











from the interviews with the undergraduate students. The main aims of our analysis were:

1. To collect reports of students' experience and perceptions of the barriers and motivators to their creative process through individual interviews and cross disciplinary group discussion.
2. To enhance students' awareness of their ongoing personal development and the skills they are acquiring in Higher Education via informal structured learning events (Cross 2006).
3. To develop a model of good practice for embedding personal development in a way that is relevant and meaningful to creative practice students and underpins their meta-cognition.

These autobiographical accounts were used to analyse the following aspects of the students' experience:

1. To identify the specific mechanisms for creativity within these particular groups of students that were unique to each discipline and also identify more generic experiences that support students in being creative.
2. To use these personal conversations to identify circumstances and material that empowers the creative process.
3. To identify potential blocks to students' creativity and to make use of their comments to suggest possible strategies to support students in overcoming these barriers.
4. To examine the attributes, processes and outcomes of creativity through the experience of the individual.
5. To identify the differences in student's approaches to their creativity, highlighting the barriers they experience and pinpointing those approaches that seem to be the most productive.
6. To understand how students' creativity and experiences with their creative process helped prepared them for work and for life beyond university.

## 6. Results

Feedback from the individual interviews and the evaluations of the collaborative workshop suggests that;

### **A) That the students found the experience of participating in the individual reflective**

### **interviews and the collaborative workshop positive.**

1. The interviews and the workshop were able to raise students' awareness of their ongoing personal development and enabled them to identify the skills that they are acquiring in HE and consider how these might relate to their post-degree ambitions.
2. Students found that the opportunity to discuss their creative process on a one to one basis was useful and enjoyable. Students said that these personal conversations with a researcher provided them with an opportunity to discuss and describe their creative process in-depth and outside the assessment criteria and the traditional formal setting of the classroom. Because the process was one to one and non-judgemental or assessed, they were able to reflect honestly about the positive and non-positive experiences and talk at length about why they were proud and/or concerned about their progress. Each interview provided opportunities for the students to identify their own processes and to consider how they were developing as practitioners and learners which was motivational.

The students' enjoyed participating in the Creativity Workshops and found that it was a beneficial opportunity to discuss and debate their creativity in an informal setting, outside their normal learning environment. Students also found that working on collaborative, interdisciplinary tasks using a variety of drawing and writing enhanced their creative processes.

The collaborative workshops provided students with the opportunity to work with students from another creative discipline. These cross-discipline activities, writing poetry, collage and sketching, provided further opportunities for students to engage in discussion and debate their creativity which gave them a surer sense of their position within their discipline and a greater sense of how they were evolving as practitioners. Similarly to the students, the authors found the cross-department collaboration a great source of inspiration for their own research and teaching processes. For this reason, the authors would strongly endorse this approach as having a meaningful effect on staff and students' creative processes, and also on their personal development.

4. The workshops and interviews established that regardless of discipline, writing or illustration, all the students regarded writing, drawing and reading as key skills for creativity. Many of the students who participated in the interviews and workshop were able to use their creative skills interchangeably, using reading and writing to inspire visual practice and also using visual practice to inspire writing. The participating students described personal memories

of developing these skills simultaneously when they were young but that in most cases one form eventually started to dominate their practice [3].

