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From the Margins to the Mainstream? Creative Entrepreneurship in Schools

This Paper is the second of three 'State of Innovation' Papers written by Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy¹ for the British Council-led CENTRES (Creative Entrepreneurship in Schools) project 2012-14 (www.centres-eu.org). This paper was written following the second Centres conference, held in London in January 2013.

CENTRES (Creative Entrepreneurship in Schools) is a multi-country project co-funded by the European Commission, British Council and eight organisations across Europe.

CENTRES is being delivered in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Finland, Poland, Slovenia and the UK.

The project creates a European forum for issues relating to **entrepreneurship education** specific to the **creative industries** and for **sharing innovation and best practice** in this area. All of the partners involved in the consortium see a need for increased international networking and a combined European approach in this area.

"The creative industries start with individual creativity. So, too, does every child's learning experience. There is a growing recognition of the need to find practical ways of nurturing creativity at every stage in the education system: from the nursery through to secondary school; whether in academic or vocational courses; on apprenticeships or at university" (DCMS Creative Britain 2008).

The recent conference – *Creative Entrepreneurship in Schools: International Approaches* – brought together some leading experts and innovators in creative learning and education. For young people and educationalists across Europe, this conference was staged at a critical time. The combined influence of austerity and educational traditionalism mean that in some countries (such as the UK, France and Italy) creative entrepreneurship in schools is being squeezed to the margins, with schools finding it ever harder to deliver progressive learning tools in the face of a return to STEM subjects and a reduction in spending on activities such as creative learning and arts education. Yet at the same time, some countries (e.g. Sweden and

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Finland) see creative entrepreneurship as absolutely critical to the challenges of the age, with entrepreneurship education overall being increasingly promoted in some European countries and creative entrepreneurialism in particular a major focus in northern Europe. According to report - *Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe*¹ - eight countries² have launched specific strategies to promote entrepreneurship education, while 13 others³ include it as part of their national lifelong learning, youth or growth strategies. Half of European countries are engaged in a process of educational reforms which include the strengthening of entrepreneurship education. Yet in most countries, entrepreneurship and especially creative entrepreneurship, remain to the margins of the overall offer and are in danger of being lost altogether without a strategic and knowledge broadside which promotes (creative) entrepreneurialism as key to personal development, achievement, attainment and improved life chances.

In this context, the overall CENTRES programme is playing an important role in building knowledge on and appetite for creative entrepreneurship in schools; supporting partners to increase and improve provision, to advocate and convince of the significant value of the approach, and ensuring it is integrated across the whole learning experience rather than limited to peripheral 'nice to have' rather than 'must have' exercises.

Participants were at this 2nd CENTRES conference to explore and share emergent good practice, reflect on how the landscape for creative education is changing, and co-create future opportunities for effective creative learning and education. The conference was not a stage for advocacy and special pleading for nurturing creative entrepreneurship in schools: participants arrived already convinced of the importance of this agenda. Instead, the conference, as neatly described by **Andy Williams** (Director of British Council, Poland), provided a space for "*sharing, inspiring and engaging*". This short Paper provides a summary of the key messages explored at the conference, and gives additional context on the 'state of innovation' for creative entrepreneurship in schools.

There were **4 core messages** from the conference, each of which is explored below.

1. The economic imperative: how creative learning introduces the possibility of a creative job.

John Kieffer, Chair of A New Direction⁴, partner organisation with the CENTRES project, provided the opening keynote for the conference. He emphasised how the future economy will be driven by jobs which require the kind of open thinking, agility and collaborative mindset which creative education helps to engender. A critical challenge here is supporting young

¹ Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe - National Strategies, Curricula and Learning Outcomes (European Commission, March 2012).

² Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Wales and the Flemish part of Belgium.

³ Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey.

⁴ www.anewdirection.org.uk

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people to develop the skills and learning ethos to succeed in the creative industries and wider knowledge economy, while accepting that many of the jobs of the future do not currently exist. This requires brokering stronger links between young people and the current creative industries sector, while introducing the core development attributes of a creative education (e.g. an enquiring mind, willingness to cross boundaries, hunger for ongoing change, openness to collaboration) so that the future workforce is adaptable to the multifarious jobs and business models we cannot currently imagine and plan for.

