (Turner et al 2004). I have also done many years research with children (aged 5-13) about their experiences and knowledge of daily life (eg Mayall 2002), and this has included development of theory about childhood. This paper therefore addresses a number of issues arising from the evaluation.

What are the aims and methods of Chickenshed (CS)?

Information derived from the MA for Lifelong Learning, from Paul Morrell's recent paper (2007) and from discussions with Louise Perry is used to here to set out briefly what CS stands for and works towards. These points provide a basis for the following sections.

CS offers drama workshops, out of school hours, to children and young people aged 5 to 30+, and currently has about 800 members. There is a termly fee for membership, but CS can offer subsidy for those who cannot afford it.

CS, like many others who work across theatre and 'education', regards theatre as integral to education (in the broadest sense) and vice versa – education is integral to theatre.

CS aims for children and young people to participate freely in making drama; during these processes they are both learning drama skills and learning what drama is.

CS aims for inclusivity. Anyone can join and the particular characteristics of any one person are not a barrier or an issue. Everyone can participate and everyone has something to contribute.

At CS, children, young people and adults work in partnership towards common goals. In practice, this means that older young people, with more experience of Chickenshed's approach and methods, help younger people, with less experience, to work together. Thus children and young people learn to collaborate with each other and to rely on each other.

Paul Morrell says: Chickenshed's inclusive theatre process places theatre, performing arts and inclusion and the creative communication and expression they celebrate at the heart of the learning experience – a learning experience which involves individuals genuinely learning about each other in order to learn about themselves.

As a purposeful organisation, Chickenshed aims to counter the divisive character of our state education system, where children are labelled as 'having special needs' and divided off from the mainstream; even where 'inclusive' systems are in place, they find many instances where children are so separated out.

In its early days (it started in 1974), CS worked not only in its own (hired) premises, but also in schools, where it ran workshops for children; one aim being to help school teachers use drama in their work. In more recent years, it has somewhat changed its strategy; this is in part because staff have found that school teachers cannot step out of

the constraints of current education policies and so cannot incorporate child-friendly drama work in their practice. So CS has devoted its outreach resources to helping others start up their own Chickensheds. It does this by offering training both at the prospective site and through week-long training workshops at the Enfield building. It has now trained people to run over 20 Chickensheds across the country.

Chickenshed works in collaboration with Middlesex University, and currently has about 60 students studying for a B Tech in the Performing Arts, and 28 students working on a Foundation Degree in Inclusive Performance; and CS also contributes some modules to the MA for Lifelong Learning. Part of the work of students is to take part in and observe drama sessions at Chickenshed.

Currently the success and esteem of CS is indicated by several points: there is a 2,500 waiting list, those who join continue to come over the years, and other groups across the country have shown themselves keen to work in similar ways. Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate have given top marks to Chickenshed.

Two brief vignettes from my own (short-term) experience may help show how CS's aims are put into practice.

On October 3rd 2007 I observed a session (4.45-6.00) for about 35 5-6 year olds (some had joined last year, some were new – this was their fourth session). In a large room were five groups – young people and children (about 15 in each group). The young people looked after the children, helped them participate, comforted and encouraged the sad or timid, led the group work. A team of practitioners led a series of drama exercises, in which group participation (bodies, emotions, minds and voices) was key. It seemed that almost everyone enjoyed the session (terrific noise and laughter) and the few tentative children were being helped along. After the session a five minute debriefing took place to help the young people work with and for the children in the next session.

On 18th October 2007 I observed a rehearsal (5.00 – 6.30) for the Christmas show – A Christmas Carol. The group in action were the Cratchit children (primary school age), working with older people and practitioners to create a scene in the Cratchit home – where there was no money and so the 'family' was making their own Christmas – making themselves into a tree and imagining a splendid Christmas drink. This session was led by Louise Perry, who engaged the 'family' with the possibilities of using their bodies, minds and voices to create a joyful scene.

What the sociology of childhood can contribute to understanding CS and the evaluation – three levels of theory

The aims and methods of CS can be contextualised within more formal sociological ideas. The sociology of childhood has developed over the last 25 years for a range of reasons. One is dissatisfaction with the more simplistic, traditional ideas within developmental psychology, which can be seen as harmful to understandings of children and of childhood. Another is the move within sociology away from positivist,

deterministic models of how people become conforming adults (Parsons) towards emphasis on people as agents, interactive agents, for change.

