

INITIAL PARTICIPATORY ARTS FACILITATION TRAINING

An investigation in to the options related to developing a joint programme between Fio, Mess Up The Mess and Taking Flight.

INTRODUCTION

What the brief required

Fio (formerly Youth of Creative Arts), Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company (MUTM) and Taking Flight Theatre Company (Taking Flight), gained funding from ArtWorks Cymru to investigate the possibility of jointly developing their three separate training programmes in to a programme that combined the best of all three models. The aim of creating a single, unified course is to provide a more effective, sustainable long-term model that could benefit people seeking drama facilitators training and the three organisations. In November 2015 the three organisations appointed a consultant, (Anna Leatherdale) to undertake research and make recommendations in relation to the following issues:

- To gain an external perspective on participants' views of their current course offer and the needs of people training to be facilitators
- To facilitate discussions between representatives of the three organisations in order to explore potential future working relationships and course options
- To identify potential forms of recognition that might be attached to a new course model.

The three organisations agreed that exploring potential forms of external recognition was an important part of the process if a course was to fully benefit trainee facilitators and lead to new employment opportunities in the sector.

PROCESS

As part of the research process Anna:

- Met with six people who had taken part in courses offered by the three organisations
- Held individual meetings with representatives of all three companies
- Facilitated a joint meeting between representatives of the three companies
- Held phone conversations with representatives from Agored Cymru, Drama UK and exchanged emails with a representative from the University of the Arts London Awarding Body
- Undertook desk research in to course accreditation and qualification options.

More detailed accounts of the key points raised by course participants and course providers are included in the appendices, together with information about potential qualification and accreditation options.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Discussions with course participants and representatives from the three organisations, together with research in to facilitator training course models in England and Ireland, indicates that there appears to be a need for training for people seeking to work as drama facilitators.
- People training as drama facilitators would welcome some form of external recognition that would give additional validity to a facilitators' training course. They believe this would improve their future employment opportunities, particularly if the external recognition was delivered by an organisation which is credible and has standing within the theatre sector.
- The three courses currently offered by Fio, Mess Up The Mess, and Taking Flight are very compatible. The three organisations share common values and their three courses complement and enhance one another. The three organisations already assist one another with aspects of their independent course provision and believe that they could work effectively with one another on a jointly-created course.

- All three organisations are busy drama / theatre organisations with limited capacity. They would need additional financial support to buy in project management, educational advice and internal capacity in order to make a new course that was robust enough to stand up to the scrutiny of an external validating organisation.
- At present there do not appear to be any qualifications for drama facilitators offered by independent awarding bodies in the UK and no organisation with good industry connections that could offer independent course accreditation suited to the needs of the proposed course. However CCSkills is working with the University of the Arts London Awarding Body to create a Community Arts qualification which is due to be introduced in the autumn of 2017. Drama UK is also exploring the possibility of creating a kite-mark scheme for continuing professional development (CPD) courses which could act as a form of course accreditation.

WHAT'S CURRENTLY ON OFFER

At present all three Welsh drama providers deliver facilitator training courses in the Cardiff and Swansea areas. They initially developed the provision because they were unable to find people with the necessary experience to assist with the delivery of their drama workshops to disabled, BME and hard-to-reach young peoples' communities. Demand for their services was growing and the only way to meet demand was to train additional facilitators. All three courses provide trainee facilitators with the opportunity to develop their facilitation skills, learn ice-breakers and games to engage participants in different contexts, inform them about diversity and disability access issues, help them to plan sessions and projects effectively and support future learners' improvisation skills.

Facilitators attending the training all agreed that the courses helped them to respond flexibly to the needs of the individuals they might come in contact with and enabled them to work in an inclusive way more effectively. Three of the six participants interviewed as part of the consultation specifically credited the courses with enabling them to secure employment in the sector and the other three participants all said that the courses had assisted them to find employment in new fields.

A small number of other theatre companies in the UK offer training that give course participants the opportunity to develop practical skills in drama facilitation. For example, Almeida has teamed up with the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama to offer the one-year course leading to the Applied Theatre with Young People Post Graduate Certificate (Appendix 3). This course is significantly longer than the short facilitation courses offered by Fio, MUTM and Taking Flight. However it covers similar themes and provides participants with placements where they can gain first-hand practical experience in facilitation. The Post Graduate Certificate attached to the course is awarded by the University of London. Arcola Theatre also offer a course called the Youth Facilitator's Toolkit, however this does not appear to be running at the moment (see Appendix 4)

In Ireland, a number of drama and arts facilitation courses, including accredited certificate and diploma programmes, are offered by Smashing Times Theatre Company (see Appendix 6) and the Cork Institute of Technology *Arts in Group Facilitation Certificate*. Like the Almeida course the Smashing Times courses are longer than the programmes offered by Fio, MUTM and Taking Flight and are also accredited by a university. However the number and range of courses in Ireland indicate that there is a demand for drama / arts facilitator training.

