

A case study exploring the societal  
gatekeeper role of an Ofsted inspector, using  
a systems thinking model of creativity, in the  
business studies curriculum in Further  
Education colleges in England

by

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## Abstract

This study explored my own societal gatekeeper role as an Ofsted inspector, using a systems thinking model of creativity, within the domain of vocational business studies curricula, in Further Education (FE) colleges in England.

My research questions sought to explore how business teachers and inspectors define, recognise, measure, reward and promote creativity skills in vocational business education.

To provide a definition of creativity, I propose a framework based on its seven key aspects: process, person, place, pressures, product, persuasion and permanence. In addition to evidence-based success, I argue that we recognise the need for trust and freedom, through quality of relationships, to stimulate creativity.

Through critical self-reflection on my role as an inspector and thematic analysis of data from multiple sources including interviews, Ofsted reports and Further Education college websites, I conclude that there is a low level of interest in promotion of creativity skills in the business curriculum in FE and that Ofsted is associated with normalisation, standardisation and efficiency rather than creativity.

Creativity is an important business skill, so Ofsted inspectors, as societal gatekeepers, need to be self-reflective in acknowledging pressures that may distort perceptions, resulting in biased judgments that fail to reward and promote creativity appropriately.

## ***Dedication***

*I am dedicating this research and thesis to my parents Amar Singh and Tej Kaur, my uncle Ram Singh and my siblings Surjit Singh, Balbir Singh, Davinder Singh, Narinder Singh, Harbhajan Singh & Surinder Kaur for nurturing and sharing my love of education*

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*I am grateful for all the creative ideas that have stimulated my curiosity and enthusiasm for this research. For example, the Persian poet Rumi wrote a poem suggesting that what we seek is also seeking us. While searching for creativity, I found it approaching me. The spirit of creativity, courage, compassion and confidence strengthen my resilience and push me along, at times like a forceful gush of wind on my back and at other times like a warm breeze that makes a day writing about creativity, simply feel like a good day. Thank you to Waheguru for making it all possible.*

## Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Context</b> .....	11
<b>Organisation of my thesis</b> .....	14
<b>The issue to be studied</b> .....	15
<b>Research Context</b> .....	16
<b>The context of Further Education Colleges</b> .....	18
The context of Ofsted in Education) .....	22
Systems Thinking Conceptual Framework.....	25
<b>Purpose of education</b> .....	25
Education and work .....	26
Blame free solutions .....	27
Diversity and inclusion.....	28
Summary .....	30
Conclusion.....	30
<b>Chapter 2: What is creativity?</b> .....	31
Introduction to Literature Review Chapters .....	31
What is creativity? .....	34
Popular definitions of creativity .....	35
Process, originality & value.....	35
Who decides whether an idea is new or has value?.....	37
Can everyone be creative? .....	38
Is creativity individual or collective? .....	40
How important is the context in defining creativity? .....	41
Difference between 'creativity' and 'learning' in a creative classroom.....	41
Summary of definitions of creativity.....	42
Conclusion.....	43
<b>Chapter 3: A Brief History of Research into Creativity</b> .....	44
Introduction .....	44
Gifted, talented and genius .....	45
Importance of Diversity .....	46
Approaches to research into creativity.....	47
Personality traits of creative people .....	52
Conclusion.....	58
<b>Chapter 4: Culture and Creativity</b> .....	59
Introduction .....	59
Definitions of culture .....	59

The impact of culture on creativity.....	61
The impact of creativity on culture.....	63
International differences in creativity.....	63
Cultural unpopularity of creative people .....	66
Cultural diversity and creativity .....	67
Cultural value of creativity.....	68
Rising importance of creativity across the world .....	71
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	74
Chapter 5: The Whiteness of Creativity .....	76
Chapter 6: A Systems Thinking Model of Creativity .....	83
Introduction .....	83
Part A: Aspects of the systems thinking approach of most relevance to my research .....	83
Networks vs hierarchies.....	83
Relationships vs objects and mapping vs measuring.....	84
Small changes can lead to huge impact.....	84
Parts vs Whole .....	84
Circular vs linear relationships.....	84
Synthesis vs analysis .....	85
Language and perception .....	85
Feedback .....	86
Emergence .....	86
Temporality.....	87
Part B: Systems Thinking Model of Creativity .....	88
Field.....	91
Inter-relationship between individual, domain and field .....	92
Big C and little c creativity.....	94
Why, when and where vs who or what is creative .....	95
Creativity as the process of evolution .....	96
Importance of persuasion and gatekeepers.....	97
Careers of creative people.....	98
Part C: Limitations of Systems Thinking Approach .....	101
Structure influences behaviour.....	101
Power imbalances.....	102
Ethics of Systems Thinking.....	102
Part D: Relationship between systems thinking, society and culture.....	105
Karl Marx (1818 – 1883).....	107
Herbert Marcuse (1898 – 1979).....	108

Walter Benjamin (1892 – 1940).....	109
Antonio Gramsci (1891 – 1937) .....	110
Pierre Bourdieu (1930 – 2002).....	111
Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984) .....	112
Jurgen Habermas (1929 – present).....	112
Conclusion .....	114
Chapter 7: Methodology .....	115
Introduction .....	115
Structure of Methodology Chapter.....	116
Research questions .....	116
Research Design .....	117
This Purpose of research .....	117
Focus of case study .....	118
Parameters for Case Study.....	119
Rationale for Exploratory Case Study design .....	121
Analytical approach.....	123
Credibility in the findings .....	123
Generalisation.....	124
Time Issues .....	124
Ontological position.....	125
Unconscious dynamics and positionality.....	125
Identity.....	132
Values .....	132
Beliefs.....	132
Political stance .....	133
Teaching approach .....	134
Self-reflection .....	134
Epistemological position.....	135
Qualitative Approach .....	135
Ethical considerations.....	137
Critical thinking To think critically about my intentions in doing this research, I asked myself:.....	137
Philosophical values To answer these questions, I turned to the wisdom of classic Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Plato who advocated living virtuously in the pursuit of happiness, truth and beauty. Aspiring to these classical core philosophical values, I also bore in mind the words of Aristotle in aiming for “good”: .....	137
Potential impact of research.....	138



Ethical review documentation .....	138
Professional integrity .....	140
Hidden agendas .....	141
Transparency .....	142
Political implications .....	142
Distractions .....	142
Wasting time and money.....	143
Ownership and copyright .....	143
Plagiarism.....	144
Data Management.....	145
Rights of participants .....	145
Feedback to participants and reciprocity .....	146
Summary .....	147
Data Collection .....	148
Purpose of data collection.....	148
Type of data collected .....	148
Recruitment of interview participants .....	148
Type and degree of control exercised.....	149
Record of data sources and themes extracted for case study .....	150
Interviews with Teachers (11), Students (9) & Business owners (2).....	150
89 Ofsted inspection reports.....	150
235 Further Education College websites.....	150
329 Times Education Supplement Articles .....	151
Online searches for relevant articles.....	152
Public Engagement Activities .....	153
Ofsted Documents .....	154
Professional Teaching Standards.....	154
Critical self-reflection .....	154
Database design (Access).....	156
Evolution of themes .....	157
Interview Schedule.....	157
7.7 Strategy for data analysis .....	158
Document analysis:.....	158
Content analysis using NVivo software .....	161
Thematic Analysis .....	164
Discourse Analysis.....	169

Conclusion.....	171
Chapter 8 Findings .....	172
Finding 1: Lack of a clear definition of creativity.....	174
Finding 2: Perceptions of creative people .....	177
Positive, neutral and negative characteristics of creative people .....	177
Three contrasting fictional profiles of highly creative students.....	178
Commentary on fictional student profiles .....	180
Finding 3: Association of creativity with humanist rather than behaviorist pedagogy .....	184
Finding 4: Ofsted inspectors fail to adequately reward creativity .....	189
Internal pressures that distort judgments made by Ofsted inspectors.....	189
External pressures that distorted my judgments as an Ofsted inspector .....	215
Finding 5: The level of cultural interest in promotion of creativity skills is low .....	221
Further Education Colleges express a low level of cultural interest in creativity.....	235
Chapter 9: Discussion .....	260
<b>Question:</b> How do we promote creativity in the business curriculum?.....	262
Socialisation for the workplace.....	262
Vision, mission and value statements .....	264
Surveillance.....	265
Normalisation .....	266
Standardisation.....	267
Performativity .....	268
Efficiency .....	271
Competition .....	273
<b>Question:</b> How do we define creativity in the business curriculum?.....	274
<b>Question:</b> How do we recognize creativity?.....	306
<b>Question:</b> How do we assess or measure creativity?.....	307
<b>Question:</b> How do we reward development of creativity skills? .....	308
Chapter 10: Conclusions .....	321
<b>Diversity</b> .....	321
Trust .....	324
Language .....	326
“7 Ps of Creativity” conceptual framework for creativity.....	327
Equality & Diversity agenda and the needs of creative students and teachers? .....	331
Evaluation of creativity based on quality of relationships and processes.....	331
Critical self-reflection to reward creativity appropriately .....	332
Limitations of systems thinking conceptual framework.....	334

Unconscious drivers .....	334
Dynamics of power in relationships between individual, society and culture .....	334
Acknowledging and overcoming limitations of systems thinking.....	335
Questions arising from my research .....	340
Milestones in my research journey .....	341
References .....	344
Appendices .....	354

## Figures and Tables

### List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1.1	14
Figure 1.2	15
Figure 6.1	92
Figure 7.1	122
Figure 7.2	124
Figure 8.1	178
Figure 8.2	181
Figure 8.3	240
Figure 9.1	281
Figure 10.1	335
Figure 10.2	338

### List of Tables

	Page
Table 8.1	180
Table 8.2	183
Table 8.3	191
Table 8.4	198
Table 8.5	223
Table 8.6	226
Table 8.7	228
Table 8.8	232
Table 8.9	238
Table 8.10	243
Table 8.11	248
Table 8.12	337

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Context

The concept for this case study began while I was working as a business studies lecturer in a Further Education college in England in 2011. I was interested in discovering effective teaching strategies to enable my teenage students to develop creativity skills.

During the three-year period from 2012 to 2015 I worked as a freelance Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) inspector and this experience transformed the nature of my research interest. Through my lesson observations as an inspector and as an Education Consultant, I became aware of the impact of Ofsted as a societal gatekeeper, in moulding the curriculum so that certain aspects are highlighted, and others are overlooked or ignored. The online *Dictionary of Creativity* defines a gatekeeper as follows:

People whose role in a creative ecosystem gives them the power to decide whether or not particular creative acts or products are placed into channels of transmission or creative outlets by which they can become visible to relevant audiences. In the literary world, for example, editors, publishers, and owners of bookstores function as gatekeepers" (Harrington 1999). In the system approach, gatekeepers are people "who have the right to add memes to a domain" (Csikszentmihalyi 1999: 324) and who collectively constitute the field. (Gorny, 2007)

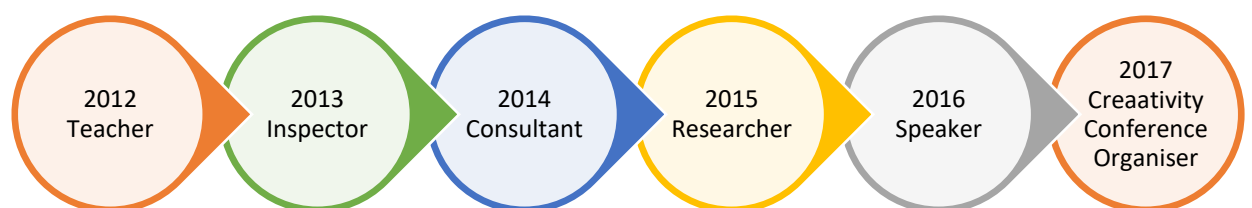
Ofsted's role as a societal gatekeeper as defined above, seemed to me to impose certain constraints on development and thought about the vocational business curriculum in Further Education (FE) colleges. These constraints, I felt, needed

researching further in order to offer understanding and insights relevant to development of creativity skills.

I have compiled this case study through an exploration of data from multiple sources including interviews with business teachers, analysis of Ofsted inspection reports, magazine articles and Further Education college websites.

Using a systems thinking conceptual framework (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014), I draw on my professional experience as a business studies teacher, Ofsted inspector for the business curriculum and Education Consultant specialising in raising teaching standards in the business curriculum in Further Education colleges. The 6-year period of research reported in this case study reflects my own professional transformation. As indicated in the timeline below (Figure 1.1), at the start of my research journey, I was a business studies teacher looking at the object of my research, creativity, within the confines of a classroom. Towards completion of my research, I organised a Creativity & Culture Conference attracting 120 academics, entrepreneurs and educators interested in research into creativity.

**Figure 1.1: Timeline illustrating my research journey from 2012 to 2017**



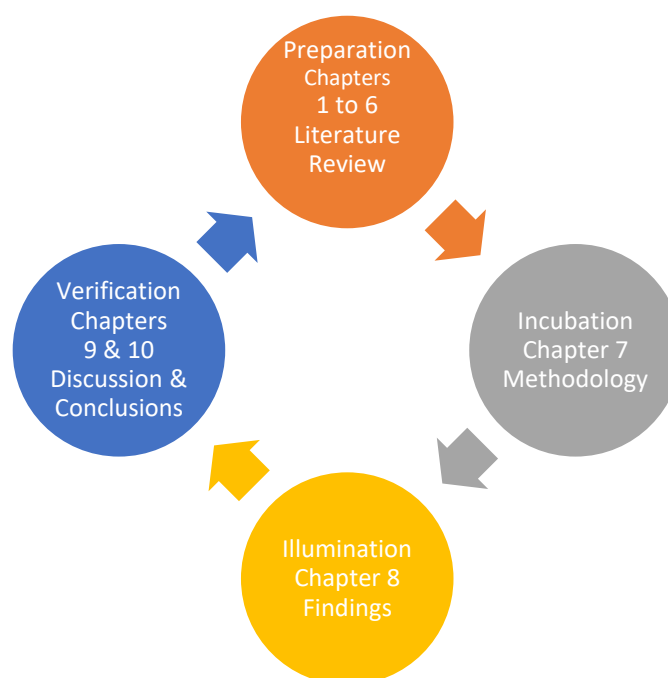
The object of my research, creativity, is no longer confined within the limitations of a classroom and curriculum. I am now applying my skills and experience, acquired through my role as an Ofsted inspector, to make useful observations about the societal role of gatekeepers responsible for selecting those who are recognised and promoted, and those who are ignored, for example at conferences, within the systems thinking framework of creativity.

My role as an Ofsted inspector was preceded by my role as a business studies teacher and followed by my role as an organiser of Creativity & Culture conferences. This case study places the spotlight on my Ofsted inspector role: as a societal gatekeeper (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) in recognition and promotion of creativity.

## Organisation of my thesis

Through my review of the existing literature about creativity I discovered the work of Wallas (1926) and his theories about the four stages of creativity (discussed in Chapter 9): preparation; incubation; illumination; verification. A PhD thesis may be considered an example of this creative process (Frick and Brodin, 2014) so I have organised my thesis as illustrated below (Figure 1.2):

**Figure 1.2: Organisation of thesis**



My preparation for this thesis included an explanation of the research context (Chapter 1) and conducting a literature review of the topics I felt to be most pertinent to my research (Chapters 2 to 6). My incubation period, which involved a great deal of reflection on my choice of methods and methodology, is reported in Chapter 7. As expected of PhD research, my findings (Chapter 8) produced many insights and unexpected outcomes such as my decision in July 2015, to stop working as an Ofsted inspector. This decision sprung from what Wallas (1926) described as the stage of illumination in the creativity process: I realised that my values (e.g.



creativity) are not in alignment with those espoused by Ofsted (e.g standardisation). In Chapter 9 I seek to evaluate my findings (which Wallas considers to be the fourth stage in the process of creativity) through discussion of the questions I explored to build this case study: How do we define, recognise, assess, reward and promote creativity? Finally, in Chapter 10, I further evaluate the significant findings through critical self-reflection, using my own professional experience and data I derived from interviews, documentation and public engagement activities.

#### The issue to be studied

The purpose of this research is to explore my societal role as a gatekeeper, working as an Ofsted inspector, in development of creativity in the context of business education, responding to questions about its attributes: definition, recognition, measurement, assessment, reward and promotion of the concept as an important cultural value..

This chapter will outline the research context and will be followed by a literature review in Chapters 2 to 6. Chapter 2 will begin by enquiring into the definition of creativity, followed by a brief historical context of creativity in chapter 3. The importance of culture in creativity will be explained in chapter 4, with chapter 5 discussing the role of race in creativity. Chapter 6 will provide a detailed account of the systems thinking model of creativity. Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 will outline my methodology, findings, discussion and conclusions.

## Research Context

I decided to carry out the current research following a 30 year teaching career in which I developed my research perspectives, frequently engaging in educational projects, such as those initiated by Petty (2013) in Further Education Colleges in the UK , called “Supported Experiments”, using an Action Research approach. This involved a considerable amount of research into current literature on the subject of how to create outstanding teaching and learning, for example Beere (2012) who presents ideas for creative stimulating learning environments in the context of the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework (2012a)

My research perspectives have been heavily influenced by my training and subsequent experience as an Ofsted Inspector from 2007 to 2015. I reframed the inspection process as a form of qualitative research, which required me to use the process of triangulation (Thurmond, 2001), gathering data and then synthesising evidence from multiple sources including lesson observations, learner portfolios, focus groups and interviews with learners and staff, to make fair and valid judgements about the quality of teaching and learning provided by the organization under scrutiny. Within my role as a teacher/researcher, education consultant and Ofsted inspector, I began to investigate the complex problem of teaching creativity skills to teenagers studying vocational BTEC Business Studies courses in post-compulsory Further Education Colleges in the UK in November 2012, when I started my formal research, supervised by the Institute for Learning (IfL), exploring teaching strategies for development of creative thinking skills.

For this initial research, I used a qualitative, Action Research approach (Campbell et al., 2004) based on philosophical assumptions supporting a phenomenological research approach, acknowledging that the interactions between myself, my teaching colleagues and our students would have an impact on the research findings. The methods I used, consisted mainly of structured classroom observations, following the guidance of Campbell et al., (2004: 94).

I found it difficult to be a teacher and a researcher simultaneously due to the different priorities and commitments required by each role. As a teacher, my first priority was to meet the needs of my students whereas I needed to be observant and reflexive as a researcher. The pressures and stress entailed in teaching teenagers left very limited time available for reflection. Therefore, I gave up my role as a class teacher so that I could focus on research instead. Moreover, two years into doing my PhD research, I decided to give up inspecting with Ofsted to build my case study with more impartiality. Even though I am not pursuing scientific objectivity or using a positivist philosophy, I found it beneficial to occupy the position solely of researcher, particularly while I did my fieldwork.

### The context of Further Education Colleges

A brief overview of the historical roots, and political purpose underpinning Further Education (FE) outlined below, serves to illustrate the context in which I have conducted the current research.

State funded Further Education in England is generally associated with vocational rather than academic education and based on my professional experience, I would echo Lucas et al. (2012: 43) in saying that “Vocational education tends to be seen as the ‘poorer cousin’ of academic education”. This association may lie in the historical roots of Further Education, traced back to altruistic educators such as John Pounds (1766-1839) who taught literacy and life skills such as cookery and carpentry to destitute, homeless children (History, 2018). Pounds inspired the “Ragged Schools Movement” which provided education for those neglected by mainstream society, described by Schupf (1972) as follows:

The schools were intended for a class of juveniles as yet unreached by any other institution, an urban group brought into existence by the rapid and unplanned growth of England's larger cities. They were the children of costermongers, pig-feeders, rag dealers, part-time dock workers, in fact of all those whose work was menial, irregular, and ill-paid. Also included in this category were the offspring of those who laid claim to no job whatsoever, the lowest mendicants and tramps, and persons who get their living by theft, who altogether neglect their children; the children of hawkers, pigeon-dealers, dog-fanciers, and other men of that class. A great proportion of the children are those of worthless and drunken parents, and many others are the children of parents, who, from their poverty, are too poor to pay even a penny a week for schooling. (Schupf, 1972: 2)

During the 19th century, Further Education, largely provided by charitable individuals or organisations, continued to focus on personal development and work-related skills (Skillswise, 2018). In the 20th century, the Education Act 1944 (Dent, 1968) formally requested local education authorities (LEA) to make provisions for post-compulsory education. In 1992, Further Education Colleges were removed from LEA control and given full financial independence ((Doughty, 2015). This major change to the way FE colleges are funded, obliged them to operate as competitive businesses and (Doughty, 2015) explains that:

Colleges were thus encouraged to improve efficiency, student numbers, retention and performance, cut costs (5% efficiency savings) and compete for students. The key target was to equip all students with the basic numeracy and literacy levels to gain employment.

According to the Association of Colleges (Colleges, 2017) FE colleges currently “prepare 2.2 million students with valuable employability skills, helping to develop their career opportunities.” Even though the language used to describe the type of students catered for at Further Education colleges has become kinder than that used in the quote from Schupf (1972) above, the emphasis remains on training citizens to be employable and to develop career opportunities, in other words there needs to be a productive, economic outcome in return for the money invested by the government. Moreover, there is a clear political focus on efficiency as stated in Government documentation in 1947:

“We must be efficient in our work, for upon this depends our standard of life and that of our neighbours at home and abroad.” (Great Britain. Ministry of, 1947)

In addition to the emphasis on work-related skills, post-war politicians in the 40s in England highlighted the importance of equality of opportunity in education, advocating inclusion of those traditionally neglected by society. However, the political claims about equalising opportunities were not always transparent, for example Fieldhouse (1994: 3) suggested that, “Greater equality of opportunity, which really meant equality of competition, rather than equality per se, was the goal.”

Despite its explicit primary aim to prepare students for the workplace and train them to acquire skills that may support them in progressing in their careers, Lucas et al. (2012: 15) argue that FE colleges do not always meet the needs of local employers and that “too often employers complain that the content taught does not connect closely enough with the requirements of a particular occupation.” This may be due to the changing nature of the work environment and the lack of clarity about the purpose of Further Education which (Wahlberg and Gleeson, 2003, p. 425) argue faces the strain of “Pressures to increase FE provision for the diverse purposes of inclusion, skills development, and economic development”. One of these political pressures faced by vocational education providers is explained by Paton (2010) reminding us that “When Labour came to power (in 1997) it declared that it wanted 50 per cent of school-leavers to go on to higher education – a bold aim designed to increase social mobility and meet the needs of a rapidly changing skills-based economy.”

The vast majority of my students, studying on vocational business studies courses in FE colleges, went on to University, being the first person in their family to do so. Very often, these students had failed to meet the entry criteria to follow the academic route into University via Advanced (A) levels and they were opting to take a vocational pathway into academia. The vocational pathway to Higher Education was often seen to be the second choice for students who had failed to achieve academic success upon completing their compulsory school education. This provides a contextual background to my exploration of creativity in a vocational rather than academic classroom environment.

The context of Ofsted in Education)

Before the creation of Ofsted, state funded education was inspected by the Local Education Authority (LEA) (Politics.co.uk, 2018) and this meant that the quality of teaching and learning was variable across a diverse range of LEAs in England.

Following the Learning and Skills Act (2000), Ofsted (Politics.co.uk, 2018) merged with the existing Adult Learning Inspectorate to inspect Further Education Colleges in England to improve learning outcomes and achievements and to standardise the quality of education across the country (Gov.UK, 2015) “reporting to policy makers on the effectiveness” of services provided.<sup>1</sup>

Although Ofsted is ostensibly an independent inspection body, reporting directly to Parliament since its creation in 1992, education researchers such as O'Leary (2014: 12) explain that its roots can possibly be traced back to the political unrest of the 1970s and the ‘politicization of the curriculum’ supported by the ‘Great Debate’ speech delivered by Prime Minister James Callaghan (1976) . The political desire for efficiency, competitiveness and value for money is clearly indicated in Ofsted’s publication of its priorities which include statements such as:

“We target our time and resources where they can lead directly to improvement”  
(Gov.UK, 2018)

Ofsted’s drive towards efficiency is controversial, leading to criticisms such as those delivered to Parliament by Bassey (2010) arguing that “Education is not an industry. Teachers are not technicians. Classrooms are not production lines. Students arriving are not inputs, nor outputs when they leave.” Despite its overt emphasis on efficiency

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<sup>1</sup> For a distinction between Additional Inspectors and HMIs see page 214



and competitiveness, the political impartiality of Ofsted is strongly defended by the union representing its inspectors, for example Penman (2014) emphasises that:

“Inspectors are civil servants – politically impartial and appointed under authority of the crown – who work hard to ensure that inspections are conducted robustly and independently within the legal responsibilities laid down by parliament. That is why they believe passionately that Ofsted must inspect every institution without fear or favour, and must continue to guard against politicisation.”

Until 2015, Ofsted supplemented its directly employed HMIs (Her Majesty’s Inspectors) with a freelance pool of inspectors provided by independent inspection providers, called Additional Inspectors (AIs). This research draws on my professional experience as an Additional Inspector from September 2012 to July 2015. My inspiration in vocational education is influenced by the benevolent approach of its historical advocates such as John Pounds (1766-1839) although I remained sincerely committed to remaining politically and professionally impartial throughout my inspection career.

When I began my training as an Ofsted inspector in 2007, I associated Ofsted with values such as quality, efficiency and innovation. Ten years later, having completed my PhD research, I am aware that Ofsted is obliged to prioritise some values due to their economic reward. For example, standardisation of the curriculum and resources may provide equity in expectations of a majority of learners nationwide whereas innovation may appeal only to a minority. Moreover, efficiency is likely to save money whereas creativity will involve risks and potential loss of money. Ofsted is

responsible for making judgments about the return on investment in state funded education and outcomes, such as increased efficiency, tend to provide tangible, concrete and easily discernible outcomes whereas creativity may be less visible and more difficult to quantify.

## Systems Thinking Conceptual Framework

Systems thinking is the conceptual framework through which I have chosen to research and Chapter 6 will give a broad overview of what this approach entails.

The main characteristics of systems thinking have been succinctly summarized by Capra and Luisi (2014: 80) as entailing a shift of perspective from the parts to the whole; inherent multi-disciplinarity; from objects to relationships; from measuring to mapping; from quantities to qualities; from structures to processes and from objective to epistemic science. Each of these features is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

### Purpose of education

Based on my experience as an educator for over 30 years, I am convinced that one of the aims of education is its long-term benefit rather than merely the short-term benefits of successful qualifications which may never be fully utilized. Using a systems thinking approach pedagogically (Merryfield, 1998), enables us to equip learners with strategies that they may use during decades of their life experiences and careers in an international, inter-dependent business environment. In alignment with Senge (1997) who posits that human survival is being threatened by slow, gradual destructive processes, I believe that teaching educators and learners through a systems approach may creatively enhance the long term impact of education.

Pragmatic use of systems thinking for the long term improvement of the human condition and business is advocated by Bausch (2001: 139) citing Banathy, one of the founders of this approach, in challenging the predominant mechanistic paradigm which they believe is inadequate in enabling fulfilment of human potential and

improving the human condition. In the context of education, there appears to be more theoretical support than practical application of systems thinking as an approach for equipping students with a broader understanding of global perspective, as noted by Merryfield (1998) who argues that:

Although much has been written about the need to infuse global perspectives in education so that students will understand and benefit from the increasing interconnectedness of the world's cultures, economies, and political relationships, few scholars have studied the actual practice of social studies teachers as they teach global perspectives or tried to understand the contexts of their instructional decisions. (p. 342)

### Education and work

Being an educator, I am sensitive to the role of education in preparing our students not only for the work place but also their place in the world. Senge (2006a: xi) emphasises that management systems cannot be adequately transformed unless education systems are transformed, quoting W. Edwards Deming (famous for improving Japanese management through his Total Quality Management systems):

We will never transform the prevailing system of management without transforming our prevailing system of education. They are the same system. (Senge, 2006a: xi)

Common sense as well as behaviorist psychology (Skinner, 1974) informs us that the habits we have learnt at school (affective, cognitive and behavioural) will shape the way we perform in the work place. Senge explains this further using Deming's rationale for linking conditioning at school with behavior at work:

The relationship between a boss and subordinate is the same as the relationship between a teacher and student. (Senge, 2006a: xi)

School education serves the purpose of socialising individuals to take their position in society so it is highly probable that the modelling an individual receives through their relationships with teachers, shapes their behaviour, through reward and punishment. Senge (1997) suggests that if children learnt to be successful by pleasing their teachers rather than being creative and risking making mistakes, in the workplace, they may focus on pleasing their bosses instead of being creative and improving the systems, because they have been socialised to believe they cannot afford to take the risks entailed.

### Blame free solutions

The systems thinking approach appeals to me as a strategy for finding “blame free” solutions. Although this may appear to be a limitation of systems thinking, Senge (2006a: 67) considers the “no blame” aspect of systems thinking to be an advantage, emphasising that despite the tendency to blame others for our problems:

Systems thinking shows us that there is no separate “other”; that you and the someone else are part of a single system. The cure lies in your relationship with your “enemy”. (p 67)

Instead of blaming others for a problem, Senge (2006a: 75) suggests that:

The key to seeing reality systemically is seeing circles of influence rather than straight lines. This is the first step to breaking out of the reactive mindset that comes inevitably from “linear” thinking. Every circle tells a story. By tracing the flows of influence, you can see patterns that repeat themselves, time after time, making situations better or worse. (p. 75)

This perspective avoids the clearly demarcated divisions of power between the worker and owner associated with Marxist ideology and is more in alignment with the notion espoused by philosophers such as Foucault (1980) who demonstrate the impact of decentralized, dispersed power where influence flows through systems as a continuum rather than a categorical, hierarchical relationship.

Even though “blame free” systems thinking may be criticised for unethically absolving people of any wrong doing, in my view, it provides us with a platform for action instead of reaction.

### Diversity and inclusion

I have promoted diversity and inclusion throughout my career, perhaps because I am bilingual and bicultural, always struggling to position myself in rigid hierarchical structures. For example in Further Education Colleges, the Principal was at least two rungs above me in the organizational hierarchy, making communication between us rare, awkward and superficial. Becoming an Ofsted inspector, facilitated my communication with the Principals of the colleges we inspected as it equalized the level of platform from which we spoke with one another. However, in this case, I struggled to be accepted as an equal member of the Ofsted organisation as I was part of the outsourced “Additional Inspectors” rather than an HMI (Her Majesty’s Inspector) which often led me to feel estranged and alienated (Seeman, 1959) rather than included.

A systems thinking approach creates a physical or emotional space, or opportunity, within networks, where we may feel valued instead of marginalized. Each node, component or individual in a system of networks has power which arguably is less

contested than in hierarchical systems. Senge (2006a: 311) further clarifies the links between systems thinking and diversity, noting that:

The imperative to build more diverse and inclusive communities will only grow in an increasingly networked world. (p 311)

Whereas contemporary approaches to appreciating diversity tend to put people into categories, he says “The real issues here are much more personal, and more developmental, than the way most corporations have been looking at diversity. It is about our ability to understand and appreciate how (others) think, communicate, and relate. It’s about living together.” Senge (2006a: 311)

## Summary

This chapter has provided a contextual framework for my research as a vocational business studies teacher and also an Ofsted inspector in Further Education Colleges. It provided me with some themes to explore, to guide me in my review of relevant literature. Chapters 2 to 6 summarise the broad themes which led to formulation of my research questions: How do we define, recognise, measure, assess, reward and promote creativity? I chose these questions because as an experienced business studies teacher and also as an Ofsted inspector, I did not already know the answer to them; found them to be interesting and useful and moreover, believe that answers to these questions will add value to the quality of business curriculum provision in Further Education Colleges in England.

## Conclusion

Following this initial exploration of my research context, I decided to conduct a literature review, focused on responding to three questions:

What is creativity?

What is the history of research into creativity?

How is culture related to creativity?

The following chapter will introduce the structure of my literature review and summarise my exploration of literature related to the definition of creativity.



## Chapter 2: What is creativity?

Introduction to Literature Review Chapters

My literature review (Chapters 2 to 6) began with online searches using key concepts associated with creativity, for example “definition”, “history”, and “culture”, which reflected gaps in my own knowledge, highlighted by my previous research (Mahil, 2013). My review of literature pertaining to each of these concepts fell neatly into three separate chapters which I wrote in my first two years’ of research whereas Chapter 5 was written towards the end of my research journey, using literature that helped to explain the racial context for my research. Finally, Chapter 6 was written to summarise the main features of the systems thinking approach of relevance to my research.

**Chapter 2**, *What is Creativity?* explores a wide range of definitions of creativity, most of which derive from the fields of Arts and Science rather than business. I found two key concepts commonly used in academic definitions of creativity: value and originality. However, it was the systems model of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) asking questions such as “Creative for whom?” which highlighted limitations of current definitions of creativity. This chapter led to my first research question: How do we define creativity?

**Chapter 3**, *A Brief History of Research into Creativity* was inspired by three handbooks, compiling creativity research from the 1950s (Sternberg, 1999, Kaufman and Sternberg, 2006, Kaufman and Sternberg, 2010), following the famous address by Guilford (1950) when he lamented that “the subject of creativity has been neglected by psychologists”. This chapter highlights various approaches to creativity

research, for example, psychometric, biological and contextual and it confirmed my decision to use a contextual approach which is in alignment with my ontological perspective.

**Chapter 4**, *Culture and Creativity* explains the importance of placing creativity within a cultural context. Although there is a rising level of interest in creativity research around the world, leading advocates such as Gardner (2011b) suggest that much of this research is dominated by Western culture. As my review of the literature for this chapter indicated cultural differences in how we promote creativity, it led me to formulate my research question “How do we promote creativity?”

**Chapter 5**, *The Whiteness of Creativity* was written towards the end of my third year of research, to highlight some of the challenges I was facing as a non-white researcher, such as insidious racism. At first, I placed this chapter in my methodology section as it illuminates my ontological perspective. It also tied in well with Chapter 4, *Culture & Creativity* although it is distinctly more personal in nature. After moving Chapter 5 to various positions in my thesis, including my discussion and conclusion chapters, I decided to keep it distinct, as an important account of literature which supported and explained my perspective as a non-white creativity researcher. This chapter supported my critical self reflections and conclusions about invisible needs of highly creative teachers and students

**Chapter 6**, *A Systems Thinking Model of Creativity*, provides a rationale for my use of the system thinking model of creativity as a conceptual framework. It outlines key aspects of the conceptual framework that I have used to design my research and

interpret my findings. One of the reasons I chose this framework is familiarity, as I studied for an online course with some of its advocates (Capra and Luisi, 2014). However, to ensure that my awareness of this framework was up to date and to justify its relevance to my research, I extended my knowledge by reviewing systems thinking theories arising from different disciplines, for example scientific (Capra and Luisi, 2014) management (Senge, 2006b) educational (O'Connor and McDermott, 2012) and psychological (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). I also review relevant ideas from critical social theorists including Karl Marx, Michel Foucault and Walter Benjamin to broaden the scope of systems thinking as an analytical framework.

### What is creativity?

The subject of my research is creativity so I begin by asking the question “What do we mean by “creativity” in the business curriculum in Further Education Colleges?”

This is an important question in view of my previous action research into development of creative thinking skills on BTEC Business Studies courses in Further Education Colleges, (Mahil, 2013) which highlighted the need to ensure that teachers and learners share the same concept of “creativity”. When learners were asked to produce a “creative poster” as part of a classroom activity designed to stimulate creativity skills, many students expressed their understanding of creativity to mean colourful posters with images. On the other hand, the teacher expected to see creativity as an expression of ideas in the content and presentation of the posters. So, what exactly do we mean by “creativity” in the context of the business curriculum in Further Education (FE) Colleges in England?

There is a wide spectrum of definitions of creativity as researched by Banaji and Burn (2010: 10) who note that:

Academics, policy-makers and arts educators deploy a range of claims about creativity which emerge from different theories of learning, different contexts, different artistic traditions, different academic or quasi-academic traditions, and different policy contexts. (p 10)

Following this range of claims and viewpoints, this chapter will discuss a range of definitions and explain their relevance to the business curriculum for young adults in Further Education (FE) Colleges

## Popular definitions of creativity

One of the most popular advocates of creativity in education is Sir Ken Robinson (2011), author of “Out of our minds”. In August 2014, his YouTube video entitled “Do schools kill creativity?” (Robinson, 2007) has already been watched almost 7 million times, indicating the international appeal of his views about creativity. His message is that creativity, which he defines as “the process of having original ideas that have value”, is as important as literacy and that both can be learnt and should be taught in compulsory school education.

Robinson highlights collaboration as being a key element in creativity and that:

Creativity is a process more often than it is an event. To call something a process indicates a relationship between its various elements: that each aspect and phase of what happens is related to every other. Being creative involves several processes that interweave within each other. The first is generative. The second is evaluative. (Robinson, 2011: 151)

The limitations of Robinson’s position are highlighted by Csikszentmihalyi (2014) using the systems thinking model of creativity which raises questions such as “Valuable to whom?” and “Who decides whether something is original?”.

## Process, originality & value

In the context of a business curriculum, it seems perfectly reasonable to accept Robinson’s suggestion that creativity is a process in which original ideas are generated and then evaluated. However, as a business studies teacher, I did not have a clear set of criteria to enable me to evaluate creativity without relying on my intuition and personal preferences.

Action Research by Mahil (2013) based in a typical FE business curriculum setting, used a definition of creativity by Krathwohl (2002) suggesting that the “create” level in their Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002) involves “Putting elements together to form a novel, coherent whole or make an original product.”

Based on this definition of creativity, classroom activities designed to stimulate a process which allows students to generate ideas, evaluate them and choose those that have value (in terms defined by the teacher or students), seem appropriate for development of creative thinking skills. However, Mahil (2013) found complexities in this overt simplicity, such as misunderstandings between teacher and students, caused by lack of shared meanings of concepts such as ‘creative’ and ‘unique’.

The popular notion of creativity advocated by Robinson (2011) as being simply a “process of having original ideas that have value” does not address the questions of “Original to whom?” and “Of value to whom?” which are implied in the work of another popular author on creativity, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2013: 23) who argues that,

If by creativity we mean an idea or action that is new and valuable, then we cannot simply accept a person’s own account as the criterion for its existence. There is no way to know whether a thought is new except with reference to some standards, and there is no way to tell whether it is valuable until it passes social evaluation. (p 23)

Csikszentmihalyi emphasizes that creativity is a systemic phenomenon which does not occur in the isolation of personal thoughts; creativity arises in the interaction between personal thoughts and their sociocultural context.

### Who decides whether an idea is new or has value?

In the business curriculum, a combination of the definitions of creativity suggested by Robinson and Csikszentmihalyi is pragmatic in providing a broader paradigm through which to explore creativity. A simple definition of creativity being a process of generating original ideas that have value, seems easily applicable in establishing a learning environment that fosters effective development of creativity skills. However, we must bear in mind the **standards**, and the necessary social evaluation that will decide whether the ideas generated are in fact original and whether they have value.

Edexcel (2012) the Awarding Body for BTEC business qualifications, provides external standards to judge the quality of work produced as evidence of students' progress and achievement and they propose that:

Young people think creatively by generating and exploring ideas, making original connections. They try different ways to tackle a problem, working with others to find imaginative solutions and outcomes that are of value. (Scales, 2012: 263)

Edexcel's (2012) pedagogical guidance about creative thinking skills is that young people:

- Generate ideas and explore possibilities
- Ask questions to extend their thinking
- Connect their own and others' ideas and experiences in inventive ways
- Question their own and others' assumptions
- Try out alternatives or new solutions and follow ideas through
- Adapt ideas as circumstances change

This analysis of creative thinking corresponds with Robinson's (2011) definition of creativity, involving generation of ideas, making original connections and finding outcomes that are of value. However, it does not adequately address Csikszentmihalyi's concern about the systemic evaluation of the creativity expressed in ideas, connections and outcomes. The Awarding Body tells us **what** students are expected to do but it fails to clearly indicate **how** we evaluate whether an idea is indeed creative and whether the outcome has any value and **who** judges it to be so. This lack of clarity about **who** and **how** we evaluate an idea to be original and of value, remains a huge challenge in development of creativity in the business curriculum.

### Can everyone be creative?

In a business context, the notion that creativity is ubiquitous is supported by Craft (2001) cited in Banaji and Burn (2010: 29) who states 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." Craft offers a very generic concept of creativity which she believes is "the ability to cope effectively with changing life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She distinguishes this clearly from creativity in the arts and from the paradigm shifting creativity of 'great' figures."

Arguments against this ubiquitous concept of creativity, such as those put forward by Thomson and Hall (2006) cited in Banaji and Burn (2010: 30) rejecting the notion of 'vulgar creativity which everyone is supposed to possess in equal measures' and seem pertinent to creativity in arts and culture rather than a business curriculum. For



example, it is clear that not everyone can aspire to become a 'creative genius', which is one of the rhetorics of creativity described by Banaji and Burn (2010: 15).

It seems apparent that creativity, like intelligence, varies along a continuum. Ausubel et al. (1978: 584) note that only rare individuals, having contributed significantly to a particular domain, for example art, science, politics or philosophy, can be called a creative person. They propose that:

The creative person is, by definition, a much rarer individual than the intelligent person. Thousands of intelligent individuals exist for every one who is truly creative. (Ausubel et al., 1978: 584)

Responding to a global business environment, which is diverse and multifaceted the business curriculum tends to be inclusive rather than exclusive and does not normally suffer from the 'vulgar elitism', highlighted by Thomson and Hall (2006) and also Willis (1990) who laments that:

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 cited in Banaji and Burn (2010: 21)

Even though it is tempting to accept Craft's broad brush concept of ubiquitous creativity, where 'it is possible for every person, child or adult, to learn to make choices about their lives which are creative or not creative', Negus and Pickering, cited in Banaji and Burn (2010: 30) argue that "...we cannot collapse creativity into everyday life, as if they are indistinguishable." They acknowledge that there are intrinsic connections between everyday life and creativity such as creating a beautiful

flower arrangement, telling an entertaining story or finding ways to recycle unwanted packaging. However, the flower arrangement, the story and the recycled packaging may not be of value to anyone outside the creator's circle of family or friends.

Without value, a product does not meet the requirements of creativity.

In a business class, both these viewpoints are relevant. On the one hand, we can assume, as Craft agrees, that everyone is **capable** of being creative and generating new ideas that have value, for example because they meet a physical or emotional need. However, on the other hand, as Negus and Pickering highlight, not all the ideas they generate will be new and not all of them will have value. The question remains however, who decides what is creative and what is not; and how do we measure the value of a new idea and therefore, how creative it is?

### Is creativity individual or collective?

We began with a simple pragmatic definition of creativity, taken from Robinson (2011) stating that creativity is the process of generating original ideas that have value and took into consideration Csikszentmihalyi's (2013: 27) concern that the value of these original ideas has to be judged by experts in the field and within the "domain which consists of a set of symbolic rules and procedures". In

Csikszentmihalyi's view, the individual person is merely the third component of the creative system (the first being the domain and the second being the field). Robinson (2011) agrees that "Creativity is about making connections and is usually driven more by collaboration than by solo efforts." (Robinson, 2011: 211)

Therefore, in a business curriculum, it seems fair to assume that creativity is collective rather than individual. An idea may seem highly original and valuable to

the individual who generated it but in business, the value of an idea is judged by those willing to buy it in some shape or form.

### How important is the context in defining creativity?

An idea may be creative because it has value in one context, but in a different context, the same idea may have no value at all and therefore it would lack creativity (defined as a new idea that has value). For example, the price people are willing to pay for an idea, at any point in time, is an indication of its value, although the value may increase or decrease over time. So, the simple definition of creativity being the process of generating original ideas that have value needs to be understood within the various dynamics of collaboration (e.g. mutual trust, respect and shared values) that create the context in which the idea emerges. An idea cannot be said to be of value unless someone, within a particular context in time, evaluates it as having value, for example it may improve quality, increase efficiency or lower the cost of production.

### Difference between 'creativity' and 'learning' in a creative classroom

The 'creative classroom' rhetoric, reviewed by Banaji and Burn (2010: 63), seems "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". However, if all learning takes place in a creative classroom context and we accept that everyone is capable of generating creative ideas that have value, what is the difference between creativity and any other learning that leads to a valued outcome?

In a 'creative classroom' students may be encouraged to play games, use pictures, the internet and multimedia technology to work in teams, on projects designed to stimulate learning to meet a variety of appropriate learning objectives. Even though each of these activities may lead to spontaneous insights and learning, they may do so without any evidence of creativity as we have defined: *generating original ideas that have value*. These ideas may be new and of value to the students themselves so we could say that learning has taken place. However, although they have learnt something, **creatively**, they have not necessarily developed their capacity to generate original ideas that have value. This is one of the most common misunderstandings around creativity in the business curriculum. Teachers mistakenly believe that the creative activities they use to foster a 'creative classroom' teaching approach is synonymous with development of creativity whereas what often happens in the best of these classes is that learning takes place which does not always include creativity. This distinction between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity is well explained by Starko (2005: 19) cited in Banaji and Burn (2010: 66) insisting that 'creative teaching' (where the teacher is creative) is not the same as 'teaching to develop creativity'.

### Summary of definitions of creativity

To sum up, many ideas surround the idea of creativity, but a popular and pragmatic definition is one offered by Sir Ken Robinson (2007, 2011) where he simply states that creativity is a process of having original ideas that have value. This definition challenges the notion that some people are creative and others are not and it emphasises that in a business curriculum, we can **all** be taught how to be creative, in other words to generate ideas that add value.

## Conclusion

The wide range of definitions of creativity inspired me to explore previous research into creativity from a multitude of perspectives. In the business environment, the context is highly important in determining whether an idea is valuable. It has to be innovative and of benefit which is usually measured in profitability. The tendency is to confuse creative teaching (where a teacher uses innovative teaching methods to inspire learning) and useful learning in general (where a student is able to practically apply new learning) with creativity that entails a learner discovering new ideas that add value, either implicitly or explicitly in collaboration with others. In the business curriculum, one of the most pressing concerns is highlighted by Csikszentmihalyi (2013) when he reminds us that we cannot accept a person's own account as the criterion for existence of creativity without reference to standards and social evaluation. These standards may notionally be set by stakeholders such as the Awarding Bodies for the qualification, Ofsted and PGCE teacher training courses. How well these standards are understood and communicated effectively for a shared understanding and strategies for development of creativity, may be an area that needs further exploration and clarity.

Most of the existing research into creativity has been generated over the past 68 years, following a strong argument presented by Guilford (1950) lamenting the dearth of research into creativity and advocating the importance of such research. The following chapter highlights the lack of consensus around the concept of creativity and the diverse range of epistemological approaches to its exploration.

## Chapter 3: A Brief History of Research into Creativity

### Introduction

The previous chapter emphasized the lack of consensus in defining creativity which may be one of the reasons that many professionals in my network of contacts, told me they have gone through formal education, believing that they are not very creative when in fact it may be more accurate to say they do not have a clear definition of what is meant by creativity. It wasn't until I had been teaching for at least 30 years that I finally allowed myself the time to reflect on why so many of my teenage students also held this common belief that they were "just not very creative". Initially, I did not realise that the misperception may be due to the absence of a shared definition of creativity.

In researching the history of the concept that we call "creativity", defined in chapter 2, I learnt that the Ancient Greeks and Romans did not believe that people could be personally creative; only the Gods and Goddesses could be creative. Reflecting on why none of my teachers had ever made it a priority or their concern to teach me and my peers how to be more creative, I wondered if they associated creativity with the realm of spirituality or ancient rhetoric, concluding that either a child is blessed with a gift for creativity or not.

This chapter briefly outlines how the concept of creativity has evolved, from the rhetoric associated with ancient Greeks to an acceptance of a democratic concept of creativity where each human being is supposed to have creative potential. Since the 1950s, many approaches to researching creativity have developed, for example, the psychometric, psychological, biographical and biological approaches which I summarise in this chapter.

The periods of the Renaissance from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the Enlightenment from 1685 to 1815, helped to separate the concept of creativity from the realm of Gods and Goddesses. Artists in the broad meaning of the term to include musicians, writers and sculptors, started to be recognised for being creative in their own rights. However, some of the best artists remain adamant that their creations are merely uncovered from the spiritual realm. As I mentioned in my conference speech in Germany in 2015 (Mahil, 2015) composers such as Beethoven and Mozart suggest that they wrote down the music they heard in their minds, and successful writers say their stories were written as though they were taking down a dictation; sculptors echo the sentiments of Michelangelo saying that he saw David trapped in the marble and sculpted around him to set him free. We call this genius.

Unlike Plato who emphasised the mystic source of creativity, notes Starko (2001: 33), Aristotle “did not believe that creative products came through mystical intervention or unique creative processes. He believed that just as plants and animals produced young in a rational, predictable fashion, so art, ideas, and other human products derived from logical steps of natural law.” This indicates that the debate about whether creativity is ubiquitous or the privilege of a selected few (discussed in chapter 2) has been contested for thousands of years.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, (Albert and Runco, 1999) the distinction between ‘talent’ and ‘genius’ became more established. It seemed that educators can enable their students to develop talent whereas genius does not respond well to external

feedback, rules and regulations. Albert and Runco (1999: 21) report that it was concluded that talent required education whereas genius did not.

### Importance of Diversity

Darwin's theory of evolution was a significant milestone in the development of creativity as a concept, because it was considered to be an essential component in problem solving, facilitating adaptation to changes, necessary for survival. Evolution theories imply that it is the strongest ideas that survive and through the process of natural selection, we may infer that the strongest societies are those that have adapted to change and tolerated the greatest level of diversity. A high level of diversity provides a culturally rich environment in which creativity is stimulated (Florida, 2007, Florida, 2015). This view is supported by Shiu (2014) who advocates an inter-disciplinary approach to research:

Further evidence for the positive effect of interdisciplinarity on creativity comes from research on contextual factors like organisational structure, intellectual climate, collaboration and diversity. Many of the most striking historical examples of creative environments are characterised by a high concentration of and interaction between scholars from different disciplines (e.g. ancient Athens, renaissance Florence and Vienna around 1900). (Shiu, 2014: 38)

Although diversity is positively associated with creativity (Florida, 2015, Shiu, 2014) it is clear that there has to be some common ground (for example level of interest and experience in the subject matter) between the various participants to ensure that skills and resources are used effectively. Referring to research conducted by Yong



(2012), which favoured same-discipline collaboration compared with interdisciplinary collaboration, Klausen (2014) warns that “too much diversity can be detrimental to group creativity,” without a clear focus and shared knowledge.

### Approaches to research into creativity

Since the 1950s, following the famous speech delivered by Guilford (1950) in his Presidential role to the American Psychological Association, lamenting the dearth of research into creativity, there has been a growing interest in research into creativity. Admitting that he has selected only a small sample from the plethora of research into creativity that has accumulated since the 1950s, Mayer (1999) has categorised existing research into creativity into six main approaches: psychometric, psychological, biographical, biological, computational and contextual. These are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Six main approaches for research into creativity (Adapted from Mayer (1999))

<p><b>Psychometric approaches:</b> develop a test to measure creativity; compare people who score high and low in creativity; determine relations between creativity measures and other measures</p> <p><b>Psychological approaches:</b> describe the cognitive processes involved in creative thinking; compare the cognitive processes in creative and non-creative thinking; determine factors that improve creative thinking</p> <p><b>Biographical approaches:</b> provide a qualitative narrative, or a quantitative analysis of a case history of a creative person; provide a qualitative description or quantitative analysis of commonalities of case histories of creative people; identify life events or provide a quantitative analysis of events in a case history that foster the development of a creative person;</p> <p><b>Biological approaches:</b> describe the biological correlates of creative thinking; compare the biological characteristics of creative and non-creative people; determine how biological impairments affect creativity</p> <p><b>Computational approaches:</b> produce computer code that simulates creative production; compare computer programs that are creative and non-creative; determine how changes in a program affect creativity</p> <p><b>Contextual approach:</b> describe creativity in social and cultural contexts; describe conceptions of creativity in different cultures; identify techniques to overcome barriers in creativity in a social context and identify the evolutionary processes that shape human creativity.</p>
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The research approach that I consider to be most relevant to my thesis is what Mayer (1999) has labelled the “Contextual approach” as it arises from the systems thinking conceptual framework which I have outlined in chapter 1. The systems thinking model for creativity will be described in more detail in chapter 6 and here I will briefly outline four of the other approaches (psychometric, psychological, biographical and biological) that provide an interesting and relevant contextual base for my research.

### *Psychometric Approach*

The psychometric approach to researching creativity is largely based on the pioneering work of Guilford (1950) and the tests that he created to measure “divergent thinking”. In these tests, participants are asked to produce several responses to a prompt instead of just giving one correct answer. In 1974, Torrance, building on the work of Guilford, created the “Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking” and these tests are still being used to measure divergent thinking and problem-solving skills.

### *Advantages of psychometric tests*

These tests have provided a supposedly objective way of scoring the level of creativity in terms of divergent thinking and problem-solving skills, in ordinary people, whereas previously, people who were well known for their creativity were studied using subjective rather than objective measures. The tests are much easier to administer and to interpret (for example, (Ayas and Sak, 2014, Benedek et al., 2016) than the lengthy case studies conducted to research the creativity skills of famous people (Gardner, 2011a).

## Criticisms of the psychometric approach

Sternberg and Todd (1999: 7) note various criticisms of the psychometric approach to researching creativity. For example, “some researchers rejected the assumption that non-eminent samples could shed light on eminent levels of creativity, which was the ultimate goal of many studies of creativity.” Other researchers, for example Policastro and Gardner (1999) argue that the tests “fall short of distinguishing imagination from fantasy, relevant from irrelevant material, and contextually valid from rambling associations.” They suggest that the tests are inadequate measures of creativity because the concept involves more than the traits such as fluency, flexibility and originality that are measured in the psychometric tests.

When people have been coached or tested several times on the psychometric tests, the outcomes of the test are likely to be distorted and therefore low in validity as a measure of divergent thinking or creativity.

Furthermore, regardless of how well a participant has done on the psychometric test, it does not follow that they will demonstrate that level of performance in the real work place or educational environment. Therefore, psychometric tests are criticised for limited practical use and Sternberg and Todd (1999) report criticisms that there is not enough longitudinal research to provide evidence to the contrary although Torrance (1987) suggests that creativity tests can predict creative performances years later.

