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The rhetorics of creativity:
A review of the literature

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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

These reports have been commissioned to introduce readers to the main principles, theories, research and debates in the field. They aim to introduce the major themes and writing pertaining to each area of study and to outline key trends and arguments. The executive summary and bibliography offer pointers for further research and application.

Acknowledgements

Cover photograph:
Generation by Joe Hillier at the headquarters of One Northeast,
the regional development agency Photographer: David Williams

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A report for Creative Partnerships

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Foreword

Creative Partnerships aims to develop schoolchildren's potential, ambition, creativity and imagination, by building sustainable partnerships between schools, creative and cultural organisations and individuals, which impact on learning. Phase 1 of the programme ran from April 2002 to March 2004. Sixteen Creative Partnerships were established in areas of economic and social disadvantage. Each Creative Partnership brokered partnerships between 15-25 schools and creative individuals and organisations. Nine Phase 2 Creative Partnerships areas joined the initiative in September 2004 and eleven Phase 3 areas joined during September 2005.

Creative Partnerships aims to influence policy and practice in both the education and cultural sectors. It was established by Arts Council England, with funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in response to the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) report by Ken Robinson: *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*. It spearheads a raft of initiatives designed to develop creativity and encompasses social, personal and economic domains. As a flagship project, Creative Partnerships can have maximum impact if teachers, parents, children, young people and creative practitioners learn from the experience and activities that are delivered through the programme. For this reason one of the most significant legacies of Creative Partnerships will be the product of its research and evaluation and how that is effectively communicated to stakeholders.

However, because Creative Partnerships works by creating partnerships drawn from the widest fields of endeavour, the different stakeholders recognise that there is a 'knowledge gap' between reflection, analysis and learning from Creative Partnerships. In addition, the wide focus of approach, which is fundamental to the eclectic nature of creativity, means that people are often working at the limit of their disciplines.

For these reasons we have commissioned a series of research monographs exploring the key issues in a range of current literature and summarising the latest developments in each subject. Each monograph is written by an experienced and respected author or authors in their field. The reports aim to be accessible, clearly referenced and to act as 'stepping-stone' resources to underpin the research conducted by and for Creative Partnerships.

This report surveys the core concept of creativity. It sets out an original way to disentangle the range and variety of theories and understandings of the concept. Most of us use the word 'creativity' or 'creative' casually with a range of different meanings. However, the key insight of this report is that it is helpful to understand the term in its historical and social context. There are (at least) nine different uses of the term 'creativity' and when we use it we bring into our conversations a host of assumptions and implications. Often we are not fully aware of those implications and the authors of this report suggest that there are many opportunities for misinterpretation - that my notion of creativity may not be the same as yours.

Creative Partnerships in general espouses an eclectic notion of creativity. In a large and complex national programme, it does not pretend to simply follow one narrow use of the term. By definition, the wide range of practitioners involved in the programme will bring to their practice different histories and expectations. This report aims to help all those involved in creative programmes to develop a more finely nuanced and informed understanding of how we might be using the term and thereby be able to plan and evaluate creative education activities in a more coherent fashion.

This is an important and original report laying out a helpful and scholarly understanding of a key issue. Its central message is that we should not use the idea of creativity superficially, that in our concern to develop the education system and provide more 'creative' learning opportunities we need to be realistic and informed about what we are trying to achieve. We hope that it will enhance the quality and effectiveness of all of our discussions about our aspirations to develop creativity in young people.

Dr. Julian Sefton-Green

Dr David Parker

Creative Partnerships

Executive summary

This report takes as its basic premise the notion that the idea of creativity is constructed as a series of rhetorics: claims emerging from the contexts of academia, research, policy and practice. The purpose of such an approach is to help educators and practitioners to see more clearly how such constructions work, what claims are being made, and how they might locate themselves in relation to these rhetorics.

We were able to distinguish nine rhetorics, around which the sections of the review are organised, and which are summarised in the conclusion.

We further found a number of themes which cross-cut the rhetorics. We have posed these as questions, which it is not the place of this review to answer, but which can be productively addressed by planners of creative learning projects.

The conclusion details these themes under four key questions, which ask whether creativity is an internal cognitive function or an external cultural phenomenon; whether it is a ubiquitous human activity or a special faculty; whether it is inevitably 'pro-social' (orientated towards social conformity and/or culturally specific, accepted definitions of collective well-being) or can also be dissident or even anti-social; and what the implications are for a creative model of teaching and learning.

1. Introduction

Academics, policy-makers and arts educators deploy a range of claims about creativity which emerge from different theories of learning, different contexts (artistic, bureaucratic, pedagogic, political), different artistic traditions (fine arts, popular arts, different artforms, commercial art), different academic or quasi-academic traditions (liberal-humanist literary theory; aesthetics; philosophy; psychology; communication and media studies; cultural studies), and different policy contexts (social inclusion; vocational education; gifted and talented). This review will explore what the different discursive positions claim about creativity, and how they function as rhetorical stances.

By rhetorics, we mean in this context a subset of discourse, characterised by specific properties:

- they are highly elaborated structures, drawing on distinctive traditions of philosophical, educational, political and psychological thought

- they are organised to persuade, as a form of 'communicative action' (Habermas, 1984), seeking to bring about consensus, leading in some cases to intervention in specific contexts of practice

- they produce discursive frameworks such as key terms and taxonomies which can be learnt by practitioners who either need them or are obliged to use them. In this way they feed back into more general 'popular' discourses of creativity.

The key objectives of the review are:

- to identify a distinct set of rhetorics of creativity which can be of use for researchers and practitioners in the field of creative learning

- to identify a set of cross-cutting themes, posed as questions, which can similarly be used in planning, evaluation and research

- to make the argument that creativity is to be seen more productively through these rhetorics than through narrow and unchanging characterisations that seek to endorse particular definitions, making different stances more entrenched and more difficult to reconcile and debate.

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1.1 Methodology

Our methodology has been to hypothesise:

- that organised, conscious, structured models of creativity, whether they emerge from policy imperatives, philosophical traditions or empirical research, are always mobilised, or ready to be mobilised, in the interests of intervention in practice or policy, and can be termed rhetorics, as distinct from discourses
- to refine and develop our provisional list of such rhetorics through an increasingly selective literature review, narrowing to two or three key texts which represent each rhetoric
- to identify cross-cutting themes from the rhetorics, leading in turn to productive questions for project planners, and to test these with authorities in the field of creative learning[1].

The limits of the review are:

- we will only briefly sketch the provenance of particular traditions from which the rhetorics emerge; certain rhetorics, such as those focusing on divine creation, are not considered
- we cannot consider how the rhetorics might overlap with discourses of creativity used by teachers, children and artists
- we cannot rehearse arguments at length; merely briefly indicate their direction and sources for fuller exposition.

[1] This took place at an expert seminar held at The Knowledge Lab, University of London, in January 2006.

2. Creative genius

While notions of the artist as creative genius have their seeds in the Renaissance, they did not come into their own until the 18th century when the idea of artistic genius began to be articulated in relation to the specific personality traits of 'great' artists and their 'inspired' works. As Paul Kristeller noted:

[f]or the first time, the term "creative" was applied not only to God but also to the human artist, and a whole new vocabulary was developed to characterize the artist and his activity although there were some partial or scattered precedents to be found in ancient and Renaissance thought. The artist was guided no longer by reason or by rules but by feeling and sentiment, intuition and imagination; he produced what was novel and original. And at the point of his highest achievement he was a genius. (1990: 250).

Perhaps the most influential Enlightenment definition of genius is in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, which presents genius as the 'mental aptitude' necessary for the production of fine art, a capacity characterised by originality, and opposed to imitation. This view dominated a particular strand of the Romantic sensibility (especially the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge), and is arguably still a strong presence in popular notions of creativity, as well as in what we call a 'traditionalist' academic view.

While some commentators in contemporary discussions of creativity remain implicitly attached to the idea that some people are more creative than others, few educators now wish to promote models of singular creative genius. The sociological critique of Kant proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (1984) opposes Kant's view that a refined cultural sensibility was a universal property, arguing instead that it is the restricted taste of a particular (bourgeois) social class. This critique offers a democratic view of popular cultural taste and, by implication, of the capacity for artistic production. In this section, we look at what a modern version of the belief in artistic genius

might make of creativity and raise the question: to what extent is 'creative practice' a modern debasement of 'real' artistic endeavour on the part of lone artists? One who does propose this view, the conservative, neo-Kantian philosopher Roger Scruton, begins by expressing his fear and dislike of more democratic versions of creativity.

2.1 A traditionalist view

Scruton's negative views of modernist art and architecture turn on his sense of a loss of balance, tradition, skill and insight. While these views are fairly extreme and now well known, they bear revisiting here because they lead him to recapitulate more clearly than elsewhere his sense of the significance of individual romantic genius for the arts. In an essay entitled 'After Modernism', he draws a distinction between the products of architecture and those of other artforms:

> *Our best bet in architecture is that the artistic geniuses should invest their energy…in patterns that can be reproduced at will by the rest of us. …Most of the architecture that surrounds us is bound to be second-rate, uninspired, and uninspiring…. In making innovation and experiment into the norm, while waging war against ornament, detail, and the old vernaculars, modernism led to a spectacular loss of knowledge… and to a pretension to originality in a sphere where originality, except in the rare hands of genius, is a serious threat to the surrounding order (Scruton, 2000).*

Notably, while the language used here counterposes the ordinary with the exceptional, there is a sense in which 'novelty' is viewed as a negative, almost dangerous, attribute when proposed by those who do not possess the requisite skill and inspiration to maintain a link with what is seen to be the best in the past.

This despairing attitude to modernism in the arts has its counterpart in Scruton's view of creativity in education. Criticising the Plowden report on primary education for what he sees as its contribution to a steady decline in educational standards, Roger Scruton argues that the report's ideology was one of 'expressionist egalitarianism'. This involved, in his view, 'the belief that the purpose of education is to realise the potential of each child, that the potential is, in some deep sense, equal, and that the way to realise it is not through discipline or instruction, but through a process of free expression' (1987: 39). Scruton's pejorative view of television (1987: 40) and of 1960s-fuelled cultural, social and educational practice in general is evident. In attacking the work of Tracy Emin (The Sunday Times,

Artist Anthony Whishaw RA at Acme Bonner Road Studios in East London, during Arts Unwrapped in November 2005. Arts unwrapped was created and funded by Creative London in partnership with Arts Council England and ASC Studios. Photographer: Dave King.