WHAT THE TRAINEES SAID

In order to find out whether there might be a demand for a unified course offer, a meeting was held between the consultant and six people who had attended one or more of the

current training programmes. Representatives from the three organisations were not present at the meeting and the trainee facilitators spoke openly about their views of the courses.

All participants spoke very positively about all three courses. They were impressed by the opportunities that the course they had attended had afforded them and felt the courses offered a very valuable opportunity to extend skills that were essential to gaining a broader range of work in the sector. They felt strongly that the courses delivered what they promised and were particularly complementary about the range of high quality guest artists who facilitated on the courses. They liked the different opportunities that the courses provided (eg more of a focus on Shakespeare on one, the opportunity to learn supporting entrepreneurial skills on another). All stated that they would be reluctant to see the three courses merge in to one course, however they qualified this by saying that this was largely because having three courses (rather than one) enabled them to:

- Pace their learning and fit it in with the demands of their working lives (taking time off to attend courses was a significant issue as it made an impact on their earning capacity)
- Apply newly acquired skills in a work context then return for further advice once they had tried their ideas out in a real-life context
- Meet new course participants on different courses, thereby extending their professional networks

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The participants in the consultation came from a range of backgrounds. Some had studied drama at university. Others had had careers in teaching (modern foreign languages, music and photography) or other fields and had chosen the facilitation courses because they wanted to explore new career options. All those involved in the consultation had degrees but noted that not all the people on the courses they had attended had had formal qualifications.

All participants found the networking opportunities that the courses provided them with of inestimable value in trying to break in to a new field of work. They valued the placements that they were offered and noted that the positive reputation of the companies offering the courses and those that they had gone to for placements had made a positive impact on their CV and had helped them to secure future work.

Several of the trainees also noted that one of the greatest benefits of being on a course had been the opportunity to test out their developing skills in a safe and supported environment. Many of the participants recounted the challenges they had faced when working with new groups of people (disabled participants, hard-to-reach and those from BME backgrounds). They cited an initial lack of confidence and uncertainty about handling difficult situations and noted that the supported experiential learning had been a key to building their own self-confidence and ability. The Deaf facilitator attending the consultation noted that it had been particularly important for him to be able to experiment in a supported environment and to work with an organisation that was committed to widening participation as he believed he would not have been able to find a similar, supported training opportunity anywhere else.

Participants who had attended the Fio course particularly valued the chance to gain practical (rather than theoretical) information about issues related to employment in the field, such as child protection, risk assessment and administrative processes (like invoicing) that could be applied in a 'real world' context.

Participants had mixed views about attaching a qualification to any of the courses (or a future course). One of the six participants said that if she had thought there was a qualification attached to the course it would have put her off participating in it as she would have been

concerned about the process of assessment she would have to go through. She also believed it would have changed the nature of the course, moving the focus from experiential learning towards assessment. Other participants shared the view that some of the participants who attended the courses but who had no previous qualifications might have been put off a course that led to a qualification because it might be perceived to be 'too much like school'. However, the conversations revealed the participants' clear suppositions about the nature of assessment related to qualifications (ie a written test), which is not necessarily the method of assessment that course providers or qualification awarding bodies might want to adopt.

The general consensus was that qualifications were useful because they:

- Provided evidence of achievement (in this case in the field of facilitation) which participants felt was valuable in terms of drawing their skills to the attention of potential employers
- Provided the qualification holder with external acknowledgement of their own abilities, thereby reinforcing their levels of self-confidence
- Could provide more detail about the content of the course to potential employers

Five of the six participants said that they would have liked to have a qualification linked to the course. When asked about potential qualification levels participants were uncertain about what qualification level might be appropriate in relation to the courses and found it difficult to disassociate the concept of qualification level with the amount of time spent working towards the qualification. One participant said that they would not be interested in a course or qualification that was lower than Level 4 and suggested that Level 4 or 5 might be appropriate. All participants agreed that ideally they would like to see a variety of qualification levels available as a result of participating on the course so that the qualification level could be tailored to the level of participation (ie volunteer, trainee facilitator etc), as this might provide some people with their first opportunity to gain a formal qualification.

All participants agreed that if any qualification was offered it was essential for it to be one that was nationally recognised, and not one issued by the course providers themselves. They felt strongly that all the course providers had an excellent reputation within Wales but one of the primary reasons for wanting to have a qualification was to evidence their skills and knowledge beyond the immediate geographical area. They wanted a qualification that would be transferable to different geographical contexts within the theatre sector.

Participants were equally split on issues relating to course accreditation. Some participants felt that accreditation should be awarded by a sector-specific organisation – one that could speak with authority about the value of the course to the profession (the example given was the National Theatre of Wales). Other participants felt that accreditation should be awarded by an organisation that was recognised for its authority in relation to learning (ie a university). All participants acknowledged that there were pros and cons for accreditation from either of these routes.