One of the reasons that psychometric creativity tests are of limited use in the work place is that they are administered to measure the individual creativity of a person, working alone whereas in the organisation, they usually have to work in groups or teams. The tests do not measure what the performance of the individual will be like

within an environmental context in which group dynamics and work-related pressures may inhibit their ability to express their full creative potential.

### *Psychological Approach*

The psychological approach, like the psychometric approach, focuses on the individual as the source of creativity. Whereas the psychometric approach attempts to measure aspects of thinking associated with creativity for example fluidity, flexibility and originality, the psychological approach takes into consideration a broader range of cognitive processes, personality traits and creativity in response to different types of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

### *Freud (1908/1959) The role of the unconscious*

Prominent psychologists such as Freud (1908) took a serious interest in the concept of creativity. According to the psychoanalytic approach, we express the unacceptable desires and conflicts of our unconscious mind through creative expression, in a “publicly acceptable way” (Sternberg and Todd, 1999). For example Freud’s case study of “Little Hans” (Midgley, 2006) illustrates Herbert Graf’s phobia of horses when he was a child. Freud associated this phobia with repressed sexual conflicts although he revised his interpretations at a later reading of the case study. Moreover, Midgley (2006) explaining the diverse range of interpretations of the same case study by significant psychoanalysts, including Melanie Klein and John Bowlby, demonstrates the highly subjective nature of psychoanalysis which makes it difficult to draw reliable conclusions, which would be of use in the vocational business curriculum, about the nature of creativity.

### Finke et al (1995) Geneplore model

More contemporary psychologists such as Finke et al (1995) have researched the cognitive processes involved in creativity, including the processes of retrieval, association, synthesis and transformation. They suggest two phases in creative thought which they label the “Geneplore” model: the generative and exploratory phase. In the first phase, Finke et al suggest that an individual constructs mental representations which are then used to come up with creative ideas. For example, faced with the prospect of bankruptcy, business owners may generate a list of options available to them (generative phase) and they may then explore the potential outcomes deriving from implementation of the different options available (exploratory phase). This process may lead the company to discovering the most creative solution.

### Personality traits of creative people

Many researchers for example (Amabile 1983; Barron 1968, 1969; Eysenck 1993; Gough 1979; MacKinnon 1965; Maslow 1968; Carl Rogers 1954) have focused on identifying personality traits of creative people.

Psychologists such as Amabile (1983) have focused on personality traits that characterise creative people, for example self-confidence, risk taking and independence. Her research suggests that a playful approach increases the likelihood of producing creative results. Amabile has also produced research highlighting that intrinsic motivation contributes favourably to creative expression whereas extrinsic motivation can be an inhibiting factor.

This supports the well-known research of Maslow (1968) who suggested that creativity is one of the expressions of an individual working towards fulfilling their full

potential and attaining self-actualisation as part of the hierarchy of human needs. He identified personality traits such as courage, freedom and spontaneity in creative people.

On the other hand, Feist (1999) reminds us that personality traits of creative people will be different depending on the domain. For example, he reports on research that distinguishes between the personality traits of artists compared with scientists. He concludes that the personality of the creative artist is someone who is imaginative, open to new ideas, neurotic and perhaps antisocial at times. On the other hand, creative scientists are "... generally more open and flexible, driven and ambitious, and although they tend to be relatively asocial, when they do interact with others, they tend to be somewhat prone to arrogance, self-confidence and hostility."

Introversion, ambition and autonomy seem to be common traits for both creative artists and creative scientists. Storr (1988) has argued that the ability to be alone and away from others is a prerequisite for creative activity. Only those who make time to be by themselves can spend the necessary amount of time thinking and creating."

Although researchers (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996a) (Martinsen, 2013) (Rudowicz and Hui, 1997) are in agreement about general traits shared by those with a predisposition towards creativity, there is no general consensus about what constitutes a 'creative personality'. Feist (1999: 290) argues that "The creative personality does exist and personality dispositions regularly and predictably relate to creative achievement in art and science." However, he does not report on research describing the creative personality in a wider range of domains than art and science, for example business.

### *Implications for Education*

The importance of recognizing and valuing the creative skills of students is supported by Sternberg and Todd (1999) who report that “ when creative students are taught and their achievements are then assessed in a way that values their creative abilities, their academic performance improves (Sternberg, Ferrari, Clinkenbeard & Grigorenko, 1996)”

Being creative in a particular field does not necessarily mean that a person is creative in every field. We tend to be most creative in fields that are most familiar or appealing to our nature. For example, the famous artist Vincent Van Gogh may not have been as creative as William Shakespeare in writing, and the famous musician Beethoven, may not have been as creative in business as Richard Branson.

Although Finke (1990) suggests that creativity skills can be acquired, developed and applied across a range of situations, Ward et al. (1999) have found that “.....there is considerable evidence that creative performance is tied to expertise in a particular field, which enables the person to retrieve relevant information and to recognise when a new idea is likely to be valid or significant.” One of the personality traits associated with creativity is deep passion for the subject in which one is creative, combined with research highlighting the importance of being in the right field, supports educational pedagogy advocating that course content is personalised (Thorndike, 1906, Reece and Walker, 2007, Greenwood and Gaunt, 1994) to match the needs and interests of students.

### *Biographical Approach*

The biographical approach to researching creativity is based on case studies of historic figures, for example Newton (1643-1727), Descartes (1596-1650),



Beethoven (1770-1827) and Gandhi (1869-1948), acknowledged for their creative contributions. This case study method is referred to as 'historiometry' and researchers, for example Gardner (1983) have used this method to explore various aspects of the lives of creative individuals, such as, their family lives, education, social and historical contexts in which their contributions were accepted as being creative.

The personal lives of highly creative people are often described as being notorious. Feldman (2010: 174) reports on a study conducted by Gardner (1983) in which he found that all seven creative individuals he researched, "... had difficulty forming close friendships or deep emotional relationships. Friends, lovers, wives, and husbands were important, to be sure, but more for what they contributed to the creator's purposes than for their intrinsic value. All seven individuals also worked hard at getting their work known and recognised, and formed and maintained relationships as part of that process." Policastro and Gardner (2010: 215) also found that "Talented individuals generate creative work in the context of prolonged, meaningful and intrinsically motivating pursuits, which demand total immersion." Unfortunately, this total immersion in work often came at a sacrifice of their personal and non-work-related activities. However, these case studies were constructed using not only a small but also highly specialised sample of successful people renowned for their creative contributions to society which prevents us from making broad generalisations based solely on these cases.

#### Four distinct kinds of creators

Even though there is no general consensus about what constitutes a creative personality with research being limited to relatively few case studies of famous creative people, Policastro and Gardner (1999) have categorised the information

accumulated from these case studies into four distinct groups: the master; the maker; the introspector and the influencer.

Examples of the “master” include Mozart and Shakespeare who achieved the highest degree of attainment possible in their domain. Freud and Einstein are examples of the “maker” as they challenged their domain to create a new domain or sub-domain. The “introspector” for example Woolf and Proust makes a creative contribution by exploring their own psyche. The fourth category of creators, the “influencer”, for example politicians such as Gandhi, direct their creative expression in making an impact on others.

Qualitative case studies researched by Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Gardner, 1993; Gruber, 1999, support the notion that before innovation is produced, creative individuals need to be deeply immersed in their field of expertise. This close connection between knowledge, familiarity and creativity is further explained by Weisberg (1999: 248) who argues that “The reason that one person produced some innovation, while another person did not, may be due to nothing more than the fact that the former knew something that the latter did not.”

### *Biological Approach*

#### *Cortical activation & arousal*

When links between boredom and creativity are discussed (Davis and Csikszentmihalyi, 1977, Kanevsky and Keighley, 2003, Quindlen, 2002) it is not always an antagonistic relationship as suggested by Schubert (1977). In fact, contemporary researchers Belton and Priyadharshini (2007) have begun to advocate the importance of ‘boredom’ in generating creativity. Their findings support the earlier research of Martindale (1999) who reported that low-arousal produces greater

creativity than high arousal, at least when an individual is engaged in the creative activity and particularly when they are trying to be creative. When an individual is under stress, for example when they are being watched or working in a group, they are in a state of high arousal and this decreases originality, even in tasks which are traditionally used to stimulate ideas, for example brainstorming. Amabile (1983) supports this finding as her research demonstrates that even the arousal caused by external rewards decreases creativity. On the other hand, Martindale (1999: 141) reports research by Maddi (1965) suggesting that “creative people are less physically active than uncreative people.” Moreover, Martindale (1999) provides further support for the notion that high level of creativity is linked to low-arousal by noting that “Self-reports of highly creative people almost all stress the effortlessness of creative inspiration. Creativity seems not to be based upon self-control or willpower. Just the opposite seems to be the case.” This is supported by the experience of creative individuals with an introvert disposition such as Cain (2012) who express their appreciation for environments such as retreats, which allow them to withdraw from sensory stimulation which lowers their cortical arousal.

In contrast, Berlyne (1971) Houston & Mednick, (1963) and Farley, (1985) present findings that suggest that creative people need novelty and stimulation which increases cortical arousal. Martindale (1999) offers an explanation by suggesting that creative individuals withdraw because of oversensitivity which leads to a low level of arousal and this in turn leads to a craving for novelty and stimulation.

## Hemispheres

Research findings such as those submitted by Penfield and Roberts (1958) Galin (1974), Hoppe (1977) and Jaynes (1976) support the assumption that the right and left hemispheres of the brain control different cognitive functions. When the right

hemisphere is stimulated through hypnosis, alcohol or drugs such as marijuana, Weckowicz et al (1975) have shown that it leads to a higher level of performance on creativity tests. Research has also demonstrated a positive correlation between leftward eye movements and a higher level of creativity. Hines and Martindale (1974) report that “Subjects perform slightly better on creativity tests if they are forced by specially constructed goggles to look leftward as opposed to rightward while taking the tests.”

### Conclusion

Although the psychometric, psychological, biographical and biological research into creativity provides useful insights, these approaches tend to focus on internal cognitive aspects of individual creativity. On the other hand, the systems approach to creativity, to be discussed in Chapter 6, enables us to explore collaborative creativity within specific contexts and within the business environment. I decided this is the most pragmatic approach for the research question I am exploring. Culture is an integral aspect of the systems thinking model of creativity so the next chapter will explore the relationship between international cultures and creativity.

## Chapter 4: Culture and Creativity

### Introduction

Drawing on the work of researchers who associate culture and creativity, this chapter will explore ways in which culture makes an impact on creativity and how various cultures around the world are giving it increasing importance based on both a business and personal development imperative.

### Definitions of culture

Just as there are a wide range of definitions of creativity (discussed in Chapter 2) there are numerous definitions of culture, often linked to shared values, beliefs and patterns of behavior (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural, 1999, Lubart and Georgsdottir, 2004). For example, The (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural, 1999: 53) describe two values underpinning British culture:

- the right of all individuals to fulfilment and self-realisation; to freedom of personal expression and action, providing the freedoms of others are not infringed; and respect for different value systems and ways of life
- contingency and a willingness to admit that things might be different to how they appear (questioning current perceptions, knowledge and practices and to believe in the virtues of openness in public and political life rather than closure and censure.”

Definitions of culture, for example, Blumenthal (1940) suggest that “Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” Brown (1953) notes that “culture is defined as the class of responses of any hominid individual

learned from any other hominid individual.”. Csikszentmihalyi (1999: 313) breaks down culture into domains (existing knowledge, values and shared assumptions) and fields (gatekeepers, institutions and reward systems) in which the individual is evaluated and judged. Csikszentmihalyi argues that:

An unacknowledged creativity, from this viewpoint, is no creativity at all; it is only when it is selected and recognised as such, that it becomes creative.

Csikszentmihalyi (1999: 313)

In the systems thinking perspective of creativity, advocated by Csikszentmihalyi (1999: 313) the values promoted by the cultures in which we inhabit, strongly influence how we express creativity. This relationship between creativity and culture is supported by Simonton (2006: 493) who emphasises that “Creativity clearly takes place in a social context” and Misra et al. (2006: 422) who argue that until recently, positivistic analysis of creativity has focused on the creative product or the creative person, paying little attention to the context in which creativity occurs. They endorse Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) systems model of creativity which “recognises that creativity results from the interaction of a system composed of three elements – a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognise and validate the innovation. All three are necessary for a creative idea, product, or discovery to take place. “ This systems model of creativity will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

It is important to bear in mind the cultural aspect of creativity in order to overcome the sociocultural environment barriers, which Misra et al. (2006: 447) argue, need to be overcome in order to express it. When creativity is seen through a Darwinian lens, overcoming sociocultural barriers may be seen to be a form of emancipation.

Drawing on Gestalt psychology, Preiser (2006: 172) also supports the systems approach to creativity (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6), highlighting the multicausal interactions occurring in the cultural context rather than linear person-environment relationships.

### The impact of culture on creativity

The oppressive impact in society of 'invisible' hegemonic power expressed through cultural values, beliefs and attitudes, is often interpreted using the conceptual paradigms attributed to Gramsci (1971) In my conference speech in USA (Mahil, 2016b) I discuss the distinction made by Gramsci between "common sense" and its associations with behaviour arising from learned cultural assumptions, and "good sense" associated with behaviour that may transcend the cultural norm, for example during times of dictatorship which formed the contextual backdrop to Gramsci's writings. Similarly, Freire (1970) applied his awareness of hegemonic cultural power in raising awareness of the predominant "pedagogy of the oppressed" in the politically repressive context in which he lived in Brazil.

In Britain, the OFSTED inspection process, supposedly seeks, on behalf of the government and the general public, to ensure that our investment in state funded education delivers value for money. The inspection process claims to be transparent (Ofsted, 2012d) in highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the education system being inspected in order to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning in the institution. The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural (1999: 133) explains that:

The inspection system influences what schools do and how they do it. This happens as a result of what and how it inspects; on what and to whom it

reports; and what happens as a result.

The impact of Ofsted on development of creativity skills has not always been supportive and the National Advisory Committee (NAC) (1999) admitted that “we have been made aware repeatedly of a number of specific concerns about the effects of the inspection system on opportunities for creative and cultural education.” Although it is not in the remit of this research to explore these concerns submitted to the NAC (as I am more interested in my own role as an inspector rather than the role of the Ofsted organisation) it would be interesting to see if these previous concerns have been alleviated in any way or whether they persist. Nevertheless, the Ofsted inspection process remains one of the ways in which our culture has a salient impact, whether negative or positive, on development of creativity skills.

Other examples of how culture has an impact on creativity are demonstrated by research illustrating how cultures of poverty where members have low self-esteem (Stepanossova and Grigorenko, 2006: 236) and face other political pressures (Preiss and Strasser, 2006: 61) that prevent freedom of speech, can inhibit creativity. Barron (1969: 125) supports the notion that poverty and other adverse characteristics of the environment may destroy potential creativity:

While in some respects creativity seems to be a hardy plant and even to flourish in the midst of hardship and privation, a developing body of testimony from educators and from psychologists in the school system suggests that much potential creativity is made to wither by an unfavourable climate both in the classroom and in society at large.



### The impact of creativity on culture

When culture is seen to be a set of acquired or learned responses from other members of a society, it is often easier to see its impact on the individual instead of the converse relationship; impact of the individual on their culture. However, psychologists such as Csikszentmihalyi (1996b) argue that there is a two way relationship between individual creativity and collective culture and that our creativity can, to varying degrees, change or even transform our culture. For example, the creativity of famous artists such as Van Gogh and Picasso have left an indelible mark in the world of art and the creativity of psychologists such as Freud and scientists such as Einstein have transformed the emotional and material tools available for our well-being. Admittedly, although culture has an impact on everyone, there are relatively few individuals that make a noticeable impact on their culture.

### International differences in creativity

Although my research is clearly focused in England and most of the literature I have reviewed is written by European or American researchers, I felt inspired by the *International Handbook of Creativity* (Kaufman and Sternberg, 2006) to explore research conducted further afield, to identify any major differences in perspectives, should these exist..In this section I will summarise a few ideas that I considered to be noteworthy and worth exploring in future research.

Cultural differences in creativity are discussed by Lubart and Georgsdottir (2004: 47) who explain that they “are implemented through indirect environmental pressure on cognitive development, indirect pressure on conative (personality-motivation) development, or through the direct effect of the activities proposed to children or the availability of role models.” For example, Oral (2006: 360) draws upon research conducted in Turkey by Ilhan and Okvuran (2001) to highlight four ways in which

society and culture may inhibit creativity: family pressure; social pressure; economy and traditions.

International cultural differences in the concept of creativity, are discussed by Chinese researchers (Rudowicz, 2004: 61) and Korean researchers (Choe, 2006: 414) who link creativity to ethical and moral standards. In contrast, the Western definition focuses on originality and value. The Eastern concept of creativity is also more intuitive rather than logical with a desire to adapt what already exists instead of making radical changes (Rudowicz, 2004: 62). Whereas humour is often associated with creativity in the West, in the East, humour is not connected with creativity. Moreover, Rudowicz (2004: 69) notes that "... the Chinese care a lot more about the creator's social influence, status, fame, charisma, and contribution to society, than his/her contribution to culture."

Cultural differences in the concept of creativity are also apparent in our approach to life. Rudowicz (2004) reports that Scandinavians consider creativity to be an attitude toward life whereas the Americans emphasise productivity.

Moreover, there seem to be cultural differences regarding the purpose for which research into creativity is conducted. Niu (2006b: 389) conducted a comparative study of creativity research in Chinese societies using two large databases from a search engine called CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) which is (Niu, 2006a: 378) "the largest Chinese-language academic search engine". He found that mainland China seems to have a strong interest in studying theoretical issues of the topic, such as cognitive and neurocognitive mechanisms of creativity whereas creativity research in Taiwan, seems to be driven by practical goals such as making its people and its society more creative. This is supported by his findings that

the majority of research in Taiwan “focuses on how to stimulate creativity in school or business organisations rather than investigating the nature of creativity or people’s views of creativity.”

On the other hand, reviewing research studies into creativity in Latin America and the Caribbean, Preiss and Strasser (2006: 47) explain that “most are clearly applied and aimed at solving practical problems rather than understanding the phenomenon of creativity.”

This brief overview of international research into creativity demonstrates that it is useful to take into consideration the cultural context in which we are positioning our research and that our interpretations will invariably be limited by the cultural paradigms through which we conduct this research.

## Cultural unpopularity of creative people

There are many cultural differences in how creative people are perceived, ranging from being seen to be isolated and withdrawn 'loners' (Choe, 2006) to being socially responsible, inspirational politicians. In the East, creativity tends to be linked to ethical and moral standards and the impact on society whereas in the west there is more focus on individual characteristics of the creative person such as humour and non-conformity. The Eastern approach places more emphasis on a wholistic approach, synthesising existing knowledge, whereas in the west, the creative person is expected to specialize in an increasingly narrow domain.

Around 50 years ago, research reported by (Getzels and Jackson, 1962) in Barron (1969: 125) suggested that highly creative children tend to be unpopular with their teachers and their peers. They do not fit the norms and often reject cultural values, rules and authority. Their non-conformity, aloofness, or persistent questioning may frustrate their teachers leading to negative attention. More recent research, Oral (2006: 361) indicates that highly creative children are independent, curious and persistent in what interests them, to the annoyance and frustration of their teachers. As a result of these dynamics, they may become disliked and marginalized by not only their teachers but also their peers.

Students who score highly on intelligence tests tend to be easier to manage compared to those scoring highly on creativity tests and this may be one of the reasons leading to teachers' preference of highly intelligent students compared to highly creative students. It is interesting to note that those who showed convergent

thinking received higher marks and better grades than those who showed divergent thinking (Genovard et al., 2006: 71)

### Cultural diversity and creativity

Success (usually indicated by financial profitability) in a diverse business environment often draws upon the important links between cultural diversity and high levels of creativity. For example, Florida, in *'The rise of the creative class'* (Florida, 2015) argues that corporations set up their bases where they are likely to find the most creative human resources and this is often in cities that are culturally very diverse. According to Florida, cultures where a high level of diversity is tolerated tend to be more creative than the cultures of homogeneous societies with very little tolerance of diversity in behaviour, attitudes and beliefs.

Similarly, Smith and Carlsson (2006: 206) highlight the importance of diversity in generating creativity in scientific teams, whereas Preiss and Strasser (2006) illustrate the importance of diversity in a very different context, the cultural diversity arising from the mixing of races and cultures in Latin America, which inspired great writers and led to new dances such as the tango.

Like Latin America, Britain is an increasingly diverse society since the 1950s, with the arrival of citizens from Commonwealth countries, Europe and the Middle and Far East, (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural, 1999: 53).

Arguing in favour of the benefits brought by this diversity, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural (1999: 57) proposes that

It is in the balance between closure and openness, between tradition and innovation, that creativity thrives or dies: and with it the diversity and vitality of human culture itself.

Diversity is seen to be valued in the Ofsted inspection process (Ofsted, 2012b) as it is an essential feature of the common inspection framework. In contrast, there is no specific reference to development of creativity skills in the Common Inspection Framework (2012) and Ofsted inspection reports for the business curriculum hardly ever refer to development of creativity skills. Teachers and inspectors rarely make links between diversity and creativity even though they may define creativity as being something “different” or “unusual”.

### Cultural value of creativity

The educational value of both culture and creativity was argued in detail by the famous government commissioned report entitled “All Our Futures” (Education, 1999). This report made a strong case for funding projects that promoted creativity and culture and amongst its list of recommendations was the call for “opportunities for contact with outside specialists; and with the community and cultural organisations.” Schools responded with projects such as *Creative Partnerships* (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2010) between schools and local employers. However, my research is based in Further Education Colleges which did not benefit from government funding allocated for promoting creativity and culture in the curriculum.

One of the indicators of how much a culture values creativity may be the extent to

which the culture invests in researching or promoting the concept and Sternberg (2006: 2) has found that:

What is perhaps most notable about creativity research around the world is how little of it there is. In every country, there is a dearth of research on creativity relative to other topics, and what research there is proves to be relatively poorly systematized. (p.2)

Based on this neglect of creativity, Sternberg (2006: 2) concludes that:

... governments say they want creativity, but their actions belie their words. Many of the world's governments depend on ignorance for their existence. In autocracies, education and especially creative thinkers pose perhaps the greatest threats to their existence. In democracies, one would hope that creativity would be more valued, and it probably is.

Nevertheless, many of the governments that are elected got into place only through the ignorance and narrow-mindedness of the people who selected them. The last thing these governments want is critical and creative thinking that would threaten their existence. Indeed, the level of political discourse in many of the world's so-called democracies is only slightly above that of the autocracies, if it is above that level at all.

The research themes that a culture values most tend to be considered "mainstream" and Sternberg explains that creativity is not yet considered to be mainstream:

In psychology and education, creativity has always been at the margins. Working in an area at the margins has many disadvantages. For one, it is less prestigious to work in such an area. For another, it is therefore harder

to get a job. For a third reason, it is harder to get published in top journals, and, for yet another, it is harder to get funding. (Sternberg (2006: 2)

This view is supported by Shiu (2014: 1) who notes that “Compared to its ‘cousin’, ‘innovation’, academic research on ‘creativity’ has been less written about in journals and books. My own experience as a creativity researcher also supports Sternberg’s observations: it was extremely difficult for me to find supervisors interested in the subject of creativity research; I did not succeed in getting funding for my PhD and judging by my experience over the past three years, looking ahead at career prospects using my PhD, it is unlikely I will get a job directly related to my interest in creativity research. Unfortunately, I have not yet come across any evidence to suggest that Sternberg and Shiu are overly pessimistic in their assumptions about creativity research being marginalised, under-represented and less rewarded than research into subjects that are considered to be more prestigious, for example innovation.

However, cultural values change over time and the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural (1999: 52) reminds us of “discoveries whose significance was unrecognised, even condemned or ridiculed by contemporary audiences” and the difficulty in predicting how ways of life will change:

Cultural change is rarely linear and uniform. It results from a vortex of influences and events which is hard enough to understand with hindsight and impossible to plan in advance.

National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural (1999: 53)



## Rising importance of creativity across the world

Even though there is relatively little research about creativity in education, it seems that since the 1950s, there has been a growing interest in the subject across the world. For example, Choe (2006: 395) states that in Korea, “Creativity has become a main topic in education, business, and almost every sector recently, and the demand for finding ways of maximising creative potential has never been higher.”

Similarly, Niu (2006b: 385) reports that in Taiwan, “Laws and reform policies have been formed to advocate the inclusion of creativity in Taiwanese educational curricula. With the endorsement of the government, creativity in Taiwan is not only an important research topic but also a lifelong learning goal and an asset for success in Taiwan.” Niu (2006b: 390) explains that “creativity is no longer devalued in the Chinese societies. With the rapid growth in global economy and cultural exchange, Chinese societies cannot afford not to promote creativity. Research on creativity has begun to draw more and more attention in both the academic and social domains in Chinese societies”.

Reviewing research on creativity in German speaking countries, Preiser (2006: 182) claims that “Since the 1970s and into the twenty-first century, there has been a public demand to reinforce creativity and innovative spirit in society, the economy, and the education system. Preiser (2006: 193) reports that creativity is a popular subject for German speaking researchers. For example, in Switzerland, Guntern and Guntern-Gallati established Creando – International Foundation for Creativity and Leadership, a non-profit organisation, in 1979, which used to organise the international symposium for creativity and leadership annually, during which highly respected, internationally known personalities, who are honoured for their creativity,

lecture on their experiences with creativity and their mobilisation of personal resources.

In Spain, Genovard et al. (2006: 68) explain how “The Education Act (1970) gave a great boost to study of the subject by setting provisions for creativity in the law, and specifically describing and recommending the use of educational methods and programs aimed at favouring originality, inventiveness, initiative and in short, creativity.” The Education Act (1970) in Spain was designed to promote creativity throughout the educational cycle so that students would develop creative minds, expressing spontaneity, initiative and responsibility.

The importance of promoting creativity in compulsory education in the UK, was stressed by the government commissioned report called ‘All our Futures’, (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural, 1999). This report argued that “Creative and cultural education are not subjects in the curriculum”. Instead, it was suggested that creativity and culture are functions of education which should be promoted strategically. Government funding for projects such as the aforementioned *Creative Partnerships*, stopped in September 2011, even though a report compiled to ascertain the cost and benefits of these projects, (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2010: 39) suggested that:

Based on the available evidence, we estimate Creative Partnerships has a net positive economic benefit of just under £4bn. Taking the ratio of total benefits to total costs (the benefit cost ratio or BCR), we estimate that every £1 invested in the programme delivers £15.3057 worth of benefits.(p 39)

In addition to the changing political climate which has tightened funding for creativity and culture projects, the changing economic environment and nature of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has made it essential to rethink the purpose of education. The National

Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural (1999: 19) argued extensively that the needs of the current work environment have changed dramatically, in terms of nature and also in terms of patterns, since the post-war Education Act of 1944.

Consequently, we need to adapt our education system to prepare citizens for work in a global environment.

The contemporary work force needs to be highly skilled in adapting easily to changes and resourceful in identifying new opportunities because unlike their parents, young people can expect to change occupations several times during their working lives and moreover they will be competing with a global workforce (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural (1999: 21).

Although the government is still emphasizing the importance of standards in literacy and numeracy, it is difficult to predict whether these will be the most important skills required in the workplace in the near future. The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural (1999: 21) emphasise that “Raising standards of literacy and numeracy is essential: but it is not enough. Nor is raising standards of academic qualifications. All of these are important, but the assumptions about human resources that education made in 1944 will not meet the challenges of 2004. Employers are now looking for much more than academic ability.” Moreover, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural (1999: 21) highlights that.:

“New technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for young people to broaden their horizons; to find new modes of creativity and to deepen their understanding of the world around them.”

## Conclusion

Evidence from international research as discussed above, demonstrates how creativity and culture are inter-connected. This relationship between culture and creativity is supported by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural (1999: 57) . They explain that creative processes draw from the cultural contexts in which they are situated and that there is an ongoing shaping and reshaping of culture through acts of human creativity. In other words, there is a symbiotic relationship between creativity and culture, each having an impact on the other.

Up to now, the concept of creativity has been dominated by Western culture. However, a leading contemporary author in the field of creativity, Gardner (2011a) believes that in this century, the hegemonic domination will swing towards Eastern models of creativity, and he therefore advises a broader, international approach to creativity which examines “ individual versus group creativity, revolutionary versus evolutionary creativity, creativity in new as opposed to standard domains, and the ways in which societal fields (institutions, gatekeepers, teachers) steer the promotion and evaluation of creative efforts. “

Regardless of the East & West cultural perspectives, in the context of business in a global environment, Clegg and Birch (1999: 3) suggest that “it’s not fanciful to state that without creativity there are very few companies in existence today that will still be around in a few years’ time.” Many of the oldest companies in the world, some surviving since the early 700s, are based in Japan (Crockett, 2015), whereas some of the most lucrative contemporary companies are based in the West, so a broad,

international perspective on the importance of creativity and culture in business, as advised by Gardner (2011) seems wise, for a healthy global business environment to ensure both prosperity and also longevity.

Having established the international cultural context in which the concept of creativity is emerging with increasing importance, the following chapter will explore the role of race in this cultural context.

## Chapter 5: The Whiteness of Creativity

In an attempt to keep my research mainstream, I intended to steer away from race related issues; to explore creativity untainted by the colours of racial bias. However, using self-reflections as part of my methodology resulted in the concept of Whiteness, to become a thorn in the side, deserving attention.

There is ample research illustrating how the Whiteness of teacher education creates pressures that undermine the success of those who do not fit in, for example writing about this “Whiteness in Education”, Sleeter (2016), using a Critical Race Theory (Delgado et al., 2012) framework, refers to the “myth of neutrality and color blindness”. I have found relatively little existing research that specifically explores the relationship of Whiteness to creativity although I found that the plight of highly creative people in formal education, is similar to those, such as myself, who have experienced racism in education, being constantly marginalised, overlooked or ignored.

One of the external pressures that suppresses or oppresses creativity is the insidious force of racism, which for the purpose of remaining within the parameters of my thesis, I will refer to as the Whiteness of creativity and I will highlight the literature that has informed and influenced my perceptions.

I prefer to use the concept of “Whiteness” rather than “racism” because I am focusing on the societal and cultural context rather than individual or personal behaviours. Many authors, for example Henry & Taylor (2006) (Education, 2015) emphasise that Whiteness is a learned social construct which is broader than the racial term “white” and that “the meaning of ‘whiteness’ is historical and has shifted

over time (i.e. Irish, southern European peoples-Italian, Spanish, Greek; have at times been 'raced' as non-white)"

Similarly, Gillborn (2008: 33) distinguishes between "Whiteness" and "White people", explaining that the concept of "whiteness" is associated with the "socially constructed and constantly reinforced power of White identifications and interests". For example, Gillborn (2008: 34) notes that "...White authors tend to receive greater rewards and recognition, even when they are repeating analyses made elsewhere by scholars of color." I consider this to be an example of "Whiteness", behaviour that is socially and culturally accepted rather than personal, deliberate racism.

Drawing on Critical Race Theory (Delgado et al., 2012), Gillborn (2008: 10) has written extensively about racism in education where it seems as though there is a conspiracy to preserve the superiority of "whiteness" in a well-defined racial hierarchy which is upheld through conscious and unconscious biases of White people. This is perpetuated through ignorance, moral rationalisation and 'motivated inattention'. In his chapter "WhiteWorld: Whiteness and the performance of racial domination", (Gillborn, 2008: 162) suggests that:

Most White people would probably be surprised by the idea of 'WhiteWorld': they see only the world; its Whiteness is invisible to them because the racialized nature of politics, policing, education and every other sphere of public life is so deeply ingrained that it has become normalised, unremarked and taken for granted. (p 162)

Similarly, Gaine (1995) articulately illustrates the concept of Whiteness using the rhetoric of multi-cultural versus anti-racist education, in his book 'Still no problem

here' . He argues that White homogeneity often encourages people to claim that "There aren't many of them here so there isn't a problem....". In fact, absence, invisibility and lack of attention to those on the periphery of Whiteness, is often evidence of exclusion, marginalisation and the 'motivated inattention' that Gillborn and other Critical Race Theorists have written about extensively.

It is this concept of Whiteness that is relevant to my exploration of creativity in the context of education. One of the few contemporary writers that illustrate the role of Whiteness in creativity is Goodfellow (2014) who in an article written for the RSA magazine (available online) recounts the following illustrative story:

A couple of months ago, I was watching music videos with friends when a band made up of Cambridge graduates came on the TV. As images of the musicians flashed in front of our eyes, someone made a "joke" about one of the non-white band members: 'he can't have gone to Cambridge, he's black'. While it's easy for some to dismiss this as a harmless aside, this one comment tells us a lot about British society. Even if a minority ethnic person succeeds at their creative endeavour (whether academic or musical), the focus is not on their talent, but the colour of their skin!

Goodfellow (2014) argues that there is "an acceptable face of mainstream, 'respectable' creativity" and that this face is white. She suggests that:

To address this kind of institutional racism, we, as a society, should take a lesson from the person who made the crude but unmistakably clear racist joke. We need to stop skirting around racism in the UK and start calling it what it is. Only then can we disrupt the status quo that privileges white people and their creative products above others. So I'll begin: Britain is an institutionally



racist society and society needs to find creative ways to do something about it.

Although creativity, particularly in the business environment, is a broad concept, many educators and students tend to associate creativity with art. Therefore, it is useful to consider that Whiteness has permeated the art curriculum throughout our education in England. Sarup (1991) reminds us that when Western education teaches us about the progression of art from the Greeks, the Renaissance and contemporary art it usually excludes non-European art.

When we think of creative people that we learnt about during our compulsory school education, or creative people that are idolised through the media, the likelihood is that the ones most foremost in our minds are white. Unless of course we are asked to think of primitive art, in which case we may think of African or Aboriginal Australian creativity. This is an example of Whiteness as cultural hegemony, which Sarup (1991: 44) explains as evidence of “racism in art” with numerous examples where communities are marginalised and labelled ‘untypical’ when they do not conform to the norms of Whiteness. As an example of this, Sarup (1991) recounts a story of a trainee teacher, with a narrow, ethnocentric view of music, facing challenges teaching at a girls’ school in the East End of London. He notes that it was the predominantly Bangladeshi community that were seen to be the cause of the challenge rather than the narrow, ethnocentric music training that the trainee had been prepared with. In contrast, my thesis adopts a systemic thinking framework where teachers, students, inspectors and the communities in which they function are perceived to be a network rather than a hierarchy in which some stakeholders are entitled to a superior position.

Included in the concept of Whiteness is the assumption that we must communicate in English to be noticed and understood. There are umpteen examples of this, but a recent one that attracted my attention is when I watched the film “The Man Who Knew Infinity” (2015) which is based on the true story of the mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan. Ramanujan was often misunderstood by his Cambridge professor, Hardy. In one scene, Hardy sarcastically admonishes his student for their misunderstandings, saying, “Well, you don’t expect me to speak in Tamil, do you?”.

Ramanujan’s simple, reflective response to this was:

“No. I don’t. But **you** expect me to speak in English.”

That short, sweet sentence speaks volumes. The Whiteness of creativity means that it has to be represented in the English language, using symbology that is considered to be civilised rather than primitive; academic rather than intuitive.

While it is not within the scope of my thesis to explore the relationship between language and creativity, it is useful to note the findings of Gillborn (1990: 173) illustrating the impact of English not being the mother tongue of students going through a British curriculum. For example, the identity, self-esteem and level of confidence of the student in a context of Whiteness where they are considered to be an outsider because of their accent or bilingualism (seen as a deficiency rather than an asset), may well have an impact on the expression of their creativity as noted by researchers who have focused on identifying the typical characteristics of creative people, such as a high level of confidence and self-esteem. Gillborn (1990: 199) warns against adopting a ‘colour blind’ approach in education, pretending that we

can forget about skin colour and race. On the contrary, he (Gillborn, 1990: 199) argues that, “evidence gathered in schools and classrooms demonstrates that (whatever we may believe) human beings are far from blind when it comes to questions of ethnicity.”

In a reflexive account of “‘whiteness’ in race-related research”, Troyna notes that:

Although interest in the status of ‘whiteness’ has assumed a particular shape and cadence within the ‘politics of identity’, questions about the role of white researchers in race-related studies have, of course, been a vigorous, contentious and enduring theme in social science and political discourses. (Troyna, 1998: 97)

Researchers such as Troyna find themselves having to explain their Whiteness in race-related research because as (Puwar, 2004) explains, in that particular realm they are occupying a space that is not reserved for them. In contrast, I have found myself, as a non-white researcher, having to explain my non-Whiteness in a subject that is not specifically related to my own race and ethnicity.

My thesis does not explicitly focus on Critical Race Theory (Delgado et al., 2012) and the undermining pressures of institutional racism. Nevertheless, using a Systems Thinking conceptual framework, I am aware of the socio-cultural context of exploring creativity as a non-white researcher, being positioned on the margins of Whiteness.

Creativity, seen through the lens of Whiteness, is merely a fragmented picture of creativity. It is not within the scope of this thesis to explore a broader paradigm of creativity that transcends Whiteness with its “particular identifications and interests” (Gillborn, 2008). Using Foucauldian terms (Foucault, 1980), the extent of my ‘gaze’

in researching for this thesis is limited by the boundaries of Whiteness as a 'regime of truth'.

## Chapter 6: A Systems Thinking Model of Creativity

### Introduction

In previous chapters, I have explained my interest in systems thinking as a conceptual framework (Chapter 1); the wide range of definitions of creativity (Chapter 2), a brief history of research into creativity (Chapter 3); the important inter-relationship between culture and creativity (Chapter 4) and the racial context in which I am researching creativity (Chapter 5).

This chapter reviews literature that informed my selection of systems thinking as a conceptual framework and is divided into four parts as follows:

**Part A:** Aspects of the systems thinking approach of most relevance to my research

**Part B:** The Systems Thinking Model of Creativity

**Part C:** Limitations of Systems Thinking Approach

**Part D:** Relationship between systems thinking, society and culture

Part A:

Aspects of the systems thinking approach of most relevance to my research

In Part A of this chapter, I will summarise ten key components of systems thinking that are of relevance to my research.

Networks vs hierarchies

Although in state funded Further Education Colleges, we tend to see structures in terms of hierarchies, Capra and Luisi (2014: 68) suggest an alternative paradigm to view our education from a network perspective instead, arguing that hierarchies and pyramids are a human projection and that in nature there is no such “above” or “below”

Relationships vs objects and mapping vs measuring

Creativity is more likely to be found in dynamic relationships rather than inanimate objects and Capra and Luisi (2014: 80) advise that it is more appropriate to map these relationships, to identify patterns and configurations, rather than attempting to measure and weigh them. The act of attempting to map interactions in a system can itself be an expression of creativity, stimulating useful debate leading to further actions (Jackson and McKergow, 2002: 40).

Small changes can lead to huge impact

Another important aspect of systems thinking is the assumption that small changes in a system can cause huge effects. This is demonstrated in the popular story called “The Butterfly Effect” based on a paper written by meteorologist Lorenz (2000: 66). Senge (2006a: 63) also provides metaphors and examples to illustrate that, “Small changes can produce big results....”

Parts vs Whole

The systems thinking belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, is an idea that Bausch (2001: 10) reminds us, was “common to the thinking of ancient Greeks, many of whom held that a whole (for example, a body) was greater than the sum of its parts. “ The importance of seeing events within their context is illustrated by Senge (2006a: 6) using metaphors of thunderstorms created through a highly complex interaction of processes and arguing that (Senge, 2006a: 66), “Dividing an elephant in half does not produce two small elephants”.

Circular vs linear relationships

Within the concept that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, is implicit the theory that cause and effect are not necessarily linear relationships and in fact Senge (2006a: 63) argues that “Cause and effect are not closely related in time and

space.” This is supported by Craft et al. (1997: 93) who explain how the tendency to see events through simplistic, linear cause-effect relationships can be problematic in education because it overlooks the complexity of multi-directional influences in societal relationships; society has an impact on education and education has an impact on society.

The concept of non-linear cause and effect relationships is further endorsed by Bausch (2001: 379) who explains that “Conceptual knowledge is circular. We know everything in reference to something else.” The concept of circularity in systems thinking discourages making interpretations in isolation or based on seemingly isolated events.

Synthesis vs analysis

Systems thinking seeks to understand and discover new knowledge through synthesis rather than analysis. Aronson (1996) contrasts analysis and synthesis by explaining that analysis breaks and separates individual pieces of the subject being researched whereas synthesis looks at the interactions between these individual pieces within a larger and larger context. The importance of synthesis is also advocated by Skyttner (2001: 34) who explains that:

A system in as much as it is a whole, will lose its synergetic properties if it is decomposed; it cannot be understood through analysis. Understanding must therefore progress from the whole to its parts – a synthesis. (p 34)

Language and perception

Language and perception are key components in gaining understanding and awareness through a systems thinking perspective. Senge (2006a: 73) explains that

Language shapes perception. What we see depends on what we are prepared to see. Western languages, with their subject-verb-object structure, are biased toward a linear view.

The impact of language syntax and structure is also noted by Bausch (2001: 391) who argues that our thinking processes prioritise things first and relationships later, generally ignoring the context.

Languages that constrict us to follow a linear structure where a sentence only makes sense if it follows rigid rules may distort our perception unless, as advocated by the systems thinking approach, we take into consideration a broader world view where a diverse range of languages may indeed present an enriched contextual understanding and awareness.

#### Feedback

Feedback mechanisms are seen to be a core aspect of systems thinking. Senge (2006a: 79) highlights the importance of reinforcing and balancing feedback, explaining that the former are “the engines of growth” while the latter direct goal-oriented behaviour. The importance of feedback mechanisms in systems thinking is also emphasized by Capra and Luisi (2014: 92) using popular examples to illustrate the impact, such as the “invisible hand” regulating the market in the economic theory of Adam Smith and the “checks and balances” of the US Constitution. They suggest that “the phenomenon described by these models and metaphors all imply circular patterns of causality that can be represented by feedback loops....”

#### Emergence

Emergence is another key aspect in systems thinking, described by Capra and Luisi (2014: 154) as “the novel properties that arise when a higher level of complexity is reached by putting together components of lower complexity.” These new properties



are not present in the parts. They emerge as a result of the relationships and interactions between the parts. For example, animated films are composed of thousands of static pictures which are shown in sequence at such a fast speed that apparent motion is created.

Similarly, Jackson and McKergow (2002: 41) note that “In the emergent paradigm, systems are again characterised by interactions between the component parts. But rather than being inherently designable, these interactions are of a complex, interweaving, and self-referential nature, which means that the net effect of all the interactions is impossible to predict accurately in advance.”

#### Temporality

A further characteristic of systems is their “temporality”; every system is changing constantly in response to actions and interactions in a circular process. Bausch (2001: 345) explains that temporality is seen in all aspects of reality; all kinds of living systems, including psychic and social systems, undergo constant circular processes, reshaping themselves in response to new situations and with every act of communication. Nothing is permanent in systems.

Having summarised ten key aspects of the systems thinking framework (networks, relationships, small changes, wholes, circular relationships, synthesis, language, feedback, emergence and temporality) that are most relevant to my research, I will now explain the systems thinking model of creativity based on the work of Csikszentmihalyi (2014).

## Part B:

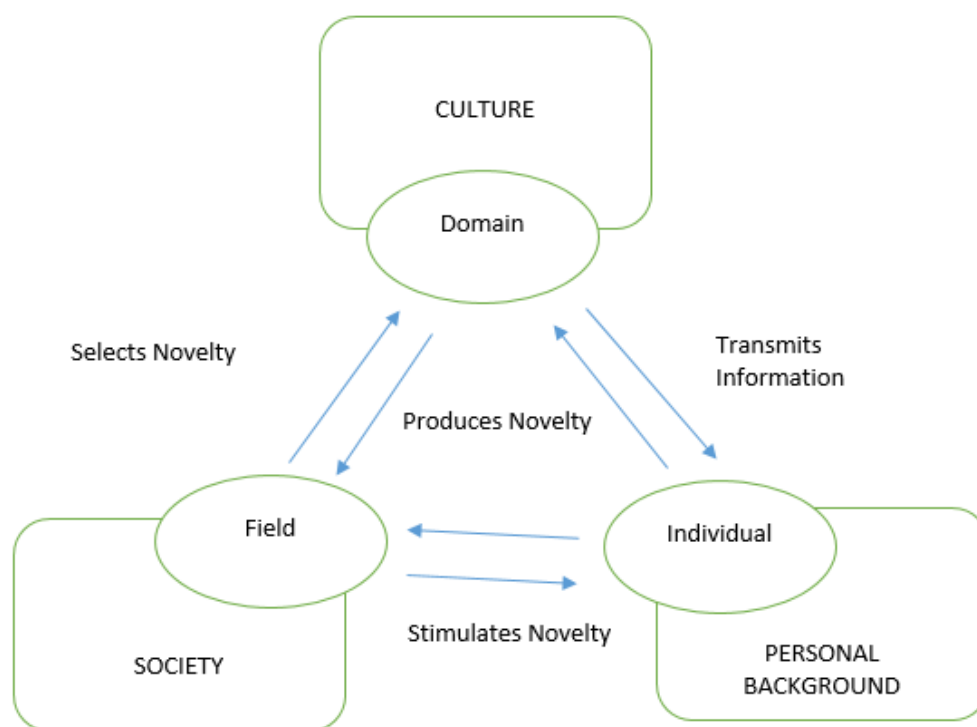
### Systems Thinking Model of Creativity

In chapter 2, “What is creativity?” we saw that most popular academic definitions of creativity include the concepts of originality and value whereas Csikszentmihalyi (1994: 154) emphasises that creativity entails adding something new (that is perceived to be valuable) to the culture. He emphasises the role of culture and society explaining that something becomes creative only when it is selected and recognised as being creative.

Many creativity researchers have stressed that creativity does not occur in a vacuum and Csikszentmihalyi (1994: 147) uses a metaphor to illustrate this:

To study creativity by focusing on the individual alone is like trying to understand how an apple tree produces fruit by looking only at the tree and ignoring the sun and the soil that supports its life.

**Figure 6.1: Inter-relationship between individual, society and culture**



In the systems thinking model of creativity (illustrated in Figure 6.1 above), proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1994: 148) we need to explore creativity from three aspects: the individual; the field and the domain. In this model, the individual is not the most important element in creativity and we cannot fully understand creativity without taking into consideration the interaction between each of the three aspects: the field, the domain and the individual.

Although Csikszentmihalyi (1994: 151) acknowledges that the personal traits and skills of an individual are important, he argues that, “If creativity were a strictly individual trait, then one would expect every creative person to exhibit more or less the same characteristics”.

In his view, creativity is clearly a systemic trait, and the contribution of an individual varies in relation to their society and culture.

One of the distinguishing factors of the systems thinking model of creativity is that the society and culture in which an individual expresses creativity, needs to recognise and favourably evaluate the product as being creative. Csikszentmihalyi (1994: 151) suggests that “whether an idea or product is creative or not does not depend on its own qualities, but on the effect it is able to produce in others who are exposed to it.”

Like many other researchers, such as Simonton (2006: 493) and Gruber (1981, 1986, 1988), Csikszentmihalyi (1994) highlights that new thoughts do not occur in a vacuum; they occur in relation to old ideas within the context of history, society and culture (Leung et al., 2004: 114). Another difference between Csikszentmihalyi’s (1994) definition of creativity and the definitions outlined in Chapter 2 is that he believes that new ideas need to make a cultural impact that passes the test of time to be considered “creative”. So Csikszentmihalyi’s (1994) definition expands on the popular definition that creativity is the process of generating new ideas that add value (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural, 1999) to include transformation of the culture in a significant way, standing the test of time.

This is a more comprehensive definition of creativity and it is an appropriate one for use in the business environment where products and processes are not merely bought and sold based on how original and valuable they are, but whether people can be *persuaded* to recognize their value; and as mentioned earlier in the chapter about cultural differences in creativity, there are only a handful of businesses, mostly based in Japan, that have stood the test of time, surviving over 1400 years (Crockett,

2015). Although the factors determining the longevity of a business are a complex interplay between a diverse range of variables including political, economic, technological and social changes, it appears that when people are no longer persuaded of their value, these businesses die very quickly. This is illustrated by the case of businesses that have survived for centuries but not adapted to change, for example the Buddhist Temple building business, Kongo Gumi, established in 578 AD, which was closed down after 1,428 years in 2006 due to Japan's economic recession (Hutcheson, 2007)

## Domain

A domain is the existing body of knowledge about a subject (Feldman et al., 1994: 20, Csikszentmihalyi, 1994: 153) which has a "history that can be learned, to some degree, independently of the persons who constructed and distilled its contributions along the way."

## Field

The 'Field' includes systems that are authorized to make judgements about the quality of products and processes, and Gardner and Wolf (1994: 57) drawing on the work of Csikszentmihalyi, explain that "domain" is an epistemological notion whereas "field" is a sociological concept:

The field consists of the teachers, judges, institutions, agencies, reward systems, and other entities that allow or thwart the development of a career and the production and recognition of creative works. Acknowledgement of the field entails a recognition that no individual can work in a vacuum – that, ultimately, every action must stand judged by the community.

### Inter-relationship between individual, domain and field

Kongo Gumi, the Japanese business that failed after 1,428 years, (Hutcheson, 2007) is an excellent example of creativity being situated in an interplay between individual, society and culture, and not just arising from the realm of the individual alone.

Csikszentmihalyi (1994: 151) explains that, “The field is that part of the social system that has the power to determine the structure of the domain. Its major function is to preserve the domain as it is, and its secondary function is to help it evolve by a judicious selection of new content.”

Csikszentmihalyi (1994: 145) explains that creativity is the result of a dynamic interaction between three subsystems: a domain, a person and a field. Each of these subsystems has an essential role to play:

The domain transmits information to the person, the person produces a variation, which may or may not be selected by the field, and the field in turn will pass the selected variation to the domain. The subsystems influence each other, and no act or product with claims to creativity can exist without an input from each of these subsystems. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994: 145)

Ofsted inspectors are part of the “field” in this model, acting as gatekeepers, authorised by the government and society to make judgements about the quality of education paid for through taxpayers money. In the systems thinking model of creativity, their role as intermediaries between the domain and the individual is an important one in managing expectations and also allowing space to nurture creativity to enrich the domain.

Making a visible impact on the domain is a complex process and the systems thinking view acknowledges that events do not have a simplistic linear cause and effect relationship. Moreover, there is often a great distance in terms of time and space between actions and their consequences, which makes it difficult to accurately perceive how and when creativity occurred.

Creativity involves a high level of mastery which can take a lifetime of dedication to the subject to identify its strengths and weaknesses. Feldman et al. (1994: 23) note that:

....the people most likely to transform a domain are those who have perceived a problematic aspect and who are not so entrenched in the established knowledge and belief of the domain that they defend rather than extend its boundaries. (p 23)

Csikszentmihalyi's model of creativity can be applied to educational institutions (Wu, 2004: 183) where "the "domain" is the knowledge to be imparted to students; the "field" is the teaching staff who control the transfer of knowledge; and the individual refers to the students who aim to acquire knowledge." According to this model, the school principal, teachers and related professionals in teaching act as gatekeepers (the field) in the system. (Wu, 2004: 183) argues that gatekeepers, responsible for deciding "whether creativity of students is accepted and valued or neglected and suppressed" should be selected for their proven competency in making these influential decisions. In contrast to the systems thinking approach upon which this model is based, the competency of gatekeepers such as teachers, inspectors and examiners is less likely to be questioned when they are positioned in superior positions to students, in hierarchical organisations. The application of a systems

thinking model of creativity, as described by Wu (2004) is limited to organisations that are structured using the tenets of a systems thinking approach which will be explained later in this chapter.

### Big C and little c creativity

Not everyone agrees that we are all capable of “creativity” and in Chapter 2, I highlighted the ‘elite’ versus ‘democratic’ rhetorics of creativity; the former arguing that true creativity is only expressed by the gifted few and the latter arguing that we are all capable of expressing creativity and that it is a skill that can be learnt rather than an innate gift or talent (Jones, 2009).

The systems thinking model of creativity favours a democratic paradigm of creativity. Indeed, Csíkszentmihályi (2010) found that the most creative people in his sample came from either very privileged backgrounds or very under-privileged or challenging backgrounds; it was those who were raised in the relative comfort of the ‘middle-class’ that were not as well represented in terms of creative achievements in adult life.

Nevertheless, the systems model of creativity distinguishes between ‘little c’ creativity which Feldman et al. (1994: 2) suggest can refer to everyday actions that each one of us is capable of, for example, “a charming arrangement of fresh flowers to brighten up a room, or the use of a doorstep to weatherstrip an ill-fitting window, or a clever remark that lightens the tone of a conversation”. On the other hand, ‘Big C’ creativity is a complex process involving acceptance by society and culture, Feldman et al. (1994: 2) propose that Big C creativity is:

the achievement of something remarkable and new, something which transforms and changes a field of endeavor in a significant way. In other



words, we are concerned with the kinds of things that people do that change the world.

As an educator, I have always believed in the democratic rhetoric of creativity. Indeed, as a teacher of English to speakers of other languages for over 20 years, I taught language in a way that students were able to be creative with each bit of new language taught. As a business studies teacher, I believe that students need to at least have an awareness of the skills and processes required to shift from the mundane (or 'everyday') 'little c' creativity to recognition of 'Big C' creativity.

#### Why, when and where vs who or what is creative

In using a systems model of creativity, I am not focusing on individual qualities that make my students or colleagues creative, for example their personality or their motivation (Gardner, 1994: 72) or what makes particular products or processes creative. Instead, as noted by Jones (2009) Csikszentmihalyi's model is useful in allowing us to consider 'Why, when and where new ideas arise, form and become established in a culture?'