Currently we can separate out three levels of theory. Firstly, we conceptualise children, not as pre-social developers socialised by adults, but as citizens, as members of society, who, like adults, work within social relations, and contribute to the economic and social welfare of the society. This is a structural view: it emphasises children as a social group with its own part to play in society. It is also important to recognise that children constitute a minority social group vis-à-vis adults, who control their lives (Qvortrup 1985, 2005; Alanen 2001; Mayall 2002).

Secondly, it is obvious that ideas about children and childhood are differently understood in varying societies and at varying times. And these social constructionist ideas will structure how children are allowed to live their lives, the legal framework which affects their lives; the social institutions and the norms and values that impact on children (eg Hendrick 2003; Prout and James 1997).

And thirdly, at the level of social interaction, the sociology of childhood recognises that children have competence to consider their own experiences and thereby to contribute their voices to understanding of how society works. There have by now been very many studies which have collected data with children about their daily lives, their relations with each other and with adults, their problems (eg The Future of Childhood series, 2001-4; Hutchby and Moran-Ellis 1998; Burke and Grosvenor 2003).

Whilst psychological paradigms remain dominant, these ideas are making headway and have been taken up in some work on education. University courses in ‘childhood studies’ are proliferating, many of them providing introductions to a range of approaches to childhood. These newer ideas are of direct relevance to the work of theatre/drama groups, for they understand children as members of society who are concerned with social, moral and cultural issues. The practitioners tend to work more democratically with the children than teachers (who operate under specific constraints); and indeed it can be argued that successful drama work requires partnership rather than adult authority and control. The work of drama groups stands as a challenge to models of children as empty vessels in some versions of national educational projects (though these too are coming round – again - to the idea of children as agents in learning). And drama groups recognise children’s competence in considering issues in social relations, and their concern for important moral dilemmas.

Rights

These sociological points link into rights issues. Since the drafting and ratification (1991 in the UK) of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children’s rights have moved up UK policy and practice agendas, with emphasis on participation (as well as protection and provision). Thus there has been great pressure from NGOs and researchers, to upgrade the status of children as contributing agents, as workers even, in society (eg Hart 1997; Johnson et al 1999). There has also been much commentary on

how children are constructed in ways that in policy and practice socially exclude them from meaningful participation (eg Tisdall et al 2006). And there have been many research projects demonstrating that children are competent to comment on their own lives and experiences (eg Smart, Neale and Wade 2001; Mayall 2002; Hallett and Prout 2003; Christensen and O'Brien 2003).

Participation

There are problems with 'participation' because much depends on the commentator's understanding of children's social and political status; and so varying meanings are attached to the term (see eg Thomas 2007). It can mean merely listened to; or 'being consulted'; or taking part; or contributing to decision-making. It can be seen as tokenistic, since children may be understood as under the authority (rightfully?) of adults. One important dimension is the necessity for adults to enable participation. Children's rights depend on adult action. So how far can a minority social group (vis-à-vis adults) meaningfully participate?

Much of the empirical and policy-related work on participation has been about the extent to which and ways in which children can take part in decision-making about social issues (local planning decisions, school issues). It has rarely been noted that one of the articles of the UNCRC concerns children's right to take part in the cultural life of the society. Article 31 outlines the right to play and leisure and 'to participate freely in cultural life and the arts'. The implications of this right are that states shall promote children's rights 'to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity'. The state education service is one important arena where this promotion and this provision could be made.

Perhaps one of the ways in which children can participate, relatively freely, in the society's cultural activities is through drama work. Yet we have to recognise, as above, that much depends of adult willingness to enable this participation. Jonothan Neelands (2004) argues that drama practitioners should work with a socially committed pedagogy that regards students and the social contexts in which they live as 'unfinished' and 'waiting to be created' (in other words, as open for change); such an approach provides the conditions in which personal and social transformations may take place. His proposition builds on, among others, Freire, who argues in favour of education as a liberating and humanistic task where people act with intention towards the social worlds they inhabit (rather than being filled as empty vessels within existing social/power paradigms).

Child-adult relations

One of the keys to success in drama work is the character of the relations between the participants, in this case adults and children. In most social arenas children are sited as inferiors to adults.