All participants stated that their ideal would be to have an accredited course that led to a nationally recognised qualification that was recognised and valued by the industry.

WHAT A FUTURE COURSE MIGHT LOOK LIKE

The drama / theatre organisations were aware of the trainees' opinions on the value of having the option to access three different but complimentary programmes. They noted that the trainees liked having the option to go from course to course and to engage in learning

when they had the time and resources to do so. However the three organisations agreed that if they were to develop a joint offer they would need to replace their existing (separate) provision with the new single offer because of capacity issues. They would, however, ensure that the new programme was structured in such a way as to enable trainees to engage in bite-size chunks of learning to fit in with their time and finance availability.

Organisational representatives discussed what the Initial Participatory Arts Facilitation Training course might consist of. They agreed it should be made up of a number of core elements (which each of the partners could deliver), with additional options (which might be delivered by different partners). Whilst further investigation and discussion is necessary, it was agreed that the contents of the chart below provided an initial starting point for future discussion.

Core elements	Options
Learning how to plan (sessions and projects) Ice-breakers / games Reflection Values – why do we do these things? Equal ops / hard to reach Facilitation Content: - devising (including story telling) - working physically - worm ups (physical and vocal) - improvisation Placements – links to industry via tutors / networking opportunities	Disability inclusion / Access (all areas) Working in different setting Legal compliance, including: - Health and Safety - Risk assessments - Safeguarding / share aware - Insurance Business skills / projects Shakespeare Scripts / text (Director focused) Forum theatre and pre-forum Identifying starting points

Organisational representatives agreed that the terms ‘Initial training’ accurately described the proposed programme for whilst trainees might have prior experience in drama and the training might be a form of continuing professional development for them, the skills they gained through the programme would be new to them and would enable them to expand their employment prospects.

CHALLENGES

Fio, Mess Up The Mess and Taking Flight face a number of challenges in developing a single course that can either be accredited or lead to drama facilitator qualifications.

Course development

The first challenge is to find the resources needed to develop a joint course. All three organisations currently have very full timetables and limited staff capacity. Funds would be needed to buy in personnel to enable the three organisations to work together to develop a coherent joint offer. In addition, the three organisations would benefit from some external support and advice in order to help them shape a course to meet the requirements of an external accreditation or qualifications awarding body. All three organisations are very clear about the needs of the sector and are experienced in the ability to train future facilitators, however they are generally unfamiliar with the demands of formal qualification. For example, within their existing courses the three organisations have described course learning outcomes with varying degrees of clarity. If a joint course were to be devised and recognised by an external body there would be a need to develop clear and agreed learning outcomes and quality assurance mechanisms, including assessment criteria, assessment mechanisms and course evaluation systems. If these mechanisms were to be put in place it would be advisable for the course providers to work closely with an awarding or accreditation body

from the outset to ensure that the newly devised mechanisms were aligned to the requirements of the oversight body.

External validation - Qualification route

At present there do not appear to be any qualifications delivered by independent awarding bodies (as opposed to universities) that recognise the skills of drama facilitators working in participatory arts contexts in the UK. The Almeida / Royal Central School of Speech and Drama course Applied Theatre with Young People leads to a post graduate certificate but this is awarded by the University of London, rather than an independent awarding body. Qualifications are available in Ireland through both Irish universities and independent awarding bodies. The Welsh course providers would therefore have to work with an awarding body to develop an appropriate qualification or wait until the Community Arts qualification is introduced in 2017 by University of the Arts London Awarding Body (see Options below).

External validation - Accredited course route

There are a number of organisations within the UK that are in the business of offering course accreditation (see Options below). However, most of the trainee facilitators and all the course providers were clear that in order for accreditation to carry weight with employers in the drama sector any course accrediting body should have clear connections to the theatre industry. Drama UK (which is recognised across the industry as an organisation that supports professional drama training and education) currently offers course accreditation to full-time vocational training courses only. However, it is looking at the possibility of developing accreditation for continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities but does not yet have a mechanism or related pricing structure for this work.

University of the Arts London Awarding Body offers quality assurance for courses leading to its qualifications but as noted above, the Community Arts qualifications will not be due for deployment until the autumn of 2017.

There is therefore currently no industry-recognised organisation in the UK that can offer the kind of course accreditation that the three training providers are currently looking for.

OPTIONS FOR RECOGNITION

There are two potential routes for gaining some sort of external recognition in relation to a course. The course itself can go through an accreditation process, whereby the inputs related to the course (ie resources, personnel, number of hours, venues etc) can be measured and quality assured. This results in course accreditation but does not necessarily lead to a qualification for the people attending the course.

