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Towards a framework for care-full teacher learning: stories from the British art show professional development programme

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ABSTRACT

The education system in England can arguably be characterised as care-less. Art teachers, for example, are rarely offered opportunities to acquire subject-specific knowledges. This paper reports on a programme which supported art teachers to engage with the critical, find comfort with/in the indeterminate, and take up the questioning approach espoused in contemporary arts philosophies. We draw on interviews with fourteen teachers and a feminist ethic of care to suggest that the programme's focus on particularity, politics and purpose recognised the realpolitik of teachers' work. Unlike the logic of cause and effect, teachers were trusted to direct their own learning and, over time, they changed their practices. We suggest that this ethical care framework could be more widely used to support transformational teacher learning.

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Subject-specific; art teacher; ethic of care

Care-less organisations are dominant in many countries. Care-less organisations are predominantly concerned with delivery and performance, the measurement of performance and the management of appearances (Normore and Brooks 2016, Samier and Milley 2018).

Since the late 1980s, the school system in England has been marked by: competition between schools; school hierarchisation via inspection and audit; a rhetoric of the benefits of choice and markets; the hollowing out of local authorities and their replacement by academy trusts; and a narrow definition of equity taken to mean performance in a restricted testing and examination regime (Ball 2018, Greany and Higham 2018, Thomson 2020, Hall 2023). Marketised, datafied and underfunded schools' practices mean that teachers work long hours. The most recent DfE figures (Walker *et al.* 2023) show teachers work a 49.5 hour week. While this is down on the 54.4 hours reported in 2016, it is still a heavy load. Wellbeing data produced by a national education charity (Education Support 2023) shows that, in 2023, 78% of teachers reported high levels of stress and an alarming 36% reported they felt burnt out. The survey also showed that a majority of teachers felt isolated and lonely. It is not surprising then that workload is a focus for contestation between teacher unions and government. If the exodus of teachers and school leaders (Mclean *et al.* 2024) can be taken as an indication, the English education system is arguably an exemplary case of a care-less organisation.

National policy reforms in England often focus on teachers as a key instrument/conduit for the effective delivery of organisational goals (Barber *et al.* 2010, Barber 2017). Policy-makers attribute teachers' heavy workload to the burdens of school-based curriculum development (Stacey *et al.* 2023) while also suggesting that teachers not only lack time but also the know-how to effectively

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deliver policy-designated outcomes (Fitz and Nikolaidis 2020). Therefore, professional learning and development has often been directed to ameliorating teachers' perceived lack of expertise (Wilkins 2014, Mutton *et al.* 2024), particularly teachers why are older and more experienced (Spicksley 2021). The policy promise is that 'better teachers' will simultaneously reduce workload (efficiency) and improve students' learning (effectiveness). However, the deficit approach, rather than building on teachers' existing knowledges (Gravani 2007), produces the very deskilling it apparently redresses (Stevenson 2017). As Stevenson (2023) puts it, professional learning that is

> . . .dominated by transmissive modes of 'delivery', often focused on ensuring implementation of some short term institutional objective and in turn driven by the desire to chase a target, or achieve a learning objective, that can seem distant and remote. has never been an appropriate way to think about professional development . . .

This paper focuses on an example of local professional learning and development which does not work in this way.

Our paper focuses on a two-year teacher learning and development programme designed to support art teachers to engage with contemporary visual artists and practices. We introduce and use feminist theories of care to analyse post-programme interviews with fourteen art teachers from fourteen educational settings. We argue that the professional development programme used an ethic of care in tension with the dominant competitive and selective logics of contemporary education policy. The programme's resources, experiences and connections allowed teachers to take charge of their learning and provide new learning experiences for their students. We suggest that this was in reality a form of resistance to a care-less national school system. We propose in conclusion that an ethic of care could be a useful framework with wider application.