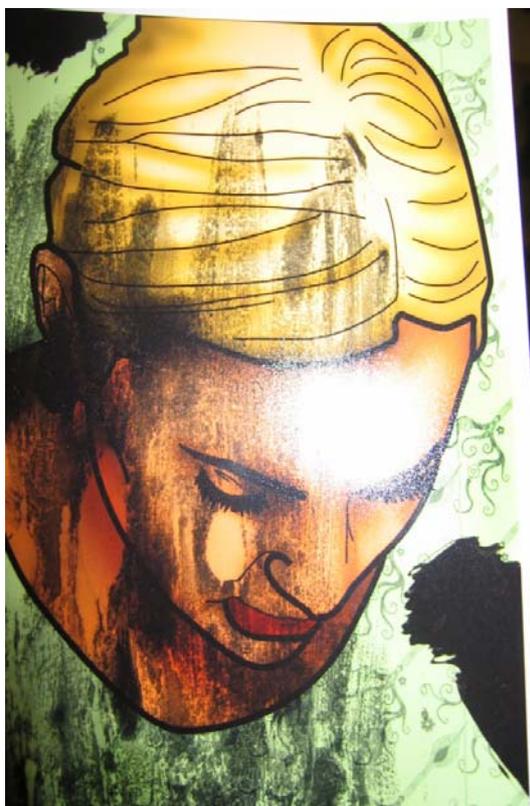


Figure 5. Student work

5. Collectively we found that these activities (informal structured learning events) helped students to articulate their practice in more depth and with more confidence and a surer sense of the knowledge they had acquired. This in turn supported their development as undergraduate researchers and enabled them to use the experiences they had gathered outside HE to enrich their creative processes. Students' enhanced confidence in the articulation of their creative processes can lead to greater meta-cognition, research/enquiry learning practices and self belief in their place within their discipline.

The authors have found that both the interview and the workshop, although only research tools, have the potential to function as a transformational events for the learner. In our research there was a cross over between the interviews and workshop as research events but also teaching events with the potential to impact on the students' personal development and planning. The events were not planned as learning events and the researchers did not see their role within the workshop or the interviews as that of

teacher but interviewer and facilitator however, because the lines of questioning encouraged students to actively reflect on their work and make the connections between different aspects of their creative process and their personal, vocational and academic development, they were clearly relevant in terms of learning and personal, academic and vocational development. Because the researchers were talking to the students individually and in small groups about their discipline and their practice, students were provided with informal learning support and an opportunity to talk about their difficulties and concerns connected to their academic, vocational and personal lives. We argue that these events have the potential to provide a model of best practice that would be relevant to academic staff development. Our own experiences as creative practitioners and academics suggest that establishing events where academic staff can develop and discuss their creative practice and its relationship with academic research and writing would benefit academic staff in a similar way to the students who took part in this study. We argue that the model we have reported on here should be trialed further amongst undergraduates on creative practice courses and also with the staff teaching and implementing these classes at undergraduate level.

**B) Students' experience and perceptions of the barriers and motivators to their creative process through individual interviews and cross disciplinary group discussion.**

The purpose of these personal conversations in relation to the research project was to identify circumstances and material that has the potential to empower students with their creative process. By locating the specific mechanisms for creative processes amongst these students autobiographical experiences prior to and whilst at university, the authors aimed to discover shared experiences that support students in their creative practice and also identify possible learning experiences that would support their academic, personal and vocational development. The research found that student's creative process is motivated and supported by;

1. Understandably, confidence and belief in their (the students) ideas and their ability to execute them is important for creativity. Students vary in their degree of confidence, which can be eroded by negative criticism and/or supported by encouragement from tutors, family or friends.
2. The key to ensuring that students get the best out of academic courses lies in helping them to develop a better sense of themselves and being able to relate their individual and personal creativity to their studies. This enables them to get more out of

their course and prepares them for their professional working lives. We also found that those students who were clearer about their interests and motivations and had a better sense of themselves were also more confident about their work and had a surer sense of ownership regarding their assessed outputs (writing and drawing).

3. Students' creativity is enhanced and inspired by positive support and encouragement from tutors, family and peers. The majority of students, regardless of discipline, described early memories of being encouraged to be creative and seemed sure that this was critical to their motivation for becoming creative practitioners.

I mean part of the reason I did it was probably because I would do something and people would go, 'Wow, wow! Look at what Ben's doing!' (Transcript 1)

4. Students' creativity is improved and increased by the confidence to use personal biography as a motivator for creative work that they also find it difficult to always relate these experiences to their academic studies and vocational ambitions.

Whilst personal biographies might provide the impetus for their creativity, students also need to be able to relate this to their lives post-university in order to make sense of the purpose of their time at university. To do this, they need specific support and learning events (conversations, workshops etc) to be able to relate their creativity within a disciplinary framework.

