The Edge Foundation

Employability Skills in Studio Schools
Investigating the use of the CREATE Framework

October 2018

SKOPE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To cite this report: Robson, J., Randhawa, A., and Keep, E. (2018) *Employability Skills in Studio Schools: Investigating the use of the CREATE Framework.* London: The Edge Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Remit

The study was funded by the Edge Foundation and took place between October 2017 and October 2018. It is focused on the ways in which Studio Schools engage with and implement the CREATE Framework, an employability skills framework originally conceptualised as being one of the defining aspects of the Studio Schools model. The study took place at a critical period in the history of Studio Schools at a time when the Studio Schools Trust was in the process of closing and the new principal-led Studio Schools Network was beginning to establish itself as an umbrella organisation for all Studio Schools.

The project sought to answer the ollowing research questions:

1. How is the CREATE Framework perceived and interpreted by the key architects of the Studio School model, individual Studio Schools, senior leaders, teachers, students, and employers?
2. How is the CREATE Framework implemented in Studio Schools and used to shape the curriculum and activities to develop young people's employability and enterprise skills?
3. In what ways can the CREATE Framework facilitate partnerships between employers and Studio Schools and how does it help enact and guide the provision of experiences and activities?

Approach

A three phased approach was adopted to systematically answer these research questions. Phase 1 combined document analysis of foundational documents associated with Studio Schools and CREATE with interviews with the original architects of the model and the framework. For Phase 2, data and analysis from Phase 1 were used to design a questionnaire sent to principals and SLT in all Studio Schools focused on how they engage with and implement CREATE or alternative employability skills frameworks. Findings from both of these phases informed Phase 3, in-depth case studies of five Studio Schools. Case study schools were selected in order to represent different levels of engagement with CREATE, from the framework being fully embedded in the fabric and identity of the school to a school that had adopted a different employability skills framework. In each case study, data were collected through document analysis of relevant materials and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (principal, SLT, teachers/learning coaches, personal coaches, students, and where possible, employers).

Findings

The findings from our research have implications for not only the CREATE framework, but employability skills more generally, and the wider Studio School model. The CREATE framework has been deployed fairly loosely across the Studio Schools network, with each of the Studio Schools in our case studies managing their own interpretation, and therefore

deployment amongst staff, students and employers. The messy realities of the deployment of the CREATE framework indicate that there is a pressing need on behalf of the network of Studio Schools to take a step back, and assess if the CREATE framework and the employability skills it inculcates are still fit-for purpose.

Our research has highlighted that Studio Schools attempting to place the CREATE Framework at the heart of their operations, as originally envisioned in the Studio School model, has proved problematic as the pressures of accountability, marketisation, funding, and agendas of schools' Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) present a variety of challenges that must be navigated. These challenges often lead to incremental returns to mainstream approaches with the Studio Schools in our study finding it increasingly difficult to develop and maintain an integrated, whole school, skills-based approaches. This led to the gradual erosion of distinctive aspects of the Studio Schools model, project based learning, an integrated coaching model, longer days, rich employer partnerships, and CREATE, as an employability skills framework, sitting at the heart of the school. That said, having an employability framework, however imperfect has proven useful to schools attempting to create a name for themselves in the education marketplace. The focus on employability skills is one that resonates with parents and students alike, makes for an effective recruitment tool, and is indicative of a wider desire for school curricula to focus on more than just the academic subjects.

Despite the pressures that Studio Schools face in maintaining their distinctive identity, we were able to find examples of best practice amongst the case study Studio Schools of how they had implemented the CREATE employability framework. These examples were used to create a map of best practice for Studio Schools and other new school models implementing an employability framework:

- LEADERSHIP: While it goes without saying that all schools have a need for strong leadership, schools attempting to implement either employability frameworks of innovative models of schooling require perhaps even stronger leadership and an unwavering belief in the strengths of the model or framework. This ensures they maintain their unique identities and ethos in the face of increasing accountability measures and marketisation.
- OWNERSHIP: the implementation of employability frameworks (such as CREATE) involves multiple stakeholders (students, parents, employers, staff). All stakeholders should have a sense of ownership of the framework and its use to ensure meaningful engagement.
- LANGUAGE: in order to ensure employability frameworks developed or adopted by a school are fit for purpose, the language used must be relevant for all the key stakeholders, particularly the students who may initially be unfamiliar with terms used in the workplace.

- TRAINING: the successful implementation of employability frameworks requires dedicated and consistent training for all members of staff. This ensures a shared understanding of the goals and ethos of the framework and clear communication between staff.
- INTEGRATION: employability frameworks are most successful when they are embedded and integrated into the culture of the school. This ensures that the framework sits at the heart of all school activities allowing for a deep understanding and development of employability skills for both students and staff.

Implications for School Management:

Moving to some of the wider implications of the project, our findings highlighted that when creating innovative new models of schooling, the importance of having a parent or central organisation that provides an anchor point for schools in the network. Such an organisation allows for the maintenance of branding and institutional identity, provides support and guidance for member schools, and has the ability and capacity to represent the model's interests with policymakers.

Policy Implications:

The research has highlighted the importance of new models of schooling, such as Studio Schools, maintaining a strong institutional identity rooted in the distinctive and innovative aspects of the model. We found this was increasingly important for the Studio Schools in our study, as they found themselves subject to strong market forces pulling them towards a mainstream school model. The 14-19 'space' provides limited opportunity for innovation, as at any given moment, there is only a finite pool of 14-19 year olds in a given locality. New innovative school models run the risk of losing out in this zero sum game competition for students and the money that follows them which means that student numbers never reach the minimum threshold required to maintain the institution's viability. Without a strong branding and ethos, which a centralised school management can help create, maintain, and advocate for, there is a danger that new school models will consistently suffer at the hands of the market.

Wider Recommendations

Drawing on the data we have gathered, we recommend that the relevant stakeholders from the Studio School Network explore the following actions:

1. The Studio Schools Network should be funded appropriately in order to ensure it has the capacity and administrative support to fully represent member schools in policy and public contexts, support member schools appropriately to navigate the range of challenges they are likely to face, develop appropriate strategic plans for the future of the model, and convene regular meetings with member schools.

2. The Studio Schools Network should examine the possibility of updating the CREATE Framework in a way that represents the diverse range of needs and approaches to employability skills that exists across the network.

3. The Studio Schools Network and individual schools should investigate the possibility of adopting alternative employability skills frameworks that have been developed by larger organisations that have the capacity to delivery targeted, relevant and up to date training for all members of staff.

4. Funding bodies should explore the possibility of developing a future research agenda that examines (a) the way parents and students make decisions about engaging with vocational models of schools; (b) what broad lessons from different models of vocational schooling can be learned for mainstream schools trying to engage with issues around employability better and how will these lessons can be clearly communicated.

1. INTRODUCTION

Studio Schools represent a disruption to the current norm of secondary education (Cook, Thorley & Clifton, 2016). The term 'Studio School' is derived from the concept of the Renaissance Studio such that students in these Studios learned by doing, guided along by an experienced master (Hendry & Sharpe, 2013). Studio Schools try to emulate this 'Renaissance style of learning' in that they provide students with an environment that simulates genuine workplaces, 'which seeks to address the growing gap between the skills and knowledge that young people require to succeed, and those that the current education system provides' (Studio Schools Trust, 2014). They provide a targeted 14-19 curriculum, and aim to ensure that all learning in the school is based on project-based learning and real work experience. Having first opened in 2009, there are certain essential elements that have been highlighted by the Studio School Trust itself that make a school a Studio School: they should be *small schools* (a maximum of 300 students), *non-selective* and *striving for academic excellence*, and incorporate an employability and enterprise skills (*the CREATE framework*), a *personalised curriculum*, *practical learning*, and *real work experiences* (Studio School Trust, 2010). Founded and operated locally, however, Studio Schools do not follow an explicit prescription (e.g. a specific curriculum, fixed sponsorship models, etc.), that specifies how schools should work with these essential elements. Given that these schools follow what is essentially a community centred model (Wandersman et al., 2003; Van Urk, 2016) in their implementation, examining any element of them requires high contextual understanding and an in-depth approach.

In 2017, the Studio School Trust changed its structure to form a network of Studio Schools represented by the Studio School heads of currently open schools. This change in structure highlights a need to understand what the envisaged goals and structures of the Studio School model were in the development of the different elements of the model and prompted the Edge Foundation to fund this research project via a bid to the Edge Grant Fund in 2016 . The CREATE framework is meant to form the heart of the Studio School model, having been designed specifically for the Studio School model; understanding if it still remains fit for purpose and is being engaged with in a meaningful way becomes crucial as it is meant to be an integrated part of the identity of a school being recognisable as a Studio School.

This year-long research project involved a **three phased** approach; in the **first** phase, **documentary analysis** of key texts involving the CREATE framework and **semi-structured** interviews were conducted with those responsible for the setting up and deployment of Studio School model. This phase provided us with key insights into how the model and particularly the CREATE framework had been brought to life, and how its creators had envisaged its operationalisation. The concepts highlighted from this phase were used to the form the basis of a **questionnaire** that was deployed across all the schools, forming the core of the **second** phase of this research. 21 schools responded to our questionnaire, highlighting

the variety of ways that the CREATE framework had been interpreted, and the varying degrees to which the skills framework had in fact been implemented across the entire network. Using a scale of levels to which schools were engaging with the CREATE framework, ranging from 'not at all' to 'it is in integrated part of the school', **five** different schools were chosen to conduct in-depth research in. In this **third** phase involving the different cases, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved with the development and use of the CREATE framework including but not limited to senior leadership to employers to students.

The analysis presented in this report is reflective of the individual and unique journeys that each of the five Studio Schools have taken not just in the implementation of the CREATE framework, but also of the ups and downs of establishing themselves in the identity of the Studio School model. The schools have found themselves in the (sometimes) tricky position of navigating their identity through the needs of not only the Studio School model, but also the needs of the community, those of MATS, and even national policies. Each of these sometimes synergistic and sometimes competing needs have impacted the ways in which Studio School have come to view not only the CREATE framework but also impacted the ways in which employability skills development occurs at the schools.

This report also presents a future outlook for the CREATE framework as framed through the voices of the Studio Schools themselves; highlighting the need for a framework that takes into account the changing needs of not just the schools as they navigate the policy landscape, but also the changing needs of the students who are the ultimate recipients of the framework, as they navigate education in the 21st century.

2. METHODOLOGY

The project has been guided by the following research questions:

- How is the CREATE Framework perceived and interpreted by the key architects of the Studio School model, individual Studio Schools, senior leaders, teachers, students, and employers?How is the CREATE Framework implemented in Studio Schools and used to shape the curriculum and activities to develop young people's employability and enterprise skills?
- In what ways can the CREATE Framework facilitate partnerships between employers and Studio Schools and how does it help enact and guide the provision of experiences and activities?

A three phased approach has been adopted to systematically answer these research questions. Phase 1 and Phase 2 were completed between October 2017 and March 2018. Findings from these phases informed Phase 3 (in-depth case studies of five Studio Schools), which were undertaken between April and July 2018.

Phase 1

Phase 1 focused on understanding the ideas, aims and objectives that underpin the CREATE Framework and the ways in which it was originally anticipated that it would be operationalised within Studio Schools. In order to examine these issues, documentary analysis of key documents related to CREATE and the foundation of Studio Schools more widely was undertaken and semi-structured interviews were carried out with some of the key individuals involved in developing the Studio Schools model.

Document Analysis

A large range of historic and current documents relating to the CREATE Framework and the aims and objectives of Studio Schools were stored in a members-only area of the Studio Schools Trust's website. These documents are provided to all Studio Schools as vital guidance on working as a studio school and using the CREATE Framework. Access to this area of the website was provided by the Trust, the documents were discussed in detail with the director of the Trust, and the relevant materials then downloaded for analysis. This selection process was guided by a very broad set of criteria. Documents related to the CREATE Framework in any way (including its aims and objectives, development, implementation, current uses in individual schools etc), and documents related to the wider aims and objectives of Studio Schools, their foundation, development, and operations were included.

This produced the following list of documents for analysis:

CREATE
- The CREATE Framework 2011
- The CREATE Framework 2012
- The CREATE Guide for Studio School Staff 2013
- CREATE Sample Rubric 2013
- Example of a curriculum overview: Knutsford
- Studio Schools Staffing Structures 2012

Employers
- Employers' Guide to Studio Schools (date unknown)
- Working with Employers: a guide for schools 2015

Governance:
- Studio Schools' Key Messages
- DFE Guidance – Academy Trusts and Local Authorities
- DfE Guidance – Nodal Points
- DfE Guidance – Banding
- Example Admissions Policies from:
    - Parkside
    - Rye
    - Stephenson
    - Waverley
- Example Application form from Ockendon
- Governors Handbook
- Online Government Recruitment Brochure
- Recruitment tips for parent governors
- Volunteering as a school governor
- National Governors Association – Studio Schools Governance: the Role and Responsibilities

The five documents relating specifically to the CREATE Framework were analysed line by line in order to gain a rich understanding of how the framework was originally conceptualised and how its operationalisation was formally envisaged within these key documents and guidance. This analysis highlighted the importance of the Studio Schools' innovative staffing model for schools' participation in and engagement with CREATE as well as the importance of employers' engaging directly with CREATE to support students' skill development. Therefore, documents relating to the Studio Schools' Staffing Structure and Employers were also included in this close analysis. Other documents relating to key messaging for Studio Schools

and to Governance, although deemed broadly relevant, were analysed in general terms to provide insight into the overall structure, vision and guidance for running a Studio School.

Semi-structured Interviews

This documentary analysis was supported by semi-structured interviews with key individuals involved in the development of the CREATE Framework and the Studio Schools model. Gaining access to many of the individuals involved in establishing the Studio Schools model proved challenging and establishing who was directly involved in writing the CREATE Framework at an individual level was problematic given the passage of time and the collaborative nature of the way in which it was produced. However, three interviews were conducted with the following people:

- Two Trustees of the Studio Schools Trust involved in the Trust from its foundation
- A policy maker involved in the foundation of the Studio Schools model

These interviews were recorded and analysed. They provided important background information that was integrated into the document analysis.

Phase 2

The data from Phase 1 were used to develop a questionnaire. This was focused on investigating the different ways in which Studio Schools engage with the CREATE Framework to develop young people's employability and enterprise skills, different perceptions of the framework amongst schools, and its wider place within different schools' overall curriculum approach and offering. Based on the interviews in Phase 1 and our wider experiences with Studio Schools, we were aware that a number of schools were using alternative or additional skills frameworks instead of or alongside CREATE. Therefore, the questionnaire included sections to determine the number of schools using alternative/ additional frameworks, and examine the reasons why these are being used, how they were developed, and how they relate to CREATE. The questionnaire was designed primarily for head teachers/ principals to complete and so contained a range of questions related to school identity, school aims, and strategy. However, heads/ principals were also encouraged to share the questionnaire with other members of staff and so different pathways through the survey were developed so individuals only needed to complete the sections relevant to them.

The questionnaire was put online using Bristol Online Surveys and was sent to every Studio School in the Studio Schools Network, directly contacting the heads/ principals. Contact details were provided by the Studio Schools Trust and these were supplemented by hand searches on the Studio Schools Trust's website, the DfE website and individual Studio Schools' websites. These hand searches, along with subsequent phone calls directly to the schools, highlighted that many Studio Schools are going through periods of change (in leadership,

structure, and identity) and that much of the centrally held online information about them is out of date.

The questionnaire was sent individually to the heads/ principals of 33 Studio Schools on 25th January 2018. A follow up email was sent on 6th February 2018. Schools that had not completed the questionnaire were followed up with telephone calls in the week commencing 13th February 2018 and again in the week commencing 19th February 2018. Personal contacts were also used to encourage schools to complete the questionnaire. This work produced 21 completed questionnaires from 14 Studio Schools.

Data were analysed both quantitively, in a descriptive manner, and qualitatively. A combination of inductive and deductive approaches were taken to the qualitative analysis, with themes informed by analysis undertaken in Phase 1, but firmly grounded in the data. This allowed key issues to emerge directly from the information provided by the schools. This analysis provided a key framework for selecting schools for in depth case studies in Phase 3.

Phase 3

Phase 3, in depth case studies, was undertaken between April and July 2018. These case studies provided the opportunity for analysis in a way that took into account the local contexts and varying aims of the different stakeholders while providing narrative accounts of the schools' relationships with CREATE and alternative/ additional frameworks and their future plans and direction of travel.

Data from the questionnaire was used to identify a list of potential Studio Schools for in depth study. These schools were selected in order to give an overview, as indicated in the questionnaire data, of the different trajectories schools take and the different relationships they have with CREATE. As such, several of the selected schools are likely to be representative of a larger number of Studio Schools who have adopted similar approaches. Other schools are highly distinctive and so provide extreme and instrinsically interesting case studies: the distinctive nature of their approach and engagement with CREATE provides vital insight into the wider model.

The following schools were identified for case study work (their names have been changed to ensure anonymity; they are described fully in the findings section where each case is written up in depth):

- **Studio School Crawfords** – This provided an extreme case of limited or non-existent engagement with the CREATE Framework. The school a new Studio School and has developed its own skills framework related to the IBAC. Despite not using CREATE, data from the questionnaire suggested very high engagement with the implementation of the alternative skills framework across the school and the potential

for rich data on the decision to move away from CREATE and work with an alternative framework.

- **Studio School Zorya** – Based on questionnaire data, this school was selected as having the potential to provide an extreme case of deep engagement with the CREATE Framework. According to the information provided by the principal and the vice principal, CREATE appeared to be embedded in all aspects of the school's operations.

- **Studio School Una** – As one of the largest Studio Schools, Una offered an extreme example of size. However, most importantly, the school appeared to sit between the two extremes of engagement and non-engagement with the CREATE Framework. CREATE is the only skills framework used in the school, but the principal described a feeling that the school was not using it fully to measure progress – this is 'something we are wrestling with'. As such the school may be relatively representative of many Studio Schools.

- **Studio School Coraline** – This school was selected as an important case of transition. The Coraline has expanded significantly in the last two years and, importantly, is in the process of developing and implementing an additional skills framework. Although it is using CREATE, it is currently working with Activate Learning to develop this additional framework. The school provided an opportunity to explore this journey in depth and the decision making processes related to it, providing insight into the process of moving away from CREATE that some schools are undertaking.

- **Studio School Tigris** – Based on the data provided in the questionnaire, this school was selected as having the potential to offer a case study of transition back towards deeper engagement with the CREATE Framework. In the questionnaire, respondents described a range of challenges the school had experienced with project-based learning and the use of CREATE soon after foundation, but described actively working to re-embed the framework in the school. As such, the school was selected to provide insight into a journey back towards an embedded approach to CREATE. However, as will be described below, on visiting the school, we discussed that it was in fact an important example of a school coming to the end of a journey away from CREATE.

Following a review with the Edge Foundation, the schools were contacted and invited to participate. All the schools agreed to participate in the project. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (principals, senior leaders, teaching staff, coaching staff, students, and employers) and document analysis of key curriculum and policy documents used in the schools. This provided an in depth examination of the perceptions of CREATE by the different stakeholders, the implementation of CREATE and its place within each school's wider curriculum, the perceptions and place of alternative/ additional frameworks, and the ways in which employers engage with all skills frameworks used by the schools, as well as wider information about the schools' institutional identities and journeys.

For each case study school, the following interviews were undertaken:

Zorya:
Principal; vice principal; personal coach; business links developer; two specialism leads; three students.

Una:
Principal; head of sixth form; associate principal; director of learning; four teachers; two personal coaches; an employer partner; five students.

Coraline:
Principal; vice principal; employability lead; director of assessment and curriculum; student support manager; four students.

Tigris:
Principal; vice principal; assistant vice principal for behaviour; assistant vice principal for academic progress; assistant vice principal for SEND; two teachers of academic subjects; the head of one of the specialisms and previous coach; six students.

Crawfords:
Principal; vice principal; assistant principal; four teachers; a personal coach; the work experience coordinator; six students

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data for each case was analysed both deductively and inductively with effort being made to analyse each case on its own terms. The analytical process focused on creating rich, in depth narratives for each school, then cross-case analysis was undertaken to determine critical issues across all the schools.

Ethical Considerations

The research design has been approved by Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee and the approach has been developed in accordance with accepted principles of educational research ethics outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011). All participants have provided informed consent. Their data has been stored securely on password protected servers or in Bristol Online Surveys' servers (UK based and approved by Oxford University's Research Ethics Committee) in accordance with Oxford University provision and GDPR. Individuals and institutions have been anonymised to ensure no harm is caused at an individual or institutional level.

3. FINDINGS

Phase 1

The key aim of this study is to gain a rich understanding of the different ways in which Studio Schools are engaging with and implementing the CREATE Framework. In order do this it is important to understand exactly how the CREATE Framework was originally conceptualised, how its operationalisation was originally envisaged, and how it was seen as fitting into the wider model for Studio Schools. Document analysis and interviews undertaken in Phase 1 were therefore focused on these areas. This work provided a broad narrative account of the original vision for the CREATE Framework that was embedded in the guidance documents from Studio Schools Trust and held by some key individuals involved in the development of the framework and the educational model. However, perhaps more importantly, this work also highlighted a key range of issues and tensions associated with what can be described as an idealised form of implementation that are likely to prove challenging in the messy realities of small schools in practice. These issues were used to shape the design of the questionnaire and the case studies in Phase 3.