At the outset, we need to clarify the ways in which we discuss professional development and learning. We take professional development as a structured process designed to enhance teacher knowledges, skills and competencies. Despite ongoing debates about nomenclature and overlaps (Jones and O'Brien 2024), we discriminate professional development from professional learning – the provision of formal professional development programmes is no guarantee that teacher learning will occur (Hayes *et al.* 2024). We take teacher learning as a continuing, collaborative, reflective and empowering practice. Our interest in this paper is in approaches to continuing professional learning and development (CPDL) which are underpinned by a democratic vision (Sachs 2001, 2003) where learning is self/collaboratively directed to critical reflection and inquiry as well as pedagogical growth (Mockler and Groundwater-Smith 2015, Mansfield and Thompson 2017, Watkins and Noble 2022). For us, professional learning puts teachers in charge of their growth and does not over-emphasise practical applications in the classroom. Professional development that supports this kind of teacher learning challenges care-less organisational practices that largely disregard the existing expertise and intellectual and emotional needs of their staff (Grummell *et al.* 2009).

We begin by signposting the current professional learning available to art teachers in one region in England, followed by an outline of the British Art Show (BAS) professional development programme.

Art teachers and subject-specific professional development and learning

In addition to the general pressures felt by all teachers, art teachers have particular reasons for feeling beleaguered. Changes in the curriculum and school performance measures mandated by policymakers formalised the subject hierarchy between 'academic' and other subjects, leading to schools and students 'choosing' to avoid 'lower status' courses (Thomson *et al.* 2019, Thomson and Hall 2023). Since 2015, GCSE arts entries in England have fallen by 35%. Every arts subject recorded a decrease in entries with art and design in particular dropping by 3.2% from 2022 to 2023. A level figures are on a similarly downward trajectory with 2.7% fewer students enrolled in 2023 than in 2022. Given the disregard for their subject area, it is hardly surprising that an All Party Parliamentary report *Art Now* (APPG for Art, Craft and Design Education 2023) found that four

out of five art and design teacher respondents reported that wellbeing and workload were the two biggest disincentives to stay in teaching. According to the report, 67% of art and design teachers are thinking about leaving the profession.

The *Art Now* report highlighted the paucity of arts education in primary teacher education as well as the limited opportunities available to both secondary and primary teachers to 'develop and maintain their knowledge, confidence and skills in art and design.' The Art Now survey reported that

> a fifth (21%) of secondary art and design teachers are not getting regular access to subject-specific training. Primary teachers had significantly less access to art and design training than their secondary counterparts with 21% reporting they had never attended any subject-specific CPD.

Teachers who engaged in formal professional development programmes generally did so in their own time and at their own expense. *Art Now* found that 87% of teachers surveyed sometimes or always attended art and design professional development in their own time. The programmes were offered by the national subject association, regional networks, specialist consultants, exam boards (secondary), other schools, galleries and arts organisations.

Art teachers, as reported in *Art Now*, have 'a high level of interest in CPD opportunities provided by arts organisations, museums or galleries'. And because the national curriculum enshrines a culturally conservative approach, the CPD programmes for art teachers developed by arts organisations, museums and galleries often aimed to support them to both enact *and* contest the notion that all students must acquire a canon of cultural capital (Thomson and Hall 2022). Art teacher CPD programmes brought specialist art concepts, values and processes into schooling (Thomson *et al.* 2019) potentially resistant to dominant schooling trends (Jeff *et al.* 2008, Bremmer *et al.* 2021).

There is, of course, research on artists and arts organisations working with schools and teachers (Galton 2008, Pringle 2009, Sayers 2011, Hall and Thomson 2017b, Thomson and Hall 2023), and research examining artist-teacher programmes (Adams 2003, Brass and Coles 2014). There is, however, less research on artists and arts organisations working with art teachers where the goal is the acquisition of disciplinary and pedagogic content knowledges (there is some, e.g.Taylor 2023). Our paper thus contributes to understandings of subject-specific teacher learning in art, as well as more generally.

This paper focuses on a teacher CPLD programme designed to encourage art and design teachers in primary and secondary schools to engage with contemporary art. The programme had been running for two years and worked particularly around the British Art Show 9 (BAS9) as well as with subsequent local exhibitions.