## Creativity as the process of evolution

I find many similarities between Darwin's theories of evolution and the systems thinking model of creativity formulated by Csikszentmihalyi. For example, for Csikszentmihalyi, how creativity is recognised and selected is of utmost importance. The process of selection can be seen through the lens of Darwin's theory of evolution, for example (Jones, 2009) suggests that 'Creativity is to culture as 'mutation/selection/transmission of genetic variation is to biological evolution' (Csikszentmihalyi , 1999:316)

Comparing the systems model of creativity to the process of evolution, Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1996) explains that whereas physical evolution occurs when an individual organism produces a variation which is selected by the environment and transmitted to the next generation; cultural evolution takes place when creativity makes a significant impact on the social environment to cause a transformation that is passed on to future generations. He argues that "a change that does not affect the way we think, feel or act will not be creative," (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999: 316) and that "it is the community and not the individual who makes creativity manifest." (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999: 333) In other words, communal norms influence whether something is perceived to be creative or not.

The links between evolution and creativity are also made by Barron (1995: 302) who explains the essence of growth, diversification and complexity of interactions involved in each concept which ultimately results in increased biological or cultural variety.

## Importance of persuasion and gatekeepers

In order to make an impact on culture causing an evolutionary transformation, (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) argues that persuasion must be an integral aspect of creativity. He claims that:

...if you cannot persuade the world that you had a creative idea, how do we know that you actually had it? And if you do persuade others, then of course you will be recognised as creative. Therefore, it is impossible to separate creativity from persuasion; the two stand or fall together...

it is the role of gatekeepers in our society to make judgments about whether something is considered to be creative or not within the particular field in which the individual is expressing their creativity. (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014: 102)

Bearing in mind that these judges of creativity are making subjective evaluations based on their own experience, values and preferences, Csikszentmihalyi suggests that “whether an idea or product is creative or not does not depend on its own qualities, but on the effect it is able to produce in others who are exposed to it.” Furthermore, these judgements about creativity, claims Csikszentmihalyi (1994: 143) reflect current values and norms, so “*creativity is not an attribute of individuals but of social systems making judgements about individuals.*”

The importance of encouraging our students to develop persuasive skills is clear as proficiency in this skill could make the difference between one of our creative students being recognized and successful in their creative achievements or being ignored, frustrated and ultimately drained of their creative potential. However, in my

experience, development of persuasion skills is hardly ever prioritized in the vocational business curriculum in state funded education.

### Careers of creative people

Without well-developed persuasion skills, creative people fail to be recognized for their creativity. This has been observed by several researchers including Csikszentmihalyi (1994: 137) who has documented the detrimental consequences for creative students who entered the world of work without mastering these essential communication skills. As Csikszentmihalyi was studying the careers of creative artists, he based his research on the skills of artists who are still alive rather than those who gained fame after their death, for example Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890). He found cases of very creative (judged by the quality of their art work), introverted artists who lacked the extroversion skills to persuade the societal gatekeepers (critics, gallery owners and the media) about the value of their work. Without the skills of persuasion, these talented artists, “tended to disappear from the art scene, never to be heard of again.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994: 137)

Apart from persuasion skills, (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994: 141) emphasises the importance of intrinsic motivation for eventual career success. His research suggests that in order to sustain the effort required for creativity, a person needs “the ability to derive rewards from the activity itself rather than from external incentives like power, money, or fame.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994: 141)

Based on their research studying the career progression of young artists, Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976: 7) conclude that “...to earn a livelihood in our society, artists must learn to negotiate forces that are often in conflict with their deepest values, personality traits and aspirations.”

Illustrating the importance of recognition, persuasion and values, Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976: 181) report findings from case studies where highly creative people abandoned their own creative endeavours after failing to achieve success in society through their creativity. Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi concluded that their failure was due to lack of persuasion skills rather than the level of their creativity.

An interesting observation of the competitive, self-promoting behaviour of aspiring creators was documented by Gardner (1994: 79). He found that aspiring creators initially work co-operatively with their peers but eventually they avoid competition from their peers by looking for followers and promoters instead. Moreover, creative people often identify with prominent figures from different spaces and times instead of peers in close proximity.

We may teach with an attitude that creativity is the democratic right of each student; we may even teach our students excellent persuasive skills, nevertheless, this does not guarantee that their creativity, even if it fulfills the criteria of being original and valuable, will be recognised. Ludwig (1995: 19) alludes to the power struggles in our society and culture that mean there is not a level playing field in which creativity will be recognised 'democratically'. Despite our views about the democratic nature of creativity, Ludwig suggests that the elites in society hold positions of power which makes them responsible, as gatekeepers, for determining who and what is considered to be creative or not:

As leaders, trend setters, role models, spokesmen, and pioneers, they occupy the top positions of fame, power, and wealth in society, and exercise authority and influence in their fields. They formulate policies, set standards,

and establish future directions in government, science, art, education, and culture. Ludwig (1995: 19)

When we look at our cultural history and recognise famous people for their creative achievements, we are unaware of all the creative people that failed to be recognised for their achievements and therefore did not stand the test of time.

Ludwig (1995: 21) raises very important questions that link to Csikszentmihalyi's emphasis on the importance of gatekeepers in their role of recognising and selecting creativity. He asks:

Why is it, for example, that Sigmund Freud is far better known today than Havelock Ellis, when both had so much in common? .....As another example, we find that Judy Holliday is all but forgotten while Marilyn Monroe lives on as a cult figure, with many biographies written about her over the years. Ludwig (1995: 21)

Therefore, even though the democratic rhetoric of creativity claims that every human being is capable of being creative, (Misra et al., 2006: 447) argue that sociocultural environment barriers that thwart creativity need to be overcome in order for each individual to express this creativity in a rewarding way.

## Part C:

### Limitations of Systems Thinking Approach

There are several limitations of the systems thinking conceptual framework and three that may be most relevant to my research are outlined below: that structure influences behavior; the impact of power imbalances, ethical issues.

#### Structure influences behaviour

A fundamental concept in systems thinking, which is more controversial than the other main components, is that structure influences behaviour. Senge explains (1993: 42) that “When placed in the same system, people, however different, tend to produce similar results.” He urges us to “look into the underlying structures which shape individual actions and create the conditions where types of events become likely.” This concept causes controversy as it undermines individual freedom of choice and responsibility and accountability for actions taken. For example, it seems to imply that anyone who finds themselves in a dysfunctional system may inevitably behave in a dysfunctional way, in response. Numerous examples could be cited to demonstrate that this clearly is not always the case, for example some people behaved nobly within a ruthless Nazi system whereas prisons full of criminals in practically every societal system indicate that even though these segregated citizens are part of the same system, those in prison failed to behave in the same way as those who are not in prison. So, the claim that people behave the same way, producing similar results, if they are in the same location in a system, is evidently exaggerated.

### Power imbalances

Another limitation of the systems thinking framework is that it overlooks relations of power in systems. Bausch (2001: 123) criticises the inadequacy of systems thinking “.... in dealing with situations where there is an imbalance of power relations.”

Bausch (2001: 322) notes the philosophical objections made by Habermas who criticises systems theory for being biased towards a technocratic, mechanistic ideology at the expense of humanistic concerns.

These philosophical objections of Habermas to systems thinking, are also highlighted by Capra and Luisi (2014: 300) who note that “For Habermas, the social system has to do with the ways social structures constrain people’s actions, which includes issues of power and specifically the class relationships involved in production.”

Not only is systems thinking criticised for failing to acknowledge the power imbalances in structures, but also for only focusing on the exterior half of systems. Fitzgerald (1999: 235) argues that we do not have access to the interior part of the system:

You can look "inside" a system all you want using the latest and greatest of assessment technology, but all you'll ever see is more of its exterior (greater surface span), and not its elusive, ethereal, and irreducible within.

### Ethics of Systems Thinking

There are potential ethical issues in relying on systems thinking to draw conclusions about each person’s role within, for example a Further Education College “system” if it implies that each individual is a puppet being played rather than a conscious being with complex internal, unwitnessed forces that they freely choose to exercise.

Bausch (2001: 61) discusses the philosophical debate about the importance of free



personal agency on one hand and the importance of impersonal laws that protect individual and community rights on the other, by drawing on the debate between two eminent philosophers, Habermas and Luhmann:

Habermas claims that applications of systems theory tend to repress free personal agency because they operate mechanically without recourse to common sense, democratic discourse, and social justice. Luhmann counters that the complexity of pluralistic societies precludes normative consensus in the particulars of contested situations. Moreover, impersonal, positive laws are the safeguards of individual and community rights. Finally, insistence on personal norms in social contexts is a remnant of dysfunctional metaphysical narrow-mindedness. (Bausch, 2001: 61)

The objections of Habermas are also noted by Capra and Luisi (2014: 300), for example his assertion that “people’s interpretations always rely on a number of implicit assumptions that are embedded in history and tradition”. Systems thinking does not take into consideration an individual’s historic identity which may leave invisible imprints in actions and reactions that are witnessed. Moreover, Capra and Luisi (2014: 300) acknowledge Habermas’s critique that systems thinking fails to identify ideological distortions and power relations that distort communication.

Systems thinking does not easily counter Habermas’ objections that “certain unspoken premises underlie every attempt to communicate” Bausch (2001: 64) and Bausch (2001: 65) believes that this has ethical implications as it may undermine an individual or group’s resistance to oppression, for example, as he says, by a “rampaging technocracy that regards functionality as its chief value.”

The criticisms of Habermas are mainly based around the impact of power and language which systems thinking does not fully explain in drawing conclusions about interactions and feedback mechanisms in the systemic processes. In an attempt to counteract this criticism, an advocate of systems thinking, Luhmann (1990 pp. 3-5) claims that “....society is coterminous with human communication.” Luhmann believes that society is insulated from individual or collective influences because it is a self-referential systems that develops autonomously (Bausch, 2001: 334) and the psychic, unconscious forms of communication that Habermas argues are overlooked by systems thinking, are in fact a part of society as it is an all-inclusive entity.

## Part D: Relationship between systems thinking, society and culture

Prominent advocates of systems thinking (Capra and Luisi, 2014: 30, Senge et al., 2005, O'Connor and McDermott, 2012) express a desire to make a positive impact on society and culture through a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach in synthesising knowledge. This allows us to widen the scope of a systems thinking framework by incorporating ideas arising from a diverse range of paradigms. My research is positioned in the context of business rather than sociology or politics. Nevertheless, as business is always located within a socio-political context, I will draw on the ideas of social theorists and philosophers such as Marx (1844), (Gramsci, 1999, Foucault, 1980, Habermas, 1997, Benjamin, 1936, Marcuse, 2002, Bourdieu, 1990) whenever relevant in my reflections about creativity.

The importance of focusing on a socio-cultural context in generating creativity is supported by systems thinking researchers such as Csikszentmihalyi (2014) who suggest that in order to overcome obstacles that thwart and frustrate creativity, we work at the level of fields (society) and domains (culture) rather than at the level of individuals (Jones, 2009). In other words, fields containing gatekeepers, for example Ofsted, need to be better able to recognize creative achievement; domains such as the business curriculum in Further Education Colleges, need to be open to enrichment through diversity; and economically, 'surplus energy' needs to be turned in a creative direction. (Jones 2009). Similarly, Barron (1995: 300) highlights the importance of society and culture by comparing them to ecologies in general and concluding that:

The same formal variables that one finds in the origin of novelty and the sustainability of ecologies are those that facilitate the functioning of systems adaptively to produce new forms as reality demands.

Using ecological terms as a paradigm for exploring society and culture (Capra and Luisi, 2014), the metaphor of planting seeds of creativity in the spaces that stimulate interactions and allow connections to be formed, is useful in distinguishing how and why creativity will occur in some environments more readily than in others. For example, a mango seed is unlikely to thrive in a desert whereas in a tropical environment it will need minimal support to flourish.

In contrast to the scientific (Capra, 1975), biological (Bertalanffy, 1971) and psychological (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) underpinnings of systems thinking, social theorists tend to explain power dynamics between the individual, society and culture as linear, cause and effect relationships rather than a web of dispersed (rather than centralised) power.

Social theorists (Barthes, 2000, Marcuse, 1969, Benjamin, 1992) refer to arts and aesthetics in a socio-political context rather than creativity in a business context. Although their work is not directly relevant to my research, some of the ideological concepts they are well-known for, serve to illustrate the contextual parameters for my exploration of creativity within a narrowly defined context: the vocational business curriculum in Further Education Colleges in England. Therefore, I will summarise how I positioned my research into creativity within the broader socio-cultural context explicated by well-known social theorists such as Marx (1844), (Marcuse, 1969, Gramsci, 1999, Foucault, 1980, Bourdieu, 1992, Benjamin, 1992, Barthes, 2000). I have selected relevant ideas from each of these intellectuals which serves to

demarcate the boundaries of my research and the limitations of the systems thinking conceptual framework:

Karl Marx (1818 – 1883)

Business processes can be dominated by scientific management strategies, commonly known as “Taylorism” to produce high level of efficiencies at the expense of dehumansisation of the workforce. These create a sense of alienation, which Marx (1844) described as “estrangement” from the products we create, from our colleagues and even from ourselves. Concepts commonly associated with alienation, such as powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation, are discussed by Seeman (1959: 9) who explains that, “the worker who works merely for his salary, the housewife who cooks simply to get it over with, or the other-directed type who acts “only for its effect on others” – all these (at different levels, again) are instances of self-estrangement”.

Alienation can result in a split from our intrinsic nature (Marx, 1844). Moreover, (Marx, 1844: 30) explains that through alienation, a worker:

.... does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. (p30)

In contrast to this, the systems model of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) paints a very different picture of the relationship between an individual and their work. There is a natural connection between the creative person and their product, Whereas alienation arises from high levels of competition, creativity is associated with high

levels of collaboration. Whereas Marx (1844) described alienation as a natural consequence of industrialisation, creativity in the modern business environment is better associated with open source technology such as Facebook, Google and YouTube which have expanded through collaboration rather than direct payment for services. These creative and innovative strategies for making a profit are better understood and supported by a systems thinking approach than Marxist ideology, explaining the complex rather than linear power relationship between an owner and a worker in business. Therefore, in relation to my research into creativity, the relevance of Marxist ideology is limited. Alienation is not naturally inherent in processes that generate creativity.

Herbert Marcuse (1898 – 1979)

Following in the tradition of Karl Marx, Marcuse (1969) highlighted the importance of incentives for work, and the tension between work as an obligation due to external pressures and work that is desired and in alignment with our life instincts:

The construction of a free society would create new incentives for work. In the exploitative societies, the so-called work instinct is mainly the (more or less effectively) introjected necessity to perform productively in order to earn a living. But the life instincts themselves strive for the unification and enhancement of life...(Marcuse, 1969: 91)

Marcuse's distinction between work that arises from our inner instincts and enhances life in contrast to work that is enforced through external pressures, is of relevance to my research as it supports the case argued by advocates of creativity, such as the National Advisory Board (Education, 1999) that creativity is important for personal development and well-being and therefore needs societal investment. Moreover, the

contrast between “alienation” (previously explained by Karl Marx) and work that instead inspires cooperation and offers freedom is noted by Marcuse (1969):

The social expression of the liberated work instinct is cooperation, which grounded in solidarity, directs the organisation of the realm of necessity and the development of the realm of freedom. (Marcuse, 1969: 91)

Creativity is often associated with non-conformity to existing thought and behaviour so the “one-dimensional” society that Marcuse wrote about (2002: xxvii), is clearly “lacking a critical dimension and a dimension of potentialities that transcend the existing society”. There is synergy between the systems thinking perspective, espousing multi-dimensional and complex relationships, and Marcuse’s criticisms of a “one-dimensional” society which undermines individual freedom of choice, creative expression and the right to determine one’s own destiny. At the time when Marcuse was most influential (in the 1960s) research into creativity was in its early stages, following Guilford (1950). Over half a century later, Marcuse’s social theories (based on Marxist paradigms about alienated workers) are relevant to my research as they support the importance of creating a business environment (simulated in classrooms teaching business studies) in which creativity can thrive.

Walter Benjamin (1892 – 1940)

Creativity does not occur in a vacuum (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) and the importance of context, an integral aspect of the systems thinking model of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) is supported by the social theories of Benjamin (1980) who illustrated the importance of time and place for societal attitudes to art:

The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely

changeable. An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol.

(Benjamin, 1980: 217)

Although my research focuses on creativity in a business environment whereas (Benjamin, 1936) was more concerned with aesthetics and the domain of Art, the links between some of his social theories and the systems thinking approach are pertinent as they express a similar desire to resolve global problems using a broader vision. For example, in a similar vein to Marcuse, Benjamin (1980) criticises traditional societal behaviour which lacks creative, life enhancing solutions:

Instead of draining rivers, society directs a human stream into a bed of trenches; instead of dropping seeds from airplanes, it drops incendiary bombs over cities; and through gas warfare the aura is abolished in a new way.

(Benjamin, 1980: 235)

Other social theorists that enhanced the systems thinking conceptual framework for me, through alternative paradigms they offer, are (Gramsci, 1999), (Bourdieu, 1992) and (Foucault, 1980). I spoke at conferences in Poland, the USA and at Universities in the UK about the influence of these authors on my PhD research.

Antonio Gramsci (1891 – 1937)

Speaking at an international conference for Equine Assisted Educators in the USA, (Mahil, 2016b) I discussed the distinction made by Gramsci (1999) between “common sense” and “good sense”. Gramsci, following a Marxist tradition, distinguished between conformist (common sense) and non-conformist (good sense) patterns of thought. In a state of Fascism society becomes polarised so it is



comprehensible that people may have been categorised as conformists and non-conformists; Fascists and non-Fascists as though there were easily definable distinct features that separated them. However, using a systems thinking perspective, creativity and conformity are seen as a continuum in the same manner that intelligence is seen to be a continuum and according to Csikszentmihalyi (2014) it is a matter of persuasion that determines societal recognition of our creativity. The power dynamics involved are likely to be much more complex than suggested by Marxist ideology or by systems thinking. However, it is beyond the remit of this research to explore the sociological pressures that lead to our discernment between what Gramsci called “common sense” and “good sense”.

Pierre Bourdieu (1930 – 2002)

Creativity generates ideas which can lead to generation of wealth. In my conference speech in the USA, (Mahil, 2016b) I wanted to highlight that wealth does not necessarily have to be financial. Drawing on the theories of Bourdieu (1992) I explained the importance of social and cultural capital. There are numerous business examples where people say that they built their business from “nothing”. I believe that in these cases, what appeared to be “nothing” was in fact a creative use of skills and relationships which Bourdieu (1992) explained as being the distinguishing features that resulted in some people attracting an abundance of opportunities through their wide networks (social capital) and their position in society based on symbolic status symbols such as level of education (cultural capital). The relevance of theories posited by Bourdieu (1992) to my research into creativity, became apparent when I considered my societal role as a gatekeeper, working with Ofsted. Even though we had the same title, our social and cultural capital was unevenly

distributed causing inequalities not only between peers but also in the way various stakeholders (students, staff, managers) perceived us.

Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984)

In my view, one of the most interesting features of the societal gatekeeper role, is that they exert an influential impact even when they are not physically present. I discussed this in my conference speech at the University of Birmingham (Mahil, 2016a) using the metaphor of the Panopticon described by Foucault (1980). This metaphor uses the image of a prison with glass walls where everyone feels as though they are constantly under surveillance and therefore they adhere to the rules and conform. Foucault's metaphor is very useful in demonstrating how surveillance undermines creativity in favour of standardisation, normalisation and efficiency. Foucault's theories support systems thinking particularly in explaining distribution of power which is considered to be dispersed rather than centralised. This fits in well with the notion of networks in which power is unevenly distributed and temporal.

Jurgen Habermas (1929 – present)

One of the leading critics of a systems theory of society, is Habermas (1997) and his objections relating to power and ethics have been outlined above in Part C of this chapter. To complete my literature review, I will briefly explain the contrasting perspective that Habermas offers through his theories about "lifeworlds". Habermas (1997: 118) proposes "that we conceive of societies *simultaneously* as systems and lifeworlds." Whereas systems tend to focus on external behaviour, using the concept of "lifeworld", Habermas highlights the impact of internal identities, purposes and underlying linguistic interpretations in what he describes as "communicative action" (Habermas, 1997: 124). The parallels between systems thinking and the concept of

the lifeworld proposed by Habermas are clear in their mutual appreciation of interconnectedness:

The processes of reaching understanding upon which the lifeworld is centred require a cultural tradition across the whole spectrum. In the communicative practice of everyday life, cognitive interpretations, moral expectations, expressions, and valuations have to interpenetrate and form a rational interconnectedness via the transfer of validity that is possible in the performative attitude. (Habermas, 1997: 327)

In the systems thinking model of creativity, persuasion of societal gatekeepers is a key concept although the linguistic and sociological factors that contribute to persuasion are not sufficiently analysed. On the other hand, Habermas (1997: 181) provides a linguistically deeper understanding by reflecting on prestige and influence, where:

Prestige is attributed rather to the person, influence to the flow of communication itself. Although prestige and influence are interdependent variables – prestige enhances influence, influence enhances prestige – we can separate them analytically in respect to their sources. (p.181)

Although Habermas is seen to be a critic of systems thinking, I believe his work enhances the systems thinking model of creativity by providing clearer linguistic interpretations and analysis using his lifeworld and communicative action theories.

#### Summary

The systems model of creativity proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (2014) is based on the inter-relationship between an individual, society and culture. However, Csikszentmihalyi is a psychologist rather than a sociologist and in my view the

framework he offers is enhanced by complementary social theories, for example those described above, which provide a deeper context in exploring the role of societal gatekeepers in development of creativity skills.

## Conclusion

My literature review, beginning with Chapter 2, gave me a starting point for defining creativity based on the concepts of originality and value. However, in the business context I felt this definition required further clarification or enhancement. Therefore, the question about “What is creativity?” remained an important focus for my research. The literature I reviewed in Chapter 3 provided me with sufficient information to support my selection of the systems thinking contextual approach as the most appropriate for my exploration within a vocational business context.

Chapter 6 explored this approach in further detail with specific reference to the work of Csikszentmihalyi (2014) and his systems thinking model of creativity.

Csikszentmihalyi’s model of creativity is based on the interactional relationship between an individual, society and culture and I reviewed literature pertaining to the impact of society in Chapter 6 and the impact of culture in Chapter 4. The following chapter outlines and explains the research methodology I designed and implemented to explore my role as a societal gatekeeper in development of creativity skills in the vocational business curriculum in Further Education colleges in England.

## Chapter 7: Methodology

### Introduction

Following my literature review, I chose to carry out my research using an exploratory case study design (Thomas, 2011: 104) which, as noted by Streb (2010: 2), “investigates distinct phenomena characterized by a lack of detailed preliminary research...”. This methodology is in natural alignment with systems thinking (Thomas, 2011: 55) with the subject of my research being the societal gatekeeper role of Ofsted in development of creativity skills in the business curriculum and the analytical frame being the systems thinking model of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). A case study design gave me the flexibility to change perspectives (Streb, 2010: 2) and to use data from a variety of sources, for example interviews, documents and critical self-reflection. My main purpose in collecting data was to broaden my own professional perspective and to illuminate gaps in my knowledge, through synthesis of the beliefs, values and experiences of various stakeholders in the vocational business curriculum, including business teachers, business owners and business students. In addition to interviews and public engagement activities, I collected data from documents which included Further Education college websites, Times Education Supplement articles and Ofsted inspection reports. I acknowledge that analysis and synthesis of the meanings and interpretations I extracted from my data was subjective and I used critical self-reflection to highlight biases and potential distortions in my interpretations. In this chapter, I outline my research questions; research design, ontological and epistemological positions, ethical considerations, data collection and data analysis strategies:

## Structure of Methodology Chapter

### 1 Research questions

### 2 Research design

### 3 Ontological position

### 4 Epistemological position

### 5 Ethical considerations

### 6 Data collection

### 7 Data analysis

#### Research questions

My literature review allowed me to broaden my knowledge about creativity and to find partial answers to the gaps in my knowledge. I identified five questions that as an experienced business studies teacher and Ofsted inspector, I still did not fully know the answers to:

1. How do we (educators) define creativity in the business curriculum?
2. How do we recognise creativity?
3. How do we assess creativity?
4. How do we reward creativity?
5. How do we promote creativity?

## Research Design

### This Purpose of research

Based on the three types of research enquiry explained by Robson (1998: 42)

(exploratory, descriptive and explanatory), the purpose of my research is to ‘explore’ my role as an Ofsted Inspector, in the development of creativity skills in the

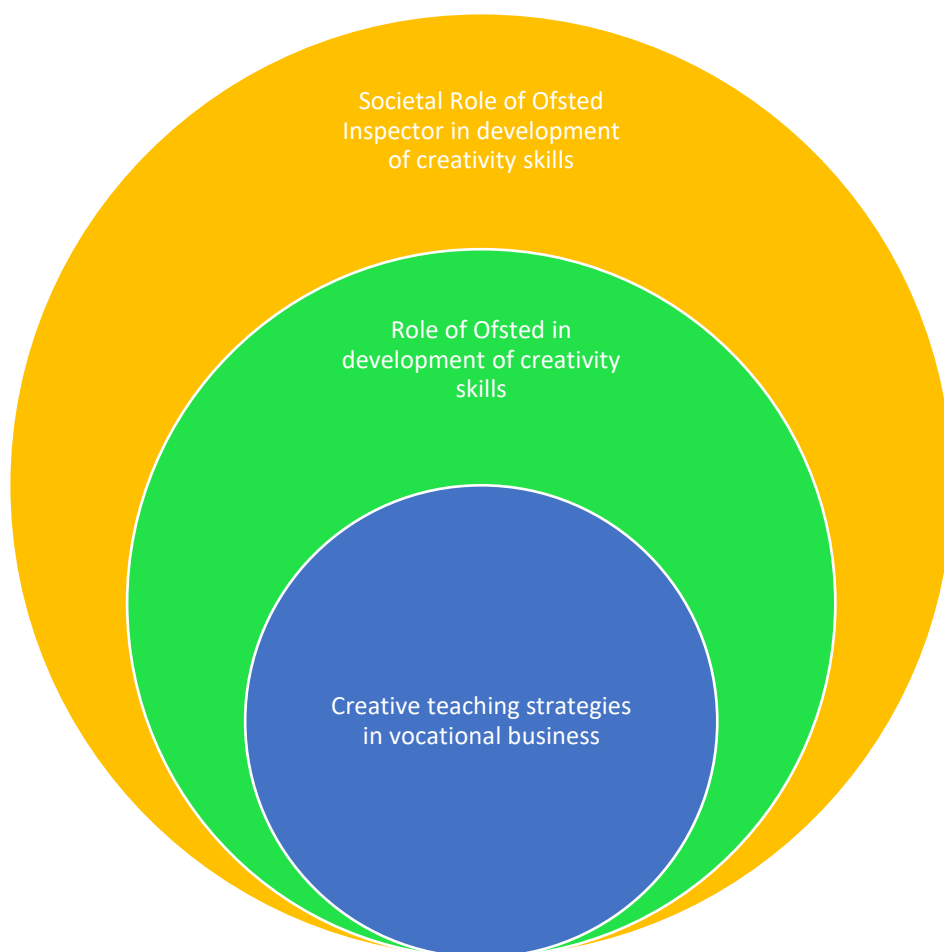
vocational business curriculum in FE colleges. March (1991) explains that

“Exploration includes things captured by terms such as search, variation, risk taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery, innovation.” I am particularly interested in discovering new ideas and insights drawn from multiple perspectives. My purpose is not merely to *describe* what I did as an Ofsted Inspector, nor to *explain* how I attempted to promote development of creativity skills. I do not intend to offer explanations or generalisations about how creative thinking skills can or should be developed on vocational business studies courses, but to share insights about what seems to work effectively (in generating creativity) and conversely, what does not seem to be working effectively. This intention is supported by Thomas (2013) who reminds us that “It is *not* expected that you can generalise from interpretative research: your ‘sample’ gives you insights rather than generalisations.”

## Focus of case study

A case study needs to have a subject and an analytical frame (for example the systems thinking conceptual framework) through which to focus on this subject (Thomas, 2011: 14). An exploratory case study allows us to shift perspectives and to “drill down further” (Thomas, 2011: 4) The illustration below (Figure 7.1) shows how the focus for my case study shifted from 2012 to 2017:

**Figure 7.1 Shifts in focus**



My initial focus was on what took place in a business classroom, for example the teaching strategies and resources used. As I progressed through my research and identified the gaps in my knowledge about creativity, as a highly experienced business studies teacher and also as an Ofsted inspector, I realised the importance



of society and culture (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996b) on what takes place inside the classroom so I shifted my focus to the external influences on what takes place in a classroom (for example the role of Ofsted) and eventually, I focused more specifically on my own role as a societal gatekeeper with an influential role in development of creativity skills in the vocational business curriculum.

#### Parameters for Case Study

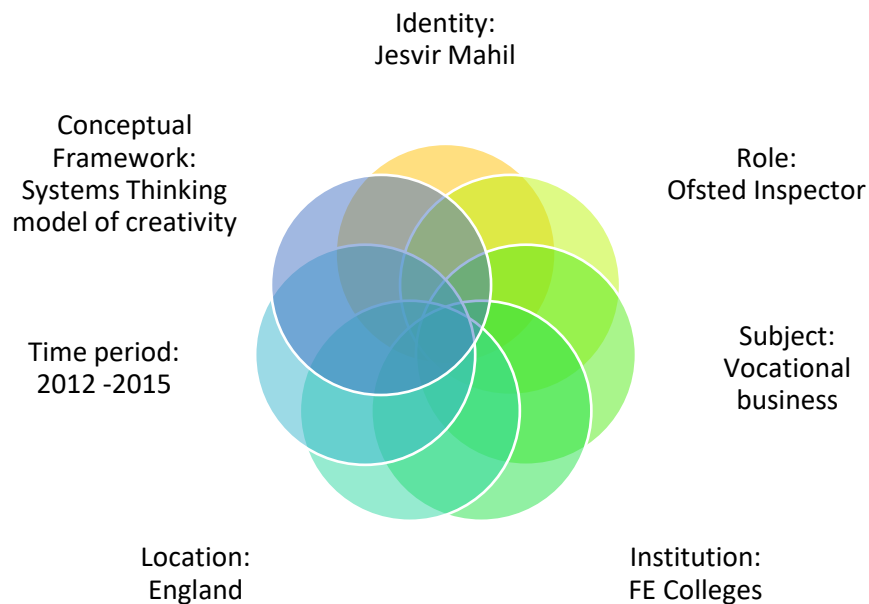
Although the context is of importance in a case study, we need to create parameters so we can focus on a manageable aspect of the broader context. I took heed of the advice given by Gerring (2007: 1) that “We gain better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part.” I realised that being too far away from my subject (creativity) I would be unlikely to see detail that is interesting or useful in expanding existing knowledge and awareness. On the other hand, becoming too close to the subject may result in the case being idiosyncratic as noted by Gerring:

In order to be a case of something broader than itself, the chosen case must be representative (in some respects) of a larger population.

Otherwise – if it is purely idiosyncratic (“unique”) – it is uninformative about anything other than itself. (Gerring, 2007: 145)

Therefore, I chose parameters (illustrated below in Figure 7.2) carefully so that the intersection between them would create a space of uniqueness without loss of relevance to the broader context.

**Figure 7.2: Parameters binding the case study**



**Parameter 1: Conceptual framework:**

This case study uses a systems thinking paradigm rather than other paradigms for example biological, psychological and psychometric (explained in Chapter 3)

**Parameter 2: Identity:**

I am exploring my own (identified) role as an Ofsted inspector and not the anonymous role of an Ofsted inspector

**Parameter 3: Role**

The case focuses on my role as an Ofsted inspector and not other societal roles such as teacher or examiner.

**Parameter 4: Subject:**

The case focuses on the domain of the vocational business curriculum and not academic domains or different subjects such as Arts or Sciences.

**Parameter 5: Institution**

The case focuses on Further Education colleges and not schools or Universities

**Parameter 6: Location**

The case is based on sources of data in England and not in an international environment

**Parameter 7: Time period**

The case looks at a time period when a particular Common Inspection Framework was used rather than the whole life span of Ofsted.

Bounding my case study (Stake, 2005: 455) with the parameters listed and illustrated above, gave me clarity and confidence to focus on my subject within a narrow contextual environment while acknowledging the broader context from which it originates.

**Rationale for Exploratory Case Study design**

From the various types of case study designs explained by Thomas (2011: 93), I chose to conduct a 'key case', with an 'exploratory' purpose, to gain insights about creativity using multiple perspectives.

I was confident that I would get the co-operation of a sufficient sample of participants willing to be interviewed for my case study (Robson, 1998: 168) and initially this was an important factor in deciding to use a case study research design. The exploratory type of case study design was feasible for me in terms of the resources available to me as a self-funded researcher whereas other designs, such as evaluation and ethnographic approach were not.

### *Ethnographic approach*

I decided not to take an ethnographic approach as the information I had access to during Ofsted inspections was private and confidential. I would not be able to use that information for research as it was not given to me for that purpose. Therefore I eliminated this type of research approach due to ethical considerations.

### *Evaluation*

I did not have the level of authority or the funding required to carry out an evaluation of Ofsted. Moreover, it was not appropriate for me to use an evaluation approach due to the wide range of complex and sensitive political connotations involved (Stake, 1986: 89) (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) (Patton, 2002: 168) Cronbach (Cronbach, 1982: 5) (Miller, 1991: 94) (Robson, 1998: 170) (Glasman, 1988) (Rossi, 1985: 33)

### *Consideration of limitations of case studies*

I took into consideration that case study designs are often criticized for lack of rigour and scientific value, (Robson, 1998: 56) (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2001) , lack of “representativeness of the findings” (Robson, 1998: 168) and lack of ‘comparator’ Gorard (2013: 17). There is also a great deal of data which needs to be managed, analysed and presented efficiently and effectively (Hakim, 1987: 74) (Yin, 2014a: 123) to ensure the reliability and credibility of the case study.

Another common criticism of the case study design, dismissed by Flyvbjerg and Seale (2007: 4) is that “The case study contains a bias toward verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions.” On the contrary, Flyvbjerg and Seale (2007: 19) emphasise that “researchers who have conducted

intensive, in-depth case studies typically report that their preconceived views, assumptions, concepts, and hypotheses were wrong and that the case material has compelled them to revise their hypotheses on essential points.” I am convinced by Flyvbjerg and Seale’s argument that researchers, including myself, are motivated to discover what they don’t already know rather than verification or confirmation of what they already believe.

I also agree with Thomas (2011: 215) that validation of a case study “... comes from the connections and insights it offers between another’s experience and your own. The essence comes in understandability emerging from phronesis – in other words, from the connection to your own situation”

Above all, it was the flexibility, and opportunity to explore “the unexpected and unusual” (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2001) offered by a case study design, that were strengths that appealed to me. This flexibility enabled me to vary my position and perspective during my research process.

#### Analytical approach

I am using a systems thinking model of creativity explained fully in Chapter 6. This involves analysis in the form of patterns, themes and relationships within the contextual environment.

#### Credibility in the findings

I am using triangulation, as described by Yin (2014b: 106) and (Seale, 1998: 77) using multiple data sources (interviews, documents, websites, media, social media) for corroboration and follow Yin’s (2014a: 47) suggestion to establish a chain of evidence. As my case study is taking a qualitative rather than quantitative approach

(Trochim, 2006) the purpose of my chain of evidence, using Nvivo software to categorise and code my data, was to increase credibility in my findings.

I will account for researcher effects, acknowledging for example 'The Hawthorne effect', described by Thomas (2013), as "a change in people's behaviour which happens because an interest is being taken in them."

I am also noting experimenter-expectancy effects as much as possible, which Thomas (2013: 142) explains "are brought about by the expectations of the researcher. By gestures, tone of voice, or the actual questions that you ask or the words that you use you may convey your expectations about your findings to your research participants, who will then, consciously or unconsciously, conform to the lead you appear to be giving."

### Generalisation

I will not be making claims about generalisation as the purpose of the research is to explore and gain insights about my role as an Ofsted Inspector in development of creativity skills in the vocational business curriculum. This is supported by Thomas (2011: 71) who believes that, "The quality of a case study depends less on ideas of sample, validity and reliability and more on the conception, construction and conduct of the study". Furthermore, Burns (2000: 474) argues that "Case studies are focused on circumstantial uniqueness and not on the obscurities of mass representation."

### Time Issues

I began the field work in September 2015, contacting 28 HMI Ofsted inspectors that I had previously inspected with in FE Colleges in England. By the end of March 2016, I had interviewed 11 business studies teachers who responded to my request to

participate in this research from a sample of 242 colleges invited to participate. I had also interviewed 9 students, 2 business owners and received feedback through my public engagement activities from over 50 business owners and professionals through my social media connections.

### Ontological position

Using an inductive phenomenological ontological approach I acknowledge that my personal history, experiences, values and beliefs will shape my interpretations and inform my conclusions, as explained by Grix (2010: 68) (Bryman, 2008: 6) and Blaikie (2007). It is important, in other words, to explicate my positionality. Below, I will outline some of the key components of my positionality that are likely to influence my research conclusions: unconscious dynamics, identity, values, beliefs, political stance, and teaching approach.

### Unconscious dynamics and positionality

After almost four years of researching for my PhD in Education, I stumbled across an article by Romanyshyn (2010) with a title that immediately captured my attention:

“The Wounded Researcher”

It was a moment of epiphany to realise that my deep inner motivation and relentless passion for discovering unimagined realms of creativity, most probably arose from the layers of unconscious forces.

The first two sentences in this article by Romanyshyn (2010) resonated with what I already believed:

I make the case that an approach to research that makes a place for the unconscious subjectivity of a researcher is the next logical step in a line of development, from psychology as natural science through it as a human and hermeneutic science, that has made a place for the subjectivity of the researcher in research. The process of research that arises from this approach begins with acknowledging that research is a vocation in which a work claims a researcher through his or her complex unconscious ties to the work as much as he or she consciously chooses it.

Romanyshyn (2010: 1)

This article illuminated my passion for creativity as an unconscious as well as a conscious choice. Over the past 34 years since I graduated with a degree in Psychology, I have started PhD research twice previously. My first PhD proposal was inspired by CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) protests in the early 80s. I spent a couple of years researching psychological defence mechanisms that we use to deal with the threat of a nuclear holocaust. On reflection, my passion for that subject ran out of steam in direct correlation with my growing optimism and interest in exploring wider horizons, which led me to work in Spain and Italy where I forgot about psychological defence mechanisms, perhaps at my peril in some ways. It seemed that my unconscious desires for exploring defence mechanisms had been resolved, and in the conscious realm it appeared that I had run out of steam for the subject.

About ten years later, in the early 90s, I started PhD research into conflict resolution strategies for creating world peace. I have found that the conflict resolution



advocates and strategists that I admired most, for example, Parry (1991) died without seeing an impact of their work that they could sincerely be proud of at a global level. So, my cynicism bred pessimism once again. However, by the late 90s, I had successfully completed an MBA (Masters in Business and Administration) and I became more pragmatic and resourceful in advocating materialistic business development and growth instead of my previous, more spiritual concerns. Reading the title “The Wounded Researcher” was the jolt I needed to remind me of my core spiritual values. For example, in business, my passion has always been to teach ethics, sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Creativity is the synthesis of all my deepest values in work, career and life in general.

I had not thought of this before reading the article by Romanyshyn (2010), but agree wholeheartedly with her claim about research being a vocation in which unconscious forces compel the researcher to choose a particular subject although this choice may be complex. Romanyshyn highlights this complexity in suggesting that:

When one makes a place for the unconscious in research, the issue of how one chooses a topic is complex. As such, the process begins with the acknowledgment that a topic chooses a researcher at least as much as, and more likely even more than, he or she chooses it. Its complex beginnings mean that a researcher is called into a work via his or her complex relationships to the work. In this context, research is re-search, a searching again for something that has already claimed you. (Romanyshyn, 2010: 9)

Even though I am using a systems thinking conceptual framework for my research, which admittedly only looks at the surface behaviour patterns and interactions

without delving into the intangible interior forces that provoke the overt response, I am intrigued, nevertheless, by Romanyshyn's claim that:

Research as vocation places the researcher within a context that is larger than his or her intentions for the work. Indeed, the work is the site where the complex pattern of the researcher's history and the unfinished business of the ancestors meet, where the time-bound world and the timeless qualities of the work encounter each other. (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 124)

Other, previously unconscious motives for choosing the subject of my research, surfaced as I read Romanyshyn's article. For example, for almost 50 years, since the age of 6, I have felt, experienced and survived the external pressures of being a foreigner in a racist society; constantly struggling to belong and be accepted as mainstream rather than marginalised. I believe that the current heightened tensions and natural conflicts of life in a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multilingual society, are increasingly a force to be reckoned with, for all concerned. At a personal level, I have persevered and demonstrated resilience in overcoming insidious racism which, when I was younger and less experienced, may have tempted me to give up researching for a PhD for the third time in my life. It is the awareness that the subject is an inherent aspect of my own soul that has made it a worthwhile investment of time and physical resources. Reading "The Wounded Researcher" shifted my perspective dramatically as I reflected to episodes in my life where I attributed being treated unfairly to the hegemonic force of racism; perhaps the attacks were not evoked by the colour of my skin but something much deeper in my psyche; the wounded, frustrated and neglected creativity in my soul? Ironically, seeing myself as a

“wounded researcher” brings me into the mainstream; a place of belonging that feels more comfortable than being on the mediocre peripheries of mundane, perpetual racism, a position that I have resented and resisted because it offers little dignity or indeed creativity.

Also relevant to my current research, in terms of the unconscious forces that mark my subjectivity, is my vocation as a writer. Even though I have written three books, I have never flaunted my identity as a “creative person” or author because of the apparent mismatch between my self-identity and the identity bestowed upon me by the society in which I live where I am labelled in terms that reflect my *external* appearance (Indian), behaviour (professional) and success (ambitious) instead of the invisible aspects of my being. It does not take too much of a stretch of the imagination to assume that my passion for exploring how creativity is recognised in education arises from an unconscious desire to understand why my own creativity has not yet been recognised and why I have remained silent about this deep inner voice that has almost, but never assertively, expressed itself.

As a strategy for making this “silenced” voice heard, I toyed with the idea of taking an “auto-ethnography” approach which Denshire (2014: 845) claims “demonstrates the potential to speak back (and perhaps differently) about professional life under prevailing conditions of audit culture so as to make and remake ethical relations in contexts of professional practice”. However, I am not prepared for the extent of vulnerability that the auto-ethnography approach demands and the level of self-confidence it requires to deal with the potential backlash in response to raw undisguised truths that may reveal unwelcome aspects of our lives that are inter-

related with the lives and stories of others. Due to the confidential nature of my relationships with key stakeholders in education including Ofsted inspectors, Further Education College managers, teachers and students, I decided that it would be unethical and unwise to use my research process to (in the words of Denshire (2014) “remake power relations”. My position in relation to the object of my research, which is the concept of creativity, has shifted several times over the past 4 years.

1. When I started my research, I took the position of a teacher wondering why my students were often reluctant to develop creativity skills. They preferred to just get on with what they needed to do for their assignments (often they wanted to do the minimum required) and they saw creativity as an optional extra that would not result in higher marks on their assignment. Therefore, many of my students considered time spent on developing creativity skills to be a waste. In my position as a teacher I wanted to explore the challenges in teaching creativity, such as lack of student motivation.
2. The following year, my position in relation to my object, shifted due to a change in my work role. Instead of teaching, I now worked as an Ofsted inspector and Education Consultant observing and judging the quality of vocational business studies lessons around the country. I was surprised that I never saw any of the teachers that I observed specifically aiming to develop creativity skills in these business lessons even though it is well known that creativity is a highly sought skill in the world of business. Consequently, my research question changed; instead of observing my own relationship with creativity, I was now observing other teachers' relationship with creativity;

instead of wondering about the students' lack of motivation, my focus was now on the *teachers'* lack of motivation.

3. A year later, I analysed over a hundred Ofsted inspection reports for the business curriculum and found there was practically no reference to development of creativity skills. When I asked my Ofsted inspector colleagues about this absence some of them informally suggested that the lack of reference in the reports was because Ofsted inspectors are not looking for creativity; it is not a specific criterion in the inspection framework used for making judgments about the quality of teaching and learning. So, my question about my object, creativity, changed to “why is it not being recognised and promoted by stakeholders and gatekeepers in education?”.
4. My position in relation to my object shifted further when I became clear that the main object I am exploring is the concept of creativity within business education, rather than the students, teachers or the Ofsted organization in their relationship to this concept.
5. Reading the article “The Wounded Researcher”, discussed previously, has shifted me to my current position where I am now exploring my own role as an Ofsted inspector, and the relationship I have with the object of my research, creativity, as a gatekeeper for this concept.

Using a case study design, with multiple sources of data, has enabled me to shift positions (outlined above) much more freely than other designs (for example the ethnographic or Action Research), would have allowed.

## Identity

At a conscious level, I consider myself to be a highly qualified, trained and experienced educator and over the past 30 years, I have developed a proven track record for high quality teaching in ESOL, EFL and vocational business studies courses. Based on my innovative contributions in the world of education, I was accepted as a Fellow into the Institute for Learning which is now called The Education and Training Society. I am a trained Ofsted inspector, with extensive experience of inspecting or consulting in over 50 Further Education Colleges around England from 2011 to 2015. The credibility and gravitas I have acquired in my field in education, on both a personal and professional level, nurtures my high self-esteem. I am confident and resourceful.

## Values

I am clear about my deepest values in education: Creativity, Confidence, Compassion and Courage. These four values are underpinning the purpose of my research and they are the compass that guides my thought processes and synthesis of knowledge that is available to me, in drawing conclusions.

## Beliefs

I believe that education has to be creatively useful (for the enrichment of self or others) and easily accessible, for example through language that is easy to understand. I also believe that education should be free as it is our investment in the future. Moreover, in my view, all education should be non-compulsory, as forcing children to learn seems to be an oxymoron.

## Political stance

I believe in a democratic, non-elitist approach to academia. I am an activist, personally investing in research through my time and financial resources, challenging the status quo wherein very little academic research has actually been produced **by** Further Education practitioners, **for** Further Education practitioners. I believe that this is an issue that needs to be addressed, if only for pragmatic reasons that the research is likely to be more useful if the researcher is aware of what the needs of the end user of the research are. When I began my research as a Further Education lecturer, I was shocked to find that I had **no** access to relevant academic resources in FE, and even when I paid for library membership at the University of Birmingham, I only had access to a very limited number of resources. It was only when I made an investment of thousands of pounds in registering for a PhD that I had access to the academic research I needed. The vast majority of my colleagues in Further Education colleges will never have the time or the financial resources to make such an investment in research. Politically, my activism is motivated by a desire to enrich education in FE colleges with research that has been produced by someone with personal knowledge and experience of what it entails to deal with the pressures and challenges of educating teenagers in FE colleges. Up to now, we have relied on very limited and inaccessible research, usually based in schools and produced by academics that have never actually taught in FE colleges.

I support the Plain English Campaign (Maher, 1979) and believe, like Thomas (2013) that research should be written in a manner that is accessible to the end-user which in my case will be teachers of 16-19 year old learners in Further Education Colleges. Contextually, I have conducted my doctoral research within “highly politicised battles about teacher education” as reported by Campbell et al (2004: 13). The battles she

mentions are “those of opposing sides, one trying to professionalise teaching and link this to raising standards in schools, the other trying to deregulate teacher preparation and development and setting out to highlight the lack of connection between teacher qualifications and pupil achievement”. Mulholland (2012) reported Michael Gove’s initiative allowing Academies “to employ people with no formal teaching qualifications in a move that could sideline both the unions and the established teacher training colleges.”

### Teaching approach

For over 30 years, my preference has been to use the humanist teaching approach based on the work of (Rogers, 1969, Rogers, 1983) amongst others. I agree with humanist ideology that education is not about filling up the empty jar with knowledge; it is about kindling a fire; the teacher’s role is to create an appropriate environment for learning to take place; just like planting a seed. The seed will grow and blossom if the right environment has been created to nurture it; the teacher is a facilitator for that life force to emerge within a creative environment. I believe that we are all born creative i.e. we all have a capacity to generate new ideas that add value. My teaching approach will be discussed in more detail in the findings chapter about the classroom experience.

### Self-reflection

Using the guidance of researchers such as Branson (2009) I have used self-reflection as an important aspect of my methodology. I have borne in mind, as suggested by Branson, that,

The aim of self-reflection, regardless of the approach, is to proactively initiate a self-inquiry into existing, but most likely unconscious, knowledge associated



with beliefs, attitudes, feelings, intuitions, sensitivities, emotions, and values.

This is the knowledge that affects how we perceive, analyse, interpret, and respond to our reality in each moment of experience. It is the knowledge we unconsciously use to form images in our self-concept, our impressions of others, our preferences, our biases, our likes and dislikes, and ultimately what we consider to be right or wrong. (Branson, 2009: 98)

My self-reflections will be coloured by my own ontology and cognitive constitution which I have discussed in chapter 5, “The Whiteness of Creativity”.

### Epistemological position

I am using a phenomenological approach with qualitative data (Burns, 2000: 3) (Trochim, 2006) and a systems thinking conceptual framework to ‘scaffold’ and guide the research, as discussed in previous chapters.

### Qualitative Approach

Trochim (2006) argues that the philosophical differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches to research are based on ontological and epistemological concerns rather than methodology and he gives examples to illustrate how all qualitative data can be coded quantitatively and conversely, how all quantitative data is based on qualitative judgment.

Nevertheless, Trochim (2006) clearly distinguishes between the criteria used for judging research validity in each of these approaches. Whereas quantitative research validity traditionally relies on internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity, qualitative research needs to be credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable.

Using a qualitative stance ontologically, epistemologically and also methodologically, I agree with Trochim (2006) that since “ the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's eyes, the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results.”

Although I am specifically exploring my own role as an Ofsted Inspector, in promoting creativity through recognition and reward as part of the inspection process, my findings may be transferable to the role of gatekeepers in a much broader field in society, including education, business and industry.

Trochim (2006) suggests that the concept of dependability “emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs.” As an organisation, Ofsted has undergone dramatic changes since its inception in 1992 and consequently its role has never been static. I am exploring my role, as a corporate agent of Ofsted, during a relatively short period of time from September 2012 to June 2015 when we inspected with a particular Common Inspection Framework tool which had a shelf life of just three years.

Trochim (2006) defines confirmability as the “degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others.”. I interviewed participants (business teachers, business students and business owners) who gave me consent to record the online interviews via Skype software. Although I transcribed these videos and coded names of participants in order to ensure confidentiality, the videos would be archived in case they were required at a later date to confirm my findings. The secondary source data I used from published Ofsted inspection reports and Times Educational Supplement articles would also be easily available to confirm my findings. NVivo software that I

used as a database for my primary and secondary source data will facilitate confirmability of my findings.

### Ethical considerations

Before I began my research, I asked myself about the integrity of my intentions, motives and purpose in wanting to carry out the research and I reflected on potential ethical concerns to avoid harming anyone or anything involved with the research including people and organisations. In this section, I will explain how I complied with ethical norms in conducting my case study research.

### Critical thinking

To think critically about my intentions in doing this research, I asked myself: “What is my purpose in doing this research?”

Why do I want to do it?

What are my motives?

What is driving me?

What are the outcomes I hope to achieve?

### Philosophical values

To answer these questions, I turned to the wisdom of classic Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Plato who advocated living virtuously in the pursuit of happiness, truth and beauty. Aspiring to these classical core philosophical values, I also bore in mind the words of Aristotle in aiming for “good”:

Every skill and every inquiry, and similarly every action and rational choice, is thought to aim at some good; and so, the good has been aptly described as that at which everything aims. Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (Crisp, 2000: 3)

I felt convinced that my research was in alignment with these values highlighted by classic philosophers; that it had the potential to be of benefit through revealing truth and generating beauty and happiness for myself and others at a local community and also at an international level.

#### Potential impact of research

At a local level, I feel a great deal of compassion for fellow teachers, struggling to nurture creativity under the pressure of competing priorities such as exam preparation and development of vocational skills such as creativity. Through my research exploring internal and external pressures that restrict development of creativity skills, my intention was to illuminate and help to alleviate, some of the associated challenges educators and students face.

At an international level, inspired by the compilation for 'The International Handbook of Creativity' by Kaufman and Sternberg (2006) my intention is to use the exploration of my role as an Ofsted inspector, as a basis for further exploration of the role of gatekeepers for creativity. I believe that a synthesis of approaches to development of creativity may further enhance our knowledge, awareness and strategies for sustainable innovation.

#### Ethical review documentation

Once I was clear about my philosophical integrity in conducting the case study research, I completed essential documentation to request permission from my University to invite potential participants for my research.

This included a letter of introduction, a research information sheet and a consent form (see appendix 1).

The letter of introduction included information about my background experience relevant to the research; my purpose in conducting the research and my intended research methodology. In this letter, I assured potential participants of their right to remain anonymous and to be able to change their mind about participating in the research, up to 6 months after their initial consent. The letter of introduction also explained how I would publish my findings during and after completion of the research.

The second part of my essential documentation required for the University ethical review, seeking permission to contact potential participants, was a research information sheet which elaborated on my research design, giving a more detailed description of the context for my research and a statement of my intended purpose for the research.

The third piece of essential documentation, seeking ethical approval, consisted of a “consent form” which I would ask all participants to sign. This consent form was designed to ensure that participants had read my letter of introduction and accompanying research information sheet with details of my research purpose, methodology and intentions. The participants signed to agree that they understood the requirements for their participation and their rights to anonymity and ability to withdraw from the research by contacting myself or my research supervisor, up to 6 months after their signed consent. The consent form assured participants that their personal data would be removed from the study and destroyed unless the findings had already been published. Furthermore, the consent form assured participants that their personal data would solely be processed for the purposes of the research outlined in the accompanying research information letter, in accordance with current Data Protection legislation.

My application, including the three essential documents outlined above, was accepted by the University ethical review panel and I was given a seal of approval to go ahead with my field research.

### Professional integrity

In my view, being truly ethical in our research is much deeper than the information contained in forms, regardless of how well-designed they may be. I believe that the core ethical values determining our strategies and actions while engaging in research lie in our professionalism and who we are as human beings and our ontological position. Most of these integral aspects of our character are not fully apparent on any forms that we fill in. For example, are we honest or dishonest in declaring our ideological biases? Favouring research perspectives because they appeal to our deep-seated prejudices, biases and fears is not ethical as it may lead to further confusion and narrow-mindedness instead of knowledge and expanded awareness.