20 May 2001), for instance, Scruton announces his disgust at 'personal' expression, self-indulgent (feminist) commentaries on the body, spontaneous (unskilled) production, and everything he considers to be anti-authoritarian and pushing against the 'rules'.

2.2 The degradation of art?

Scruton is not alone in his concerns about the debasement of 'real' art, the rejection of 'training', 'rules', 'traditions' and so on. Websites such as 'The Illinois Loop' (a supposedly critical look at school education in that state) pride themselves on taking issue with 'creative' aspects of the modern arts curriculum. Indeed, like Scruton, they mobilise parental concern around what they define as a binary opposition between 'pointless creativity' and 'real learning':

> *When your 6th grader comes home and proudly shows you the "art project" he made in school from shoeboxes, duct tape, and spray paint, a valid question is, "Is my child learning anything about art?"*
>
> *In the context of the art program itself, the overwhelming emphasis in most schools is on art as a hobby and craft, with heavy favoritism of "creative" projects (painting an album cover, decorating a hub cap, etc.). **Yes, it's fun. And some of the projects are indeed delightful. And no one doubts that kids should have time to be kids and let their creativity thrive.** (Their emphasis)*
>
> *But what is missing?*

(http://www.illinoisloop.org/artmusic.html)

Other comments on this website, as well as the articles it links to, clearly favour a view of art in schools as being about the teaching of history and theory in relation to established canonical figures and their works; as well as about the learning of what is seen as 'classical' art via discipline and the acquisition of a range of skills used by internationally-known western European and American artists from the 15th century onwards. The view of art as being about self-expression is derided as a mere loss of skill and in some cases as an apology for absent skills. In conjunction, the point is made that a crafts-based view of the arts in schools leads to children producing work that does not deserve the label 'art', let alone the label 'creative'.

Such traditionalist and/or conservative commentaries on culture, the arts and education keep alive old stereotypes about their opponents that are frequently misleading, and in doing so they tend to marginalise even the most pertinent aspects of their own critique. As may be seen in sections below, 'progressive' commentators on the arts and education often share an emphasis on tradition, conventions and rules, as well as on originality and novelty in writing and art which echoes some of the concerns raised by authors in this section (cf. Negus and Pickering 2004; Pope 2005). More to the point, there has been in such writing an emphasis on training, skills and hard work (cf. Negus and Pickering 2004: 68) of which even Scruton might approve.

3. Democratic and political creativity

In this section we examine examples of research that highlight the democratic nature of creativity, its relation to cultural politics, and its role in young people's identity construction, through their interactions with popular culture and the social structures around them. Our main examples dwell on the struggle over the purpose and outcomes of collective forms of cultural participation amongst disenfranchised communities and groups. In tandem, questions about the connection between creativity and different definitions of culture (arts-related or more general, elite or popular, social or anthropological) run throughout the research and provide interesting parallels with those in later sections.

3.1 Creativity and marginalised cultural forms

Paul Willis' opening to the book based on the Gulbenkian funded project, *Common Culture*, castigates 'high' culture for elitism:

The institutions and practices, genres and terms of high art are currently categories of exclusion more than of inclusion. They have no connection with most young people and their lives. They may encourage some artistic specialisations but they certainly discourage much wider and more symbolic creativity… (Willis 1990: 1).

Against this, Willis makes the case for the creativity he sees as inhering in the everyday life of young people. He argues that this form of creativity has been devalued, even denied, and needs to be recognised or, as he puts it, 're-cognised'. He maintains:

most young people's lives are not involved with the arts and yet are actually full of expressions, signs and symbols through which individuals and groups seek creatively to establish their presence, identity and meaning... This is the realm of living common culture. (1990: 1).

Willis sets out his project as being to 'understand popular representation through and in the everyday. .. to present and understand the creative symbolic elements of everyday life' (Ibid: 6), and it is a broadly 'ethnographic' methodology (Ibid: 7) that enables *Common Culture* to do this. Willis takes issue with the

notion of Romantic genius, and, effectively, the Kantian aesthetic, arguing that '[t]hose who stress the separateness, the sublime and quintessential in art have actually assumed and encouraged a mindlessly vulgar materialist view of everyday life' (Ibid: 10). Against this, Willis argues that:

symbolic work and creativity place identities in larger wholes. Identities do not stand alone above history, beyond history.... memberships of race, class, gender, age and region are not only learned, they're lived and experimented with (Ibid: 12).

Some of the examples Willis explores are the 'ironic' buying of products based on advertising, even where the young person is aware that they do not need or even like the product; sports and games with their individual, physical and sociable potential, engagement with aspects of discourse in teenage magazines, dancing in front of a mirror at home and dressing in particular fashions such as punk or glam rock when attending music concerts.

This almost uniformly celebratory commentary on the creative negotiations of identity taking place in youth communities via interactions with popular and other cultural products does raise some problematic issues. Much identity work – whether amongst youth or others – is practically premised on exclusion as much as inclusion, on rejection of others as frequently as on acceptance, and on what may be called a learnt acceptance of particular aspirations and boundaries, roles and positionings. Since this is the case, regardless of the label 'creative', the symbolic identity work of the young is as likely as any other area of human endeavour to be beset by quite real inequalities, hierarchies and prejudices. Additionally, Willis' account has been critiqued by Buckingham (2003) for its blurring of boundaries between cultural consumption and cultural production.

3.2 Policy discourse

In this context it must be noted that educational practice is very often situated between the extremes of 'elite' and 'democratic' views of creativity; and the aims, rhetorics and practices of individual projects may be positioned at various points on the spectrum. They are then pulled in different directions by a number of factors which might include policy imperatives such as social inclusion or provision for the 'gifted and talented' as well as the need for a school to bid for funding and compete for pupils. These issues are often related to forms of cultural politics, either explicitly or implicitly. Thus, more inclusive practices are seen as

democratising forces, or even as forces for social change – as is evident in literature emanating from organisations such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and indeed is behind the development of Creative Partnerships itself. However, at the level of policy, creativity is being constructed in quite contradictory ways: it is supposedly overwhelmingly important, but also marginal to the mainstream curriculum in terms of time and resources.

The National Curriculum in Action website for promoting creativity (http://www.ncaction.org.uk/creativity/), for example, defines creativity as in the NACCCE report (section 5): creativity is imaginative and purposeful, and produces original and valuable outcomes. Its definition of these attributes is careful to make key distinctions: it distinguishes between imagination and purposeful imagination and defines originality as new to the child, not necessarily the world. It reflects largely the cognitive approaches explored in sections 8 and 10 and makes no reference to cultural content or context. The following headings indicate QCA's priorities:

- 'creativity improves pupils' self-esteem, motivation and achievement'
- 'creativity prepares pupils for life: an important aim of the national curriculum'
- 'creativity enriches pupils' lives'

This site thus combines rhetoric about the future of the economy and society (cf. section 6) with a somewhat generalised version of little 'c' creativity of the kind identified in section 4. The rest of this section concerns itself with several interrelated questions that arise from the contrast between creativity in Willis' account and in the policy literature.

3.3 Creativity and political challenge

CAPE UK carries out projects with children and young people in a range of educational contexts. Their guide *Young Roots, Your Roots*, based on the findings of a series of 'community cohesion' projects in Yorkshire schools in summer 2004 coordinated by CAPE UK[2], is aimed at people working with the 5-13 year old age group in communities and schools, school leaders and teachers or Local Education Authority (LEA) officers and artists or creative practitioners undertaking 'creative' work in schools. Several of the projects reviewed are instructive about the gaps in project-based arts work with children in complex cultural situations.

While key policy ideas centre on the issues of preparation, collaboration and a mixture of knowledge and production (in the case study about designing a comic based on ideas about citizenship in Hull primary schools), there are clearly political issues in play around the choice of the topic. Instead of exploring these, the report chooses to emphasise practical issues. For instance, artist Simon Crook worked with five groups of pupils and overcame their initial anxieties about not being able to draw. This outcome, like those described by Maria Balshaw (2004), is clearly linked to a growth in individual confidence and improved interpersonal skills. The project ranged from discussions of what it means to be a citizen and British (with some refugee and migrant children present) to storyboarding and producing a high quality comic strip. However, the politics of representation in the subject matter chosen, and the artist's and children's relationships to this, is given little space; as is the question of whether and how these representations subsequently interacted with their understanding of their rights as citizens.

Attempting to bridge the gap between policy rhetoric and institutional contexts, Graham Jeffery (2005) makes the case for creativity in relation to post-compulsory arts education, as 'these broader modes of expression can foster engagement and commitment in young people who are disengaged from other forms of learning but find ways of developing autonomy and self-knowledge through participation in the arts' (2005: 2). Like the

[2] Creative Partnerships are amongst CAPE's funders, as are the Home Office and the Arts Council of England. Of real interest is the 'checklist of issues to consider' for community cohesion; its clarity and scope are significant as they include advice about 'getting started, making community links, involving parents and carers, listening to the voices of young people, sustaining the work, respecting the time, skills, knowledge and input of teachers, establishing strong, equal working partnerships' (*Young Roots, Your Roots*, page 24).

notion of culture which is conceptualised as cultural democracy, the notion of creativity proffered here is defined as critical, dialogic, socially engaged and always alive to the dynamics of social power. It is also keenly aware of the potential and pitfalls of buying into the need for cross-institutional partnerships (2005: 13).

In this context, the critique by Thomson et al of the conduct, experience and outcomes of one arts project and its various implications for the everyday life of an ordinary primary school, makes worthwhile reading. In the abstract to their piece 'An arts project failed, censored or….?', (2006) Thomson et al begin:

> *When a successful primary school engaged a writer to work with children on an arts project, they thought that the result would be a lively, publishable product. When the writer worked with the children, he thought that he should use the children's experiences and ideas as a basis for meaningful and engaged composition. However, the result was a text which the headteacher and her staff felt was inappropriate. They were concerned that it could bring disapproval from parents and possible adverse publicity. The head refused to publish but continues to worry about this decision. The writer describes the project as censored.*

Thomson argues that the thought-provoking writing and imagination of the children in this Midlands primary school are effectively censored by the headteacher for fear that their sardonic, ironic or dark ideas will undermine parents' faith in the school, offend various members of the school community and cause a scandal in the press. The parts of the children's work with the artist/writer in residence that are most creative and challenging are those that cause the most conflict, leading to a question about the entire project in the first place.