The Arts Connect teacher learning programme

The British Art Show is a high status event. The major touring exhibition of contemporary art occurs every five years, visiting four cities across the country. The ninth BAS was organised by the Hayward Gallery in collaboration with institutions across four UK cities including Wolverhampton. The BAS9 website claims that it is 'recognised as the most pertinent and ambitious recurring exhibition of contemporary art produced in the UK, bringing the work of some of the most exciting contemporary artists'(https://homemcr.org/exhibition/british-art-show-9/). The Wolverhampton gallery advertised BAS9 saying "40 artists will be presented, engaging with many of the most urgent issues of our times, including the environmental crisis, identity and belonging, conflict resolution and healing (https://www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk/bas9/).

The Wolverhampton gallery works in partnership with Arts Connect, a regional youth arts organisation in the West Midlands whose mission is to 'create arts and cultural opportunities with and for young people' (artsconnect.co.uk). Arts Connect and the Wolverhampton gallery saw BAS9 as an opportunity to support art and design teachers to feel comfortable and confident teaching about contemporary art practices. BAS9 had particular relevance to art educators keen to diversify

their source materials, improve representations of artists and art forms from a wider range of communities and to address issues of concern to their students. Arts Connect recognised that the creative risk-taking and open-ended practices associated with contemporary art rubbed up against the orthodoxies of contemporary schooling in England (Adams 2010) but held significant opportunities for students (Addison and Burgess 2020, Marshall *et al.* 2021) to develop agency and what Maxine Greene (1977) called wide-awakeness to the world.

The Arts Connect staff member coordinating the programme, Becky T, was a former secondary art teacher and knew well both the curriculum and the challenges of teaching; she brought understandings from both the artworld and schooling to her work. She invited 20 secondary schools, colleges and schools specialising in working with children with special needs to 'explore and be inspired by' the exhibition through a professional development programme which consisted of teacher and student gallery visits and workshops, teacher events, teacher resources, artists visiting classrooms and public exhibitions of students' work produced with artists.

Our research

We were invited by Arts Connect to conduct post-programme interviews with teachers who had worked with them over the two year period. Arts Connect nominated 27 teachers as possible interviewees and we emailed these 27, inviting them to participate; 14 were willing to volunteer. The participating teachers worked across primary ($p = 3$), secondary (S = 8) and further education (FE = 3) settings and included teachers from Special Educational Needs settings (S-SEN = 1) and fee-paying contexts (S-F = 1) (See Table 1). Pseudonyms were assigned to teachers by using a random name generator.

Working with nominated teachers means that this research is not representative of the entire group who participated in the programme, nor of art and design teachers more generally. The volunteer group had had an experience with Arts Connect they wanted to share. They formed a purposeful sample from which useful insights for future developments might be gleaned (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007).

Semi-structured video interviews were conducted by Author 2, one-to-one, online, at the end of the 2022–3 school year. Online interviews were chosen as the medium causing least disruption for time-poor teachers and because we and they had become more familiar with computer-mediated interactions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Time was taken to explain the project, gain informed consent and ensure that teachers were comfortable talking frankly about their experiences (Salmons 2010). Teachers were asked about their professional histories and formal training in art and design, their current role in school and its art and design programme alongside their experiences of the professional development programme. They were also asked about changes they had made to their teaching as a result of the programme.

Most interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. They were recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions were then read and re-read and writing that described them was drafted and re-drafted as a sense-making process (Richardson and St Pierre 2005, Denzin 2014, Coles and Thomson 2016). During this analytic writing process, key themes emerged which became the sections and sub-sections of this paper. The usual ethical protocols of confidentiality and anonymity guided the research. The paper quotes teachers directly in heavily edited form: words have been cut

Table 1. List of participants by the education stage they work in.

Primary (P)	Scott	Pearl	Valorie							
Secondary (S)	Sheila	Susie	Alma	Simon	Joanna	Sara	SEN (S-SEN)	Kim	Fee-paying (S-F)	Jade
Further (FE)	Kali	Rose	Maya							

and phrases have been reordered in order to focus on key points, but no words that were not originally present have been added. Becky T and Arts Connect have been named with permission.