This includes focusing on both the 'glamorous' parts of the creative industries (e.g. front of camera, on stage, content creating) and the perhaps less glamorous (e.g. technical jobs, service provision and creative industries services such as management, law and accountancy). Of course the latter 'less glamorous' elements of the sector provide the most jobs and are likely to be within reach of a larger number of creative talents.

In the UK, by way of example, the last decade has seen an evolution toward a more creative and collaborative approach to creative learning and, more specifically, creative entrepreneurship in schools. Critical developments include:

- **The launch of the National Skills Academy for the Creative and Cultural sector** (a membership network of creative businesses and training providers) **and roll-out of creative sector diplomas:** The diploma in Creative and Media launched in September 2009 is part of the continued shift in education towards more vocational, technical, business-led and cross curricula activities; with greater involvement of third parties, including cultural organisations and creative businesses. Over 1,800 apprenticeships have been brokered / supported by the Academy, and over 1 million people have benefited from industry-endorsed careers information via the Creative Choices Programme. In addition, new infrastructure has been developed – such as High House Production Park – an 'international centre of excellence for culture, creative skills and regeneration'.
- **Work-related learning (WRL):** Now a core component of the English National Curriculum at Key Stage 4, WRL is seen as playing a vital role in providing a range of skills, including enhancing employability and pathways to work. Partnerships with business are being encouraged by the current Government, although this has not been matched by any strategy or significant action at this stage.
- **Recognition of non-formal learning:** Non-formal learning providers (often organisations run by creative practitioners, plus voluntary bodies) play a key role in providing the skills and knowledge required to succeed in the creative industries. The boundaries between non-formal and formal education are becoming blurred with different types of provider offering validated qualifications. However, many non-formal learning providers and voluntary organisations are currently struggling to develop an effective role due to the ongoing public spending cuts, with the core market for creative learning organisations significantly tightening. An investment gap is opening up in this part of the creative learning landscape, and it is in everyone's

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interests to close it before it adversely affect the sustainability and confidence of the overall sector.

– **Greater involvement of arts and cultural organisations/ practitioners:** Arts and cultural providers, including arts organisations, are increasingly tasked with delivering creative education activities as part of their core business. In the UK, programmes such as Creative Partnerships, Find Your Talent and Make Your Mark all played an important role in bringing creativity into the classroom and wider learning landscape. They also played a vital role in building professional capacity and an education market for the arts and cultural sector, with many creative practitioners building sustainable careers through a blend of their ‘art’ and their role as service provider in creative education. The discontinuation of nationally funded programmes such as Creative Partnerships have dealt a major blow to creative education overall, but this has led to a more entrepreneurial approach from arts and cultural organisations, which have subsequently developed new roles as providers of creative education – often in schools as part of a wider creative education programme. The current picture is piecemeal and very much in motion, with organisations such as A New Direction (funded as a National Portfolio Organisation by Arts Council England and tasked with a ‘bridging role’ to coordinate and consolidate arts and creative learning activities) set to play a major role in shaping the future creative entrepreneurship landscape.

It is clear there is still much to be done and especially with regard to creative entrepreneurship in schools. This point was made at the conference by **Steve Ackerman**, Managing Director of Somethin’ Else⁵. Steve talked of the ongoing challenge of recruiting young people who are self-starters, extremely motivated and open to delivering different types of task, however menial they might at first seem. Overall, Steve pointed to three types of deficit in the calibre and profile of young people he encounters when recruiting:

- **It continues to be a major struggle to recruit young people from minority ethnic communities and from more ‘working class’ backgrounds.** A mix of barriers in education, cultural factors, and the capacity to work for very little in the early stages of a creative career are all contributory factors. The creative industries remains relatively mono-cultural and middle class, which means the sector is not effectively engaging the full range of talent available and too many young people are not accessing the opportunities available to their more affluent or better connected peers.

- **Too few young people are presenting the ‘can do / must do’ attitude required for survival and then success in the creative industries.** As Steve puts it: *“we need young people with the agility to move from their job description to a diverse range of other tasks”*. Currently, too many young people are resistant to this required agility – and instead stick obstinately to what they were trained in or perceive to be good at.