At home they are reliant on adult provision and protection; their rights to participation will vary. But children know that adults – mainly parents – take on and carry through major responsibility for financing the household, for caring for the children, for keeping the household healthy and functioning. In these respects children are aware (as parents are) that parents/carers are in charge and in the last resort must be obeyed. However, it has been observed that it is at home that children have the best chance of being respected as persons (Mayall 2002; Neale 2002).

At school – the other major site of children’s daily lives – child-adult relations are characterised by adult control, adult agendas, adult superiority. The curriculum imposed by government puts much of the emphasis on adults transferring knowledge, rather than on children learning through exploring (see eg Triggs and Pollard 1999). It has been observed in English primary schools that children are rarely enabled to engage in dialogue with their teachers (or with each other) (Alexander 2000: 399). Children themselves consistently ask for, and say they usually fail to get, respect (Blisshen 1969; Burke and Grosvenor 2003). Furthermore, in spite of various government measures to promote inclusion, many local authorities still separate out some ‘special needs’ children from the rest, and even where all are on the same site, special units may serve to isolate or stigmatise some children (Alderson and Goodey 1998; Davis and Watson 2000).

Drama and child-adult relations So an arena where children and adults work more equally, in partnership, towards common goals will be an arena where children’s participation may be implemented more meaningfully and where they are respected as persons. Ofsted expresses concern that speaking and learning ‘remain under-represented in the English curriculum’ (Ofsted 2006: 52). Yet drama sessions (whether in or out of school) are obvious encounters where children and adults engage with each other, through language as well as through movement and other sound; and these interactions, if skilfully and effectively managed, may take place in a context of more equal partnership than is common in child-adult relations in school (eg Evans et al 2007). Since the National Curriculum does not place high value on drama work in schools, one value of drama sessions out of school time can therefore be that children and adults communicate with each other in fairly even relations and partnerships

The social/political context for out-of-school arts activities

How is the government responding to calls for participation, creativity, children’s active learning? After many years of implementing nationally devised curricula, testing and competition between schools, so that the educational process has looked ‘like the dispersal of knowledge rather than the process of discovery (Wooster 2006: 22), the government has been under pressure to recognise the value of children’s active, creative engagement with learning.

In 1999 the NACCCE report urged government to think on these lines (see also Joubert 2001). More recently the government itself has argued that children should enjoy their work! (Excellence and Enjoyment, DfES 2003) although children’s agency was not

central to the agenda in that document. However a government-commissioned report on Nurturing Creativity (DCMS 2006) led on to a government response – the establishment of an advisory board to work on this. In summary, it seems that at the level of rhetoric there has been some movement, but in terms of policy and practice the government so far has held fast to its top-down curriculum, its emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and its mechanisms to promote competition between children and between schools. These measures and structures profoundly militate against children’s agency in learning and against good social relations between children and between children and adults at school.

However, we may note that the government currently endorses – in its guidance on delivering the National Curriculum (2000) - the idea that drama work on topics related to the National Curriculum may be a helpful way in to develop understanding (see Howell and Heap 2001). And extrapolating from this, teachers may argue that in complement drama work may develop children’s drama skills (Chaplin 2001). Further, work with children in class has been found to improve their social skills – working with each other, speaking and listening to each other (Griffin 2004). Indeed Neelands (2004) argues that the peripheral status of drama in the National Curriculum may, perhaps paradoxically, give it the freedom to go beyond the curriculum in ‘counter-cultural and pedagogic terms’. And Wooster (2006) argues that it is drama’s ability to tackle social and personal issues that enables it to survive, even though on the margins, within school agendas. It is also worth noting that schools themselves seem to be keen on maintaining children’s experience of the arts. For instance, in the 20 primary schools we worked with in our National Theatre study, all were taking active steps to promote the arts – through clubs, by importing the arts and by taking children on trips out, and headteachers put high value on arts experience as a part of a ‘holistic’ approach to education, a ‘rich and rounded set of experiences’ (Social Science Research Unit 2003). A national survey came up with similar points (Downing 2003).

The work of Chickenshed and its popularity, as well as the large numbers of youth theatres up and down the country (see Hughes and Wilson 2004), suggest that there is considerable support for drama workshops, from children and their parents. It would seem that participation in these provide experiences that are valued for their own sake, rather than (as with out-of-school classes in, say Maths and English) for their contributions to children’s achievement within the formal curriculum.