We also spoke with Becky T, the Arts Connect staff member responsible for organising the programme. This was not a formal interview per se, but rather a fact-gathering conversation which focused on what the CPLD programme offered. Additionally, the report we wrote for the organisation, and this paper, have been the subject of further conversation. Arts Connect has never sought to change our analysis but often asked for further clarification or added useful information.

After our initial analysis we turned to theories of care to help us understand and explain further what the teachers told us.

Care

Care is often seen as the business of women within the home or the work of formal education, health and welfare institutions (Bolton 2000, Barnes *et al.* 2015). As such, care has been subject to considerable scholarly exploration and debate across the social sciences and humanities. In this paper, we do not address care as a specific field of activity but, in line with the meaning taken up by the BAS9, as a practice which might occur across society. Care was seen by the BAS9 as a form of resistance, as artist Ian Nesbitt describes:

> To develop tactics for togetherness means to first consider the ways in which care plays out under the radar, in our communities. Care connects us, and once connected, we are entangled. The role of those working on the ground could be to draw out and network these small acts of care as a safety net for what is coming, or through a gloomier lens, what has already begun, in the systematic removal of the institutional structures that currently support our society. (Nesbitt 2022)

Feminist social scientists explain care further. Care, according to Lynch (2022), together with love and solidarity, is integral to human flourishing. An 'affectively egalitarian society', she says, depends on the creation of 'social systems and institutions where people are resourced and enabled to receive as much love, care and solidarity as is humanly possible' (Lynch 2022). Feminist ethicists (e,g. Held, 1995), including within the field of education research (e.g. Gilligan 1982, Noddings 1986, 1992), argue that care comes into play when both the carer and the one being cared for recognise that their relationship is one of care. Subsequent educational interpretations of care (e.g. Renshaw 2017) have worked to avoid essentialist positionings of care while maintaining a relational perspective, the approach we also take.

Care in the relational sense is both structural and interpersonal: it is an ethic, a moral theory, a disposition, an aspect of identity, a form of labour, a matter of law and a normative personal and social measure (Held 2006). Writ large, care is not only the unrewarding slog of social reproduction but also work that resists dehumanisation and has the potential to reconstruct the world as a place of nurturing and creativity (Federici 2012). In practice, care is often a situated and specific tangle of values, routines, actions, narratives and histories.

Fisher and Tronto (1990) see care as a relational process encompassing 'everything we do to maintain, contain, and repair our "world" so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment' (Fisher and Tronto 1990). Defending the notion of care as an ethic which might democratise wider society, Tronto argues that

> Caring requires that one start from the standpoint of the one needing care or attention. It requires that we meet the other morally, adopt that person's, or group's, perspective and look at the world in their terms (1993)

Tronto posited four dimensions of care practices: (1) attentiveness, becoming aware of need; (2) responsibility, being willing to respond and take care of need; (3) competence, having the skills and knowledge to provide effective care; and (4) responsiveness, considering how others see their position and recognising the potential for the responsibilities of caring to be violated (Tronto 1993, pp. 126–136). Tronto later reworded these four points

to direct care providers to the importance of 'the purpose of care, a recognition of power relations, and the need for pluralistic, particular tailoring of care to meet individuals' needs' (2010).

Tronto's ethic of care is not dominant in post-welfare public policy, including education (Gewirtz 2002), but often remains as an oppositional bottom-up practice contesting truths, values, knowledges and processes (c.f Chatzidakis *et al.* 2020, Dowling 2021). Our research looks at one such bottom-up practice explicitly working against care-less teacher CPD initiatives aiming to ensure compliance with policy mandates and raise student and teacher performance in ways that are narrowly measured and hierarchically ranked and rewarded.

The Arts Connect teacher CPLD programme

We report and discuss our interview analysis in three sections. Each section explores how one of Tronto's (2010) interlinked notions – the particularity, politics and purpose necessary for and to care – illuminate the teachers' discussion of their learning. The first section deals with the ways in which Arts Connect approached particularity. The second section shows how the realpolitik of current education policy was addressed. The third section reports on the ways in which Art Connect understood the purposes of their professional development programme and how this met teachers' reported experiences.