This section has raised questions about both the creative status of popular culture and how creativity that is seen to be potentially disruptive and anti-social, politically challenging or problematic, can retain these important aspects in highly controlled institutional settings. Sometimes the confluence of project and local institutional environment means that even limited project goals, centring on the issue of youth inclusion, may not be met, while teachers may be left feeling patronised and unconsulted. Meanwhile, arts educators and project leaders need to be rigorous in their evaluations of the contexts within which their projects contribute to the experiences of young people.

Generation by Joe Hillier at the headquarters of One Northeast, the regional development agency. Photographer: David Williams.

Willis' work has been criticised for cultural populism (McGuigan, 1992), for an analysis of youth culture which depicts creative work as being of such autonomy that no intervention, political or educational, appears to be necessary. However, read against the backdrop of the arts projects described by Thomson et al, Willis' work raises thorny questions about the definition of 'culture', the notion of canonical works, the rights of some to include and exclude from this canon, and the relationship between elite and popular forms. His answers to these questions, while raising further issues, do at least connect ideas about creativity to those about culture with more clarity than some of the other rhetorics we will examine (notably those of the Community Arts movement and in the NACCCE report: see section 5).

The move from a view of creativity that is at best premised on the exceptional genius of a few inspired individuals and the will of a slightly larger number to study and emulate them, to one of democratic inclusiveness still leaves questions to be asked, especially concerning the problematic issues of value (and evaluation – see Sefton-Green and Sinker, 2000) and the ideals of social restructuring and transformation. Is all the symbolic creativity found in the everyday life of youth the same? How can playing with identity at a symbolic level through engagement with popular culture or subculture lead to real enfranchisement, to opportunities for access to experiences in other real arenas, to political change? Finally, could it be said that in reserving the notion of creativity for activity that links the construction of identity to cultural knowledge and the arts, rather than to other spheres of life, this view still refuses to acknowledge and value the ubiquitous creativity of everyday life?

4. Ubiquitous creativity

Anna Craft (2001) emphasises that the move towards empirical rather than theoretical studies of creativity in the early years of the 20th century took place in four major traditions: the psychoanalytic, cognitive, behaviourist and humanistic. She suggests that, in education, the definitions of creativity that have had most purchase in the last 50 years have been those that marry creativity and imagination, and take an inclusive approach by suggesting that everyone has the potential for creativity as it is a fundamental aspect of human nature. She refers to the NACCCE definition of creativity from 1999: 'Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value' (1999: 29) - asserting that there have been two waves of conceptualising creativity in early years education: a romantic notion of personal creativity and a strong emphasis on social systems. In line with these approaches, a great deal of educational policy – for example, on the part of organisations such as QCA in their online document, *'Creativity: Find it; promote it'*[3]– has focused on notions of 'fostering' creativity. Craft, however, sees the national curriculum definition of creativity as a 'cross curricular thinking skill' as being misleading in linking creativity to a singular 'skill' that is not based on a domain of knowledge. She argues that recent curriculum development is incoherent in that it advocates creativity in principle while moving early years teaching methods towards formalised, structured and 'basic skills' approaches.

4.1 Little 'c' creativity

Craft's own approach – what she calls the third wave – is 'little 'c' creativity', the ability to cope effectively with changing life in the 21st century. She distinguishes this clearly from creativity in the arts and from the paradigm-shifting creativity of 'great' figures[4]. This creativity she says is based on 'possibility thinking', which for her, means 'refusing to be stumped by circumstances but being imaginative in order to find a way around a problem' (2000: 3-4). Craft maintains that her notion, while being practical in that it ties all domains of life – the ethical, social and conceptual – to each other in everyday contexts, is also akin to the romantic notion (in the tradition of Rousseau and Blake) as it has its roots in a sense of personal growth and fulfilment as well as personal divergence and agency. She maintains, in addition, that little 'c' creativity means the overcoming of obstacles such as job loss and poverty and the taking up of opportunities. Challenging 'instrumental' justifications of creativity, Jeffery (2005) maintains that '[a]n inclusive rationale for participation in cultural activity would draw on notions of everyday creativity (eg Craft, 2001)… (2005: 16)'.

4.2 Critiquing little 'c' creativity

Clearly, however, for those in favour of retaining a particular link between creativity and the arts and culture this approach raises a number of key questions. Is this view of creativity, as an ability to be flexible in meeting the demands of life, incompatible with the notion of creativity as something that adds a special quality to life? For Thomson and Hall (2006), it is divergence and challenge, rather than the ability to successfully negotiate everyday life that is at the heart of creative endeavour. They argue that while they 'reject a notion of vulgar elitism', they 'also reject a notion of vulgar creativity which everyone is supposed to possess in equal measure [and] look for a theory about a creativity/ies which is/are more heterogeneous, recognises difference, redistributes cultural capital and decentres dominant classed, raced and gendered pedagogies, knowledges and practices' (Thomson and Hall, 2006). Negus and Pickering, meanwhile, develop a strong critique of little 'c' creativity, arguing that:

[4]This is a distinction also drawn by psychiatrist Gene Cohen. A review of his book in the Aging Research Newsletter online at http://www.agingresearch.org/living_longer/summer00/feature.html categorises the difference in these terms:
   "Dr. Cohen …defines "big C" creativity as extraordinary accomplishments of unusual people, such as renowned artists, scientists and inventors. Creativity with a "little c" refers to personal creativity, grounded in the various and sundry realities of life….It could be a new recipe, a floral arrangement, a letter or poem that you wrote, or a new trick you taught your dog."

…we cannot collapse creativity into everyday life, as if they are indistinguishable.... Only certain of our everyday experiences involve creativity; only some of our everyday actions are creative. …To say that all our everyday actions are in some way creative might have a certain polemical appeal, but that is all. What we're arguing for instead are the intrinsic connections between creative practice and everyday life, for it's important that we don't forget how the heightened moments of creativity are always linked to routine and the daily round, and how a particular artwork or cultural product may catch us within the midst of ordinary habitual life. (2004: 44-45)

There is a notion of artistic genius in Negus and Pickering's arguments. They insist, for instance, that the culture industries, dominated as they are by copyright, labelling, contracts and managers, would nevertheless not exist were it not for the creative work, even the 'genius', of the struggling or established individual artists around which they grow up and upon which they thrive. Nevertheless, their position belongs not to the conservative neo-Kantianism of Scruton, discussed in Section 2, but can be associated with British empiricist notions of creativity deriving from Hume, who saw genius and taste as contingent upon material circumstances. In this sense, Negus and Pickering staunchly resist the urge to consign creativity to the realm of mysticism or to deify the artist. To them, quite crucially, creativity 'cannot be done without reference to existing rules, devices, codes and procedures' (2004: 68).

With regard to genius, Negus and Pickering (2004: 138) maintain that there is a need to separate the activity of creativity and judgements made about it. In developing their critique of existing ideas on creative genius, they suggest that we should 'move away from the conventional sense of genius as an ontological condition or rarefied individual form of identity,' thus abandoning a sense of genius as attached to an entire human being. Their preference is for an understanding of creativity:

which embraces both the ordinary and the exceptional in terms of their productive tension... approaching creativity as the communication of experience and the attainment of communicative value allows us to grasp the mutually constitutive relation between the ordinariness and exceptionality of creativity. (2004: 159)

In this section we have seen two highly contrasting views that both hold on to a notion of creativity as everyday in the here-and-now, rather than focusing on it as something held apart and separate. One of these views, however, posits creativity as ubiquitous: it is possible for every person, child or adult, to learn to make choices about their lives which are creative or not creative. Those who learn this skill will, it is suggested, lead the most successful, satisfying and ethical lives. Furthermore, those who do not possess this skill 'naturally' or learn it via their normal situations and experiences, may yet be transformed into creative and confident individuals by their interactions with arts projects in non-threatening and collaborative settings. A very different view of creativity and the everyday may be seen in Negus and Pickering's counsel that it is the dialectical tension between mundane reality and exceptional experience that lies at the heart of creative encounters, whether as producers or consumers of culture.

The rhetoric of ubiquitous creativity, then, is democratic in its formulation and fits neatly with liberal pedagogies by challenging the narrowness of the national curriculum and of market-driven conceptualisations of the need for creativity (see section 6). It connects with everyday life in ways that other rhetorics do not, investing people's mundane actions and choices with a potentially romantic edge. However, pro-social models of creativity such as the one expressed in this section by Craft, and to a certain extent by Jeffery, tend to depend to a large degree on socially-endorsed notions of adequacy, acceptability, good behaviour, and wise choices. In this sense divergent individuals/artists could be said to be acting against the grain of aspects of little 'c' creativity. Equally problematically, it has no clear relation to culture, especially popular culture and the arts, and thus removes the term from its historical context. Section 5, however, examines another pro-social model that retains strong links with education, the economy and the arts.

Another Place by Anthony Gormley. Installation at Crosby Sands, Merseyside 2005, brought to the area by South Sefton Development Trust in partnership with Liverpool Biennial. Cast iron, 100 figures. Photographer: Robert Cook.

5. Creativity as a social good

In this section several core questions about the discursive construction of creativity are explored via engagement with key texts on education, creativity and the arts. To what extent is creativity seen as arts-based and to what extent is it linked to all domains of human activity? Is creativity primarily individual or is it always a collective endeavour? How does creativity connect with social empowerment? What is the role of assessment in creative production? And what are the links between creative learning and cultural learning? These questions will be explored via a reading of the 1999 NACCCE report into creativity and culture and then revisited from the perspective of claims made by those working in the community arts movement, as well as critics of the report's analyses.