What do we know from other research about children’s engagement with the arts?

I cannot give an exhaustive account, given the time-scale of this work, but have chosen what I have found to be relevant here. We have to note that this is a very difficult topic to research, methodologically speaking. The best way to consider the impact of engagement with the arts would be via a randomised controlled trial (RCT) over a stretch of time, but in the real world this is rarely possible. Much of the research has relied on what voluntary participants (children and adults) say; the problem here is that they are likely to endorse their activities and the value of participation. Another kind of research, sometimes carried out in tandem with opinion-seeking, is observational – what happens. This is expensive (in time and work-load) and requires careful piloting of methods and training

of researchers to improve consistency between them. Its value may be compromised by the researchers' own pre-conceptions. Longitudinal studies are also expensive and difficult to carry through. There has been some research, mainly by teachers, about their own drama work projects including GCSE work in schools – mostly about work with secondary level students. There follow brief accounts of some reasonably systematic studies.

Hughes and Wilson (2004) provide a useful account of the work of youth theatres. This study included a range of methods in order to provide data that can be triangulated. It is essentially a study of what practitioners and young people say about theatre work. They did a review of over 700 youth theatres (12-30 years) across England, using existing data, reports and publications; they did workshops with 240 young people; carried out qualitative interviews with young people and the workers; and collected more quantitative data with young people and workers, via questionnaires. Their principal finding is that through drama work young people learn competence in social relations and self-confidence 'to perform comfortably and effectively' in a range of environments.

Susan Young (2004) reports on how an established theatre group (Oily Cart) works with under-fives and their parents. Using observation and interviews, she documents the innovative work of the practitioners, as they developed specific skills for work with this age-group, and she notes the importance of the setting (a theatre, a Sure Start group; a private nursery school; a local authority nursery) for what takes place. So this is a study of process, not of outcomes.

The Youth Music/Northumbria University study also studied pre-school children, in two areas of England, in Sure Start and Early Excellence centres. 271 children (0-5 years) were individually followed over two years, during which time they had regular contact with a musician. The researchers point out that they could not set up a control group; but they used a range of methods including interviews and questionnaires, and they think regular observations over the time-period were crucial to ensure each child's progress was being monitored, observed and tracked. They saw progress in communication skills and understanding, in mathematical skills and understanding, in musical skills and understanding and in emotional, social physical development and a sense of self. Of course though the research was as rigorous as it could be, there is always the possibility, as the researchers recognise, that the children would have developed in these ways anyway; 'naturally' and through their exposure to many influences in their daily lives. However, interestingly, where mothers took part in the sessions – and continued the good work at home between sessions, they said – the children's rate of progress was faster. The researchers also point to the development of the early years workers' music-related skills as an outcome of the projects.

A pilot study (2004) in Northern Ireland (Connolly et al 2006) aimed to find out if pre-school children's attitudes (as indicated through what they say) can be affected by their engagement with cartoon stories and curricula packages which focused on three dimensions of difference: disability, 'race' and cultural differences. Broadcasts of the stories were supplemented by packages of resources used by teachers with children (N –

95) over a six-week period in five varied playgroups. Five control settings were also studied (70 children). Before the intervention and after it, all the children were shown photographs of groups of children, with the aim of testing changes in a) whether they recognised instances of exclusion, b) their ability to understand how being excluded makes people feel, and c) their willingness to be inclusive of those who are different in some way. After the six week programme, on a) the intervention children showed greater recognition of exclusion than before, whilst there was no change among the controls. On b) more intervention children showed understanding that exclusion might lead to sadness than before, whereas there was no change for the control children. On c) whilst more intervention children showed a tendency to be willing to play with other children (than did the controls), neither group changed in their feelings on this where the photo showed children who differed from them in being Protestant or Catholic. This supports earlier research by Connolly who found that NI children by age 6 clearly understand themselves as belonging to one religious/cultural group. One comment on this research may be that the methods used were not strong enough or prolonged enough to effect change. But this research also perhaps suggests that entrenched beliefs and practices may be difficult to shift, although that interventions can improve children's empathy. Since 2004, the programme has been rolled out across Northern Ireland.