Formal ethical approvals do not usually reveal the deep-seated insecurities that may sway our judgments in carrying out research; neither do the ethical approvals measure our low level of self-esteem or high level of insecurities that may cause us to interpret findings with distorted perceptions, based on what we would like to see. So, in addition to gaining ethical approval by a panel of judges who may only have a superficial, if any, interest in our research, being an experienced professional, I relied on my professional integrity, acknowledging that while I am transparent about my ontological values and preferences, I remain unconscious of many of my biases and fears that may distort my perception and interpretation of findings.

### Bias

In my research, I was conscious of various personal biases (Godkin and Allcorn, 2009), for example, a tendency to give more time and space to those that, like myself, advocate creativity in education and I naturally welcomed ideas that supported my own view of the world.

During my interviews, I attempted to avoid nodding in agreement to encourage and reward opinions I shared. Although I smiled and laughed with the participants when appropriate, I was conscious that these types of gestures may steer the conversation away from the focus of my research. I used a semi-structured interview schedule to remain on track, eliciting responses from the participant that were relevant to the themes for my research.

#### Hidden agendas

Even though my research purpose was declared and transparent, I had to acknowledge that potential participants and the Further Education Colleges they work for, may feel threatened by the possibility of a hidden agenda.

I have worked in over 50 Further Education Colleges as a teacher, Education Consultant or Ofsted inspector. Some potential participants may have been reluctant to take part in the research and disclose information that may be used against them at some point. Even though I was transparent about my previous role as an Ofsted Inspector and clearly stated that I am no longer affiliated to Ofsted, there was no guarantee that I would continue to be independent of Ofsted when I had finished my research. This possibility may have led potential participants to suspect hidden agendas, dissuading them from participating. Those who did participate may have remained guarded as they did not know me well enough to trust me or the transparency of the process.

### Transparency

To avoid the negative impact of perceived hidden agendas, I highlighted transparency as a core ethical value in my research. Throughout my research, my aims remained transparent rather than covert and there was no deception involved. I declared my previous role as an Ofsted Inspector and my current role as an Education Consultant. To ensure that these roles did not conflict with my role as a researcher, I interviewed business teachers who I had neither inspected nor coached in my role as an Education Consultant.

### Political implications

There is also the question of ethics regarding political implications of our research. For example, as Reason and Bradbury (2002: 70) suggest “If certain voices are absent in the debate, their non-participation is interpreted as their own apathy or inefficacy, not as a process of exclusion from the political process.” For my research, I invited participants through the Principals of the Further Education colleges where they work. At least five Principals made the decision on behalf of their staff that they were “too busy” to participate. There are deep underlying political implications to be explored regarding exclusion of Further Education members of staff from current research. However, I had to remain within the ethical parameters of my research. This meant avoiding the temptation to veer away from my declared purpose, intent and motives for my current research.

### Distractions

Even though I am intrigued by questions emerging from my research such as:

Why is there so little academic research conducted by Further Education specialists?

Why is the voice of vocational Further Education teachers so silent in academia?



These questions are not the central focus of my research and it would be unethical to use the primary source data that I gained through my interviews for a purpose that was not transparently stated in my initial research information sheet. I would need to seek additional consent for use of data gained for a particular purpose if I wanted to use it later for an alternative purpose.

### Wasting time and money

Another important ethical issue relates to wasting time and money. As Gorard (2013) warns,

Using an inappropriate design or no design at all, as is currently so common in the existing social science literature, is just as unethical as research that sought to harm its participants. Perhaps more so. In fact, such poor research does harm the participants by wasting their time, and the rest of us by wasting our money.” (p191)

I ensured that my research design and implementation were of the highest standards, to avoid being unethical through wasting my own time and money and more importantly the precious time of my participants.

### Ownership and copyright

Zeni (2001: 45) illustrates the importance of clarifying ownership of knowledge. I used a combination of secondary source data from the public domain, copyrighted published articles and primary source data from interviews which I recorded and transcribed. I was able to easily access and download Ofsted inspection reports from the internet and these are freely available to the public, for information and also for

research purposes. I was also able to easily download articles from the Times Educational Supplement magazine. However, these are copyright protected so I adhered to ethical guidelines for use of published material and I referenced this material appropriately. Ownership of the interviews that I have conducted and the transcriptions I have compiled belongs to me as a self-funded researcher. Likewise, as a self-funded researcher, copyright of my research publications also belong to me.

### Plagiarism

The Cambridge Dictionary defines plagiarism as the use of another person's ideas or work pretending they are your own. There have been famous cases where highly respected academics, professionals and celebrities have been accused of plagiarism. When people are already highly successful and have more to lose than to gain from plagiarism, their actions are often taken to be carelessness rather than deliberate dishonesty. However, even carelessness is unethical when it means that someone is harmed through our neglect in acknowledging their work. To avoid inadvertent plagiarism, I avoid copying and pasting large chunks of text from the internet when I am making notes. When I make notes from books, I have disciplined myself to use inverted commas to remind myself they are quotes and not my own words. To make it easier to add the reference next to each quote in my lists of notes, I use online software called Endnote for referencing which means that all books, articles, websites and videos I have used for my research are clearly archived online and I can add a reference to my writings with just a few clicks in the software.

## Data Management

I collected primary source data from 22 Interviews and have ensured that this data is managed in adherence to current data protection legislation. I am not storing personal information of any of my participants and have used coding to make all interview transcriptions anonymous. The electronic data for these interviews is on a safe, password-protected external hard drive which is not subject to internet security threats such as viruses and hacking. The data I collected will only be used for the purpose for which it was intended, outlined in the research briefing I sent to participants when they signed their consent forms.

Secondary source data that I collected from the public domain such as social media comments, Ofsted inspection reports and Times Educational Supplement articles, remains in the public domain and this data does not contain any personal information which is subject to data protection legislation. Moreover, I am not storing this data and have added clear references where I have used selected excerpts from secondary sources in my thesis.

## Rights of participants

Throughout my research I remained in professional integrity, adhering to the rights of participants which were promised when they signed their consent form. To honour their right to privacy (Brewer and Hunter, 1989: 191), I ensured that all participants in my research remained anonymous by coding all interview transcriptions so that their names and the Further Education Colleges in which participants work would not be identified.

I also remained conscious of participants' rights to withdraw from the research. Even though they had signed a consent form agreeing to take part in the research, I had to bear in mind that during the interviews, they may have disclosed information that

they later regretted or felt embarrassed about, leading to an inadvertent and perhaps unavoidable transgression of their “informed consent”. All my participants were reminded that they had 6 months from the date of our interview to withdraw from the research without any negative consequences for them. None of the 22 people I interviewed for my research raised any objections or concerns during or after my research. None of them chose to withdraw.

### Feedback to participants and reciprocity

Participants volunteered their time and resources in taking part in the research so it was ethical for me to practice the principal of reciprocity in providing them with regular feedback intended to make them feel recognised and rewarded for their involvement in my research. I kept my interview participants informed with summaries of my research findings via email, short articles posted on my website and short video clips posted on YouTube, for example (Mahil, 2016a, Mahil, 2016c, Mahil, 2016b) These videos serve to communicate some of my research findings through public engagement activities for which additional permission was granted by the University ethics committee (for example, I facilitated some workshops for coaches and other professionals interested in my research. Members of the public (not research participants) commented on many of my social media videos, allowing me to further contextualise my research in a real business environment. The students and business owners I interviewed responded by “liking” my videos whereas a couple of the business teachers I interviewed for my research responded to me privately via email when they found a video to be interesting. To date, none of my research participants have expressed any dissatisfaction or disagreement with general research findings I have made public through social media

## Summary

To summarise, I adhered to high ethical standards by remaining true to my philosophical intentions aiming to reveal truth and beauty and to express happiness through my research. I provided my research participants with transparent information about my research methodology and I acknowledged my own unconscious biases in collecting, analysing and interpreting data. I have respected the rights of my participants for privacy by using coding and will not be using data gathered through this project for other future projects without gaining further informed consent. Above all, my research avoids causing harm to any person or organisation by illuminating gaps, pitfalls and systemic weaknesses that educators need to avoid, to raise the quality of vocational education.

## Data Collection

### Purpose of data collection

Using a systems thinking framework and a case study research design, the purpose of my data was to gain insights and make connections using multiple perspectives.

### Type of data collected

1. Recorded semi-structured interviews with business teachers; business students and business owners
2. Ofsted inspection reports, Ofsted Common Inspection Framework, Handbook, Annual Report
3. Media coverage of Ofsted in relation to creativity in Times Educational Supplement (TES) weekly magazine for educators.
4. Websites of 235 FE colleges where vocational business courses are offered.
5. Public engagement feedback and evaluations (Facebook, Twitter & Linked in communication) The public engagement data served to gauge the individual, societal and cultural context in which I explored my research questions.

Appendix 9 outlines my rationale for using Public Engagement and provides examples of public engagement activities during which data from conference evaluations and online interactions was collected.

### Recruitment of interview participants

All (a total of 242) Further Education Colleges where vocational business studies courses are offered and inspected were contacted and invited to participate in the research. Out of this sample of 242, all participants able and willing to be interviewed online via Skype software, within the 3-month time frame from January to end of March 2016 (the Spring academic term) are included in the sample of 11 business teachers. Over half of the Principals from the 242 colleges contacted did not respond

to my request, others responded saying that their staff were either uninterested or too busy to participate, others sent in their completed consent forms but failed to commit to a date and time for an interview to take place.

I interviewed 9 business students from a BTEC Business Studies cohort that I taught from 2007 to 2009. I chose these students because I had remained in contact with them through social media although I had not spoken with them for over 6 years. This provided sufficient distance in the teacher-student relationship for them to express their independent opinions developed through their University or industry experience after completing their courses with me.

Throughout my research period from 2012 to 2017, I conducted public engagement activities, asking for the opinions of business owners in my network of contacts using social media platforms, for example LinkedIn.com. I interviewed two of these business owners and realised that my data was already saturated with similar opinions. I had the opportunity to interview many more business owners but the public engagement activities had already provided me with sufficient data to ascertain points of view from a business perspective so I did not feel it to be necessary to interview more than two business owners.

My rationale for interviewing business teachers, business students and business owners was approved by the ethics committee (see appendix 1 for forms). I also received ethical approval for my public engagement activities.

#### Type and degree of control exercised

I am using a research design defined by Gorard (2013: 125) as 'passive', with no direct intervention by the researcher at the stage of data collection. With the semi-structured interviews, I have set prompt questions but refrain from agreeing or

disagreeing with the participants, to avoid manipulation or distortion of their responses, as much as possible.

#### Record of data sources and themes extracted for case study

I used data from 22 interviews, 89 Ofsted reports, 235 Further Education (FE) college websites, 329 Times Education Supplement (TES) articles, public engagement activities on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, Ofsted annual reports and inspection documents and the Professional Teaching Standards document. All these sources of data have been uploaded to an NVivo database.

#### Interviews with Teachers (11), Students (9) & Business owners (2)

I coded the interview transcriptions to ensure confidentiality and theme coded these transcriptions in Nvivo (see appendix 3: Interview Codes for full list of codes for teachers, students and business owners)

#### 89 Ofsted inspection reports

I used the SSA 15 (Business, Administration & Law) part of 89 full Ofsted inspection reports for FE colleges inspected between September 2012 to August 2015 under the 2012 version of the Common Inspection Framework. I theme coded these reports in NVivo and attached copies of each extract to my Access database for sources of information.

#### 235 Further Education College websites

I visited the websites of 235 FE colleges which provide vocational business education over a 3-day period from Monday 25 July 2016 to Wednesday 27 July 2016 to find the cultural vision, mission and value statements. I theme coded these in Nvivo to identify the core values.



### 329 Times Education Supplement Articles

On 11 June 2016, I searched Nexis UK database for TES articles and using the search criteria “Ofsted” and “creativity” anywhere in the text, I found 329 entries.



Using a search strategy of “Ofsted” AND “creativ\*” brought up 543 entries. many of which were irrelevant as they included items such as “creative subjects” without adding much meaning to the theme of my focus (cultural values and priorities)

Therefore, I chose to use the initial search for “creativity” AND “Ofsted” and read through each article to see whether it was relevant or not to my search based on whether the article contained information relevant to the themes of interest to me:

- the definition of creativity
- the characteristics of the creative person
- the creative classroom
- the role of Ofsted
- the cultural value linked to creativity.

I then coded 123 of the relevant articles from TES in Nvivo based on the themes listed above.

### Online searches for relevant articles

I conducted online searches for relevant articles about creativity and Ofsted in December 2015 and then in April, May, June and August in 2016. I used the following databases: Web of Science; Proquest Social Sciences; Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts; Proquest Dissertations & Theses Global; Proquest Business and Nexis UK database for TES articles.

## Public Engagement Activities

I interacted with over 1,000 contacts on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube and received both private and public responses to my questions and requests for feedback (see appendix 9 for some examples). Ensuring anonymity, I uploaded coded data from public engagement comments to NVivo, categorised into themes related to the Systems Thinking Model of Creativity: the individual, societal and cultural role of creativity. For example, in organizing an online conference on Creativity & Culture [www.jesvir.com/conferences](http://www.jesvir.com/conferences) , I received detailed responses from 9 international business owners and professionals to the following three questions:

- How are you creative? How do you express your creativity?
- How are you persuading societal gatekeepers about the value of your work?
- How does your culture influence your creativity? How does your creativity influence your culture?

This public engagement activity linked with the focus of my research in exploring the role of gatekeepers beyond the confines of a classroom. After 5 years of researching creativity as the object of my focus, my gaze was now on the particular interaction between gatekeepers and those selected as being creative enough to participate in a Creativity & Culture Conference. Exploring the interaction of gatekeepers within a broader contextual environment allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of my own role as an Ofsted inspector.

## Ofsted Documents

I used the relevant Ofsted Handbooks for inspections. Common Inspection Framework, Annual Reports and the Prevent Strategy Review. These are uploaded in Nvivo for reference.

## Professional Teaching Standards

I uploaded relevant extracts of the Professional Teaching Standards, pertaining to responsibilities and skills expected of teachers, to NVivo software and I used themes associated with my research questions (definition, recognition, reward, measurement and promotion of creativity skills) to code text contained in the published documents.

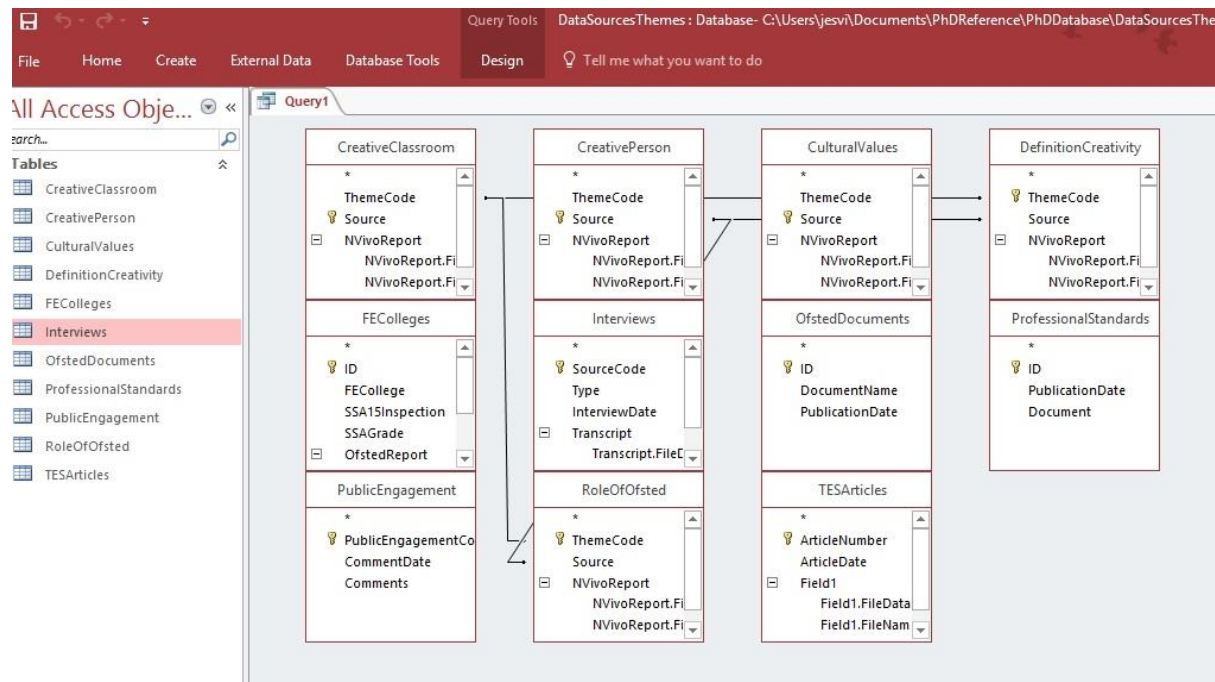
## Critical self-reflection

As a trained teacher, I have used self-reflection throughout my teaching career spanning over 30 years, as one of the most important strategies for continuously improving my teaching practice. My initial teacher training introduced the ancient roots of reflection as a methodology for learning, springing from the times of Confucius in China and Plato in Greece. More contemporary adaptations of self-reflection as a methodology for learning and self-improvement included the well-known learning theories of Kolb (1975), Gibbs (1988) and Brookfield (1998). I have utilised the approach advocated by these established theorists of self-reflection as a research strategy for learning, in particular the work of Brookfield (1998) which favours observation of events from multiple perspectives. However, instead of looking at phenomena from various lenses as Brookfield suggested (our own autobiography; our learners' eyes; our colleagues' experiences and theoretical literature) I have critically evaluated phenomena based on my own distinct roles as a teacher; a student and as an Ofsted inspector. Each of these roles entails internal

and external perceptions viewed through a characteristically diverse range of lenses. A synthesis of the various perspectives facilitated by the different roles (teacher, student, inspector) offers creative insights. I used my notes from my PGCE teacher training courses; my notes from lesson observation training and my notes from Ofsted inspection training to facilitate critical self-reflection grounded in the education theories I have been most influenced by in the humanist, behaviourist and cognitive traditions.

## Database design (Access)

In order to track and link sources of data to themes extracted, I have created an Access database with tables containing links to attachments that provide supporting evidence for coding related to each theme.



In addition, appendix '4: NVivo Coding Summary by Source Report, provides comprehensive hierarchical links to each node which led to thematic clusters.

## Evolution of themes

The systems thinking conceptual framework encourages us to look for patterns and gaps in our knowledge. Based on my experience as a business studies teacher and Ofsted inspector, I identified and categorised some of the gaps in my knowledge into five themes as follows:

Theme 1: Definition of creativity

Theme 2: Recognition of creativity

Theme 3: Assessment/measurement of creativity

Theme 4: Reward for creativity

Theme 5: The role of Ofsted in promotion of creativity skills

## Interview Schedule

Interviews lasted around 60 minutes, During the first 10 minutes, I introduced myself, clarified the purpose of the interview and confirmed respect for confidentiality, ensuring that the participant had read the briefing notes sent by email. Participants were all asked the following questions:

**Q1:** In the context of business studies, how do you define creativity?

**Q2:** How do you recognise creativity in the context of a business class?

**Q3:** How do you assess or measure the level of creativity expressed by students on vocational business courses?

**Q4:** How do you reward students for expressing creativity?

**Q5:** In your view, what is the role of Ofsted in development of creativity skills on vocational business studies courses?

**Q6:** What else is interesting and important for us to be aware of in the context of teaching creativity skills on vocational business studies courses?

Although each participant was asked all six questions listed above, they were allowed to take as much time as they liked on each question and I asked follow up

questions when appropriate, for example for clarification or to respond to new questions stimulated by the discussion.

## 7.7 Strategy for data analysis

My research findings derive from document analysis, content analysis, thematic analysis and discourse analysis as briefly outlined below:

### Document analysis:

I used easily accessible Ofsted inspection reports that are in the public domain and therefore not subject to copyright laws (McCulloch, 2004: 48) or ethical concerns such as confidentiality. I have nevertheless adhered to general ethical guidelines advocated by Bryman and Bell (2011) for example maintaining anonymity of the colleges by referring to them with a reference number, in order to avoid causing offence.

I noted the implicit values and ideologies in the way the documents have been prepared, as highlighted by current social researchers such as Robson (2011: 348) Rapley (2007: 88) Patton (2002: 293) Hodder (2000: 703) McCulloch (2004: 129) McCulloch (2004: 78). Hodder (2000: 703) considers it to be a strength of documents that they “can be separated across space and time from its author, producer, or user.” This separation of author and user was relevant to my analysis of Ofsted inspection reports and Times Educational Supplement (TES) articles as I was interested in the cultural values and priorities expressed which go beyond the personal influence of the authors, producers and immediate users of the documents.

Using an interpretivist approach, I looked for cultural meanings about the role of Ofsted within an educational context. Drawing on the work of Derrida, Hodder (2000:



704) explains that “meaning does not reside in a text but in the writing and reading of it.” Therefore, it was essential to interpret both the inspection reports and magazine articles within the context in which they were produced, with clarity that they do not represent facts, only versions of reality as perceived by the corporate agent (inspector) or the education expert (positioned in that status when selected for publication in TES).

Formal inspection reports are written by an anonymous Ofsted inspector supervised by a named HMI Ofsted inspector and the report has been checked through internal Ofsted quality assurance measures. It is meant for a wide audience including all stakeholders in state funded education: the government, the Further Education College that was inspected and all its staff and students, parents, the local community, competitors of the college and also investors. A college can attract funding and future customers with a highly positive report and it can lose state funding and potential customers with a negative report so this inspection tool is powerful and influential.

The author of the formal report can be described as a corporate agent with very specific guidelines on what to write and how to write it. There is even an Ofsted House Style to determine the way lexis, grammar and punctuation is to be used, with a high level of commitment to “plain English” (Maher, 1979).

I have no reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the Ofsted inspection reports as I downloaded them directly from the official Ofsted website where they are currently published. Patton (2002: 499) warns that documents may be “incomplete or inaccurate”. I am confident that all the reports and articles I am using are complete in

their published form although they are likely to have been manipulated at the editing stage in each case for quality assurance purposes or to meet the style requirements.

The TES magazine articles differ from the inspection reports in various ways; the purpose for which they are written, the transparency of authorship and above all the power to make a direct impact on the primary end user which in the case of the inspection reports is the college that was inspected and is being reported on. The influence of the articles is more democratic; the target audience can choose to read or ignore the articles without negative consequences for making either choice. In contrast, the messages in inspection reports cannot be ignored if they indicate areas for improvement.

Both Ofsted reports and also magazine articles that I used were “unobtrusive” (Patton, 2002: 191). They did not require “additional human subject protection permission” and the fact that I used secondary source data meant my presence did not have a distorting researcher effect on how the documents were initially produced.

Prior (2004: 386) discusses “the importance of how documents are circulated.” In drawing parameters around my research, I was only concerned with the primary circulation of the document, from publisher to the target audience, rather than secondary circulation of “processed” documents, by those at a higher point to those at a lower point in the education hierarchy, which in view of the various interpretivist, critical realist and systems thinking philosophies would generate different interpretations and conclusions.

I have no personal involvement in how the articles relating to Ofsted in the Times Educational Supplement magazine were written, selected for publication and edited,

so the boundaries around what I am allowed to say are much looser compared to my use of the Ofsted inspection reports where I have to ensure anonymity of the subjects of the reports and also the corporate agents who produced the reports.

A published inspection report is not “inert” as explained by Prior (2004: 388) stating that “documents can often become agents in their own right.” An “outstanding” inspection report will have a different impact on the organisation including its staff and students, compared with an “inadequate” report. Thus, I made the first analysis of the 89 Ofsted inspection reports I am using by categorising them into one of four groups: outstanding; good; requires improvement; inadequate.

#### Content analysis using NVivo software

As I am exploring the role of Ofsted in development of creativity skills in the vocational business curriculum, my second step was to conduct a ‘content analysis’ of the reports for key words associated with creativity as explained by Bryman and Bell (2011: 308).

Matthews and Ross (2010) explain ‘content analysis’ as a process that “ looks for the presence of words (or phrases or concepts) in a text and endeavours to understand their meanings and relationships to each other.” Bryman and Bell (2011: 305) note that “Content analysis is a very transparent research method” and this is echoed by Burns (2000: 9) who say that the major strengths of this method are its “precision and control” and “the expectation exists that there will be consistency in results of observations made by different researchers or the same researcher over time.”

Using NVivo software for the content analysis, I found that there was hardly any reference to development of creativity skills in the reports.

Therefore, I conducted a word search query set to include similar words to “creativity” and also to include synonyms. This returned results containing the word “origin” and “original”. When I read the paragraphs containing these words, I found they referred to the origins of students or they were in a different subject area, referring to “original hairstyles” for example, so they were irrelevant to my research on creativity in business. I was surprised that the NVivo software did not pick up “innovate” and “innovation” as synonyms of “creativity. Although these concepts are indeed different to the definition of creativity I am interested in, I had anticipated that I would need to sift through the search results to discard references to innovation, manually.

My query entitled “creativity skills” returned 74 items with a total of 200 references. I had to read through these to decide which were relevant as the query searched the whole PDF rather than the page for SSA 15 (Business, Administration & Law). I could have converted the specific part of the report I needed into a word document to enable a more specific search in NVivo. However, that would have been much more time consuming than allowing the software to search through the whole PDF and then scanning the results to identify the relevant paragraphs.

I created a “Tree Node” in NVivo , which enables us to capture data within an identified theme as explained by Gibbs (2004):

A node in NVivo is a way of bringing together ideas, thoughts and definitions about your data, along with selected passages of text. Passages of text from one or more documents are connected to a node because they are examples of the idea or concept it represents. (Gibbs, 2004: 31)

As noted by Bazeley and Richards (2000: 114) “NVivo does not require that you order nodes, but nodes almost always have a logical relation”. The logical relation I used was an umbrella node for vocational skills subdivided into creativity, functional and business skills. There were only 10 references to creativity in 89 Ofsted inspection reports for SSA 15 (Business, Administration & Law)

I was very surprised to notice such a low level of reference to creativity and using a normative approach I may have been inclined to conclude that Ofsted hardly ever reports on creativity. However, using an interpretivist approach, I realised that this conclusion may be misleading without a context to support it.

The Ofsted reports I used were written by many different inspectors and whether the key words were mentioned in the report may have been due to the interest and focus of the inspector rather than an accurate reflection of what was witnessed during the observations reported. A content analysis of the reports does not easily allow us to distinguish between the variable of who authored the data we are using as names of individual inspectors who formed part of the inspection team are not published on reports from 2012 to 2015.

One of the disadvantages of using content analysis is that it was time consuming sifting through hundreds of reports and as Bryman and Bell (2011: 308) comment, “A content analysis can only be as good as the documents on which the practitioner works.” The Ofsted reports were written by many different inspectors and their level of interest in creativity will no doubt be quite diverse, which may be one reason why there are so few references to this concept in the report. A content analysis alone presents us with what is present in the report without explaining why this is so.

Although content analysis pointed me to what was relevant in the reports, as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006) this method tends to focus at a more micro level than thematic analysis and as noted by Vaismoradi et al. (2013) “researchers employing content analysis are sometimes accused of removing meaning from its context”.

In addition to the disadvantages of using content analysis as a method, Silverman (2005: 207) and Robson (2011: 472) suggest, there are also limitations in using computer software, such as NVivo, to save time. Although the NVivo software saved me a great deal of time and effort in highlighting and narrowing the range of pages where I would find references to my key words, I was unable to direct NVivo to search only specific areas of the PDF report that were relevant to my research. I was only interested in references to creativity or creative thinking skills in SSA 15 (Business, Administration & Law) sector, whereas the search query brought up references that were made anywhere in the report, including sectors that I was not interested in such as Creative Arts and Media. In order to specify certain parts of the report for the search query, I would have had to convert the PDF to a word file and then include some formatting styles to the reports. It was less time consuming to analyse the references manually to discard irrelevant references.

### Thematic Analysis

The huge amount of data I collected from my 22 interviews was overwhelming and organising this data into themes made it more manageable, and it became easier to interpret and make sense of it.

There are various definitions of themes. For example, Braun and Clarke (2006) define them as “patterns of meaning” and Boyatzis (1998) elaborates further to propose that a theme is “a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes the possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon”. Guest et al. (2012: 50) define a theme a “unit of meaning that is observed (noticed) in the data by a reader of the text.” They explain that (Guest et al., 2012: 50), “Thematic analyses move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes.” Similarly, Saldana (2014) propose that themes are “extended phrases or sentences that summarize the manifest (apparent) and latent (underlying) meanings of data”. The underlying premise in these definitions is that themes are based on patterns rather than quantifiable information which can be placed in distinct categories. Moreover, themes are subject to interpretation as noted by Abram (2014: 38):

Once we are in the realm of non-quantifiable knowledge, we are reliant on interpretation, which brings us back to the need to recognise the experience, skill and intellectual creativity of the particular researcher doing that work. (p 38)

With blurred boundaries and malleable patterns, themes are more subject to interpretation compared with categories that are based on more tangible or concrete evidence.

My intention for this research was not an attempt to generate theories and I did not desire to use my data for, “conveying the credibility of a theory” as outlined by Glaser (1965) so I chose not to use the constant comparative method of analysis that he

suggests, which would have meant placing my data into categories iteratively. As my research was designed to explore my data to gain insights rather than theory building, I allowed ideas to emerge from the patterns I observed in the data, through inter-related themes rather than distinct categories.

Saldana (2014) explains the difference between categories and themes as follows:

Category construction is our best attempt to cluster the most seemingly alike things into the most seemingly appropriate groups. Categorizing is reorganizing and reordering the vast array of data from a study because it is from these smaller, larger, and meaning-rich units that we can better grasp the particular features of each one and the categories' possible interrelationships with one another. (p 587)

In contrast, Saldana explains that themes allow us to

construct summative, phenomenological meanings from data through extended passages of text. Unlike codes, which are most often single words or short phrases that symbolically represent a datum, themes are extended phrases or sentences that summarize the manifest (apparent) and latent (underlying) meanings of data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Boyatzis, 1998). Themes, intended to represent the essences and essentials of humans' lived experiences, can also be categorized or listed in superordinate and subordinate outline formats as an analytic tactic.

(Saldana, 2014: 596)



## **Stages in thematic analysis**

Researchers such as Nowell et al. (2017: 4) advocate a step by step, methodical approach to thematic analysis to ensure “ensure credibility, dependability and confirmability of interpretations. Using a similar approach to that outlined by Nowell et al (2017) I followed the steps below in identifying and interpreting themes in my data:

**Stage 1:** I searched my data for themes relating to my research questions:

How do we define, recognise, measure, reward and promote creativity?

**Stage 2:** I coded these themes as “nodes” using Nvivo software, highlighting relevant paragraphs in my data

**Stage 3:** Using the systems thinking conceptual framework, I searched for additional “emerging themes” in the data, for example relating to negative and positive perceptions of Ofsted

**Stage 4:** I coded these emerging themes as additional “nodes” in Nvivo, highlighting relevant sentences and paragraphs.

**Stage 5:** Using the systems thinking model of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) which highlights the importance of the individual, society and culture, I clustered my nodes (themes) into three broad categories loosely relating to the individual, society or culture

**Stage 6:** I used Nvivo software to run reports with a complex range of combinations of data sources with highlighted themes so that I could identify patterns. I used my professional experience and awareness to make interpretations, for example creating fictional profiles of creative students and classroom scenarios where creativity is likely to occur.

**Stage 7:** I used Nvivo software to create relationships between different themes to stimulate insights and critical reflections in my data analysis, guided by my research questions.

### **Advantages of using themes**

Using thematic analysis allowed me to take the context into account to extract broader and deeper meanings from my data. I was able to be flexible in taking “an organic approach to coding and theme development” (Braun and Clarke, 2006) as I shifted my position in relation to the focus of my research. Through a clear and systematic coding using NVivo software, I aim to foster what (Richards, 1999) (Lincoln and Guba, 2007) call “trustworthiness”, in my interpretations.

### **Disadvantages in using themes**

Although I am claiming credibility and coherence in my data analysis and interpretations, Holloway and Todres (2003) warn against the “essential tension” between flexibility, credibility and coherence. Distinct patterns in my data may seem random information without adequate explanations to create cohesion. Themes can fragment personal narratives in the data making it more impersonal and less nuanced in containing personal meanings. The narratives contained in my 22 interviews are not identifiable in the themes as they have been fragmented into short quotes and placed into themes which are based on research questions rather than the participants involved. This means that I may have unwittingly ignored important information that does not fit into any of my themes.

## Discourse Analysis

I used discourse analysis which Hewitt (2009) defines as “....a research method which involves examining communication in order to gain new insights.”, in order to look at broader meanings within a political and socio-cultural context as suggested by Taylor (1997). Fairclough (2013) reminds us that “social realities have a reflexive character,” and Rapley (2007: 128) concurs that “there is not ‘a truth’ but rather multiple and sometimes contradictory *truths or versions*.” So, in using discourse analysis, I expected to gain insights on the values and beliefs of the educators who have written the articles and also the publishers who have selected these articles for publication in the TES.

Using discourse analysis enabled me to make relevant interpretations much more easily using the magazine articles. For example, the title below conveys the perceived relationship between Ofsted and creativity in the use of the word “still”:

**“How to teach creatively and *still* get a good Ofsted rating”** (Professional, 2014b)

Whereas content analysis was useful for highlighting the absence of reference to “creativity” in the Ofsted inspection reports, with the articles, using content analysis with a positivist approach would have made it unnecessarily difficult to make interpretations, for example of the title above, indicating that Ofsted is seen to be inimical to creativity, an assumption which is further supported by the opening line to this article which states that:

There can’t be many schools that would invite Ofsted inspectors to meditate in a Mongolian yurt or join a class of eight-year-olds to round up some water

buffalo. And with good reason: *the general consensus is that Ofsted would hate that sort of thing. (Professional, 2014b)*

In order to explore the role of Ofsted in development of creativity skills, I opted out of working with Ofsted, to be in a position where I am independent of the organisation and not prohibited formally or informally from conducting research that questions the role of the organisation. There are elements of positivism, critical realism and also interpretivism that influenced my decision: a desire to be more “objective”; a desire to remove myself from a position within the organisation where I lacked the freedom to question its authority and also a desire to be more reflexive in making my subjective interpretations and conclusions. Taking myself outside of the organisation also enables me to use a holistic, systems thinking approach where I am able to view the role of Ofsted from multiple perspectives, drawing on my personal experience as a student, as a teacher, as an Education Consultant and also as an Ofsted Inspector, without being locked into a particular positioning by any of these roles.

Using a combination of content analysis, thematic analysis and discourse analysis to analyse my documents, supported by interviews and public engagement activities to discuss my findings, enabled me to gather a range of data, fulfilling the requirements of a triangulated base of evidence which I synthesised using a systems thinking, holistic approach, drawing on both positivist and interpretivist philosophies as appropriate.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have summarised my research methodology, outlining my research questions, research design, ontological and epistemological positions. I have also explained the ethical issues I took into consideration, such as maintaining the anonymity of my research participants and being transparent about my intentions and motives throughout the research. I collected primary and secondary data from multiple sources and have adhered to current legislation regarding data management and data protection (GDPR 2018). I analysed my data using Nvivo software to facilitate document, content, thematic and discourse analysis. The following chapter reports on my research findings.

## Chapter 8 Findings

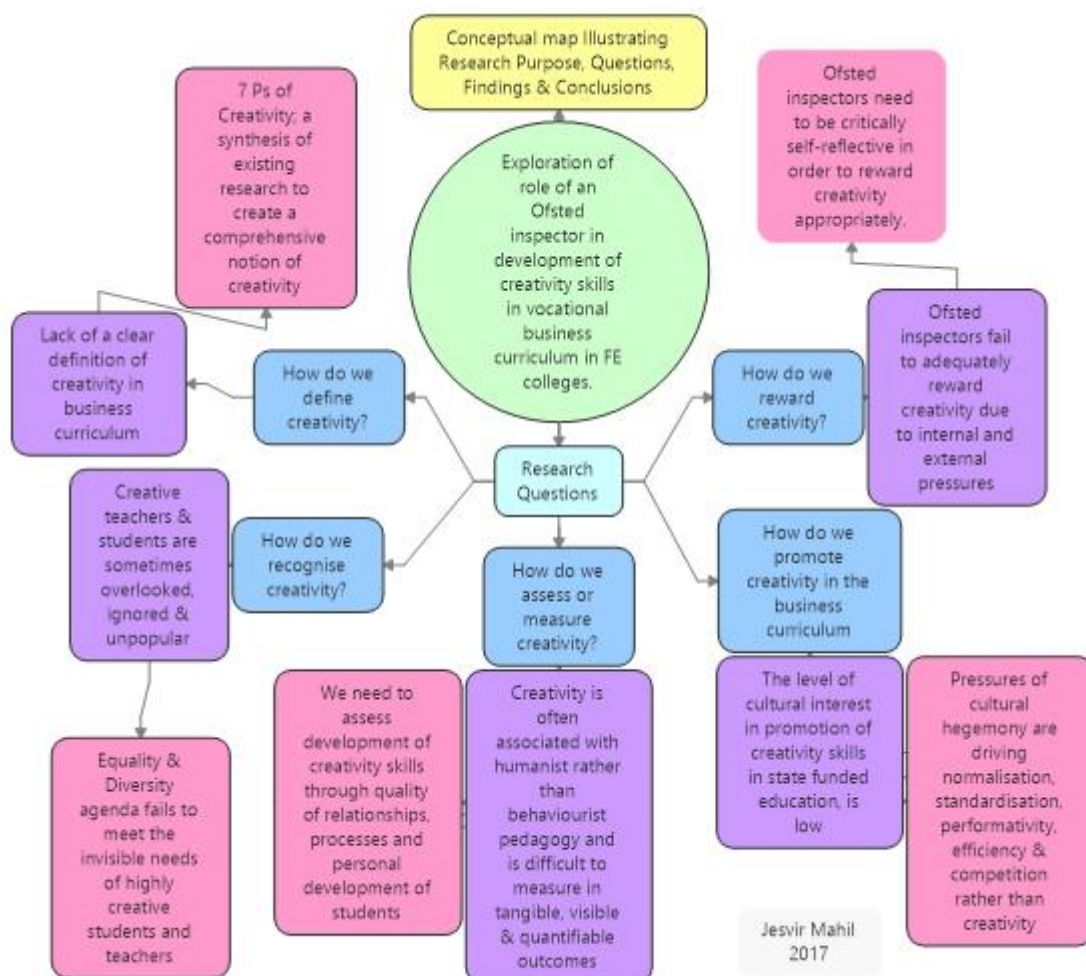
As noted in the methodology chapter on page 119, I set out to explore my role as an Ofsted inspector and to find answers to the following research questions:

1. How do we define creativity?
2. How do we recognise creativity?
3. How do we assess or measure creativity?
4. How do we reward creativity?
5. How do we promote development of creativity skills in the business curriculum?

Serving as an advance organizer, the conceptual map below (Figure 8.1) links the 5 research questions (blue boxes) to summaries of my findings (purple boxes) and conclusions (pink boxes)

**Figure 8.1:**

**Conceptual map linking research questions, findings and conclusions**



Details of my findings and conclusions are presented below in 5 sections to respond to each of these questions.

### Question 1: “How do we define creativity?”

### Finding 1: Lack of a clear definition of creativity

Data collected from 22 interviews with business owners, business teachers, business students and 329 Times Educational Supplement articles, in response to the question “What is creativity?” indicates a lack of clarity about the concept of creativity. The lack of understanding of what we specifically mean by creativity skills in the vocational Business Studies curriculum, as distinct from its meaning in the Arts and Sciences, makes it difficult to recognise and promote these skills in the business curriculum.

Table 8.1 ‘Findings 1’ below summarises 23 distinct responses indicating implicit theories (constructions of lay people, derived from their belief systems (Chan and Chan, 1999)) about creativity. Generally accepted academic definitions of creativity include the concepts of novelty and value in a specific context. However, the majority of responses below do not fully incorporate the concepts advocated by academics and a great deal of diversity in interpretation of “creativity” is apparent in the range of responses received. See appendix 5: *Findings1; definitions of creativity*, for the quotes from which these concepts have been extracted.



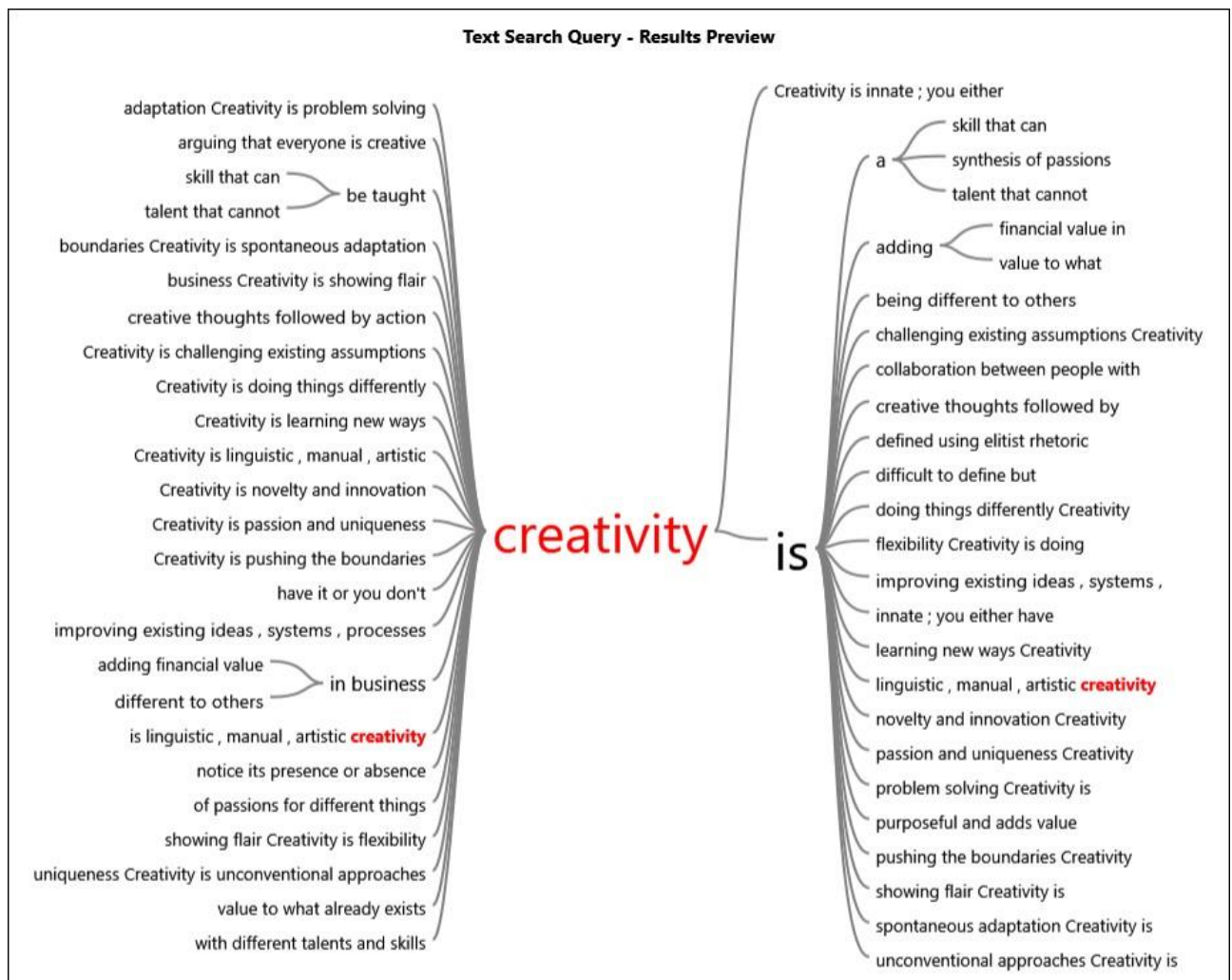
Table 8.1 'Findings1': "What is creativity?" compilation of implicit theories (Chan and Chan, 1999) about creativity, taken from 22 interviews with business owners, business teachers and business students and 329 TES articles.

Creativity is ...

1. creative thoughts followed by action
2. being different to others in business
3. improving or adding value to what already exists
4. collaboration between people with different talents and skills
5. a synthesis of passions for different things
6. linguistic, manual, artistic creativity
7. it is innate; you either have it or you don't
8. pushing the boundaries
9. spontaneous adaptation
10. problem solving
11. learning new ways
12. passion and uniqueness
13. unconventional approaches
14. novelty and innovation
15. needs to add financial value in business
16. shows flair
17. flexibility
18. doing things differently
19. challenging existing assumptions
20. can be taught
21. cannot be taught
22. is difficult to define but we can notice its presence or absence
23. must be purposeful and add value in relation to objective

Using NVivo software, I illustrated key sentences associated with a description of creativity in Figure 8.2 below:

**Figure 8.2: What is creativity?**



The wide range of responses in attempts to define creativity illustrated a lack of clarity and a diverse range of notions of the concept of creativity, some including the concept of value and others including the concept of originality, but these concepts were isolated rather than combined.

## Question 2: How do we recognise creativity?

### Finding 2: Perceptions of creative people

Assuming a democratic notion of creativity where each one of us is potentially creative on a continuum like intelligence, we are likely to have students who are more creative than the norm just as we are likely to have students who are more intelligent in various other domains (Gardner, 1999). Highly creative students in the vocational business curriculum are more likely to find themselves in learning environments where equality in terms of lifestyles and diversity in terms of thinking styles are \*not\* promoted well enough (only 39% of the 89 SSA 15 Ofsted reports that I analysed, reported good promotion of equality and diversity); they are more likely to be in a learning environment where stereotypical thinking is left unchallenged (three out of 89 SSA 15 reports stated that stereotypical thinking remained unchallenged compared with only one report stating that stereotypes were challenged); and their chances of being in a classroom environment where there is mutual respect and inclusion, are about half and half, based on the 89 Ofsted inspection reports that I analysed.

### Positive, neutral and negative characteristics of creative people

Using data from 22 interviews with business teachers, business students and business owners and also 329 TES articles, I extracted characteristics associated with highly creative people (see appendix 6: *Findings 2; Perceptions of Creative People* for source data) and I placed them into three rough categories which in my view, taking into account the context in which these descriptions occurred, seemed to suggest either a positive or negative connotation, or a connotation that may be deemed to be either positive or negative, which I labelled as 'neutral'

The table below shows the characteristics associated with creative people in the three broad categories: positive, neutral and negative.

Table 8.2 'Findings 2': Positive, neutral and negative characteristics associated with creative people

Positive Characteristics	Neutral Characteristics	Negative Characteristics
able to concentrate and persist always learning brave confidence to take risks confident confident enough to challenge courage to pursue their ideas in the face of opposition create mind blowing things do more than expected because they enjoy it don't allow others to sway them don't let obstacles get in their way genuinely passionate go the extra mile inspirational passionate about learning playfulness with ideas resourceful self-confident take initiative take risks think on their feet tolerance for ambiguity willing to accept new ideas willing to explore unlikely connections willing to go the extra mile without reward willing to learn willing to make mistakes willing to reinvent themselves work harder	artists rather than functionaries ask more questions attract attention challenging do not like authority do not prioritise completing paperwork do things differently to their peers don't like authority enjoy using technology follow their own path inquisitive mischief need freedom to work in loose boundaries persistent prefer to do things their own way pursue their visions push boundaries quiet stand out try different approaches	argue with the teacher attract jealousy can be negatively perceived can be stifled in the name of classroom management difficult to manage disregard for rules disruptive distracts others expected to perform highly get into trouble with teachers get low marks may fall into a downward spiral of failure more likely to get into trouble with their teachers non-compliant perceived to be lazy pressurised to do more than peers refuse to let an issue drop shout out impulsively stifled because they are perceived to be dominant threat to status quo unpopular unwilling to tick boxes withdrawn

### Three contrasting fictional profiles of highly creative students

Using my own teaching, inspecting and consulting experience combined with advocacy for the use of narratives and fiction in educational research provided by

educators such as Clough (2002) , I used the characteristics outlined in the table above, to create three fictional profiles of students that I have personally taught or students that I observed being taught by others, as follows:



Student Profile 1 displays many positive characteristics associated with creativity

This student is **inspirational** in class. They **love learning** and they are **genuinely passionate** about the subject. They are **highly confident** and **willing to take risks**. They **don't mind making mistakes**. They are easily able to **focus** and **concentrate**. They **ask a lot of questions** and **challenge the teacher respectfully**. They **resist peer pressure** and have the **courage to pursue their ideas** in the face of opposition, and they are **resourceful** in overcoming obstacles. They **think independently**, **take the initiative**, and **go the extra mile** to **produce much more than is expected of them**. They **work much harder than their peers to produce amazing outcomes** which makes them **stand out**.



Student Profile 2 displays characteristics that may or may not be associated with creativity

This student stands out and attracts attention by asking a lot of questions. They challenge the authority of the teacher and push boundaries to seek freedom to do things their own way. They are inquisitive and enjoy using technology

to learn but they don't like writing up their assignments to show evidence of this learning.



Student Profile 3 displays many negative characteristics associated with creativity

This student is **unpopular** with their peers and with their teachers. They **argue** with their teachers, and **disregard rules**, which gets them into **trouble**, sometimes leading to a **downward spiral of failure** as they are **stifled** in an attempt to prevent them from **disrupting** the class and **distracting** their peers. In some lessons, they **get low marks** for the work they produce because they are seen to be capable but **lazy**. In other lessons, where they seem to have a natural talent, they are **pressurised to do more than their peers** and to meet **exceedingly high teacher expectations** of them which attracts **resentment** and **jealousy** from their peers. Sometimes this student copes with the pressure, criticism and disapproval from their peers and teachers, by becoming **withdrawn**.

#### Commentary on fictional student profiles

The profiles I have outlined above are a reminder of the wide range of characteristics that may define a 'creative person' and the implication is that diversity may be the common denominator. If so, a highly creative student is likely to find their needs catered for in a classroom environment in which diversity is promoted well.

Promotion of 'Equality and Diversity' in education is supposedly a key priority in Ofsted inspections so I conducted a content analysis of the 89 SSA 15 Ofsted

inspection reports published during the time parameters of my study, to ascertain how well the diverse range of student needs are catered for, according to the reports.

Appendix 7: 'Findings 2a; shows that analysis of the "equality and diversity" paragraphs in the 89 Ofsted inspection reports for the business curriculum showed only one reference that mentioned teachers' awareness of needs of learners from diverse backgrounds:

*"Teachers understand the needs of learners from diverse and often disadvantaged backgrounds."*

This is the closest reference made to indicate an awareness on the part of the teacher to diverse needs of students.

There is only one reference to challenging stereotypical thinking:

*"Learners frequently share information and discuss the cultural differences between different groups of people and nationalities so that they can challenge stereotyping. "*

On the other hand, there are three references to not challenging stereotypical thinking as illustrated by the quotes below:

1. *"However, they do not adequately facilitate discussions among students to challenge stereotypical thinking further."*

2. *“However, in a few classes, teachers do not adequately facilitate discussions among students to challenge stereotyped images.”*
3. *“However, staff do not routinely incorporate the promotion of equality and diversity within lessons as opportunities naturally occur, or promote discussion to widen learners’ understanding and challenge stereotypical thinking.”*

Previous research shows that creative students (presumably the same principles would apply to creative teachers) tend to be unpopular with their peers (Getzels and Jackson, 1962) (Fontana, 1981: 135). To mitigate the negative impact of this unfavorable predisposition, creative teachers and students may thrive more easily in learning environments where there is mutual respect, trust, sensitivity and an inclusive learning environment. I found around 46 references (which represents about half of the reports analysed) to mutual trust and inclusion (see appendix 7: Findings 2a ‘Diversity’)

This raises the question: Why is mutual respect, trust, sensitivity and an inclusive learning environment **not** reported in around half of the Ofsted inspection reports?

Although it is not in the remit of this research to explore how well highly creative students are supported in the vocational business curriculum, the relatively low number of reports (only around half) in which mutual respect, trust, sensitivity and the creation of inclusive learning environments is reported on, raises some concerns from a teaching and also an inspection point of view.

As a previous Ofsted inspector, aware of the obligation to report on how well equality and diversity are promoted in the curriculum, I was curious to see whether the 89



Ofsted reports for the business curriculum demonstrated good or better promotion of equality and diversity. I found 35 references to confirm that equality and diversity are being promoted well which represents only 39% of the total business curriculum Ofsted inspection reports for the period September 2012 to August 2015.

Moreover, appendix 7: Findings 2a 'Promotion of Equality & Diversity', shows 25 references indicating that equality and diversity are not being promoted well enough which represents 28% of the total number of reports analysed. Equality and diversity not being promoted well enough in over a quarter of the business curricula across the country is an alarmingly high proportion and the experience of highly creative students within this domain (where equality and diversity are not promoted well enough) may be worth exploring further.

### Question 3: How do we assess or measure creativity?

#### Finding 3: Association of creativity with humanist rather than behaviorist pedagogy

Reflecting on my research data including interviews, articles and public engagement activities, I found that creativity is more likely to occur in classes where a humanist approach (Rogers, 1983) and methodology is being used. However, as an Ofsted inspector, I felt that the Ofsted inspection process clearly leans in favour of a behaviourist approach (Skinner, 1974) and methodology, expecting tangible outcomes as measures of success. During my role as an Ofsted inspector I felt implicit pressures to favour a behaviourist approach and teaching methodology, even though the overt Ofsted rhetoric claimed that the inspection process does not favour any particular approach or teaching methodology. In practice, I found it very difficult to find and record the evidence of learning required when a humanist approach or teaching style was being adopted. The inspection instruments, for example the Common Inspection Framework and the Handbook for Inspection are underpinned by a behaviourist philosophy, for example, the need to focus on outcomes rather than the process, and to quantify the quality of extrinsic rather than intrinsic feedback and evaluations. These are much easier to record, witness and measure with a behaviourist frame of reference rather than a humanist frame of reference.