5. Students' creativity is supported by a process through which they can follow their ideas and motivations as they develop their creative approaches. Pivotal to this is the opportunity to reflect on and discuss and debate the processes at work in their creative projects. This process is best supported by a process that provides students with opportunities to detail, discuss and develop their ideas. It is the experience of this research project that these opportunities are possibly more beneficial when outside the normal and traditional context of the classroom.

6. Students' creativity is best supported by a process through which they can follow their ideas and motivations as they develop their creative approaches. Central to this is the ability to reflect on and discuss and debate the processes at work in their creative projects

7. Students also value personal spaces in which to be creative. Students need spaces they can make their own in order to be creative. For some students

(especially visual practice students), this space relates to a physical place in which they can surround themselves with the images and other stimuli that inspire them. For other students it can be related to ways of working, for example, carrying a notebook or sketchbook in which to collect and store things that they notice.

C) To develop a model of good practice for embedding personal development in a way that is relevant and meaningful to creative practice students and underpins their meta cognition.

The creative process is inextricably linked to personal development, academic achievement and vocational ambition. By creating opportunities for students to identify and reflect on their personal motivations for work and debate their creative process in a collaborative and social environment, there is an opportunity for HE to support students in the development of their creative practice. By facilitating this form of intensive reflective practice, we believe that the different factors that influence a student's creativity can be meaningfully recorded, discussed and developed. It would also allow HE the opportunity to learn about the critical moments in students' creative processes across different disciplines and provide insight into an as yet untapped source of research data that will potentially help HE practitioners to enhance teaching and learning across the curriculum.

Critical to improving students' academic and creative work is an opportunity to develop their ability to be critically self aware, to understand the inspirations driving their work and to provide opportunities for them to articulate their learning and creative processes. The informal learning events developed as research methods for this research project, one to one interviews and workshops, have the capacity to achieve all of these learning outcomes.

A model for embedding creativity into HE (based on our research findings) should include the following characteristics;

- A) Be non-assessed.
- B) Be facilitated in neutral safe spaces away from the classroom and other forms of assessment.
- C) Be collaborative – bringing together students and staff from different creative disciplines.
- D) Combine visual and textual approaches.
- E) Encourage students to record and reflect on their ideas in note books.

F) Promote the idea of creative practice students as researchers – providing opportunities for students to articulate and present ideas to others.

It is our belief that these characteristics also provide the basis of effective staff development events that would help with the personal, academic and vocational development of academics working in creative practice disciplines. By establishing opportunities for academic staff to discuss and reflect on their practice in cross-disciplinary groups, it may also be possible to enhance and nurture creativity in staff which may be relevant across disciplines including those not associated with creative practice.

## 7. Conclusion

Understanding the motivators and barriers that drive and diminish a student's creativity and identifying the learning and learning strategies that have the potential to enhance students' creative processes is an ongoing and complex challenge. In a time of spiralling fees, it becomes more and more important for students to understand the how their university studies will help them with their academic, vocational and personal ambitions post-university but PDP is often seen by students and staff as a meaningless exercise that only increases workloads without any tangible results.

This research shows that developing their confidence and identifying teaching and learning strategies that will help students to articulate and present creative processes can enable students to make the learning leaps [29] during which they learn to make the connections between;

- i) Their personal interests and imaginative ideas that motivate and inspire their creativity and
- ii) their creative processes and their personal, vocational and academic ambitions.

In this way, the learner may overcome fragmented views of their own creativity and also to identify more closely with the discipline of their study. Through the processes of reflection and meta-cognition, students seem to learn to recognize that they are on, and prior to HE have been on, a perpetual journey that brings them ever closer to becoming creative practitioners in their chosen fields. Identifying this journey as personal, ongoing and enhanced by the university experience can be empowering and uplifting for students. Whilst they do not initially identify themselves as being creative practitioners, the processes of self reflection, articulation and presentation of ideas seems support students by encouraging them to believe in and

accept themselves as creative practitioners in their field. It is our belief that this model is also relevant in providing meaningful staff development for academics working in disciplines connected to creative practice and we suggest that similar events – workshops and one-to one interviews – are potentially important opportunities for motivating, inspiring and developing staff and allowing colleagues to share experiences and best practice.