CREATE: Original Conceptualisations and Visions for Operationalisation

The CREATE Framework was formally published first in 2011 and a modified version was published again in 2012. However, development of the document began as early as 2007 (CREATE 2011; SST Trustee) and was firmly rooted in the development of Studio Schools model from the outset. CREATE was always envisioned as the core vehicle for the development of skill for attendees of Studio Schools and is consequently listed as one of the essential criteria for a Studio School: they should be small (a maximum of 300 students), non-selective and striving for academic excellence, focus on employability and enterprise skills through the CREATE Framework and project-based learning, provide a personalised curriculum, practical learning and real work experiences (Studio Schools Trust, 2010).

The framework and the Studio Schools model were developed by the Young Foundation and the Edge Foundation. As plans solidified, the Studio Schools Trust was founded, but there was a significant overlap of members of staff between the different organisations so that all groups played an essential part in the formation of CREATE and the wider vision for Studio Schools (SST Trustee). It was only when the Trust moved up to Manchester, by which time many of the foundational members had left the different organisations, that full separation between the Young Foundation, the Edge Foundation, and the Studio Schools Trust occurred. By this time the CREATE Framework had been finalised and did not go through any additional iterations.

CREATE stands for Communication, Relating to Others, Enterprise, Applied Skills, Thinking Skills, and Emotional Intelligence, referring explicitly to the sets of skills embedded within the framework. It was based on other existing skills frameworks and 'the best bits were cherry

picked and included in CREATE' (SST Trustee). The process of development is hard to unpack and took place in 'fits and spurts'. According to both Studio Schools Trust Trustees, the Young Foundation worked with a large number of interns and a lot of the development work for CREATE was undertaken by these members of staff. The high turnover of interns meant that the process behind the development of CREATE was somewhat opaque and largely rooted in transient members of staff. As a result, establishing the visions for the framework from the original architects through post hoc interviews is problematic. However, the 2011 and 2012 versions of CREATE, alongside specific guidance documentation, provide very clear indications of what these original conceptualisations, aims, and visions for operationalisation were, while wider foundational and guidance documents from the Studio Schools Trust provide a clear overview of how CREATE fits into the wider structural model for Studio Schools.

Through the CREATE Framework, Studio Schools aim to develop key employability and life skills for all their students ensuring that the young people who attend Studio Schools are:

- Enterprising self-managers with a sense of health and wellbeing who have the potential for leadership in business, enterprise and their local communities
- Creative and willingly look for solutions to the challenges they face, often coming up with novel ideas and approaches
- Active learners who learn by doing and can apply their knowledge
- Collaborative and able to function effectively in a wide range of contexts and groups with the skills needed for work and life
- Involved in their local communities and have a sense of civic corporate responsibility
(The CREATE Guide for Studio School Staff; Studio Schools Trust 2013)

As such the CREATE Framework sits at the heart of the Studio Schools model and is presented as shaping and underpinning every aspect of school life: 'The CREATE Skills Framework is meant to inform the day-to-day engagements that take place in Studio Schools and should be embedded in everyday conversations and activities among learners, coaches and employers' (Studio Schools Trust, 2013).

Embedded within the Studio Schools model is an aim to cater particularly for students who might benefit from practical approaches to learning and skills development. In other words, it combines a particular model of curriculum with practically-oriented forms of pedagogy. Therefore, the schools aim to achieve these goals by connecting academic learning to real world contexts through multi-disciplinary project-based learning and placements with employer partners (A Guide for Studio Schools Staff). The CREATE framework supports these key practices by providing a diagnostic and planning tool to undertake the assessment of

which skills and subskills students need to work on through project work and placements, planning this work, and then assessing progress (CREATE 2011, 2012).

Each skill area is described in detail within the framework and contains the specific sub-skills that define the related practices, aptitudes and skills students will develop across three levels of progression: Apprentice (student performance that requires substantial support, guidance or prompting in order to complete tasks or assignments); Expert (student performance that performs tasks or assignments independently, with moderate prompting); and Coach (student performance that takes initiative beyond expectations and supports other learners to develop in the identified area). Across these sit four levels of performance:

- Level 1 (performance does not meet set standard(s) or target(s));
- Level 2 (performance approaches set standard(s) or target(s));
- Level 3 (performance meets set standard(s) or target(s));
- Level 4 (performance exceeds set standard(s) or target(s))

(CREATE 2011 & 2012; Studio Schools Trust 2013).

Through these clearly defined skills, subskills, pathways to and measurements of progression, students, staff and employers can work together to help young people develop key skills.

However, embedded in this broad outline of the vision for CREATE are a number of distinctive concepts and related issues that will be unpacked below.

Staffing Structures

Sitting at the heart of the Studio School model is a vision for an innovative staffing structure. This has seven key characteristics (Studio Schools Staffing Structure: 1):

1. a distinct organisational structure with unique nomenclature;
2. a diverse staffing team;
3. a more closely integrated staffing structure;
4. a dynamic and flexible staffing structure;
5. greater emphasis on pastoral support and care;
6. a leadership model which reflects the diverse nature of staff backgrounds and distinct ethos;
7. and a public facing structure that is more closely integrated into the community.

However, at the centre of this vision for a novel staffing approach lie the two roles of Learning Coach and Personal Coach. Across all the CREATE guidance documents and the wider Studio School documentation, these separate roles, working together in a complementary way, are portrayed as essential to the implementation of the CREATE Framework. The Learning Coaches take on what would traditionally be seen as the teacher role, planning and delivering lessons and, developing programmes of project-based learning for their students. As argued

by Trustees from the Studio Schools Trust, they 'should always be qualified teachers' ensuring that they have the expertise required to support student learning.

The Personal Coaches, seen as generally coming from industry (SST Trustee), would work alongside the Learning Coaches, focusing specifically on supporting the development of skills. In the documentation, Personal Coaches:

- Oversee the delivery of projects, tailoring them meet student goals
- Plan and coordinate personalised learning plans for students
- Work with students to set personal targets and reflect on progress
- Liaise with the Studio School staff and business partners to monitor student placements and progress
- Work with Learning Coaches to ensure core content is delivered
- Make students aware of progression routes available to them and how their learning relates to these pathways.

(Studio Schools Trust, 2013: 8)

Therefore, in this original conceptualisation of the model, when a student joined a Studio School, he or she would work with a Personal Coach to develop a skills profile, highlighting strengths and areas for development. Working with both the young people and the Learning Coaches, the Personal Coaches would then constantly review progress in the development of skills and subskills and look for personalised opportunities within the project-based work for further development for each student (CREATE 2012; Studio Schools Trust, 2013). The CREATE Framework forms the basis of this work and is used to shape conversations between all stakeholders. As such, and as articulated by one of the Trustees from the Studio Schools Trust, 'The Personal Coaches are the owners of CREATE'.

Within this original conceptualisation of the Studio Schools' staffing structure, as indicated in the organisational charts made available to Studio Schools when they are set up (Studio Schools Staffing Structure), the implementation of CREATE requires Learning Coaches and the Personal Coaches to work together as equals, supporting both 'knowledge acquisition' across the wider curriculum and the development of CREATE skills through project-based learning. As one of the Trustees from the Studio Schools Trust argued, 'The Personal Coaches and Learning Coaches should have parity'. They bring different experiences together in a holistic way to implement the CREATE Framework and the Studio Schools model.

However, data from the interviews suggest that this idealised model has been relatively rarely implemented in practice across the majority of Studio Schools. A key issue centres on the equality between Learning Coaches and Personal Coaches. One of the Trustees from the Studio School Trust suggested that due to limited finances, Personal Coaches are paid less than Learning Coaches, 'at times significantly less'. This means that although the two roles should be organisationally equal, 'in the real world, we started talking about parity of esteem'.

In some contexts, the practical implications of this mean that 'Personal Coaches are seen as second class citizens… the teachers know they're paid more and find it hard to believe anyone should have parity with them' (SST Trustee).

At the extreme end, the interview data and the researchers' wider experience within Studio Schools, suggest that some schools have combined the two roles, with Learning Coaches incorporating the tasks of Personal Coaches into their normal work. In some cases, it would appear that the language of Learning and Personal Coaches have been dropped altogether and members of staff responsible for both learning and the development of skills are simply referred to by the traditional title of 'teacher'.

The full implications of this apparent move away from the original vision of Learning and Personal coaches working together as equals is unclear. Our interviewees and other informants involved in Studio Schools across the sector were highly critical of this move. For example, one of the Trustees from the Studio Schools trust emphasised that 'I don't think you can implement CREATE at all without Personal Coaches!' This argument was rooted in the view that Personal Coaches, coming from non-educational, industry related backgrounds, are best placed to examine and support the development of skills in project work and industry placement. Teachers, it was argued, particularly if they have taken a traditional career pathway (from school, to university, to a PGCE), may not have developed the full range of skills embedded in the CREATE Framework in the way that the students are required to. As such their ability to link and deliver CREATE skills through industry based project work may be compromised.

Given the centrality of staffing structures to the implementation of CREATE within the Studio School model and the clear complexity associated with adopting the model in practice, there is a clear need to explore these issues in more depth through the questionnaire and case studies.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The Studio School model is consistently portrayed as innovative throughout the documentation. Subsequently, many members of staff coming from teaching backgrounds are unlikely to have significant experience of working with skills frameworks like CREATE, working alongside Personal Coaches, or partnering with Employers. Similarly, those members of staff employed as Personal Coaches, coming from outside education, are unlikely to have experience of working within school environments or supporting young people's skills development through the CREATE framework. Therefore, appropriate training and CPD for different members of staff is likely to be essential to the successful implementation of CREATE.

However, across all the documents selected for analysis, 'CPD' was only mentioned three times and in a superficial manner (for example, suggesting there would be opportunities for CPD within Studio Schools). 'Professional development' was only mentioned twice and this was in relation to governors and administrative staff. Although, some initial training courses, funded by the Edge Foundation, were available through the Studio Schools Trust during the early years of its existence, this absence of a clear strategic approach to ongoing professional development in relation to CREATE or the wider studio school model was highlighted in the interviews. For example, the Trustees from the Studio Schools Trust both suggested that formal CPD provided to staff was very limited and generalised. While materials existed in America on project-based learning and the Trust did some initial work with an organisation in San Diego, limited training was provided on coaching or on CREATE. It was suggested in the interviews that although there was support from the Edge Foundation to develop some training, support from the DfE to develop CPD programmes that were tailored to the Studio School model was limited. This was exacerbated by the nature of small schools: 'it's really difficult to get staff out for training in a small school, so it has always been pretty patchy'.

Given the importance placed on staff understanding both the CREATE framework and the wider Studio School model, the apparently limited opportunities for relevant CPD available to members of staff, highlight critical issues around how staff acquire professional knowledge related to CREATE and skills development and how schools ensure staff are appropriately trained. These issues were raised in the questionnaire and will require further investigation through the case studies in Phase 3.

Who is CREATE for?

As described above, CREATE is portrayed in much of the documentation around Studio Schools and in the interviews as 'owned by personal coaches'. However, it is also clear that the framework is meant to underpin all work undertaken by Learning Coaches. At the same time, employers are advised to engage with the CREATE Framework, working with Personal Coaches to support students developing CREATE skills through placements and partnership working (Employers Guide to Studio Schools). Perhaps most importantly, within the documentation, CREATE is seen as being used actively by students themselves on a daily basis, underpinning everything they do (A Guide for Studio Schools Staff). This is most strongly emphasised in the CREATE Framework itself, which directly addresses the students: for example, 'you will use your skills in lots of different environments, such as school, the workplace, with your friends and family and in the local community and wider world' (CREATE 2011).

Embedded in the CREATE Framework, therefore, is a model of skills development that places individual student agency at its heart. It requires students to engage with the framework in an in-depth and ongoing manner, supported by Personal Coaches, Learning Coaches and Employers, all of whom must have a detailed understanding of it. Given the importance

placed on this kind of rich, in-depth engagement with CREATE from all the key stakeholders, there is a need to examine how this aspiration is being implemented in practice, the different ways in which the stakeholders actually engage with the framework, and what different kinds of engagement may mean for skills development. Aspects of this were included in the survey and, as will be described in more depth below, issues around student agency, the ways students are introduced to and engage with CREATE, and the depth of wider stakeholder engagement were seen to be critical issues in the case studies.

Leadership

Although the majority of the documentation around CREATE did not deal explicitly with the issue of leadership, the wider documents around governance and our wider experience highlighted the importance of having a strong leadership for implementing the Studio School model. This issue was emphasised in all the interviews and in all informal conversations we had with individuals working in the sector. They emphasised that the successful implementation of CREATE was fundamentally determined by the approach taken by the Principal. Strong direction from leaders was seen as leading to buy in from staff and employers, and was described as being linked with the degree of engagement that staff, students and employers had with CREATE.

However, one of our interviewees suggested that a number of principals were simply not interested in the Studio School model. Rather, they were using their leadership positions as stepping stones to further their careers and move to heading up larger schools[1]. The nature of the funding arrangement with the DfE meant that the defining characteristics of a Studio School, including the use of the CREATE framework, were not included in the funding documents. This means that principals have the flexibility to determine the extent to which they operate within the formal parameters of the Studio Schools model and engage with the CREATE Framework. As such, principals that may not have a strong interest in CREATE or the Studio Schools model are unlikely to develop a culture that is conducive to its successful implementation.

Our interviewees suggested that this issue could be exacerbated by two critical factors. Firstly, the speed with which a large number of Studio Schools were founded and opened meant that many struggled to recruit staff. According to our interviewees, this led to some Learning Coaches not only having limited experience with project-based learning or skills-based approaches, but actively opposing them. Without strong leadership, these attitudes went unchallenged and the innovative aspects of the Studio Schools model and the CREATE Framework inevitably were eroded or in some case dropped. Secondly, the interviewees and particularly the policy maker, stressed that the education system is inherently conservative

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[1] To a certain extent this perspective was potentially evidenced through the process of sending out the questionnaire, which highlighted a surprising amount of staffing change across the Studio Schools Network at principal level.

and cautious of change. Without a strong principal to drive change, there is always a tendency to revert back to the status quo and perceived safe ways of operating. According to one interviewee, this tendency to revert back to previous was of operating was for some schools emphasised by the Education Advisors, acting as liaison between the school and the DfE, who frequently advised principals to reduce project-based learning and focus on the core curriculum.

The issue of leadership highlights a range of important issues relating school culture, key stakeholders' attitudes to educational innovation, the core tenets of Studio Schools, and the CREATE Framework. Questions relating to these were included in the questionnaire, and are unpacked in more detail below through the real world examples of the case studies.

Phase 2: Questionnaire

As indicated in the methodology section, the questionnaire was sent to all 33 Studio Schools in the Studio Schools Network. This produced 21 responses from 14 schools. In each of the 14 schools, the questionnaire was completed by the principal apart from in one instance where it was only completed by the vice principal. Four schools provided multiple submissions. These additional responses came from different members of staff, the majority of whom had some role in the senior leadership team – head of sixth form, for example. The process of producing these 21 responses was very labour intensive and involved multiple emails and phone calls to the schools and direct conversations with the principals. However, this work highlighted an apparent fluidity of staff at the senior level, with many records across the Studio School Trust and individual schools' websites proving to be out of date. This relatively high turnover of staff is likely to be indicative of the complicated position Studio Schools occupy within the wider educational structure in the UK and also the pressures that some of them are under.

Analysis of the questionnaire responses was undertaken with the Schools themselves as the unit of analysis. Therefore, multiple responses from specific schools were analysed together to build up a more holistic picture of each school.

Overview of the data

Engagement with CREATE

From those schools that responded to the questionnaire, as indicated in Chart 1, representatives from five schools reported using CREATE 'all the time', nine schools reported using it 'some of the time', and three schools reported using it 'never'. It's important to note that three schools are represented twice within these data as, in these instances, multiple respondents diverged in their descriptions of how they engaged with CREATE.
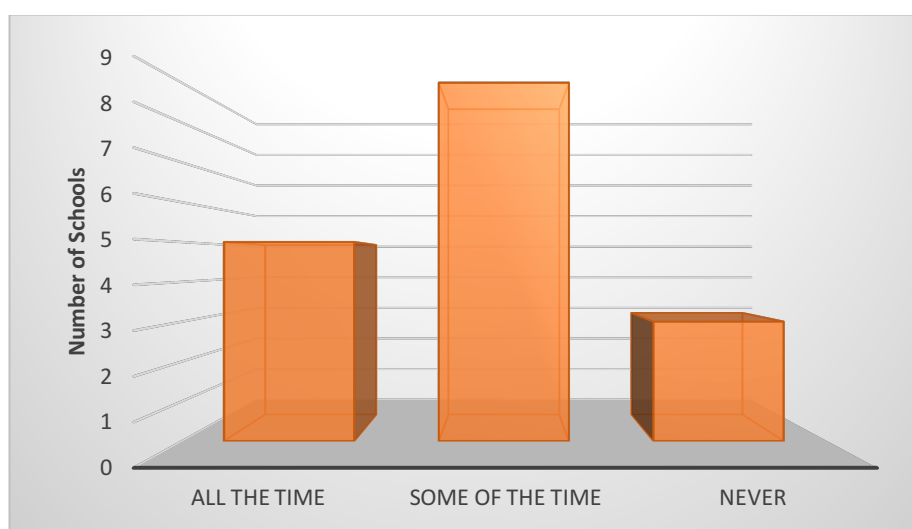

Figure 1 : Schools' Engagement With the CREATE Framework

Where schools indicated that they use CREATE 'all the time', they describe the framework being used in very similar ways to the original conceptualisation embedded in the documentation, as underpinning all school activity and being actively used to engage with employers and monitor progress in skills development. In one instance, the head teacher describes such rich engagement with CREATE that the framework is even represented physically through the decoration of the school buildings: 'The CREATE Framework is represented physically in the building, rooms are painted to reflect the nature of the subject and the CREATE skill with which they relate, there is a border on the walls that exemplifies the CREATE strands and students are asked to reflect on their CREATE skills'.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the largest proportion of schools reported using the CREATE Framework 'some of the time'. However, the kinds of engagement described in relation to this response ranged widely from descriptions of deeply embedded use ('we use the CREATE framework in all subjects making explicit links between what the students are learning and the skills needed in the wider world of work') to more superficial engagement with the framework ('General awareness around the school. [It is used for] conferences and personal development'). One school described using CREATE as a planning tool to underpin the selection of work to use with an alternative skills framework, PiXL Edge. Another school described using the tool to support young people's preparation for sporting events, as opposed to linking it with project-based work or placements with employers. This range of engagement and types of use, often quite different to the original conceptualisation of the Studio School model, with CREATE underpinning all school activity and linking project-based learning with employment placements, illustrates the inherent flexibility in both the model and framework.

Two of the three schools that indicated they never use CREATE suggested that having worked with it originally, found the framework too limiting, preferring to develop something themselves. Although limited in depth of description, the responses suggested that the reasons behind these decisions may have been related to the requirements of associated MATs or the institutional agency associated with tailoring a framework to the schools' specific contexts as much as they were related to the CREATE Framework itself. The third school that stated it never used the CREATE Framework, was a newer Studio School. Respondents suggested that the school had received insufficient support from the Studio Schools Trust to engage with CREATE and so had made the decision to develop its own framework based on its specific contextual and curriculum needs.