Particularity – starting with teachers

According to the *Art Now* report, art teachers' most frequent professional development experience is learning about new policies, or whole school priorities. As already noted, at best this genre takes teachers as tabula rasa; they are assumed to know nothing of the initiative under discussion. At worst, teachers are seen as deficit and part of a 'quality' problem which (re)produces poor results (Towers *et al.* 2023). Arts Connect did not start from this position but presumed that all of the teachers brought some knowledges about contemporary art from their own everyday cultural participation and/or formal art education.

Moreover, Arts Connect attended to differences among the teachers they met. Some teachers felt knowledgeable about contemporary art, having studied it at degree level and beyond: 'My whole degree was very contemporary. We had a person who got a first with a bit of coal in the middle of the room because they could articulate the idea around it. It's about ideas' (Susie, S). Those who had studied art at degree level, however, sometimes found contemporary art inaccessible: 'Some things I look at and think, "What on earth is that?"' (Kali, FE). Others, particularly those teaching in primary schools, had very little experience of even seeing contemporary art exhibitions: 'I hadn't studied art since year nine. That became very alarming when I took on the Art Subject Coordinator role because I myself don't feel particularly cultured' (Pearl, P). Cutting across teachers' histories of engagement with contemporary art were their different levels of teaching experience: some were in the first years of their career, while others had taught for many years and managed their departments.

The BAS9 programme offered different starting points and different pathways for teachers to acquire and work with knowledge. For some, becoming involved with Arts Connect was the beginning of a new learning journey: 'It helped me in my early days as an Art Subject Lead. It calmed me down. It helped me make connections and get some inspiration' (Scott). For others, finding Arts Connect seemed to be the continuation of ongoing learning that had been on pause: 'At Uni, we had lots people coming to talk to us about current research but it's harder when you're out there, getting on. It gives me new ideas, it encourages me to try something new' (Joanna, S). For some, it was experienced as an opportunity to activate and deepen existing knowledges. These teachers reported that they were encouraged to give presentations and share their resources and their input was appreciated by the other teachers: 'When I walked around the BAS, it was other

teachers talking to each other and asking each other questions and responding. It was lovely to meet a peer who had more experience than me and who was able to offer her insights' (Pearl, P).

Starting from different points mirrors the ways in which good art and design teachers work with students' variable interests, understandings and experiences. Yet, despite their differences, all of the teachers valued and used the common knowledges at the heart of the programme, as our next two sections show.

Politics – working with power relations

Schooling is not a neutral activity conducted on a level playing field. It is heavily implicated in the generational reproduction of class, gender, race, disability and sexuality; everyday life in schools is strongly framed by wider societal relations, as well as the workings of education policy and administrative hierarchies (Reay 2017). Arts Connect sought to support art teachers to navigate these within-school and beyond-school contexts, as well as to provide them with resources to work differently in class. The programme did this in two important ways by: (a) working with pressures on teachers, particularly with teachers' time-poverty and (b) working with issues relevant to students.

Dealing with teachers' time-poverty

Through exhibition tours and workshops, teachers acquired knowledge about contemporary artists and artworks and how to introduce them to their classroom. They spoke of valuing how this knowledge was easy to acquire, trustworthy and immediately useful (see Table 2).

While some teachers' desire for immediately useful knowledge could be seen as lacking deeper engagement with conceptual art, preparedness to deliver 'instant' knowledge was a manifestation of Arts Connect's understanding of schools and the difficulties the teachers were experiencing. Arts Connect consciously avoided criticising or exerting pressure on the teachers they worked with. Instead, teacher's initial needs – to have anxieties around the inaccessibility of contemporary art

Table 2. Working with power relations – illustrative quotations, our emphases in italics.