As discussed earlier (Finding 1) there is not an apparent, clear definition of creativity which is shared amongst educators, including Ofsted inspectors and vocational business studies students. However, as with the concept of quality, creativity can be conspicuous both through its presence and its absence. Even though we may not be able to clearly define what we mean by “quality”, we can usually pick up an object and intuitively feel its inherent level of quality. Similarly, as an experienced teacher

and Ofsted inspector, and moreover, as someone who proactively seeks creativity, I can walk into a class and instinctively feel whether creativity is present or not. My assumption is that many teachers and inspectors, like myself, can intuitively ascertain the presence or absence of creativity although we may each label it very differently.

Using my teaching, consulting and inspecting experience, I analysed my research data from interviews, Ofsted reports and TES articles, to create two broad scenarios; one in which I am likely to see the occurrence of creativity; one in which I am unlikely to discover examples of creativity. These two scenarios (which I have created through a synthesis of my data from multiple sources listed above) are contrasted in the table below:

**Table 8.3 ‘Findings 3’: Two scenarios contrasting the likelihood of creativity occurring and being witnessed in a lesson**

	<b>Scenario 1: Creativity is likely to occur</b>	<b>Scenario 2: Creativity is unlikely to be seen</b>
<b>Atmosphere</b>	Expectant of creativity likely to occur, you may imagine walking into a classroom where there is a <b>high level of energy</b> and a “ <b>buzz</b> ” which seems to be <b>purposeful</b> and in tune. Each student demonstrates an <b>alert body language</b> and <b>excitement in their tone of voice</b> suggesting that they are <b>enjoying</b> themselves. Despite the loud volume of verbal communication, you experience an atmosphere of <b>calmness</b> and <b>productivity</b> .	Imagine walking into a classroom where there is a <b>stagnant energy</b> . The body language of students demonstrates they are <b>bored</b> and <b>distracted</b> . The communication you hear, between the teacher, students and amongst the students, expresses <b>anxiety, frustration</b> and <b>lack of desire</b> to be in the space of this classroom.
<b>Relationships</b>	There is a <b>high level of trust</b> between teacher and students and amongst the students too. Students are <b>confident and willing to make mistakes</b> and to correct these mistakes with support from their peers and/or their teacher	Relationships between the teacher and students is strained. Students express <b>mistrust</b> in their teacher’s level of competence and ability to teach them. Students <b>lack confidence</b> in their own ability to learn independently. They want the teacher to teach them everything they need to know about the subject and they <b>do not believe they will learn by doing their own research and making mistakes</b> . They are offended if their <b>mistakes are highlighted</b> and corrected by their peers. They are <b>unwilling to support</b> their peers.
<b>Power and Control</b>	The teacher is comfortable using a variety of teaching approaches and methodologies with different levels of freedom and control given to students. Students are willing to <b>take responsibility for their own learning</b> and they easily adapt to parts of the lesson where they have a lot <b>more freedom</b> . All students feel <b>safe and</b>	The teacher consistently uses a teaching approach which allows them a <b>high degree of control</b> to manage the students with <b>least effort</b> . They use a very <b>narrow range of teaching strategies</b> that they have tried and tested to gain <b>maximum teacher control</b> . Students have very <b>limited freedom of choice</b> and they <b>rely heavily on the teacher</b> for

	<b>supported</b> by the teacher and by their peers	defining what they need to learn and how they need to learn it.
<b>Teaching methodology</b>	The teacher uses a <b>student-centred</b> approach with <b>personalisation</b> of the course content so that it is <b>relevant</b> and <b>useful</b> to the learners. She <b>contextualises</b> development of knowledge and skills by drawing on their <b>cultural values, interests and attitudes</b> ; their <b>previous work experiences</b> and <b>future career aspirations</b> so that the knowledge they learn is <b>up to date, meaningful</b> and <b>inspirational</b> to them. She allows students a <b>high level of choice</b> in how they participate to ensure their <b>personal learning strategies are optimised</b> with sufficient time for individual, <b>quiet self-reflection</b> as well as <b>interactive questioning and related discussions in pairs, small groups and large groups</b> , in an attempt to <b>meet the diverse range of student needs</b> and to encourage both <b>independence</b> and <b>collaboration</b> .	The teacher uses a behaviourist approach and methodology, using stimulus, response, reinforcement techniques. The <b>course material is generic</b> and presented by the teacher, in <b>small, easily digestible chunks</b> which the <b>students absorb without asking questions</b> . There is <b>hardly any interaction between the students</b> .
<b>Evidence of learning</b>	Students <b>are appropriately challenged</b> so that they learn knowledge that is new to them and further develop their skills. <b>Evidence of their learning</b> is seen, for example, in the <b>questions they ask</b> , the <b>presentations they make</b> and their ability to <b>inspire</b> and <b>support their peers</b> to increase their awareness and understanding of the new concepts.	Students complete a set of <b>pre-defined tasks to demonstrate their learning</b> . There is <b>very little room for adaptation or variation of the tasks and responses required</b> .
<b>Practical extra-</b>	Real-life <b>work experience, field trips, visits, successful guest speakers</b> and <b>networking</b> events support the	The course is <b>not supported with extra-curricular activities</b> such as work experience, visits and guest

<b>curricular activities to support classroom theory</b>	<b>experiential and practical knowledge and skills development</b> of students, and as a result, they are able to <b>relate classroom theory to business practice</b> very well. <b>Students organise and take part in events</b> that involve their local community, for example <b>fund-raising for charities</b> or taking part in <b>national and international competitions</b> . They <b>produce valuable marketing and business tools</b> , for example posters, designs and high tech, multimedia web sites.	speakers. Students do <b>role-plays and simulations</b> in class instead of participating in real life activities in the local community. They find it <b>difficult to relate theory to practice</b> and <b>do not feel motivated to make an effort to create useful, valuable products</b> .
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Trained and experienced contemporary teachers may identify the first scenario, where he or she is likely to see creativity, as being associated with a humanistic approach based on the well-known educational ideology arising from humanist psychologists such as Rogers (1983) and the second scenario is most likely to be associated with a behaviourist approach, following the learning theories proposed by famous behaviourists such as Thorndike (1906) and Skinner (1974).

Even though creativity may often occur in scenario 1, illustrated above, it is often overlooked due to the lack of training and resources available for evaluating the value of relationships, processes and invisible learning which may be deep and highly creative. Evidence based learning with tangible outcomes tend to be favoured over development of creativity skills.

#### Question 4: How do we reward creativity?

##### Finding 4: Ofsted inspectors fail to adequately reward creativity

###### Internal pressures that distort judgments made by Ofsted inspectors

During my involvement with Ofsted from 2007 to 2015, I had always looked for creativity as an essential employability skill in the business environment and it was only through my research that I discovered that there was not a specific expectation for Ofsted inspectors to be looking for evidence of development of creativity skills in the business curriculum. In order to appropriately reward creativity, as Ofsted inspectors, we need to first of all realise the importance of creativity as a useful employability skill in the business environment, be aware of its presence and have the appropriate tools to measure its value which may be qualitative rather than quantitative. It requires critical self-reflection to avoid the internal and external pressures that may distort our perceptions.

Therefore, to probe more deeply into the assumptions that led me to associate development of creativity skills with a humanist pedagogy (Finding 3), I decided to use the strategy of self-reflection from multiple perspectives (e.g. student, teacher, inspector) which I learned during my coaching training and used frequently when coaching managers and teachers in Further Education to improve the learning experience for their students. Coaches, actors and mediators are usually highly skilled in using this strategy, which simply stated, involves seeing an issue, event or story from various perspectives by adopting the position of different proponents in the relevant context.

Although self-reflection from multiple perspectives usually entails looking at issues from the viewpoints of others, I was curious to self-reflect from my own perspective

based on three distinct roles in which I have many years of personal experience: my role as a student; a teacher and an inspector.

Self-reflection on my role as a teacher, inspector and student, was stimulated with reference to the books I used while in training to be a teacher in the early 80s and then during my second PGCE course in 2007. These books, for example, (Brandes and Ginnis, 1986, Fontana, 1981, Holt, 1965) informed my early teaching practice and I remained heavily influenced by a handful of the leading advocates of three main teaching and learning approaches: behaviourism; cognitivism; humanism. As an Ofsted Inspector, I naturally observed lessons and made judgements about the quality of teaching and learning, through the lens of these three approaches which I had practiced using for three decades. Although I had previously reflected on the value of behaviourist, cognitive and humanist pedagogy from my perspective as a teacher, I had never previously had reason to reflect on these pedagogies from my perspective as a student or my perspective as an inspector.

The systems thinking framework encourages us to see events in circular rather than linear relationships. Using this principle, I found it useful and interesting to see the development of my experience in three roles: as a teacher, inspector and also as a student on numerous courses since I graduated with a degree in psychology in 1982.

The behaviourist, cognitive and humanist ideology I outline through selected quotes in Table 'Findings 4' below, underpinned my training as a teacher and consequently informed my judgments as an Ofsted inspector. Being a trained inspector has in turn influenced my experience as a student, forming a reinforcing feedback loop as explained in chapter 1, using systems thinking as the conceptual framework. It is important to note that I started my teaching career in 1983 committed to being a



“humanist” teacher based on what I had learnt about the work of Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and Erik Erikson as part of my psychology degree and PGCE. Over 30 years later, I realise that despite the fact I still label myself as a “humanist teacher”, my reflections below illustrate that I am much more of a pragmatic behaviourist.

I was surprised to find that even though I have prided myself on being a “humanist” teacher throughout my career, it is not the teaching approach I prefer when I am a student. As a student, I most definitely prefer the behaviourist approach as I feel it gives me most value for time and financial resources I invest in attending the particular course of study. I echo Sotto (1994) in wondering why so many of us teach in ways that we hate to be at the receiving end of as students ourselves.

The concepts I have summarised below are not meant to epitomise excellence in education or learning. I have only included the concepts that I used most frequently in my own career and I have omitted those that I personally felt uninspired to draw upon in my teaching career even though I am aware there are many tools and techniques that other teachers use effectively.

There are gaps of course in my personal teaching repertoire. I am not a perfect teacher. I have deliberately left these gaps in place to highlight the fact that as an Ofsted inspector, we are only likely to perceive what fits in with our existing schemata, as explained by Ausubel, Novak et al. (1978). In other words, during my Ofsted inspections, it is highly likely I will have missed or overlooked evidence of both good or poor teaching practice that was not in my realm of prior teaching and learning experience. My reflections, summarised below, from the perspective of a teacher, inspector and as a student, illuminate the discrepancies, the tensions and

the undercurrents of hegemonic discourse (Puwar, 2004, Gramsci, 1999, Fairclough, 2001) that distorted my perceptions regardless of my commitment to fairness and impartiality in making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning that I observed.

**Table 8.4 ‘Finding 4’: Reflections on my ideological values and influences from a teacher, inspector and student perspective (please see appendix 2 for full list of pedagogical quotes that triggered my critical self-reflections below)**

<b>Purpose of education</b>		
<b>Ideology: Behaviorism</b> “The word Education is used with many meanings, but in all its usages it refers to <i>changes</i> . No one is educated who stays just as he was. We do not educate anybody if we do nothing that makes any difference or change in anybody. (Thorndike, 1906: 1)		
<b>As a teacher</b> , during my own lesson preparations I always asked myself “What difference will this lesson make to my students?”	<b>As an inspector</b> , I looked for evidence that students were learning knowledge and developing skills that were likely to change their internal thoughts and external behaviour in a beneficial way.	<b>As a student</b> , the MBA course I did from 1996 to 1999 changed my behaviour, my perceptions and my thoughts. In completing the course, I saw the world of business in a new light and I changed my career path from teaching ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) to teaching business studies instead.
<b>Purpose of education</b>		
<b>Ideology: Cognitivism</b> “To some individuals the function of education is to transmit the ideology of the culture and a core body of knowledge and intellectual skills. To others education is primarily concerned with the optimal development of potentiality for growth and achievement – not only with respect to cognitive abilities but also with respect to personality goals and adjustment. “ (Ausubel et al., 1978: 17)		
<b>As a teacher</b> , I believed that the purpose of education is primarily for ‘optimal development of potentiality for growth and achievement, with respect to cognitive abilities and personality goals’.	<b>As an inspector</b> , I was disappointed in lessons that were merely transmitting the current ideology of the culture, for example a knee-jerk response to terrorism in the form of a heightened level of surveillance advocated by the Government (2011) through its “Prevent Strategy”. Being a ‘corporate agent’ of the government, I felt unable to share my personal	<b>As a student</b> , I had a deep interest in history, but as a 14-year-old in a Secondary school in England, I consciously decided not to choose History as one of my GCSE options because I resented the ideological bias around the way the impact of colonialism in India had been presented to me in the previous years. The British history curriculum was so overtly and

	views regarding this instrument of surveillance and ideology, in case of being misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrepresented in a tense environment which the inspection process perforce created.	explicitly biased ideologically that even as a young, naive teenager, I felt its oppressive force. As an adult student, I have always valued education that has allowed me to grow and develop rather than feel subservient. The latter is the antithesis of education which, in my view, is meant to empower.
<b>Purpose of education</b>		
<p><b>Ideology: Humanism</b></p> <p>“... I believe that at an unconscious or unverbaised level, there is this desire for the products of our schools to be obedient, good followers, willing to be led. Those who are independent, who think for themselves tend to “rock the boat”. It is easier to manage an industry or an army with men and women who have learned to conform to the rules.” (Rogers, 1983: 306)</p> <p>“I have heard scientists at leading schools of science and scholars in leading universities, arguing that it is absurd to try to encourage all students to be creative – we need hosts of mediocre technicians and workers, and if a few creative scientists and artists and leaders emerge, that will be enough. That may be enough for them. It may be enough to suit you. I want to go on record as saying it is <i>not</i> enough to suit me. When I realise the incredible potential in the ordinary student, I want to try to release it. We are working hard to release incredible energy in the atom and the nucleus of the atom. If we do not devote equal energy – yes, and equal money – to the release of the potential of the individual person then the enormous discrepancy between our level of physical energy resources and human energy resources will doom us to a deserved and universal destruction.” (Rogers, 1983: 132)</p> <p>“Moreover, we cannot possibly judge what knowledge will be most needed forty, or twenty, or even ten years from now.” “Since we can’t know what knowledge will be most needed in the future, it is senseless to try to teach it in advance. Instead, we should try to turn out people who love learning so much and learn so well that they will be able to learn whatever needs to be learned.” (Holt, 1965: 173)</p>		
<b>As a teacher</b> , I preferred students who were obedient and easy to manage. Even though I favour a humanist approach and I am	<b>As an inspector</b> , I often saw students’ acquiescence of a teacher’s commands as a sign of respect and their tacit obedience	<b>As a student</b> , I have often ‘rocked the boat’ when I felt I knew more than the teacher. To my surprise, my behaviour, in such situations, has

<p>aware that Rogers was advocating independence and non-conformity, I have to admit that when I wanted my students to work independently, the underlying, and much more powerful command was expecting them to be <u>obedient</u> in doing so. Blinded by my ideological desire to enable students to 'think for themselves', I overlooked the needs of students who hated working independently and thinking for themselves; who needed much more support &amp; guidance than I was willing to offer them.</p>	<p>indicated that things were going as planned. When there were too many students doing their own thing and not attentively listening to the teacher, I did not conclude that perhaps a humanist teaching approach was being taken whereby the free thinking, non-conformist behaviour of the students was to be applauded rather than dismissed as evidence of poor teacher control and management.</p>	<p>been perceived to be aggressive rather than assertive or non-conformist which may be due to my embodiment. The somatic norm associated with my embodiment is to be quiet, gentle and meek and any deviation from this norm may be perceived to be more aggressive than it is within the wider cultural context, merely because it is unexpected. In order to avoid punishment such as being asked to leave the course, I have needed to quickly fall back into an inauthentic, subservient role, which does not empower me to grow or sharpen my skills, but in fitting the somatic norm, it enables me to survive in a hostile learning environment (Puwar, 2004).</p>
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### Motivation

#### **Ideology: Humanism**

"The extent to which learners are motivated to learn depends to a considerable degree on factors which lie outside the classroom, and teachers have no influence on these. Nor can they motivate a person who has lost all motivation to learn. What a teacher can do is to try to create learning situations which are intrinsically rewarding, and a climate of learning which is friendly and supportive. When a teacher has managed to do these things, and learners still don't want to learn, why then there isn't much else a teacher can do. Teachers are not magicians. As for using extrinsic rewards, we have seen that they offer a short-term solution with many long-term costs – in as well as out of school." (Sotto, 1994: 41)

"... living creatures are naturally active and motivated to learn when they find themselves in an environment which enables activity and learning to take place. If that is roughly correct, it again suggests that teachers need not be concerned with motivating their learners. The problem appears to be to find a way of teaching which does not inhibit motivation; and to find a way of teaching which is in line with the motivation already present in the learners." (Sotto, 1994: 25)

“On the debit side, competition may inhibit learning by arousing excessive threat and inducing undue anxiety (Shaw, 1958). When carried to unwholesome extremes, it fosters feelings of inadequacy in less able children, encourages them to withdraw from activities in which they do not excel, and unduly depresses their status in the group.” (Ausubel et al., 1978: 471)

**As a teacher,** I favoured the humanistic propensity toward creating a friendly and supportive learning environment in which my students felt supported, safe and confident enough to make mistakes. I attempted to motivate my students by finding out their interests and basing my lesson examples and activities, around these interests. Contrary to the ideology of co-operation embraced by the humanist approach, I often tried to motivate my students through competitions and I encouraged a competitive spirit that would motivate them to sharpen their skills. Unfortunately, it was only when I stopped teaching and began to observe lessons as an inspector or as an education consultant that I realised the potential damage of these competitions to the self-esteem of the students who never won despite their constant striving.

**As an inspector,** it was often impossible to discern whether students were motivated intrinsically or extrinsically during the space of a lesson observation spanning less than an hour. It was also difficult to predict whether the consequences of any apparent motivation expressed on the part of the student would endure or wear off. The comments I made about motivation were usually generic, for example, “students are highly motivated to....” which may well have been just another way of saying that they were obedient, compliant and respectful towards the wishes of the teacher.

**As a student,** I have retained my curiosity and deep desire to learn and to feel inspired. Nevertheless, even as an adult, I have fallen asleep in seminars and lectures, despite making great attempts to stay awake and learn something new. The teachers who have noticed me falling asleep may falsely assume that I am just not motivated but indeed I am. Unfortunately, in such situations, they have usually failed to empathise with my motivation, perhaps because they have simply not asked or acknowledged my reason for making the effort to be there

## Personalisation

### Ideology: Humanism

“One factor that should decide what children ought to learn and do is adaptation to the intellectual and practical needs which the children can then and there appreciate; and this factor is also a chief determinant of their interests.” (Thorndike, 1906: 55)

“The real facts are that work at which one utterly fails, with which one makes no headway, is commonly uninteresting, that the same thing becomes easier to an individual when attacked with interest, and that to any individual those lines of work for which he possesses capacity are commonly interesting.” (Thorndike, 1906: 56)

“What anyone becomes by education depends upon what he is by nature. Teaching is the utilization of natural tendencies for ideal ends.” (Thorndike, 1906: 34)

“The worst error of teachers with respect to individual differences is to neglect them, to form one set of fixed habits for dealing with all children, to teach ‘the child’ instead of countless different living individuals. To realize the varieties of human nature, the nature and amount of mental differences, is to be protected against many fallacies of teaching.” (Thorndike, 1906: 84)

“... a humanistic approach can stimulate initiative, creativity and independent thinking which allows students to individualise the learning and apply it to their own situations.” (Reece and Walker, 2007: 95)

**As a teacher;** I learnt to make good use of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) which the students created with their own personal goals and aspirations in relation to their course. We received a great deal of training to ensure evidence of ‘Personalisation’ and ‘Differentiation’ in our lesson preparation and delivery to ensure that the individual needs of each one of our students was being met. I enjoyed the role of coach and facilitator in enabling

**As an inspector;** I had to make judgements about how well the ILPs were being documented and practically utilised. More often than not, the ILP documents were an act of compliance without evidence of personalisation in the course. It was as though the ILPs were completed at the start of the course, and even if they were updated at regular intervals, the goals were generic, such as “complete my assignments to Distinction level” which

**As a student,** I have never experienced a course that I believe was ‘personalised’ to meet my individual needs. During my compulsory school education, from 1968 to 1977, ‘personalisation’ or ‘differentiation’ were not part of the mainstream discourse in teaching methodology. As an adult, studying for my various degrees and postgraduate qualifications, even though I have always submitted a rationale for wishing to be accepted

students to identity their personal goals and formulate appropriate strategies to achieve these as they progressed on their course of study.	merely informed the teacher of the students' level of aspiration.	on to the course, my declared aspirations have rarely, if ever, been acknowledged by the teachers, nor have they shaped the design of the lessons or the curriculum, except perhaps for freedom of choice in assignment topics and the opportunity to share my interests and aspirations during small group discussions.
<b>Individual differences</b>		
<p><b>Ideology: Behaviorism</b>  “A person is not an originating agent; he is a locus, a point at which many genetic and environmental conditions come together in a joint effect. As such, he remains unquestionably unique. No one else (unless he has an identical twin) has his genetic endowment, and without exception no one else has his personal history. Hence no one else will behave in precisely the same way. We refer to the fact that there is no one like him as a person when we speak of his identity.” (Skinner, 1974: 167)</p> <p><b>Ideology: Humanism</b>  “‘There is a hegemonic discourse which propounds that all people are plainly treated as ‘individuals’. A disavowal of embodiment makes it very difficult for those who are situated as different from the centre to actually name their difference. Admitting difference in an organisation which asserts that everybody is the same and that standards are neutral is more than a troublesome task.” (Puwar, 2004: 154)</p> <p>“Certainly those outsiders who do not discuss their difference and just try to blend in with the norm are more likely to be accepted and to succeed. As a strategy of survival, then, they might judge it more pragmatic to remain silent and to concentrate on the job.”  (Puwar, 2004: 154)</p>		
<b>As a teacher</b> , in my early career, I didn't have the experience or the skills to prepare lessons based in individual differences between my students. I thought of each class as a whole and delivered lessons	<b>As an inspector</b> , commencing my initial training in 2007, I was advised to judge the quality of lessons based on how much learning the students had accomplished almost regardless of how well	<b>As a student</b> , I have nearly always been a member of the “minority” and learnt to live with the fact that majority rules and therefore my needs would only be met when the majority had been satisfied. The fact that I



<p>aimed at the majority. It was only when we kept receiving training on “differentiation” which was a popular concept, certainly in FE Colleges in the 90s, I learnt to prepare lessons that would not neglect those who required support while challenging those who found the lesson content too easy. I admit that before the popularisation of “differentiation” I tended to prioritise those who required more challenge, partly because they were the ones most likely to complain, and I allowed the strugglers to fend for themselves to a large extent, hoping they would catch up with more home study just as I had done through most of my own learning experience.</p>	<p>the teacher had taught. I learnt to profess the official Ofsted claim, that in our role as inspectors, we were more interested in the students’ experience rather than the performance of the teacher. Wishing to see that each student’s needs were being met, I always looked for students that were invisible to the teacher; students who seemed to be quietly, obediently, amiably, getting on with the tasks but when I asked them a relevant question, their lack of understanding about what they were learning or how that particular knowledge was in any shape or form useful in their lives, was sadly apparent</p>	<p>was a minority, not just because of my racial, religious and cultural background, but also because of my invisible challenges such as low self-esteem, partial deafness and dyslexia, I did not expect teachers to be sensitive enough to even detect my needs let alone attempt to design their lessons so that I would excel. To date, in almost 50 years of experience in education in England, I cannot recall any teacher or trainer who acknowledged my individual differences or who made an attempt to remark on <i>how</i> I was learning. There was a lecturer on my MBA course who advised me not to choose the weakest members in the class to do group assignments with, suggesting that I would excel if I chose to work with the brightest students instead. I remember reflecting on his comment and wondering if he had seen through my low self-esteem which made me avoid the brightest students and to seek out the strugglers in whose company I felt more accepted. I used to wish that the MBA teachers would support us all to excel by putting us in effectively-designed groups, since our group assignments formed a</p>
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		large part of our final grades, but none of them knew us well enough to do so, so they bluffed, abdicating responsibility for our learning, saying they were allowing us the opportunity to choose our own groups, a freedom of choice that most of us did not freely choose.
<b>Classroom environment</b>		
<p><b>Ideology: Behaviorism</b></p> <p>“The aim of the teacher is to produce desirable and prevent undesirable changes in human beings by producing and preventing certain responses. The means at the disposal of the teacher are the stimuli which can be brought to bear upon the pupil, - the teacher’s words, gestures and appearance, the condition and appliances of the school room, the books to be used and objects to be seen, and so on through a long list of the things and events which the teacher can control. The responses of the pupil are all the infinite variety of thoughts and feelings and bodily movements occurring in all their possible connections.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Thorndike, 1906: 7)</p> <p><b>Ideology: Cognitivism</b></p> <p>“Well, all of this again just tells us that any organism needs a rich and stimulating environment in order for its natural capacities to emerge. Again, to go back to the image of teaching being like allowing a flower to grow well, if you don’t give the flower water it’s not going to grow to be a flower. It’s not learning from the water to be a flower – if it was a tree, it would use the same water to grow to be a tree. I think much of the same kind of things happens in human development, including the development of language and thought.” (Chomsky, 1988: 197)</p>		
<b>As a teacher</b> , I agreed with the stimulus – response; cause and effect relationship between the classroom environment and students’ behaviour, so I worked hard in creating a rich learning environment through seating arrangements and attractive handouts and interesting work on the walls	<b>As an inspector</b> ; I looked for cause and effect (stimulus-response) relationships to judge the quality of teaching. During my feedback to the teacher I often said “I noticed you did X ....and they responded with Y.....” and I commented on the impact of the seating arrangement and always praised the presence of	<b>As a student</b> , I hardly ever notice what is on classroom walls. The information I see is only relevant to a very few students (usually those that put the information up). I have never been in a classroom which I considered to be my personal space in any way and I cannot recall anything on the classroom walls ever

	silent stimuli on the classroom walls, such as glossaries or work completed in earlier sessions.	making any difference whatsoever to my learning. As for other aspects of the learning environment, for example the way a teacher is dressed, have on occasion made a difference to my learning, for example when a corporate trainer was invited to facilitate a workshop at the college in which I worked and I was annoyed that she was dressed for the beach instead of a classroom environment. I have been conditioned to expect what I have learnt to be professionally appropriate in terms of attire, language used and above all, professional quality in learning materials used.
<p><b>Ideology: Humanism</b></p> <p>“We adults destroy most of the intellectual and creative capacity of children by the things we do to them or make them do. We destroy this capacity above all by making them afraid, afraid of not doing what other people want, of not pleasing, of making mistakes, of failing, of being <i>wrong</i>. Thus we make them afraid to gamble, afraid to experiment, afraid to try the difficult and the unknown.” (Holt, 1965: 165)</p> <p>“ Students are encouraged to participate fully in, and take responsibility for, their own learning; each individual is valued and trusted.” (Brandes and Ginnis, 1986: 3)</p> <p>“Our task as teachers is to create an environment where students feel part of a group and feel that their contribution has worth.” (Reece and Walker, 2007: 86)</p>		
<b>As a teacher</b> , I was highly inspired by a book called “How Children Fail” (Holt, 1965) which was one of the course textbooks on my psychology degree	<b>As an inspector</b> , I expected the classroom atmosphere to be pleasant and conducive to learning; this was considered to be the ‘norm’ and therefore not	<b>As a student</b> , the first few years of my schooling in England were the most fearful. My family migrated to England from the Panjab in 1968 when I was 6

<p>course. The insights and conclusions drawn by Holt (1965) from his lesson observations and reflections left me with a deep commitment to ensuring that I did not prevent my students from learning effectively, by contributing to their fear, which Holt passionately argued, was one of the main underlying reasons for the failure of so many students. Seeing my students afraid was always a sign I was pushing them too hard, for example doing presentations in front of a class, and with experience I learnt to introduce challenges gradually, at a pace that was not overwhelmingly causing fear and anxiety.</p>	<p>even worth mentioning unless the atmosphere was overtly creating anxiety and fear which inhibited learning. During my experience as an inspector, I never witnessed students expressing fear and anxiety in class. Nevertheless, I saw students being withdrawn and disinterested which may have been a coping strategy for their internal fear and anxiety.</p>	<p>years old. I began my first year of primary school, at a great disadvantage, not speaking a word of English. For the whole first year at school, I did not speak a word of English in class; I remained totally mute even though I had learnt to speak the language quite fluently, like 6 year olds do, within the first few months of listening to and absorbing the language all around me. I was placed in class 1C which everyone understood to be the “dunces class” because it was the class where children with behavioural issues, including linguistic issues such as mine, were placed. My inability to speak the language is not what caused my fear and anxiety; it was my inability to defend myself from the bullying and exploitation by some of my very disturbed 6-year-old classmates; the fact that my teachers were all oblivious to this is what caused my fear and anxiety and it was only a stroke of luck that pulled me out of the dysfunctional, fearful learning environment in which I clearly did not belong and could not thrive.</p>
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## Power relations

### **Ideology: Behaviourism**

“People have suffered so long and so painfully from the controls imposed upon them that it is easy to understand why they so bitterly oppose any form of control.” (Skinner, 1974: 200)

“We must surely begin with the fact that human behaviour is always controlled. “Man is born free”, said Rousseau, “and is everywhere in chains,” but no one is less free than a newborn child, nor will he come free as he grows older. His only hope is that he will come under the control of a natural and social environment in which he will make the most of his genetic endowment and in doing so most successfully pursue happiness.” (Skinner, 1974: 200)

### **Ideology: Humanism**

“...teachers are fearful of sharing power with their students. It seems too risky. It is easier to stay with the conventional authority structure – the hierarchical order – which is so prevalent in our society.” (Rogers, 1983: 306)

“Climate: HMI have very sensitive antennae for the quality of relationships in school, between pupil and pupil, teacher and teacher, as well as between teacher and class. They view a supportive and reassuring climate of good order as significant, not only for the personal and social education of the pupils, but for the delivery of an effective curriculum.”  
(Wilson, 1988: 33)

“There is another kind of power in the classroom – that of creative potential. This is not related to a job or status, but is inherent in every human being. Teachers and students alike possess it. In a traditional setting, this power is released only in a limited way, through strict, predetermined channels, and this may breed frustration and encourage students to create a whole range of cunning, subversive activities which are the cause of so much classroom confrontation. In the worst kind of didactic teaching, there is deliberate suppression of these creative powers which may be seen as a threat to the central task of ‘learning’. Teachers who operate within a traditional framework may feel that their own creativity is being stifled too as they sit down to mark yet another set of books.”  
(Brandes and Ginnis, 1986: 29)

**As a teacher,** my preferred teaching style was when I was able to share power with mature students who were willing to take responsibility for their own learning; for the safety of their peers, and with the confidence to take initiative. However,

**As an inspector;** I understood, from my own teaching experience, the need for different power relationships between the teachers and the students based on the stage in the lesson, the number of weeks into the

**As a student,** I have always felt more confident and valued by teachers who trust me in sharing power in the classroom environment. As a nine-year-old in primary school, I remember never being the one chosen by the teacher to share their

when I was teaching 16 to 19 year olds, often in the same class, I felt that I needed to maintain power and to be a willing participant in the power struggles that ensued, in order to make sure that the students in my care felt safe and guided.	course, and the type of learning activity involved.	power, by, for example, handing out the children's exercise books. I envied the children selected to express these gestures of authority and leadership.
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### Preventing Bullying

#### **Ideology: Behaviorism**

"Education should at times stimulate and favour inborn tendencies, at times inhibit them, and, most frequently of all, direct and guide them. The capacity for active thought and reasoning, for instance, needs encouragement; the teasing and bullying instinct must be inhibited; the inborn tendencies to curiosity and sympathy must be directed into useful channels and transformed into habits of intelligent thinking or sensible and noble action" (Thorndike, 1906: 21)

**As a teacher,** teaching young children and teenagers, I understood my responsibility in preventing bullying and I took the behaviourist approach of reward and punishment in doing so (I rewarded good behaviour with praise and friendliness and punished aggressive or bullying behaviour with a harsh tone of voice, severe looks, castigation and if necessary referral of the student to my manager)

**As an inspector,** I never directly witnessed bullying in the classroom. The mere presence of an external authority may have served to inhibit this tendency. In order to ascertain whether bullying was an issue in class, I always asked students about the level of respect and support from their peers and teachers. There were several cases where it seemed that the teacher was bullying their student through neglect. Absence of attention by a teacher can indeed be intimidating.

**As a student,** I have at times been bullied and intimidated through lack of attention. Challenging this has cost me time and financial resources. For example, I paid for a TEFL course at International House in 1986 and the tutor who was to decide whether I passed or failed the course, for a mysterious reason that I labelled racism but could not prove, totally ignored me for the whole duration of the course. Fortunately for me, one of the lessons in which he was ignoring me was observed by an external consultant, the Head of TEFL from Waltham Forest College. During this lesson, her eyes met mine, acknowledging that she understood the power dynamics at play and I knew she could

		<p>empathise with how I felt. When the tutor at International House stated I had failed the TEFL course, I immediately wrote to the teacher trainer consultant from Waltham Forest College asking if I could enrol to retake the TEFL course there. To remind her who I was, I said "I am the student who was being totally ignored when you came to observe the lesson at International House". She offered me a place; I passed the course with flying colours and eventually became an outstanding teacher. Racism takes its toll but the impact does not have to leave an indelible mark.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Unconscious biases</b></p>		
<p><b>Ideology: Behaviorism</b></p> <p>"What behaviourism rejects is the unconscious as an agent, and of course it rejects the conscious mind as an agent, too." (Skinner, 1974: 154)</p> <p>"....what happens when women and racialized minorities take up 'privileged' positions which have not been 'reserved' for them, for which, they are not, in short, the somatic form." (Puwar, 2004: 1)</p> <p>"Some bodies are deemed as having the right to belong, while others are marked out as trespassers, who are, in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically and conceptually), circumscribed as being 'out of place'. Not being the somatic norm, they are space invaders." (Puwar, 2004: 8)</p>		
<p><b>As a teacher,</b> I agreed with Freudian theories about the power of the</p>	<p><b>As an inspector,</b> I noticed the unconscious biases that students and</p>	<p><b>As a student,</b> I am convinced that many teachers ignore me</p>

<p>unconscious, rejected by behaviourism. This meant that I was always conscious of my unconscious biases towards students who are similar to me, racially, politically and socially, and my biases against students that did not appeal to me for various reasons. I am convinced that unconsciously I favoured some students with greater attention, more empathy and a higher level of admiration, thus raising their level of self-esteem, whereas there were some students whose names I found more difficult to remember and when they were absent, I did not notice they were missing until I took the register.</p>	<p>teachers demonstrated towards me through the kinds of questions they would ask, for example “How did you become an inspector?” as if that role was an unnatural space for me to be occupying (Puwar, 2004) Similarly, I sometimes saw, behind the smiles and apparent amiability, an implicit mistrust in my judgments, which may well have been due to both conscious and unconscious perceptions based on a combination of my external appearance and internal conflicts.</p>	<p>because they don't see me; the reason they don't see me is not physical but cognitive; it is not a conscious but an unconscious process that allows them to delete anything or anyone that threatens to challenge their own security.</p>
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### Fear, anxiety & competitiveness

#### **Ideology: Humanism**

“From general classroom experience the teacher soon discovers that a mild degree of anxiety can be a useful aid to learning, but that too much can have an inhibiting effect and interfere with it. Precisely what degree of anxiety motivates and what degree inhibits varies from child to child and from task to task (the more difficult the task, the more likely a given degree of anxiety is to interfere with it). One of the most potent sources of anxiety in children is the fear of failure.” (Fontana, 1981: 152)

“But some sources of anxiety are less obvious than this. Trown and Leith (1975) and Bennett (1976) produce evidence that suggest habitually anxious children may find the informal classroom, where they are often unsure of what is expected of them, more anxiety-provoking than a more formal. Less ambiguous environment.” (Fontana, 1981: 152)

#### **Ideology: Humanism**

“Competition has harmful effects. Focusing the spotlight on the very best, it damages the self-respect of the mediocre.” (Cronbach, 1963: 529)



Competitions should not be made so important that failure to win is emotionally disruptive.” (Cronbach, 1963: 529)

**As a teacher,** I often encouraged competitiveness because I believed it to be an important survival skill in business. The negative impact of competitions on the majority who failed to win compared with the positive impact on the minority that did win, did not occur to me as a serious concern until I started my career as a consultant and had a chance to reflect on the hidden cost of strategies that created a lot of excitement and enthusiasm.

**As an inspector,** I was often presented with evidence of students’ success in winning competitions. These were usually case studies, collated as examples of progress and progression. As the case studies were isolated examples, it was difficult to ascertain the positive and negative impact of their success on their peers.

**As a student,** I learnt that I was not a winner, regardless of how hard I worked. As an adult learner, I have often been competitive in an attempt to develop mastery in various skills but each time I fail to win it lowers my self-confidence. Nevertheless, I use my resilience to build up my confidence again and I use the pressure entailed in preparing to compete to sharpen my skills to my full potential. Therefore, the loss of confidence in the short term is compensated by the deepening of resilience, which is an important survival skill for the long term.

### Active participation of students

#### **Ideology: Behaviourism**

(Sotto, 1994: 31)

“So, according to the behaviourists, learning is generated by two absolutely fundamental factors:

- The need for the learner to be actively engaged; and
- The need for the learner’s appropriate activity to be *reinforced by being rewarded* immediately.

(Sotto, 1994: 31)

“Pedagogy: HMI expect the school to engage its pupils, at all levels of age and ability, as active participants in their own learning. They are relatively uninterested in teaching in any performative sense: their concern is with what the pupil does, rather than with the teacher. They look for learning that is active, oral and questioning rather than passive, silent and receptive. They seek real problem-solving in place of token exercises and formal drills. These priorities rest on large-scale observation of pupil performance: HMI have seen quite enough good work of this order to be confident that the demand they make is reasonable.”

(Wilson, 1988: 32)

**Ideology: Humanism**

“Involvement and participation are necessary for learning” (Brandes and Ginnis, 1986: 13)

“The constraints of the punishment/reward system of teaching, so familiar to most teachers and learners, do not apply when the learner is personally involved. The rewards of working through a process together and finding new questions or answers on the other side are exciting in themselves. Intrinsic rewards are derived from the fun of learning, of discovering, of challenging or questioning, of becoming competent in new areas and of completing self-initiated tasks.

(Brandes and Ginnis, 1986: 13)

**As a teacher**, it was easy for me to apply the learning theory that students need to be actively involved in the learning process for learning to take place. For example, when I was teaching English, it seemed to be common sense that students would learn to speak English by speaking; when I was teaching business studies to teenagers, it was at times very hard to convince my students that their participation would facilitate the learning process; many expected learning to take place if the teacher was skilled in inputting the information effectively, with least effort on the part of the students.

**As an inspector**, nearly all lessons I observed entailed interactive participation between the teacher and students and also between students in groups and pairs. In business studies classes, the need for active participation seemed to be well-accepted and applied.

**As a student**, I have always preferred lessons controlled by the teacher; the more entertaining the better; the least amount of effort required on my part, the better. Ironically, group work or pair work seems an unnecessary evil to me when I am a student, whereas in a teacher role, pair and group work are my favourite teaching strategies, requiring more effort on my part outside the class in terms of preparation and very little effort in class when I am merely facilitating the planned groups and activities.

**Freedom of choice, independence, autonomy**

**Ideology: Humanism**

“Freedom to learn or choose; *self-directed* learning; these are completely untenable concepts in the minds of many behavioural scientists, who believe that man is simply the inevitable product of his conditioning.” (Rogers, 1983: 269)

“” What is essential is to realise that children learn independently, not in bunches; that they learn out of interest and curiosity, not to please or appease the adults in power; and that they ought to be in control of their own learning, deciding for themselves what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.” (Holt, 1967: 185)

**As a teacher,** I found that when I was teaching English, it was students at the higher levels that really appreciated freedom to choose and self-direct their learning; beginner level students did not have the language tools for autonomy. Similarly, when I was teaching business studies to teenagers, it was the students who already arrived in my classes with confidence and high self-esteem that valued freedom to choose; less confident students needed the security of less choice.

**As an inspector,** I looked for how well individual needs of students were being met, and I usually found good evidence of this in lessons where students were given choice and encouraged to be independent in directing their own learning

**As a student,** I find lessons that are tightly controlled and packed with interesting and relevant information to be best use of my time. I am often annoyed when the teacher places the onus on me to do my own research because I am highly independent anyway and I do not need a teacher's permission to learn by finding things out for myself. I can easily do that from home and save myself the time and expense in paying for transport to get to the classroom for 'freedom to learn'.

### Questions

“, it seems that teachers spend about 30 per cent of their time asking questions. In other words they may ask about 100 questions per hour.” (Brown and Edmondson, 1984: 97)

#### **Ideology: Humanism**

“Learners asking questions

It is usually the teacher who asks most of the questions in a lesson, and we tend to take such a state of affairs for granted. However, it might be an idea to examine that custom for a moment. After all, the answers we understand and remember best of all tend to be the answers to the questions we have asked ourselves. If so, teachers might help their learners if they could contrive things so that it is the learners who ask more of the questions.” (Sotto, 1994: 179)

**As a teacher;** I was trained very early in my career as an English language teacher, to ensure that my students asked more questions

**As an inspector;** one of my key judgements about the quality of teaching and learning was based around the quality of questions

**As a student,** I am rarely given the opportunity to ask questions in class, because I am not seen and therefore not

than I did, because it was they, that needed the practice after all.	asked by both teacher and students and how well this indicated learning and reflection. I was also keen to interpret the dynamics regarding which students asked questions the most. I noticed that teachers would spend more time on the questions asked by white students and they tended to make relatively cursory comments when questions were asked by non-white students. This observation was frequent enough for me to speculate on whether this is one of the ways in which racism manifests itself in contemporary British education, where the Equality & Diversity agenda is more posted than practiced.	selected, partly due to my visible differences, being of Indian racial heritage, but also because of my invisible differences; I am slightly deaf and slightly dyslexic which slows down my thinking process. This means that invariably, by the time I have formulated my question, the discussion has moved on.
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## Discussions

### **Ideology: Behaviourism**

“Novel verbal responses are likely to be generated by discussion, not only because more than one history of reinforcement is then active but also because different histories may by accident or design lead to novel settings. The so-called history of ideas offers many examples. In the eighteenth century in France the leaders of the Enlightenment borrowed a good deal from English writers – in particular, Bacon, Locke, and Newton. As one author has put it, “English thoughts in French heads produced in the long run some astonishing and explosive consequences.” The sentence is intentionally metaphorical, of course, and mixes the mental (“thoughts”) with the anatomical (“heads”), but it makes the valid point that translations from English into French that are then read by people with very different verbal histories may generate novel responses.” (Skinner, 1974: 115)

<b>As a teacher</b> , especially when I was teaching English, generation of a stimulating discussion was the highlight of the lesson; it was often what the preliminary activities	<b>As an inspector</b> , I was interested in implicit and explicit power dynamics inherent in the discussions I observed; who spoke and who remained silent; which	<b>As a student</b> , I hardly ever participate in large class discussions. A weak hearing ability and dyslexia, mean that the speed at which I am able to respond is just too
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were leading up to; for students to be able to express their own personal opinions using the newly acquired language tools. This was the creative stage of the lesson where novelty was expected and as the teacher, I was just as surprised, inspired and intrigued by some of the creative use of language to express thoughts and opinions.	comments were rewarded and which were overlooked. In other words, I had the privilege as an external witness, not to become trapped in the surface content of the discussions, but to notice what skills, if any, these discussions enabled the students to develop.	slow unless there are spaces where the others have nothing to say. I sometimes feel the confidence to occupy these vacant spaces.
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### Evidence of learning

#### **Ideology: Behaviourism**

“The only way we can tell what they have learned or that they have learned is by having them do things to give us evidence of their learning. There is no magic way of getting inside the pupil to make it happen or tell that it is happening. In a rather common sense way of looking at the business, schooling is a behavioural enterprise.” (Steinberg, 1980: 77)

“The effort to make schooling more scientific required the specification of the outcomes of schooling in observable terms.” (Steinberg, 1980: 89)

“The good or harm done by an educational experience can only be judged by considering all the changes in behaviour, feeling, and understanding that it produces.” (Cronbach, 1963: 63)

“The advantages of the approach are that the objectives are clear, it is highly specific and it is measurable.” (Reece and Walker, 2007: 95)

“Unless we are changed in some way, learning cannot be said to have taken place.”  
(Fontana, 1981: 148)

“Learning is shown by a change in behaviour as a result of experience. The child has learned when he shows a new ability, and also when he changes his typical behaviour so that some response becomes more probable, or less probable, than before.”  
(Cronbach, 1963: 84)

#### **Ideology: Cognitivism**

“And even if teaching is competent, it does not necessarily lead to learning if the pupils concerned are inattentive, unmotivated, or cognitively unprepared.”  
(Ausubel et al., 1978: 14)

"A definition of learning

"Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." (Kolb, 1984: 38)

**Ideology: Humanism**

"The person who really needs to know something, does not need to be told many times. Drilled, tested. Once is enough. The new piece of knowledge fits into the gap ready for it, like a missing piece in a jigsaw puzzle. Once in place, it is held in, it can't fall out. We don't forget the things that make the world a more reasonable or interesting place for us, that make our mental model more complex and accurate." (Holt, 1967: 187)

(Sotto, 1994: 197)

"I have tried to present a theory of learning and teaching. It holds that people learn when they discover that they don't know something (which they consider worth knowing), form hunches about a possible answer, seek information, and apply that information to test those hunches. In doing these things they have experiences, and in that way they learn." (Sotto 1994: 197)

"Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes." (Kolb, 1984: 26)

"Learning is an emergent process whose outcomes represent only historical record, not knowledge of the future." (Kolb, 1984: 26)

"When viewed from the perspective of experiential learning, the tendency to define learning in terms of outcomes can become a definition of non-learning, in the process sense that the failure to modify ideas and habits as a result of experience is maladaptive. The clearest example of this irony lies in the behaviourist axiom that the strength of a habit can be measured by its resistance to extinction. That is, the more I have "learned" a given habit, the longer I will persist in behaving that way when it is no longer rewarded." (Kolb, 1984: 26)

"Learning is an extremely complex psychological process that largely operates on an internal level, which makes it very difficult to assess if it has taken place. But as observers can only report on what they see, inaccurate assumptions and conclusions may be drawn from the classroom experience. Even if we assume that we are able to assess learning taking place, it is questionable how much or how little we are able to observe." (O'Leary, 2014: 67)

**Ideology: Humanism**

"Most people would agree that there is an important difference between 'verbal' learning, and what might be called 'real' learning. We all know people who seem to carry around chunks of prefabricated thought, and when an appropriate slot appears, they slide the chunk in. Other people make quite a different impression. What they say seems theirs, and it seems alive. These kinds of people can use their knowledge in varying circumstances. They can be creative." (Sotto, 1994: 57)

<p><b>As a teacher,</b> I relied on behaviourist techniques to confirm that my students were learning, for example regular quizzes, tests and challenging questions to check understanding.</p>	<p><b>As an inspector;</b> I felt pressurised to look for evidence of learning taking place in the actual lesson observed but this was difficult to do when I entered the lesson midway without seeing the starting point of students' learning in the sessions. I sometimes judged evidence of learning based on what students had done in previous lessons and using my own experience of what students were expected to know at this stage of the curriculum. This entailed reliance on behaviourist techniques for example sampling written work and feedback given previously.</p>	<p><b>As a student,</b> during my compulsory school education, the marks I received for my homework were the only indicator for me that I had learnt something and the homework was usually completed having read up on the subject covered in class, at home. During the actual lessons, I don't recall how my teachers or I really knew if I was learning anything or not; I was hardly ever asked any questions and during group activities I allowed the older students to do the learning on my behalf (I was born in August and in the British education system, the academic year beginning in September, I was always the youngest in class). I believe I self-educated myself, to a large extent, relying only on the teacher to tell me which subjects I had to cover</p>
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My self-reflections on the ideological influences that have shaped my teaching career over the past 30 years, summarized in the table above, demonstrate the inconsistency in how these values are expressed pragmatically when I adopt the different roles of student, teacher and inspector. Much to my surprise, I favour a humanist pedagogy as a teacher but a behaviourist pedagogy as a student. As an inspector, I felt pressurized to lean towards a behaviourist pedagogy and away from a humanist pedagogy for which it is difficult to provide tangible evidence to

demonstrate that learning has taken place. Although as an inspector I regretted this invisible barrier that prevented due recognition of the creativity entailed in lessons based on humanist pedagogy, as a student, my self-reflections summarized above, shocked me into acknowledging the numerous courses I have taken during my lifetime which resulted in no discernible learning, negligible impact and therefore a considerable waste of time and financial resources. Most of these courses were experiential and based on a humanist pedagogy that as a teacher, I deeply admire.

Based on my self-reflections, it appears that internal pressures arising from our ideological preferences, leave unpredictable, complex impressions on our judgements.



## External pressures that distorted my judgments as an Ofsted inspector

Besides the internal pressures that distorted my judgements, illustrated in my critical self-reflections above (ideological preferences, values and beliefs), there are also external pressures that distorted the judgments I made in my role as an Ofsted inspector. This section will explore some of these external influences.

In my role as a corporate agent of Ofsted, I acted in alignment with its hegemonic discourse, writing carefully constructed Ofsted reports using the 'Ofsted House Style'. The impact of the hegemonic Ofsted values was pressure to witness and record particular evidence during the inspection process, in order to write reports matching the limited set of criteria stipulated in the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). This meant that important aspects of teaching and learning that were too difficult to measure and provide tangible evidence for, for example intrinsic learning (e.g. a student learns to trust peers), intrinsic feedback (e.g. a student realizes a mistake has been made) and intrinsic evaluation (e.g. a student feels a sense of satisfaction with their contribution), remained unrecorded and therefore unreported.

To understand the power struggles that distorted my perception during Ofsted inspections, it is important to note that I was an 'Ofsted Additional Inspector' (AI) which is distinct from an Ofsted HMI. If someone inadvertently called us HMI, according to protocol, we were meant to correct them and be transparent about our role as AI instead of HMI. The latter is a salaried position with all the benefits that may be expected for someone working as Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), for example, top of the range, conveniently located and paid for hotels during inspections. The former is the title given to those of us who were part of the outsourced, freelance pool of inspectors, often told that our services were not required for the following week, with only a few days' notice, with no financial

compensation, because an inspection had been cancelled at the last minute. We paid for our own hotels out of our inspection fees which meant staying at 'affordable' hotels, usually a long distance away from where the HMIs ate and slept. This distinction is important because it indicates our lower status and how dispensable we, so-called AIs were. We were at the beck and call of an official organisation that we needed to be seen to be associated with, in order to establish our authority and credibility for other essential freelance education consultancy work. Being a "badged" inspector was often the main reason for an FE college seeking our consultancy services. These organisations hoped we would empower them to meet Ofsted expectations in their forthcoming inspection, much to the chagrin of some of my HMI colleagues who resented our audacity in making such claims.

There was an incredibly deep divide between HMIs and AIs. The use of the modifier "Additional" in our title, demarcated the invisible boundaries we had to remain within. It defined our role as explicitly subordinate to the "real" inspectors who prided themselves on their title of HMI. A couple of HMIs that I worked with, told me it used to be frowned upon in the organisation for them to use their title "Dr." based on having completed a PhD. Apparently, it conflicted with the title HMI which was supreme.

Each AI was allocated an HMI supervisor to read through a sample of their evidence forms and final report for quality assurance before it was shared with the whole team, including the FE college nominee, on the last day of inspection. Very often these HMIs pressurised me to change the wording of my report, supposedly so that it met the Ofsted house style. In my view, they often changed my wording to their own, simply because the title HMI trumped the title AI. For example, when I wrote:

“Teachers do not challenge advanced learners well enough” I was asked to change it to:

“Teachers expectations of advanced learners are not high enough”.

The latter sentence fitted in with the Common Inspection Framework and the HMIs own perceptions of correct versus incorrect terminology for the report.

Besides this non-egalitarian social stratification between HMIs and AIs, I had to deal with the powerful undercurrents of racism, being a Sikh woman, in a body that, using the words of Puwar (2004) was perceived to be a “space invader”. Not being the somatic norm, I was occupying space that was not reserved for me: in simple terms, I did not look like an Ofsted inspector. Puwar (2004: 8) explains this phenomenon by suggesting that “social spaces are not blank and open for any body to occupy”.

Certain bodies fit the somatic norm and others are out of place in privileged positions.

As an Ofsted AI, in my interactions with colleagues and those I was inspecting, I was conscious of the “super-surveillance” that was bestowed upon me, predicted by (Puwar, 2004: 61) as being the fate of all ‘space invaders’ as:

“Not only do these bodies that are out of place have to work harder to convince people that they are capable, but they also almost have to be crystal-clear perfect in their job performances, as any imperfections are easily picked up and amplified.” (Puwar, 2004: 61)

In the context that I describe above, I was very careful about being alert while I walked on the tightrope as there was no safety net to cushion the blows to my self-esteem and confidence if ever I made a mistake.

I knew what I had to gather evidence of and to report on; it was stipulated in the CIF and the Handbook for Inspections. There were times when it was difficult to find hard evidence for some aspects of the CIF, for example the quality of written feedback given to students when it was at a very early stage in the academic year, or evidence of equality and diversity being promoted when teachers seemed to assume that the diverse range of students, for example in cosmopolitan cities constituted promotion of diversity. When there were such gaps, the HMIs would interrogate us at the daily team meetings to ensure we found relevant evidence to make our judgements. There was NEVER any interrogation or prompting by HMIs to encourage me to look for evidence of development of creativity skills. Unlike development of literacy and numeracy skills, development of creativity skills is not in the CIF; so, neither the HMIs nor the AIs are obliged to look for it or make judgements about it.

So, we didn't.