⁵ www.somethinelse.com

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- **There is a real dearth of specialists and some very significant skills gaps** – e.g. with developer and coding skills (and especially among women). In turn this is pushing the market rates of specialists upwards, with costs then passed on to customers. This is an often-cited issue when the future competitiveness of the Games Industry is discussed, with organisations such as the UK Games trade association, TIGA⁶, calling for a renaissance of computer science in the classroom, coupled with a dynamic approach to creative entrepreneurialism. As Steve Jobs said at the launch of the MacBook Air:

“(T)echnology alone is not enough – it’s technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the result that makes our heart sing...”.

Currently our education institutions respond to shifts in technology and the required skills to leverage the potential from such technology. Ideally, they would collaborate with technology providers and businesses to explore the innovation potential of new and emergent technologies and co-create the required skills offer:

“In the digital media industry the only way to stay competitive is to use the emergent technologies before others adopt them. It’s the pioneers, early adopters and risk-takers that succeed” (Dr John Manley, HP Labs).

2. The classroom imperative: how a creative curriculum introduces improves employment prospects and enhances innovation and competitiveness.

Annika Löfgren (Founder KREO⁷) and **Sara Hägglund** (Mälardalen University, Sweden) provided a keynote presentation which passionately emphasised the need for creative entrepreneurship to be integrated across the whole curriculum and not just ghettoized in the arts or a small section of the humanities. In Sweden, the new curriculum is shaped by the 2009 National Strategy for Entrepreneurship in Education, which prescribed entrepreneurship as a core skill across several subjects. In turn, this approach is designed to assist the delivery of the Swedish National Innovation Strategy to 2020. This contrasts with the experience and approach in other countries (including the above-featured UK), where creative entrepreneurship in schools is delivered in a piecemeal, often short-term way, with a dependence on the motivation of individual organisations, schools and individuals rather than any structured, coherent and ambitious policy.

⁶ www.tiga.org

⁷ www.kreo.org

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In Sweden, creative entrepreneurship is not solely positioned as a means toward a more resourceful and competitive creative industries, although this is certainly a key agenda⁸. Rather, it is based on a belief that:

“(S)chools run by motivation, relevance, creativity and a confidence in the future will make pupils and staff feel better, be more motivated and consequently learn more” (Annika Löfgren and Sara Hägglund – quoted at the conference).

Or as the Swedish National Agency for Education puts it:

“Entrepreneurship in school is an educational approach in the classroom” (quoted at the conference).

Here we need to move away from an ‘industrial society approach’, where the future is mapped out (e.g. in the types of jobs available) and young people are regulated and taught with control and didacticism central; to a more open, interactive and co-created approach. Creative entrepreneurship can play an important role here – reducing a dependence on externally motivated learning where pupils seem driven as much by duty and compulsion as individual aspiration, curiosity and courage. As Røe Ødegård (2010)⁹ asserts, by enlivening the school experience through entrepreneurial learning, young people can be mobilised to replace passivity with actuality, or reproduction with innovation.

KREO are operating as catalysing agents in this field, transforming entrepreneurship theory into practice via interactive workshops in schools where teachers and pupils are encouraged to co-create a learning process which has entrepreneurship at its heart.

3. The Institutional Imperative: Creative Entrepreneurialism as a Core Mission across the Arts and Education Landscape

“What is needed are not new or adapted instruments for knowledge transfer, but something quite different: the spaces in which interactions can take place” (Geoffrey Crossick, A lecture to the Royal Society of Arts, 2009).

In the panel session of the conference, **Honor Wilson-Fletcher, MBE** (Chief Executive of the Aldridge Foundation¹⁰) lamented the ways institutions across the education and arts / cultural sector are in many ways antipathetic to entrepreneurialism because they depend on a rigid departmentalism and command system for their operational wellbeing. This translates across every aspect of the institution. In a school, this is evidenced in how staff are trained,

⁸ See ‘To Do: Development of Cultural and Creative Industries in Practice’ (Anna Linton and Jonas Michanek, 2013) for an insightful introduction to the creative industries support environment in Sweden.

⁹ [Inger Karin Røe Ødegård](#) (2000), *Focusing Entrepreneurship in Education as a Postmodern Paradigm* pp. 143-152, in Sjøvoll, J. and Skogen, K. *Creativity and Innovation, Preconditions for Entrepreneurial Education*. (Tapir Academic Press).