5.1 Pragmatic appeals

The rationale set out at the beginning of the NACCCE report suggests that being able to compete in a global market, having a flexible workforce, facing national economic challenges, feeding the 'creative industries' and enabling youth to adapt to technological change are the main reasons for fostering a creative curriculum. Here, our primary concern is with a further NACCCE rationale for encouraging creativity in education, which focuses on the social and personal development of young people in communities and other social settings. This encompasses a bow to multiculturalism (1999: 22-23) and anti-racism, as well as an avowed desire to combat growing drug use, teenage alcoholism and other social problems. In this view, 'creative and cultural programmes' are seen to be two-fold mechanisms of social cohesion, 'powerful ways of revitalising the sense of community in a school and engaging the whole school with the wider community' (1999: 26).

Although the NACCCE committee accepts that exceptionally gifted creative individuals do exist, their report favours a 'democratic' definition of creativity over an 'elite' one: 'Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value' (1999: 29). For the NACCCE team, imaginative activity entails a process of generating something original, whether this be an idea or a relationship between existing ideas. This immediately

sets it apart from discourses which might be seen to encourage a view of creative and imaginative activity as play or fantasy. NACCCE is apparently suggesting that the preparatory and exploratory time in art, media, technology and drama classrooms and projects is only valuable insofar as it contributes to the final product.

With respect to evaluation, originality can be judged on a scale, but is also said to be 'more likely to emerge from a system that encourages creativity in everyone' (1999: 30). Significantly, the definition of creativity is supplemented by reference to a list of attributes, whereby creativity:

- must involve critical evaluation
- is as common across science and mathematics as in the arts, although the arts are seen as being unique in their ability to develop and tap into creative 'emotional intelligence'
- is multi-dimensional, involving emotional, intellectual, social, cultural, spiritual, moral, political, technological and economic understanding and enquiry
- is not simply 'free flowing' but involves knowledge and skills. (1999: 38)

Here creativity is again identified as involving cooperative activity and as socially and personally empowering, and hence as a matter of common good. In this respect, the NACCCE position has much in common with other rhetorical positions on this subject, ranging from creative learning and the economic imperative to cognitive psychology. Although the word 'critical' is included in the list, the critique here is meant to be self-directed, in that it is evaluative, or at most, directed at particular aspects of art or science. There is no indication that meta-critique (which might involve philosophical questioning of existing moral and political frameworks) or social critique is judged to be a good basis for creative endeavour. An attempt is also made to tap into a rhetoric about the 'knowledge society' (related to the economic policy argument for creativity), and to distance the NACCCE view of creativity from one that is implicated in the stereotype of 1970s laissez-faire pedagogies.

5.2 Culture

According to the NACCCE report, and despite its almost overwhelming visual emphasis on drama, dance and art projects[5], there is a dynamic relationship between technology, science and the arts (1999: 44). Throughout the report, however, the arts are viewed as doubly useful in creative education because of their role as conduits for culture: '[p]ractising and understanding the arts in all their forms are essential elements of creative and cultural education' (1999:41). Critiquing this apparent desire to romanticise the inclusive potential of the arts, Buckingham (2003) argues that there is little evidence that involvement in the creative arts actually leads to excluded young people becoming less excluded, more employable or getting jobs. From his point of view, social class still remains a key determinant of young people's futures.

References to culture in the NACCCE report are problematic. Knowledge about creative traditions and rules (1999: 100) and contributions to global creativity (1999: 101) are encouraged, although these are not placed in any historical or political context. The immediate way in which knowledge of 'other cultures' is seen as contributing to social harmony (1999: 99) in particular raises a series of questions about the difference between 'creative learning' and 'cultural learning'. Is all cultural learning, for instance, to be thought of as inherently creative? And, if not, what does cultural learning that is not creative look like? We might find one aspect of an answer to this question in Negus's and Pickering's contention that while the intersecting social categories of gender and social class 'have defined the denials and limits of creativity, these are not simply imposed from outside. They can be internalised as part of who people believe they are or are able to become' (2004: 118). The cultural experiences of some social groups do not find their way as readily into education as others and, as Jonothan Neelands (2006) puts it, there is much creative learning that masks its cultural nature and naturalises cultural categorisations and impositions.

Here Buckingham and Jones (2001) critique the NACCCE report for failing to acknowledge 'culture' as contested or indeed, as ultimately political. They argue that the majority of the report's recommendations were ignored by the government because they did not fit in with the move towards a strengthening of testing regimes and structures for 'controlling the political and cultural

Michael Forbes, visual artist works on Lynch Hymn series. Photographer: Bob Haye.

agency of children and young people' and warn that in this discourse, culture and creativity might come to be seen as magic ingredients for evening out the inequalities between youth. This, they emphasise, will not happen unless issues such as inequality, disenfranchisement and poverty are acknowledged and tackled directly. These views have been endorsed by other academics and practitioners in the field (eg: Marshall 2001).

5.3 The arts for everyone

In their introduction to *Finding Voices, Making Choices*, Mark Webster and Glen Buglass explain that 'Community Arts takes as its starting point that everyone is creative and that, essentially, everyone is an artist.' The community arts movement has an anti-elitist history, and is a term embracing all those activities which involve groups of ordinary people doing creative things together. Thus, crucially, this movement is defined not by 'artform' but by 'process' (2005: 2) and those fostering community arts projects must be prepared to be both democratic and flexible, rather than fixated on the finished outcomes of the projects.

Finding Voices, provides a series of mini case histories of arts for change projects. One example provided by Jonathan Herbert explores the initiation of various projects and the subsequent transformation of the Beechdale estate where '[o]ne of the aims of the Beechdale Arts Forum was to 'allow the creative voice of the people of Beechdale to be heard' (2005: 13). Gospel Choirs, young people's painting and murals, as well as other collective endeavours are described as having a transformative effect on the self-confidence and atmosphere in this almost derelict estate, where young and old had been perennially at odds and suspicious of each other. Herbert writes that 'the power of creativity has opened up new possibilities for people and has greatly extended their vision of themselves and the world they live in' (2005: 14). Arts-based activities are seen as fun; collective activity is clearly comforting both at a personal and social level; and local control is both essential and empowering.

The view of creativity that unfolds in this section clearly constructs it as being a democratic force. The writings on the community arts movement examined here are premised on a belief in the confidence-building and inclusive power of collective enterprise, whether in the arts or the sciences, involving popular or elite cultural forms. Such 'creative' inclusion, or the experience of it, may give participants the confidence to challenge other ideological or material structures in their daily lives. Differently-inflected versions of this rhetoric may be seen at work in a number of formal

educational contexts, where some teachers are committed to the value of group work, the importance for students of learning to express themselves and taking pride in the outcomes of their work, regardless of the 'grades' expected.

Other questions raised by the NACCCE report are still being debated. What impact do different notions of cultural competence and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) have on the ways in which young people are inducted into projects? Is there a hierarchy of cultural production and consumption when it comes to the term creativity – in other words, would teachers and project managers be advised to encourage some forms of consumption and production as being inherently more creative than others?

While it may appear that the rhetoric used in the NACCCE report supports 'democratic' notions of creativity, and encourages an appreciation of cultural difference, many of its promises about the benefits of creative education betray elements of more elitist and romantic notions of artistic endeavour, and the traditional artistic practices and forms associated with them. Though it proposes a general view of creativity, its emphasis is implicitly on the arts. While it promotes both creative production and cultural consumption, it is not clear about how they relate to each other.

6. Creativity as economic imperative

The knowledge economy carries a powerful democratic impulse. Rewards must flow to talent, creativity and intelligence; not to birthright (Charles Leadbeater 2000: 224).

Creativity has replaced raw materials or natural harbours as the crucial wellspring of economic growth. To be successful in this emerging creative age, regions must develop, attract and retain talented and creative people who generate innovations, develop technology intensive industries and power economic growth (Gertler et al, 2002).

This rhetoric, which is expressed most clearly by the Demos document *The Creative Age* (Seltzer and Bentley,1999) is straightforwardly about advancing the economic prospects of the nation by creating a more flexible workforce. As opposed to a manufacturing-based workforce, it is argued, a 'knowledge-based' workforce needs to learn fast and flexibly at all times, or to risk losing employment or economic slow-down. Hence, 'Learners and workers must draw on their entire spectrum of learning experiences and apply what they have learned in new and creative ways' (1999: viii), because "knowledge has become the primary resource of the new economy [and], as a result, the ways in which people acquire and use it have taken on a new significance" (1999:1). As in Gertler et al (2002), the workplace is constructed by Seltzer and Bentley as being increasingly global and dispersed rather than local, the workforce as being 'weightless', and 'knowledge' work as based on 'intangible' resources rather than raw materials and labour. 'Creativity' is identified as the most potentially successful response for negotiating economic change.

In Bentley and Seltzer's view, creativity is learned, not innate; collective, not individual. Thus far it is uncontroversial amongst currently prevalent views on this subject. For them, it is 'the application of knowledge and skills in new ways to achieve a valued goal' (viii). The skills that are chosen to represent creative thinking are problem-solving, knowledge transfer, incremental learning and goal oriented work. Clearly, while the concept of creativity could be linked to a combination of these abilities and skills, it may be asked how this list defines creativity in all its

senses. This 'problem-solving' approach to creativity is certainly at odds with the arts-focused notion pursued in the NACCCE report, with its emphasis on 'emotional intelligence'. In terms of their notion of how creativity is to be fostered, however, the two approaches do bear some similarities: here too, a sense of the importance of environmental constraints, context and support is stressed. One must have trust, freedom of action, variations in context, the right balance between skills and challenges, an interactive exchange of knowledge and ideas, as well as real world outcomes to reinforce change.

Their recommendations for policy change therefore resemble the NACCCE recommendations, for example in respect of 'extended project-based learning', rewarding and disseminating creative teaching and policy, and 'cutting the content requirements of the national curriculum', but diverge radically in the emphasis on making students apprentices and trainees for the future health of the economy. Extended work-based placements for undergraduates in particular might be seen as controversial, at least by those supporting a more arts-based conception of creativity.