Earlier in 2010, the authors used a similar workshop format in a session with third year creative writing students and members of the University of the Third Age (U3A). The title of the workshop was 'Challenge and Sport' and the students and the over 50s worked individually and in mixed groups to on poems, collage, autobiography and sketches that fed into the group discussions on sport as it was in the past and sport as it is now. Feedback from the workshop was positive with all the participants welcoming the opportunity to develop their creativity and share ideas and experiences in a safe but dynamic space. The workshop was funded by the Creative Campus Initiative which seeks to fulfil the aims of the 2012 Olympiad by enriching culture, celebrating diversity and bringing people together under the banner of sport. Outputs from the day were submitted to the editorial committee of the Creative Writing Anthology, produced by the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex and funded by the CCI. Two of the members of the U3A had their work published in the anthology (ref), further evidence of the potential of the workshops to boost confidence with the creative process and offer participants vocational, academic and personal development. Elizabeth Jenkins's poem 'Sport Then and Sport Now' can be seen below.

The success of the project with undergraduates and also the workshop with members of the U3A has encouraged us that this project should be extended to include academic staff and that the model of best practice we have identified contains transferrable tools that would be relevant in academic staff development events. We are currently seeking funding to embed this model in undergraduate programmes of study at the University of Brighton and also in the staff development strategy at the same institution.

### **Sport Then and Sport Now by Elizabeth Jenkins**

Mohammed Ali -  
you are a genius,  
a powerhouse of

honed muscles.  
You can sting like a bee,  
dance like a King,  
make us all sing  
with joy in our hearts.  
For we want you to win,  
to win, to win, to win.

Chris Eubank –

You are a cocktail cabinet.  
A weatherer of storms,  
owner of a Rolls Royce, with  
special features of course.  
You are a Champagne drinker,  
and like to eat in flash restaurants  
at any time of day or night.  
Your taste in music  
is strange and rapacious.  
You like to eat off gold plates.  
Your décor is cream, scarlet and black.  
You like to argue with traffic  
wardens and police and  
you are a cheetah for raising funds.

## 8. Discussion

This study finds that supporting students with their creative process and equipping them with the self confidence that they need to see themselves as creative practitioners requires that we focus on students' meta-reflections' (individual and group) about their learning experience. Our findings indicate that when creative practice students are given opportunities to reflect on and discuss their meta-memory experiences and meta-cognitive processes that it can help them to improve their academic work.

The paper argues that the facilitation on informal structured learning events can provide the ideal scenario for providing students with threshold moments when dynamic learning leaps can occur. The paper also suggests that these workshops should be embedded in creative practice courses and in staff

development strategies for academics and researchers in HEIs so that further research can be carried out to assess their potential impact on students' and staffs' creative processes and how this might influence teaching and learning of creative practice students and staff development policy in institutions nationwide.

This research raises a number of further questions about nurturing creativity in HE and we invite discussion on the following topics:

1. Is creativity and the teaching of it the same for all creative subjects (design, creative writing, art, performance, etc.)?
2. Can this process encourage learning across the curriculum that liberates students from the traditional approaches to their subjects?
3. How can academic staff ensure that they are creating a vision of creativity that fits with the sustainable and moral values of HE?
4. Can this process be used to empower students with the confidence to interpret the academic material that is in keeping with their own values and interests with a view to facilitating lifelong learning?
5. Why facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations between students and staff?
6. How can creative practice courses embed personal development planning in a way that is meaningful for students but not necessarily part of their assessment?
7. How can HE Institutions embed personal development planning for creative practitioners that also unblocks the creative process and helps them to identify methodologies for legitimizing practice and teaching?

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