Alternative/ Additional Frameworks

Five schools indicated that they only used the CREATE framework; nine schools indicated that they used alternative/ additional frameworks. Of the five schools that indicated they use CREATE 'all the time', four used additional frameworks to support their work. The three schools that never used CREATE were using alternative frameworks. This suggests that even

those schools that were most engaged with the CREATE Framework felt the need to supplement this provision.
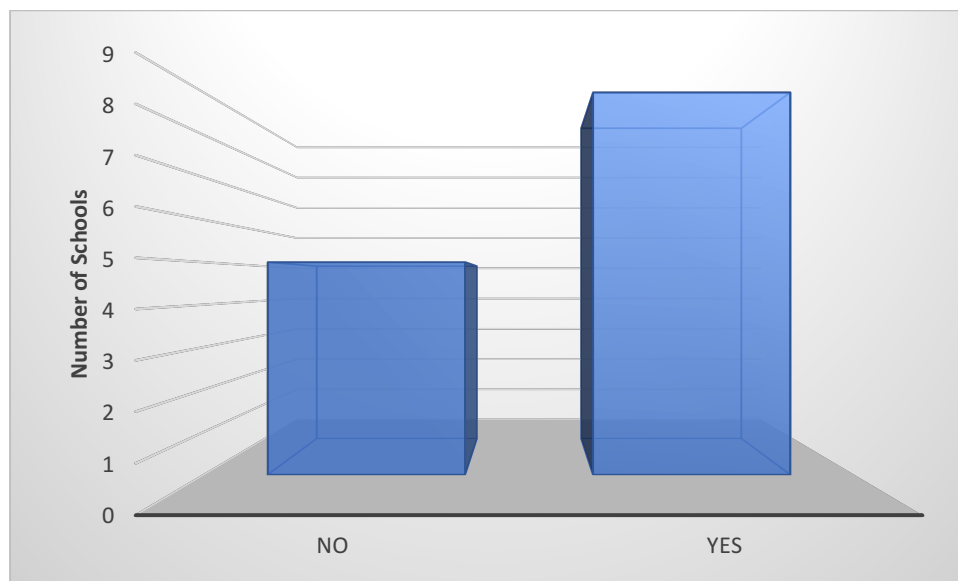
Figure 2 : Number Of Schools Using Alternative / Additional Skills Frameworks

A variety of skills frameworks were described in the responses of the questionnaire. Several schools had explicitly developed their own frameworks based on their curriculum needs, using the International Baccalaureate for example, or in partnership with their MAT (the Aspirations Employability Portfolio, for example). Other schools used externally developed frameworks: e.g. City and Guilds Employability Skills, PiXL Edge, and 'Ofsted Framework for Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare'. The reasons given for using these externally developed frameworks varied, but were often related to the larger bodies of curriculum and professional support that were associated with them and the larger school networks (at both institutional and individual teacher levels) that could be turned to for support.

Staffing Structures

One of the key issues highlighted in Phase 1 was the importance of placed upon the innovative staffing structure of the Studio Schools model for the successful implementation of the CREATE Framework. This emphasised the need for Learning Coaches and Personal Coaches to be separate roles, working together to support CREATE through project-based learning and employment placements. Our initial work had suggested that in many schools the roles were combined and Learning Coaches were doing the work of Personal Coaches alongside their own teaching work. The questionnaire, therefore, included a section on this issue.

As indicated in Chart 3, six schools maintained separate Learning and Personal Coach roles, while five schools combined the roles. Three schools didn't respond to this question, which may suggest that they didn't understand it or are simply not providing any form of personal coaching (an option that hadn't been included in the questionnaire). Broadly speaking, the

schools that had separate Personal Coaches and Learning Coaches corresponded with those that were more fully engaging with the CREATE Framework. This is unsurprising, but highlights the connection between the ways in which schools engage with the CREATE Framework and the degree to which they have bought into the original conceptualisation of the Studio Schools model. In many ways this emphasises the holistic nature of the original vision of Studio Schools in which all distinctive aspects (CREATE, staffing structure, project-based learning etc) act together to provide a distinctive model of education. As such, any analysis of the CREATE Framework must take into account a wider analysis of the Studio Schools model as a whole.
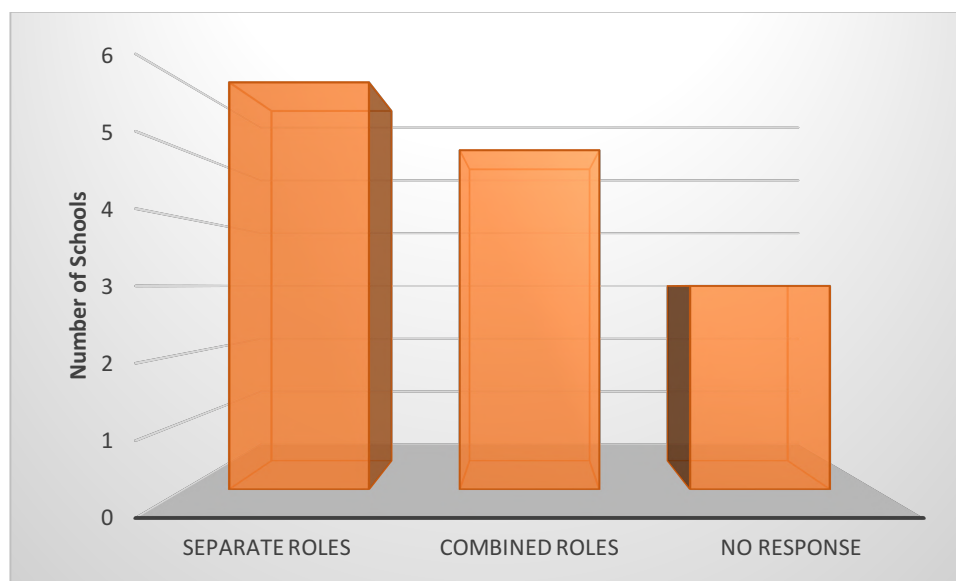
Figure 3 : Structure of Personal Coaches and Learning Coaches

Who Engages with CREATE

One of the key visions for the use of CREATE outlined in Phase 1 was the way in which different stakeholders engaged with the framework. The importance of employers working with CREATE was emphasised, but more important was students taking an active and agentic role in using CREATE both to develop and measure their employment skills. As shown in Chart 4, employer engagement with the CREATE Framework was limited with the employment partners in the majority of the responding schools having no or little engagement with CREATE. Although six schools stated that their students 'somewhat' engaged with CREATE and one school reported that its students engaged to 'a great extent', none of the schools appeared to describe the active and agentic student ownership of the framework that appeared to be embedded within the documents.
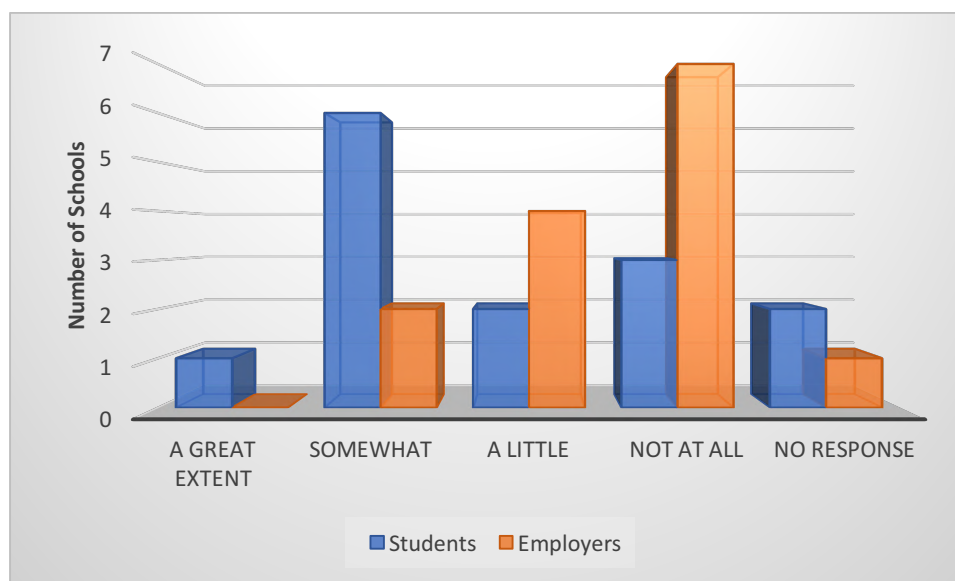
Figure 4 : Student and Employers Enagement with the CREATE framework

This may suggest that the aspirations for the framework were overly ambitious and, once faced with the messy realities of real life schools, directly involving employers and students in the implementation of CREATE proved too complex. As one of the Trustees from the Studio Schools Trust stated, 'no battle plan is complete until it's met the enemy!'

The data from the questionnaire suggest a significant diversity of approaches to the Studio School model and ways in which the CREATE framework is conceptualised and operationalised across the Studio Schools Network. Underpinning this are a wide range of issues and challenges which are further discussed in the case studies.

Phase 3: In Depth Case Studies

Using the analysis of the questionnaire data, five schools were selected for in-depth case studies. As indicated above in the Methodology section, these case studies focused on understanding the different ways in which schools and key stakeholders within them engaged with the CREATE Framework and the different ways they drew upon additional or alternative skills frameworks. These case studies map the journeys the schools have undertaken to date and chart their future direction of travel.

Each of the case study schools was unique with a different structure, ethos, and approaches to the Studio Schools model and CREATE. Therefore, rather than attempt to apply an overarching and limiting framework to the presentation of the data, we have taken the methodological choice to write each case up in a way that reflects the distinctive nature of the schools and the data. This has enabled us to highlight critical points in each case, all of which will be dealt holistically through the cross-case analysis in the discussion section – 'What we have learned about and from CREATE'.

Case Study 1: Studio School Zorya

Studio School Zorya is a relatively established Studio School, having opened its doors in 2014. The school is located in a small market town in the Midlands and shares its grounds with another academy together with which it forms the MAT. Despite having been open for almost four years now, the school is undersubscribed, with only 74 students on roll in 2017/18. The school's specialisms include engineering, business, and sport. The school when it first opened specialised only in engineering business in response to the needs set out by the skills shortages identified by the Local Enterprise Partnership. The school had considered opening a third specialism of hospitality and leisure as that is what made sense for the local area but based on feedback from the LEP and recognising the demand from students, they chose to focus on sport as the third specialism. School leadership recognised early on that the school 'wasn't going to be everything for all people' (Zorya SLT1), and worked to maintain a curriculum focus that suited the employability outcomes they wanted. The school has a robust work placement program in place for its students, with a dedicated Business Links Manager who has worked with leadership to bring 170 companies on board to offer students one-off or more sustained work placements. Work experience is heavily integrated into the curriculum, and teaching is structured around this emphasis (Zorya Teacher2). In recognition of their work on this, Studio School Zorya is the only school in the country to have been awarded a Fair Train Gold accreditation, which is an Ofsted and DfE standard for work placements. The Studio School also has a coaching model in place that 'forms the core of their [our] ethos' (Zorya SLT2), with coaches working not just with students, but also with parents and industrial partners.

Creating and maintaining the ethos of Studio School Zorya

A large part of our conversation with leadership at Studio School Zorya was about how they had deliberately worked to build the ethos of a Studio School and its elements from 'the very point of application'(Zorya SLT1) through its temporary homes to where it is today. Studio School Zorya has been designed to 'feel like a primary school' in that leadership wants parents and students to feel like they are part of a large family. They also aim to 'be a true part of the community' in that whichever projects are undertaken by the school, they need to give back to the community in some form. Another core part of the school's ethos is that of creating a 'true parity of esteem' (Zorya SLT1) which has been articulated in two ways:

1. school leadership wanted to create an environment where students felt comfortable talking and working with one another irrespective of their age or backgrounds, creating parity amongst year groups, and
2. school leadership wanted there to be no difference in employment or higher education outcomes based on whether students took A-Levels or technical qualification. This meant that school leadership has invested time and money on ensuring that the technical qualifications and associated teaching and work placements offer for students on the applied route are of top quality.

Two members of the SLT have been instrumental in co-creating and enacting the vision for Studio School Zorya. In their previous employment, both members had been actively involved as specialist teachers in the development of the 14-19 Diplomas for the region, working hard to develop meaningful connections with the companies in the area to co-deliver courses (Zorya SLT2) in engineering and business. Being part of the lead college in developing the consortium for Diplomas had given both members of the SLT an appreciation for the integrated model that the Diplomas espoused, where higher qualifications could be offered to students either at schools or colleges, allowing the consortium to harness its expertise to the full extent.

> *It really was an integrated model. And again, lots of my thinking when we were thinking about the studio school was developed from what we did with the diplomas. But again, something that worked really, really well for us, the kids were getting fantastic qualifications.* (Zorya SLT1)

This integrated model of learning is something that Senior Leadership felt the Studio School model tried to do as well, and combined with the ethos of the CREATE framework, the two felt that this model would be the way forward for a new school in the region (after plans for the 14-19 Diplomas fell through). The CREATE framework, for them, echoed the PLTS (Personal Learning and Thinking Skills) that had been a core part of the Diplomas; an element that both leaders knew had crucial employer buy-in. Both were also aware that there was an appetite amongst employers in the area for a substitute for the ill-fated Birmingham Baccalaureate (a certificate awarded to students in recognition of employability skills developed on projects and qualifications designed by employers), which had also suffered due to funding cuts. They recognised that the CREATE framework would help build that ethos of embedded employability skills that employers in the area were searching for, and so 'it became one of the underpinning forces' for the ethos of the school (Zorya SLT2).

> *that the CREATE framework, if students left us with evidence of, perhaps not mastery, but certainly exposure and some confidence in each of those skills, then that would stand them in good stead in terms of their employability. (Zorya SLT2)*

Both members of senior leadership were steadfast in their belief that this was a school that wasn't going to be for everyone, and so actively chose to not make any curricular decisions that were driven by accountability measures such as the EBacc. They knew that their industrial partners had bought into the idea of the Studio Schools based on the strategic decisions around specialisms and never wanted to dilute that trust. Having listened to the needs of their industrial partners , for example, the SLT embraced the flexibility of curriculum provided to Studio Schools, and convinced the school governors that all students in KS4 would take the BTEC Award in Business , irrespective of whether they were a business studies student or not; this was done so that all students would have 'at least an understanding of business' (Zorya SLT1) when they went to work. This further built on the ethos of the school

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of creating parity of esteem for the applied qualifications as senior leadership wanted to (and still continue to) challenge the notion that 'people think employability, that's, like, for the lower ability, thinking that other people never ever go to work, but employability is for every single person, it seems to me, and you have to make them more employable' (Zorya SLT2).

Senior leadership also recognised that investing in the coaching model and intensive pastoral support is important, and something they were (and currently are) unwilling to compromise on. They understood that there was a large appetite in their town for a small school and the pastoral environment that comes with it, and that parents wanted to send their children 'irrespective of the specialisms, it's a small school, I don't really care what you teach, it's a small school, they go ''yes, yes, they go to work, yes, yes, of course they do a long day''. So, they're fixated, I think, on small school and the pastoral support' (Zorya SLT2).

There are only 4 full time teaching staff at the school, alongside 2 coaches, and a business links developer. This has been driven by two factors :
1. Senior Leadership had wanted to ensure that the staff they hired truly bought into the ethos of the school , and would be willing to integrate in the curriculum , and
2. The school is part of a very small MAT, and so staffing resources for some subjects that are not the specialist subjects are shared across the two schools. The staff and students all mingle and eat with one another over lunch breaks, creating a more informal atmosphere than at other schools – reinforcing the idea of creating a 'family feel' in the school. All the staff employed firmly believed in either the concept of a small school or that the Studio School provided them with the opportunity to 'do work and education and tie it all together' (Zorya Teacher2).

CREATE's place in the school

Studio School Zorya is an example of a Studio School where the CREATE framework underpins the ethos and activities of the school and has done so from the very inception of the school. The school has made deliberate choices to make CREATE 'live in the building' (Zorya SLT1) to the largest extent as possible. CREATE is represented physically through not only PowerPoints and posters, but also from the building's walls themselves. Each room that students are in has one wall that is dedicated to the CREATE framework skills, almost making the students live and breathe CREATE. Leadership are of the belief that it was explicit measures such as these that has allowed students, teachers, parents and employers alike, to not only be aware of the framework at all times, but also make it part of the everyday language of the school.

> it is one of those things that gets ... there are some explicit references to it. Very often, because I think the staff have been here from the start, the investment, the work that we put into making create part of their thinking, is implicit now. It just happens because that is what people are doing. (Zorya SLT1)

The two biggest ways in which Studio School Zorya attempts to develop the skills in the CREATE

framework is through an investment in a robust coaching model, and through the creation of their bespoke CREATE Passport. Leadership has been keen to ensure that the development of these skills is so embedded in everything that they did, that students wouldn't even realise it was happening, rather than it being an 'artificial, teacher-led framework' (Zorya SLT1).

> *What we developed, and this is what Zorya Coach1 will hopefully talk you through, is this thing called Create Passport. The idea being when you graduate from us, it's your passport to employment or your passport to university. In there you have a record of what you achieved while you've been with us. So, for communicating, it might be that you were involved in some meetings in the work placement. You take your CREATE Passport along with you, and your industrial partner signs that off. It is not us, what do we know.* (Zorya SLT1)

Students are introduced to the CREATE framework through their coaching sessions, which last for 15-20 minutes per week per student. This is where they work on their CREATE Passports as well. Created by the Personal Coaches and based on documentation obtained from military training courses, the CREATE Passport is a visual representation of the skills of the CREATE framework and is a written record of the goals that students set themselves on a weekly, termly and yearly basis. It also includes information on building a student's resume, and has space for students' reflections from their work experiences. The goals students agree with the coaches always link back to the CREATE framework, for example, if a student sets themself as small a goal of getting in touch with a potential employer about a work experience opportunity, then that would be linked back to the Communication skill in discussions with coaches (Zorya Coach). The coaches' objective is to ultimately to move students to a point where these small goals would build up to represent their aspirations for what they wanted to be in adult life. There was a recognition amongst the Personal Coaches that when students first come in there's a lot more mentoring and pastoral care that is given by them, but soon it turns into a 'fairly robust coaching model' (Zorya SLT2). The coaches work weekly with students to move them from a coach-directed goal setting to student self-directed goal setting to make the improvements that they feel they might need- making the students the true owners of the CREATE framework.

> *It's all about baby steps, and so every single target that the students set themselves, it's coded against CREATE, so that's going to be C target and not our target, we never get them to make more than two, they're just not going to remember.* (Zorya Coach2)

The CREATE Passport is not just about capturing goals, but also about understanding the value of the work experiences that the students were involved in. The Passport allows a capturing of the record of the work that they have done with employers, but also allows for a reflection of the skills that they have developed as a part of that work. Employers are involved in this process such that they are required to sign off on not only the work but also on the reflection of the skills developed, giving the student a real sense of ownership of the Passport and an

understanding of the skills they develop at work could and can relate back to the CREATE framework. As students move through their school years, all their activities and skills are captured in this manner, and when they graduate from school they are handed a laminated version of the Passport to take with to employment or on to higher education. The Personal Coaches and senior leadership all share the thinking that in using the CREATE Passport in this manner, students were not only becoming the true owners of their own skills development but were also gaining an awareness that one needs more than just qualifications to succeed in the world of work;

> *Some skills I don't think you can teach, so it is just learning about them as a person which is why we wanted to identify, or from an employer's perspective, wants to be able to say, "oh right, this is who you are, this is what you are good at.* (Zorya Coach1)

Personal Coaches spend time with students in KS4 delivering occasional lessons on CREATE, whereas for the students in KS5, it is more loosely introduced through the PSHE syllabus, to encourage students to think and relate the ideas of the framework to their everday activities;

> *they have PSHE lessons in which loosely covers some of these, so you talk about subjects that are through the PSHE syllabus, but you'd have to get them thinking about stuff for emotional intelligence, because you get them to relate and think. So there are connections to this, but it's not explicitly 'this is now CREATE, this is this from CREATE'. It's very much embedded.* (Zorya Teacher2)

This emphasis on the Coaching model has been reflected in Ofsted's inspection of the school in 2017. The personal development of pupils was highlighted as outstanding, with inspectors emphasizing the culture that the school leaders had established at the school one of the main reasons.

As can be seen from the discussion above, CREATE at Studio School Zorya lives very much in the domain of the Personal Coaches. The coaching staff understand this role is very much about guiding students on a journey of skills development but find themselves being pulled towards issues related to mental health and safeguarding. Coaching staff are cognizant of this and work to re-allocate time between them. This ensures that one member of the coaching team is always focused on coaching only to protect that developmental time with the students.

> *We have found there are lot of mental health issues and safeguarding issues this year. Personal Coach1 has been busy and almost taken on a pastoral manager kind of position with what we have found, and it has been difficult. Therefore, I have to take all of the coaching on, because someone has to go that.* (Personal Coach 2)

The teaching staff that we interviewed, whilst aware of the CREATE framework did not engage with it in the same manner as the Personal Coaches. That said, during our interviews, the teachers indicated that being a part of this research study had encouraged them to reflect on their work and how it tied to the CREATE framework. They realised that even though they rarely mentioned the CREATE framework explicitly, the way their qualifications were structured meant that there was significant

overlap between the behaviours that their students had to demonstrate in class with the skills outlined in CREATE.

> *everything we do, it's there, but we don't actively go out and say we've got to hit that, but I can tell you here and now, we can fill every one of those little pockets in some format. It's embedded in what we do.So, as I say, I can pull to any particular piece of work, but I can pull out on various bits, units and things like that, and various bits of work that I would do that would slot into these elements of the CREATE framework.* (Zorya Teacher1)

The times that they would engage with the CREATE framework was during student induction days, where they would set students little projects to give them the opportunity to immerse themselves in the school. These projects are designed to bring students from the three specialisms together and are built on the elements of the CREATE framework. After these days though, their engagement with any explicit reference to CREATE diminishes, with an increased reliance on the Personal Coaches to work on these skills with students.

The degree of use of the CREATE framework with employers is mixed and dependent on the internal ethos of the employers themselves. In some instances, the language of the CREATE framework is one that has helped the school engage with the employers, particularly with the development of work experiences for students; in other instances the entire CREATE framework has been embraced by employers and is even used as part of their own training for those employees involved in the work experience offer. The assessment of skills developed in the workplace involves no engagement with the employers in terms of the CREATE language – that very much remains in the domain of students, who reflect on their work and try to link back to CREATE as part of the CREATE Passport.