Much of Seltzer's and Bentley's emphasis is directed towards getting more IT literacy and knowledge of computers into the curriculum and getting young people into industrial/business placements at an early stage, whether in school or university. Instead of being about the motivation to learn and create, which is a feature of an interest in a particular subject, discipline or set of ideas, the imperative here is the requirement to meet the needs of the modern capitalist economy:

> *More and more work will require a high knowledge component and high level skills; even marginal and low-paying jobs will demand greater ability to manage information, apply knowledge and learn on the job.*

> *Accelerating competition and the application of new technologies mean that companies must innovate more rapidly in order to survive.[...]*
> *The changing patterns and demands of the labour market will require new forms of personal discipline and self-reliance. (1999: 1-2).*

The paradox of this position is that even while there is a constant appeal made to notions of autonomy, creativity, flexibility and a diversity of individual skills, 'success' in *The Creative Age* is defined as being able to stay afloat, to stay sane, stable and alive in business or an institution, not to fall off the side of the ship entirely. This is expressed with extreme precision in what they term 'The skills paradox':

> *While skills requirements are rising, more qualifications are not necessarily helpful. Because of the premium on new ideas and flexibility, people who have built up detailed knowledge over time find themselves at a disadvantage if they do not know how to apply what they know in different ways. The new basic skills are about how people think and act, not just what they know (1999: 10).*

Furthermore, 'the central theme underpinning this new demand for skills is creativity: the ability to apply and generate knowledge in a range of contexts, in order to meet a specific goal in a new way' (Ibid 11).

As we saw in section 4, Buckingham and Jones' (2001) analysis of this 'new' rhetoric emerging in the UK about business and capital saw it as overtly focused on making the workforce flexible, adaptable and supposedly creative. For these writers, however, such economic appeals that utilise the terms 'flexibility' and 'creativity' disguise insecurity and poorly-paid employment for the mass of workers, and deny 'knowledge workers' a right to challenge working practices. In the rhetoric of a knowledge-based economy, creativity, self-discipline and self-reliance are all tools that will aid management in introducing working practices for their staff that others assert may actually be fundamentally at odds with individual creativity and choice (2001: 7).

David Livingstone and Anthonie Scholtz (2005) have investigated claims about the creative spaces opening up for knowledge workers and others in the new economy in Canada, using survey data gleaned from over 9,000 adult Canadians. Their findings tend to support arguments such as those of Buckingham and Jones:

[p]ower relations of the traditional class hierarchy are largely intact in the employed Canadian labour force…with most industrial and service workers having little opportunity for decision-making input…The professional and managerial employees who are typically the focus of knowledge worker discussions still tend to have very limited decision-making power… Even among the highly skilled, possession of technical skills is no guarantee that one has opportunities to use them (2005: 3).

This section has focused on one example of what has become a highly resilient rhetoric in business circles. Training courses in 'creativity', promising anything from personal fulfilment and office bonding, to higher profits and guaranteed jobs, abound both on- and offline[6]. But, realistically, we must ask questions about the variety of arenas and domains in which those who buy into this 'new' vision of creativity would be allowed to function. Would time for playful testing of ideas be built into the working days of 'knowledge workers' or would they have to accommodate such necessary, but peripheral, business in their own personal time by giving up leisure (as is increasingly the case with the penetration of work-related ICT in the home)? In what way might different skills lead to creative production? And would the mere acquisition of skills be enough as a contribution to a greater collective or corporate endeavour? Clearly, while the newly flexible workforce described by Seltzer and Bentley might be encouraged to manage themselves and their departments or sections, their control over the overall structures and practices of their organisations might remain as limited as ever.

[6]See, for instance, the websites for Creative Thinking and Lateral Thinking Techniques, (2003) available at http://www.brainstorming.co.uk/tutorials/creativethinkingcontents.html and Creativity Unleashed Limited (2003) managerial training website at http://www.cul.co.uk/

Indeed, as Rob Pope (2005: 28) poignantly describes with regard to two of the companies presented as shining examples of such newly creative practices in *The Creative Age*, jobs and livelihoods may be no more secure if workers become 'creative' and 'flexible' than those in very 'old-fashioned' manufacturing jobs that did not fall within the scope of the knowledge economy. A final problem that arises with the use of the term creativity in this context is a definitional one. As with the generalised application of creativity to all teaching and learning in all subjects (see sections 5 and 10), the danger is that it may simply become a more glamorous and appealing synonym for 'effective', thereby losing its distinctive sense. In sections 7 and 8 we examine rhetorics of creativity that have been concerned precisely with all that is distinctive about creativity, and in doing so, seek to locate it as a quasi-mental process or psychological phenomenon with clear social effects.

7. Play and creativity

Modern pedagogies involving play and creativity perhaps begin with Rousseau, whose *Emile* (1762) suggests how play is an essential process in the development of children as rational, ethical and social beings. Influential modern accounts of the relation between play, learning and creativity can be found in developmental psychology and philosophy, especially in the work of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner. The question of whether play is necessarily creative (or, indeed, whether creativity is necessarily playful) is a persistent one. More interesting, from the point of view of this report, are a series of parallels and connections between rhetorics of play and rhetorics of creativity (see Sutton-Smith, 1997).

One strand of current approaches to play, creativity and learning comes from the more positivist[7] perspective of cognitive science, but in the main they share the emphasis of the 'Creative Teaching' rhetoric (section 10) on the importance of divergent thinking. Sandra Russ, for instance, argues that '[p]lay has been found to facilitate insight ability and divergent thinking' (2003: 291), and that 'theoretically play fosters the development of cognitive and affective processes that are important in the creative act' (2003: 291). However, she sees children as being potentially excluded by dominant definitions of creative products as effective, novel and valuable. She argues that 'both the ability to think about affect-laden fantasy and the capacity to experience emotion are important in creativity. In play, children express affect in fantasy and experience emotion' (2003: 292-293). Following from this, she notes that the broad repertoire of associations built up via these fantasy play scenarios facilitates divergent thinking by broadening the search for associations, and that the ways in which children use toys, role plays and objects to represent different things in play are habitual ways of practising divergent thinking skills. Her own longitudinal study of children between first and sixth grade appears to confirm that 'affective and cognitive processes in play in young children were predictive of divergent thinking over time' (2003: 295).

[7]Positivism is generally characterised by a belief in scientific knowledge as the only 'true' knowledge, and in the testability of all knowledge.

Carruthers (2002) claims that 'essentially the same cognitive resources are shared by adult creative thinking and problem solving on the one hand, and by childhood pretend play, on the other – namely, capacities to generate, and to reason with, supposition (or imagined possibilities)'. Indeed, Carruthers also argues strongly for the developmental function of play, since for him 'the evolutionary function of childhood pretence is to practise and enhance adult forms of creativity'. Problematically invoking socio-biological claims about genetic selection, he further maintains that these proposals can provide an evolutionarily-plausible explanation of 'the gap between the first appearance of the human species in Southern Africa some hundred thousand years ago and the creative explosion of cultural, technological and artistic change which took place within the first human populations some sixty thousand years later' (Carruthers 2002).

While this is a speculative account, Carruthers argues strongly that creativity manifests itself in new types of behaviour, going beyond mere re-applications of established scripts or action patterns. It is possible for someone to be more or less creative, to engage to a greater or lesser extent in creative behaviours. Childhood pretence exists in order to enable adult creative action – both have the same cognitive root in imaginary thought and supposition. His argument is that there was always the potential to be creative in *homo sapiens*; and although there was little external creativity for thousands of years, there was selection in favour of those with a predisposition towards childhood play and pretence. This was seen as being the case because exercises of imagination are seen as being a partial constituent of intelligence. Carruthers suggests that what motivates such childhood supposition and play is an intrinsic gratification for most children from the act of imagination/supposition itself. He also argues that the enjoyment of pretence requires a capacity to represent one's own agency.

Despite the highly questionable nature of this quasi-historical Darwinian account, it does raise several significant questions for those interested in creativity and education. For example, there is widespread concern about the way in which childhood pretence and play are being squeezed out of the school curriculum, to be replaced by an approximation of 'adult'-type problem solving tasks. If it is even probable, as Russ and Carruthers argue, that there is a deep-rooted linkage between playful fantasy behaviour in childhood and successful problem-solving in adulthood, then simply forcing children to mimic adult thought processes as soon as they can, may be inhibiting, rather than enhancing, their chance of exploring life creatively as adults.

Creative Partnerships Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham "Jabberwocky".
Photographer Gavin Joynt.

Taking such a possibility into account, projects with young people in schools may well wish to build in significant amounts of time for playful exploration of and engagement with – and by corollary enjoyment of – ideas, artefacts and materials. Another issue thrown up by accounts such as those of Russ and Carruthers is that of the distinction being drawn between childhood and adult thinking. There seems little doubt that if playful and fantastic activity is indeed a prerequisite for the development of certain kinds of associative and cognitive skills in children, this kind of activity is likely to be similarly worthwhile for adults.

Cognitive accounts of play and creative learning tend to overlook the cultural and social contexts of learning. By contrast, the developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky's essay on play (in Vygotsky 1978) proposes essentially the same framework for play as he does for learning in general, and learning about language in particular. Play, like any form of symbolic action, involves the social use of tools for making meaning: resources endowed with meaning by the imaginative work of the user, such as a broomstick, which in play might become a horse. The emphasis here is less on the internal mental mechanisms of play, imagination and learning, as in Russ and Carruthers, and more on how imaginative and playful processes are negotiated with others through external resources. Creative learning here becomes dependent on context and culture; and crucially, for the purposes of this report, play is a necessary precursor of creativity in Vygotsky's thinking (Vygotsky 1931).

Classic accounts of children's play, even where they may not explicitly be concerned with creativity, raise productive questions about cultural and creative learning. For instance, in the Opies' study of playground games (1959), play is clearly cultural in the sense NACCCE uses the word; but is it creative? Such games both replicate and transform existing cultural resources, and can be seen as creative in this sense. However, as in all forms of performed oral culture, the emphasis is on continuity and repetition of traditional forms, challenging the criterial notions of originality at the heart of some definitions of creativity, from Kant to NACCCE.

8. Creativity and cognition

A substantial body of research on creativity locates itself within a broadly cognitive tradition, asking questions about the links between creativity and the workings of the mind, intelligence and creativity and, in tandem, the creative potential of artificial intelligence and the manner in which its study can inform understandings of human creativity. The trajectory of this research in education derives from the tradition initiated by Piaget, rather than from the more culturally situated notions of learning expounded by Vygotsky, Dewey and Bruner. While some studies of creativity and cognition investigate the nature and conditions of intelligent thought and creative action in qualitative terms, others apply positivistic testing methods to a variety of samples in order to ascertain measures of creativity, creative personality scales and other psychometric data.