¹⁰ www.aldridgefoundation.com

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motivated and mobilised; and therefore in how pupils are engaged, inspired and taught. In an arts or cultural institution (which may be a partner or resource in creative learning), this is evidenced by a widespread lack of capacity and confidence to develop fresh ways to engage and co-create with audiences, or by the underdevelopment of the diverse revenue streams required for sustainability and growth.

Honor Wilson-Fletcher spoke compellingly of the 'creative entrepreneurship imperative', where teachers need to move beyond the 'Dick Turpin approach': i.e. "Stand and Deliver". She talked of how we need our education institutions to go beyond their historic comfort zones and in doing so ensure young people are mobilised to travel beyond theirs':

"We all know small children are naturally entrepreneurial...then we squeeze it out of them and then try to patch it back in again".

Honor Wilson-Fletcher, with the added voices of **Catherine Large** (Joint CEO of Creative & Cultural Skills)¹¹, **Lindsey Hall** (Director of Real Ideas)¹² and **Erica Neve** (Head of Learning, Livity)¹³, then explored how we can open up institutions so they are more entrepreneurial and thus progressively risk-embracing. This includes opportunities to connect micro enterprises to schools, with the school offering a space or a platform to engage young talent, explore ideas and introduce entrepreneurial thinking to the young people and the education institutions.

In the UK, the Academy programme, which notionally introduces a 'free market' in the ways schools promote and sell themselves, generate revenue and develop their position in the local community, could have some positive outcomes in this field. Here, positive outcomes such as the embedding of entrepreneurial culture across the education landscape, might to some extent counter the negative outcomes of the programme (chaotic reform, self-selection and the introduction of huge inconsistencies in quality and opportunity).

Building on this example, the speakers made the connections between institutional entrepreneurialism and entrepreneurialism for young people. For example:

- **Too many young people lack communication skills and are able to deliver on a narrow range of communication registers.** In part this is an outcome of the 'lack of range' a school has for its communication with young people. Approaches which speak to young people in different ways, encourage the co-creation of the learning environment, and support creating and making as much as theory (and listening and watching), will assist young people to develop the communication skills required for their creative aspirations to be met.

- **There are too many short-term projects** which feel like they are being 'done to' young people; rather than longer term programmes of involvement and learning where young people are able to build relationships (e.g. with entrepreneurs) across

¹¹ www.ccskills.org.uk

¹² www.realideas.org

¹³ www.livity.co.uk

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the lifetime of their school experience. Programmes such as FILMCLUB¹⁴, which provides a programme of film-watching and reviewing, plus introduces links to industry and activities in film-making and media, can play an important role here – giving young people a constant platform and set of engagement tools which they can develop progression routes through from starting school to leaving school. Indeed, participating projects in the CENTRES programme are leading on this type of activity. For example, 300 13- to 19-year-olds at the Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme ENTRUM (a partner in the CENTRES project) recently participated in filming a music video in collaboration with music video director Heigo Lepla for a song by the Estonian artists Teele Viira, Tuuli Rand and ULA.

- **We lack integration between academic and vocational learning**, with too few young people encountering the practical and market-facing skills they will need to succeed in sectors such as the creative industries. As Honor Wilson-Fletcher puts it:

“We need to put the real world into the classroom and the classroom into the real world as much as possible”.

Overall then a holistic approach to entrepreneurship in schools is required: one where institutional transformation is a prerequisite for individual transformation, and one where a wider set of engagements are key - with parents, businesses and the community.

We can learn here from Norway. The Norwegian Ministries of Education and Research, Trade and Development, and Local Government and Regional Development, in their seminal cross-departmental national strategy document of 2006, provide a clear introduction to entrepreneurialism as relational and socially embedded:

“Entrepreneurship is a dynamic and social process where individuals, alone or in collaboration, identify opportunities for innovation and act upon these by transforming ideas into practical and targeted activities, whether in a social, cultural or economic context” (p. 4)¹⁵.

The national strategy document focuses on developing personal qualities and attitudes, but it does so by emphasising the need for the whole educational setting to itself be more open, collaborative and explorative. In other words, institutions need to change and different institutions need to work together if young people are to enjoy an effective entrepreneurial education.