The second option is that the course providers identify a qualification that will reflect the learning outcomes gained by the course participants. The inputs relating to the course may or may not be assessed, but the course participants will be required to evidence their ability to meet the learning outcomes specified in the qualification. In this way, successful qualification candidates (course participants) will emerge with a qualification. Qualifications can be awarded by a wide range of organisations – including independent awarding bodies, universities or self-certifying organisations. Not all qualifications are nationally recognised, and those which are not hold limited value for the qualification holders seeking to gain employment in a wider market, so great care should be taken when searching for an awarding body.

Course accreditation

There are a number of potential ways of getting course accreditation. A number of independent commercial companies that offer course accreditation for a fee, for example:

- British Accreditation Council - <http://www.the-bac.org/> (£1,800 for short courses – see Appendix 7)
- CPD Accreditation Service - <http://www.cpduk.co.uk/>
- CPD Accreditation Standards - <https://www.cpdstandards.com/>

The organisations listed above accredit a broad range of courses (from hairdressing to engineering), and do not specialise in the arts.

Some universities also offer course accreditation options, however in almost all cases course deliver becomes linked in some way with the university and is often linked to a qualification awarded by the same institution.

Some independent awarding bodies, such as Agored Cymru, have a quality assurance process that includes course inspection / accreditation with qualification delivery. (See Appendix 8) Bespoke qualification development is available through Agored Cymru with qualification development costs starting at approximately £7,000 (and with centre registration and annual fees in addition to these initial costs). A broad range of subjects are recognised by this awarding body.

Drama UK (https://www.dramauk.co.uk/what_is_recognition) offers course accreditation to some of the leading full-time vocational training providers in the drama / theatre sector. The organisation is recognised by a broad range of industry bodies (including Equity, the BBC, ITV, Creative and Cultural Skills). It does not currently offer course accreditation for part-time or CPD courses but is exploring the possibility of doing this.

Qualifications

Qualifications can be awarded by a wide range of organisations and are pitched at a range of levels of increasing difficulty with Entry Level being the lowest (and easiest) level and Level 8 being the most challenging. Registers of qualifications exist in Wales, England and Scotland and course providers seeking to deliver courses leading to qualifications in Wales should ensure that the qualifications awarding body is recognised by 'Qualifications Wales' – the independent organisation responsible for regulating general and vocational qualifications in Wales.

There are a large number of independent awarding bodies that develop and deliver qualifications across a range of subjects in Wales. None appear to offer qualifications relating to drama or community arts facilitation although model qualifications are available in Ireland (Appendix 9). Agored Cymru will work with course providers to create bespoke qualifications which it will then register on the national register of qualifications. Other awarding bodies could be approached as potential partners, but most require a significant number of candidates before being willing to consider the development of qualifications.

Universities can also be approached as potential partners for the development of qualifications. However many universities require courses leading to their qualifications to be delivered in association with the university itself. This can limit the autonomy of the course providers. University qualifications tend to be geared to more academic than vocational learning and course providers would need to assure themselves that the methods of assessment prescribed for a university-awarded qualification were in line with the ethos of the course.

In the UK the sector skills council for the creative and cultural industries, CC Skills, is working with the University of the Arts London Awarding Body to develop 'a range of Professional Qualifications with 'Community Arts' being one of the Diplomas'. The same bodies are also looking to develop Community Arts Apprenticeships and anticipate that the first delivery of these qualifications will be in September 2017. If the course providers chose to work

towards these qualifications they would need to ensure that the awarding body was recognised to deliver qualifications in Wales through the

Recommendations

As a result of this investigation, the course providers may wish to:

- Seek funding to enable the three organisations to work together with the support of an external advisor to draw together a course that will compliment the individual courses offered by each of the three organisations. Funds will also be required for an application for course accreditation – whether through a sector-related body like Drama UK or through the University of the Arts London Awarding Body (if the course providers choose to work towards the delivery of a course leading to the Community Arts qualifications), and for course marketing and delivery (venue hire, personnel etc).
- Once funding has been secured, begin to develop a course structure with clearly identified and agreed learning outcomes and quality assurance mechanisms. Course providers may wish to do this in association with a chosen awarding or accreditation body to ensure that the requirements of the external oversight body are matched as the course structure and content are developed.
- Talk further with Drama UK about course accreditation options as it is a quality assurance provider with experience of providing course accreditation and is also recognised within the industry.
- Talk further with the University of the Arts London Awarding Body to keep abreast of the development of the Community Arts qualifications.

APPENDICIES

1. *Anna Leatherdale background information*
2. *Participant consultation key notes*
3. *Organisation consultation notes*
4. *Almeida course outline*
5. *Arcola Facilitator's course outline*
6. *Smashing Times course outline*
7. *BAC Accreditation fees list*
8. *Agored Cymru information*
9. *Example qualification specification*