8.1 The quantitative path

One exponent of this approach, Arthur Cropley, argues (2001: 6) that when educational or psychological consideration is taken of the definition of creativity, a core of three elements can be identified: novelty, effectiveness and ethicality. He locates his study as primarily concerned with 'ordinary' creativity and defines his approach as 'quantitative' in that 'it rejects the view that some people are creative whereas others are not and assumes that everybody can display creativity' (2001:12).

The human characteristics and cognitive attributes that psychologists see as critical to creativity vary, and there are more than a dozen different formulations and combinations. The cognitive theories called upon lead to definitions of intelligence that typically distinguish it from creativity. In this view intelligence is logical, factual recall, the putting together or application of existing knowledge, while creativity is emotional, imaginative, spontaneous and productive. It can nevertheless, so it is argued, be quantified via the use of personality scales that 'test' and 'measure' the traits associated with creativity. Two chapters in Cropley's book are devoted to assessments of creativity on various personality tests and scales similar to IQ tests, and an acceptance by the author of the maxim, 'creativity is that which creativity tests test'[8] (ibid: 97).

An avowed emphasis on 'novelty' that is also 'effective' which runs through Cropley's work leads, unsurprisingly, to various questions about whether children particularly can, in any sense, be said to be creative, as none or few of their products are likely to be either novel or effective in the adult sense of the word. The unremitting over-emphasis of this definition of creativity on 'effective novelty' leads to the need to argue in convoluted ways for childhood 'creativity'. Indeed, there is a constant effort to show ways in which the things produced by young children are somehow novel and effective within their worlds: the drawing of circles and the moulding of clay, the questions asked about the world and the stories made up by five year olds all fall into this category.

Cropley may well be right in urging us to view the fostering and teaching of creativity as an on-going, holistic and constantly self-conscious and self-questioning process on the part of educators. However, the suggestions for developing creativity here, gleaned from a large number of studies and sources, tend towards what might nowadays be considered 'effective' teaching methods in any area of a curriculum, even by QCA. Brain trees, spidergrams, brainstorming, discussion, meditation and production are all staples of teachers' professional development courses. Similarly, his arguments against mere rote learning and the narrowest of testing, as well as authoritarian modes of teaching and teacher behaviour that are suspicious of novelty and hence of creative students, would arouse no dissent, but arguably gain nothing in particular by being characterised as fostering 'creativity' rather than as 'effective pedagogy' (see section 10). This study ultimately provides a positivistic (see above) endorsement of cognitive theories of creativity. The need to reiterate that testing is useful and necessary to learning 'if done in a more "open" way', and the reliance on arbitrary groups of factors in scales and creativity tests, all share a similarly utilitarian philosophy.

8.2 Artificial intelligence: a pattern of the creative mind?

A more coherent study in the cognitive mould, Margaret Boden's *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms* (1990) sets out to dispel the many 'romantic' and 'inspirational' myths about creativity that are seen as impediments to its study. By examining artificial intelligence (AI) systems, she hopes to make transparent some of the mechanisms that occur in human creative genesis and to show, by corollary, how creativity can be taught and learned. Seeing impressive creativity as being built firmly on expert knowledge, she distinguishes ideas that are P-creative, i.e. psychologically creative, and those that are H-creative , i.e. historically creative.

The first set are ones where an individual has an idea that is novel to them, but may not be to all others; the second set of ideas is distinguished by the way in which they become acknowledged as changing the world and human thought in some completely new and encompassing manner.

Boden describes the creative beginnings of ideas for mathematicians, musicians and the like as "playing around' to gauge the limits of the potentials of a particular way of thinking' (1990: 46). Helpfully detaching the notion of creativity from that of problem-solving, she sees it as having more in common with pushing boundaries, making associations (she applies her phrase 'associative memory' to poets and artists as much as to mathematicians and scientists), testing new combinations and playing around: she calls this mental mapping, or 'maps of the mind'. She insists, (ibid: 82-83) that although 'absolute novelty' might be a feature of how creativity is commonly conceptualised, it is the linking of existing ideas with new ones that most often may be creative. The constraints within which the creative mind plays, the structuring features, are the essential ingredients of creativity, rather than being antithetical to creativity. This leads Boden to the crux of her argument, which is that even in the arts, the processes of creativity can be mapped by simulating them via AI. While creative artistic products might be magical, the combinations of ideas gone through to get them, the associations, analogies, constraints, etc, are all quite clear, open to scrutiny, and may even be quite prosaic.

In this view, then, inspiration is 90 percent perspiration – the linking together of existing associations, patterns and ideas in various ways – and this can be undertaken by a computational intelligence (i.e. a computer, or one that functions in a logical chain of reasoning to create something new). While Boden agrees that the outcomes of creative endeavour must be 'unpredictable' (ibid 227) she is adamant that this does not put them beyond the realms of understanding. To know and understand a disease, she says, is very different from being able to predict it. Likewise a gorgeous painting or sonata may be understood via the notebooks and conversations of their makers, but could not have been predicted or pre-empted based on these. This is similar to the view of writing, both historical in relation to examples of 'great' literature, and in relation to new computer-aided writing programmes, put forward by Sharples (1999) when he breaks the creative writing act down into stages or processes, such as 'idea flowing', 'low focus knowledge transforming' and 'high focus knowledge transforming' (1999: 48-9).

Firmly attaching this cognitivist position to a 'democratic' or egalitarian version of creativity, Boden is at pains to dispel as many of the assertions of 'elite creativity' as she can. She concludes that motivational commitment, high levels of short term memory and perseverance are all constitutional factors in what has come to be known as elite creativity, and can be developed by all of us if we wish to do so (1990: 259).

8.3 Intelligence

As in Boden's work, questions about the weight and value of creativity continue to be tied to notions of mental capacity, thought process and intelligence. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences, for example, has been quoted at great length in some literature on creativity. Gardner's argument contrasts sharply with the prevalence in education of IQ tests and other psychometric scales. Such tests, he asserts, emphasise linguistic and/or logical capacities far above every other aspect or form of intelligence. He opens his book *Frames of Mind* (1993) by bemoaning the ways in which intelligence has conventionally been pigeon-holed:

> *In delineating a narrow definition of intelligence... one usually devalues those capacities that are not within that definition's purview: thus dancers or chess players may be talented but they are not smart. In my view it is fine to call music or spatial ability a talent, so long as one calls language or logic a talent as well (1983: xxiv).*

In this context, Gardner lays out his reasons for wishing to explain human beings in terms of a series of intelligences: kinetico-spatial, logical-mathematical, musical, linguistic, artistic, personal and social (to which, in recent years, he has added one more – namely naturalist intelligence – and has considered adding existential and moral intelligences as well). Gardner argues that 'a human intellectual competence must entail a set of skills of problem solving, enabling an individual to solve genuine problems or difficulties that he or she encounters, and when appropriate, to create an effective product – and must also entail the potential for finding or creating problems – thereby laying the groundwork for the acquisition of new knowledge' (1993: 60). This definition, which is of a 'human intellectual competence', and not specifically of creativity, is at the root of many current definitions of creativity,

The Calma Show. Stephan Doitschinoff painting some site specific work at the Contact Theatre, Manchester. Photographer: Nilu Izadi.

including the widely-used NACCCE definition. Notably, from the point of view of those interested in the arts and creativity, Gardner refers back constantly to art or art-like processes in his explication of the intellectual challenges of non-arts subjects (ibid: 139).

Although he appears to take issue with the rigid stages of Piagetian developmentalism, in the sense that he feels a child can be at one level with regard to expressions of one intelligence, without having to be at the same level in another, Gardner takes a developmentalist perspective on childhood creativity, stressing that '[e]arly in life most children give the appearance of engaging in original or novel behaviour...However...genuinely original or novel activities can come about only when an individual has achieved mastery in the field where he has been working' (ibid: 290). This aspect of Gardner's presentation of creativity fits neatly with Margaret Boden's emphasis on the highly schooled nature of creative endeavour[9].

8.4 Cultural psychology and creativity

Finally, the rather different tradition of cultural psychology sees social activity and cultural resources as central features of the creative process. This work (e.g.: Bruner, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Engeström, 1996) draws on the work of Vygotsky, who saw creativity as transformative of both culture and the self. For Vygotsky (1931), children's play is creative in that through external activity and the manipulation of culturally significant objects (a broomstick as a horse is Vygotsky's example) it helps them to understand symbolic substitution. This ability is then internalized as the imaginative faculty: 'imagination' then becomes play which has 'gone inside'. In early adolescence, imagination combines with thinking in concepts to form true creativity, which is seen as

[9]It should be noted that Multiple Intelligence theory, according to John White (2004), produces no good evidence to suggest that the eight or nine intelligences outlined actually exist as distinctly as Gardner maintains. White argues that like all developmentalist theories, Gardner's is flawed via its implicit paralleling of biological and intellectual growth and powers.

a lifelong ability to transform cultural resources and one's own identity. The oscillation between the external, social use of tools and artifacts, and the internal operations of creative thought, is developed by later 'activity theorists', as in the notion of learning through 'expansive cycles' (Engeström, 1999). In this tradition, then, creativity is productively connected with culture and with learning.

This section has attempted to present a cross-section of what can be seen to be fairly diverse developmentalist views of creativity based on human cognition. From the perspective of creative learning, while it is important to hold on to a notion of learning that encompasses development, it might be more useful to do so from the tradition of cultural psychology rather than from that of the cognitivist theories of creativity outlined here. Additionally, while Howard Gardner and Arthur Cropley are clearly concerned about contexts of formal learning, from the point of view of those planning and initiating projects with young people, most cognitive rhetoric on creativity appears to neglect altogether attention to most cultural contexts of creative practice, while for cultural psychology this is the most important component.