> *But we definitely look at the CREATE framework and the skills, because this is all linked to how you need to be in the workplace, so there is that link there, yes. So we do talk about the skills they need to be developing while they're out at work experience* (Zorya Business Links Developer)

How do students view CREATE?

During our interviews with students, it became clear that their interaction with the CREATE framework had been both through the coaching sessions and from their work experiences. Both the students interviewed had been at the school since its beginning and had had multiple work experiences at a range of small and large companies. Both had immersed themselves in their coaching sessions to learn about the CREATE skills and had set targets towards their own development.

> *It's more about employability rather than just having qualifications. You also have these extra set of skills or this framework that you can … so, for the communication, it helps you to talk to others, because you might be lacking in one of the areas, and you can set targets every week in that goal area, and work on it.* (Zorya Student1)

Students also spoke about how they were able to relate the CREATE framework to their work experience and found the process of maintaining a diary to reflect on the skills they developed at work a useful process. Where they would not explicitly speak with their employers about the CREATE framework, they found that when employers had to sign off on their reflections, it was almost like an endorsement of their belief in their own employability skills, which would only encourage them further. On completing their work experiences, they had found it helpful to try and relate back to the CREATE framework, therefore allowing them to gain an appreciation for why they were actually working on learning about and developing these extra skills outside of their qualifications.

> *I can use some of the CREATE sections, some of the CREATE framework, in my work experience……. I would definitely say the work experiences are useful, because, otherwise, I wouldn't know how to behave at work.* (Zorya Student 1)

The students at Studio School Zorya come close to the envisioned Studio School model in that they seemed to be the masters of their own CREATE journeys, scheduling coaching as and when they needed, and working with the coaches to identify areas of improvement, ultimately being responsible for their development themselves.

Training on the CREATE framework

The Studio School Trust had provided initial training on the CREATE framework, with both the Coaching team and teaching staff having attended training at Manchester. This occurred at the time when the school had just opened, which meant that the school had not received training from the Trust or the newly formed network in four years. The materials for tracking and measuring skills provided by the Trust had proved unfit for purpose for Studio School Zorya, which is why the CREATE Passport had been developed by the coaching staff. All the developmental and improvement work that is done on the CREATE Passport is shared between the coaching staff and the business links manager, with very little in-house training deployed to whole staff.

School trajectory

During our discussions with the staff at school, it was interesting to see that staff could sense 'the winds of change coming' (Zorya SLT2) and felt their vulnerability in being the smaller school of a small MAT, as well as being an undersubscribed Studio School. Senior leadership were reflective in their discussion with the research team that they were now in a situation where they had struggled to increase their student roll due to a variety of factors such as bad press around Studio Schools, factually incorrect information published on their Progress 8 measures, and the battle with 'small town thinking' (Zorya SLT1) of parents. With increasing pressures related to funding, senior leadership was aware that the MAT was wanting to institute changes such as bringing students from the other school into the MAT which they felt would 'destroy the ethos of the small school' (Zoray SLT2) and make it harder for the

school to provide the integrated learning model they had developed. School leadership was also wary that Studio Schools would suffer the same fate as the 'specialist schools and the diplomas' (Zorya SLT1), which would mean that all the work that they had done to develop this integrated curriculum and with employers would fall to the wayside. These conversations are particularly insightful, as since our interviews, both leaders have left the school (one due to funding decisions by the MAT), signalling a change in the MAT's view of how the Studio School should function.

Case Study 2: Studio School Una

Studio School Una is an established Studio School, having opened in 2013. Located in an industrial town in the West Midlands of England, the school is part of a five-school strong MAT. The Principal from the Studio School not only sits on the Executive Team for the MAT but is part of the founding team for the MAT in the area, giving the school 'influence' (Una SLT 1) and 'complete parity with every other school' in the MAT (Una SLT1). Having achieved an influential position in the MAT, the school has championed the creation of an alternative provision school, partly to fulfil an unmet need in the area, and partly to articulate the difference between a Studio School and an alternative provider to the community; something that has been a barrier for the Studio School in terms of recruitment. This move is symbolic of Senior Leadership's emphasis on creating an understanding of the Studio School's branding and ethos not only in the local area, but also nationally, as it has been confusing for some stakeholders;

> *Studio Schools frustratingly keep on being thought of as being Alternative Provision (AP) Schools and they are not but do you know what, Personal Coaches and the work with employers is perfect for AP so I'm going to take this model and I'm going to make it work in AP and that will also help me redefine what Una Studio School is because it won't be confused with being that* (Una SLT1)

The school building is small, however, there are plans for expansion, and they do share facilities with some of the sponsors of the school. That said, the school does have the electronic equipment and facilities for students to flex their interest in TV production or radio; the school also has a performance arts space that provides an area for some of the students taking Creative subjects. Those involved in dance or singing or a particular instrument usually go to other studios to receive the bespoke training that they would need. Students at the school are largely from the local area and the school is close to fully subscribed, a feature unique to the Studio School network. Being set up in the Midlands, Studio School Una has focused on providing employment outcomes for young people in the area in the Digital and Creative Industries, which are the largest growing industries in the area.

> *National context is really important in terms of sector skills for the purpose of a Studio School. We wanted to specialise in creative industries……. in terms of the national remit and the gaps around shortages, and in demand industry sectors, economic growth so really at the national level that was a driver for us. Obviously looking at the local level in terms of the breadth of curriculum available. As SLT 3 just said, in terms of specialising in the arts there was really a gap in the market in terms of that and the other one was really picking up where EBacc loses out.* (Una SLT2)

The school is actually one of the first fifteen schools selected to be a T-level pioneer for the new digital Technical Level qualification. Studio School Una is also currently expanding its

offerings to include Health and Social Care, to meet the future demands of industry in the area (as defined by the Local Enterprise Partnership), keeping in line with its self-defined purpose as a school. It is important to note that Studio School Una employs a coaching model as originally envisioned in the Studio School model, where staff have been hired specifically as Personal Coaches to develop the Pastoral Curriculum and provide the students at the school with coaching 'at least every three weeks' (Una Personal Coach2). The CREATE framework is not used explicitly with employers, and there are limited paid work experience opportunities available for students at the school. That said, employers do get involved in projects within the school that allows students to build skills that they may otherwise in their industrial experiences.

CREATE gone full circle

As described by the SLT at Studio School Una, the CREATE framework and its use has come full circle in the five years of the school being open in that there was high engagement with the framework across the school at its opening, followed by a move to CREATE being the domain of Personal Coaches only, to a recognition for a need to move back to whole school engagement through an implicit embedding of the framework's key elements in the technical qualifications. This move away from CREATE from a whole school culture is evident from both newer teachers and students who had not been part of the school's initial journey.

> *So that Teachers that were there from 2013 or even 2014 it was part of their DNA, but then staff I recruited in 2015/2016, I remember being horrified one INSET day close to Christmas, talking about CREATEand one of the staff said 'sorry what Is that'? I'm like how has that happened?* (Una SLT1)

This cyclic description of the CREATE framework is linked to the journey that the Studio School and its leadership have taken in steering Studio School Una through identifying and embracing its own unique identity.

> *So, its [CREATE framework] been on a journey and I think we are reconnecting with it right now.* (Una SLT1)

The initial life of CREATE

When it first opened, Studio School Una had attempted to implement the Studio School model (and subsequently, the CREATE framework) in the original form that had been envisioned by the Studio School Trust. All subjects offered were taught through project-based learning, and all lessons were mapped to the different elements of the CREATE framework (Una SLT1) using its own special scheme of work. At the time, members of staff developed and delivered 'CREATE lessons where every member of staff took a skill, and had to deliver an hour session on it, for instance' (Una SLT3). Three of the students we interviewed had experienced this explicit deployment of the CREATE framework recalled feeling that CREATE

was 'part of every lesson' (Una Student2) and was 'like the school's motto' (Una Student1). At this time the school also recognized that the CREATE framework provided a unique selling point for the school as it 'increased [the school's] credibility' with both students and parents who could 'relate to the fact that [the school has] a framework with which to help build soft skills, which they know that they need to succeed in life' (Una Personal Coach1).

The re-positioning of the CREATE framework

Half-way through the first school year however, Studio School Una pivoted in its journey of project based learning to adopt a more traditional approach to qualifications, and chose to heavily invest in the coaching staff at the school, making the personal coaches 'the custodians and drivers of not just the mapping but the showing the kids how and why they are developing these CREATE skills' (Una SLT1). This move was attributed to the belief held by school leadership that neither the project-based learning nor the CREATE framework would help the school to 'illustrate it's progress to Ofsted or to the DfE' (Una SLT1), particularly with regards to the EBacc requirements. The school moved from its focus on those qualifications that had employability outcomes to include Humanities, Geography, and more science, not just to complement the vocational qualifications, but 'more science for the EBacc's sake' (Una SLT1) and they also introduced languages. As the staff moved towards this increased curriculum, and the increasing demands of teaching, CREATE moved solely into the domain of the Personal Coaches. For a small school of 300 students, 3 and half FTE were dedicated to personal coaching and the development of CREATE skills was all managed through them. The coaching staff would meet with students in one to one sessions as often as they could, working on one or two areas of the CREATE framework with the students.

In our interviews with the coaching staff, one obvious tension that was highlighted was whether the CREATE framework itself was fit-for-purpose as a coaching model. Where the CREATE framework had initially been adopted en masse, the arrival of a Personal Coach who had run his own coaching business had prompted a period of reflection from the coaching staff. Both the Personal Coaches felt that the coaching at the school felt more like mentoring, and pastoral care, with the Coaches being the owners of the CREATE framework; a model that was not at all like what the coach felt were true coaching models. Both the Coaches however, did recognize that it would be almost impossible to implement a pure coaching model in a school which such a diverse intake of students. Not all students came from a background that meant they had the motivation or the understanding to take ownership of their skills development, and so the Coaches have had to perfect a delicate balance between guiding students towards real coaching and providing them with the support they needed in terms of mental health or guidance.

> *I think mentoring has it's its role in its place but coaching does as well and I think the difference is ownership. If they uncover things for themselves and then they see, we have to realistic within our role in the school.* (Una Coach 1)

Students are introduced to CREATE at introduction evening, and then again when they start school. It is when they have one on one sessions with one of the Coaches that they are introduced to the framework in depth. The Coaches recognized that the framework in its entirety might be too much for all students to take in, and so they pick one or two areas that they feel that the student may want to work on. After this process begins, students take the CREATE Assessment Tool every quarter to assess with their Coaches just how much progress they were making on the development of their target areas. Both the Coaches were critical of the Assessment tool as each skill had many statements associated with it that a student would have to digest and then assess themselves against. The Coaches found themselves having to dilute the language of the statements or explain the statements to the students which took away the sense of ownership that the tool was actually meant to develop in the students as there was more 'hand-holding than necessary' (Una Personal Coach1). There was clear tension highlighted between the two Coaches, where one had completely bought into the ethos and language of the framework from the very beginning, whereas the other had taken a while to be convinced that CREATE would be a valuable coaching tool. Both Coaches did agree though the Assessment Tool felt bulky and the language felt more tailored to employers, rather than to students. The areas covered by the framework itself however were 'great' (Una Coach1) and allowed them to be flexible in their coaching vs pastoral role with students.

> *I think in reality it took me probably a good 12 if not 18 months to buy into CREATE in all honesty but now that I have personally, and seeing the needs and the demands of the school and how we have to justify our existence I would say that we are heading more into CREATE rather than away from it because it certain has great value.*

It is interesting to note that the students who were newer to the school were less able to talk about their coaching sessions in terms of the CREATE framework. They knew what the framework was, but were unable to make the links as to how the areas they had been set as targets by their coaches would eventually link back to employment. A potential reason for this is that the KS4 students had not had any work experience yet, nor had they engaged in any large projects that would have utilised these skills.

Another tension that was highlighted in our interviews was that with the heavy investment in coaching, teaching staff were less invested in understanding and engaging with the framework, resulting in a mixed response from staff to the time that was actually spent on the CREATE framework and coaching. The coaches did recognize though that the pressures of the curriculum made it hard for the teachers to engage with the CREATE framework as much as the coaches would have liked them to, however, felt that there was a growing understanding that coaches provide value to the students lives and skills development.

We have had a mixed response and reaction to coaching in general. Some buy into and are very supportive. Some have been resistant to it, although I think it's interesting that some of those who have been resistant to it recently have left the school but towards the end started to value it more than they did at the beginning (Una Coach1)

The future of CREATE

Senior Leadership expressed distress that new staff at the school had become so disconnected from the CREATE framework that they didn't even know of its existence. Knowing this was driven by the deliberate decisions made on coaching, the principal wanted to ensure that CREATE was once again embraced by all at the school. That said, they were not willing to take away from curriculum time, as CREATE was 'not a curriculum, it was a framework through which progress beyond academic outcomes can be demonstrated' (Una SLT1). The school is also deliberately making decisions that are not driven by external requirements such as the EBacc and is choosing to re-focus its energy on the technical and vocational qualifications on offer at the school. For example, students are no longer required to take a language, and science is more closely linked to the technical specialism. The school is now moving towards a scenario where project-based learning will be emphasized through the technical and vocational qualifications, allowing teachers to weave in elements of the CREATE framework quite smoothly, creating an implicit interaction for students, and re-engagement of the staff with the skills. As staff themselves identified, the vocational qualifications leant themselves quite well to implicitly building CREATE skills (Una Teacher1), which would allow an easy building of the skills without having another framework front and centre with students.

No, absolutely not and I think to be honest if we did do that, if we put it forward in that sense I do actually think that in some cases you'd disengage the Student because again it's another framework in front of them. I think the framework for Teachers as criteria, if you like, or as something to use to assess whether or not a Student is working towards employability skills is fantastic but as a Student model not necessarily so (Una SLT4)

The school is not looking to move to project-based learning en masse in order to teach the core subjects, but is evaluating ways in which it could deliver real world projects in the technical specialisms that would help students tackle gaps in their core subjects as well (Una SLT3). The idea therefore moving forward is to have coaching work hand-in-hand with project-based learning, as senior leadership hold the belief that it is only the combination of the two that can hit all the different elements of CREATE.

No matter how innovative I am with the Technical Vocational areas they are not teaching emotional intelligence. But the Personal Coaches are brilliant in terms of that challenge and that's why you can't do CREATE without PBL, and you can't do PBL without Personal Coaches (Una SLT1)

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In plotting the future of CREATE, senior leadership also feel that the framework and its language needs re-visiting, as some of it felt out of date, and not necessarily fit for purpose for the millennial generation (Una SLT 3). Some staff expressed a need to challenge Studio School leadership to truly understand what types of skills they wanted an employability framework like CREATE to instil in students (Una SLT4).

Training

Staff at Studio School Una had received initial training from the Studio School Trust when they first opened. It is also from the work from the Trust that they had received the CREATE Assessment Tool. However, conversations with the Trust, particularly with regards to the CREATE framework have been limited to none since then, and Personal Coaches have been left to grapple with the nuances of tweaking the CREATE framework for themselves. Senior leadership recognise that the lack of touch points with the CREATE framework has left some staff with no notion of the ethos that the framework tries to embed, and so are in the process of creating training that would be available to all staff.

Case Study 3: Studio School Coraline

Studio School Coraline is a relatively new Studio School (open for 2 years) located in a market town in South East England. This school is not only a part of the Studio School network but is also part of a large seven school MAT. More recently, the school has also joined the PiXL[2] Club, which is a group of schools across the country that have come together to learn from each other's best practices with the aim of raising school standards. The school has a very large catchment area and yet the school remains undersubscribed. Studio School Coraline opened in 2016 with two to three big employers on board as employer partners but school leadership has since found that their strongest partnerships and highest engagement comes from the smaller, more local businesses that have since joined their portfolio. Studio School Coraline has therefore expanded its employer network to include numerous smaller employers that may not have been absolutely relevant to their specialisms but would at least be able to offer meaningful work experiences to students. The building that the school is housed in is a purpose built, modern open building, with large open spaces to promote collaborative working amongst students. The building is constructed using sustainable materials, echoing the theme of the Studio School at the time of opening (sustainable constructions and logistics). These themes were selected to reflect skills need that had been identified by the Local Enterprise partnership. However, Studio School Coraline is currently transitioning away from its original (very specific) themes and moving towards a more generic theme of STEM thereby expanding their qualification offer to better suit the needs of the local community. The staff at Studio School Coraline is small, with teachers carrying multiple responsibilities in the running of the school. Staff, while aware of the CREATE framework, are not engaging with it currently, as leadership evaluates how they would like the employability framework to be framed at the school.

CREATE: An employability framework in transition

In its relatively short lifespan Studio School Coraline has experienced a transition not only in its themes and specialisms, but also in the implementation and development of the CREATE framework, and curriculum delivery. SLT at the Studio school recognise that CREATE was used at the school almost as a 'bolt-on' (Coraline SLT1) framework to the school ethos and wanted to move towards a more integrated culture of employability, and character skills throughout the school. Our conversations with them were very much focused on the changes that were governing this transition and the different voices that they were having to consider. This transition is representative of the different forces (internal and external) that can influence

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[2] PiXL Club – Partners in Excellence is a not-for-profit of over 1600 secondary schools, 500 sixth forms, 600 primary schools, and 75 providers of alternative education, spanning England and Wales. Started by Sir John Rowling, PiXL is a product of the school improvement program, the London Challenge, and started in 2005. Where PiXL was first set up to support schools to achieve academic excellence, it now has expanded its programs to the development of employability skills and character development. The network draws on the expertise of subject leaders and headteachers to build programs, almost a catering 'for the schools, by the schools' through its model of collaboration around leadership and shared resources.

Studio Schools more generally as they navigate the education landscape while trying to stay true to their original ethos and model. The student experience with the model is not as explicit as envisioned in the original Studio School model, due to a transition that will be described below. Due to this, the analysis of the CREATE framework has focused largely on the perspective from the senior leadership team (SLT) at Studio School Coraline, however student voice is represented later on in the discussion.

The initial life of CREATE

When it first opened, Studio School Coraline had adopted the CREATE framework as a means of talking about and deploying the idea of employability skills to students, parents, and employers alike. The CREATE framework provided a unique selling point for the school, as the framework and its ethos was deemed as 'common-sense', and 'something that they could all relate to in their daily jobs' (Coraline SLT1) by parents and employers alike. School leadership therefore recognised the marketability of the framework and used it as a tool for recruitment.

In its first year, the Studio School held a workshop on CREATE for its students to familiarise them with the core skills for their personal development. Following this, the CREATE framework was embedded in projects and activities that were run throughout the year to 'develop and drive skills that they [the students] otherwise didn't have' (Coraline SLT 3). By adopting different roles in these projects, students were able to focus on and develop various CREATE skills. As the school moved into its second year, there was less emphasis on projects, particularly for the Y11 and Y13 students as the emphasis shifted towards curriculum delivery for GCSEs and A levels. This year was also marked by the growth and development of an employability framework within the school's MAT, and an adoption of character development programs from the PiXL Club. All of these highlighted factors have had an influence on the life of the CREATE framework at Studio School Coraline, as will be discussed in more detail below

Influence of internal forces

Staffing structure

Studio School Coraline has a small staff and does not deploy the staffing structure recommended by the Studio School model of having coaching staff and teaching staff (learning coaches) to focus on the different elements of the Studio School model. With no 'assigned' staff member for CREATE, the delivery of the skills fell to all members of the staff. This was done via projects that were meant to not just develop these skills but also deliver some academic content. Although both staff and senior leadership recognised the value of this project based learning towards building student engagement and motivation, they realised that students were actually falling behind where they needed to be in their curriculum. As all staff had been involved in deploying the framework through these skills, the intense and sudden shift in focus meant that CREATE fell to the wayside. With no

specialised staff in the form of Personal Coaches, there was no explicit focus placed on CREATE, thereby creating a void in the Studio School model;

> *I actually think that's probably the best solution that we'd have, that underpins the coaching model, students sit at a chair and go 'Okay, well let's talk about, you know, what were your CREATE things to work on for the last few weeks? (Coraline SLT 3)*

Not having a coaching model from the start was a conscious decision (Studio School Coraline SLT1) made by school leadership. This was partly because they didn't have the funding for it, and partly due to a perceived need that the school needed to establish itself as a Studio School before attempting to embed a coaching model . That said, members of the SLT (Coraline SLT 3 and SLT4) intimated that it was the lack of the coaching structure that meant that fewer one on one conversations occurred which would have encouraged deeper self-reflection amongst the students; the way some of the skills were developed in students' lessons in tutorials made it feel like a superficial attempt.