New knowledge was easy to acquire	[Exhibitions are] easy to access if the resources are there. It was great to have [a guide] talk about the work and to go with other art teachers and engage with it in a deeper way. *It was a quick way of having instant knowledge to take back to the classroom*. (Susie, S)
New knowledge was trustworthy	This was a way for me to get know who Arts Connect rate. It's a little tick. It's been checked. There's this bank of artists we can feed into our medium-term plans and *I know they're rated by somebody who knows*. (Valorie, P)
New knowledge was immediately useful	The events helped me understand that the context behind an artwork gives you an insight into what it's about. For example, some of the female artists used very heavy industrial materials and talking about the discrimination they faced gave a way into the artwork. They also asked questions like 'Which artwork is your best friend?' 'Which artwork would help you if you were feeling sad?' 'Which artwork makes you feel uncomfortable?' *They gave me tools to crack into, to open the door, so the children could start to interpret and see things for themselves*. (Pearl, P)
Practical support enabled teachers to participate and to involve students	There is always someone that you can turn to if you've got any questions and *they make the process really easy*. I know everything is thought about. If you send them an email, they'll get straight back to you and you know they'll check in. (Kali, FE)
Teachers and students discussed and made art addressing issues relevant to their lives	There was lots of anatomy drawings and doodles making images out of penises and things. It was a comical take on a serious topic and that was the message [the students] got, that sometimes it's hard to talk about things that are tough. I initially thought, 'Oh, we'll scoot past this because don't want them to get silly about penises but *it opened my mind to thinking that they can tap into abstract concepts and share about themselves*. (Kim S-SEN)

calmed and inputs compatible with existing curriculum structures – were recognised and accommodated.

Teachers also emphasised the importance of Arts Connect's role in setting up projects and offering support as they took place, particularly when their projects involved students. One spoke of the programme turning his dreams into reality by offering ready-made projects that otherwise he would have had to organise himself from scratch: 'I always had dreams to do these things, but now Becky is always emailing different opportunities and projects, it opened up a door' (Simon, S). Teachers described the minor acts of individualised practical assistance that made their participation possible, emphasising the importance of 'just little things like picking up artwork, facilitating things that, when I can't leave school because I've got lessons' (Kim, S-SEN). Care meant not simply offering an opportunity but being aware of, and prepared to do, what was needed in order for it to be taken up.

Addressing students' experiences

In viewing exhibitions, such as the BAS9, teachers and students were introduced to the work of diverse artists and artworks about contentious, pressing social and cultural issues. These are neither the issues valued by the national curriculum (Nightingale 2020), the policy mandate to address 'British values' (Vincent 2019) nor the populist rhetoric of anti-'wokeness' (e.g. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10522731/As-teachers-new-rules-wokeism-Britains-wokest-schools-revealed.html). Yet focusing on these art works prompted teachers to start conversations that students found relevant.

One teacher described her students' surprise at seeing art addressing themes they had not expected in education contexts: 'They saw some videos about drugs and were shocked, like "Wow, this is art?". It opened their eyes to what art could be' (Susie, S). Teachers felt supported by the learning programme to have conversations with students about issues such as race and to address the racial dynamics of the classroom:

> I said 'I'm doing this project at Wolverhampton Art Gallery to do with the Blk Arts Group. I know I'm a white woman' and we all laughed, which was nice to break the ice. It's given me confidence to address those topics because I've got the knowledge to back up difficult questions. We had a speaker at the last Arts Connect event and I asked her 'I've had situations where there is absolute uproar if I introduce these topics'. And she reassured me 'It's because they don't get to express their opinions on these things because teachers aren't confident to address them'. I feel empowered that students are able to discuss these issues in Art. (Joanna, S)

Teachers told us that dialogue around political issues offered a way into making conceptual art in the classroom, finding that it helped students 'think about why they're doing things, to really think about their own ideas' (Susie, S). They found that opportunities for their classes to exhibit work through the programme further deepened students' interest in the meaning of their own work: 'Week in, week out, students create artwork that stays in their books. [But being exhibited] aided conversations about "How can you reach people?" "How do you communicate your message?" "How do you change the world through art?"' (Alma, S).

Purpose – pluralistic learning pathways

Arts Connect did not see the programme operating to 'deliver' a pre-specified outcome but instead saw that supporting teachers to engage with contemporary art meant allowing them to take charge of their own learning. The teachers we spoke to likewise understood the programme to be supporting them to develop their own relationship with contemporary art and their own approach to teaching it. Learning journeys were different for different teachers, as they chose to engage in the particular projects and events that supported their own purposes, such as connecting with other teachers and artists, engaging more deeply with students' own artistic journeys or bringing conceptual questions to the classroom.