¹⁴ www.filmclub.org

¹⁵ Norwegian Government (2006), (Revised) *Strategy for Entrepreneurship in Education 2004-2008: See Opportunities and Make Them Work*.

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4. The Individual Imperative: Entrepreneurship for Personal Development.

“Entrepreneurship is a way of thinking and doing. It is an attitude towards life, which means being a responsible actor and being able to lead one’s one mind”
(Peltonen 1986).

Outi Hägg (Aalto University, Finland – CENTRES partner institution), who provided the above quote, delivered the penultimate keynote speech of the conference. In describing the approach to entrepreneurial education developed over many years in Finland, she emphasised the importance of understanding the different journeys individual learners take through their personal, social and educational development. The task for teachers and other learning professionals and opinion-forming individuals, is to give young people the space to explore their own needs and grow their own identities, with entrepreneurship offering a tool for self-expression and self-determination. In an institutional context, this can be challenging, with the temptation to search for universal solutions and outcomes. Here Outi Hägg suggested there is an ‘ethics’ to entrepreneurship which can be adopted to enable learning to be personalised within a wider school setting.

Core ‘ethical aspects’¹⁶ include approaches which:

- Enlighten the strengths of individuals rather than discourage them by majoring on weaknesses or reducing their identity to one of the crowd
- Empowering individuals rather than shrinking their self worth
- Listening and engaging rather than dismissing.

By extension, the ‘ethical tools’ for entrepreneurship education include:

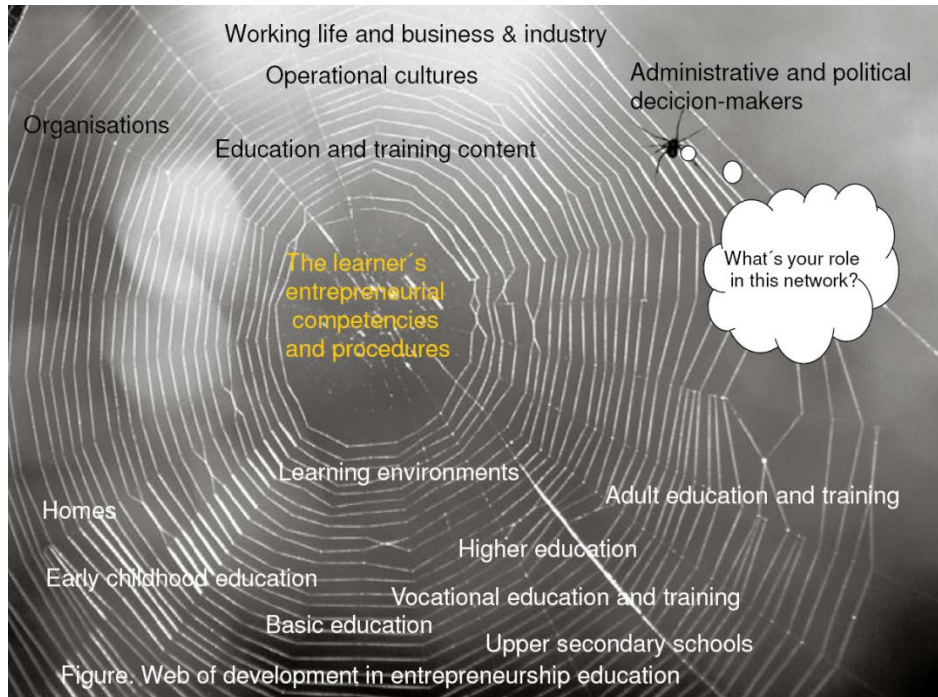
- Reflection – giving individuals the space and time to think and showing that this thinking process is valued
- Dialogue – discussion and listening to individual perspectives throughout the learning experience
- Network development – built on trust in the capacity of individuals to show initiative and appetite (driven by an entrepreneurial perspective).

This learner-centred approach is illustrated by Outi Hägg’s ‘web of entrepreneurial learning’, a concept she has developed for her forthcoming book. Presented in draft form below, this web shows the different influences on each learner journey and emphasises how we need to introduce entrepreneurial learning from early childhood education to and through professional life. This further reinforces the need for entrepreneurial learning and practice to be adopted as much by teachers and institutional hierarchies as individual learners.

¹⁶ Atjonen 2011, Learning today - Education for the Future (Finnish Educational Research association).