Visual Paths to Literacy (Meecham and Carnell 2002) was a three-year research study aimed at considering impacts of experience with the visual arts on children's literacy. It perhaps looks a bit far from CS's concerns but I think it provides some important and helpful pointers for consideration. In brief, two classes (selected by the school) each, from ten inner London primary schools and one Year 7 class, participated (21 classes). Over the fieldwork period they visited the Tate Britain Gallery about ten times, and follow-up work took place in school. Adults involved included gallery educators, artists in residence and teachers. Children were asked to engage with specific paintings and later to write on topics and in formats of their own choice: reflections, stories, poems. Methods included child-adult discussions, group and pair learning, story-telling, drama and role-play. The adults learned to work in partnership with the children, respecting their views, learning from the children, while also broadening and deepening the children's intellectual and emotional understandings of the art-works.

This therefore was a process evaluation, in which the researchers followed the children through the three years, and maintained conversations with them and the adults involved. Of particular interest, methodologically, was the theoretical stance they adopted. This is known as Appreciative Inquiry (Brighouse and Woods 1999). Derived from study of organisations (such as schools), this method starts from the idea that one should identify what works well, and then try to promote and advance it. So the researchers, in collaboration with children and adults, attempted to identify and describe instances and contexts where good experiences were being had, and (in this case) where learning was taking place, and interesting work produced.

Finally, I provide a brief account of our own study, of the National Theatre's work in primary schools (Turner et al 2004). Though we could not do an RCT, we did the next best thing. This research was both a process evaluation and an outcome evaluation. The

NT Education Department had identified 10 primary schools on the basis that they were within walking distance of a community theatre in inner south London. We then matched these schools with ten others in other inner London boroughs, on the basis of prevalence of English as a second language, prevalence of eligibility for free school meals, and SATs scores at Level 2 (the control children). Our main sample was 20 classes (the NT children), whom we followed for three years, from Year 3 to Year 5. We had been asked to consider impacts on literacy and numeracy of the NT's work, but we also focused on children's engagement with making drama and with drama as an art form. We used observation of workshop sessions and discussion groups with the NT children, and questionnaires to all the children and teachers. The NT children experienced engagement with drama workshops (10-12 per term over two terms, over 3 years), they worked on drama texts (*The Tempest*, a story-telling project, and *Dr. Faustus*), they attended theatrical events specifically designed for them at the NT and they put on their own shows and attended those of the other classes at the local community arts theatre.

This multi-method study, with its intervention and control groups, allowed us to provide fairly firm data on the impacts of the NT's work. The types of impact included: gains in self-confidence, in social skills and in drama skills; acquisition of knowledge of what drama is; and (though we don't place much weight on this) gains in maths SATs scores. Towards the end of the study, we used the Appreciative Inquiry approach (mentioned above) as a relevant way of considering our data.

Across the board, those reporting on their own projects and the small number of research reports referred to here make two main points. The two main outcomes alleged from engagement with the arts are that children grow in self-confidence and that they learn to appreciate the value of working together. The self-confidence is alleged to spill over into other arenas of life, for instance at home and school. Children learn that everyone has something to offer and that collaborative working leads to a better outcome than individual working is likely to.

The above points are endorsed by Sally Stote of Youth Music. She tells me that they have by now accumulated over 1700 reports on the music-related projects with young people that they have commissioned. In her view the two themes that emerge most powerfully from over four-fifths of the self-evaluations of the projects are that the young people gain in self-confidence and that they gain team-building (or social interaction) skills. Youth Music has studied 100 of these reports (randomly selected) and has found confirmation of these points.

Some other points occur in and across the above pieces of research:

- Drama/arts work helps children construct meaning; and helps children consider social and moral issues.
- It allows mind, body and emotions to connect and function together towards valuable work.
- Children's innate creativity (Kress 1995) comes to bear on the activities and children creatively respond to and build on what is offered them.

- Some children who do not flourish in National Curriculum work flourish in arts activities (Turner et al 2004; Youth Music 2005).
- Most of the studies referred to are inclusive – and observers think children gain from experience or working with a range of other people: they learn acceptance of other people and of the contributions everyone can make to the enterprise.
- Children’s level of engagement with arts activities is high, according to observers (teachers, parents, researchers). They show commitment to the enterprise; they enjoy it!
- Drama (and other arts work) works best when adults understand children as competent agents and work in partnership with them.