Teachers reported that their purpose in engaging with the learning programme developed in different ways over time (see Table 3). Some teachers became less interested in teaching skills and more interested in students' processes of exploring and experimentation: 'For me, art was learn a skill and then create something to present that skill with. But now it's not about what the finished piece looks like, it's what the student discovered and what they thought and felt' (Kim, S-SEN). Others became less interested in knowledge and more interested in concepts and questions: 'I was always thinking "How do I explain that concept to a child?" But it widens your horizons. I don't have to always answer the questions. Sometimes I just have to pose them' (Sheila, S). Many spoke of coming to enjoy taking risks in their teaching: 'I enjoyed knowing that I could do something a bit different. There's a sense of pride in knowing I can take risks' (Valorie, P).

An increased appetite for risk-taking was linked, by teachers, to their becoming a part of a like-minded community. This gave them strength to advocate for art within their school:

> When we have our exhibition next week, all the SLT (senior leadership team) will be out and 'Aren't we a wonderful department'. But we've had to fight to get there. We have to be forthright and go, 'This is what we want to do. We will need support in doing it'. Sharing good practice is a massive confidence boost for risk-taking. (Sheila, S)

Teachers also attributed the evolution of their purpose in engaging with the BAS9 programme to the development, or activation, of their own relationship with artworks, art institutions and art practice. Several teachers discussed how seeing exhibitions and engaging in practical workshops inspired them to draw on their own art practice to extend their teaching repertoire, for example, to work with a wider range of media in the classroom: 'I specialised in alternative photographic processes. Seeing Rachel Whiteread's work, that's also about this idea of emptiness, negative space, and then the workshop we did with alginate and plaster casting, really gave me the confidence to try 3D [with students]' (Jade, S-F). Others discussed the value they came to see in connecting their teaching to local art exhibitions, which allowed them to engage students in artworlds they could become part of: "You can say to the kids, 'You can go and see this. It's in the art gallery and it's free and it's on your doorstep" (Rose, FE). Another teacher described how the Arts Connect programme helped her find new ways to use her real-world experience as an artist in her teaching: 'It was my first opportunity to be working with the real artworld and with my students, with me as a teacher in the middle. It was those worlds colliding in a really cohesive and productive way' (Maya, FE).

Table 3. Pluralistic learning pathways – illustrative quotations, our emphases in italics.

Teachers became integrated in a supportive, like-minded community	It was really nice to speak to other art teachers and find out that they were having some of the same challenges as me. *It's been nice to get that reassurance from other people that they've got similar values*. (Susie, S)
Teachers became more open to student exploration	The artist was really open. 'It's up to you what you do. Here's lots of materials. Off you go.' And the children really responded. We've got learning objectives that we have to hit but *I did watch that lesson and think 'Maybe I'm too controlling sometimes'*. (Valorie, P)
Teachers deepened their interested in using questions in teaching	So one thing [the visiting artist] brought was a level of questioning. He was interested in how the classroom works as a space. What could this place be? *That kind of question we use all the time now*. (Simon, S)
Teachers developed their own relation to artworks and drew on this in their teaching	[Visiting exhibitions] opened my eyes to my responsibility to have my have my own thoughts, my own opinions, and to enjoy artwork *so I can talk passionately and meaningfully about it and inspire my students to have their own experiences* as well. (Pearl, P)
Teachers became engaged with their local artworld and put value on connecting their students to it	The beauty of this subject is that there's always new things happening, new opportunities, so keeping in the know, being in the loop, is really important. *I wasn't in the loop before but now I am*. (Sheila, S)

But the teachers' learning was neither uniform nor universal. Some of the teachers experienced tensions between their developing pedagogical content knowledges and desires and their school situation. Difficulties included lack of time, for attending events and programmes and for their own art-making, and a disconnect between their initial training and developing interests and the expectations of their institution.