When I asked the Assistant Director for Further Education in the Ofsted organisation, at a public meeting attended by around nine educators, at the London Headquarters of Ofsted, in May 2016, about the role of Ofsted in development of creativity skills, he responded with a carefully considered, response (I had emailed him about my current research several times since November 2015):

"Ofsted's role is \*not\* to promote creativity skills. It is about the quality of learner experience. We inspect the quality of learner experience.....it is not Ofsted's role to promote creativity skills nor anything else for that matter; the role of Ofsted is to make judgments about the quality of teaching and learning taking place and the quality of the learner experience." P.J. Assistant Director FE, Ofsted (May 2016)

From my experience as an Ofsted inspector, I am aware that when statements such as the above are made, the wording is used very deliberately and the deep conviction with which this statement was uttered confirmed my experiential assumptions that Ofsted does not perceive itself to have any role whatsoever in promotion of creativity skills although I argued about the inaccuracy in the statement above suggesting that Ofsted does not promote anything; that it merely witnesses the quality of teaching and learning. This is clearly not the case, Ofsted promotes British Values and the 'Prevent Strategy' for example and it promotes development of literacy and numeracy skills. However, as confirmed by the Assistant Director of FE, it does not see its role to extend to promotion of creativity skills.

It was only through my critical self-reflections, after I decided to stop inspecting with Ofsted in 2015, that I began to evaluate my role as an inspector. As a corporate agent of Ofsted, I was positioned and controlled by this hegemonic discourse, even when I was not consciously aware of the underlying assumptions and ideology of Ofsted. I was an anonymous entity, responsible for writing evidence-based, normalised and standardised texts.

I worked with at least 28 HMIs, at least once and several times with a few of them, on an estimated 40 to 50 inspections from 2007 to 2015. When I contacted these colleagues asking them to participate in my PhD research, two thirds of them did not reply. The ones who did reply, all gave reasons for not participating in my research such as:

“Sorry but it is policy for HMI not to participate in this type of work, but despite this I hope the studies go well “.

Extract from an email I received from an HMI 22 Sept 15

“Your research sounds most interesting; however, I would not be allowed to participate.”

Extract from an email I received from an HMI 14 Sept 15

“Sadly, I am unable to contribute to your research project – I checked with my senior HMI and deputy director for FE, and we are unable to accept such requests.”

Extract from an email I received from an HMI 29 Sept 15

The responses I received from 28 of my HMI colleagues, including the lack of response from two thirds of them, implied an impersonal, objectified nature of my role as an Ofsted inspector. Intellectuals such as Foucault (1980), Bourdieu (1992) and Gramsci (1999), all emphasise the underlying forces of hegemonic discourse, rhetoric and power struggles entailed in being a corporate agent with limited free will.

Indeed, one of the few times I felt I was expressing my own free will was when, in order to explore the role of Ofsted in development of creativity skills, I opted out of working with Ofsted. I realized the importance of being in a position where I am independent of the organisation and not prohibited formally or informally from conducting research that questions the role of the organisation. There are elements of positivism, critical realism and also interpretivism that influenced my decision: a desire to be more “objective”; a desire to remove myself from a position within the organisation where I lacked the freedom to question its authority and also a desire to be more reflexive in making my subjective interpretations and conclusions. Taking myself outside of the organisation also enables me to use a holistic systems thinking approach where I am able to view the role of Ofsted from multiple perspectives,

drawing on my personal experience as a student, as a teacher, as an Education Consultant and also as an Ofsted Inspector, without being locked into a particular positioning by any of these roles. Above all, deciding to no longer inspect with Ofsted, using the philosophical lens of Foucault, removed me from the 'super-surveillance' and 'normalizing gaze' of Ofsted.

This critical self-reflection from various perspectives, considering both internal and external pressures, illustrates the biases that may occur in our judgments due to our perceptions and assumptions. Therefore, without appropriate self-reflection, as societal gatekeepers, we may be failing to reward development of creativity skills adequately.

Question 5: How do societal gatekeepers such as Ofsted inspectors, promote development of creativity skills in the business curriculum?

#### **Finding 5: The level of cultural interest in promotion of creativity skills is low**

My interviews with business teachers and business students, TES articles, various public engagement activities such as my speeches at education conferences, and analysis of 89 Ofsted inspection reports for the 3-year period from September 2012 to August 2015, indicate that Ofsted does not actively promote development of creativity skills.

To support this assumption, there is the blatant lack of attention or the lack of prioritization of creativity skills in Ofsted inspection tools which include the Handbook for Inspections; the Common Inspection Framework and the lack of reference to development of creativity skills in Ofsted inspection reports.

Using the systems thinking conceptual framework, it is useful to consider the educational context in which data derived from interviews and Times Educational

Supplement articles illustrates a diverse range of perceptions of Ofsted. Even though Ofsted is negatively associated with development of creativity skills, the inspection process is valued for numerous reasons, suggesting that if creativity were to be explicitly included in the Common Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2012c) it may be valued more.

To contextualise development of creativity skills within the valued role of Ofsted, I have listed 17 reasons, extracted from my research data from interviews and Times Educational Supplement articles.



**Table 8.5 ‘Finding 5’: Reasons given to support valued role of Ofsted**

1. Ofsted identifies areas for improvement so that quality of learning and success rates can be increased
2. Ofsted monitors positive impact of courses in career progression and transformation of student’s lives
3. Ofsted measures the extent to which teachers motivate and inspire students with the information they provide.
4. Ofsted monitors to ensure that individual needs of students are met and that all students are supported.
5. Ofsted provides benchmarks and standards to clarify expectations so that teachers and organisations recognise where they are in relation to their peers and to encourage consistency, in order to raise the level of quality in teaching and learning
6. Ofsted provides an opportunity for teachers to showcase the variety of teaching activities they use and to proudly demonstrate what their students are capable of.
7. Ofsted has the power and authority to ensure that important agendas, for example promotion of diversity, are prioritised and incorporated through teaching and learning.
8. Ofsted is a thorough, robust and rigorous process that is necessary for quality assurance.
9. Ofsted provides assurance and encouragement when teachers are exceeding expectations and they feel affirmed and rewarded and their approach is validated.

10. Ofsted can provide an external, objective view on the benefit and relevance of what students are learning to their future experience in the workplace.
11. Ofsted can lead to a beneficial shake up in the organisation so that members of staff who are no longer providing value to the organisation and their students can be asked to leave (this is a controversial point made by a business teacher and I am certain that Ofsted would not openly admit to being a cause for dismissal of incompetent, demotivated staff)
12. Ofsted takes into consideration a wide range of evidence indicating the quality of teaching and learning.
13. Ofsted is a catalyst for change.
14. Ofsted inspections prompt teachers to adapt their teaching methodology to meet the needs of young learners for example by shifting from a teacher led to a student focused approach.
15. Ofsted prevents teachers becoming complacent.
16. Ofsted encourages education organisations to respond to the needs of their local communities.
17. Ofsted encourages the use of data to effect improvement and a culture focused on enabling every single student to succeed.

Two teachers commented that Ofsted inspectors praised and encouraged them to set business projects which took students outside of their classrooms engaging in practical entrepreneurial tasks collaborating with students from different courses,

learning in non-traditional ways. These projects enabled students to develop many transferable employability skills such as teamwork and decision making and the Ofsted inspectors applauded this, noting the benefits of developing skills that will serve the students in their careers. Similarly, during inspections, I also expressed my positive opinions about students participating in real life activities that added value to their own lives and the lives of others in the present rather than at a hypothetical point in the future which may never occur as imagined or predicted.

In my interviews with teachers I was told that apart from encouraging real life experiential learning, another of the ways in which Ofsted promotes creativity is by emphasising individuality so that students come up with their own ideas and encouraging students to learn from each other instead of simply relying on the teacher.

Despite the value of Ofsted for the reasons listed above in Table “Finding 5” and the sporadic favourable experiences regarding Ofsted’s comments about creativity reported by a couple of teachers, the themes I extracted from my data, summarized in Table Findings 5c below, suggest that Ofsted undermines the development of creativity skills through its powerful discourse expressed via the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), generating a tick box approach. During formal observations, teachers prioritise what is stipulated in the CIF in order to deliver what seems to be expected of “good” or “outstanding” teachers. When marginalised skills such as creativity are not noticed, or praised by inspectors, teachers feel demoralized.

**Table 8.6 ‘Findings 5c’: Examples given by teachers and to illustrate how Ofsted undermines creativity**

1. "The Ofsted inspection process is "all about ticking boxes" and the priority is to ensure standards are high which means rules and regulations that "diminish the space for creativity."
2. "As creativity is not specifically listed in the CIF, inspectors fail to see, witness and report on it, which is unfair "to the organisation or to the staff or to the students that were displaying creativity."
3. "When Ofsted inspectors fail to recognise creativity, "it can be very demoralising when you've spent a lot of additional time outside the classroom, doing things to embed the creativity and to embrace it really ".

4. A couple of teachers stated that Ofsted would discourage creativity:

"...because they seem to take a very narrow view of students learning and the approach that we take and so I think if anything they would discourage it"

"Well, I think they have quite rigid expectations and they discourage creativity. If you've got very rigid expectations I don't know how you can have creativity. It certainly doesn't encourage it because because with OFSTED you feel you need to be uniform, you need to enable them to tick a box. And so you're very cautious. You are less creative and you don't do things that might be seen as different. You're given a lot of instructions on what you should and shouldn't do when OFSTED come in. And so that discourages any creativity and I wouldn't see OFSTED as creating or expecting creativity. And the only way they could encourage it is by getting rid of the rigid tick box. You know, rumours always circulate when they are coming in as to what they are expecting. Well, as long as you have that, you are not going to have creativity. You're limiting people. You are restricting them. Because everybody is frightened because they're not going to give OFSTED what they want. And so they focus on a narrow set of rules that they think OFSTED are looking for. And in that way any creativity is dampened".

5. The confusion around whether we are talking about teachers' creativity or students' creativity was evident in some of the comments made by teachers. For example, one of the teachers emphasised that teachers need to be very creative in demonstrating their skills in embedding all the CIF criteria into their lessons in order to get a high grade:

.... I think to be able to demonstrate to an inspector who might only have been in your classroom for about 40 minutes 45 minutes maximum an hour you have to be creative to be able to demonstrate that you're enhancing English and maths skills that you are embedding employability skills that you are broadening learners range of knowledge and awareness of equality diversity and inclusion so whilst I think you need to be quite creative to get all of that in in an hour so whilst I don't think it's necessarily prescribed in that way I think it would be if you weren't creative in what you were teaching. I don't see how. it would be hard not to include those elements in inspection if you weren't creative."

6. A couple of business teachers stated that since creativity is not specified in the CIF, they would not prioritise incorporating it into their lessons if they knew they were going to be observed during an Ofsted inspection:

“...if I was being inspected tomorrow certainly creativity from an assessment point of view would not be something I would necessarily concentrate on.”

7. One of the teachers interviewed commented on the difficulty in measuring creativity during a lesson observation due to the fact that it is not a “ticky box”:

“I mean, they’ll be looking through our learner walks and other quality assurance they are looking for, how do you embed English or maths skills ..is it in our scheme of learning, is it evident in our objectives is it being assessed in our lesson plans, so yeah you’re right, they’re constantly looking for where it is embedded, perhaps they’re not looking for creativity ..what they do, from our College point of view is they tend to look for the experience in the classroom and looking for that creative environment which is stimulating learners and seeing that through sort of the experience of students but it is difficult to measure because it is not a ticky box.”

Ofsted claims to be an independent organisation but quotes listed in Table ‘Finding 5d’ below, illustrate opinions suggesting otherwise. It is often perceived to be too closely tied to political and economic agendas. It is seen to police compliance of rules and regulations in a hegemonic discourse promoting standardisation and narrow normalisation rather than creativity. It creates a great deal of fear, stress and anxiety and this in itself crushes creativity. Ofsted creates a burden of bureaucratic demands which take away time and space for creative endeavours. I was not aware of the complexity in linking Ofsted to development of creativity skills prior to gathering my data for this research.

**Table 8.7 ‘Finding 5d’: Reasons given in interviews and Times Educational Supplement articles for questioning the role of Ofsted**

1. Ofsted is a compliance body, merely policing processes that are already in place, ticking boxes rather than adding creativity to these processes.
2. Ofsted is not an independent body and it would only promote creativity if it was part of the government agenda to do so.

3. As so many young people are attempting to start their own businesses, Ofsted should do more to promote development of creativity skills
4. Ofsted creates fear, stress, pressure and anxiety which is not conducive to creativity.
5. Ofsted focus more on results, progress made and grades rather than the less easily measurable creativity
6. There is a lack of clarity about what Ofsted expects as standards continue to change and teachers are too busy to keep up with the constant changes and expectations, some of which are unrealistic.
7. The Ofsted reports are not always useful in helping teachers to improve the quality of teaching or do things differently.
8. Ofsted is not associated with creativity
9. The CIF lists literacy, numeracy, diversity and employability skills for example, but not creativity skills; this seems to devalue the skill.
10. Teachers do not want Ofsted to try and promote creativity as it would become just another "tick box" for compliance, undermining their professional judgment.
11. The communication gap between corporations advocating creativity and Ofsted basically ignoring creativity, is incomprehensible.
12. When Ofsted fails to recognise creativity, it is disheartening and "soul destroying" for members of staff who went the extra mile to organise events to inspire creativity.
13. There needs to be liaison between Ofsted and the Awarding Bodies to ensure that creativity is a criterion that is marked, assessed and inspected.
14. Ofsted inspections do not give a balanced, holistic view of the quality of teaching and learning in the educational establishment.
15. Ofsted follows working practices that are not underpinned with sound research supporting their efficacy.
16. Ofsted makes too many bureaucratic demands which sap away time and energy, diminishing creativity.

The wide range of reasons for questioning the role of Ofsted, identified in Table 'Finding 5d' above, above (arising from interviews and TES articles), suggest that the Ofsted inspection process makes a complex contextual impact.

One of the main trails of impact that Ofsted inspectors leave after an inspection is through the Ofsted inspection report we write. As noted by Prior (2004: 375)

"Without documents there are no traces. Things remain invisible and events remain

unrecorded.” The Ofsted inspection report is one of the symbols of the “value” created by an Ofsted inspector.

As mentioned earlier, formal inspection reports, in the period of my research from 2012 to 2015, were written by an anonymous Ofsted inspector supervised by a named HMI Ofsted inspector and the final published report is checked through internal Ofsted quality assurance measures.

It is publicly available to anyone with an interest in seeing it, for example, stakeholders in state funded education: the government, the Further Education College that was inspected and all its staff and students, parents, the local community, competitors of the college and also potential investors.

A college can attract funding and future customers with a highly positive report and it can lose state funding and potential customers with a negative report so this inspection tool is powerful and influential. The message in an inspection report cannot be ignored, it is not ‘inert’ as explained by Prior (2004: 388) who notes that “documents can often become agents in their own right,” especially if they highlight areas for improvement suggesting remedial action.

Ofsted inspection reports are usually circulated as hard copies and also electronically which means they are potentially available to an international audience. During my experience as a teacher in Further Education Colleges (1994 to 2017), I noticed that Principals often sent out chunk bites of key points that they considered to be pertinent, in circulars or short newsletters to their staff members. However, I rarely had time to read these documents so the fact they are readily available does not necessarily mean they are actually read by their target audience.

Although I wrote a significant number of reports for the business curriculum, only the lead HMI is identified on the inspection reports from 2012 to 2015; the rest of the team of authors for each report remained anonymous according to protocol for that time frame. The lead HMI had the authority to change the wording of each inspector's report, in alignment with the Ofsted house style of writing, as long as there was sufficient evidence to support any changes made. A combination of rigorous adherence to this Ofsted house style, pressure from HMIs in the supervisory role to use particular wording and the editing process that ensued after we had submitted the reports and before they were published about 3 weeks later, means that I am unable to distinguish between Ofsted reports that I personally wrote and reports that were written by others. Each report is impersonal, evidence based, and above all standardized.

During the time frame parameters of my research, from September 2012 to August 2015, a total of 89 Ofsted inspections were carried out for the SSA 15 (Business Administration & Law) curriculum, excluding specialist colleges, community colleges and sixth form colleges in which the organisation culture and needs of the students are slightly different from those in General Further Education Colleges

In adherence to ethical guidelines explained in my methodology chapter, I have coded the 89 colleges for anonymity, as the names, locations and reputations of the colleges may cause unnecessary distraction from the focus of my current research.



I conducted a content analysis of the reports to find the frequency of words related to creativity using the terms: “Creative”, “Creativity” “Creatively”

I identified only the following references in the 89 reports:

1. Tasks lack creativity
2. Creative teachers
3. Creative approaches
4. Creative resources (twice)
5. Students research creatively
6. Teachers’ use of whiteboards is not creative enough
7. Teachers encourage learners to demonstrate creativity in their approaches
8. Teachers don’t use opportunities creatively
9. Creative Production Promotion (title of a course module)
10. \*\*\*Learners have opportunities to develop skills such as creativity in real business situations.\*\*\*

Although there are 11 occurrences of variations of the word “creative” in the 89 relevant Ofsted inspection reports, only one of them, number 10 in the list above, actually pertains to development of “skills such as creativity”. There are no occurrences of the word “creative” in Grade 1 (Outstanding) Ofsted inspection reports of which there were 2 out of 89. Table Finding 5b below, shows these references to creativity in context.

**Table 8.8 ‘Finding 5b’: Content analysis searching for “creativity” in 89 Ofsted inspection reports published between Sept 2012 to August 2015.**

College Code	Grade	Quote
N10	Requires improvement	"The less effective lessons are too teacher-led with a slow pace. <b>Tasks lack creativity</b> and do not stretch students sufficiently. The college's experienced lead practitioners support well plans to improve weaker teaching and learning".
N11	Requires improvement	"Where learning is most successful, students are motivated and enthused by knowledgeable and <b>creative teachers</b> . Students take part in a wide range of activities, which engage and interest them, and they develop a good understanding of business principles. Teachers have high expectations of their students and they help them to realise their ambition to achieve high grades."
N32	Requires improvement	"Apprentices have a satisfactory understanding of employment rights and responsibilities. A few apprentices benefit from <b>creative approaches</b> to the development of their personal learning and thinking skills. For example, administration apprentices developed good project-management skills when they designed, implemented and evaluated a charity carnival event for their employer. Off-the-job training workshops provide useful opportunities for management apprentices to develop their knowledge of leadership styles and theories of organisational improvement and how to apply these in their workplaces."
N35	Inadequate	" <b>The college's VLE contains creative and professionally-produced learning resources</b> that benefit learners. Following staff training, learning technology is now effectively embraced by a few teachers, but its potential is not fully exploited in most lessons."
N53	Good	"In the well-planned lessons that have a strong and positive impact on learning, especially in the area of business <b>management, students use independent thinking and research creatively</b> to support their ideas. Students enjoy their learning and benefit from the lively pace of lessons and informative discussions. Teachers facilitate activities and are particularly effective in supporting students to understand complex concepts, for example, economies of scale".
N75	Good	"Teachers generally make good use of learning technologies to support learning, using video clips well to demonstrate learning points and promote effective discussion. The virtual learning environment is well resourced and used by learners during lessons and for catching up missed work and revision. However, in some lessons, <b>teachers do not make sufficiently creative use of interactive whiteboards to extend learning.</b> "

N77	Requires improvement	<p>In the most effective lessons, learners benefit from experienced and knowledgeable teachers who use relevant and topical case studies to illustrate key business terms. This helps learners to apply their learning and to make good links between theories of organisational development and the real world of work. For example, in an A-level lesson, learners were able to evaluate critically different approaches to business integration planning for takeovers and mergers.</p> <p>Staff encourage learners effectively to demonstrate creativity in their approaches to business start-up projects and entrepreneurship.</p>
N78	Good	<p>"The development of learners' English is very effective. Learners understand the value of good communication and speak clearly and confidently, using accounting and business terminology accurately. Teachers correct learners' grammar, spelling and punctuation in assignments very carefully. Accounting learners develop an excellent understanding of mathematics through the regular use of complex calculations. Learners on work-based courses also improve their English effectively through writing curriculum vitae and learning job interview techniques. However, handouts and other learning resources for these learners sometimes contain grammatical and spelling mistakes. Trainers do not always use naturally occurring opportunities creatively to encourage learners to develop their mental arithmetic skills."</p>
N84	Good	<p>"Productive links with local and regional businesses are outstanding. Most vocational students undertake two weeks purposeful work experience to develop employability skills and apply business theories in human resources and creative product promotions in real business situations. Many students take part in business competitions with local businesses and develop good research skills with a local youth steering group. Employability advisers work well with teachers and students to embed employability skills effectively into the curriculum."</p> <p>"Students have good access to resources in the learning centre to further develop understanding of business. However, the virtual learning environment for business courses lacks suitably broad and creative resources to encourage independent and deeper learning, especially for more able students. Only a minority of teachers use technology to show film clips and to create interesting activities that engage students. Too many teachers use it simply to display information, and fail to exploit its potential for dynamic learning."</p>
N85	Good	<p>"The college has extensive links with local businesses, which provide many learners with opportunities to develop skills such as enterprise, teamwork, innovation and creativity in real business situations. For instance, a local car dealership</p>

		supports a competition where business learners design a promotional campaign, with aspects of the winning campaign being used by the company. Learners also develop advanced business skills through the extensive range of relevant projects in which they participate.”
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*Content analysis for reference to Employability Skills in Ofsted reports*

In contrast to development of creativity skills not being mentioned in the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), development of employability skills is specifically mentioned in the CIF, so I expected to see a substantial number of references to employability skills in the reports.

My query for “skill” brought up 461 references so I refined the search to “employability skill” which resulted in a more manageable 41 results.

Whereas only one of the references in 89 Ofsted inspection reports for the business curriculum related to development of creativity skills, at least 40 references in the same sample of reports specifically relate to either development or improvement of “employability skills” although it is often ambiguous what is meant by “employability skills”. Skills ranging from punctuality to team building to communication skills are given as examples of what is referred to as employability skills. However, “creativity skills” are never given as examples of so-called “employability skills” in these reports.

In this sample of 89 Ofsted inspection reports, covering the period from September 2012 to August 2015, development of “employability skills” is 40 times as likely to be mentioned as development of creativity skills. As previously noted, ‘employability skills’ are specified in the CIF whereas ‘creativity skills’ are not.

#### *Content analysis for reference to Diversity in Ofsted reports*

Inspired by the links identified by Florida (2015) between creativity and diversity, I decided to do a content analysis for references to diversity in my sample of Ofsted inspection reports and I found that 83 out of the 89 reports contained at least one sentence about diversity although only around half of these references to diversity were positive references (see appendix 7: Findings 2a; *Diversity*)

This content analysis of 89 Ofsted reports for the vocational business curriculum confirms my assumption about the underlying pressures of the current hegemonic discourse expressed through the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). For example, “employability skills” and “diversity” are much more likely to be mentioned in the inspection report than concepts that are not listed in the CIF such as “creativity skills”

#### *Further Education Colleges express a low level of cultural interest in creativity*

One of the driving forces steering the promotion of creativity skills is our culture in education. In order to explore aspects of education culture expressed through vision, mission and value statements, over a three-day period from Monday 25 July 2016 to Wednesday 27 July 2016, I visited the web sites of around 235 Further Education Colleges in England, in order to see how the concept of creativity is promoted through their institutional culture. Key elements of organizational culture are often publicly projected through stated vision statements, mission statements and top organisational values.

Less than half of the FE College websites I visited (about 110 out of 235) displayed their cultural statements accessibly. Based on my online experience, I consider a site to be “accessible” if I can find what I am looking for within 5 clicks, when each click represents descending to a lower sub-heading on the website.. I found the relevant

FE vision, mission and value statements, usually by clicking on the tabs labelled “About” and then “Governance” or “Annual Report” or “Corporate”. Based on my experience as an Ofsted inspector, I was aware that each FE College, funded through taxpayer resources, submits an annual report which is available to the public. These reports usually begin with a clear ‘Vision Statement’, ‘Mission Statement’ and ‘Values’ statement as well as a statement about how the college is providing value for money in return for our investment, as taxpayers, in its activities. Knowing that the annual report certainly exists for each FE college, I was disappointed to see that less than half of the FE colleges had placed important parts of this report, for example the College’s Visions, Mission and Values, on its website so that those who do not easily have access to a hard copy of the Annual Report, can easily access this information online. One of the key aspects of creativity is adaptability and the use of up to date communication resources, such as electronic, online multimedia to make important information about the college, clear, transparent and accessible.

### *How do FE Colleges value creativity?*

In a competitive business environment, first impressions, made in less than 5 seconds perhaps, may be the difference between winning or losing the deal. My first impression in looking for cultural information about each of the 235 FE colleges in England, expecting to see transparent vision, mission and value statements, was disappointment. I found that at least 125 FE colleges in England are not using their websites to make cultural information (vision, mission and values) about the publicly funded education provider, easily accessible to stakeholders. This may be due to various reasons such as lack of resources, lack of a forward looking cultural attitude

or simply that other features on the website are considered to be a much higher priority. Creativity is inherent in our communications, our approach and the quality of our effectiveness. Its absence is marked.

I identified 81 distinct values stated in the FE college vision, mission and value statements. These are listed in Table 5e below:

**Table 8.9 FE college values**

accountability achievement adaptability ambition aspiration authenticity caring celebrate challenging choices clarity collaborating commitment communication communities confidence connected constructive contribution courage <b>create</b> <b>creating creative creativity</b> culture democracy discipline diversity dynamic effective effectiveness efficient effort empowering encourage encouraging endeavour engaging enhance enjoyment <b>enterprise enterprising</b> enthusiasm <b>entrepreneurial</b> equality esteem ethically ethos excellence expectations fair flexible focus humility <b>imaginative</b> inclusion <b>innovate inspiration</b> integrity love motivate nurture openness opportunities <b>passion</b> positive reputation resilience respect responsible success supportive sustainable talent teamwork tolerance transparent trust vision wellbeing excellence
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The word cloud below (Figure 8.3) is formed using the frequency of these 81 values stated in the cultural statements of FE colleges (110 out of 235 college websites visited). It demonstrates that the values of respect, excellence and integrity featured more prominently than the value of creativity which appears to be marginalized in the top left-hand quadrant,



Figure 8.3: Word cloud illustrating frequency of FE college values



A small minority of only 16 out of 235 (7%) FE colleges clearly promote creativity by including it in their Vision, Mission or Value statements which are communicated with the public through their organizational websites. 53 out of 235 (23%) FE colleges use the terms “innovation” or “enterprise” on their websites, to declare an interest in creative endeavours. Adding these figures, FE colleges that claim to value creativity, innovation or enterprise make up only 30% of the total pool of publicly funded education provision.



From 235 FE websites, I was only able to access a total of 40 Vision Statements; 52 Mission Statements and 55 Value Statements. Some colleges had vision statements but no mission or value statements and others had value statements but no mission or vision statements. As aforementioned, less than half of the FE Colleges had any cultural statement on their website (i.e., no vision, mission or value statements)

69 of the FE colleges that displayed their vision, mission or value statements on their website, highlighted either creativity, innovation or entrepreneurship as a key value for the organisation. 16 of these FE Colleges specifically highlighted the importance of creativity in either their Vision, Mission or Value statements; 53 FE Colleges highlighted the importance of innovation or enterprise as a priority value for the education organisation.

As a percentage of the total number of FE colleges in England, (69/235) around 30% have publicly expressed that they value creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. As a percentage of those who actually displayed their cultural values online, (70/110) a percentage of 64% demonstrate their prioritisation of these values. The fact that they have used technology creatively to share these values implies that they are in favour of innovation and enterprise. The 70% of colleges that have not shared their cultural statements online, or if they have done so, they have not highlighted creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, even though these colleges teach business studies, is a concern.

Table 'Findings 7' below, gives a list of colleges that highlighted either creativity, innovation or enterprise in their vision, mission or value statements displayed on their websites week commencing 25 July 2016. Where colleges used more than one of the key words (creativity, innovation and enterprise) in their vision, mission and

value statements, they have been categorised in only one of the columns, prioritising as follows: creativity > innovation > enterprise.

Table 8.10 'Findings 7' illustrating list of colleges that highlight either creativity, innovation or enterprise in their vision, mission or value statements displayed on their websites week commencing 25 July 2016.

<b>Creativity</b>	<b>Innovation</b>	<b>Enterprise</b>
1. Bexley College	1. Andover College	1.Bromley College
2. Bridgwater College	2. Aylesbury College	2.North Warwickshire and Hinckley College
3. City College Brighton & Hove	3. Barnet & Southgate College	3.Petroc College
4. City College Plymouth	4. Basingstoke College of Technology	4.Selby College
5. City College Coventry	5. Bedford College	5.Somerset College of Arts and Technology
6. Cornwall College	6. Bishop Auckland College	6.South Leicestershire College
7. Croydon College	7. Blackburn College	7.West Cheshire College
8. Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College	8. Bolton College	
9. Grantham College	9. Bournville College	
10.Harrow College	10.Bracknell and Wokingham College	
11.Huntingdonshire Regional College	11.Bradford College	
12.Knowsley Community College	12.Brooklands College	
13.Leeds City College	13.Buxton & Leek College	
14.Sussex Coast College Hastings	14.Chelmsford College	
15.Vision West Nottinghamshire College	15.City of Bath College	

16. Weston College	16. City of Bristol College	
	17. City of Sunderland College	
	18. Derby College	
	19. Dudley College of Technology	
	20. East Berkshire College	
	21. East Durham and Houghall Community College	
	22. East Riding College	
	23. East Surrey College	
	24. Eastleigh College	
	25. Furness College	
	26. Greenwich Community College	
	27. Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education	
	28. Heart of Worcestershire College	
	29. Hopwood Hall College	
	30. Hull College	
	31. Milton Keynes College	
	32. New College Swindon	
	33. North East Worcestershire College	
	34. North Hertfordshire College	
	35. Oaklands College	
	36. Salford City College	
	37. South Gloucestershire and Stroud College	
	38. Sparsholt College	
	39. Stanmore College	
	40. Swindon College	

	41. The Manchester College	
	42. Trafford College	
	43. Tresham College of Further & Higher Education	
	44. Tyne Metropolitan College	
	45. West Herts College	
	46. Wiltshire College	

16 FE Colleges highlight “creativity” as a prioritised value in their Vision. Mission or Value statements whereas a much larger majority of 53 FE Colleges use the terms “innovation” (46 FE Colleges) or “enterprise” (7 Colleges). A small minority of only 16 out of 235 (7%) FE colleges clearly declare their cultural interest in creativity through their Vision, Mission or Value statements.

53 out of 235 (23%) FE colleges use the terms “innovation” or “enterprise” to declare an interest in creative endeavours. Adding these figures, FE colleges that claim to value creativity, innovation or enterprise make up only 30% of the total pool of publicly funded education provision

### *How is creativity valued in the Professional Standards for Teachers?*

Societal standards are another aspect of culture that may promote or neglect development of creativity skills. I found that although Professional Standards for Teachers make expectations regarding development of language, literacy and numeracy skills, there is no specific reference to creativity in these standards.

Appendix 8: Findings 5 shows the expected professional standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector published by (LLUK, 2005)

These standards “describe, in generic terms, the skills, knowledge and attributes required of those who perform the wide variety of teaching and training roles undertaken within the sector with learners and employers.” (LLUK, 2005: 3)

I was very familiar with the long list of expected professional standards, having completed my second PGCE qualification from 2007 to 2009 (my first PGCE specialised in teaching 5 to 9 year olds so, later in my career, I chose to complete a PGCE specialising in the post-compulsory education sector). When I completed this second PGCE, I applied for QTLS status with the Institute for Learning (IfL) and this meant that in addition to my prior qualifications and teaching experience, I had to produce evidence of meeting the professional standards in all domains as follows:

- Domain A: Professional values and practice
- Domain B: Learning and teaching
- Domain C: Specialist learning and teaching
- Domain D: Planning for learning
- Domain E: Assessment for learning
- Domain F: Access and progression

Within each of these domains, a teacher is expected to demonstrate values, knowledge and understanding in their teaching practice. For those who are looking for creativity, inclusion and support for development of this skill may be perceived under the broad umbrella of equality and diversity. There are ample references indicating promotion of a fair and inclusive approach for example:

“Teachers in the lifelong learning sector value all learners individually and equally. They are committed to lifelong learning and professional development and strive for continuous improvement through reflective practice. The key purpose of the teacher is to create effective and stimulating opportunities for learning through high quality

teaching that enables the development and progression of all learners.” (LLUK, 2005)

The importance of valuing the learner experience, their aspirations, and creating an inclusive learning environment is highlighted in several domains of the professional teaching standards. The extracts in the table below show various references in the professional standards that may be conducive to development of creativity skills even though they do not specifically promote this skill:

Table 8.11 'Findings 7b' Extracts from Professional Teaching Standards (LLUK, 2005)

<p><b>Domain A: Professional values and practice</b></p> <p>Teachers in the lifelong learning sector value:</p> <p>AS 1 All learners, their progress and development, their learning goals and aspirations and the experience they bring to their learning.</p> <p>AS 2 Learning, its potential to benefit people emotionally, intellectually, socially and economically, and its contribution to community sustainability.</p> <p>AS 3 Equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to learners, the workforce, and the community</p> <p><b>PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING</b></p> <p>Teachers in the lifelong learning sector know and understand:</p> <p>AK 1.1 What motivates learners to learn and the importance of learners' experience and aspirations.</p> <p>AK 2.1 Ways in which learning has the potential to change lives.</p> <p>AK 2.2 Ways in which learning promotes the emotional, intellectual, social and economic well-being of individuals and the population as a whole.</p> <p>AK 3.1 Issues of equality, diversity and inclusion.</p> <p><b>PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE</b></p> <p>Teachers in the lifelong learning sector:</p> <p>AP 1.1 Encourage the development and progression of all learners through recognising, valuing and responding to individual motivation, experience and aspirations</p> <p>AP 2.1 Use opportunities to highlight the potential for learning to positively transform lives and contribute to effective citizenship.</p> <p>AP 2.2 Encourage learners to recognise and reflect on ways in which learning can empower them as individuals and make a difference in their communities.</p> <p>AP 3.1 Apply principles to evaluate and develop own practice in promoting equality and inclusive learning and engaging with diversity.</p>
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The extracts in Table 'Findings 7b' illustrate that although Professional Standards for Teachers make expectations regarding development of language, literacy and numeracy skills, there is no specific reference to creativity in these standards.

### *How does Ofsted value creativity through its publications?*

Ofsted does not express an explicit cultural concern (at the level of its corporate culture: vision, mission and values) for development of creativity skills in Further Education Colleges as can be seen by examining its main publications: The Handbook for Inspection of Further Education Colleges; The Common Inspection Framework and the Ofsted Annual Inspection Reports.

### *Handbook for the Inspection of Further Education Colleges (2012)*

The Handbook for the Inspection of Further Education Colleges (Ofsted, 2012d) is the main instrument that stipulates the ethos and values, in other words the cultural norms which need to be adhered to during each Ofsted inspection. There is no guidance in this Handbook, often referred to as the “Bible” for inspections, about development and recognition of creativity skills in the curriculum.

A word related to the concept of creativity appears in this Handbook only once and it guides inspectors on their judgment about teachers’ use of resources:

“how effectively and **creatively** staff use resources, including accommodation, equipment and technology, and specialist advice and guidance, to promote and support learning “ (Ofsted, 2012d: 49)

A word related to the concept of innovation also, only appears once in the entire Handbook, guiding inspectors in their judgement about the providers’ responsiveness to local and national needs:

“All of the provider’s activities demonstrate the pursuit of excellence through **innovative** responses to local and national need, and, over a sustained period



of time, an uncompromising ambition to improve performance constantly, or maintain the highest levels of performance, for all learners, including those in subcontracted provision. “ (Ofsted, 2012d: 63)

### Common Inspection Framework (2012)

Words related to the concepts of creativity, innovation and enterprise do not feature at all in the Common Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2012c)

### Ofsted Annual Reports from 2012 to 2015

There is no reference to creativity in the Ofsted Annual Report for 2012.

The Ofsted Annual Report for 2013/14 claims that:

“The 20 providers visited for our good practice survey on teaching, learning and assessment had overcome often significant barriers to provide excellent teaching and training and then to sustain these high standards.”

One of the seven themes that inspectors identified as leading to these providers becoming “outstanding” was:

“promoting innovation and providing strong support for using new ideas and approaches”

In the Ofsted Annual Report for 2014, a case study demonstrates the importance assigned to enterprise skills

*“Case study:*

*Advice and guidance for career choices is systematic and effective throughout the school. Links with businesses are particularly strong and impact significantly on the development of enterprise and employment skills. The Comenius Project involves pupils setting up small businesses, such as producing beeswax products and developing 'Caf, Paramo' links with a community in the Dominican Republic. Teachers use opportunities such as these to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and enterprise skills.* " Heathfield Community School, Ofsted Annual Report (2014)

The Ofsted Annual Report (2014) reports that when parents were asked:

"whether schools were doing enough to prepare young people for the world of work. The most common view from parents was that there were important gaps in what their children were learning. They suggested a wide range of topics and skills that they felt their children would need in the future that they were concerned may be lacking:

- computing and technology
- spoken language and the ability to present orally
- creativity and self-expression
- the ability to manage finances
- entrepreneurialism
- social skills and teamwork
- character traits like resilience, discipline and resourcefulness."

This finding by Ofsted confirms my own findings through public engagement communication where parents including business owners, professionals and non-professionals have expressed similar concerns about the lack of development of creativity skills, both in their own school experience and in the experience of their children too.

According to the Ofsted Annual Report (2014):

“Inspectors have sharpened their focus from September 2015 on the extent to which schools prepare pupils for the world of work and make effective links with local businesses. In a thematic report to be published next year, Ofsted will identify how well schools help pupils to develop crucial employability and enterprise skills through both academic and vocational routes.”

Although these annual reports indicate the importance of enterprise and creativity skills in schools, albeit quite superficially and briefly, there is **no reference to development of creativity skills in Further Education Colleges, on vocational business studies courses** attended mainly by 16 to 19 year olds. This indicates a lack of priority and value attached to development of creativity skills in the Ofsted culture regarding inspection of Further Education Colleges.

#### *How do TES readers and writers value creativity?*

Promotion of creativity skills may also be influenced by what educators read. The Times Education Supplement (TES) is a UK based magazine read by educators around the world. In 2016, the print circulation is around 50,000. According to one of its Further Education Editors,

“The magazine features news and analysis on the main issues facing the education system. However, increasingly there has been a shift towards including more pedagogy pieces written by principals, teachers and other practitioners ..... I believe the magazine reflects the main issues of interest to professionals in the education sector.” S. Exley, Further Education Editor, 2016

I have been a reader of the TES since my early teaching career in the 80s although admittedly, in those days I bought the magazine because of its job advertisements. I changed jobs every year or two in the first ten years of my teaching career and the TES was instrumental in helping me find several of the teaching posts I have held. In more recent years, especially when I started to research for my PhD, I have actually read some of the weekly articles.

I have often wondered how the education culture that the TES readership represents is catered for in the selection of the articles. I asked one of the TES Editors, S. Exley, the following question:

“How are decisions made about which articles get selected and which do not?”

The response I received was:

“Each section of the magazine has an editor with responsibility for commissioning and editing the content. The editor has to make a judgement call on what issues and themes will be of most interest to the magazine’s readership, including both classroom practitioners and those in senior leadership positions. It’s important for us to have an ongoing dialogue with the teaching profession to make sure our content remains relevant and interesting.”

Based on my assumption that the TES readership and writers represent our current education culture, I searched for articles with the key words “Ofsted” and “creativity” and found 329 from 17 March 1995 to 13 May 2016. Even though I am focusing on the period September 2012 to August 2015 regarding the Ofsted inspections, I wanted to access a broad a range as possible regarding the discourse around Ofsted and creativity as culture changes less swiftly than Ofsted inspection frameworks. In skimming through the 329 TES articles, I found two main themes advocating the importance of creativity skills in education:

1. Business and Economic reasons
2. Personal Development reasons

## Business and Economic Reasons for development of creativity skills

One of the TES writers in 2009, reminded us of the optimistic arguments favoring development of creativity skills, put forward by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural (1999):

“Ten years ago, a report was published that in many ways defined the optimism that characterised much of New Labour's early approach to education in England. All Our Futures: **Creativity**, Culture and Education argued that Britain's success in the 21st century would be dependent on the intellectual capital of our creative sectors: the nation's schools needed to make **creativity** a cornerstone of its teaching.”

TES 12June2009

The “All Our Futures” Report seems to have made a very significant impact on some stakeholders in education, such as those represented by this TES writer who reminds us of the business case for development of creativity skills, for example creating jobs from ideas. However, the report, which made specific recommendations for Ofsted in terms of development of creativity skills, does not seem to have made any lasting impact on the Ofsted inspection process and in my experience, the inspectors I spoke with during my time with the organisation from 2007 to 2015, did not consider the report to be of high relevance to the inspection process.

A writer in 2013 highlighted the growing demand for Scottish teachers due to their creativity and innovation:

“**Creativity** and innovation are equally high on the agenda of qualities sought. These are areas which many Scottish teachers have developed in recent times, as a result of the emphasis shifting and more autonomy being granted to them.”

TES22March2013

Teachers in England complain about decreasing autonomy whereas according to this fairly recent article dated March 2013 in the TES, suggests that Scottish

teachers are benefitting from a higher degree of autonomy. Although it is not in the remit of the current research to explore cultural differences, it may be an interesting avenue to explore in future research.

Articles dated 2010 and 2004, confirm that employers value creativity skills:

"I employ people based on a judgment about their **creativity** and experience."

TES24December2010

"**Creativity**, it seems, is a highly marketable commodity. The "creative industries" are the fastest growing part of the British economy. They employ around 1.4million people and contribute more than Pounds 100 billion each year to the UK economy."

TES27February2004

"I am genuine in saying my experience in talking with employers is that what they really want is enthusiasm and **creativity** and passion,"

TES27March2015

The article from which the quote above dated February 2004 has been extracted, argues that "the jobs that today's primary children will do have not yet been invented" therefore teaching them to be "flexible" and "free-thinking" is of utmost importance for their career prospects.

It is not just students who opt to do Arts subjects that need to develop creativity skills; it is all students that will need these skills in their careers. For example, a writer in the TES on 4 December 2015 noted that:

"At some point those plumbers, vehicle mechanics and bricklayers may go on to start businesses of their own, venturing into the world of marketing and publicity. Surely, then, we have a responsibility to light the creative spark in those learners, too?"

TES4December2015

## Personal Development Reasons for developing creativity skills

There are many advocates for developing creativity skills to nurture the well-being and personal development of students. For example, a writer in the TES on 15 May 2015 emphasised that in addition to well-known proponents of the creative approach for example Sir Ken (Robinson, 2011) and Alistair McConville (Professional, 2014a), we “need to acknowledge the many teachers and leaders who appreciate the value of a creative approach and stand up for the cause of supporting children to develop as rounded individuals”.

TES15May 152015

Observations of the personal development benefits arising from a creative education were reported by a TES writer in October 2008 who claimed that:

“Creative education is a balance between teaching the basic knowledge and skills, encouraging innovation and taking risks. There is no doubt that the children are enjoying their time in school, but we have also seen improvements in results and in their self-esteem, behaviour, general knowledge and capacity to improve. When children find their creative strengths, it can have an enormous impact on their self-confidence and on overall achievement.”

TES17October2008

These observations about the increase in confidence and self-esteem are echoed by other TES writers, for example, in February 2004:

"Since we began to foster **creativity**," says Jane Loder, "the children have shown a huge improvement in terms of attitude, self-esteem and social skills. So teachers are happier too."

27February2004,

The political debate about the importance of developing creativity skills in state funded education is well stimulated by a relatively recent writer in the TES who in February 2015 commented on relevant research, surmising that:

**“Creativity** and the arts are being "squeezed out" of schools, with pupils from low-income families hardest hit, according to a major report. A commission led by the University of Warwick to examine the value of culture in British society warns that the most deprived students are missing out on opportunities in the creative industries. The report ([bit.ly/FutureCulture](http://bit.ly/FutureCulture)), drawn up by academics and cultural leaders, calls for evidence of "excellent cultural and creative education" to be a prerequisite for an "outstanding" **Ofsted** grading.”

TES20February2015

Also alluding to the political concerns around the plight of children from poorer backgrounds, a writer in the TES in March 2004 complained that:

“Middle-class parents are moving their children to private schools because the state system is losing its soul and its spirit.”

5March2004

As discussed in Chapter 4, Culture and Creativity, poverty does indeed hinder development of creativity (Stepanossova and Grigorenko, 2006: 236) (Barron, 1969: 125) which supports the argument in favour of addressing the needs of students from impoverished environments by prioritising development of creativity skills in education, which more affluent students may more easily be able to develop in their time away from school. Indeed, teaching creativity skills to students from poorer environments may give them the support they need to develop the self-esteem and confidence to be treated fairly in a competitive work environment. For example, a writer in the TES in July 2010 is convinced that:



“Once **creativity** is grasped, it has the power to transform individuals and schools.”

TES23July2010

Articles in the TES on the topic of creativity and Ofsted provide evidence that creativity skills are sought by employers; that creativity skills are empowering not only in business but also personal development and that there is a wide range of advocates for development of creativity skills in education based on political and professional justifications.

### *How do FE teachers value and promote creativity skills?*

Business teachers recognise and value the importance of creativity skills for both business and personal development reasons. In the business environment, students need to demonstrate creativity in expressing their potentially unique contribution in adding value to their work place; at a personal development level, students develop their confidence, raise their self-esteem and learn from mistakes and failures when they are encouraged to take risks and to be creative.

My interviews with eleven business studies teachers currently working in eleven separate Further Education Colleges across England, highlighted two broad themes when they justified their advocacy of creativity skills in the business curriculum. Like the TES writers, the main themes that business teachers expressed related to business & economic and personal development reasons for teaching creativity skills.

## Business and economic reasons for promoting creativity skills

One of the teachers highlighted the inspirational aspect of creativity which has the impact of improving the bottom line and profitability in business.

“....: the best outcome is that it would inspire other employees to also be like that and essentially any business the bottom line is that business wants to make money so that would be the best outcome for the business I suppose is that they're making more money from having all of these creative ideas, a creative culture in the workforce and whether that's done by having beers after work on a Friday or having an inspirational speaker come in, it wouldn't matter if ...creativity can breed can't it ...if you're with other people that are creative then that will definitely help you explore your own creativity in your own individual way.”

FE Business Teacher Reference: T1000040216JA

Another teacher emphasised the importance of remaining up to date with creative technology:

“...I think really it's got to be the use of up-to-date new techniques as I said earlier technology is moving in a vast rate when one I don't know the latest IT gadgets is the wrong word, IT media or medium, no sooner is it out then there's something else coming along and it it's the use of the use of relevant up-to-date technology which in itself is creative, technology is creative.”

FE Business Teacher Reference: T1400110116MH

Some of the teachers interviewed expressed disappointment that creativity, an important employability skill, is not featured in the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework, for example:

“....I think it's an area that needs developing, it's an area that needs focusing on obviously coming from industry to be successful in business you need to be creative. I think it's something there that if we could develop that in students then they're going to be more employable. I think I personally would like to see an emphasis on creativity from the common inspection framework. Whether, when and if that happens I don't know but I think it's certainly something that we are missing and lacking in education.. I've said virtually

from day one when I came into teaching and this to a certain extent links with creativity, we're far too classroom-based theory and not practical real-life brief situations and I think it would promote creativity if we had a more practical element to the curriculum rather than theory. So I think it is something I would welcome in the common inspection framework, I would welcome creativity aspect because I think it is a very very good employability skill."

FE Business Teacher Reference: T1400110116MH

Some business teachers recognised the importance of creativity skills in enabling the students to stand out from the crowd when progressing on to higher education or the workplace:

"I think it's vital because as I said earlier, once the students are in front of an employer or an interview for UCAS let's say, and the personal statements, they've got to demonstrate that they did something more than every other student in the room that's got the same certificate....so, if they can use these skills of creativity, they can demonstrate what they have done, how far they've come, who they have been liaising with; what contacts they have made; how they negotiated; all these skills are vital for when they get to the bigger world. It's all very different outside of the classroom as our students find out when they organise these events."

FE Business Teacher Reference: T16000701168AB

One of the teachers interviewed reported on research she had conducted with her level 4 students confirming the importance of creativity in the work environment. As a teacher working with both level 3 and level 4 students, she was aware that students on level 4 are encouraged to express creativity in their work and they are rewarded with marks for doing so; level 3 students on the other hand are not awarded extra marks for creativity in the current vocational BTEC Business Studies courses.

".....from the research I've done with our level 4 students, you know, one of the top skills that employers look for is innovation and creativity along with leadership and management so it is recognised that that skill is needed

by employers, but you're right, it is not embedded in our programs, we're not measuring how creative and innovative our students are. we are starting to develop level 4 programmes and innovation but we aren't delivering level 3 programs in innovation and maybe that should be a module that should be added to BTEC programmes or we look at sort of what we offer, maybe in terms of employability and there is an innovation and creativity element to deliver but the College won't do that because there will be a financial implication of that unless it is seen as something which is being measured externally."

FE Business Teacher Reference: T1730160316ML

### Personal development reasons for promoting creativity skills

Some teachers made it clear that the rationale for developing creativity skills was not merely for business and economic reasons but for a much deeper purpose, such as transforming the world that we live in, for example:

"It's important for me that they get their qualification and at the same time I want my learners to change the world. Because I'm not going to be doing it. And certainly the people that are in control at the moment and this is not some grand conspiracy theory but generally the people that seem to be in control of things people of import people that have got the power are not going to change the world. So I place a great deal of hope in young people so I want them to change the world...I don't want them to just be good employees I don't want them to be just good citizens in the notion of their contribution that they can make on an individual basis. I want them to do big things. So if I can help in that which is a ridiculous idea I know I can get young people to go out and change the world...if I can get them to think different about the important question things and stuff and I don't mean some sort of in some sort of revolutionary ferment I'm just talking about questioning the way things are and maybe the way things might be for example then that's good but I also recognise that they have to get their qualification so it can help them get into university or get them onto some kind of employment pathway or into some kind of training after their course I will do my very best to do that as well"

FE Business Teacher Reference: T1130270116WA

There was a shared consensus amongst the teachers I interviewed that there is a relationship between creativity, confidence and high self-esteem and that they encourage their students to take risks and to be willing to learn from mistakes, for example:

“I suppose I think that it's about expression ... it's about students being able to express themselves. And I think that's quite important. About students not being afraid to be different and coming up with different responses. And so they can take that into the workplace and not afraid to be different. Because I think creativity in the workplace essential”

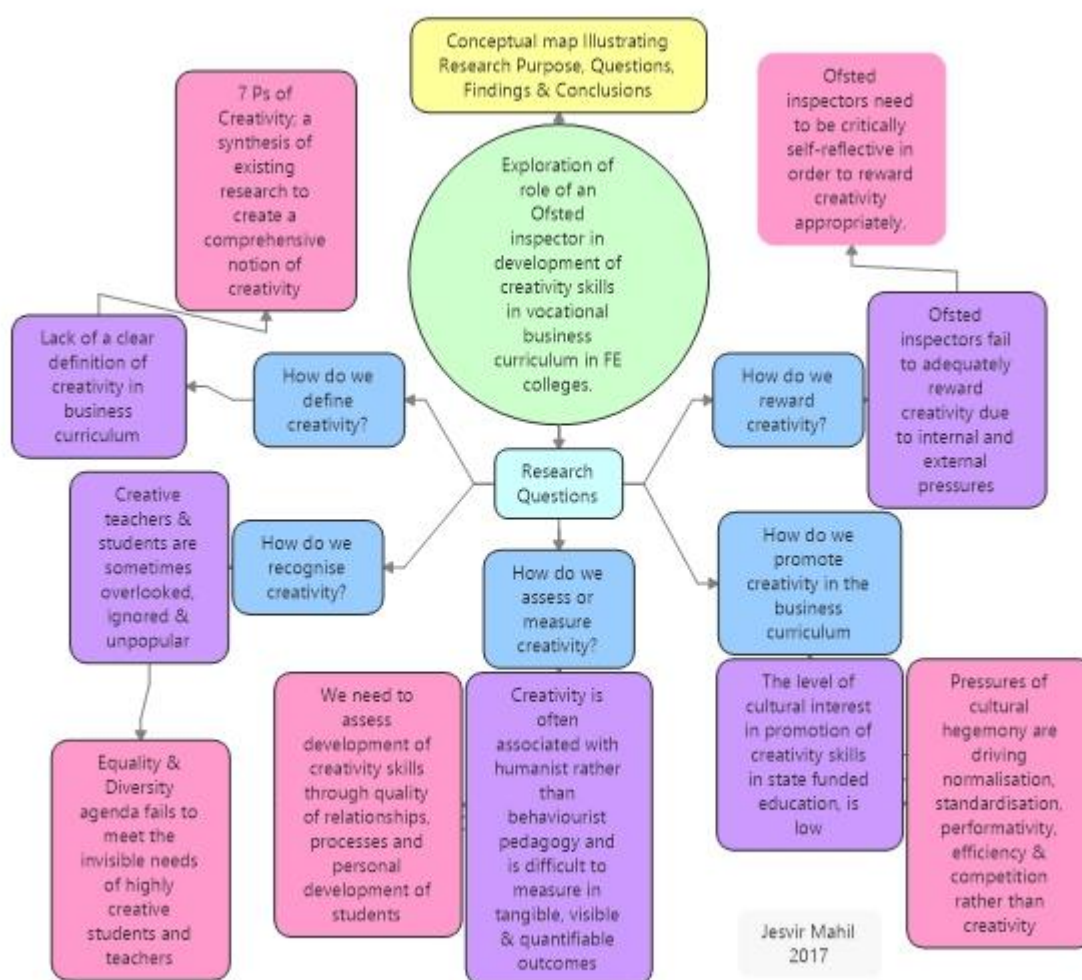
*FE Business Teacher Reference: T1800060116BG*

Although at the individual level, I found support and advocacy for promotion of creativity skills, I found that at the cultural level of visions, missions and values of Further Education Colleges, Ofsted and societal gatekeepers such as Professional Standards, there is very limited evidence that creativity skills are being promoted.