Lack of resources and support from the Studio School Trust
Prior to opening, members of the Studio School Trust delivered training on the CREATE framework to staff at Studio School Coraline. This training helped the Studio School build its network (Coraline SLT3), providing examples of what had worked and what hadn't at other Studio Schools. This not only allowed the school to learn how members of the movement had been successful at the making CREATE the 'language of the school' (Coraline SLT1), but also to gain 'comfort' (Coraline SLT1) knowing that it was indeed possible to embed CREATE in a school's ethos. SLT members did reflect however, that whilst helpful, the training provided was inexorably linked to a coaching structure model making it unfit for purpose for Studio School Coraline that had in fact been given the advice to not invest in a coaching model from the get go. School leadership was also critical that there was a lack of resources made available from the Studio School Trust leaving the deployment of the framework and development of CREATE skills very much dependant on the 'skill of the individual teacher' (Coraline SLT 1).

Student vs employer language – what really works?
The members of the SLT were appreciative of the language that the CREATE framework provided to students as it was one that employers could easily relate to, as the 'actual language that it uses, and you know, with the CBI context … is very powerful' (Coraline SLT1). They also felt that helps equip students with the knowledge of how to talk about their accomplishments to employers, to highlight their skills outside their academic qualifications.

> *if you think of a CV, you've got 'how employable I am', you know, outside of specific qualifications. What CREATE does is it changes student skills into a language that you would use with an employer. I think it needs to go through*

While useful in conversations with employers, the SLT was cognizant that the language of CREATE was not fit for purpose for students to truly internalize the ethos and practise the reflexivity required to internalise these characteristics that would make them more employable. The language was clumsy, and aimed at employers, at times being too complex for students to understand, particularly those with no experience of work. They highlighted the need for a framework that has simpler language, making it easier to 'articulate… to students so that it kind of, it kind of fits' (Coraline SLT3), and is digestible by students, allowing them to become true owners of their skill development .

Influence of external forces

Influence of the MAT

Since its first year, the SLT has also felt the need to find /create an employability framework that 'for us was more usable within the framework of our schools' (Studio School Coraline SLT3). As mentioned before, Studio School Coraline functions as part of a larger MAT which has its own framework of employability skills deployed across the schools and colleges in the MAT. Leadership at Studio School Coraline has spent the last year linking the CREATE framework to that of the MAT, mapping characteristics, to allow a transition towards the MAT's language for employability skills. Part of this decision was also influenced by the lack of support provided by the Studio School Trust itself, in that there were no resources that sat behind the CREATE framework that would allow a meaningful assessment of the skills developed in students.

> *what we realised is we didn't have anything that sat behind that and people said 'Oh you coach them'. Well you know, what does that mean in practice?*
>
> *And that's where Studio Schools I think struggled because the realities of actually having people that knew what they're doing, that can consistently constantly engage with students and stuff, that was a problem.* (Coraline SLT1)

This move serves the school in two ways:
1. the school will now have better support and greater resources than with the Studio School Trust as the resources were being developed MAT wide , creating a community of users and
2. the school would now benefit from a universal employability language that would allow for MAT-level engagement with employers, increasing the school's reach within the local and national community (Coraline SLT4 and SLT2). The SLT highlights the need for a unified language to facilitate a better development of these employability skills that would then translate across not just the school, but also the MAT network.

> *The thing is, is that what [MAT employability framework] I think will do is something that's sort of easy to have as part of the sort of rhythm of the school, it hooks in to lots of other resources and material that we can have and it gives a sort of unified brand across [MAT] as well.*(Coraline SLT1)

Influence of PiXL

Studio School Coraline is a part of a pilot scheme run by the PiXL Club for a character/moral framework that looks to instil more kindness and a compassion for the other in its students. As the school navigates the program, the SLT is looking to integrate elements of this PiXL character framework with the MAT's employability framework based on common attributes. For leadership at Studio School Coraline, the PiXL character framework would form the backbone of the ethos they would like to inculcate at the school, with the MATs employability framework deployed to students on top of it.

> *the PiXL model has really helped us as a school and I think it's helping schools nationally to say, you know, 'We can't just be about results, we have got to be about the character of each individual person', you know, and we've got to model that as adults and we've got to have a culture in our school that embraces that*
> *(Coraline SLT2)*

Influence of inspection framework and accountability structures

The intensified focus on accountability via measures such as Progress 8 is highlighted as an obstacle in the school's desired focus on the development of employability skills. Members of the SLT brought to light the fact that it is difficult to assess the skills developed by CREATE, or any employability framework for that matter. The templates provided by the Studio School Trust had proved too 'clunky' (Coraline SLT1), moving the focus from self-reflection to unnecessary and repetitive reporting. This lack of assessment , and in turn ability to demonstrate to Ofsted the worth of the skills made it hard for school leadership to justify spending time on the framework;

> *The biggest resource stumbling block for me is time, particularly, you know, because this CREATE framework, however good it is, it's not a qualification that is recognised in, you know, performance tables and everything else so we've got to put our focus on that but then of course you run out of time to* (Coraline SLT4)

Did the students have anything to say about CREATE?

Unsurprisingly, given that school leadership was currently evaluating the nature of the CREATE framework the younger students interviewed in this study were unable to articulate what the acronym even stood for. Only one student was able to talk in uncertain terms about CREATE , and how in his first year (the first year of the school), the projects he had worked on had helped him develop skills that would be useful outside of school. What is interesting

to note however, is that these students had chosen to come to the Studio School to take advantage of the work experience offer, which in turn would allow them to build the employability skills espoused by the CREATE framework, and so there was indeed an appetite amongst them to learn and develop these skills.

So, where does CREATE sit today?

Studio School Coraline still intends to provide a set of employability skills to its students, as it is after all, one of the school's USPs. However, this framework will now align with the needs and language of the MAT and that of the PiXL framework much more closely than with the Studio School network. The school is also looking to implement the character framework which forms the foundation and sits in complement to the types of skills that the schools wants its students to leave with. The school is looking to use CREATE as a form of recognition; the intention is to create a school leaving certificate that is built on CREATE, tying the school loosely back in with the Studio School model. CREATE is no longer featured on school documentation, or on the school website, as the school continues to transform its identity to meet the demands of the many factors outlined above.

Case Study 4: Studio School Tigris

Studio School Tigris is a one of the older Studio Schools, having opened approximately six years ago. It is based in the South of England and has an increasing number of students, going up to 500 in 2018/19. This makes it is one of the larger schools within the Studio Schools Network. This is reflected in the number of staff employed at the school, 38 and a number of specialist coaches on casual and fixed term contracts. The school defines itself as 'focused on employability in the areas of Sport and Performing Arts'. Across all documentation Tigris emphasises that its core purpose is to 'make the pathway towards high performance more accessible for young athletes and performers', arguing that 'for too long athletes and performers have had to sacrifice their education in order to succeed in their chosen specialisms'.

These two specialisms sit alongside each other as an Athlete Academy and Stage and Screen, generally referred to within the school as 'sport and stage'. Across these two pathways KS4 students undertake GCSEs in English Language and Literature, Maths, Science, Business, a language option, and a Humanities option. Those in the Athlete Academy also take either GCSE PE or NCFE Level 2 Health and Fitness while also undertaking timetabled specialist training and strength conditioning. Those students in the Stage and Screen pathway also take a GCSE in either Music, Dance, and/ or Drama while also undertaking specialist technical and performance training. At KS5 students take either a BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma (in Sport or Performing Arts) or a BTEC Level 3 Diploma plus an academic A level, alongside three or four academic A Levels and specialist training.

The staff described something of a divide between the two pathways, with one member of staff likening them to different 'houses', with a competitive spirit between the two. In part, differences are rooted in the nature of the activities, but there is also a gender divide, as described by the vice principal: 'we're very heavy weighted in boys in sport, we're very heavily weighted in girls in stage and screen.' However, all the teachers agreed that working with these two groups of students, with different needs and aspirations, though challenging, is extremely rewarding. Similarly, the students described rewarding collaborations between the two pathways, with, for example, sports students helping with staged performances by moving the set during the shows.

At the school's inception, Tigris focused on health and social care and construction based on local labour market needs. However, according to members of the SLT and teachers who had been involved with the school from the beginning, the focus on sport and performing arts came about largely through chance, the failure of the original specialisms to attract sufficient student numbers, and existing student interests rather than local labour market needs. This has meant that the school is not and does not need to be fully embedded in the local

community and so has a very wide catchment area, attracting students with specific sporting or performing talents and interests.

Institutional Identity: The pull towards mainstream

As in other case studies, the school's engagement with CREATE was fundamentally rooted in all aspects of its engagement with the wider Studio Schools model and its broad approach to education, skills, and employment. In many ways, at the time of data collection, Tigris appeared to be in transition, moving from a clear Studio School model, set up under the previous administration, to something closer to mainstream education. This movement appeared to have been ongoing for the last few years, partially since the new principal started in 2015 (she had been seconded into the role to deal with a wide range of challenges that the school was facing at the time, particularly a significant deficit in the budget). A number of critical changes in the operation of the school were due to be fully cemented in the following academic year (2018/19).

This transition was perhaps most visible in the decision to change to the operating hours of the school. The principal described how Tigris had originally operated from 9-5, Monday to Thursday, and 9-4 on Fridays, in accordance with the Studio School model. However, in part due to budget restraints, these hours had been reduced so that, from 2018/19, the school's core operational hours will be consistent with mainstream schooling in the area. Similarly, the principal described moving away from the 14-19 year old model and expanding to a 13-19 year old model, starting the school at Year 9. Again, this change was to be formalised in the following academic year, but had been unofficially piloted in 2017/18, with approximately 50 students (increasing to 70 by July 2018) registered to a sister school being educated in Tigris. Members of the SLT implied that there was a hope to compete with other neighbouring schools and expand the school all the way to a mainstream 11-19 model, with intake at Year 7. This introduction of a Year 9, alongside a wider strategic decision to grow the school, has meant the small school ideal, embedded in the Studio School model, is also in the process of changing. The principal described how in 2015, there were 127 students, but since she took over management, this has grown to the point where there will now be more than 500 students in 2018/19.

Alongside this, the assistant vice-principal described the school's trajectory away from project based learning. He discussed how the Studio School model aimed to deliver the whole curriculum through project based learning, but described how a decision had been made at Tigris for each subject to be delivered by a subject specialist in order to meet the requirements of GCSE subjects:

> *I think probably about two years into it we realised that trying to deliver a range*
> *of the academic subjects through projects wasn't going to be the way in which*

Project based learning was still undertaken in PSHE and Citizenship, where students took the time to explore large issues such as democracy and community through collaborative projects. However, teachers acknowledged that large-scale projects would almost certainly have to be abandoned in the future due to the reduction in the school day: 'it [project based learning] takes a lot of time, and that time on our timetable has been reduced… That's made it more difficult.'

This pressure of formal examinations, therefore, meant that the school adopted a more mainstream teaching approach in what teachers referred to as 'the academics' – subjects outside of training in specialisms. The vice principal suggested that part of the pressure came from the MAT: 'I think personally, because we're part of a trust now, we're now held to account by them'. Even though the school, as a Studio School, did not have to report on Progress 8, the vice-principal still described the pressure from the MAT of having 'to ensure that each student hits those academic buckets'. One member of the SLT even went on to describe this relationship with the MAT in pugnacious terms: 'Because the trust are academics, we're academics, and we're a Studio School, we're both and we're different and that's our battle'. In order to win, or at least not lose, this battle, the school had taken a strategic decision to adopt a schooling approach for the 'academics' that would be recognisable and acceptable to the MAT.

Retaining a Distinct Identity

Across many aspects of the practice and ethos of the school, there appeared to be a clear move towards a mainstream model. There was certainly a definitive letting go and modification of many of the aspects that are distinctive to the Studio School model. However, the principal, the teachers, and the students very clearly also viewed the school as separate from mainstream education. As such, it is perhaps most appropriate to see the school as developing its own distinctive model of education that sat somewhere between mainstream schooling and a Studio Schools approach. This model is firmly rooted in the specialisms of sport and performing arts, a deliberate drive to avoid defining success only in terms of exam outcomes, and a strategic decision to take a more holistic approach to education. As the principal stated: 'this is about the whole child'.

The members of the SLT were very aware of the transition that the school was undergoing and the tension in the school's identity as it found its own place within the vocational offering, the MAT and the Studio Schools Network. This was articulated clearly by one individual who described comparing Tigris to other Studio Schools: '[they're] so different and so vocational…

we're never going to be like that. At the same time we're never going to be like the grammar schools… We are very much in the middle and sometimes it's a very difficult ground to tread.'

What is employment? What are skills?

At the heart of many of the challenges related to Tigris' institutional identity was a tension within the school over how 'employment' was conceptualised, how placements operated, and how employment skills were defined. With a focus on sport and the performing arts, students spent significant amounts of time training and rehearsing in these specialisms at an elite level. As the principal pointed out, 'what makes you the school different to mainstream? Well, there you can do GCSE dance or PE two hours a week, three if you're lucky. Here they're doing 10, 12 hours a week by the time they've put their training in with their coaches.' This intensive training and rehearsal regime reflected the fact that the school is not focused on people with an interest in sport or the performing arts, but is explicitly tailored to students that want a career in these specialisms.

The pinnacles of such careers are generally rooted in engaging in competitive sports at a national or professional level or performing professionally. This was reflected in the display cases in the school and the fact that all members of the school, from the principal to the students, described school success in terms of the number of students competing at a national level in their chosen sports or students appearing in BBC programmes, films, or performing on Britain's Got Talent. Within this context, skills were tightly related to individual performances in selected sports or arts and so employment and employment skills were inherently tied to training and rehearsing.

This meant that, although the language of coaching was embedded in the school, coaching was understood in very different terms to the standard Studio School conceptualisation of learning and personal coaches. At Tigris coaching staff dominated students' lives. However, these were professional sports (specific to each sport) coaches or professional performance (e.g. singing, dancing etc.) coaches. Their primary function was to support training and rehearsals: for example, helping students to gain sport-specific skills, improving students' sporting tactics and strength, improving dancing and singing, and supporting the staging of large scale shows. These coaches were usually highly accomplished individuals with wider roles in national sports or the performing industries, were relatively expensive compared with their teaching colleagues, and were employed on hourly paid contracts. As the principal stated: 'you look at a coach and that's so many teachers worth… The coaches are in for that hour and that's all they get paid for. They do have a commitment to the kids, but they don't compared to a teaching staff member that's full-time with the kids.'

This different model of coaching appeared to be rooted in the fact that core skills linked with the students' vocational specialisms were seen as related to personal sporting and arts-related performances. Consequently employment skills were largely conceptualised in terms

of sporting and performance skills and students were coached in developing these through extensive training and rehearsal programmes rather than long term work placements. In fact, a large number of members of staff discussed sporting events and students travelling during term time for competitions or to act in certain shows in terms of vocational placements with the national team or relevant production company as the employer.

However, alongside this, teachers also described the importance of students being exposed a wider variety of career trajectories within their specialisms. For example, the vice principal described how stage students focused work around a large showcase, but linked up with different related professionals (e.g. performance project managers) to understand and develop 'the skills that you need beyond just your performance skills, that you will then be able to take forward into a whole range of different specialist career pathways… like theatre management… and things like that'. A similar approach was taken to those on the sporting pathway, with efforts made to help students think about career pathways beyond immediate personal sporting achievements. The assistant vice principal, for example, emphasised the importance of students needing 'to have this lifelong career plan which isn't going to be about them performing in sport all the way through to retirement… Maybe they won't make it as that professional footballer, but they will be that coach.'

At the same time, more general employment skills were also an important part of the school. All year 10 and year 12 students had to undertake a two week work placement. These placements were arranged by a careers coordinator who supported students in selecting an appropriate place of work from a variety of pre-approved employers that had been appropriately vetted. These included a wide range of different kinds of places of work including local primary schools and a large scale music shop. The coordinator described the challenge of developing new partnerships with employers due to the administrative burden of ensuring all safeguarding protocols were followed meaning that there was a strong emphasis on students working with employers already on the books. Both staff and students clearly viewed these placements as important. However, they were obviously viewed as additional experiences, and of secondary importance to the core focus on training, rehearsing, competing, and performing. In fact stage students only spent six days on their placements (as opposed to the full two weeks) due to specific performance commitments. As such, in our interviews, these traditional work placements were described as an important way of gaining experience and skills for 'second careers' either alongside or after students' core sporting or stage work.

CREATE

Within this interesting and distinctive vocational context, the CREATE Framework appeared to have an implicit role in the life of the school rather than featuring in an explicit way. During our interviews, the SLT and the teachers indicated that being part of this research project had helped them reflect on how CREATE fitted into their everyday practice. There was a consensus

that while the framework was rarely used explicitly, by reflecting on it they realised that there was significant overlap between it and what was being undertaken in the school. As described by the vice principal: 'it was really interesting to see staff going, "Oh, yes, so that's where that applies. Oh, yes, we do that."' The Principal described this implicit engagement as 'very much embedded throughout the teaching and the learning and it actually happens without us almost having to think about it because it is very much there'. This sentiment was echoed by the teachers we interviewed, one stated: 'it's integrated around the entire school in every subject rather than CREATE is in this box and then your lesson is in this box. There it's more like: we're teaching you how to be more emotionally aware when you're studying An Inspector Calls, and it works that way.'

This implicit engagement with CREATE was borne out in our interviews with students who appeared to have a very limited engagement with CREATE with them generally defining it in very generic ways often linked with PSHE and wellbeing: 'it's having different ways communicated and giving opportunities to people, and how we safeguard young people'. Similarly, although the careers coordinator described using the framework to structure a recent careers fair, she emphasised that employers involved in the placements would not engage with CREATE or any other skills frameworks: 'when I was doing workplace visits last year during the work placement, I never mentioned CREATE but I mentioned, "How are they doing? Are they working well with everyone? Are they explaining to you when they don't understand something? That sort of thing."

However, although CREATE was not overtly used, some aspects of the framework featured in coaching sessions and in reporting on training developments and, to a lesser extent, in work placements. The school had 'a matrix of outcomes which is from the CREATE framework'. These appeared to be broadly conceptualized formatively and linked with the key themes of CREATE, used to encourage students to develop, for example, their communication skills through training and rehearsals. Each individual student had an assessment sheets that was completed by their coach. However, the skills embedded in this matrix were largely described as vehicles for improving training or performance, rather than being described in direct employment terms. For example, as one member of staff described: '[the coaches' use of assessment] gets students to recognise that particular skills around emotional intelligence and around communication will directly enhance your performance by recognising that the way in which you're thinking and feeling can be communicated in different ways and also be understood in different ways'.

The matrix was supplemented by a 'performance behaviour framework', aimed at 'recognising attitudes and transferable skills (e.g. communication) that impact on success' (assistant vice principal). This is a three level system – gold, silver and bronze. The teachers and students described how there was an expectation that students would work at silver and they would be rewarded for being awarded golds marks and warned or sanctioned for

repeated bronze awards. In many ways, this framework appeared to underpin the core experience of the schools more than the skills matrix, which appeared to be used primarily for assessment, and the line between them appeared blurred. As one teacher stated: 'I think we're kind of melding that behaviour award system with the CREATE framework, because that's what we've based it on'.

This implicit, embedded use of CREATE almost certainly reflects the trajectory of the school which, when founded, fully adopted the Studio School model with CREATE and project based learning sitting explicitly at its heart. As the specialisms of the school have changed, the conceptualisation of skills, employment, and coaching have become shaped by sport and stage, and the distinctive elements of size, 14-19, operational hours, and project based learning have been gradually eroded, CREATE now appears as something of a historic artefact within the school. None of the key stakeholders (students, employers, parents, staff) appeared to have any sense of ownership of the framework and there did not appear to be any drive towards its explicit use from the SLT. Although, staff could recognise how some of their existing practices reflected CREATE, the framework itself and the language associated with it seemed primarily to underpin assessment of 'soft skills' and behaviour management. As the school appears to move further away from the Studio School model and forge its own distinctive institutional identity within its MAT, it is doubtful whether the language of CREATE or the framework itself will remain central to the school for much longer. As a member of the SLT suggested: 'I don't think CREATE has to be discreet. With the tightness on curriculum now we just need to be making them aware of where they are communicating, where they are relating to others etc.'

Case Study 5: Studio School Crawfords

Studio School Crawfords is a very new Studio School having been founded only in September 2017. It is based in the north of England and, at the time of data collection, was very small, with only 85 students and 15 members of staff, ensuring small class sizes and impressive staff to student ratios. Crawfords was housed within another school and, although it felt physically separate and had been designed with an open, free flowing feel, it was tied to the main school's infrastructure. This meant that although the Crawfords operated between 8:30 and 4:15 and had a fairly flexible timetable, the day was punctuated by bells linked with the other school's timetable. In fact, the principal indicated that the school had initially planned to operate between 9 and 5, as envisioned in the original Studio School model, but this had to be modified to accommodate the sharing of the host school's canteen. However, Crawfords was in the process of expanding substantially in terms of student and staff numbers and was undertaking extensive building work so that it would be housed in its own dedicated, specially designed building in 2019.