Care-full professional learning – towards a framework

The Art Connect CPLD programme focused on subject-specific learning needs against the grain of dominant practice; it allowed teachers to find their own way through a menu of offerings rather than offer a one-best way, and it did not predetermine outcomes, in contrast to a linear and causal approach. While the programme might be seen by some as transformative (Boylan *et al.* 2023), Arts Connect had a more modest purpose – teachers determining the levels and types of changes they wanted to make to benefit them and their students.

Our analysis of the fourteen teacher interviews suggests that it is possible to offer a teacher learning programme which supports transformation of practice. Our use of an ethic of care framing showed that it was the combination of

- particularity – that art teachers came with different experiences needs and interests and needed to find their own point of connections in and with the programme
- politics – that, like their peers, art teachers were dealing with heavy workloads and difficulties in discussing issues related to students' wider societal experiences, but it was possible to meet at least some of these needs without the learning becoming instrumental
- purpose – that, if supported, art teachers could and would take control of the pacing, direction and sequencing of their own learning and this could lead to significant changes in practice.

Using Tronto's ethic of care lens we can see and say that the processes used by Arts Connect were:

(1) attentiveness, becoming aware of need – Arts Connect staff paid attention to and were knowledgeable about teachers' working conditions, the art and design curriculum, and the philosophies and practices of contemporary arts.
(2) responsibility, being willing to respond and take care of need – Arts Connect staff understood that there was little systemic or even school provision of subject-specific learning and saw that they could fill this gap
(3) competence, having the skills and knowledge to provide effective care – Arts Connect saw their job as one of skilled brokerage rather than as the sole provider of learning – they commissioned artists, developed resources and provided regular opportunities for teachers to share their existing expertise and learning experiences.
(4) responsiveness, considering how others see their position and recognising the potential for the responsibilities of caring to be violated – Arts Connect respected the rights of teachers to participate in the ways that suited them, they exerted no pressure despite there being expectations of performance and outcomes from their own arts funders. The teachers came first not their own organisational needs.

We suggest that this analytic framework is potentially useful as a heuristic to think not only about what is to be learnt in CPLD but also the participants, their contexts and the processes of professional learning. We offer some questions that could help those interested, particularly those who are designing professional development programmes (see Table 4).

In passing, we note that these kinds of questions are synonymous with the pedagogies espoused by those interested in creative and arts-based practice – open-ended, risk-taking, and process-oriented (Hall and Thomson 2017a).

Table 4. Care-full questions for professional learning designers.

Focus	Questions for professional learning designers to ask
Particularity	How much and what diversity is there among teachers in relation to: • Their knowledge about the topic • The needs of their students • Their interests and experiences How can I cater for all these – points of entry, connection and pathways through?
Politics	What are the key work challenges faced by teachers? What can I do to make it possible for teachers to participate, given these challenges?
Purpose	What are my expectations of the outcomes of the programme? How do I allow for professional agency? Do I trust teachers to take control of the foci, pacing, sequencing of their learning? How will I account for there being a range of outcomes from the programme if this is the result? Am I willing to take the risk of the programme 'failing'?

A brief word by way of conclusion

The Arts Connect professional development programme was limited. Teachers said that it did change their teaching practices. But, while the programme addressed the material conditions of teacher's work, it did not transform them. It did, however, support an alternative approach to art teacher CPLD with potential lessons for others wishing to introduce new subject-specific knowledge and pedagogies.

The 'limitations but' approach also applies to this research. A small context-bound project does not, and cannot, lead to a scaleable new model of CPLD for art teachers, or indeed all teachers. However, it does offer an alternative underpinning ethic which might be worked with, and worked over, in other settings. A care-full approach can perhaps be thought of as an axiological proposition, a potential principled framework to support reflective CPLD design and practices. This is not insignificant. An ethic of care, as argued by Tronto, is relational, interdependent, every-day and dynamic. Care is not simply oppositional but is directed to the creation of alternatives. Care is for change and renewal (Barnes *et al.* 2015). In a system marked by dehumanising practices, care is political.

Care also requires dialogue and deliberation. We hope that our paper contributes to a growing conversation about teacher professional learning and development as an ethic of care rather than as a causal and essentialist process designed to achieve reductive organisational ends.

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