9. The Creative affordances of technology[10]

In this section we look briefly at some of the work which has done most to locate creativity as a central reason for the use of digital media and ICT in education. The creative potential of computers, the internet and new multimedia visual authoring software packages are sometimes taken for granted and, at others, challenged by those who view the increased use of technology as a threat to creativity and as embodying a variety of risks for children. But just how are democratic notions of creativity linked to technological change in this rhetoric? Is the use of technology itself inherently creative? And how do concerns raised by opponents of new technology affect arguments about creative production?

Avril Loveless (2002) argues that digital technologies open up new and authentic ways of being creative '[w]hich have not been as accessible or immediate without new technologies' (ibid: 2), suggesting that technology itself engenders new avenues for creativity if and where the potential for these is recognised. This is, she explains, because of a complex set of features of ICT: provisionality, interactivity, capacity, range, speed and automatic functions. She correctly cautions, however, that simply bringing together a 'cultural experience' and a technological means of accessing it does not make for creativity. What does this mean in terms of the uses of technology – creative or otherwise – in education?

In her chapter 'A digital big breakfast: the Glebe School Project' (1999), Loveless notes that during the project, in addition to the generation of great enthusiasm and enjoyment during the use of computerised visual packages, the question of evaluation was not forgotten by the children who 'had a sense of ownership of their images and lively ideas on how they might adapt or improve them in the future' (1999: 38). Like Rebecca Sinker (1999) she explains that multimedia offered the children control over a range of possibilities. Viewing the products of their digital media project,

the children felt that the finished pieces did not look like 'children's work' (ibid 39), and would hence be taken more seriously by adults evaluating and appreciating them. Teachers to whom she spoke expressed a variety of concerns about the potentials and actuality of such ICT-related projects for their students and themselves. Notably, they were concerned about their own levels of understanding and skill in relation to the software.

Given this context, Loveless argues that technology which is now being used in schools in varieties of ways can enhance creative learning, but only if such anxieties are handled sensitively via 'the strategic approach to the use of ICT' through the application of skills, 'rather than skills training associated with specific packages' (1999: 40).

Loveless (2003: 13) further cautions against simply using tools and techniques for their own sake in digital creations. Implicitly addressing many of the concerns aired in educational circles (Healy 1998, Reid, Burn and Parker 2003) about the apparently empty 'showiness' of digital products by children, she discusses the artist Terry Taylor and his view that:

> *It is the representation of meaning that is the key that elevates*
> *production to a position beyond the merely decorative ….*
> *This takes time and a continuation of intention and cannot be*
> *achieved by ad hoc projects based on mechanical processes.*
> *(Loveless and Taylor, 2000: 65, in Loveless 2003: 13-14).*

Supporting this socially-situated view of the potentially creative uses of new technologies in their riposte to one particularly wide-ranging and trenchant critique[11] (Cordes and Miller 2000), Douglas Clements and Julie Sarama (2003) cite studies that document what they call 'increases in creativity,' as well as better peer relations following interactive experiences with computer programmes such as Logo. Like Scanlon *et al* (2005), they also note that many computer programmes designed to increase children's knowledge and skills are not in the least creative, relying on rote learning, repetition and drill exercises. Thus they argue that computers can, but do not necessarily, support the expression and development of creativity.

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[11]Cordes and Miller assert that 'Creativity and imagination are prerequisites for innovative thinking, which will never be obsolete in the workplace. Yet a heavy diet of ready-made computer images and programmed toys appear to stunt imaginative thinking. Teachers report that children in our electronic society are becoming alarmingly deficient in generating their own images and ideas' (2000:4).

Sefton-Green (1999) tackles a number of issues relating to the democratic potential (or equitable distribution) of digital arts creativity across the school curriculum that are of importance for those intending to undertake such projects. Most obviously, he notes that the successful projects described are all heavily intensive in terms of time, staff and resources (1999: 146-147). Here, despite the enthusiasm generated, 'the organisation of the school day with its narrow subject disciplines, short working periods, and heavy assessment load' are seen as opposed to the principles of digital arts work and as inhibiting the success of such projects, particularly in secondary school.

The projects in this collection all raise significant questions about the evaluation of creative work in new media more generally: 'Do we evaluate students' grasp of authoring packages or their capacity to imagine in the new medium?', 'When is a product genuinely interactive and when does it merely ape fashionable conventions?' (1999:149). Sefton-Green warns that in a society where technology is not equally available to all, children may well be enthusiastic and confident users when offered the opportunity, but they are still divided by inequalities of access outside school (ibid 153). Ultimately, the social contexts of digital technology's use may help or hinder its creative potential for young people and the arts.

In a similar vein, but with different conclusions, the largest study to date of the use of digital video in the classroom (Reid *et al*, 1993) found a strong discrepancy between teachers' views of creativity and the most successful creative uses of digital video in the study. Teachers generally perceived creativity (and the benefits of digital technology) as liberation from constraint, convention and teacher-directed work. However, the study found that the most effective work developed from close attention to the language of the moving image, and carefully-structured tasks. It concluded that creative work in this medium does not proceed from the use of the technology itself but from awareness of the cultural properties of the medium, and from specific pedagogic practice.

It becomes apparent, through a closer look at discourses of creativity which appeal to the potentials of technology, that wider social concerns are never far from the minds of those who work with children and technology, and that these concerns can head in several directions. This leads, for some, to uniform approval and enthusiasm about technology's innate creativity; for others to a wholesale rejection of the notion that any technology can be creative; and for yet others, to the need for an understanding of technological potential in given social, cultural and psychological circumstances.

Creative Partnerships, Cornwall, "Watch this Space" .
Photographer Nick Robinson at Sam Morgan Moore.

10. The Creative Classroom

What is creativity?
Why is creativity important?
How can you spot creativity?
How can teachers promote creativity and
How can Heads and Managers promote creativity?
(National Curriculum Authority website)

Florence Beetlestone (1998) proposes a model of creativity that draws on ideas from philosophy, cognitive psychology, sociology and 'spirituality'. Each of these fields is quite broadly conceived, and at points, the very simplest (or occasionally, most simplistic) aspects of current assessment-led notions of learning are challenged or, more problematically, called upon to support the argument. The purpose of Beetlestone's work here is apparently to harness the 'creative methods' of pre-National Curriculum teaching for the primary and early years teachers who are now, according to her, struggling to meet targets and national curriculum guidelines on subject knowledge and content.

In tandem, she also signals a wish to broaden out the definition of creativity from one linked solely to art and arts education, to one incorporating any aspect of 'learning', 'representation', 'productivity', 'originality,' thoughtful 'problem solving' and a sense of 'creation-nature' and the 'universe'. In this view, none of these categories are exclusive; indeed as Beetlestone puts it, 'creativity inhabits the world of the senses' (1998:142). This of course raises the initial problem – which, for the sake of argument we will state but ignore for the time being: if all these things are 'creative', what's the specific value of the word 'creativity' – might this thing not just as well be termed 'holistic' or 'purposeful' or 'effective' teaching?

In terms of the teacher's role, creativity is not a 1960s stereotype - someone who provides a lot of materials and shouts 'have fun, enjoy, create' but then leaves the class to their own devices, without directing or evaluating, making suggestions or placing limits. Creativity in learning, for Beetlestone, is conceptualised as arising out of holistic teaching practices that value all aspects of a child's experience and personality. It is interactive, incorporating discussion, social context, sensitivity to others, and the acquisition

and improvement of literacy skills. It is contextual and has a sense of purpose, and thus cannot be based around small units of testable knowledge. However, it can also be thematic and highly specific as it often arises out of stories or close observation, which engage children's imaginations and their emotions, as well as their curiosity about concepts and situations.

In terms of the content of creative lessons, concepts are not taught as being fixed and immutable entities but as contextually and culturally anchored; subject divisions too need to be seen as arbitrary and socially constructed; for it is in crossing such divisions – between art and mathematics, languages and music, geography and science, philosophy and poetry that children (and adults) stand the greatest chance of being independently creative. All this is unquestionably sound advice. There is, however, a tension in this work between what could broadly be defined as a rather romantic wish to view creativity as something that enhances the human soul and helps young people to blossom, and the need to give practical advice to trainee primary school teachers, thus fitting them for the fairly chaotic but restricted milieu into which they will soon be going. At points, this tension is productive, or at the very least practical, in the sense that it prevents the educational perspective on creativity from sidestepping issues such as assessment and time management that are of very real significance for practitioners, both in formal educational and more unorthodox settings.

The examples of 'creative teaching' given exemplify the tightrope that many educators have to walk between institutional constraints and the fragility of their constructed 'creative' environment. However, at times the tension also appears to lead to contradiction or even paradox: risk-taking is to be encouraged but it is also to be kept within easily controllable bounds; time is required for playful engagement with ideas and materials, but this time has stringent external parameters in terms of the school day.

Both for adults and for children, newness, the ability to surprise and be surprised, is also seen as being of the essence in creative encounters. Here we can trace the outlines of a discourse that focuses on the importance of novelty and originality to creative endeavour, as was apparent both in the arguments on Creative Genius and in the work of those on the NACCCE committee (see sections 2 and 5). However, even here, refusing the exclusivity that sometimes besets those definitions of creativity which utilise concepts of novelty or newness, Beetlestone warns that in ascribing value to children's creative endeavour it is easy to

be led astray by cultural and social biases, such as the classed hierarchies of high and low culture. In fact, countering a resilient strand in individualist conceptualisations of creativity (see, for instance, Simonton 1999 and Scruton 2001), Beetlestone insists that just as recognising something that one despises as being creative is not easy, it is all the more important to be critically aware of one's own cultural perceptions and preconceptions when encouraging or critiquing the creative efforts of others.

Equally significantly, Beetlestone cautions that an undue emphasis on product rather than on process can frighten children away from originality. For her, the ability to take risks without fear of failure is one of the cornerstones of creative endeavour. Balanced against this, she sees the importance of producing an end product that can gain one the praise and attention of those watching – namely that proves the work to have been 'of value'.

However, in an arena where there is little guidance or explicitness about the ways in which evaluative criteria are set, one can only surmise the ways in which the valuing of process on par with product might affect 'creative' output which does not also fulfil the formal requirements of the school curriculum. Indeed, while it is important to highlight, and find precedent for, arguments that give weight to 'playful processes' of learning, it is doubtful whether such arguments would be sustainable – from a policy rather than a philosophical standpoint, of course – without the equal emphasis of their proponents on visible output that can be judged (valued) by others. And then, quite understandably, the decisive questions arise as to whether, and by what standards, the 'products' of such creativity may be judged/valued: for instance in relation to other, established 'creative' products, and in those instances they may at times be found lacking.