Although the school is formally linked with an international bank, one of the main employers in the area, it did not have a specific vocational specialism. However, based on staff and pupil interests, the principal described a plan to specialise explicitly in digital media and business in the future. It is linked with a MAT which had been the driving force in establishing the school, with the chief executive aiming to expand the trust's educational portfolio and offer an additional vocational model of schooling to compliment its flagship and high profile mainstream school. The principal had joined the school during the initial foundation phase and so was able to shape the focus and ethos of the school. She described being given relative flexibility by the trust, but having to establish it in accordance with key criteria: 'that it doesn't look like a school; that it's accessible to all students; that it doesn't become elitist; 'that it's not hijacked by the middle class'.

However, in addition to this the CEO had specified from the outset that the school should be both a Studio School and an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. This meant that although Crawfords offers GCSEs it is firmly rooted in the IB model and the IB career programme. As discussed below, the attempt to marry the Studio School model with the IB led to significant structural tensions and a move simply to fully embrace the IB model alone. However, in part due to the vision of the principal and the SLT and partly due to the initial mixed model approach, the school appeared to have developed a fairly eclectic approach, incorporating ideas from other schooling models and research into everyday practice where it was seen as beneficial. For example, the Principal described incorporating the idea of self-scheduling from Montessori, where students could (within reason) define their own timetables.

This led to a range of distinctive practices, which the principal and vice principal both described as being vital to maintaining an open, innovative and inclusive ethos. The principal

described attempting to draw on the work of the AltSchool in California or Orestad in Copenhagen which focus on collaboration and moving away from hierarchical structures of traditional schools. As such she emphasised the importance of ensuring that everyone in the school (students, teaching staff, personal coaches etc) had a voice. At a small scale this ethos was translated into students calling teachers by their first names, working in shared spaces (both staff and students), and learning collaboratively (both staff and students). This was particularly emphasised by the layout of the current building with open movement between the spaces, glass walls, and teachers and students working together. According to the plans for the new building, this approach will be continued and expanded.

In addition to this the SLT all emphasised the importance of being a Lean School. This builds on the famous Toyata business model and focuses on adding more value while reducing waste. In practice this particularly involved being paperless and emphasising the importance of educational technology, with the school providing laptops for all students and rooting teaching, learning, and administration in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). This emphasis on learning through technology meant that students were frequently expected to undertake research on the Internet, which necessitated a more flexible approach to firewall settings and internet access than mainstream schools. The students we interviewed particularly emphasised this point stating that this flexible access to the Internet gave them the feeling of 'being trusted and treated as adults'. This flexible approach to technology was similarly emphasised by the teaching staff with, for example, one member of staff describing how he felt it was important for the students to find approaches to using technology in ways that supported their learning: 'if that means whacking on a pair of headphones in class and listening to music on YouTube while doing maths, I'm all for it. If it means getting out their phones, that's fine. I get out my phone'.

Identifying as a Studio School

Including Crawfords in this study was important as, being such a new school, it was at a critical stage in its journey: still in the process of defining its institutional identity and ethos, coping with growth, developing relationships with its MAT and employer partners, and making decisions about how employability and skills should be conceptualised and employability frameworks operationalised. Although the school had taken an active decision not to use the CREATE Framework and was moving away from the Studio School model, understanding the way in which these decisions were made and the journey the school had taken so far are important for this study.

In many ways, the decision not to use CREATE was rooted in the way in which the school was founded. The principal described extensive challenges in this foundational process. At the time, Studio Schools were facing extensive national criticism in the media and a number of schools were closing. This led to what was seen as an unfair amount of scrutiny from the

media as well as the DfE and local authorities and a hostile reception within the school's local community. As the principal stated: 'Studio Schools are constantly in the press. We have a local activist who likes to write in [to the local press] probably fortnightly, and there's always the same paragraph about how many Studio Schools are closing'. This hostile relationship with the local community led to an ongoing need to justify the purpose of the school and the validity of the Studio School model, something which the principal described as requiring a huge amount of energy and involving her, her SLT, the MAT as well as the sponsoring bank as an employment partner.

The principal felt that she did not receive adequate support from the Studio Schools Trust, which was in the process of closing, which exacerbated many of these challenges. This left her and her senior management team feeling isolated at a time when they were most in need of assistance both in terms of dealing with the politics of setting up and justifying a new Studio School in a challenging environment as well as the practical aspects related to the Studio School model: training staff in the CREATE framework, establishing a coherent coaching model, developing meaningful links with employer partners. The hostility the principal experienced in the media combined with this lack of support led the principal to view Studio Schools as 'a tainted brand', she stated 'being a Studio School was 'bringing some bad publicity with it, but it wasn't bringing us support'.

This lack of support meant that the school has not developed close links with the new Studio Schools Network, and importantly was instrumental in the decision not to engage with CREATE. From the beginning, the school was conceptualised as combining the IB and CREATE. However, with the Studio Schools Trust in transition, the headteacher felt unable to implement CREATE:

> I went down to London to meet them [the Studio Schools Trust]… but I actually didn't get enough training to run CREATE, or exposure to it to then run with it strongly… I signed up for every CPD that the Studio Schools Trust had but they ended up cancelling them all, all these webinars, because they didn't have enough numbers.

This meant that, before the school had even opened, the principal and the vice principal had made the decision not to implement CREATE and focus purely on the IB. With several members of the SLT having had previous experience of working in IB schools and the IB providing a strong and accessible support network with a range of tried and tested resources, 'it felt safe'.

The IB Careers Programme

The school therefore decided to take on key aspects of the Studio School model, particularly being a small school, starting at 14, operating a longer working day, using project based learning, embedding work placements in the everyday life of the school, and having separate personal coaches. However, the principal decided to implement vocational work employment

skills through the IB careers programme. This careers programme has a technical or vocational qualification at its heart, generally equivalent to two A-Levels. It is then combined with two diploma subjects (a third in some cases). Alongside this is a core programme involving 50 hours of 'service learning' undertaken over two years, a reflective project (a 4000 word essay; a video plus 1000 words; or photos plus 1000 words), and language learning. Skills are developed and monitored through 10 IB learning profiles that aim to develop a range of what one teacher described as 'soft skills' (e.g. communication, being aware of and sensitive to different cultures, being reflective, being principled, having an open mind, being caring etc.), subdivided into Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills. The teachers described building ATL skills into their lessons buy these were generally described as being driven by the personal coaches.

Following the original Studio Schools model of personal coaches, at Crawfords, two coaching staff aimed to have 20-30 minute coaching sessions with each student a minimum of once a week and the role of personal coach was seen as central to the identity of the school. This was reflected in plans to invest in increasing personal coach staffing numbers in the next academic year and plans, described by the headteacher, to evaluate existing coaching and develop and distinctive coaching model for the school. The coaches aimed to work with students on their employability skills, help them set personal targets, and structure their work accordingly. This activity was closely linked with the expectations of work placements, as a core part of the IB careers programme. All students have at least one summer placement – three weeks in July or three weeks in August. At the same time IB Career Programme students go out on Mondays 'to do different work experiences like estate agents or things they're interested in'. This is supported by the Work Experience Coordinator who is directly responsible for placing students and arranging partnerships with employers.

Just as was seen in other case studies, there was some tension across the school over whether the development of employability skills and the use of the framework should be implicit or explicit. The teachers we interviewed, and to a lesser extent the coaches, all argued strongly that ATL skills should be implicit in their teaching: 'it would just be clunky to say, "right now we're working on communication"'. The vice principle on the other hand, was clear that the ATL skills framework should be an explicit part of the majority of interactions with students. She described how she will be supporting members of staff to introduce every lesson by explaining which skills they will be developing: 'they're [the teachers] not explicit enough… I'm just patient with it… it's constant reminders when I'm doing lesson observations'. She also described plans to 'add value' to coaching by really embedding the skills framework into their work and use this directly with students to discuss their skills needs. Using a 'tracker', an excel spreadsheet, the coaches will monitor and report skills development: 'I want you [the coaches] to tell me to what extent you think they [students] actually develop that skill… compare that rating to the kids' self-evaluations'. The vice principal viewed her plans to bring the IB career skills framework into the role of the coaches as slightly controversial: 'coaching

is the pastoral side, which I'm suppose to leave well alone, but I'm just trying to bring the whole thing together'.

Ironically, this approach to using the IB employability framework explicitly, embedded in both teaching and coaching, in a way that provides students with agency and control over their learning, is closely tied to the way in which the implementation of CREATE was originally conceptualised. Although Crawfords is still developing key working practices and establishing its identity as a school, its apparent successes in implementing an employability framework thus far (as evidenced by Ofsted and glowing reports from staff and students), suggests that successful development of employability skills is linked less with specific frameworks and more with a range of social and structural factors related to the school and wider contexts. Here, it was clear that a significant factor was leadership. The senior leadership team had an unwavering belief in the IB model and were able to instil that confidence in staff, students and parents. At the same time, the school benefited from a supportive MAT, which also shared a belief in the model and the framework. This was aided by wider support networks beyond the school and the ready availability of CPD to ensure all new members of staff understood the framework. Another key factor appeared to be the explicit and embedded use of the IB framework in the school (with plans to increase this visibility), with students able to gain a sense of ownership of it and the language of skills becoming embedded in cross-school communication.

A Difficult Journey

Studying Crawfords' journey through foundation to the end of its first year through this case study has highlighted the important decision making processes around employability skills frameworks. It shows that the reason the school decided not to use CREATE was related much more to social and political factors than the quality of the framework itself and that successful implementation of any framework is fundamentally linked to social and structural issues within a school and beyond. However, our study of Crawfords also highlighted a range of emerging issues that several of our case studies had experienced earlier in their histories. In these other schools, these issues limited the successful implementation of CREATE and shaped the wider vocational offering. Therefore, the fact that we saw them at Crawfords, suggests many Studio Schools went through similar trajectories, often taking a distinctive and innovative approach to schooling initially, then being pulled back towards more mainstream models as the schools grew and were subjected to a range of accountability measures and external pressures.

At Crawfords, even though the school was only a year old and the principal and wider teaching staff emphasised its innovative nature, there was already a concern about the pull of mainstream schooling. With the school about to expand suddenly, and the staffing numbers set to double, several members of the SLT discussed being conscious of the pressure this

would put on the distinctive ethos they had worked to create and the likelihood that it would be diluted by a sudden influx of new staff with their own ideas. Teachers were also conscious that the planned growth in student numbers might challenge the ethos. With the school maintaining entrance at 14, the principal described how this can lead to a 'second chance' student population, with joining students tending to be pushed out of mainstream schools for a variety of social, behavioural and educational reasons: 'there's a reason why students transfer at 14'. She suggested that if other schools in the area view Crawfords as dumping ground for difficult students, vocational aims might be derailed. To a certain extent, this was already being seen in the work of the coaches who described having to deal with a range of social and emotional problems and special educational needs, taking time away from a focus on employment skills.

Similarly, members of staff and the SLT raised concerns about the pressure of exam results. While a number of teachers described joining Crawfords because they were 'sick of working in exam factories', there was still a sense that ensuring students succeeded in formal summative assessment was something that still dominated their lives. This was clearly expressed by the principal: 'with a focus on the IB diploma, you're always aware of this final exam'. She described how this focus was already 'pushing teachers away from project-based learning' and that parents, worried about exams, had already complained about some of the school's distinctive elements – notably a lack of homework and large scale project based learning which was seen as not providing the students with adequate structure or support. Even within the short life of the school, it was clear that pressures of attainment and formal examinations, linked with parental expectations, was already putting pressure on the school's innovative approaches.

At the same time, difficulties, described by the careers coordinator and the principal, with forging meaningful relationships with employer partners meant that embedding long term work placements in the heart of the school was challenging. The careers coordinator described the problems of firms simply not responding to her, not being able to work with students below 16, or only being able to offer short term placements. These difficulties in building long term and meaningful collaborations with employer partners meant that the school could only offer a patchwork of small scale, individual, short term work placements and community service activities, ranging from dog grooming and shop sales to providing a show for residents in an old people's home. In fact, the principal described this model of work placements as 'slipping back towards a traditional school model of work experience'. This highlights the difficulties of implementing an embedded model of long term work placements if the school does not already have meaningful support from employer partners.

During our research it appeared that these emerging issues were beginning to present challenges to several aspects of the innovative and distinctive approach that Crawfords was attempting to foster. As we observed in other case studies, these kinds of challenges to the overall ethos and model of the school often led to the watering down of their use of CREATE

and so it is likely that Crawfords' use of the IB employment skills framework may change as the school grows and continues on its evolutionary journey.

4. DISCUSSION: EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS, CREATE, AND THE WIDER STUDIO SCHOOL MODEL

As detailed in our case studies, no two Studio Schools are the same. They differ not only in their geographical choices, but also in their specialism choices, recruitment techniques, student numbers, engagement with employers, and even sponsor structure. However, there are core tenets of the Studio School model that are meant to make a school clearly identifiable as a Studio School and create a common thread across the network of institutions. The most pertinent of these is the CREATE framework, which as described in the first phase of our study was designed specifically for the Studio School model by the Studio School Trust to support students to develop employability skills effectively.

However, as was clear from both the responses we received to our questionnaire and the in-depth case studies, this core element of the model is itself deployed in a diverse set of ways, embedded in a range of different conceptualisations of vocational educational and the Studio School model, and with varying levels of engagement from the key stakeholders (students, employers, staff, and parents). There is no one standard way that the CREATE framework has been used across the schools in our study. In fact, in the majority of the case study institutions, we found that the use of the CREATE framework was in flux and that the schools were all in a state of transition, establishing their institutional identity in relation to their own specific contexts and needs. In all cases, this involved, to varying degrees, moving away from the original conceptualisation of the Studio School model and the place of CREATE within it. Within these complex and transitory contexts, the implementation of CREATE must be understood holistically within the context of the school as a whole with the implementation of the framework being driven by complex and inter-connected decisions relating to accountability, fit-for use, ownership, leadership, and institutional identity.

In this section we, therefore, present the key lessons (see Figure 5) that can be learned from the Studio Schools' relationship with CREATE and employability skills, and their journey through the education market. For conceptual clarity we have presented these issues under separate headings. However, it is essential to emphasise that all the points highlighted below are part of a complex system of interrelated factors, pressures, and decisions and so overt separation of these issues is inevitably a limited approach to presenting the messy realities of the deployment of the CREATE framework in Studio Schools.

Figure 5: Lessons learned from the CREATE framework

Explicit vs Implicit Implementation of CREATE

At the heart of the diversity of approaches to CREATE across the case study schools was a tension between whether it should be implemented explicitly or implicitly. Explicit implementation placed the framework at the heart of school life, with all members of staff and students working directly with it and the language of CREATE skills becoming embedded in all learning related interactions. More implicit approaches to CREATE focused on developing the employability skills of CREATE through teaching and coaching without necessarily referring to the framework in an overt manner. In the original documentation for Studio Schools and CREATE, it was clear that the model was designed for CREATE to be implemented explicitly with both learning and personal coaches overtly working with students to develop skills through project based learning and coaching. This would allow both for the development of employability skills, as well as the teaching of the academic curriculum within real-world contexts. As such, the explicit use of the CREATE framework through project based learning and personal coaching was meant to be the core way in which employability skills were developed, planned for and assessed.

Project Based Learning

As might be expected given the centrality of an explicit implementation of CREATE to the Studio Schools model, most schools in our study started their lives investing in this form of implementation embedded in project based learning. For example, projects at Studio School Una were designed to highlight different skills of the framework, in that students could play the role of Project Manager or Researcher, which would enable them to develop different skills on the different projects that also taught them the curriculum. However, across all the

case studies, staff and leadership at the schools found that whilst teaching the core curriculum through project based learning was successful in building student engagement, motivation, and developing employability skills, it presented a range of significant practical challenges.

Firstly, large scale, embedded project based learning is extremely time consuming. While it may be successful within the originally conceived operational hours for Studio Schools (9-5), if there are any pressures on those hours (due to budgetary restrictions, for example), schools found themselves under pressure to develop and fit appropriate projects. Secondly, attempting to develop cross-curricular projects requires significant collaboration between subject specialists and expertise to ensure both skills development and appropriate learning take place. In practice, as highlighted in Tigris for example, many schools did not find they had sufficient experience and expertise amongst their staff to deliver large scale project based learning effectively. Consequently, attempts to embed project based learning across the curriculum were often reduced after the first year of Studio Schools' lives. This also often coincided with schools growing and an influx of new members of staff who may not have been as dedicated to the original Studio Schools model as their colleagues, diluting expertise and a desire to implement innovative approaches.

However, the most significant challenge to the explicit implementation of CREATE through project based learning related to the pressures of external performance measures, notably exam outcomes. Many of the members of staff we interviewed across all the schools described the challenge of attempting to combine a vocational offer with expectations of academic attainment. While many schools attempted cross-curricular implementation of CREATE through project based learning initially, the pressures of performance measures meant that as soon as it looked like academic outcomes might be weak or Ofsted reports might be critical, schools felt they had to revert to more traditional approaches to teaching and learning. In essence, they did not feel able to continue to experiment with a novel model or the development of employability skills, if it jeopardised exam success. Several schools expressed frustration at this with, for example a member of the SLT from Tigris stating that 'the setup… for academic qualifications is not elastic enough' and a member of the SLT from Coraline commenting that CREATE was 'not a qualification that was[is] recognised in performance tables'.

SLT across the schools described concern about the DfE and Ofsted as well as parental expectations, and although not true for all case study schools, this pull back towards more traditional approaches to delivering the curriculum was also exacerbated by difficult relationships with schools' MATs. In several instances it was clear that the institutions' MATs did not understand the core aims of the schools or the distinctive aspects of their vocational offer and so placed pressure on them to conform with standard success measures applied in mainstream education. For example, one school described having to meet Progress 8

standards for the MAT, rather than try to challenge the norm (Studio Schools are now exempt from Progress 8). In most cases this resulted in a move towards more mainstream approaches to teaching and learning and the loss of explicit implementation of CREATE through project based learning. Therefore, in the face of performance measures, exams pressure, Ofsted, and MATs the kind of in-depth, embedded project based learning envisioned in the Studio Schools model foundational documents was generally either abandoned or consigned to the 'Cinderella subjects' of PSHE and Citizenship.

In practice, this meant that although the different Studio Schools were highly distinctive, it was possible to see a common trajectory when it came to the implementation of CREATE through project based learning. Schools started with an explicit, cross-curricular, embedded approach, but due to a range of performance pressures, moved away from project based learning and towards more traditional pedagogies. This generally left CREATE sitting outside the core curriculum and its implementation conceptualised in more implicit terms or not at all.

Coaching

Alongside project based learning, the original conceptualisation of the Studio School model called for the explicit implementation of CREATE through personal coaching. The Personal Coaches were envisioned as working with students in one to one coaching sessions on the development of their skills, guiding them towards taking an agentic approach to skills development and, as will be discussed below, taking ownership of CREATE themselves. This kind of coaching requires frequent interaction between personal coaches and students and, as described by Studio School Una 'coaching is tailored on the calibre of the students... and the way they will respond to and interact with the CREATE framework is very different' (Una Personal Coach 1). However, just as in project based learning, the Studio Schools included in this study adopted a range of approaches to coaching. While the majority initially adopted a model similar to the one envisioned in the original Studio Schools documentation, they faced a number of challenges in implementing it.

As indicated by the questionnaire responses, a large number of schools across the Studio Schools Network did not separate out the role of learning coach (or teacher as they were called in most schools) and personal coach. The teachers simply took on the role of personal coach where appropriate. A number of reasons were given for this, but at its heart, this modification of the original Studio School model seemed to be rooted in a general philosophical disagreement with the idea of personal coaches and a lack of funding. Where teachers were described as taking on the role of personal coaches it was clear that the pressures of timetabling, delivering the curriculum, and exams meant that only limited coaching could take place at an individual level and so explicit engagement with the CREATE framework was limited.

In our case studies, the majority of schools, (including Crawfords where CREATE was not implemented) had invested in separate personal coaches. Apart from Tigris where the model of coaching was firmly rooted in a unique conceptualisation of employment skills with coaches acting as sports or performing arts coaches, these schools described their personal coaches as working with students on their employability skills. However, even in these schools it was clear that limited budget meant that only a small number of personal coaches were employed. This led to time pressure and, even in relatively small schools, the challenge of having meaningful personal relationships with all students.

Furthermore, some members of staff described the challenge of maintaining close relationships between coaching staff and teaching staff. With the widespread reduction of project based learning, in the majority of the schools we studied the coaching staff were almost the only members of staff engaging with CREATE. This dependence on just a coaching model for CREATE without involving other staff led to tension and a disconnect between personal coaches and wider members of staff as described by the principal at Una:

> *We massively invest into personal coaching and it does change lives but they become the custodians and drivers of not just the mapping but the showing the kids how and why they are developing these CREATE skills. But that took us on a journey that as I recruited more and more staff, as CREATE was in the Pastoral Curriculum as opposed to the Educational Curriculum I got this growing disconnect…….I remember being horrified one inset day close to Christmas, talking about CREATE and one of the staff said sorry what? I'm like how has that happened?* (Una SLT1)

This kind of separation exacerbated the move away from the original Studio Schools model in a way that appeared to separate out CREATE and work on employability skills from the general life of the school, preventing an integrated, whole school, skills based approach. Although there was a recognition amongst staff that there should be more interaction between them and the personal coaches, particularly in relation to CREATE, across the case study schools, there appeared to be a trajectory of growing separation and the isolation of CREATE.