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Outi Hägg's Web of Development in Entrepreneurship Education.

The final keynote speaker, **Harald Lepisk** (Victory Trainings, Estonia¹⁷), further emphasised the need to celebrate individuality as a crucial element of entrepreneurial education. With a series of upbeat messages and smartly sourced quotes, Harald Lepisk promoted the importance of creating and making as core ingredients in learning and personal development:

"We need to create something, or something within us dies".

He called for a culture of co-creation in education, where young people should not just receive the experience of education, but should collaborate to set agendas, make priorities and even be allowed to make mistakes. And he concluded with a statement which points to the need for entrepreneurial education to be as much about life skills and survival competencies as geared toward agendas such as attainment and creative employment:

"The greatest challenge in life is learning to be what you do everyday".

These perspectives are re-affirmed by a recent study in Canada by Lisa Philips: *7 Skills Children Need to Succeed in an Increasingly Right Brain World* (Artistic Edge, 2012). With a focus on arts education (rather than creative education), Lisa Philips calls for a reappraisal of what and how we teach our young people and for the 'STEM' approach (majoring on science, technology, English and maths) to be replaced by the STEAM approach (with the arts the

¹⁷ www.creativity.trainings.ee

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additional 'A'). The following 7 skills (adapted here for this Paper)¹⁸ seem a fitting way to conclude this Centres Innovation Paper; and it is clear that most of them will be explored further as the CENTRES Programme continues:

- 1. Creativity** – Being able to think on your feet, approach tasks from different perspectives and think 'outside of the box' will distinguish your child from others. If children have practice thinking creatively, it will come naturally to them now and in their future career.
- 2. Problem Solving** – Artistic creations are born through the solving of problems. Without even realising it, kids that participate in the arts are consistently being challenged to solve problems. All this practice problem solving develops children's skills in reasoning and understanding. This will help develop important problem-solving skills necessary for success in any career.
- 3. Perseverance & Focus** – When a child picks up a violin for the first time, she/he knows that playing Bach right away is not an option; however, when that child practices, learns the skills and techniques and doesn't give up, that Bach concerto is that much closer. In an increasingly competitive world, where people are being asked to continually develop new skills, perseverance is essential to achieving success. In addition, the ability to focus is a key skill developed through creative work. Keeping a balance between listening and contributing involves a great deal of concentration and focus.
- 4. Non-Verbal Communication** – Through experiences in activities such as theatre and dance education, children learn to breakdown the mechanics of body language. They experience different ways of moving and how those movements communicate different emotions. They are then coached in performance skills to ensure they are portraying their character effectively to the audience.
- 5. Receiving Constructive Feedback** – Receiving constructive feedback about a performance or visual art piece is a regular part of any creative activity. Children learn that feedback is part of learning and it is not something to be offended by or to be taken personally. It is something helpful. The goal is the improvement of skills and evaluation is incorporated at every step of the process.
- 6. Collaboration** – Through the arts and creative activities, children practice working together, sharing responsibility, and compromising with others to accomplish a common goal. Through these experiences children gain confidence and start to learn that their contributions have value even if they don't have the biggest role.
- 7. Accountability** – When children practice creating something collaboratively they get used to the idea that their actions affect other people. They learn that when they are

¹⁸ For the full and extended list, see: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/22/top-10-skills-children-learn-from-the-arts/>

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not prepared or on-time, that other people suffer. Through the arts, children also learn that it is important to admit that you made a mistake and take responsibility for it. Because mistakes are a regular part of the process of learning in the arts, children begin to see that mistakes happen. We acknowledge them, learn from them and move on.

Next Steps

The next stages of the CENTRES programme will play an important role in exploring how to effectively embed creative entrepreneurship within the learning landscape, with the different projects piloting activities and continuing to share knowledge. As we mentioned in the introduction to this report, overall the programme will lift both aspiration and appetite, supporting partners to increase and improve provision, to advocate and convince of the significant value of the approach. This will build toward the third and final CENTRES conference in spring 2014, which will showcase the results of the programme and set a shared European agenda for creative entrepreneurship in schools. The final CENTRES Innovation Paper will present this agenda and point to the longer-term opportunities for creative entrepreneurship in schools so that partners can move forward with clarity and purpose.