## Chapter 9: Discussion

The conceptual map below (Figure 8.1) summarises my five research questions (blue boxes); related findings (purple boxes) and conclusions (pink boxes)

Figure 8.1: Conceptual map linking research questions, findings and conclusions



This research enabled me to reflect deeply on my own role as an Ofsted inspector in development of creativity skills in the vocational business curriculum and to gain clear insights by looking at the education system from multiple perspectives: student; teacher; inspector. I found the role of cultural hegemony, and surveillance which

includes normalisation, standardisation and performativity to be most interesting.

Therefore, I will begin by discussing research question 5 (How do we promote creativity in the business curriculum?) highlighting factors that potentially undermine creativity such as cultural hegemony and factors that enable creativity to flourish such as trust, diversity and shared linguistic interpretations. Each of the other four research questions will then be discussed in turn.

Question: How do we promote creativity in the business curriculum?

***Finding 5: The level of cultural and societal interest in promotion of creativity skills in state funded education is low.***

When I found an apparent low level of cultural interest in development of creativity skills, I reflected on the notion of cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1999) which suggests that there may be underlying systemic pressures, promoting values such as efficiency, standardization and competition, which are in conflict with development of creativity skills.

### Socialisation for the workplace

Cultural hegemony, referring to the dominance of particular cultural norms and values, influences what is included in course curricula and what remains marginal or optional. The dominant ideology also determines the purpose of education. It is generally agreed that the purpose of compulsory, state funded education is to prepare individuals for their place in society and the workplace.

However, the past few decades have shown that a person's place in society and their work environment is unlikely to be predictable. In fact, John Holt was warning about this lack of predictability of the skills people would need in the workplace, in 1965 when he suggested that we should teach children to love learning instead of filling them with information and knowledge they may never need, (Holt, 1965: 173)

“In terms of knowledge and skills that they will require, at best, we can prepare our students for an uncertain future”.

However, some skills, for example conformity or flexibility have been associated with success in the workplace whereas skills such as creativity are not ubiquitous in their



appeal. Those who are in alignment with the status quo tend to progress in their careers through conformity rather than creativity.

Educators such as Dewey, Freire, Rogers and Chomsky have all advocated the importance of freedom and creativity but their philosophies have often been criticised when so called progressive schools have produced undesirable results. For example, Ausubel et al. (1978: 467) argued that without structure and discipline, “aggressive pupils become ruthless, whereas retiring children become even more withdrawn”. Moreover, Ausubel et al. (1978: 467) warn that progressive methodologies may produce citizens who fail to learn what is expected of them by the societies in which they live and they may develop unrealistic expectations that their society cannot fulfil.

The overriding cultural hegemony, creates and empowers the ‘common sense’ as described by the philosopher Antonio Gramsci, which makes it seem obvious that we need a workforce that conforms to the status quo, to ensure harmony and productivity. However, people respond to the cultural context of hegemony in diverse ways.

My research findings illustrated two distinct profiles of highly creative students; the positive profile included attributes such as being popular, hardworking and influential and negative attributes such as being unpopular, lazy and disruptive. The interesting thing about this finding is that at first glance it seems that there are two types of creative people but using a systems thinking perspective, I realised that like the Chinese yin/yan concept where masculine and feminine energy merges and transforms into the other, creative people can be either popular or unpopular,

hardworking or lazy, influential or disruptive, depending on the cultural context in which they find themselves.

This synthesis of positive and negative traits which may describe the same creative person, raises ethical questions about the 'student profiles' that teachers are expected to write in formal compulsory education, labelling students as "hard-working" or "popular" when those labels may pressurise them to behave in that manner constantly. If our self- confidence, the influence we have on others and our relationship with the work we do, is fluid, malleable and adaptive, then is it fair to be socialised, through student profiling, into accepting rigid beliefs about our identity, such as whether we are creative or not; whether we are influential or disruptive?

#### Vision, mission and value statements

The education culture which may encourage students to behave one way or another is often apparent in the organisation's vision, mission and value statements. In the context of business, there is general consensus that vision, mission and value statements exert a powerful cultural influence in the internal and external relationships of the organisation, for example, Wartnaby (2014), (Waddock, 2012, Scott, 1993, Gurley et al., 2015)

Vision, mission and value statements, inform and persuade major stakeholders, including the students, the staff and local employers, what the organisation considers to be its main priorities; its reason for existing and its strategies for how it intends to add value to the community.

Expressing the cultural ideology of an organization, these vision, mission and value statements serve to manufacture consent for various strategies implemented to meet

the desired aims of these values. For example, currently the Prevent strategy published online by HM Government (2011) designed to avoid terrorism purports to fulfil the values of safety and respect. However, there may be alternative implicit values that are being advocated, such as those suggested by Fairclough when he claims that:

“Ideology is the prime means of manufacturing consent.” (Fairclough, 2001: 3)

Based on my analysis of 235 FE college websites in July 2016, I found that only 7% specifically promoted the value of creativity in either their vision, mission or value statements. In contrast, 33% (78 out of the 235 FE colleges sampled) prioritised the value of respect in the vision, mission and value statements. The implication is that it is culturally considered to be more important to promote the value of respect than the value of creativity.

On reflection, we may find that the value of respect is encompassed within the value of creativity; that the value of creativity may be much deeper, more useful and more powerful than respect although, without respect, creativity is unlikely to thrive. Using the paradigms of Antonio Gramsci, it could be argued that the value of respect is ‘common sense’ and related to conformity, whereas the value of creativity is ‘good sense’ and associated with challenges to the status quo.

## Surveillance

One of the ways in which cultural hegemony exerts its power and influence to maintain the status quo, is through surveillance. Foucault (1980) explained surveillance using the metaphor of the Panopticon, an architectural design for prisons with a glass tower in the centre, which Foucault refers to as ‘the eye of

power', surrounded by multi-storey circular rows of prison cells with glass walls, at the perimeter. The dramatic breakthrough of this architectural design is that prisoners believe they are being watched even when they are not. This Panopticon metaphor is relevant to the process of Ofsted inspections which exert their 'discipline and punishment' as explained by Foucault (1980) even when they are not physically present. Under the 360° 'controlling gaze' of the eye of power of Ofsted, everyone is watching everyone else and at the same time being watched. So even when Ofsted inspectors are not physically present, the inspection system manages to discipline and punish through what Foucault calls, its 'regimes of truth'.

### Normalisation

One of these 'regimes of truth' are the national average statistics for success rates in FE colleges. These are used to normalise education through benchmarks comparing the performance of each college with the 'norm' which is the national average.

Colleges are expected to remain significantly above the national average, aiming for 100% success rate. Falling significantly below the national averages triggers a response from the 'eye of power' which can result in Ofsted inspectors being sent in to the organisation. Critically reflective teachers often experience 'demoralisation and self-laceration' (Brookfield, 1995: 2) even without the physical presence of Ofsted inspectors, when they fall on the wrong side of these national averages.

Normalisation does not take into account the personal needs of the students and it does not account for the cultural context in which they are performing. Rather than measuring the performance and achievement of students in relation to other members of the group, let alone strangers from very different socio-cultural contexts around the country, Greenwood and Gaunt (1994: 150) argue that each student

should be assessed against their own personal targets. Moreover, normalisation does not encourage skills that are not the 'norm' for example creativity.

## Standardisation

In addition to normalisation, cultural hegemony exerts itself in the drive towards standardisation. So-called 'best practice' teaching strategies have become ritualised in lesson planning and delivery. For example, teachers are expected to set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic & timed) goals which are often limited to tangible, evidence based outcomes related to successful completion of the course. Through SMART goals, it can be very difficult to evaluate learning which is invisible, creative and likely to express itself in the long term rather than the short term. As a result, that kind of learning becomes incidental and marginalised rather than a priority.

It is also standard practice that students need to be given detailed feedback on their work, and this is often done without reflection on whether the student and teacher is ready to provide meaningful feedback that the student is prepared and willing to utilise. Without reflection, the standard practice of providing detailed feedback often means hours of teachers' time wasted marking work and adding comments which students will largely ignore. The standard practice of setting up group work and then visiting each group to monitor their progress, ignores research suggesting that such overbearing presence of the teacher may inhibit development of creativity skills.

Standardisation, based on behaviourist pedagogy favours "stimulus > response > reinforcement" attainment of tangible outcomes and it overlooks the important role played by humanist pedagogy in creating learning environments that generate trust, freedom of choice and deep dialogue which may not lead to tangible short-term

outcomes but may be pivotal in stimulating insights and causing transformation at a broader spectrum than could be measured by SMART goals.

Standardisation is inimical to development of creativity because it relies on the familiar instead of creating space for new ideas and it tends to overlook the value of learning experiences which do not lead to tangible outcomes recognised by gatekeepers in education such as Ofsted.

### Performativity

The teaching profession is increasingly reliant on performativity which includes measuring the performance of teachers through graded lesson observations and linking their performance albeit implicitly, to the outcomes achieved by their students in terms of qualifications and grades. Ball (2003) explains that performativity is a method of control which leads to professionals being inauthentic and in conflict with their own personal values when they are obliged to participate in the construction and maintenance of 'fabrications'.

One of the themes I identified in my data is that performativity related to Ofsted inspections, creates fear, stress, pressure and anxiety, which is not conducive to creativity. This fear and anxiety is often related to the high stakes involved in receiving a favourable inspection judgment. Funding, reputation and community support may be enhanced or diminished by the content of an Ofsted inspection report so it is natural that not only members of staff but students too, feel obliged to perform to the best of their ability. Research, for example that of (Amabile, 1996) illustrates that pressure to perform blocks creativity, so it is not surprising that during an inspection week, there is likely to be less creativity than may occur under conditions of more subtle surveillance with less pressure to perform

Although it may seem reasonable to measure the success of the teacher in terms of how well their students achieve and their technical skills, Steinberg (1980: 93) argued that examinations deaden the curriculum, warning that:

“Teachers concerned about their reputation for successful teaching, as measured by the success of their students on examinations, feel pressured to concentrate their efforts on preparing their students for exams, especially if these are school wide or nation wide exams, which permit comparative ranking of students by teacher and school.”

Teaching which is narrowly aimed at enabling students to pass exams, prevalent due to political pressures in education in 2016, seems to be having a deadening impact on the curriculum and undermining creativity, as Steinberg noted almost 40 years ago.

With so much emphasis on performativity, there may be little incentive for teachers to take risks in developing creativity skills. Instead, as Steinberg (1980: 93) argues:

“The teacher is reduced to machine operator. Learning is reduced to the mechanical process of ingesting bits of information and spewing them back in bits as called for.”

The creativity of both teachers and students alike, may be undermined by the pressures related to performativity as indicated by Brandes and Ginnis (1986: 29). They explain that the power of creative potential is always inherent in every human being and environment although this power may be suppressed and stifled in some environments, for example through didactic teaching where creativity is seen to be a threat. Moreover, Brandes and Ginnis (1986: 29) argue that:

“Teachers who operate within a traditional framework may feel that their own creativity is being stifled too as they sit down to mark yet another set of books.”

When teachers are under pressure to perform, there is a natural tendency that they will focus on mastering the skills and techniques that give them the highest degree of control in terms of generating successful outcomes, especially when being observed. This can lead to a very narrow range of tried and tested teaching strategies. Often, the success of these strategies relies on giving students very limited freedom of choice. The teacher is held solely responsible for defining and meeting the aims and objectives. Their performance is judged in relation to how well the students succeed and they are made accountable for the failure of each of their students. O'Leary (2013) found that teachers compromise their professional identity and use standardised processes in their attempt to aim for high observation grades and that Ofsted inspectors categorizes professionals into a four-point scale by grading them. O'Leary argues that when Ofsted gives a grade, based on their subjective judgment, people are manipulated into believing that the judgments have greater objectivity and authority than they in fact do.

Ofsted inspection reports are often used to create objectives to meet performativity standards. However, these reports are impersonal, standardised and often so 'sanitised' after the different stages of editing by HMI supervisors, the lead HMI and then the Ofsted quality assurance editing team, that they could be interpreted to endorse a wide variety of follow up actions depending on the prevailing agenda.

Evidence required for measurement and evaluation of performativity relies heavily on behaviourist approaches to collection and analysis of such information. As an Ofsted inspector I felt implicit pressures to favour a behaviourist approach and teaching methodology, even though the explicit Ofsted propaganda iterated that the inspection process does not favour any particular approach or teaching methodology. In practice, I found it very difficult to find and record the evidence of



learning required when a humanist approach or teaching style was being adopted. The inspection instruments, for example the Common Inspection Framework and the Handbook for Inspection emphasised the need to focus on outcomes rather than the process, the quality of extrinsic rather than intrinsic feedback and evaluations, for example. These are much easier to record, witness and measure with a behaviourist frame of reference rather than a humanist frame of reference. Given the pressures of short deadlines during an Ofsted inspection, learning that is too difficult to qualify is less likely to be reported than learning that is easier to record.

### Efficiency

State funded education is usually under pressure to prioritise efficiency and to demonstrate good value for money. Overt demands for efficiency were apparent at least 40 years ago when former Prime Minister, Callaghan (1976) made a speech warning that expectations for more resources in education would not be met, and urging educators to reconsider priorities in order to secure efficiency through skillful use of existing resources.

Efficiency is one of the reasons that large corporations grow through mergers and take-overs of smaller companies. It is also one of the reasons for over use of text books and pre-planned materials that save time for over worked teachers, often at the expense of creativity. Efficiency may also undermine empowerment in education, as discussed by Schwabenland (2006) who argues that even though empowerment can lead to greater efficiency in the long run, in the short term, people succumb to pressures whereby it is quicker, easier and more efficient to do things for others instead of enabling them to do it for themselves. Many teachers in my research interviews lamented about the lack of time available for them to be creative or allow students to develop creative skills in class. In order to complete the course

curriculum, teachers and students have to be very efficient in the way they use time and this often means delivering course content in a manner that is concise rather than creative.

The hegemonic political pressures are further illustrated by Bell and Harrison (1995: 194) who claim that all schools, colleges and universities have been pressurized to be accountable for efficiency and effectiveness and demonstrate value for money.

Efficiency is easily associated with behaviourist ideology which formed the basis of success of large industrial corporations, such as car manufacturing, based on well-refined efficiencies in production, and distribution of standardised components. Over the past 30 years of my career in education, I have witnessed this efficient, mass production of elements, in the classroom, when I have adopted a behaviourist (stimulus > response > reinforcement) teaching approach, using generic course materials, presented in small, easily digestible chunks which the students are able to regurgitate without the need for further creative processing. Shortage of time is the foe of most contemporary teachers, working full-time in FE colleges and under such circumstances, efficiency is deemed to be the best solution in the struggle for survival. Behaviourism is an ally of efficiency, saving time and therefore alleviating the stressful panic that you may not have time to cover the course content.

In my experience, the cost of efficiency, is rarely, if ever, questioned by Ofsted although it is often the concern of teachers. Regardless of whether they have consciously chosen the value of efficiency, they are framed in a cultural context where it is the most appropriate choice to be efficient rather than be creative.

## Competition

Business in a capitalist society thrives on competition so it is 'common sense' that we teach our business students to be competitive. However, Ausubel et al. (1978: 471) have noted that pedagogically, competition may inhibit learning if it stimulates too much fear, anxiety and stress.

In a competitive environment, the relatively small number of students who always win will gain in confidence. We need to weigh this against the relatively large number of students who do not win, or are often at the lowest rungs of the ladder. The perpetual losers may learn to constantly compare themselves unfavourably with their peers. Ironically, in setting up activities designed to teach competitiveness, we may inadvertently be setting our students up for failure if we have taught them to become accustomed to not winning most of the time.

Although the development of competitive skills may be essential to survive in business, it is also important to remember that collaboration is essential for development of creativity skills where synthesis of existing ideas is a key feature as explained by Schwabenland (2006: 113) who reports case study research findings illustrating that:

“When asked where the creative ideas came from they were always described as resulting from a number of disparate things coming together, whether these ‘things’ were people, teams or circumstances.”

Question: How do we define creativity in the business curriculum?

**Finding 1:** *There is lack of a clear definition of creativity in the business curriculum.*

My current research supported previous research (Mahil, 2013) that there is a lack of understanding of what we mean by the concept of creativity in the vocational Business Studies curriculum, distinct from its meaning in the Arts and Sciences, During my MBA (Master in Business and Administration) course from 1996 to 1998, I completed a module called Creativity and Innovation so I thought I was quite familiar with the concept of creativity. It was only when I completed my Action Research (Mahil, 2013) while teaching on vocational BTEC Business Studies courses in Further Education Colleges that I realised that my concept of creativity was not always shared or understood by my students. Shared understanding and expectations was an assumption I had made, leading to my disappointment in the quality of creativity that students put into their coursework (usually limited to colourful pictures copied and pasted from the internet (Mahil, 2014)). I realised the importance of clear communication in defining creativity so that teachers and students are aware of what is expected within the remit of the business curriculum, which may include activities within and external to the actual classroom.

My research findings indicate a general lack of clarity in defining creativity in the context of formal education, evident in the vagueness of responses I received from those I interviewed, and the TES articles I reviewed.

A fundamental difference in the definitions is based on whether we adopt an elitist rhetoric which argues that only a select few are creative (see Banaji and Burn (2010: 30) Ausubel et al. (1978: 584) or whether we favour a democratic rhetoric (Craft et al., 1997, Education, 1999, Robinson, 2011) willing to see creative potential in

everyone. Whether a teacher or student is motivated to develop creativity skills may depend on their position within this elitist or democratic point of view and whether they define creativity as a skill that can be taught or a talent that is an innate gift.

Some definitions of creativity indicate an Eastern perspective, suggesting that creativity is a matter of improving what already exists and others demonstrate a more Western approach, such as “pushing the boundaries” or “challenging existing assumptions. Rarely did the definitions in my data suggest that creativity is “purposeful and adds value in relation to objective”. Often, the definitions consisted of words that are commonly associated with creativity for example problem solving, unconventional and being different.

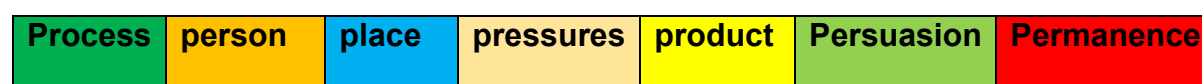
A criticism of the desire to have clear conceptual definitions of creativity is that it may be subject to a Western ideological bias which according to Badrinath (1996) (Schwabenland, 2006) results in denial of material that does not neatly fit into the limited definitions and/or a distortion of the matter so that it is forced to fit into the definition. However, I agree with Badrinath (1996) that using attributes associated with the concept may overcome this pressure. Therefore, instead of proposing a categorical definition of creativity, I highlight seven, less rigid attributes associated with the concept: person, product, process, pressures, persuasion, place and permanence.

### *What do we mean by creativity in business?*

Most of the existing research into creativity is contextualised within either Arts or Sciences. Within the confines of my sample, my current research findings, contextualised within the subject of vocational Business Studies in FE colleges, confirmed my assumption that there is a lack of understanding, amongst educators

and students in the business curriculum about what we specifically mean by creativity skills (distinct from its meaning in the Arts and Sciences about which much has already been written since the 1950s). My previous research findings (Mahil, 2013) indicated that this lack of a shared definition is one of the challenges that makes it difficult to recognise and promote creativity skills in the business curriculum. Even though there is not a linear but a cyclical relationship between the different elements of creativity, I will now discuss the importance of each element in the order in which they appear in my conceptual description of creativity (illustrated in Figure 9.1 below):

**Figure 9.1: 7 Ps of creativity**



#### *Process: How do I generate creativity?*

As a business teacher, I knew how to express my creativity in producing interesting lesson materials and *teaching creativity* but I was untrained and unaware of how to teach *for* creativity. Indeed, my initial starting point for my PhD thesis was the frustration I felt when I was spending so much of my time and energy *being creative myself* but not teaching my students to be more creative *themselves*.

#### *4 stage process of creativity and the role of the unconscious in incubation*

When I learnt about one of the earliest theories about the process of creativity, based on the research of Graham Wallas (1926) reported by (Armbruster, 1989: 178), I dismissed it as being useless for the classroom environment. This theory consists of four clear stages: preparation; incubation; illumination and verification. In the third stage, called 'incubation' it is assumed that the unconscious mind is working

on the creative project after a lengthy period of preparation and problem solving. Brown (1989: 5) explains this unconscious process of creativity by highlighting that “conscious but unsuccessful effort to solve a problem sets in motion an unconscious process that leads to a random combination of ideas, one of which may emerge as an appropriate creative solution.”

It is this stage of “incubation” that is most impractical for the classroom environment when students and other stakeholders, including Ofsted inspectors, want fairly instant outcomes, business teachers may feel they are setting themselves up for failure if they encourage processes that may require long periods of incubation, where nothing much seems to be happening at the conscious level, until months and perhaps years later when the ideas that were planted during the stage of preparation spontaneously germinate and bear fruit. But those outcomes may be recorded as evidence of success on someone else’s track record and the teacher who initially staged the process may have already been sacked for lack of hard evidence of learning.

The process of creativity is circular rather than linear. However, the Ofsted inspection process and inspection instruments including the CIF (Ofsted, 2012b) does not explicitly reward this “planting of seeds” without expectations of instant outcomes process of teaching and learning required as described by (Armbruster, 1989: 178) explaining how creativity occurs. Attempting to surmise the nature of learning occurring at the unconscious level is a great challenge; a competence that cannot be mastered rationally nor demonstrated authentically when we gather evidence to write reports in our role as Ofsted inspectors.

## Safety and Freedom

Using the metaphor of planting seeds, Rogers (1954: 146) describes the process of creativity using a farming metaphor. He argues that just like a farmer can only prepare the right conditions for the seed to germinate and sprout, we cannot force creativity to occur, merely prepare an appropriate environment for it through psychological conditions that favour the emergence of creativity, such as safety and freedom.

## Primary process cognition

Another aspect of the creative process is explained by Martindale (1989: 216) as being the difference between primary and secondary process cognition.:

“Primary process cognition occurs in normal states, such as dreaming and reverie, and in abnormal states, such as psychosis and hypnosis. It is autistic, free-associative, and analogical and tends to operate on concrete images rather than abstract concepts. Secondary process thought is the abstract, logical, reality-oriented thought of everyday waking consciousness. “

When students are day dreaming or in a state of “reverie” as explained by Martindale, it may be a necessary part of their process of creativity but it is rarely, if ever, recorded as such during formal lesson observations.

## Divergent vs convergent thinking

Another distinction between creative and non-creative thought processes is divergent and convergent thought which gave rise to numerous creativity tests based on the work of Guilford (1950) and Torrance who further developed these creativity tests.



Kneller (1965: 41) notes Guilford's concern that education as a whole has "concentrated too much on convergent thinking; it has shown the student how to reach answers that society considers correct. Within socially accepted limits it has taught evaluation or critical thinking, though generally with the emphasis that to every question there is one right answer."

### Low cortical arousal (boredom)

A common assumption is that the creative process requires a high level of interaction between teachers and students and that lessons have to be very exciting and stimulating. However, Martindale (1989: 218) challenges this notion, arguing that:

"In order for a person to be creative, as many nodes as possible must be simultaneously activated. How can this state be reached? The best way it can be reached is by being in a state of low overall cortical arousal."

This means that noisy, interactive, exciting lessons are likely to diminish creativity because they increase cortical arousal. Creativity requires low cortical arousal so classes where students seem to be bored may be the most conducive environments for creativity.

This is supported by relatively recent research, for example an article in the TES (9/01/2009) reported that:

"...boredom is an incentive for **creativity**, and should therefore be embraced in schools, claim academics who have done research in the subject. Esther Priyadharshini and Teresa Belton, of East Anglia University, have conducted research into the psychological significance and classroom implications of boredom".

The article goes on to report the researcher saying that instead of trying to eradicate boredom in class:

“..... teachers should use it (boredom) to their advantage, she said.  
"Whenever you read interviews with artists, musicians, philosophers, they say boredom links with the creative impulse. When you take time to shut down, it can lead to new ideas, but when you're being bombarded with stimuli, you don't have time to reflect”.

When we reward lessons with high grades because there was a high level of stimulation, enjoyment and overt activity, in our role as Ofsted inspectors, we do not usually reflect on the cost of all that activity in terms of the reduced space left for creativity and quiet self-reflection. We do not write in our reports that there was a good level of boredom, conducive to the process of creativity.

I am dyslexic and I don't hear very well. I need silence in order to think. To be creative, I need even more silence. Even though I personally don't like being a student in highly interactive lessons where the teacher insists on asking me questions, interrupting my flow of thought when I least expect it, I am slightly embarrassed to admit that those are the kind of lessons that I prided myself on creating. Those lessons were probably not ideal for people like myself, with invisible differences such as dyslexia, slight hearing impairments, or an introverted personality. However, they were graded highly when I was formally observed teaching and in turn, when I was an Ofsted inspector, I praised highly stimulating lessons where the sheer enthusiasm and passion of teachers and students produced outcomes but not necessarily any creativity

## Brainstorming and introverts

Brainstorming, devised by Osborn (1953) is another popular activity purported to stimulate the creative process, even though researchers on creativity such as Guilford (1959: 184) were keen to point out that:

“Although it is reported to bring about increased quantity of thinking production and to have some lasting, beneficial effects upon participants, there have been almost no reports of rigorous experiments designed specifically to test these impressions.”

Introverts such as Cain (2012) openly admit the discomfort we feel (I am also an introvert) in having to participate in group brainstorming events where a couple of dominant peers invariably lead the show while patronisingly making space for the slow thinkers, dyslexics, hard of hearing, introverts (the list could go on} to appear fully involved. Creative introverts need time and space alone in order to reflect and generate new ideas. Even though I am familiar with this need, being an introvert, as an Ofsted inspector I praised teachers for “effective monitoring to offer support to their students when required”. What this meant was that I observed teachers frantically going from student to student, asking them questions or responding to their questions, instead of sitting comfortably at their desk with a nice cup of tea and a newspaper, just letting students work things out for themselves, which in the long run, may induce much more independent and creative work.

## Meditation and mindfulness

Allowing the mind to think differently through processes such as mediation or mindfulness is also linked with the creative process. For example, Dowd (1989: 240) explains that:

“During meditation we temporarily suspend the “if-then” linear patterned way of thinking, in which every event has a cause and a result. This linear causal way of thinking is so ingrained in Western culture that it is difficult to realize that other ways of thinking exist. Creativity may be enhanced by adopting a

more circular way of thinking in which the focus is on relationships, possibilities, and recursive patterns, rather than on linear causality and single-outcome events.”

This endorsement of circular rather than linear thinking is reminiscent of the philosophical assumptions underlying the systems thinking framework. Even though meditation and its more secular version called “mindfulness” (Williams and Penman, 2012) have become well-accepted personal development strategies, especially for professionals and business people, in FE colleges such tools and techniques remain marginalised. Even though I have observed over a thousand business studies lessons in my role as an Ofsted inspector, Education Consultant and Executive Coach in FE, I have never to date, seen a lesson where students were encouraged to experiment with different ways of thinking, by using “mindfulness” for example, in the process of creativity. Such strategies are still only associated with so-called “Alternative Schools” which are often designed to cater for students for whom the mainstream system has undoubtedly failed.

### Creativity as a life force

The process of creativity can also be seen as a natural expression of life force. Advocates of a Darwinian view of creativity, for example Kneller (1965: 22) believe that:

“One of the consequences of Darwin’s theory of evolution was the notion that human creativity is a manifestation of the creative force inherent in life itself.”

Another leading proponent of the Darwinian view of creativity, Sinnott (1959: 113) suggests that “life itself is the creative process by virtue of its organising, pattern-forming, questing quality, its most distinctive character”. Similarly, Barron (1969: Vi) proposes that “Indeed a person is a form in process, and the evolution of the self in a creative person is an instance of the creative process in nature.”

Learning is a creative process in itself and despite our fallibility as teachers, consultants and inspectors, students are resilient and I am convinced that the creative process in classrooms is most apparent when we simply witness the evolution of our students as they visibly grow in confidence and gradually, invisibly, imperceptibly, become more independent with creative ideas that take us by surprise. As an Ofsted inspector, writing reports on the creative process of learning which is gradual, invisible and imperceptible is a challenge that too frequently remains ignored.

#### *Person: Who is creative and with whom?*

The person is often placed as the primary attribute in creativity but through the lens of a systems thinking perspective, the person is merely one aspect in a multitude of factors that cause creativity. Existing research on creative people, reviewed by Tardif and Sternberg (1988: 433) tends to consist of three general categories: cognitive characteristics; personality and motivational qualities; special events or experiences during one's development.

#### *Cognitive characteristics:*

Writing 27 years ago, Brown (1989:5) observed that creativity, at that time, was often seen to be merely an aspect of intelligence. In the three decades since then, there has been a great deal of further research and the distinctions between creativity and intelligence are clearer. For example, Hayes (1989: 136) dispels the false assumption that creative people have high IQs. He argues that there is not a direct correlation between high levels of creativity and high levels of intelligence and neither are the two mutually exclusive.

One of the differences between highly intelligent and highly creative people is that the latter tend to be better skilled at divergent thinking which Kneller (1965: 6) describes as “innovative, exploratory, venturesome” whereas the former tend to be better at convergent thinking, being more “cautious, methodical and conservative “

Moreover, Martindale (1989: 211) explains that “creative people must have high levels of self-confidence and ambition, perseverance, or interest, otherwise, they would be unable to bring their ideas to fruition.”

### Personality

Besides differences in cognitive characteristics, creative people are also observed to differ in their personality characteristics. For example, Kneller (1965: 62) highlights the traits of fluency, flexibility, and originality and Hayes (1989: 137) notes that “One of the most consistent observations about creative people is that they work very hard.” and that (Hayes, 1989: 139) creative people make an effort to acquire relevant knowledge and skills over a long period of time. Hayes found this long period of time to be “an initial 10-year period of silence, a rapid increase in productivity from year 10 to year 25, a period of stable productivity from year 25 to about year 45, and then a period of gradual decline.”

Creative people tend to be persistent in the face of failure and according to Kneller (1965: 62) this persistence is necessary to sustain their level of motivation “over long periods of time and in the face of formidable obstacles”. Besides persistence, Kneller (1965: 62) explains other character traits associated with creative people such as Intellectual playfulness, humour, nonconformity, and self-confidence, stating that:

When I say, therefore, that the creative person has an inner confidence, I mean that he has an ultimate faith, not necessarily in what he has done, but in what, given time and fortune, he can do. Despite all kinds of troubles – physical, financial, psychological – he is sustained ultimately by his faith in his creative powers. (p 62)

In the workplace, there are two distinct personality types of creative people according to Evans and Deehan (1988: 134): Innovators and Adaptors. They define Adaptors as being individuals who refine and improve existing systems without taking undue risks. On the other hand, they say that Innovators cause turbulence in the organization through their communication styles and recommendations for risky and difficult to implement changes.

This distinction between adaptors and innovators is reminiscent of the distinction between Eastern and Western concepts of creativity, refining and reshaping what already exists compared with identifying and filling in the gaps, causing ripples of change as a result.

### Devotion to work

Another characteristic of highly creative people is their devotion to their chosen work. Deep passion for the subject is essential to keep up the momentum for decades of devoted mastery. Hayes (1989: 137) notes that creative people are committed to working very hard on their subject which is essential for the extent of preparation required for creativity to occur:

There is wide agreement among researchers that preparation is one of the most important conditions of creativity.

Creative people are known to work hard over long periods of time, gaining the knowledge and skills in their chosen field before they become masters and able to make transformational changes.

The importance of hard work and commitment to long years of preparation, is highlighted by Barron (1969: 3), who concludes that great insights occur in the minds of those who are fully prepared by immersing themselves in the relevant subject to see hidden connections. Contrary to popular assumptions that original ideas appear out of nowhere, Barron favours the notion that:

You have to know a lot about the old to see the new. Barron (1969: 3)

## Motivation

Researchers note that there are differences in levels of motivation between those who are considered to be highly creative and those who are less so. For example, Hayes (1989: 144) argues that “ These differences in motivation then cause cognition differences, and these motivational and cognitive differences account jointly for the observed differences between creative and non-creative individuals.”

Intrinsic motivation of highly creative people striving for self-actualisation has been noted by researchers supporting the humanistic psychology approach, for example Rogers (1954: 140) and Hayes (1989: 144) suggesting that “a desire for self-actualisation” “would lead to a different type of creativity than that motivated by a desire for recognition, fame and fortune,” and Kneller (1965: 89) who observes that:

“In the most profound sense to be creative is to fulfil oneself as a person.

Each of us is a unique pattern of potentialities; each of us gives to and receives from life something that will never be repeated. Moreover, each of us



must either mould himself or allow external circumstances to mould him. The choice must be made again and again throughout our lives.”

Moreover, Kneller (1965: 30) highlights the importance of motivation in creativity, by drawing on the humanist psychology perspective of Erich Fromm, that “a person is genuinely happy only when spontaneously creating.” Kneller (1965: 30)

On the other hand, we are reminded, “the benefits of creativity can be diminished or negated altogether by the anxiety with which the creator awaits the verdict of others on his work.” Kneller (1965: 30)

The potential demotivation referred to above arises from expectations related to extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation. This difference in the impact of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation is reviewed by Hennessey (2004: 205) who summarises research conducted by (Amabile, 1983, 1996) demonstrating that “Intrinsic motivation is conducive to creativity, and extrinsic motivation is almost always detrimental.”

### Special events or experiences during one's development

Researchers support the common sense observation that creative people usually excel within a particular field in which they have become masters. For example, Van Gogh was an artist but he was not as creative in music whereas Beethoven was a masterful musician but not an adept writer comparable to Shakespeare for instance.

It is the interaction of various events that occur in a person's life, which may be a combination internal and external processes that lead to creativity. Rogers (1954: 139) supports this view, proposing that:

“My definition, then, of the creative process is that it is the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the

individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other.”

The interaction of various events can also diminish or distract a person from their creative expressions, for example Storr (1972: 184) suggests that life events such as falling in love, or at least becoming infatuated with someone, can interfere with a person's expression of creativity.

“Romantic infatuation is relevant to creativity in that it is sometimes possible to see the former replacing, or interfering with, the latter. Real love between real people does not interfere with creativity; but ‘the psychosis of normal people’ may certainly do so. Although romantic love has been the inspiration of much that is creative, especially lyric poetry, in instances where there is little chance of the love finding any fulfilment, an infatuation can seem to promise so complete an answer to life that everything else, including creative pursuits, becomes superfluous. Indeed, this seems regularly to be the case whilst infatuation runs its course. It is only after disillusion has supervened that the creative task of symbolisation and integration can be resumed.” Storr (1972: 184)

Another inhibitor or deterrent of creativity is that creative people are not always tolerated in their societies and they are often unpopular with their peers. For example, Dowd (1989: 241) reports that:

“Creative individuals have been accused of being maladjusted, antisocial, and antireligious. Creative children have earned the animosity of some teachers. Creative people have been vilified (Einstein) or even killed (Socrates). Thus, individuals should know that creativity is practised at some risk to themselves.”

Moreover, Getzels and Jackson (1962: 36) also report research indicating that high IQ students are more favoured by teachers than creative students. They explain that “The high IQ students value and disvalue the same objects and ideals as they believe their teachers do; the high creativity students do not.” This research has implications in terms of how creative students may be at a disadvantage when their work is being marked and graded and in terms of how well they do on a course where they are unpopular with staff and their peers.

### How do creative business people collaborate in creativity?

In formulating a definition of creativity that is contextualised within a business rather than Arts or Sciences domain, I believe that collaboration is one of the key distinguishing factors. Business people have to collaborate with others to survive as a profitable business. Current research on creativity has not specifically focused on how highly creative business people collaborate with others effectively. Most MBA (Masters in Business & Administration) degrees include modules where teamwork, often drawing on the work of Belbin, John Adair and the Quality Circles of Edwards Deming. However, the highly creative person, referred to as the “Plant” (the idea generator) in Belbin’s Teamwork theories, is never the protagonist or the leader of the pack. There is a lack of research currently that analyses or synthesises existing knowledge, pertinent to the business environment, about how highly creative people collaborate in the process of creativity to transform existing knowledge, services and products or to fill in the gaps where these are non-existent.

### *Pressures: What pressures block creativity?*

There are a variety of internal and external pressures that may have a detrimental impact on creativity, for example physiological factors, unconscious processes and poverty.

### Physiological factors

Although researchers who favour a democratic rhetoric of creativity argue that it is possible to teach creativity skills, there are nevertheless limitations to the extent to which teaching or training can overcome physiological barriers. For example, Martindale (1989: 226) suggests that creativity is unlikely to be determined wholly by environmental factors and therefore it is often difficult to train people to be more creative.

## Extrinsic rewards

Surprisingly, rewards designed to provide extrinsic motivation, have been shown to inhibit creativity. For example, Martindale (1989: 227) reviews the research of Amabile (1983b) which demonstrated the negative impact on creativity of surveillance and externally imposed deadlines, even if there was a reward for meeting these deadlines, for example payments for book deals.

In the classroom context, Kneller (1965: 76) believes that “an overemphasis on the acquisition of existing knowledge rather than an original use of it, a minutely organised curriculum as opposed to one encouraging the discovery of knowledge for oneself,” suppress creativity.

Kneller (1965: 88) clearly emphasises the need for formal education as a precursor to creativity rather than something that can be bypassed. He argues that we cannot subordinate formal education to the development of creative thinking because:

“successful creation demands both material for the imagination to work on and techniques for transforming that material into realised form. Sound creativity, in short, presupposes mental discipline through mastery of subject matter.” Kneller (1965: 88)

Hennessey (2004: 210) argues that extrinsic motivation is one of the “killers of creativity”. She draws on the work of Amabile and others to explain that deadlines, surveillance, competition and the prospect of having one’s work evaluated, have a damaging influence on creativity. When researchers investigated the behavior of participants of different ages, walks of life and even professionals whose livelihood depends on creativity, they were shown to be adversely affected by evaluations and external rewards.

She explains that (Hennessey, 2004: 214) it is a mistake to assume that incentives are always necessary to provide motivation. In fact, she argues, extrinsic motivators

can have a damaging impact when given for tasks that contain an intrinsic reward for students. She presents research illustrating that activities that students enjoyed when there was no external motivator became less appealing to them when an external reward was provided.

This research has implications for the value of gold stars and other rewards given to praise and provide incentives for good student performance in class.

### Emotional states

The impact of emotional states in either promoting or blocking creativity has been highlighted by Puccio and Gonzalez (2004: 393) who explain that “.... thinking abilities are often facilitated or inhibited by emotional states. Feeling states, such as love, hate, fear, curiosity, and excitement can either promote or block someone’s ability to think creatively. “

### Unconscious conflict

Not all the pressures that either stimulate or undermine creativity occur at the conscious level. Kneller (1965: 28) explains the Freudian view of creativity which assumes that “creativity originates in a conflict within the unconscious mind” and concludes that “ creativity and neurosis share the same source – conflict in the unconscious – and the creative person and the neurotic are driven by the same force, the energy of the unconscious.”. Kneller (1965: 30) argues that “Even as the suppression of the potentially creative impulses of the unconscious can cause neurosis, so the expression of these impulses can prevent it. In creative behaviour a person feels dignity, love and emotional well-being.”

## Chance

Some of the external pressures that have a detrimental impact on creativity are categorised as being simply “chance”. For example, Brown (1989: 25) reports on research conducted by Austin (1978), suggesting that we are all creative but external factors such as chance and good luck determine just how creative we are. Brown explains various levels of chance including simple “blind” luck; (serendipity) sagacity and the type of chance that favours “the prepared mind”. Furthermore, Brown explains the type of chance that results from personalised action, what Austin terms, “altamirage”, or “the quality of prompting good luck as a result of personally distinctive actions” (p. 203)

We all experience chance and good fortune to differing degrees and the perception that others are much luckier or fortunate than us can cause an inhibiting pressure that undermines creativity.

## Life force

The Darwinian perspective of creativity uses the metaphor of creativity as a life force, as explained by Kneller (1965: 22) who drawing on the work of the biologist Edmund Sinnott, believes that life, “is creative because it organises and regulates itself and because it is continually engendering novelties.”

Concurring with Kneller, Sinnott (1959: 113), suggests that “life itself is the creative process by virtue of its organising, pattern-forming, questing quality, its most distinctive character”.

Barron (1969: Vi) also advocates the Darwinian point of view of creativity, stating that “Indeed a person is a form in process, and the evolution of the self in a creative person is an instance of the creative process in nature.”

Some people naturally exude more health and life force than others and this may be dependent on their genetic constitution, what they can afford to eat, the home they can afford to live in and the life experiences they can afford. Therefore, there may be pressures related to poverty that weaken the expression of creativity.

### Safety and freedom

Humanist psychologists such as Rogers (1954: 146) argue that just like a farmer can only prepare the right conditions for the seed to germinate and sprout, we cannot force creativity to occur, merely prepare an appropriate environment for it through psychological conditions that favour the emergence of creativity, such as safety and freedom.

“From the very nature of the inner conditions of creativity it is clear that they cannot be forced, but must be permitted to emerge. The farmer cannot make the germ develop and sprout from the seed; he can only supply the nurturing conditions which will permit the seed to develop its own potentialities. So it is with creativity. How can we establish the external conditions which will foster and nourish the internal conditions described above? My experience in psychotherapy leads me to believe that by setting up conditions of psychological safety and freedom, we maximise the likelihood of an emergence of constructive creativity.” Rogers (1954: 146)

In environments without safety or freedom, we may assume, based on humanist psychology, that creativity is likely to be diminished.

### *Product: What is the creative contribution to knowledge, services or products?*

In order for creativity to be recognised and valued, there needs to be some perceptible contribution to existing knowledge, services or products which can include a huge spectrum ranging from various forms of art, science, business and indeed domains that do not already exist, such as psychoanalysis which did not exist before the contributions of Sigmund Freud.

Highlighting the importance of a product in creativity, Dowd (1989: 233) argues that:

“Unless one produces something, one cannot be creative. Thus, pure mental activity without a resulting product is not creativity. This distinction is important, because people often assume that thought is in itself creative and are willing to pay large sums of money for think tanks from which the product is often minimal.”

The most popular definitions of creativity reviewed in chapter 2, incorporated the elements of novelty and originality. For example, Tardif and Sternberg (1988) define the creative product as being “novel”. “.... they are not imitations, nor are they mass-produced. Other requirements of such products are that they are powerful and generalizable.....exhibit parsimony....cause irreversible changes in the human environment....are valuable or useful to the society”.

#### *Place: Where am I most creative?*

Being in the right place at the right time is sometimes attributed as the main factor in creativity being recognised. However, ‘place’ is not just about the physical place where creativity is stimulated, generated and recognised, but the ‘domain’ in which the creativity is positioned. For example, Brown (1989: 26) notes the importance of subject knowledge and skills as a fundamental basis for creativity saying that “one cannot be truly creative unless one knows a great deal about a particular area, has the skills necessary to produce in that area, and has “talent”, which Amabile also puts in quotation marks, for that particular area.”

The contextual and social influences on creative behaviour are acknowledged in the systems thinking model of creativity, and this of course includes, as observed by Woodman and Schoenfeldt (1989: 86) “.... physical environment, culture, group or organisational climate, time/task constraints, expectations, rewards/punishments, and role models. “The ‘place’ conducive to creativity is a space that is physical, emotional and socio-cultural.



The socio-cultural environment in which creativity is either nurtured or suppressed is likely to be dramatically different depending on whether it is influenced by a Western or Eastern mind-set. For example, Capra (1975: 133) highlights the dramatic differences between Eastern and Western mindsets, noting the greater awareness of unity, interdependence, and inter-relatedness in the East.

Eastern creativity tends to value harmony, adaptation and natural flow and change according to Capra (1975: 202) who observes that “The more one studies the religious and philosophical texts of the Hindus, Buddhists and Taoists, the more it becomes apparent that in all of them the world is conceived in terms of movement, flow and change.”

There is an inherent relationship between the forces of nature and creativity which Capra (1975: 325) clearly advocates in leaning towards the Eastern perspective of creativity, arguing that “....the world view implied by modern physics is inconsistent with our present society, which does not reflect the harmonious interrelatedness we observe in nature.” Capra calls for a cultural revolution aimed at living more harmoniously with nature and he suggests adopting some of the attitudes of Eastern mysticism to achieve a state of balance which contemporary science has not provided.

The distinction between Eastern and Western perspectives is further highlighted by Rudowicz (2004: 59) who emphasises that:

*Novelty* and *inventions* understood as attributes of creativity in the Western concept are either non-existent or, at the best, differently conceptualised in Chinese traditional teaching. Throughout the history of Chinese philosophy, creativity was perceived as discovering the nature or following “the Way” (the Tao) as there was nothing new to create. Thus, those people “who desire creating something new live in ego illusion. Rudowicz (2004: 59)

The Eastern view is less focused on an observable outcome or tangible evidence, and Hennessey (2004: 218) adds that instead, there is "... more emphasis being placed on personal fulfilment or the expression of an inner essence". She notes that:

In the East, emphasis is placed on control by the environment and the individual is expected to adapt" whereas "In the West, on the other hand, people are expected to rise above externally imposed constraints and even to alter their environment. (Hennessey, 2004: 220)

Another aspect of creativity that is seen differently across cultures is the extent to which it is an individual or social phenomenon. Hennessey (2004: 222) notes that "...Western creativity researchers, like their Western culture as a whole, have tended to focus their attention on individual geniuses and individual acts of creativity. Yet creativity is essentially a social phenomenon. Creative performance does not come about in a vacuum."

The place, therefore, for creativity to flourish is a **space** that is physically, emotionally and socio-culturally conducive to high quality relationships and effective patterns of collaboration.

### *Persuasion: How is my creativity being recognised and rewarded?*

In the systems thinking model of creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (1988) emphasises the integral relationship between persuasion and creativity, arguing that creativity has to be evaluated and recognised as creativity by society and the culture in which it arises.

In order to persuade effectively, those involved in the creative process may need to possess leadership skills. This assumption is supported by researchers such as

Brown (1989: 26) and Simonton (1984 :2) who suggest that creativity can be seen to be a variety of leadership as creators tend to be leaders.

Not all creators are recognised however. Vernon (1989: 95) highlights the fact that some creators are recognised whereas others are not even though their creativity is similar:

Frequently, it has been noted in science that two or more authors report almost identical discoveries or theories at about the same date (e.g. Darwin and Wallace). (Vernon, 1989: 95)

When this simultaneous creativity arises from different sources, it is interesting to see which individuals, particularly in the western world, get recognised and associated with the creativity and which individuals remain in the shadows. This phenomenon is particularly relevant in view of the fact that individual creativity is difficult to ascertain, even in the arts and sciences because people work in groups and even if they work in isolation, they are drawing on the ideas of those around them or those who have contributed ideas to existing knowledge.

Hayes (1989: 135) explains the importance of key gatekeepers, critics, scholars and experts in the field, in formulating judgements about creativity. However, he notes that:

...even expert judgments are highly subjective and are frequently influenced by irrelevant factors. ....Gregor Mendel had to wait decades before the appropriate experts recognised that his work was important.... Hayes (1989: 135)

The influence of gatekeepers in the process of creativity is further highlighted by Wu (2004: 183) who applies the systems thinking model of creativity proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1996), to education where the “domain” is the knowledge to be imparted to students; the “field” is the teaching staff transferring the knowledge and

the 'individual' refers to the students acquiring knowledge. In this model, the teachers are gatekeepers for creativity that arises in the classroom. Wu argues that:

.....It is up to the gatekeepers to decide whether creativity of students is accepted and valued or neglected and suppressed, so we have to pay special attention to their influence. ....when we select gatekeepers, we should also focus on their competency.

During Ofsted inspections, the Ofsted inspectors are gatekeepers for creativity and whether they recognise it and choose to reward it has implications. When we consider how some people stand the test of time in being associated with a particular invention or act of creativity, it is essential to consider the systemic process that led to that recognition, with the influence of gatekeepers at each stage in the process.

#### *Permanence: How will my creativity cause cultural evolution?*

The process of creativity leads to transformation which may eventually stand the test of time if other essential aspects of what is entailed in creativity are fulfilled, for example persuasion of society and culture that the creative product, service or knowledge is of value. If so, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1988), (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994, Csikszentmihalyi, 1996b, Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, Csikszentmihályi, 2010) there will be a permanent, transformational impact on culture. Barron (1969: 82) suggests that "The person who initiates cultural change must himself *be* a new kind of person, or at least the beginning of a new kind of person."

In a business environment, I would argue that it is not a person, in isolation, that initiates this cultural change but a group of people. In the Arts and Sciences, we have individuals such as Van Gogh, Freud and Einstein who are acclaimed as being solely responsible for the cultural changes they instigated in their fields and domains

of Arts and Sciences. I doubt that even Van Gogh produced his works of art without being influenced by other artists in his sphere of cognisance. In the business world, it is common knowledge that those who have made a deep impact on our culture, such as Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates, have created and collaborated with teams of highly skilled and talented people to produce knowledge, services and products that have changed our world, permanently.

Throughout human history, Rudowicz (2004: 55) notes that “Creativity has been the driving force behind human progress in all realms of life, and across different societies, cultures, and historical periods.” The most dramatic creativity we have seen over the past 100 years has obviously been in the Sciences, creating rockets, computers and the internet, for example. This technology has provided the platform for creativity in the domain of business; being able to communicate with customers and clients across the world in different time zones, in real time, from the comfort of our own homes via Skype, or buying and selling products remotely on eBay without requiring storage space for the products sold and without even the requirement to see what we are selling as it is bought online from one location and sold online to another location instantaneously. This business creativity is occurring as a result of collaborations between complex networks of people which are easier to analyse using a systems thinking framework (with its various components explained in Chapters 1 & 6) than traditional hierarchies. Global business occurring through networks instead of hierarchies is likely to be a permanent change and it is an example of a cultural change which is not attributable to any particular individual but to networks of people continuously evolving and expanding into larger networks.

Nowadays it is fully accepted that any discussion regarding creativity needs to be positioned within a historical and socio-cultural context, for example Rudowicz (2004:

57) Amabile (1990), Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1996, 1999), Simonton (1996, 1998) and Harrington (1990). Therefore, we must acknowledge that not all creativity involves creating something new. Rudowicz (2004: 60) reminds us that from a Chinese cultural point of view, creativity is merely uncovering what already exists rather than creating something new.”

Moreover, Rudowicz (2004: 61) reflects that “In traditional Chinese thought, a person should not take credit for what he has “created”, since an individual does not create but follows the nature and discovers the existing truth.” This is based on Confucian philosophy from an era when we did not have modern technological discoveries but the mysteries of nature remain profound, despite our scientific advances, so I believe there is value in using a systems thinking, holistic approach, where Eastern and Western concepts of creativity are in harmony without the need for one to cancel out, erase, or dominate, the other.

Transformation which causes a permanent cultural impact, is a creative process that can begin in an ordinary business classroom.

It is easy to see how this is possible if we substitute the word “transformation” with the word “learning”. We expect to see learning take place in every lesson. If this learning is at all useful, it will gradually transform the life of the student, metaphorically expressed by the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, in the well-known saying: “the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step .”

It is generally agreed by learning theorists (Thorndike, 1906: 1) (Fontana, 1981: 147) (Cronbach, 1963: 84) (Sotto, 1994: 14) (Reece and Walker, 2007: 53) that evidence of learning is a relatively permanent change in our behaviour, thoughts, skills and attitudes. For example, Gagne (1985: 2) explains that “the inference of learning is

made by comparing what behaviour was possible before the individual was placed in a learning situation and what behaviour can be exhibited after such treatment.”

Similarly, Kolb (1984: 38) states that “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”

Learning that can be associated with or equated to the kind of transformation stimulated in the process of creativity is not merely rote memorisation of facts and figures or even carrying out independent research to complete course assignments which do not change the thoughts, skills and behaviour of students in any significant way. When students complete tasks and activities in class that do not cause them to think differently, to see the world with a fresher perspective or behave in a manner that adds value to their own lives and the lives of others, it is often superficial rote learning rather than deep, transformational learning. It is often much easier to see transformational learning in the empowered experiences of students who have learnt something that they genuinely needed to improve their lives, for example the homeless children in India who independently learnt to use computers installed in street walls by Dr Sugata Mitra as part of his “Hole in the Wall” project (Mitra, 2007). I believe that it is not only learning that occurs in environments of dire poverty or hardship that needs to be transformational; all learning that is of lasting value, that makes the time and effort invested by a student in attending a course, needs to be transformational. If the learning is transformational, the seeds planted may bear fruit as the process of creativity advances beyond the frontiers of the classroom.

The importance of transformational learning rather than rote learning was evident to Holt (1965: 173) who emphasized that love of learning was much more important than the content of what is taught and learnt.

Holt and his contemporary learning theorists in the 60s would indeed be amazed at how the world has changed in 2016 compared with what they knew in the mid-60s. Similarly, we can imagine that in 50 years from now, the world will be unimaginably different, so our students need to learn how to continuously transform and adapt their lives in order to survive.

The need for learning that is intrinsically linked with personal development and continuous transformation, which in my view is an essential aspect of creativity, is expressed by one of the leading Humanist psychologists, Rogers (1983: 295) who proposed:

Here then is my theoretical model of the person who emerges from therapy or from the best of education, the individual who has experienced optimal psychological growth – a person functioning freely in all the fullness of his organismic potentialities; a person who is dependable in being realistic, self-enhancing, socialised, and appropriate in his behaviour; a creative person, whose specific formings of behaviour are not easily predictable; a person who is ever-changing, ever developing, always discovering himself and the newness in himself in each succeeding moment of time. (Rogers, 1983: 295)

Whereas Humanists such as Rogers, tend to focus on individual personal development, the leading advocate of Behaviourism, Skinner (1974: 206) asks important questions about the evolution of the social environment and culture, for example:



Will a culture evolve in which no individual will be able to accumulate vast power and use it for his own aggrandizement in ways which are harmful to others?