However, arguably, the biggest challenge the case study schools experienced in relation to coaching was dealing with the personal, emotional, behavioural and special education needs of the student population. Through our interviews with students and members of staff across all the schools, it was clear that a large proportion of the student population in all the schools had a range of needs that led them to leave mainstream education and move into something smaller and more distinctive. This is part of the 14-19 year old educational marketplace and clearly a key aim of the Studio School model is to provide an education for students who want a more vocational offering than is provided in mainstream settings. However, based on our interviews with students, it was clear that although they had experienced significant

challenges in their previous schools, the Studio School setting was proving to be nurturing and helping them to succeed.

Based on our interviews, it was clear that the coaching staff across the schools were generally expected to support students with emotional and behavioural issues as well as work with SEN students on ensuring their needs were met. The coaches we interviewed, along with SLT and students, particularly viewed this pastoral aspect of their work as essential to student wellbeing and the overall nurturing identity of the schools. With such high numbers of students with often very complex needs, this meant that, in many instances, the most significant part of personal coaches' time was spent on pastoral support as opposed to skills and vocational oriented work. Engagement with CREATE, as a result, often came second to immediate social, emotional, behavioural, and special educational needs. Therefore, as illustrated above in terms of project based learning, with CREATE limited to more pastoral subjects like PSHE in curriculum time, and coaching transformed into pastoral and SEN support, CREATE often seemed to be conceptualised in pastoral terms, illustrated clearly in the quote from Una, where the principal described CREATE as the 'pastoral curriculum'.

In some of the case studies, it appeared that the move of CREATE into a pastoral curriculum was part of a wider trajectory towards an entirely implicit implementation of CREATE. Although it adopted a different model of coaching, this was exemplified by Tigris, which appeared to have moved away from any meaningful explicit engagement with CREATE, with the framework sitting within the language of school almost entirely implicitly – almost as a historic artefact. With a number of schools expressing concern that their MATs might increasingly send challenging students to them, (i.e. who had been excluded from other schools in the trust) it is entirely plausible to assume that many personal coaches may see their pastoral responsibilities increase further in the next few years. If this is the case, it is likely that CREATE may become increasingly sidelined and increasingly existing on an implicit only basis in the schooling model.

Best practice in a messy reality: explicit and implicit implementation of CREATE

The above section has highlighted how a range of issues, pressures, and challenges have meant that the Studio Schools we analysed had moved or were in the process of moving away from an explicit implementation of CREATE to a much more implicit one. This suggests the original conceptualisation of CREATE may have been overly ideal for the messy realities of schooling. However, it is possible that within these messy realities a middle ground can be found, and our research suggests that the implementation of CREATE or any employability framework is likely to be most successful when both explicit and implicit approaches are taken.

This was particularly exemplified by Studio School Zorya, which stands in contrast to the other case study institutions as one that deliberately employed both explicit and implicit

approaches from the opening of the school (although other schools also incorporated explicit and implicit elements as highlighted in the case studies). CREATE had been embedded in the school's ethos through both a coaching framework, and a strong emphasis on work placements through which students could build their CREATE skills. The personal coaches explained the skills to students in one-to-one sessions, and when students went out on work placements they were required to reflect on and link their activities and the skills they had developed back to the CREATE framework. This combination of activities appeared to be successful in developing student agency as pupils took control of their own employability skills, and developed a meaningful sense of ownership of CREATE, identifying the skills they wanted to work on, and learning from their work experiences:

> *I can use some of the CREATE sections, some of the CREATE framework, in my work experience. I've found the applied one, doing just things like maths in a lesson, we don't tend to actually apply it to anything. But when I've been at work doing quality control on springs, it's more applied, so I had to measure stuff, and then say, "Well that's fine, we can send that back to the customer." Or "This isn't fine, we need to send them a new one, or redesign it." And it's actually applying the mathematics to something that's real and physical, not just, like Sally has, some apples.* (Zorya Student)

This explicit engagement with CREATE was further embedded in the life of the school physically. In Zorya, the CREATE framework could be found physically present around the school in the form of posters, PowerPoint presentations on school monitors, CREATE passports and diaries for student record, colours employed in documentation and even the design on the walls of schools.

> *You see the CREATE posters up and all that sort of thing... What you will also see along the middle of every corridor is a board, a frieze rather, that relates to the CREATE framework… we had plain white walls that the builders left for us. We needed to break it up and make the studio school come to the building. So down every corridor, you'll see that there is a frieze down the middle of the corridor which each of the CREATE covers, with all the symbols that represent what that area of CREATE would be.* (Zorya SLT)

These physical manifestations placed the framework at the centre of school activities and were an overt attempt to embed it in the everyday life of the school emphasising the importance of CREATE and the development of employability skills for schools' institutional identity, making the vocational ethos and values of the school explicit to anyone visiting it (new students, parents, employers). However, at the same time, these physical depictions also acted implicitly. They could be as subtle as a colour scheme or stripes of the CREATE colours running down a wall. As such, they formed part of the subliminal tapestry of the school, implicitly, but consistently reminding everyone within it of the centrality of CREATE.

There was an acknowledgement amongst staff at all the case study Studio Schools that it was easier for CREATE, 'to happen within a Vocational Curriculum rather than an Academic Curriculum' (Una Staff). As described above, this led to difficulties for teaching staff involved in, as Tigris described them, the 'academics' to engage with CREATE in a meaningful way. Teachers at Coraline described a sentiment we found across other Studio Schools that any attempt to embed CREATE skills explicitly in teaching academic subjects, for example indicating to the students which skill they would be developing in any given lessen, felt 'artificial' or 'clunky'. This was particularly the case once cross-curricular project based learning had been reduced. Rather, in this context, there was a need to work with CREATE in less direct and more subtle ways. This required teachers to do more that pay the framework 'lip service' (Coraline SLT), but rather increased the pressure to embed it within lesson planning without allowing it to jeopardise the natural focus of the lesson.

Although not actually engaging with CREATE, this approach was most clearly seen in Crawfords where teachers were actively encouraged to reflect on their lessons and understand opportunities for the development of skills in line with the IB framework. This appeared to lead to an implicit approach to skills in the academic curriculum that worked alongside explicit engagement with the employability framework through vocational activities, coaching and work placements. In other schools this reflective activity was encouraged by the research process which revealed an implicit engagement with CREATE, as indicated by staff at Zorya:

> *Staff: As we knew this was coming up, both of us have taken the opportunity to refresh ourselves on what CREATE was and find where we actually use it. And actually, on reflection, you start thinking –*
>
> *Staff: It's in everything we do.*

This suggests the importance of staff finding time and space to reflect on engagement with CREATE and the place of skills development in their teaching and that regular, collaborative formal reflection should be encouraged within all Studio Schools.

Thus, within the challenging messy environments of the current educational structures that Studio Schools must exist in, our research suggests that a core part of the successful implementation of CREATE or any employability framework requires both explicit and implicit operationalisation. Explicit implementation should take place through vocational work, coaching, and work placement and the framework should form the basis of conversations and activity in these areas. Implicit implementationtation should take place through embedding the framework in the fabric of the school, even at a subliminal level to signal the importance of the framework to the vocational ethos of the school. At the same time, teachers who might not be actively involved in the more vocational aspects of the school should be encouraged

to reflect on building skills implicitly into their lesson plans and communicate their activities closely with coaches and vocational leads.

CREATE as a marketing tool

For a new school carving its space in the local community, the CREATE framework with its emphasis on the development on employability skills proved to be an invaluable marketing and recruitment tool. The school leadership in our study described using the CREATE framework to showcase to parents that students were not being sent to 'just run of the mill exam factories' (Zorya SLT); that Studio Schools allowed for the development of the students 'beyond the classroom' (Una SLT).

> So, we actually used it to frame what the school would be about, so it's learning plus this other stuff and the other stuff framed quite nicely in the Create framework because it kind of articulated what the other stuff was to the staff and the students and the parents, it was a really good tool to do that (Coraline SLT)

School leadership found that the CREATE framework was 'something they [parents] could all relate to in their daily jobs' (Coraline SLT1), and felt like 'common-sense' (Zorya SLT) enabling early buy-in for the school concept from parents in the community;

> *Yeah, and I think the reality is that the Create Framework actually creates more opportunity for us. It increases our credibility and I think Parents then relate to the fact that we have a framework with which to help build the soft skills, which they know that they need to succeed in life. So, I actually think it's a feather in our cap that we use it in that sense.* (Una Personal Coach)

Fairly similarly, the CREATE framework helped the schools engage with employer partners, who when hearing about the development of employability skills would want to partner with the schools to provide meaningful work placements for students. Having the framework as part of the school model made it easier for the school's to convince employers of their commitment to the development of employability skills.

> *…then they looked at these posters [CREATE] on the wall. They said, "What are these then?" so whoever was with them explained it to them and they said, "Hold on a minute. ……. What's this?"*
>
> *So we explained, "They also leave with that," they said, "We've got to work with you,"* (Zorya SLT)

Leadership

Across all the case studies it was clear that successful implementation of CREATE or any employability framework required strong leadership with a vision for both CREATE and the school's ethos and institutional identity. In many ways it is unsurprising to suggest that the successful running of any school requires strong and effective leadership. However, through

CREATE and the wider Studio School model, Studio Schools are attempting to do something distinctive and unusual compared with mainstream education. As described above, there are a range of external pressures and internal forces that constantly pull Studio Schools back towards mainstream school models. In the face of exam performance pressures, demands from MATs, expectations of parents, criticism from Ofsted, challenges of growth, suspicion by teachers etc., a move back towards mainstream approaches and pedagogies will always be the path of least resistance whenever any difficulties arise. To maintain the distinctive aspects of the Studio School model and to implement an employability framework effectively, school leaders must have a deeply held belief in the model and framework in order to overcome challenges and bring their members of staff with them.

This was clearly articulated by a member of the SLT at Zorya:

> *And I think, you know, there're all the challenges that come with being a Studio School. …… But [we are] trying to stay true to that studio school's model*

The kind of leadership required to navigate these challenges while maintaining a distinctive institutional identity and vocational offering was shown by several of our case study schools, not just in the principals, but across the whole of the SLT. For example, Studio School Zorya's standout and steadfast commitment to the CREATE framework can, to a great extent, be attributed to the leadership at the school. Early on, school leaders recognized the value of the CREATE framework and how it would resonate with employers, and worked to ensure that the integration of the CREATE framework was built into the original bid for the Studio School. Investments were made in the coaching model, as well as a dedicated Business Links Manager. Time and money were deliberately allocated not only to the development of a CREATE passport, which would allow students to interact with the framework in an easy to digest manner, but also for developing employer relationships with valuable work experiences, and for projects that gave back to the local community; these were conscious decisions that the school leadership took knowing fully well that they would not be necessarily justifiable to Ofsted. It is this deliberate commitment to the tenets of the Studio School model that has allowed students to embrace and interact with the CREATE framework and become the owners of their own skills journey.

In more general terms, this kind of leadership could be seen in Crawfords, even though it was not implementing CREATE and was moving away from identifying as a Studio School. Their principal, in collaboration with the SLT, had mapped out a distinctive identity for the school, emphasising its vocational offer, along with the IB Careers Programme, placing an employability framework at the heart of the school. This took a strong vision and, in the face of significant challenges in the local community, determination to carry the vision forward. These leaders can be contrasted with the principal at Tigris. While she was clearly a strong leader, she had been brought in to deal with a number of challenges, primarily a deficit in the budget, left by the previous administration of the school. Having not been involved in the

foundation of the school and coming from a mainstream education background, she did not have the same commitment to the Studio Schools model as some of her peers in the Studio Schools network. Due to the nature of her appointment, her core aims were to reduce the deficit, improve attainment, and produce world class athletes and performers (all of which she appeared to be succeeding at), not necessarily implement the original Studio School model and CREATE. Therefore when difficulties arose, it is not surprising that the school took the path of least resistance, dropped the distinctive aspects of the Studio School model and moved towards a more mainstream offering.

Given the relatively swift turnover of senior members of staff in all schools in the UK, and the fact that, as suggested by a Studio Schools trustee, this maybe even higher in Studio Schools, the issue of leadership is significant. If schools, governors, and MATs want to maintain Studio Schools' distinctive identity and offering, founding principals and members of the wider SLT should be replaced not only with strong and capably leaders, but with individuals with significant understanding of the model and a strong belief in its distinctive elements, including the centrality of employability frameworks.

However, while emphasising the importance of strong leadership, it is equally important to emphasise that leadership comes within a context and some of the challenges schools face simply cannot be overcome by rigidly sticking to a model in the face of criticism and, potentially, failure. One of these issues that we came across in a number of case study institutions was the schools' relationship with the MAT. Ultimately, if a trust exerts pressure on a Studio School to conform to more mainstream models of schooling and meet standardised performance measures, there is little that a leader, no matter how strong they might be, can do about it. This highlights the importance of Studio Schools, if possible, developing strong and collaborative relationship with their MATs. In many ways, this kind of relationship was exemplified by Studio School Una where the principal had recently been given equal weight on the governing body of the MAT. This meant that school leadership could determine the identity and strategic approach of the MAT and carve out a meaningful place for the Studio School within the trust's wider portfolio of educational offerings. Importantly, the principal described how this relationship with the MAT meant that decisions around the CREATE framework were driven by the Studio School itself, rather than the MAT, and so Una could stay true to its original ethos. This sense of ownership for Studio School leadership has a profound impact on the confidence needed to lead a Studio School, as described by the principal at Una:

My journey has been one of growing in confidence that we in the Studio School have a bespoke curriculum that is right for these kids now, and its right for how we prepare them for the future. (Una SLT)

Thus, our findings emphasise the importance of leadership in implementing employability frameworks and maintaining the distinctive aspects of the Studio Schools model. A strong

belief in the framework and model across the whole of the SLT is required to navigate effectively the range of challenges and difficulties inherent in the current educational structure and maintain a distinctive institutional identity and this belief and understanding of the model should be a vital consideration in ongoing employment decisions. At the same time, it was clear that successful implementation of both a distinctive schooling model and an employability framework must be rooted in a strong and collaborative relationship with the schools' MATs, embedding it in the trusts' operations, giving leaders freedom to make difficult decisions, and confidence to, in the words of both Una and Zorya's principals 'punch above their weight'.

Ownership

In the above discussion of implicit and explicit implementation of CREATE and issues around leadership, reference has been made to ownership of the framework. Across the case studies, our data showed clearly that successful deployment of CREATE required a sense of ownership from all the relevant stakeholders: staff, leadership, and employers, but particularly students who are the primary users of the framework. With all stakeholders feeling a sense of ownership of CREATE, they can communicate and collaborate in a meaningful way that encourages embedded engagement and supports the development of student agency and ultimately employability skills. However, our findings highlighted a range of challenges to this idealised model of shared ownership.

Who actually owns the CREATE framework?

Members of staff

As originally outlined, students were envisioned as the core owners of the CREATE framework, responsible for developing and nurturing of their own skills. This was to be supplemented by personal coaches, who were to be the drivers of the CREATE framework, guiding individual students on their journeys. This idealised staffing structure, however, as evidenced from our case studies and discussed above in the section dedicated to coaching, was either not one that was actualised across all the Studio Schools, had been deployed with a unique definition of coaching (Tigris), or the coaching role was shared across curriculum teachers (Coraline). Even where personal coaches were actively working with students, the pressures of pastoral care and special educational needs meant that few coaches were in a position to engage with CREATE in a meaningful way. These structural and operational limitations meant that very few coaches were able to take ownership of CREATE and drive engagement across the school as had been originally envisaged in the Studio Schools model.

In the absence of the coaching model, leadership at Studio School Coraline attempted to instil a whole school culture based on the CREATE framework through all the staff at the school. Whilst this worked in the first year of the school's existence, teachers found themselves drifting away from the development of CREATE skills to focus on the pressures of curriculum

delivery and high stakes examinations in a GCSE/A-level year leaving the framework in a state of limbo. It is to be noted that at Studio School Coraline, students from the first year of its opening were at least aware of the CREATE framework, but those who had joined since were unable to articulate those skills at all, thereby never setting up a scenario where students could even exercise their own agency in the development of these skills. The issues highlighted at Studio School Coraline brought to light the need for a Coaching model to really allow students to interact with and absorb the CREATE framework, and ultimately become the owners of it.

> *But that's also another stumbling block because you've got a small staff body and*
> *people would probably, would want to get involved in it but because teaching*
> *loads are high and the exams and all that stuff is there, it's actually really difficult*
> *to get other staff to* (Coraline SLT)

To a certain extent, the issues seen at Coraline were seen across all the Studio Schools and were fundamentally linked with teachers' identity. A number of the teachers involved in the more academic subjects that we interviewed expressed the view that their focus was on 'teaching' and ensuring successful academic outcomes. Although all of them expressed a strong support for vocational models of education, their identity as professionals was rooted in more traditional pedagogic approaches. This was partially encouraged by the original Studio School model, which emphasised a very clear distinction between learning and personal coaches. However, without embedded cross-curricular project based learning holding these two roles together, there was little incentive for wider teaching staff in the majority of the case study schools to engage with CREATE let alone take any form of ownership of it.

Thus, from a staff perspective, it was clear that a whole school model of ownership of CREATE, where all members of staff were expected to engage actively with the framework, was too diffuse and at constant risk of being side lined by what teachers viewed as more urgent pressures of exams and performance measures linked with the 'core practice of teaching'. While a focused ownership model, with staff engagement being led by personal coaches, appeared to be best practice, it was subject to modifications to the role of personal coaches and the pressures of students' pastoral and special educational needs. Therefore, without embedded structural support that enables personal coaches to maintain a focus on vocational needs and employability skills, there is always a risk that no member of staff will take ownership of CREATE and drive school-wide engagement.

Students

Although students are seen as being the key owners of CREATE, our evidence suggested that even in those schools where a coaching model was deployed, student engagement, let alone ownership, with CREATE was also limited. In some schools students misunderstood what the framework was, often, based on the pastoral focus of coaching, conceptualising it in pastoral and wellbeing terms. One student from Una, for example, while describing the pastoral

benefits of coaching, stated that coaching was like 'having a mum in school'. In other schools, several members of staff suggested that working with CREATE directly with students was deliberately avoided as it might be too complicated for them.

These approaches appeared to keep CREATE away from the students in several of the case study schools, limiting engagement, ownership and students' ability to take control of their own skills development. However, in contrast Zorya adopted an approach that was more closely modelled on the original conceptualisation of student ownership of CREATE. Our conversation with the students at Studio School Zorya showed that the young people had a much more agentic relationship with CREATE. They were particularly able to relate to the framework in their work experiences through the CREATE passport, which provided space for them to reflect independently on how their work was helping them develop employability skills.

> *I can use some of the CREATE sections, some of the CREATE framework, in my work experience. I've found the applied one, doing just things like maths in a lesson, we don't tend to actually apply it to anything. But when I've been at work doing quality control on springs, it's more applied, so I had to measure stuff, and then say, "Well that's fine, we can send that back to the customer." Or "This isn't fine, we need to send them a new one, or redesign it." And it's actually applying the mathematics to something that's real and physical, not just, like Sally has, some apples.* (Zorya Student)

This sense of ownership and understanding of what the skills are and how they are developed was further enhanced by a vocationally focused coaching model. In their one to one sessions with Coaches, the students set targets for themselves, increasing their sense of responsibility. Although coaches in Studio School Zorya were, like other case study institutions, finding pastoral care was beginning to dominate their work, structuring the coaching sessions around the reflective process of the CREATE passport meant that, at the time of data collections, students were able to take ownership of CREATE and could indeed be the drivers of their own skill development.

> *Like, for me, in coaching, I would set a target, it could be anything from just tidying my room to get this work done for the deadline or it can be anything. And I have to relate that to one of the CREATE sections*

Employers

In the original documentation for the Studio School model, close relationships with employer partners sit at the heart of the vision for implementing CREATE. Employers, working with students and personal coaches support the development of specific CREATE skills through carefully tailored long term placements. As such, the documentation very clearly describes CREATE sitting at the heart of communication between employers and Studio Schools. However, in practice our research highlighted that the majority of Studio Schools were struggling to develop meaningful relationships with employers. Many schools described

frustration at calling multiple employers, desperate to arrange placements for their students. Other individuals discussed the difficulty in arranging any placements for students below the age of 16 or arranging any experiences that lasted more than a few weeks. This was illustrated by the difficulties we faced in successfully including employers' voices in the study: while we were able to meet with a few employers in two of the case study schools, it was clear that, in the majority of cases, employers were not particularly active stakeholders.