In this context, Alaine Starko (2005) reminds us that different cultures and periods have different expectations about what is 'appropriate'. She defines appropriateness, in the broadest possible sense as 'an idea or a product that meets some goal or criterion'. Is this notion of appropriateness (otherwise rhetorically expressed as 'value') useful for an understanding of creativity?

The list of examples of creative ideas or actions or products analysed by Starko includes many everyday classroom activities for children, such as different ways of doing sums, drawings based on stories, and questions in science lessons. The student who ignores the title and purpose of an assignment to create something interesting is seen as being creative when judged against his own

intentions, despite leaving unfulfilled the school-appropriateness 'part of the test'. Here Starko clearly points out that 'creativity is not always expressed in school-appropriate ways' (2005: 11). Saliently, Starko insists that 'creative teaching' (where the teacher is creative) is not the same as 'teaching to develop creativity' (2005: 19). It does not take a leap of the imagination to see how this injunction and this caution can be applied to the work of those who work on arts, science or maths projects with young people and children. Much excellent work may well be being done – by the practitioner and perhaps by the minority of youth involved in the project who already possess the skills and the knowledge that allow them immediate access to the practitioner's goals.

Like others summarising the history of research into the subject (cf. Craft 2001 and 2005; Cropley 2000), Starko notes that studies of creativity have investigated three primary areas: person, process and product. She analyses a range of theories of creativity in the cognitive mould, such as the CPS (creative problem solving) model developed by Alex Osborn and Sidney Parnes in the mid- 20th century to improve business success. Then, examining the notion of the creative individual – which, unlike some who wish to assert the 'democratic' nature of creativity, she does not entirely discount – Starko suggests the importance of analysing the connection between creativity and intelligence, insisting that there is one, because it is so rare for someone said to be 'unintelligent' to create anything. Here a crucial tension is raised by this emphasis: clearly, despite the attempt to give space to notions of process, this view ultimately turns upon the outcome of creative thought as product.

In its most positive incarnation, then, the 'creative classroom' rhetoric may be seen to promote forms of learning that are generally held to improve the experience of children in education – holistic learning, active learning, expanded notions of intelligence, attention to social and cultural contexts, social learning and ethical human development. By the same token, though, it runs the risk of losing what is distinctive about 'creativity' itself – if it cannot be distinguished from all these other things, where is its explanatory power? Additionally, in some formulations, process and product are set up as being in opposition to each other, rather than as interdependent, and this in turn leads to a seriously problematic relationship between creativity and evaluation, and creativity and critical artistic practice. How, then, are we to judge or understand creativity that does not become embodied? In such a view of the creative classroom as has been outlined here, is there even such a thing as creativity that does not have an end product?

11. Summary

The rhetorics, and the key themes and questions which run through them, are summarised in the next two sections. It should be noted that these rhetorics can only be partially realised in a review of this kind. How such rhetorics might be deployed, transformed, reacted against, replaced by educators and artists working with children – and by children themselves – may be the most interesting question of all, and that can only be explored through empirical research.

1. Creative genius

This is a post-romantic rhetoric that dismisses modernity and popular culture as vulgar, and argues for creativity as a special quality of a few individuals, either highly educated and disciplined, or inspired in some way, or both. Culture here is defined by a particular discourse about aesthetic judgment and value, manners, civilisation and the attempt to establish literary, artistic and musical canons. It can be traced back through certain aspects of the Romantic period to strands of European Enlightenment thought, in particular Kant's *Critique of Judgment*.

2. Democratic and political creativity

This rhetoric provides an explicitly anti-elitist conceptualisation of creativity as inherent in the everyday cultural and symbolic practices of all human beings. It focuses particularly on the meanings made from and with popular cultural products. In its strongest formulations, it sees the creative work of young people as politically challenging. In one respect, it proceeds from empiricist traditions in which the material experiences of the individual in society lead to creative transformations. In an apparent contradiction, however, it also has roots in radical Romantic thinkers such as Blake, for whom children were agents of a revolutionary imagination, posing a political critique of church and state.

3. Ubiquitous creativity

This entails the notion that creativity is not just about consumption and production of artistic products, whether popular or elite, but involves a skill in having the flexibility to respond to problems and changes in the modern world and one's personal life. While it is now commonly invoked alongside discussions of creativity as a social process and an ethical choice, the foundation of this rhetoric lies partly in early years education and the notion of providing young children with the tools to function successfully in the world.

4. Creativity for social good

 Seeing individual creativity as linked to social structures, this rhetoric is characterised by its emphasis on the importance for educational policy of the arts as tools for personal empowerment and ultimately for social regeneration. It stresses the integration of communities and individuals who have become 'socially excluded' (for example by virtue of race, location or poverty) and invokes educational and economic concerns as the basis for generating policy interest in creativity. This rhetoric emerges largely from contemporary social democratic discourses of inclusion and multiculturalism.

5. Creativity as economic imperative

The future of a competitive national economy is seen to depend, in this rhetoric, on the knowledge, flexibility, personal responsibility and problem solving skills of workers and their managers. These are, apparently, fostered and encouraged by creative methods in business, education and industry. There is a particular focus here on the contribution of the 'creative industries'. This rhetoric annexes the concept of creativity in the service of a neo-liberal economic programme and discourse.

6. Play and creativity

A persistent strand in writing about creativity, this rhetoric turns on the notion that childhood play is the origin of adult problem-solving and creative thought. It explores the functions of play in relation to both creative production and cultural consumption. Like aspects of the 'democratic' rhetoric, this notion of creativity as play, and its relation to education, emerges from strands of Romantic thought, in this case originating with Rousseau. There are important parallels between contemporary arguments for the role of creativity and the role of play in education.

Creative Partnerships London South; Thames Festival project.
Photographer: Rehana Mughal.

7. Creativity and cognition

Ranging from theories of multiple intelligences and the testing of mental creativity levels, through explorations of the potential of artificial intelligence to demonstrate creative thought and production, to cultural psychology, this rhetoric frames creativity in psychological and scientific terms. Its emphasis at one extreme is on the internal production of creativity by the mind, and at the other extreme on external contexts and cultures. Its trajectory in education derives on the one hand from the Piagetian tradition; and on the other hand from the more culturally situated notions of creative learning expounded by Vygotsky, Dewey and Bruner.

8. The Creative affordances of technology

If creativity is not inherent in human mental powers and is, in fact, social and situational, then technological developments may well be linked to advances in the creativity of individual users. This rhetoric covers a range of positions, from those who applaud all technology as inherently improving, to those who welcome it cautiously and see creativity as residing in an, as yet, under-theorised relationship between contexts, users and applications.

9. The creative classroom

 Placing itself squarely at the heart of educational practice, this rhetoric focuses on connections between spirituality, knowledge, skills, creativity, teaching and learning and the place of creativity in an increasingly regulated and monitored curriculum. The focal point of this rhetoric is frequently practical advice to educators. This rhetoric locates itself in pragmatic accounts of 'the craft of the classroom', rather than in academic theories of mind or culture.

12. Themes and questions

1. Is creativity an internal cognitive function, or is it an external social and cultural phenomenon?

- Does creativity come from nowhere, a lateral or spontaneous insight, or is it dependent on incremental transformations of familiar genres and templates? Is 'imagination' the lone endeavour of inspired individuals, or a social, collaborative design process?

- What is the relationship between cultural learning and creative learning? While some of the rhetorics conceive of creativity without reference to culture, others conceive of all creativity as irreducibly cultural; and, furthermore, that the arts naturalise the cultural values of dominant social groups. How can creative learning projects take this kind of cultural politics into account?

- How can cultural consumption be connected to 'creative' production?

- How does creative production draw on people's cultural experiences as audiences, readers, spectators, players? How can creative learning programmes connect children's experience of the arts, both within and beyond school, with the opportunity for them to become creative producers?

2. Is creativity a pervasive, ubiquitous feature of human activity, or a special faculty, either reserved for particular groups, individuals, or particular domains of activity, in particular artistic activity?

- How might democratic accounts of creativity, which avoid the problem of elitism, nevertheless accommodate notions of exceptional talent?

- To what extent does creativity mean the same thing in arts and non-arts contexts and how is this term helpful in these different settings? On the one hand, many educators want to argue the case for an everyday creativity, implicit in every child's every act and utterance, and for creativity in all curriculum areas. On the other hand, while no-one could reasonably deny that science and maths have their own forms of creative thinking, is there

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something specific about work that self-consciously constitutes itself as 'art', which requires a more specific definition, related to forms of aesthetic effect and judgment?

3. Is creativity an inevitable social good, invariably progressive, harmonious and collaborative; or is it capable of disruption, political critique and dissent, and even anti-social outcomes?

- Arts curricula and arts education projects emphasise positive social benefits and a collaborative ideal. But what of expressions of creativity that do not fit in with current social definitions of acceptable collective social endeavour; that are, perhaps, individualist, anti-social, troubling and even dangerous? Such expressions recall popular notions of the artist as tormented individual, or the artist as political critic.

- Is creativity political, and if so, how? The creative work of young people can clearly have explicitly political purposes, or can represent implicitly political impulses. How can these potentials be recognised, developed, encouraged? What happens when they collide with institutional values or protocols?

4. What does the notion of creative teaching and learning imply?

- What is the difference between 'good' pedagogy and 'creative' pedagogy? How is creative teaching and learning different from 'good' or 'effective' teaching and 'engaged' or 'enthusiastic' learning? What is the added value of using the term 'creativity' in this context?

- How is creative learning related to play? Notions of creativity as hard work, skills-based, and ultimately a preparation for the adult workplace, can be opposed to notions of 'game-based learning' which propose a wholesale critique of learning as joyless, mechanistic work, and contrasting it with dynamic forms of learning seen to reside in play. In addition, different theories can represent children's play as, on the one hand, progressive, rule-governed and socially beneficial, and on the other hand as chaotic and risky, echoing similar contradictions within theories of creativity.

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