Will a culture evolve in which individuals are not so much concerned with their own actualisation and fulfilment that they do not give serious attention to the future of the culture? (Skinner, 1974: 206)

Alluding to the cultural transformation required to solve global problems, which Skinner naturally advocates through Behaviourism instead of attempting to change one's own consciousness as the Humanists imply, Skinner (1974: 250), laments that:

It has recently been pointed out that an International Congress on Peace was composed of statesmen, political scientists, historians, economists, physicists, biologists – and not a single behaviourist in the strict sense. Evidently behaviourism was regarded as useless. But we must ask what the conference achieved. It was composed of specialists from many different fields, who probably spoke the common sense lingua franca of the layman, with its heavy load of references to inner causation. What might the conference have achieved if it could have abandoned this false scent? The currency of mentalism in discussions of human affairs may explain why conferences on peace are held with such monotonous regularity year after year. (Skinner, 1974: 250)

Even though Skinner (1974: 251) wrote the following words over 40 years ago, they seem highly relevant to the world we live in, in 2016:

If it were true that “an ever greater danger than nuclear war arises from within man himself in the form of smouldering fears, contagious panics, primitive needs for cruel violence, and raging suicidal destructiveness,” then we should be lost. Fortunately, the point of attack is more readily accessible. It is the environment which must be changed. A way of life which furthers the study of human behaviour in its relation to that environment should be in the best possible position to solve its major problems. This is not jingoism, because the great problems are now global. In the behavioristic view, man can now control his own destiny because he knows what must be done and how to do it. (Skinner, 1974: 251)

The systems thinking view would support Skinner's behaviourist approach in highlighting the power of environments created by systems. Transformation of the

system is likely to prove much more beneficial for a greater number of people than transformation of an individual at a personal level. This supports my view that collaboration is a key strand in creativity and transformation of the culture is reliant on group rather than individual transformation. Therefore, I agree with Sotto (1994: 108) who wrote about the dangers of so-called 'student-centred' teaching approaches which lean too heavily towards individual learners' needs instead of the community's needs. When we consider the transformation, or permanent change that learning creates in the life of an individual student, rarely is the impact of that transformation on their families and communities considered. Over 20 years ago, Sotto (1994: 14) noted, and I believe this is still the case, that:

It is possible to read current books on teaching and find a hundred references to 'the needs of the student'. And not find a single reference to 'the needs of the community'. (Sotto, 1994: 14)

Moreover, Sotto (1994: 14) argues that there is too much emphasis on achieving one's own potential and too little concern about the social needs of others. He has observed that:

It is even rare today to find an expression of the old-fashioned idea that there is a deep reward to be found in working towards something that transcends one's own needs. (Sotto, 1994: 14)

A major transformation in education which may naturally lead to a greater level of creativity is a shift towards collaborative learning instead of an over-emphasis on meeting individual needs of learners. When collaboration is most effective, individual needs are naturally met but this is a means to an end rather than the end itself. In the 1970s, Paolo Freire (Freire, 2005) caused a paradigm shift in the way educators perceived the relationship between education and politics by highlighting the plight of the 'oppressed' students. However, our current claims about meeting "individual needs" adopting student-centred approaches, may do little to release the chains of

oppression. The government and economic agenda is powerful, and through hegemonic discourse conveyed through the Ofsted inspection process, with an emphasis on value for money and maximum efficiency, overrides individual needs and concerns. This collaborative learning, to stimulate creative transformation in education, is required in the teaching profession argues O'Leary (2014: 155) claiming that we need to trust teachers' professionalism.

Using a systems thinking framework, a synthesis of the Eastern and Western approaches to transformation and creativity; the former focusing on collective harmony and the latter focusing on individual self-expression and fulfilment of potential, may develop the deep learning skills that our students will need in order to adapt to and survive a future that we, as educators, cannot accurately predict for them.

Question: How do we recognize creativity?

***Finding 2: Creative teachers and students are sometimes overlooked, ignored and unpopular***

Even though we have an Equality & Diversity agenda which is overtly promoted in state funded education, the classroom environment in vocational business studies courses is not always conducive for recognition of the invisible needs of highly creative students and teachers, for example the need for silence, working alone and time required to think of original responses.

My research data suggests that highly creative students in the vocational business curriculum are more likely to find themselves in learning environments where equality and diversity are **not** promoted well enough (only 39% of the Ofsted reports reported good promotion of equality and diversity); they are more likely to be in a learning environment where stereotypical thinking is left unchallenged (three reports stated that stereotypical thinking remained unchallenged compared with only one report stating that stereotypes were challenged); and their chances of being in a classroom environment where there is mutual respect and inclusion, are about half and half, based on the discourse in the 89 Ofsted inspection reports that I analysed.

This raises ethical concerns about how well the equality and diversity agenda supports the needs of highly creative students in its implementation in the business curriculum.

Question: How do we assess or measure creativity?

***Finding 3: Creativity is often associated with humanist rather than behaviourist pedagogy and it is difficult to measure in tangible, visible and quantifiable outcomes.***

My findings illustrated that creativity is more likely to occur in classes where a humanist approach and methodology is being used; however, the Ofsted inspection process clearly leans in favour of a behaviourist approach and methodology.

As an Ofsted inspector I felt implicit pressures to favour a behaviourist approach and teaching methodology, even though the explicit Ofsted propaganda iterated that the inspection process does not favour any particular approach or teaching methodology. In practice, I found it very difficult to find and record the evidence of learning required when a humanist approach or teaching style was being adopted.

The inspection instruments, for example the Common Inspection Framework and the Handbook for Inspection emphasised the need to focus on outcomes rather than the process, the quality of extrinsic rather than intrinsic feedback and evaluations, for example. These are much easier to record, witness and measure with a behaviourist rather than a humanist frame of reference.

Question: How do we reward development of creativity skills?

***Finding 4: Ofsted inspectors fail to adequately reward creativity due to internal and external pressures that distort their perception and judgments.***

Even though we are expected to make fair, impartial and accurate judgments based on evidence we see during Ofsted inspections, there is rarely an opportunity to be critically self-reflective about our own biases and assumptions as Ofsted inspectors which inevitably distort our perceptions and therefore judgments. Below, I will discuss various aspects of my role as an Ofsted inspector which meant that I often failed to reward creativity adequately.

### Empowerment and disempowerment

Empowerment and disempowerment of and by the role of an Ofsted Inspector, Education Consultant and Executive Coach: I wondered whether to use the preposition “of” or “by” in the title for this part of the discussion and decided that it was appropriate to use both. In exploring my recent role as an Ofsted Inspector, I realise there are stark similarities and differences between this role and my previous roles as an Executive Coach from 2001 to 2007 and Education Consultant from 2011 to the present time. In each of these roles, intrinsic and extrinsic forces resulted in empowerment and disempowerment **of** my role and **by** my role.

My research findings led me to conclude that in my role as an Ofsted Inspector, hegemonic discourse pressurised me to witness and record particular evidence during lesson observations to enable me to write carefully constructed Ofsted reports, in the Ofsted House Style, in alignment with the criteria stipulated in the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). So, less obvious aspects of learning that required a greater level of self-reflection, were often ignored.

Exploring the conscious and unconscious forces that dominated each of these roles may illuminate the value and potential damage caused by each role, in other words, empowerment or disempowerment which I was subjected to and in turn caused in a circular motion as viewed from a systems thinking conceptual framework outlined in chapters 1 and 6.

### Multiple relationships

In each of the roles, Ofsted Inspector, Education Consultant and Executive Coach, there were multiple relationships that required varying degrees of obedience, compliance and satisfaction of expectations. For example, in my early days as an Executive Coach, I worked with a European Social Fund (ESF) initiative designed to generate business and employment opportunities for citizens in “objective 2” deprived city areas, for example Newham, London. There was a three- way relationship between myself, my client and the ESF funding body through its distribution channel, an FE College. The ESF objective in providing the funding was that my coaching relationship with the client generated profit from the business ideas stimulated and to create at least one new job as a result of the enterprise, at a pre-determined rate which is not necessarily in tune with the rate at which the client is willing to grow emotionally in order to handle the business responsibilities.

As an Education Consultant, I often had a four-way relationship to manage: the FE manager who had hired my services, the teachers I had to observe and coach; and the Consultancy firm that had brokered the contract. Each had their own expectations regarding how I conducted myself during the consultancy and how I worded the final reports.

Similarly, as an Ofsted inspector, there were multiple relationships to satisfy in my role: the Lead HMI, fellow inspectors, the college nominee, managers, teachers, students, the broker for my inspection contract and above all my relationship with Ofsted itself, which was paying my fees.

Although a high level of professionalism ensured confidentiality, integrity and trust in each of these roles and relationships, none of the relationships were personal within a marked boundary for transparency, vulnerability or disclosure that a two-way relationship may allow.

People who work freelance, relying on customer satisfaction for their next piece of work, will often say that the customer is always right. The problem with working freelance as an Ofsted Inspector, Education Consultant or Executive Coach is that the customer has many heads and some of these can be very ugly. For example the ugly head of pride that caused me to lose an FE contract as an Education Consultant because I dared to grade a lesson “good” when the teacher trainer that I observed prided herself that her lesson was most certainly “outstanding”; or the ugly head of narcissism when I insinuated that a couple of my colleagues were being lazy, using their charm to make the least amount of effort during a consultancy project; they refused to work with me which meant that they got paid and I lost yet another contract. As the bank balance got lower and lower, I learnt that silence is golden in more cases than not, and that it is better to err on the side of caution. Learning to please a client with multiple heads, any of which may attack when you least expect it, is a skill that expresses itself in the degree to which there is empowerment or disempowerment of and by our role.



As a freelance Ofsted inspector, my role depended on satisfying the aforementioned multiple relationships; if not, I would not be called to do another inspection. The difference between empowerment and disempowerment was simply a “yes” or a “no”; would I be called to inspect again? “You’re only as good as your last inspection” my colleagues often said and this is how I worked for over 3 years, never knowing if the inspection I was on would be my last inspection or not. This precarious nature of my role as an Ofsted inspector naturally influenced the parameters of what I observed, witnessed, recorded and reported on.

### Benchmarking

Benchmarking was a key component in my role as an Inspector, Consultant and Coach. Funded by the government, our ultimate client during inspections, we use national statistics to gauge whether the education provider is doing better or worse than the norm. As a coach, funded by the ESF, I used tools such as “The Wheel of Life” to measure progress made by the client I was coaching, in different parts of their personal and professional lives; in this case the benchmark was not a national statistic but the client’s personal self-evaluation. Nevertheless, there was still the uphill struggle to go beyond the “norm” and to demonstrate progress had evidently been made to excel and to be on the right side of what was considered to be average, mediocre and not good enough. In a consultancy or coaching relationship, the pressure to persuade the client to believe that progress had been made, with benchmarking to prove it, was one burden that as an Ofsted inspector, I did not have to carry; if targets had not been met and the education provider was on the wrong side of the benchmarking “norm”, all I had to do was politely confirm what they already knew.

Whereas in the coaching and consultancy relationships the range of outcomes we could benchmark was theoretically broad, in Ofsted inspections, it was a very narrow range indeed: success, achievement, retention. Not only is the range of what we are benchmarking extremely narrow, the context in which the success, achievement and retention occurs is neutralised; so, in an inner-city area with high numbers of refugees for example, there is no contextualisation for the low retention; likewise, in affluent, leafy suburbs where every child has an iPad and trainers to match, there is no contextualisation for the high level of success compared with the “norm” in national statistics.

### Looking forward vs looking backward

One of the most common criticisms I heard during my role as an Ofsted Inspector is that we look backwards at what the organisation has historically done instead of looking forward and imagining all the optimistic achievements based on what they are planning now. I have to point out that this criticism was only ever made by organisations who had made mistakes in the past which they were now living to regret; organisations who had a proven track record for success were only too keen for us to look back with awe and wonder at their accolades and good choices.

Coaching is most definitely about looking forwards instead of back; indeed, we would probably refer a client to a therapist if they insisted on looking back at their trials and tribulations instead of focusing on how to create a desirable future with their resources available to them in the present. Similarly, consultancy based on a solutions focused coaching approach (Jackson and McKergow, 2002), looks for what is working well instead of what is not working well, the argument being that we strengthen the skills we focus on. Inspection is not so kind in only focusing on the

positive. Staff at FE Colleges which had received a very low grade in their previous inspection would often lament:

“But look how far we have come since our last inspection a few years ago?!

Look how hard we have all worked?!”

If the positive changes were not yet apparent in the actual success and achievement outcomes for students, and the FE provider was not yet on the right side of the “norm”, HMIs would shake their heads apologetically and almost dismiss the progress being made, explaining,

“But they are just green shoots. We don’t have a crystal ball, so we can’t see if the changes you have made will bear fruit.”

It was at times like these (too many of them) that I wished the purpose of an Ofsted inspection was to add value creatively rather than to destructively deflate egos and leave hard working professionals, tearing their hair out.

### Equality in roles

My teenage students in London often attempted to use the Equality Act to legitimise their claims of authority over me in the same way that I exercised my authority over them. For example, if I left the classroom to make photocopies, they wanted to do the same. When they argued about equality, I had to remind them that I was the teacher and they were the student: not equal.

It may seem as though there is incrementally more equality between a client and inspector; client and consultant and client and coach. Nevertheless, even in a client/coach relationship, there is not equality because one person is being coached and the other is coaching. The recipient of the action is less empowered in the

relationship even though they may be much more powerful when they are not in that relationship.

Within the role of an inspector, I was empowered to make judgments, within parameters, that often disempowered members of staff that were much more powerful than me, within their own organisation. For example, on several occasions I judged lessons to be a grade lower than what these influential, high salaried and highly positioned members of staff, believed they deserved. Sometimes they seemed stunned that a “space invader” (Puwar, 2004) who did not fit the somatic norm for occupying the space that entitled one to make a judgement that they did not like, should have the audacity to do so. In other words, did someone who looked like an immigrant really have the right to tell a person who was high up in the established hierarchy that they may not be as good as they believed themselves to be? Our roles grant us, albeit temporarily, to stand on a box and see the horizon otherwise clouded by the obstacles of race, gender, class and a multitude of invisible differences. Ironically, it is the inequality afforded by our roles (inspector, consultant, coach) that grants us the constructed experience of “equality”.

In my role as an Ofsted inspector, I was temporarily granted the privilege of being empowered, to overcome the otherwise perpetual inequality that I face as an ethnic minority in Britain, through the lens of inequality itself, positioned in the higher perspective of an inspector, evaluating the efficacy of those under scrutiny, looking up for favourable judgments.

Despite Ofsted’s overt allegiance to the Equality and Diversity agenda, failure to acknowledge visible and also invisible cultural and societal pressures in which success and failure occurs, suggests an implicit inequality like expecting a non-

sighted person to be able to perform tasks that require sight. This is a highly controversial comment as it conflicts with the discourse promulgated by Ofsted that leaders, managers and teachers must have high expectations of their learners (regardless of their backgrounds). Admittedly, this is much more empowering than the self-fulfilling prophecy that low expectations may create if those in authority were allowed to blame the students' starting points for their failures, which may be a convenient way to falsely justify poor outcomes.

### Judgments vs self-reflection

One of the stark contrasts between my role as an Ofsted inspector compared with my role as an Executive Coach is that in the former, the process revolves around judgments whereas in the latter, it is precisely the lack of judgment that makes the relationship so powerful. For example, Pooley (2004) explains that a client is looking for "a neutral space where judgement is absent, risks can be taken and connections and thoughts considered and understood, sometimes when the loneliness and isolation of their task has become apparent to them"

### Communication style

In my coaching and consulting approach, similar to my teaching approach, explained earlier, I am particularly influenced by Humanistic psychology based on the work of Rogers (1983) which values the human being as a creative and rational animal that is motivated to grow and achieve their full potential and also the Transactional Analysis work of Eric Berne which is featured in the bestseller "I'm OK- You're OK" (Harris, 1995) Rogers was rather optimistic in focusing mostly on the positive aspects of the persona whereas Berne was willing to acknowledge and analyse the destructive potential of individuals as well as their creative potential. Harris (1995:

42) describes the four “life positions” that Berne popularised in his Transactional Analysis work:

1. “I’m not OK – You’re OK”
2. “I’m not OK – You’re not OK”
3. “I’m OK – You’re not OK”
4. “I’m OK – You’re OK” (Harris, 1995: 42)

Berne also distinguished between the Parent, Child and Adult styles of communication. As the names imply, in a professional environment, regardless of the inequalities inherent in our roles, it is reasonable to expect that we would communicate with each other using the fourth life position, “I’m OK – You’re OK” and the adult to adult style of communication which validates the self-worth and integrity of each person as a mature professional. Unfortunately, there were numerous occasions during Ofsted inspections where HMIs, from their superior socially stratified positions communicated with those of us who were merely AIs, using a “parent to child” and “I’m OK – You’re not OK” communication style, which was degrading, destructive and divisive, causing small splinter groups that met in corners for support and to remind each other that we needed to bite our tongues because we needed “the badge” (Ofsted) to work and be able to pay our bills.

### Deletion, distortion, generalisation

Advocates of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) for example (O'Connor and McDermott, 2012) and its founders Bandler and Grinder (1979) teach us that our communications are influenced by our deletions, distortions and generalisations in our interpretations of the external stimuli we receive from our clients and

environment, based on the filters our mind has created to support our attitudes, values, beliefs, memories and even the language we use. I have experienced this to be true in all the roles I take, including the role of Ofsted Inspector, Education Consultant and Executive Coach.

When we selectively pay attention to certain aspects of our experience and not others, we are **deleting** information that our conscious mind does not want to or cannot handle. Many “positive thinkers” **distort** their experience of sensory data by shifting the representations of their reality in order to feel good even when something damaging happens to them. **Generalisation** is the process we all use to draw global conclusions based on very little experience, for example stereotyping and making assumptions about people. It is important therefore to identify some of these filters that we bring to the inspection process. In my coaching relationships, for example, I avoid making assumptions and judgments about my clients based on generalisations and I am also keen to learn how to improve my coaching effectiveness rather than distorting the results of each session to emphasise what worked and deleting what did not work at all. My aim is to process and interpret information with the wisdom of truth as far as I am competent to do so. During an intense inspection week when the final report has to be written on the penultimate day, under great pressure and scrutiny, there is great risk that lack of adequate time for reflection may result in deletions, distortions and generalisations that may be either favourable or unfavourable, depending on which way the wind is blowing.

### Listening vs Telling

In my coaching role, I listened to my clients at a deep level whereas as an inspector, rushed to gather a broad range of evidence for the Ofsted report, most of the time, I only had time and space to listen at a superficial level. Therefore, I doubt if any of the

people I inspected felt they had been listened to in the manner described by Whitworth et al. (1998: 31) suggesting that:

To be listened to is a striking experience – partly because it is so rare. When another person is totally with you, leaning in, interested in every word, eager to empathize, you feel known and understood. People get bigger when they know they're being listened to; they have more presence. They feel safer and more secure, as well, and can begin to trust.... (Whitworth et al., 1998: 31)

### Code of Conduct

As a coach, I followed professional guidelines for example “The International Coach Federation adheres to a form of coaching that honors the client as the expert in his/her life and work and believes that every client is creative, resourceful, and whole.”

Similarly, as an Ofsted inspector, I followed a professional code of conduct (Ofsted, 2012d: 7) which emphasized that inspectors must “treat everyone they encounter during inspections fairly and with respect and sensitivity,” and that we must “evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour.” Moreover, it was expected that all inspectors “uphold and demonstrate Ofsted values at all time”. These include: putting children and learners first; achieving excellence; behaving with integrity and valuing people and their differences.” (OFSTED, 2014)

A fundamental difference in my role as a coach compared with my role as an inspector is that in the former, the client was the expert and in the latter, I was the expert.



Even though Ofsted claims to value people and their differences, in theory, when these differences are invisible and the outcomes they generate are hard to measure, it can be difficult to recognise and value these differences, in practice.

## Narcissism

During my training as an Executive Coach, at Lancaster University, we were warned to be aware of the forces of our unconscious drives and projections and to avoid becoming “narcissistic coaches” described as someone who can only see a reflection of themselves in a coaching situation.

This warning applied equally to my role as an Ofsted inspector where I frequently found myself and my colleagues applauding practices that we understood well; strategies that we ourselves had used successfully; techniques that were tried and tested and stood the test of time. There was an element of narcissism in this behaviour: the assumption was that we were chosen to be Ofsted inspectors because we had the reputation for being outstanding teachers and the flawed logic was that when others used practices, strategies and techniques that mirrored our own, they must, naturally, be outstanding.

In order to avoid this fixation on our own favourite theories and ways of viewing the world, we need to understand the humility required to create a space of “not knowing”. We need to let go of our need to compare everything we observe with the supposed expertise in our own practice. Instead, without our masks, we may become experts in being fully present to witness, record and report without preconceptions and biases. Thus, we may avoid the narcissistic tendency to make ourselves the

yardstick for measuring the performance, success and impact that others are making in their own spheres of influence.

The Handbook for Inspections (Ofsted, 2012d) does indeed make positivistic claims about judgements being based on objectivity and impartiality. In my experience, the attempts to provide evidence to back up claims to such impartiality disguised inconvenient truths which are only revealed in the safe space at the fringes of the system. As explained in my methodology chapter, I lean in favour of a phenomenological paradigm, based on the basic belief, summarised by Easterby-Smith (2008) that “the world is socially constructed and subjective and that the observer is part of what is observed”.

To conclude, the limitations of the role of an Ofsted Inspector are illuminated when contrasted with similar but distinct roles of an Education Consultant or Executive Coach. Most of these limitations express themselves invisibly and unconsciously so it is apt to bear in mind the difference between assumptions and facts as illustrated in the quote below about Sigmund Freud, from Lewis et al. (2001: 6)

Freud is delivered anew to each generation. His conclusions permeate our culture in a multitude of ways and his assumptions have endured for so many years that they are mistaken for fact. (Lewis et al., 2001: 6)

Perhaps Ofsted Inspectors, like Sigmund Freud, see what they want to see and follow the dictates of their Id, ego and super-ego to conjure up impressionistic visions in their struggle for survival. The Freudian view of my role as an Ofsted Inspector may entail cyclical empowerment and disempowerment of and by my role as an Ofsted Inspector.

## Chapter 10: Conclusions

The level of cultural and societal interest in promotion of creativity skills in state funded education appears to be very low.

### Diversity

The Equality Act (2010) promotes an ethos of equality and diversity (E&D) which is associated with trust, so I was surprised to find that only 40% of the 89 Ofsted reports I analysed reported that E&D were being promoted well. Around 30% of these reports stated that E&D were 'not' being promoted well. This may be a weakness in the way Ofsted reports are written and interpreted, or, alternatively, the findings may indicate that despite the existence of the E&D agenda, evidence of its implementation remains low.

In education, based on over a thousand lesson observations, I have noticed that insidious, invisible and often unconscious racism manifests itself in class where a certain profile of student receives more attention than another; they are asked more questions and teachers spend more time in responding to their questions. Racism is expressed through neglect, lack of attention and preferred communication styles where the victim of the institutionalised racism is often labelled as being "quiet" which may be a euphemism implying that they are lacking skills in the language of power or it may indicate that they are quiet because they have been silenced.

Even though racism may have 'gone underground' its impact is felt perhaps even more deeply than when it is expressed overtly. Puwar (2004: 138) explains that challenging institutional racism entails a high level of risk and therefore requires a great deal of confidence and courage.

Within this context of institutionalised racism, a racialized creative person may remain invisible, unrecognised and unrewarded for their creative talents, simply because they do not occupy the somatic space that has been reserved for them. They are invisible because they are not where they are meant to be. If they insist on gaining attention from the position they are not supposed to occupy; from the space that has not been reserved for them; they are perceived to be disruptive trouble-makers, intent on rocking the boat.

Society and its gatekeepers are an essential aspect of creativity in the systems thinking model. In addition to being socialised to take up our role in society, we need to be aware that in a diverse society, the way we are perceived in that role is dependent on our relationship to the somatic norm.

Certain 'privileged' positions are reserved for those that resemble a particular somatic norm, according to Puwar (2004) who argues that even though "Formally, today, women and racialized minorities can enter positions that they were previously excluded from", they are considered to be "space invaders" when they dare to do so. (Puwar, 2004: 8)

In chapter 5, *The Whiteness of Creativity*, I explained that when I began my research into creativity, I realised that I did not fit the 'somatic norm' for the kind of person who is 'supposed to' be researching creativity. To my surprise, I encountered innuendos and connotations which made me feel as though I were a 'space invader' as described by Puwar above. I found myself conscious of being in a role associated with a young, middle class white man with trendy gear or a white woman with purple hair. Reflecting on this further, I noticed that nearly all the non-white researchers I

knew, especially those who had received funding for their research, were studying racism or a subject related to race in some way, for example Islamic marriages, the experience of Black men in prison or the extent to which international students felt included at University. In other words, their research is ethnically marked in some manner and as observed by Puwar (2004: 68), they are “strait-jacketed” and:

The participation in modernity of racialized ‘others’ is thus as marked subjects who can’t escape their ‘ethnic’ identity. (Puwar, 2004: 68)

For example, Puwar (2004: 70) recounts the example of film maker Steve McQueen who has won awards for his art but despite this, “... some people can’t desist from wanting to know how his work speaks from the deepest depths of his blackness.” (Puwar, 2004: 70)

I made a conscious effort to find non-white researchers who had been funded to research for a PhD in a mainstream subject that had no racial, gender or religious concerns. At the University of Birmingham, I found such ‘mainstream researchers’ in the Science and Business schools but none at all in the School of Education.

Ontologically, the somatic norm, in other words, the kind of person that is ‘meant to be’ researching a particular subject, needs to be taken into consideration. When a researcher does not fit the ‘somatic norm’, it may distort the research process.

Certain embodiments will face particular pressures and challenges that are unlikely to be encountered by others. I am aware that my research is likely to be racially and ethnically marked and seen through a lens in which my embodiment disfigures the perceptions I report. My body is not “invisible” in my research as it may be if I fitted

the somatic norm for a researcher who is meant to occupy the space of a 'creativity researcher', traditionally a white European male, such as Sir Ken Robinson, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, or Edward De Bono.

### Trust

An individual needs to have a high level of confidence and courage to take the risks associated with development of creativity skills. All of these skills are built upon a strong foundation of trust; trust in one's own capacity and skills; trust in those one is collaborating with and trust in those that are evaluating our work. The importance of trust is emphasised by O'Leary (2014: 17) who explains that "without it, risks will not be taken and therefore, new ideas will remain unexpressed and hinder the development of competitiveness as well as processes of continuous improvement"

Based on his research into the impact of graded classroom observations and the role of Ofsted inspections, O'Leary (2014: 155) argues that teachers need "more collaboration and less coercion when it comes to interventions in classrooms and a greater trust in their professionalism and professional capabilities to steer change and improvement."

I found that around half of the 89 Ofsted reports I analysed, did not report on the presence of mutual respect, trust, sensitivity and an inclusive learning environment. This may be because the inspectors writing the reports consider those vital aspects of a classroom environment conducive to learning to be the 'norm' and therefore not worthy of mention in the reports. However, as there is ample research evidence, springing from the humanist psychology approach, suggesting that creative students in particular require an environment where there is a high level of trust, I believe it

makes that attribute noteworthy for inclusion in Ofsted reports, as a criterion indicating how well equality and diversity is promoted. Moreover, in addition to insufficient reference to the level of trust in class, I found only 35 Ofsted reports out of the 89 (which is only around 40%) confirming that equality and diversity were being promoted well in the business curriculum for the period from September 2012 to August 2015. Around 30% of the Ofsted reports I analysed stated that Equality & Diversity was **not** being promoted well enough. From the point of view of a creative student, the chance of being in a business classroom environment where there is a sufficient level of trust, conducive to development of creativity skills, is too low based on an analysis of recent Ofsted inspection reports. This lack of evidence that trust is featured highly in the business curricula across the country, may merely be a weakness in the way the Ofsted reports are written rather than a true indicator of the importance given to trust in providing a classroom environment in which creativity is likely to thrive.

Using my own teaching and consulting experience and additional evidence from my research data, I created two scenarios (Findings 3), one in which creativity is likely to be witnessed and one in which it is unlikely to be seen or recognised. In terms of trust in relationships, I have noticed that when there is a high level of trust between the teacher, the students and their peers, they tend to express more confidence and a willingness to make mistakes. In addition, they allow peers to correct their mistakes. In contrast, when relationships between the teacher and students are strained, students often express mistrust in their teacher's level of competence and ability to teach them. Students lack confidence in their own ability to learn independently. Sometimes students complain that the teacher is not teaching them everything they need to know about the subject. Students in classes where there is a

low level of trust, are not convinced that they will learn by doing their own research and making mistakes. The tension and lack of support for each other caused by the low level of trust can result in students taking offence if their mistakes are highlighted and corrected by their peers.

#### Language

In addition to trust, the lack of a shared language around creativity in the business context, causes challenges that undermine development of creativity skills.

When I was teaching English, I always considered myself to be a creative teacher, producing interesting resources that stimulated inspirational conversations where students were allowed to practise and freely experiment with their linguistic skills.

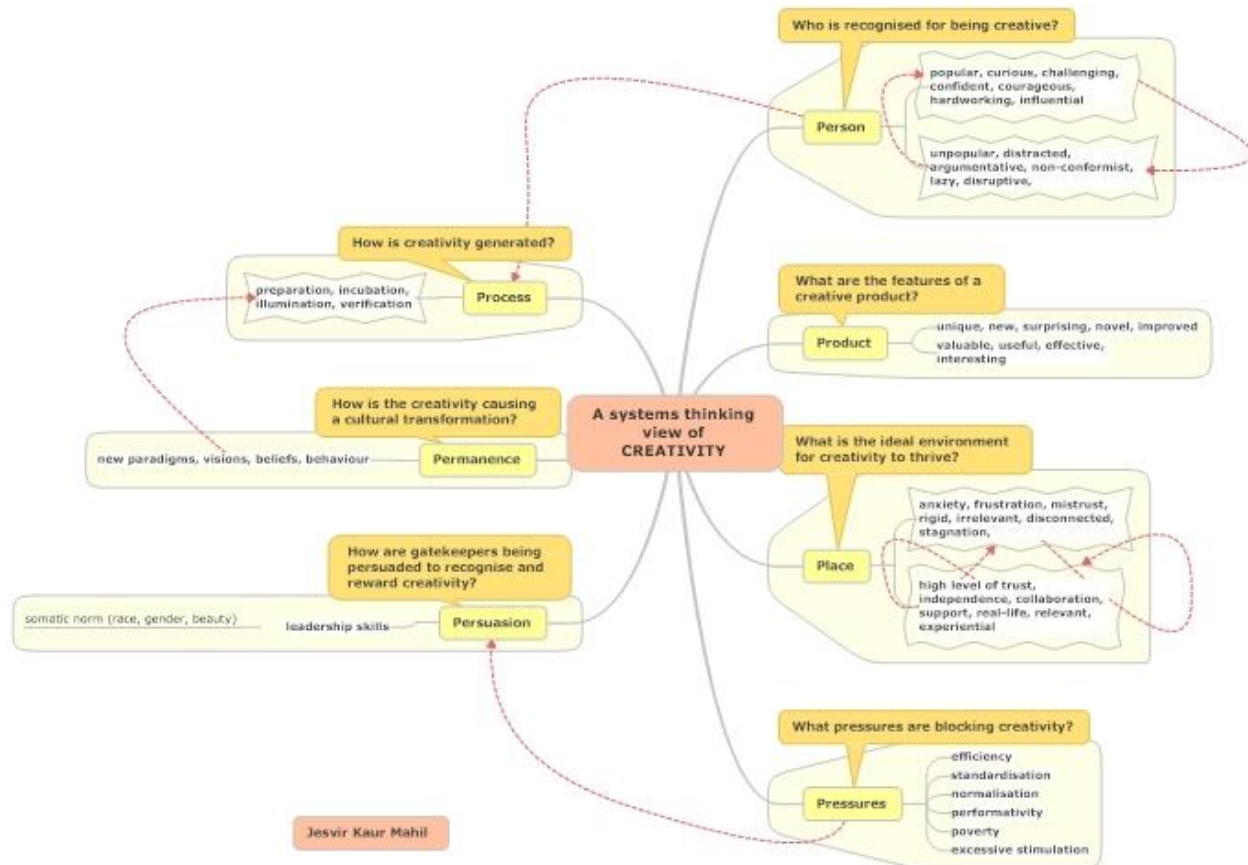
The lack of a clear definition of creativity did not cause any concerns. When I started to teach business studies to native English speaker teenagers in London, I noticed that what I meant by creativity was not the same as how they interpreted my request for creativity.

For many of my students, adding pictures and colourful titles using WordArt to their work was creativity. In contrast, what I was expecting was an element of surprise, originality and what they call a “unique selling point” in business jargon.

I realised that this lack of clarity about what we mean by creativity in a business context was one of the challenges in development of creativity skills. So, I synthesised some of the existing research on the subject, most of which is based in Arts and Sciences rather than business, and I found seven attributes of creativity which I have illustrated in Figure 10.1 below:

#### **Figure 10.1: 7 attributes of creativity**





These seven attributes are: process, person, place, pressures, product, persuasion and permanence.

The lack of a comprehensive definition of creativity that can be used in a business context may be one of the reasons this skill is overlooked and fails to be recognised in Ofsted inspection reports for the business curriculum.

### “7 Ps of Creativity” conceptual framework for creativity

In order to broaden our understanding of what we mean by creativity as a business rather than Arts or Sciences concept, I am well-positioned to offer a personal, subjective, phenomenological perspective, being a creative business teacher, business student, business owner and business studies Ofsted inspector, who is not

a creative artist or creative scientist. In order to do so, I have used a systems thinking framework for synthesising seven attributes of the concept of creativity as follows:

“Creativity is a circular **process** during which a **person** collaborates with others, in a favourable **place** to overcome **pressures**, in order to refine existing, or to discover new, knowledge, services or **products**, successfully **persuading** society of its value and making a **permanent** impact on our culture.”

**Table 8.12: What is creativity?**

Creativity is a circular <b>process</b>	during which a <b>person</b> collaborates with others	in a favourable <b>place</b>	to overcome <b>pressures</b>	in order to refine or reshape existing, or to discover new, knowledge, services or <b>products</b>	successfully <b>persuading</b> society of its value	and making a <b>permanent</b> impact on our culture.
<b>Process</b>	<b>person</b>	<b>place</b>	<b>pressures</b>	<b>product</b>	<b>Persuasion</b>	<b>Permanence</b>

In my view, the difference between a business concept of creativity compared with an Arts or Sciences concept is the emphasis on collaboration with others and the importance of persuasion of society and culture.

Compared with artists and scientists, business people require sharpened skills in collaboration in order to express creativity. Their creativity occurs externally, transparently and with tangible impact rather than in the obscurity of their inner minds.

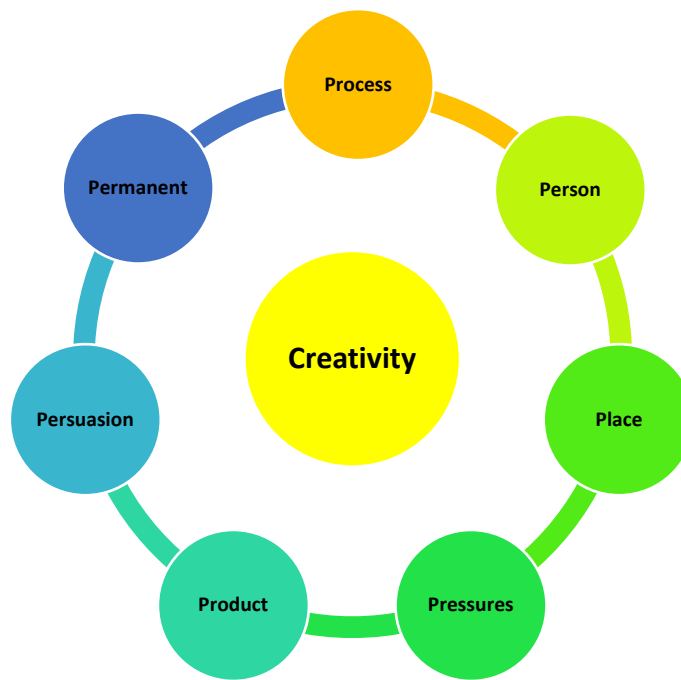
The creativity of an artist or scientist may remain undiscovered for even centuries after their death because their contemporary society did not value it. In contrast, ignored, unrecognised and unsuccessful business people cannot hope to be

discovered after their death for their business innovation. Of course their ideas and concepts may well survive the test of time, if for example, the cause of their failure was an inability to overcome pressures, or being situated in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Using a systems thinking framework, it is easy to see the circular inter-relationships which demonstrate that creativity does not have a linear beginning and end. Cultural and societal persuasion of the value of creativity may indeed be the starting point. Alternatively, a desire to overcome obstacles may be the catalyst triggering a creative process. Indeed, a random conversation between friends wishing to collaborate on a project they all feel passionate about, may generate immense creativity.

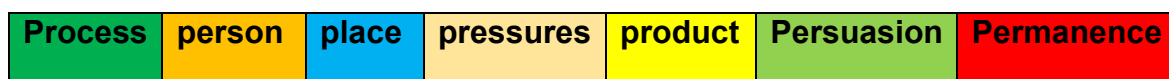
Figure 10.2: The 7 Ps business concept of creativity:

“Creativity is a circular **process** during which a **person** collaborates with others, in a favourable **place** to overcome **pressures**, in order to refine existing, or to discover new, knowledge, services or **products**, successfully **persuading** society of its value and making a **permanent** impact on our culture.”



I have incorporated seven strands into the conceptual description of creativity whereas previously only four strands were commonly identified: person, product, process and pressures (Runco and Kim, 2011). Although Runco and Kim (2011) reviewed six Ps (person, process, place, product, persuasion and potential), I have not distinguished between potential and performance as they have and instead of merely acknowledging intersectionality between each of the strands, using a systems thinking approach, I am proposing that creativity is a synthesis of each of the strands as illustrated in Figure 9.1 below:

**Figure 9.1: 7 Ps of creativity**



## Equality & Diversity agenda and the needs of creative students and teachers?

This is an area that requires further research. The Equality and Diversity agenda is not typically concerned with intersectionality of needs. For example, a highly creative student may feel they are being ostracized by their peers because of their ethnicity rather than due to resentment of their creativity. On the other hand, a student from a minority ethnic background, or a homosexual student may seem withdrawn because they do not feel they belong whereas in fact it may be their high level of creativity needs that demand concentration and inner reflection. It may be useful to explore creativity and intersectionality needs of highly creative students and teachers.

## Evaluation of creativity based on quality of relationships and processes

Even though we have natural preferences for pedagogies as students, teachers and inspectors, versatility in the range of approaches used, may avoid unfair, unintended or unconscious bias towards the success of some students at the expense of others.

Assessing the value of relationships, processes and the personal development of students alongside the tangible outcomes of success is more likely to include a wider range of learning that includes development of creativity skills.

As with quality, it is easier to evaluate creativity rather than to measure it. The quality of relationships between teacher and students cannot be measured but using a systems thinking framework, they can be mapped in terms of attention given to students and the extent to which students experience freedom to take risks in a space of trust.

### Critical self-reflection to reward creativity appropriately

There are obvious merits of the Ofsted inspection process. For example, Table 'Finding 5' showed that research participants including business teachers currently working in FE colleges, expressed at least 17 distinct reasons that make Ofsted inspections a valuable process, for example, Ofsted is perceived to be a necessary process of Quality Assurance with a great deal of beneficial impact. As an experienced teacher who has undergone numerous inspections during my career and also as an experienced Ofsted inspector, I agree with the statements made by my research participants about the benefits of inspections in ensuring accountability, quality and continuous improvement. However, there is certainly a controversy about the benefits and drawbacks of "standardisation" and "normalisation". There are also ethical issues relating to teachers and managers losing their jobs following an Ofsted inspection.

Although Ofsted is valued for reasons such as, being an essential, useful and pragmatic system for improving quality of teaching and learning, these perceived benefits are often intertwined with inherent pressures towards "standardisation" and "normalisation" which may be in stark contrast to development of creativity skills as the two concepts may in fact be mutually exclusive. In other words, is it possible to promote creativity within a standardised and normalised framework?

The role of Ofsted is questioned for many reasons for example the stress, anxiety and fear it causes blocks creativity and it encourages a tick box culture of compliance rather than independent, creative thinking which recognizes and meets the needs of students in their contextual environment. Ofsted is not associated with

creativity and as it is an important business skill, this absence of a relationship between Ofsted and creativity needs to be addressed.

Judgements made without opportunities for inspectors to be critically self-reflective, risk being unfairly distorted and failing to reward important development of creativity skills.

## Limitations of systems thinking conceptual framework

I built my case study using a systems thinking approach to synthesise my research findings about development of creativity skills within a state funded education context, looking for patterns and relationships to connect the dots. Apart from the criticisms of the case study approach that I have already discussed in the methodology chapter, there are limitations I noticed in using the systems thinking framework, as I mapped my data and drew conclusions. The two main limitations related to power dynamics and unconscious forces and I will discuss each of these below.

### Unconscious drivers

One of the criticisms of the systems thinking approach, within the context of my own research, is that it tends to focus on conscious rather than unconscious drivers of behavior. It overlooks unconscious factors that may have an impact on ethics, values and behaviours.

### Dynamics of power in relationships between individual, society and culture

The second limitation of the systems thinking framework, is that it does not clearly consider relationships of power. In fact, the approach suggests that if we position different people at a location in the system, they will invariably behave in the same way. In other words, it is the system that invokes our behaviour and to change our behaviour, we need to change the system. This is reminiscent of Skinner's behaviourist ideology (previously discussed under the heading 'Finding 4: Ofsted inspectors fail to adequately reward creativity') which focuses on tangible evidence and overt behavior.



## Acknowledging and overcoming limitations of systems thinking

In order to overcome these limitations, I used strategies that I learnt and practiced during my coaching training, including the psychodynamic, cognitive and humanist approaches to self-reflection.

A culture of inculcation (Fairclough, 2001) in education, may derive from unconscious drivers and behaviours that are unlikely to promote development of creativity skills. On the other hand, there is space for creativity in education based on a conscious culture of communication in which there is mutual concern, understanding and respect for the needs of both the individual giving and receiving the education and the demands of the society in which they are positioned.

Without sufficient consideration of unconscious forces, the systems thinking framework does not easily identify whether it is the culture that needs to be changed, or the societal gatekeepers of creativity who are merely implementing the policies and procedures constructed in compliance with the contextual hegemonic discourse.

In my professional experience, I have observed that our relationship with creativity seems to depend to a large extent on our personal commitments, the values we prioritise and our unconscious driving forces. Before I began training to be a teacher and launched into my teaching career, I was highly inspired by a book called “How Children Fail” (Holt, 1965) which was one of the course textbooks on my psychology degree course. The insights and conclusions drawn by Holt (1965) from his lesson observations and reflections left me with a deep commitment to ensuring that I did not prevent my students from learning effectively, by contributing to their fear, which Holt passionately argued, was one of the main underlying reasons for the failure of so many students. I aimed to teach in a manner that I considered to be creative so

that my students would succeed rather than fail. One of the keys to enabling students to succeed, advocated by Holt, was simply to avoid fear. Fear, anxiety and stress are inimical to creativity and it is usually at the individual level of relationships in which these fears and anxieties are expressed and alleviated. Nevertheless, societal and cultural fears regarding our position in society if we fail an exam; if we fail to acquire skills for the job of our choice; if we fail to make ends meet with the lifestyle we adopt, cannot be tackled at the individual level. Using a systems thinking approach, we need to make the connections between conscious and unconscious cultural and societal fears that are expressing themselves in the classroom environment, and look for solutions from a broader contextual perspective.

Based on my reflections about cultural hegemony, the impact of surveillance and the importance of trust and diversity in generating creativity, I believe that the low level of cultural interest in development of creativity skills is marked by pressures to perform and produce outcomes that are easy to measure, in other words 'performativity'.

Systems thinking is limited in providing the means to explore and perhaps question, the ethical foundation underpinning the bias towards performativity rather than creativity. It would be interesting to explore the unconscious drivers that promote performativity rather than creativity but that is beyond the remit of this case study.

In order to avoid the negative impact of unconscious biases and a fixation on our own favourite theories and ways of viewing the world, we need to understand the humility required to create a space of "not knowing". Instead of comparing everything we observe with the supposed expertise in our own practice, we could, without our masks, become experts in being fully present to witness, record and report without preconceptions and biases, without making ourselves the yardstick for measuring

the performance, success and impact that others are making in their own spheres of influence.

Educational organisations that take a linear, outcomes driven approach, may be paying very little attention to their impact on intangible, non-linear and unconscious dynamics in relationships in their communities and societies. Using a systems thinking approach may serve to create more sustainable changes.

While acknowledging the second limitation of Systems Thinking, that it does not adequately consider the impact of unequal power in relationships, I was able to overcome this by seeing power dynamics in relationships as circular rather than linear. I drew on the philosophy of Foucault (1980) which is quite distinct from systems thinking in many ways, but similar to systems thinking in that it does not see power in linear terms. Foucault believed that the traditional, centralised system of power in monarchic societies was largely outdated in favour of more dispersed systems of power expressed through cultures of surveillance for example. In contemporary society, many of us are privileged to take on multiple roles, in different spaces in society, with varying degrees of power. For example, my own roles as a student, teacher, inspector and education consultant allowed me to experience power and influence from multiple positions. Each position stimulated its own patterns of behaviour which were not only distinct according to the role and position but also distinct from the behaviour patterns of others in similar roles and positions due to our unique identities and prior experiences influencing our patterns of behaviour. Although the power struggles caused by inequalities of power distribution are seen to be a weakness in systems thinking, in my experience, this weakness can

be overcome when there is flexibility in the system for individuals to adopt multiple roles and occupy a variety of spaces.

Using a systems thinking approach, being prepared to see each situation from multiple perspectives situated in different roles and occupying a variety of spaces, provides us with opportunities to be critically self-reflective in questioning the assumptions that we consider to be 'common sense'. For example, my own self reflections uncovered the contradictions between the pedagogy I advocate as a humanist teacher which is in fact a pedagogy that I dislike when I am at the receiving end of it as a student, and I find it difficult to evaluate it fairly as an inspector. If I had read Sotto (1994) 20 years ago, and reflected on his question wondering 'why so many of us teach in ways that we hate to be at the receiving end of as students ourselves', with a circular, systems thinking approach, I may have experienced more clarity, integrity and a higher degree of confidence in expressing my pedagogical values in integrity.

The dynamics of international power relationships in education may be witnessed through international league tables such as PISA that promote a high level of competitiveness. Instead of relying on these rather aggressive levels of competition to improve the quality of education, it may be wiser to use a systems thinking approach, synthesising Eastern and Western approaches to creativity; the former focusing on collective harmony and the latter focusing on individual self-expression and fulfilment of potential. This synthesis may in fact lead to the desired outcome, survival and growth in a competitive business environment, with less effort and more reward.

In the systems thinking model of creativity, the inter-relationship between the individual and the society and culture in which they are located, does not take into account the power dynamics between these three domains, and the extent to which changes in the individual cause a change in the culture and vice versa. Over 50 years ago, Skinner (1974: 251) reflected that in order to solve global problems:

It is the environment which must be changed. A way of life which furthers the study of human behaviour in its relation to that environment should be in the best possible position to solve its major problems. This is not jingoism, because the great problems are now global. In the behavioristic view, man can now control his own destiny because he knows what must be done and how to do it.

The irony is that even though Skinner observed the “great global problems” above more than 50 years ago, saying that “man can now control his own destiny because he knows what must be done and how to do it”, we probably have more problems now than Skinner may have imagined. This may be at least partially due to our education being largely aimed at global competitiveness, in desperate attempts to maintain the status quo in terms of national interests, rather than creatively collaborating to improve global conditions for all humanity.

To conclude, the systems thinking approach is naturally inclusive of the diverse range of theories, perspectives and ideologies that seek to describe, explain and explore the concept of creativity, which remains mysterious and powerful in its impact in education.

## Questions arising from my research

### 1. **Invisible needs of highly creative students on vocational business**

**studies courses:** Are the needs of highly creative students being met in vocational business studies classes? Is it possible that we are ignoring the invisible needs of highly creative students and unfairly stifling their creativity and penalising them with low marks when they deserve much more for their time and investment in education?

### 2. **Equality and diversity agenda:** How well does the diversity agenda in education promote recognition of highly creative students, ensuring that the classroom experience does not undermine, but instead supports their natural creative expression, without pressure, stress and anxiety?

### 3. **Role of society and culture in creativity:** Why is there such a low level of cultural interest in promoting creativity in vocational business education? What are the benchmarks for evaluating how well FE colleges are using taxpayer funds to generate creativity?

### Milestones in my research journey

This research began with my discomfort at the level of creativity expressed by my students on vocational business studies courses in Further Education colleges in the UK. As I delved more deeply into my own internal and external motives for funding and carrying out this research, I remembered feeling this dissatisfaction and disappointment about development of creativity skills when I was a teenager, very much like the students I was now teaching. In fact, the end of my research has taken me back in a spiral, to the beginning of my learning journey as a child. This is of little surprise within the framework of the systems thinking, non-linear approach to exploration and discovery that I have adopted throughout my research.

On the other hand, what is a pleasant surprise for me is that the research process has transformed my perspective on education. Rather than focusing inwards on the limited parameters of formal education and standardised qualifications, I am now broadening my perspective on experiential learning of skills, beyond the formal classroom. Qualifications, awards and other forms of societal recognition provide a diverse range of pathways in which we can develop these skills but they are merely strategies that serve to build the level of confidence with which the learner can express their potential in making a contribution to their world.

I feel convinced that ultimately, it is not the qualifications per se but skills such as creativity, courage and confidence that will determine the socio-cultural level of success of learners.

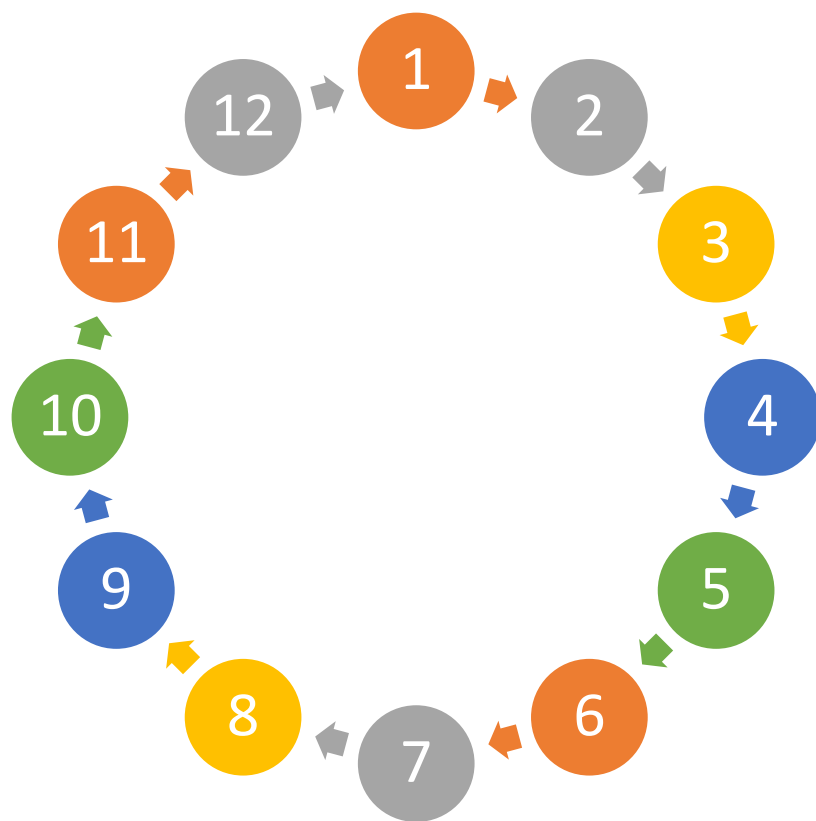
To sum up the cycle of my research journey, I see 12 iterative key milestones leading to the conclusions I have drawn:

1. **Being** excited, curious and enthusiastic about using knowledge and wisdom to generate creativity
2. **Feeling** disappointment, resentment and frustration about lack of space and opportunity for development of creativity skills in education.
3. **Making connections** between knowledge and resources that already exist.
4. **Exploring** the impact of the internal and external pressures in my role as an Ofsted inspector, within my socio-cultural context
5. **Recognising** the diverse perspectives on the world of education based on my position as a student, teacher or inspector.
6. **Noticing** that education culture, expressed through visions, missions and values, tends to ignore creativity.
7. **Finding** that there is a lack of clarity about creativity in the context of vocational business studies which may have implications for the way we recognise, assess and promote creativity skills
8. **Understanding** my own frustration at being overlooked, ignored and unpopular with my peers and managers, particularly when I have expressed creativity.
9. **Comparing** the impact of evidence-based success versus the creative quality of relationships in personal development of students, teachers and myself.
10. **Acknowledging** the importance of deep self-reflection in my work as an inspector, teacher and student.
11. **Expressing** my own creativity through writing, speaking and networking with academics, professionals and business owners with a deep interest in being more creative.
12. **Advocating** creativity skills through conferences, seminars and social media

In a cycle, each ending is a new beginning. Likewise, in a systems thinking view of the world, this case study exploring my role as an Ofsted inspector, is merely an overview of a pattern which is ever more complex as we delve deeply. The journey of learning is a creative journey because it leaves an imprint; it changes us; it transforms us. Doing the research for this PhD has shifted my perspective from being an educator wondering how best to teach creativity within a formal classroom environment, to becoming an advocate for learning that is self-inspired, creative and life enhancing.

Seeing through my own eyes as a student; as a teacher and as an inspector has broadened my beliefs about teaching creatively and teaching **for** creativity.





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## Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical Review Forms

Appendix 2: Selected quotes from humanist, behaviourist & cognitive pedagogy

Appendix 3: Interview Codes for teachers, business owners and students

Appendix 4: Coding Summary by Source

Appendix 5: Findings 1; definitions of creativity

Appendix 6: Findings 2; perceptions of creative people

Appendix 7: 'Findings 2a; analysis of Ofsted reports

Appendix 8: Finding 5; LLUK Professional Standards for Teachers

Appendix 9: Public Engagement Activities

Appendix 10: Online search strategy

**Appendices are provided on attached DVD**