Within this context, in the majority of the case study institutions, it was clear that schools that were able to find placements for their students preferred to avoid placing any additional demands on employers by introducing CREATE to the conversation. Only in Zorya did there appear to be long term placements taking place with conversations about skills embedded in communication between the school, the student, and the employer. This positive relationship appeared to be rooted in the fact that the principal and wider SLT had strong relationships with these key employer partners prior to the foundation of the school. They were brought into foundational discussions early on in the process of establishing the school and so had a strong sense of ownership of both the school and the model and so were able to engage in a meaningful way with CREATE.

Although this illustrates a model of best practice for engaging employers and using CREATE as a tool for establishing communication between schools and employers, it also highlights the important challenges all schools face when attempting to develop meaningful relationships with employers through cold calling. Without long term personal relationships with employers, developing new partnerships is extremely difficult. This is exacerbated by the requirements for redundancy in a placement system. There will always be times when some employers cannot take students and so, as suggested by Coraline, schools really need more than double the number of partners they might expect based on student numbers. Given these difficulties, it is clear that several years are required to develop sufficient numbers of strong partners. As described above, strong leadership is necessary to navigate the inevitable setbacks in creating these partnerships and continue to pursue a model of long term embedded work placements.

Consequently, while employers are conceptualised as key stakeholders in the Studio School model and consequently key owners of the CREATE framework or any partnered approach to employability skills development, this is not the case for many Studio Schools. The reality is that partnership relationships are often fragile and due to pressure placed upon schools to find adequate numbers of employment opportunities for their students, power is often unequally distributed in employers' favour. Schools are consequently reluctant to place what might be seen as additional burdens on their employer partners by expecting in depth engagement with, let alone ownership of, skills frameworks.

Alongside the importance of ownership, it became clear through our work across all case study schools that the successful implementation of CREATE requires dedicated and consistent training for all members of staff. This ensures a shared understanding of the goals and ethos of the framework and clear communication between members of staff.

In the analysis during our first phase of the research, although various ad hoc programmes were made available to Studio Schools through the Studio Schools Trust, there was only a limited strategic approach to the training of staff on the CREATE framework. This was echoed in our interviews with staff who suggested that only minimal training resources were provided to the individual Studio Schools to support them in their strategic thinking on the CREATE framework. In the first year of being open, staff were provided training by the Trust, either at the Trust headquarters in Manchester, or as part of an INSET day in the school. These sessions had taken place with all staff, ensuring there was a general awareness of the skills in the CREATE framework.

> *It's very much something that we're all aware of. I mean every member of staff that obviously enrols and comes to work for the Studio School, it's part of what we provide them in terms of what they need to know and what they should use*
> (Una SLT)

However, the training provided was closely tied to the distinctive Studio School coaching model in its ideal form and so quickly proved irrelevant for the majority of schools which had modified their approach to coaching. Furthermore, as evidenced by Crawfords, while training existed early in the life of the Studio Schools Trust, it appeared that the schools that opened later on, particularly when the trust was beginning to close, did not benefit from any training and there are now no opportunities for CPD on the Studio Schools model or the CREATE framework. This means that training new staff in any Studio School will be extremely challenging in the future with no centrally available external CPD This was one of the reasons that Crawfords decided to focus on the IB Careers Programme. It was seen as having strong support networks and internationally recognised external training that could be engaged with in a constant way.

To supplement the centrally available training, many of the Studio Schools we studied took advantage of being a part of a network of schools and visited each other to understand how their peers had made the CREATE framework work in their own individual contexts. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, these opportunities were mainly undertaken by members of the SLT, with wider coaching and teaching staff working with cascaded information and without ongoing CPD on the CREATE framework staff found that they had to work on implementing CREATE in their own unique contexts themselves. This was expressed clearly by a member of the SLT at Coraline:

But there is not a pack of resources that's sat behind it, so it really just sat on the skill of an individual teacher. (Coraline SLT)

This resulted in the varied landscape of the ways in which the framework has been deployed across the schools and little ongoing skills or CREATE specific CPD.

Thus, our research has highlighted a significant need for ongoing CPD for all members of staff in Studio Schools for both the Studio School model and the CREATE framework. Without this it is likely that new staff joining the schools will not gain an appropriate understanding of the distinctive model of schooling or CREATE, existing staff will forget the training they received initially, and CREATE will becoming increasingly sidelined.

Although still developing, the new Studio Schools Network may reinvigorate models of sharing practice and so there is an urgent need to support mechanisms for this. A potential platform for sharing case studies of good practice across the network will be discussed at the end of this report. However, given the distinctive nature of all the Studio Schools, the way they implement the model, and the way they implement CREATE, a centrally delivered programme of CPD may not now be appropriate. There is no one size fits all solution and some schools may need to look elsewhere to other better supported networks and employability frameworks to examine what works in their contexts and to access appropriate CPD.

Language of CREATE

Linked with issues of ownership and challenges of empowering students, employers, and members of staff in the case study schools were questions of language and whether the framework itself is fit for its core users.

Fit for purpose

A common critique of CREATE across the schools was that the language of the framework was not fit for purpose when used with students. A number of individuals suggested that the statements associated with the development of a 'skills used' vocabulary was inappropriate , as it was unfamiliar to students who may have only had a very limited exposure to employment. Rather, it was felt that, despite discourses emphasising the importance of student engagement with CREATE, the language embedded in the framework was more targeted towards employers rather than students. Personal Coaches had to sit with students to explain the statements in the framework (Studio School Una) or, as described above, simplify the language for students, taking away the sense of agency that the framework was meant to instil in students.

Schools were also critical (Studio School Zorya) of the need of a new language in CREATE, when the core of the framework was like the PLTS (personal learning and thinking skills) framework that had been part of the 14-19 Diplomas. Members of staff at the schools felt

that CREATE should have had feedback from employers and students alike to ensure that the framework really worked or was really needed by its consumers before it had been deployed across network of schools. This commentary on the language of the CREATE framework being aimed towards employers is particularly intriguing as very few of the schools used the CREATE framework as the basis of their relationship with their employer partners. Paradoxically, where the school leadership felt that the language was aimed entirely at employers, CREATE's language was only ever loosely used with them. This issue was acknowledged by members of Zorya's SLT who explained that although the ethos of the skills embedded in CREATE resonated with small and large employers alike and contained the language they would expect to see on competitive student CVs, this language is not actually an appropriate basis for meaningful collaborative partnerships between schools, employers and students.

The original conceptualisation of both CREATE and the Studio School model places CREATE at the heart of the relationship between schools and employers. However, the difficulties experienced by schools in using CREATE to build relationships with employers suggests that the framework itself may not be fit for this purpose and that some translation, specific to employers and, potentially, different sectors, is required. This may be particularly important where relationships with employers are tenuous (as described above) and expecting employers to engage with lengthy skills frameworks like CREATE is seen as too much of a burden.

This led several of our interviews across all the institutions to question whether CREATE is still relevant. Some individuals felt a growing need to revisit the CREATE framework and its focus to ensure that it maintained relevancy not only with the changing needs of young people, but also to ensure that that it was still relevant to employers:

> …..actually is it still up to date? Is it still what Employers are looking for?
> Because for me, actually, there are skills within there that actually we're missing
> some things (Una SLT)

The question of relevance is one that Studio Schools and the Studio Schools Network must continue to reflect on. Are there changes that are required to either make it more up to date or make it more appropriate for the structurally messy context that all Studio Schools must work in? However, these questions go beyond simple issues of language. As CREATE appears to become increasingly sidelined in many schools, the question of whether the framework should remain a core part of the model and sit at the heart of the institutional identity of a Studio School is highly pertinent. In many ways, this issue is emphasised by Crawfords, which, although no longer identifying as a Studio School or implementing CREATE, appears to have developed a distinctive vocational offer that was more closely aligned with the original studio school model than any of the schools we studied.

In terms of the lives of educational institutions, all the Studio Schools are young and, as each school continues on its journey to developing its own institutional identity, it is inevitable that each one will face a range of challenges and difficulties. From performance measures and pressures from MATs to challenges with employers and conservative expectations about schooling from parents, at the heart of these difficulties will remain the constant allure of mainstream schooling models and traditional pedagogies. Therefore, the practical question of how schools should navigate these challenges while maintaining a distinctive Studio School identity is critical. Given the fact that no Studio School is implementing CREATE in its intended form at the moment, a compromise over the framework may be necessary to ensure the future of the Studio School model. In order to help answer the question of how schools should navigate challenges and difficulties, the Studio Schools Network may find that a formal redevelopment of CREATE, drawing on existing practices in the messy context of the current education system, is essential. However, it may also be time to explore alternative employability frameworks that may be more relevant, easier to embed within the life of a school, and have wider support networks and training opportunities, and explore the question of whether CREATE is any longer an essential part of the Studio Schools model.

5. CONCLUSION

This research project was explicitly focused on the CREATE Framework and how it was implemented across different Studio Schools. However, the framework is so closely tied to the Studio School model and the way in which it has been conceptualised and engaged with by the different stakeholders was so firmly rooted in both local and wider political contexts that the findings necessarily have broad implications for the vocational, 14-19 sector as a whole. These take the form of policy implications, implications for school management, implications for innovation around implementation of employability skills training, and implications for future research agendas to examine the issues raised by this project in more depth.

Policy Implications

Studio Schools were conceived of as a concept during a brief moment when systems thinking was in play within the Government's educational thinking. The context was an aspiration on the part of the New Labour government to try to create local 14-19 'systems' of provision within which there would exist a division of responsibilities and roles between local providers. Studio Schools, it was believed, would help fill a gap by offering a vocationally-oriented alternative for local pupils who were disengaged or in danger of becoming disengaged from more traditional academically-focused provision.

Unfortunately, Studio Schools were born into an era where thinking had moved on from this stance, and was now decisively focused towards markets and provider competition as a means of ratcheting up performance and accountability. Parental choice and market forces would drive weaker providers out of existence. Rather than be allocated a role and a set of potential students, institutions would have to fight for them with both other existing local competitor institutions and with any other forms of new market entrant (e.g. free schools and UTCs) that might choose to try to set up in the locality. Precisely the same model has been applied to higher education and is also a feature of the various marketplaces (14-19, apprenticeship, and adult education) that further education (FE) colleges find themselves operating in (see Keep, 2018).

This market model sets up an inexorable logic in the 14-19 'space'. At any given moment, there is a finite pool of 14-19 years olds in a locality. Competing for these students and the funding that is attached to them can be FE colleges, Studio Schools, UTCs, free schools, employers and independent training providers offering apprenticeship places (and, in a tiny minority of cases traineeships), VI form colleges, and mainstream academy and community schools and their VI forms. In the medium-term, there are two options for how this competition will play out. The first is that choices in the local marketplace will distribute the pool of available students in ways that mean that all the players (pre-existing and any new entrants) in that marketplace have sufficient student numbers and funding to survive although this may mean that in some instances they will need to make adjustments in

curriculum offer, and reduce staffing, estates and other costs. The second possible outcome is that some institutions lose out in this zero sum game competition for students and the money that follows them, their student numbers fall below or never reach (for new entrants) the minimum threshold that is needed to maintain the institution's viability.

As many UTCs, free schools and Studio Schools have discovered to their cost, this 14-19 marketplace can be a brutally unforgiving and very competitive environment. Experience to date suggests that new entrants can face significant barriers to entry into local 11-19/14-19 marketplaces. It may be particularly challenging for Studio Schools and UTCs, as an 'offer' based around the vocational route is a tough road to tread when vocational curricula and provision are inherently treated as representing a remedial/second chance/second rate route relative to the royal road to the 'gold standard' of academic GCSEs and A Levels. In an education system where the key policy aspiration for 'quality' secondary schooling has been for it to lead to entry into higher education, other kinds of destination are implicitly being labelled as second best.   Moreover, as some of the fieldwork for this project has demonstrated, at least in part, Studio Schools have found themselves (by accident or design) acting as a second chance destination for students who, for one reason or another, have not thrived in mainstream, traditionally-structured secondary schooling. This role as second chance institutions creates interesting issues about how the schools then market themselves. How is this model of provision and the students that it attracts liable to play with aspirational parents in a world of league tables and status rankings? Are Studio Schools a niche provider for those not suited to mainstream provision, or are they aiming at a wider audience with an offering that should appeal across the upper end of the ability range? The danger inherent with being a niche provider is that there have been instances where the niche and the level of local demand it serves has proved too small to allow the institution to reach 'critical mass' in terms of student numbers, and has therefore rendered it unsustainable.

In some senses, Studio Schools can run the danger of occupying an uncomfortable middle ground between schools and FE, and there will be strong market forces pulling them towards a mainstream school model and curriculum offering. In some local 14-19 educational marketplaces, where competition is particularly intense, the pressure on Studio Schools is liable to push them back towards selling themselves as more conventional, mainstream-style secondary offerings in order to make them attractive to a wider range of pupils and parents. This pressure plainly has implications for the willingness and ability of the Studio School to maintain the original CREATE framework with its overt emphasis on vocational studies.

Implications for School Management

This study found that all the case study Studio Schools were undertaking a journey, navigating a complex and crowded marketplace and attempting to develop their own institutional identities. Although each school had developed a distinctive ethos, worked with different specialisms, and was implementing the Studio Schools model and the CREATE framework in unique ways, there appeared to be a commonality in the trajectory they were on. At the point

of foundation, almost all the schools attempted to implement all the distinctive aspects of the model (e.g. long operational hours, project based learning, embedded placements, personal coaches, and CREATE sitting at the heart of the school). However, in the face of a wide range of challenges, generally rooted in the move from systems thinking to increased marketisation, the distinctive aspects of the Studio School model were eroded away and schools were being pulled to mainstream approaches and pedagogies.

From the outset, Studio Schools were provided with a great deal of flexibility to implement the model and its distinctive elements in a way that enabled the schools to be tailored to the needs of their local contexts and communities. This meant that Studio Schools were always envisioned as manifesting a diversity of management models, specialisms, relationships with employers, and approaches to skills development. Distinctive institutional identity was to be rooted in membership of the Studio School Trust, which provided centralised administration, training, and guidance for its members as well as convening power and the ability to engage with policy makers, representing the entire network of schools.

However, the Trust was closed due to financial pressures and attempting to operate in a context different to the one it was conceived in. This closure meant that the schools lost a source of guidance and training, meaning that official documentation and training materials associated with Studio Schools were not updated or even 'lost' in relation to emerging challenges and policy changes. Schools lost the ability to engage with policy makers at a strategic level and be represented in a meaningful way. Most importantly, the closure meant that Studio Schools lost their anchor point: the central organisation that held them together despite the flexible affordances of the Studio School model. Our research suggests that the schools were more likely to be shaped by the agendas of their MATs and the pressures of the educational market place than the Studio School's brand, something that was exacerbated by the collapse of the Trust. The flexibility, embedded in the approach espoused by the Trust, appears to have have had an unintended consequence of the schools being more closely allied to schools in their MATs, or other schooling models, than their Studio School peers.

This highlights the importance of some form of parent organisation with adequate funding and capacity to represent Studio Schools' interests, with convening power, and to support all Studio Schools to retain their distinctive institutional identity and implement their innovative vocational model. Since the closure of the Studio Schools Trust, the Studio Schools Network has taken on part of this role. As a grassroots organisation it is able to understand the needs of its members and the management team will be able to engage well with principals of Studio Schools as peers. However, our findings suggest that as the Network establishes itself, it will be important to ensure that it has adequate funding and appropriate administrative support if its role as a meaningful umbrella body that can support its member schools is to be enacted. What will also be important is for the Network's leadership to build its relationship with policymakers, so that Studio Schools can have a voice at the table once again with DfE.

Implications for Implementation of Innovative Approaches to Employability Skills

The marketisation of the education system the model was conceived in and the loss of the parent organisation is the messy reality that Studio Schools must now operate in. If they are to maintain a distinctive vocational offering, with employability skills at its heart, there is a need to help schools navigate the challenges in practical terms. Our research suggested that no single challenge necessarily leads to widespread institutional change. Rather it was the subtle combination of difficulties that came together to gently pull schools towards more mainstream models, eroding distinctive elements a little bit at a time and threatening distinctive institutional identities. However, across all the case study schools there were examples of good practice in navigating the challenges, which, if brought together provide a useful map for Studio Schools, and leaders particularly, to use to implement both the distinctive model and any employability framework that is used in the school. These can be summarised as:

- **LEADERSHIP**: schools attempting to implement innovative models of employability or vocationally-oriented schooling require strong leadership and an unwavering belief in the strengths of the model. While criticality and flexibility are important features of leadership, if schools are to maintain their unique identities and ethos in the face of increasing accountability measures and marketisation, a firm belief in distinctive vocational offering is essential across the whole of a school's leadership. When facing challenges, the path of least resistance is almost always a move towards mainstream schooling models and traditional pedagogic approaches. Strong leadership is required to make the decision to take the harder, distinctive path and support staff in doing so. This is particularly important when employing new leaders after foundational members move on: clear understanding and commitment to the model are essential.

  However, our research has also highlighted the critical importance of having leaders in MATs who understand the Studio School model, or any innovative approaches that their member schools are attempting to implement. In the academised context in which all schools now operate, this strength of leadership within the central administration of a MAT is essential if innovation is to be promoted, broader models of schooling that go beyond purely mainstream approaches are to be included in MATs' portfolio of schools, and school leaders are to be supported. At the same time, now the Studio Schools Trust has closed, strong leadership from the Studio Schools Network will be essential to ensure SLTs across all membership schools are empowered to navigate challenges and maintain a distinctive institutional identity.

- **OWNERSHIP**: the implementation of employability frameworks (such as CREATE) involves multiple stakeholders (students, parents, employers, staff). All stakeholders should have a sense of ownership of the framework and its use to ensure meaningful engagement.

However, it is particularly important to empower students to take ownership of the framework used in the school and so take ownership of their own skills development. Practical measures can be incorporated to encourage this, such as 'skills passports', but a expectations of ownership must be embedded in the implementation of any framework and be explicitly supported by staff.

- **LANGUAGE**: in order to ensure employability frameworks developed or adopted by a school are fit for purpose, the language used must be relevant for all the key stakeholders, particularly the students who may initially be unfamiliar with terms used in the workplace. This may require translation of skills-based materials for different age groups and a more progressive approach to skills development.

- **TRAINING**: the successful implementation of distinctive schooling models and employability frameworks requires dedicated and consistent training for all members of staff. This ensures a shared understanding of the goals and ethos of the school and the framework and clear communication between staff. This is particularly important when new members of staff join the school. There must be appropriate training to ensure that they understand the distinctive aspects of the school and how to implement them. Given the fluid and messy educational market place that Studio Schools must operate in, there is a need for training to be able to react to and incorporate emerging issues and challenges. This is likely to necessitate large scale training providers with the resources and capacity to develop flexible and consistently up to date programme of CPD. Studio Schools may therefore need to work with larger organisation, either through their MATs or through alternative employability frameworks, to ensure they have access to strong support structures and appropriate training.

- **INTEGRATION**: Studio Schools have developed a distinctive employability skills-based schooling offer. Employability frameworks must sit at the heart of this and our research shows that this is most successful when frameworks are embedded and integrated into the whole culture of the school. This ensures that the framework sits at the heart of all school activities allowing for a deep understanding and development of employability skills for both students and staff. This enables schools to market their offer clearly to parents and employers. In a crowded educational market place, having a clear ethos with an embedded employability framework is likely to make Studio Schools stand out.

Wider Implications and an Agenda for Future Work

Our research has highlighted the range of challenges Studio Schools face and the pressure this places on any attempt to maintain a distinctive and innovative vocational model of schooling and successfully implement employability skills frameworks. This raises several critical questions about the role vocational models of schooling can play and how such approaches can achieve parity of esteem with mainstream models in a complex and competitive educational market place. Research suggests that aspirational middle class

parents are still likely to view GCSEs, A Levels and Higher Education as the gold standard educational pathway and so vocational models are viewed as second class educational approaches (Keep 2018). As found in this project, this often leaves vocational institutions in constant danger of simply becoming second chance institutions, the safety valve for a purely academic model.

In a world of league tables and institutional status rooted in exam outcomes, the combination of a competitive market and parental assumptions about the value of vocational models inevitably leads to the failure of a significant number of institutions, with parental choice removing 'weak' provision. However, weak provision is defined in terms that may not relate to the core aims of vocational schooling models. Unfortunately, this is being played out across many Studio Schools. Given the centrality of parental aspirations to this issue, we suggest that a piece of research investigating in depth why parents and their children have chosen vocational models of education is critical. The current educational context, with academisation reshaping the landscape, provides a unique situation to engage these key stakeholders and understand the factors that shaped the decision to take part in vocational schooling. This would provide vital information to help schools navigate the competitive market place and target their key audiences.

However, in a competitive educational market that necessitates institutional failure, there is also an urgent need to look critically and holistically across the whole vocational sector and understand how the different models and approaches relate to each other and what is distinctive about their offerings. This would be a step towards answering the critical questions of what broad lessons can be learned from these different models for mainstream schools trying to engage with issues around employability better and how will these lessons will be clearly communicated with mainstream education.

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