A further point made in several research studies concerns generalisation. Thus it is claimed that teachers and pre-school workers gain from experience of practitioners’/artists’ work with children – they learn skills and confidence about working with the arts with their children.

It is perhaps relevant to add here a comment on the claim that children gain in self-confidence and knowledge of the value of collaboration, from their work on arts projects. It can be argued, as many observers including parents do, that children start their lives as confident and positive, eagerly and creatively engaged in social relations and exploration of the physical world around them. These characteristics may get blunted or subdued during the processes of socialisation, especially at school. It is not surprising, therefore, that adults, observing children’s behaviour, assign ‘growths’ in self-confidence to the projects; it may be, rather, that the projects release children’s self-confidence and allow it to flourish. As to learning the value of collaboration through group work on arts projects, it may be that these do offer unusual opportunities, which are not offered very strongly in the English pre-school and school agendas.

Some comments on the evaluation by EdComs

EdComs was asked to develop methods which could later be used by CS staff to consider the value of their work. The team then used these methods to collect some data from children, young people and parents.

Evaluating on-going projects in the real world is difficult. At Chickenshed anyone can join, so it would not be possible within that environment to devise an intervention and control group. Finding a control group outside CS would be extremely costly and would be open to the objection that those people might be engaging in other drama or arts work (and could not ethically be stopped from so doing!)

This situation leads onto the problem that where people have chosen to participate in CS activities (parents, children, staff) they are likely to endorse the enterprise. One way of providing a challenge to this is to carry out observational work. We did this in our National Theatre study – it is very costly (we did a lot of it for free) and difficult (as noted above). The Youth Music, Visual Paths and Susan Young studies also did observations. To do this well also requires carrying it out over a period of time, both in

order to reduce the importance of any specific instance and to focus instead on the general, and also in order to consider process (and possibly progress).

However, it is worth asking participants their opinions on the enterprise, and it is an important finding that those questioned do mostly find good words to say. It is also relevant that their findings chime in with those of other research and with other projects. Their main findings are that members (children and young people) think they progress in personal development – self-esteem, confidence; awareness of others, working with and trusting others; and performance skills. The research thus contributes to the body of evidence on these topics. A further point made by members is that the ethos and practice of CS differs from that of other places, such as school, because it is supportive, participatory, encouraging, inclusive, non-competitive and safe. This point acts as a commentary on current education policy and practice, as briefly referred to above.

One of the concerns of the evaluation team is that CS should work beyond the limits of their building: they should disseminate their work; they should develop and communicate a clear identity; they should initiate or take part in collaborative work, especially with other arts organisations, in order to share best practice; and they should work towards sustainable funding. In this connection it is interesting that the evaluation found that parents say they see the learning their children have engaged with as generalised to life outside CS. They say that personal relations in daily life have improved since the children joined CS. This point provides complementary evidence to the findings of the Northern Ireland studied referred to above. It may be that CS could engage more directly with parents in varying ways – through issuing reports and briefings, through workshop sessions with parents.

As I noted early on, CS does work to disseminate their approach and practices, and has trained people to run other such drama groups across the country (23 at the last count). They also work in collaboration with Middlesex University and run a B Tech course and modules leading to Foundation and MA degrees. This work is spreading the word and educating people to continue with the work in many fields.

Suggestions

Tentatively, on the basis of a very short acquaintance with Chickenshed, I should like to suggest some ways forward, in complement to the EdComs suggestions.

I think it would be useful (if this has not been done) to compile some written work, to be published both in education journals, and in journals that specifically address theoretical approaches to children. This would not only reach a wider constituency than perhaps has been done so far, but would provide solid points of reference for work towards secure funding.

These papers could build, not only on the drama workshops, the training and education work in hand, but on a series of interviews with experienced members of staff, and

perhaps with others who are involved, such as the external examiner of the foundation degree and those who have been trained towards setting up their own organisations.

If CS is considering any further research to be undertaken by an external organisation, then I would suggest they might look carefully at the Appreciative Inquiry approach, briefly mentioned above in my account of the Visual Paths study. In the context of CS, this could be particularly appropriate. It is a form of action research, in which, having identified what works well, what are the surrounding enabling factors and circumstances in which things work well, staff and researchers may together consider how best to promote what works well.

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